


2014

NonTraditional Hispanic College Students' Perceptions of Their Sense of Belonging at a 2-Year College in Southwest Texas

Ronald Eugene Zawacki-Maldonado
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Ronald E. Zawacki-Maldonado

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Walden University
2014

Abstract

Nontraditional Hispanic College Students' Perceptions of Their Sense of Belonging at a
2-Year College in Southwest Texas

by

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Edd., Nova Southeastern University, 1998

M.Ed, Sul Ross State University, 1992

BS, State University College at Buffalo, 1980

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

General Psychology

Walden University

December 2014

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand how a sense of belonging contributes to graduation persistence among nontraditional Hispanic college students. The collectivist culture among these adult learners often results in family and work obligations that curtail their pursuit of higher education. The voices of these students are mostly absent in the current literature and warrant the current research study. Sense of belonging and retention theory formed the conceptual framework for this phenomenological study. A purposeful sample of 16 nontraditional Hispanic students enrolled in a 2-year community college in Southwest Texas participated in interviews. Data analysis focused on themes from the participants' responses to a series of open-ended questions. Four themes emerged: financial difficulties, college schedules, flexibility in work-school schedule, and family obligations. From the perspectives of these students, their basic needs did not differ from the needs of the traditional college students enrolled in 2-year community college; however, they perceived their access to the college's resources and services seemed to be greater than that of traditional students. These findings suggest that, in order to support nontraditional Hispanic students, institutions must provide access to support services beyond the business-hour model.

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Dedication

In memory of those who have gone before me and whose only remaining gifts are the memories and love through my lifetime. Family, extended family, and friends to whom I am grateful for their paths intertwined with mine.

In memory of Eugene C. Zawacki, my father who never fully fulfilled his dreams and aspirations but through my successes celebrated his dreams. In memory of my older brother, Allen C. Zawacki, to whom I turned for inspiration, guidance, and protection from the childhood boogie man; he was my childhood hero. Born on my 12th birthday, Laura Ann Janusz, whose time with us was too short. My Uncle Edward and Aunt Helen Zawacki, who filled many Saturdays with shopping trips to the grocery and those occasional Good Humor treats in the back seat of the Chrysler Imperial. Eugene Kuziemkowsky, better known as my Uncle Gene and Godfather who was survived by his wife Irene, sister to my mother, Adeline; Uncle Gene always came to my rescue! Frs. Domingo, David, Eddie, John, OMI, from whom much spiritual guidance filled my pathways. Maria B Maldonado, whose precious treasure—but who never saw its fruition with her surviving husband Herman Maldonado—four children who embraced me as their brother; my extended family. I am sure that God has crowned Maria with the joy of peaceful rest and eternal happiness.

All I ask of *Ultima* Maria is when you look down upon those of us that remain behind is that you smile at what your labor has wrought and rejoice in His name until He calls us home to be with you.

In honor of St Jude Thaddeus, my patron saint, St Tomas Aquinas, scholarly doctor of the Church, and to the angel, Uriel, keeper of the light of wisdom. Hail Holy Queen, blessed is your gift.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my committee members for their constant guidance and persistence in helping develop my scholarly voice and leading me on a path of joining the community of scholarly practitioners and agents of positive social change. Thank you, Dr. Rachel Moore, Committee Chair, Dr. Barbara Chappell, Committee Member, and Dr. Tony Wu, on behalf of the Walden University's URR, for your encouragement, patience, and direction in this monumental endeavor.

While I recognize the members of the scholarly community whose efforts helped forge this success, I would be deeply remised in my obligations if I did not acknowledge my family for their sacrifices, emotional, spiritual, and physical support over this course of this journey. It's not the first time we have engaged in pursuing a scholarly goal of a terminal degree, and now with a second terminal degree, the PhD in Psychology, no words can express my appreciation, respect, and love for those who have dealt with my ups and downs of rejections and revisions, open-heart surgery, and day-to-day change of plans because of the time and effort required to achieve this goal. Thank you Linda, Norma, and Nena, three special people in my life—*mi familia*—*Gracias por todas las cosas que has dado; regalos emocionales, espirituales y físicos y sacrificios a verme a alcanzar esta meta.*

Incidental and valuable to making this goal a reality stand many friends and colleagues who indirectly contributed to this day of achievement. To each of those silent partners in this journey, a special kind of thanks to you must be noted. Your friendship

and collegiality have sustained me in the pursuit of this doctorate. Your humor, pats on the back, and simple words of encouragement were the extra fuel when energy was waning and my focus seemed blurred.

In the final analysis, faith, a trust in my God, His son, Christ Jesus, and in the Christian Catholic tradition of church doctrine, Blessed Mary, Mother of our Redeemer, with the intercession of St. Jude Thaddeus and St. Thomas Aquinas, and the faithful prayers of many persons, I acknowledge His presence in my life and those who have carried me to this place.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Basic to all human beings is a sense of belonging and experiencing a sense of community. Belongingness is as essential to the human, emotional condition as is water to the maintenance of physical survival. Belongingness is a fundamental human motivation. Its absence or a lack of belongingness (e.g., being without community) is a source of negative effects when that gap is substantial and extensive. In a broader application of the theory, beyond attachment and the evolutionary purpose to abate competition for limited resources, there remains evidence that relationships develop for higher purposes than assuring sufficient water and sustenance: satiating cognitive and affective domains being general descriptions of those higher purposes. Sharing in community, the sense of belonging that emerges from relationships and associations with institutions that provide positive energy contributes to positive regard linking some of the strongest human emotions the species experiences: happiness, elation, and tranquility (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Grisez, 1997).

Beyond the import that sense of belonging plays in psychotherapy or group therapy, discussed in Baumeister and Leary (1995), a sense of belonging or experiencing community receives significant attention in current research literature in relation to student persistence and retention, the topic of this study. Borrowing from the corporate world on leadership and decision-making, the idea of stakeholders and shared visions

spring to the forefront. One might argue that a positive sense of belonging or community parallels the construct of ownership or having a vested interest. Bennis and Nanus (1985), two of the earliest purveyors of leadership models, pointed out the importance of sharing the power and breaking away from the strictly top-down management approach in corporate America. Among the principles or four strategies advanced in their book, a shared vision that advances employees as stakeholders and forges an emotional connection because they become owners in the process parallels sense of belonging, the employees experience community and positive regard in similar design raised in Baumeister and Leary. In having ownership in the process, stakeholders, then, are more likely to have a higher degree of fidelity to the organization, Bennis and Nanus postulated. Fidelity to the organization translates into retention of valuable employees.

The correlation between sense of belonging or community and a college student's persistence and fidelity to an institution continue to be of interest to researchers who are arduously seeking understanding on how to improve student success, persistence to graduation, and commitment to degree program and institution (Marti, 2008; Schuetz, 2008). A myriad of factors engulf volumes of journals reporting the interaction of academic and social integration on sense of belonging; variation in why some students persist and others dropout was central to that body of research. Researchers examined the impact of background factors such as gender, ethnic/racial, and generational status experiencing higher education on the decision to continue or withdraw (Crisp & Nora,

2010; Esquivel, 2010; Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Maestas, Vaquera, & Munoz-Zehr, 2007; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Strayhorn, 2008).

The purpose of this study is to examine the personal experiences and perceptions similar to concepts of ownership and being stakeholders that contribute to the sense of belonging (SOB) and persistence (e.g., fidelity to the institution and commitment to program degree) of nontraditional Hispanic college students attending Southwest Texas Junior College, a 2-year institution of higher education in a small rural community of Southwest Texas.

Background of the Problem

The history of the community college is substantially linked to the baby boomer generation emerging in the 1960s and the metamorphic construct of the current junior or community college institution. While several large metropolitan community colleges operate across the United States (Hawley & Harris, 2006), many 2-year institutions dot the country serving smaller communities such as the community college in the current study. Rural and urban locations of community colleges of late attract large populations of beginning or first-year students; among the largest growing population is the Hispanic learner who for various reasons chooses to enroll in the local community college rather than apply to a 4-year university (Horn, Nevill, & Griffith, 2006; Velasquez, 1999). The increasing presence of Hispanic students enrolling in 2-year institutions reflects the

increase of that population's access to formal education (e.g., Velasquez, 1999) and increasing high school graduation rates for Hispanic youth (Hawley & Harris, 2006).

Earlier studies on the topic of retention experienced by nontraditional students underscored the difficulty of living out two life journeys. One of the would-be college student who immersed himself or herself in higher education in their rural and small town communities where the choices for career were limited; the other, toward the reality of balancing the limited economic opportunities for gainful employment to support themselves and family with those of choosing college—completing the assignments—and being present for class (e.g., Diaz-Lefebvre, 1989; Kim, 2002). The majority of students described as nontraditional attend community colleges in rural and small town communities; those persons of Hispanic heritage who enrolled in community colleges located in rural areas were consistent with the data offered by later researchers (e.g., Marti, 2008; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Stieha, 2010). They—Marti (2008), Rodriguez-Martin (2010), and Stieha (2010)—indicated 75% of Hispanic students were enrolled in community colleges. For some students, the community college was not always a choice, but it was the only option available because of the learner's geographical location, access to economic resources (e.g., ability to pay and maintain personal needs), and the need to support the family financially while balancing the learner's educational pursuits. Those external forces raised in recent studies made the community college the only option for

nontraditional Hispanic, college students, and in general, the Hispanic population of traditional students (Smith, 2010).

Smith (2010) and La Claire (2010) focused on support programs for Hispanic students attending rural community colleges pointed out that the drop out patterns across the community college population were 46 %, higher than at 4-year universities for the same population within the first year. Of students enrolled in all community colleges, one-third of the population attended rural community colleges (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007) and rural community colleges comprised 60% of all community colleges in the United States (LaClair, 2010). Recent studies underscored the lack of limited resources in the rural community colleges (LaClair, 2010; Smith, 2010), and high dropout rates for a plethora of reasons (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Esquivel, 2010; Strayhorn, 2008) that were not necessarily common reasons associated with traditional college enrollees (e.g., academic success, ability to pay) but were unique to 2-year institutions. Furthermore, if the realm of traditional patterns that explained retention at community colleges were factors in patterns of retention, the gap or explanations were flawed and likely exacerbated by the approach. According to another study, by the absence of a good-fit model that focused on community colleges and students' persistence (Deil-Amen, 2011), the likelihood of why community college students dropped out remained uncertain. Using models to understand social and academic integration as studied by early researchers on the topic (e.g., Tinto, 1983) were not designed to address the unique situations of those institutions

but were models used to examine social and academic integration leading to persistence at 4-year institutions and their enrollment in predominantly urban areas (Barbatis, 2010; Esquivel, 2010; Nuñez, 2009).

Given the role of the community college in serving a growing nontraditional, Hispanic population, the purpose of this study was to encounter those Hispanic students entering higher education whose voices were relatively silent in the current literature and qualitatively construct a record of their experiences and perceptions about the higher education journey in which they were engaged. By examining the experiences and perceptions of the nontraditional, Hispanic college student, the institutions that served their educational aspirations improved the likelihood of persistence and degree acquisition of the current Hispanic learner and future nontraditional Hispanic students who pursue higher education starting at the community college.

Problem Statement

Past research on the topic of sense of belonging and persistence among nontraditional (e.g., adult learners) Hispanic college students did not sufficiently examine the issues confronting that population of college students who enrolled in small or rural community colleges. The current, but limited, body of research focusing on nontraditional students represented an endeavor to create an equal plethora of qualitative methodologically-based body of research using phenomenological or ethnological designs but instead, remained dependent on the traditional quantitative approach found in

much of the current literature, thus denying the genuine insight and voices of the population of historically marginalized persons (e.g., Stieha, 2010).

While it was known that the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population is Hispanic, the larger segment of Hispanics pursuing higher education enrolled at community colleges (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002); the Hispanic learner represented a significant percentage of college students who did not complete their 2-year program and thus were under-represented in the populations enrolled at 4-year institutions (Rodriguez-Martin, 2010). Similarly, studies that focused on the Hispanic learner did not reflect the subpopulation of nontraditional students (adult learners) who enrolled at higher education institutions in general. Together, the patterns of enrollment and dropout rates, differences in goals (e.g., degree seeking, certificates, and transferees to 4-year programs) between traditional and nontraditional learners, the communities (2-year versus 4-year institutions) that have been ignored, the limited studies conducted, and the traditional research methodologies (e.g., quantitative) used to examine the sense of belonging and its influence on persistence of nontraditional (adult learner) Hispanic college students gave cause to pursue an investigation of the phenomenon.

With the advent of increasingly reliable software technologies for the analysis of qualitative data (QDA), a paradigm shift emerged in the attitudes of researchers at higher education institutions. Those changes encouraged researchers like me, to use qualitative approaches as valid means of research. The technology provided a window of

opportunity for a researcher to capture the silent body of college students' (a) experiences and their perceptions about the learning journey, (b) their relationship with the institutions in which they enrolled, and (c) how the sense of belonging they experienced or perceived influenced their persistence. Embracing qualitative methodologies supported by reliable QDA software opened the path to the body of literature on the issue and illuminate the unique challenges that confront the nontraditional (adult learner) Hispanic college student enrolled at two-year, community colleges.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the personal experiences and perceptions—likened to concepts of ownership and stakeholder—that contributed to the sense of belonging and persistence (e.g., fidelity to the institution and commitment to program degree) of nontraditional Hispanic college students attending Southwest Texas Junior College, a 2-year institution of higher education in a small rural community of Southwest Texas.

My study examined nontraditional Hispanic college students; the characteristics of the participants' background and experiences with which they arrived at the entrance to the ivy halls did not conform to traditional students in age, experiences, and motivation. Noting those differences, the personal interview questions—open ended items—and the mixed format of face-to-face and telephone interviews served as the vehicle to gain insight about the participants' experiences and perceptions of their

relationship to the institution, commitment to their journey, and issues that contributed to their persistence in the educational endeavor. Research suggested the need to pursue qualitative methodologies in this area of research to capture the voices of a population who did not enjoy a strong presence in the current body of literature. The literature further reflected the need to examine the background and culturally significant factors that contributed to maintaining a positive sense of belonging and influence persistence while retaining fidelity to academic and social integration factors in investigating the issue (Hawley & Harris, 2006; Hurtado & Cater, 1997; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002; Meeuwisse, Severiens, & Born, 2010; Reason, 2009; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010).

In recent years, universities acknowledged the usefulness of alternative methods and invited researchers to pursue alternative research methods and research design. A shifting paradigm and the advent of highly efficient software technologies raised the research bar from purely quantitative to the inclusion of qualitative and mixed-methods approaches in social sciences (Creswell, 2009; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). The approach and methodologies adopted in my study were based on those developments and the body of literature on the topic of interest—sense of belonging influencing persistence—using a phenomenological design suggested across similar studies (e.g., Esquivel, 2010; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Stieha, 2010). McRoy (2012), on qualitative research approaches, pointed out a historical pattern of omissions in the social sciences' depth of knowledge derived from the purely quantitative approach to examining social

issues. Because the quantitative model lacked the character that was necessary to the unique data sought in investigations of human experiences, the advantages of qualitative models for research in social sciences continued to grow. Unfortunately, changes were slowly adopted and traditional methods continued to be utilized in the area of interest that I pursued. By adopting a qualitative model for this study, I hoped to contribute the advancement of the qualitative methodology.

Examining the experiences and capturing the perceptions of the participants in the current study was best accomplished by qualitative methods. Qualitative methods and phenomenological designs provided a basis to elicit genuine insights and voices constructing the data desired in this study because there was an intimate familiarity between those data and the participants. Quantitative methods failed to capture the naturalistic and systematic observations as did the qualitative approach, suggested McRoy (2012). Furthermore, with the recent development in software technologies such as Ethnograph.v6 (Qualis Research Associates, 2008) discussed briefly by Creswell (2009), the approach to this study and the analysis of the data gathered were of substantial quality unlike that of isolated, statistical analysis, the core of quantitative methods.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study drew on grounded theories in current research literature on the topic of student sense of belonging and persistence. Sense of

belonging (SOB), developed by Hurtado and Carter (1997), an alternative theory to Tinto's model (1993) of student retention, and Tinto's theory of college student departure underscored by academic and social integration (as cited in Esquivel, 2010) framed the investigation into understanding nontraditional Hispanic college students' experiences and perceptions of their sense of belonging and persistence in their educational endeavor. Borrowing from the rich body of research literature in quantitative and qualitative traditions formed the basis of this study's conceptual framework using a qualitative methodological study and a phenomenological design of personal interviews to flesh out the experiences and perceptions of nontraditional students that influenced the SOB and the college students' likelihood of persistence.

Understanding the role of SOB on influencing college students' persistence began with the plethora of studies based on the model by Hurtado and Carter (1997), which was enumerated in related studies by Strayhorn (2008), Esquivel (2010), and Rodriguez-Martin (2010). The second theory popular in current literature was retention theory. Retention theory closed the gap or minimally provided a bridge to the cognitive and affective aspects of the sense of belonging construct and those aspects of the individual's demographics (e.g., age, gender, and family background). The latter, retention theory, examined those factors among others that contributed to shaping personal goals, as Strayhorn (2008) pointed out. For Tinto (1975, 1987), according to Strayhorn, retention theory explained why students leave college before they graduated rather than persist in

their program of study. Similarly, Esquivel (2008) pointed out that retention theory attributes (e.g., family background and age) shaped dispositions and commitments to the institution and program of study and persisting toward graduation or withdrawing before program completion.

Sense of belonging (SOB) was universal as a human characteristic and was essential to healthy human beings. Simply defined, a SOB is the psychological feeling of connectedness and experiencing acceptance within one's family and community. It was important in healthy human development and combating behavior problems. The role of a healthy, positive sense of belonging was a significant part of college students' success and persistence in their higher education endeavor according to several studies (Hawley & Harris, 2006; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Velasquez, 1999).

Variations on defining SOB in the research literature has had a rich history among settings in which SOB emerged as a formidable issue bearing on success and continued association in the pursuit of higher education among college students from all backgrounds. Hurtado and Carter (1997) were credit in developing the SOB construct measuring Hispanic/Latino perceptions of their experiences in psychologically feeling connected to their higher education institutions and persisting in their enrollment to fulfill degree requirements to graduate. Tinto's (1975 and 1987) early works were considered seminal research on the topic of SOB in that integration was the antecedent of SOB (e.g., Guiffrida, 2006; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Maramba, 2008; Museus &

Maramba, 2010). Conjunctively, those constructs formed the conceptual framework for the present study.

When one speaks of SOB, the foundation that Tinto (1975, 1987) advocated was social and academic integration posited Hurtado & Carter (1997). Tinto's theory, even with its critics (e.g., Hurtado & Carter, 1997), remained a steadfast framework to examine the current issue of SOB and persistence of nontraditional Hispanic college students attending 2-year institutions. Positing that certain characteristics (e.g., enrollment characteristics, demographics, and intent to finish degree) were predictive of a student's retention and involvement—typically measured by academic and social integration—were indicative of those characteristics (Nuñez, 2009).

The construct of SOB, according to the literature, embodied cognitive and affective domains. As an individual experiences interactions with others—in the current context, students with peers, instructors, and the institution as a whole—he or she evaluated his or her membership status or standing in a group. The evaluative process constituted the cognitive aspects of the construct of SOB. The affective domain viewed as a component consisted of the feelings a person (e.g., student) experienced, and those responses measured in behaviors and outcomes (Esquivel, 2010; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Strayhorn, 2008). In summary, SOB “is a subjective evaluation of the quality of relationships with others on campus” stated Strayhorn (2008, p.505).

Retention theory, the second source for the current study framework, appeared contextually in a study by Maestas, Vaquera, and Muñoz-Zehr (2007) who examined the factors that influenced SOB at predominantly Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs). Aside from the three divisions (e.g., academic, social integration, and experiences with diversity) informing a SOB, the elements examined for background influence were those aspects of the individual's demographics presented in Strayhorn's (2008) study: age, gender, and family background. The background criteria, according to Maestas et al. (2007) examined high school GPA, ACT, the parents' level of education, paying for college expenses, and race-ethnicity as potential influences in the relationship to the three divisions, impacting the SOB. The ability to pay for one's education, for example, helped shape individual goals suggested in Strayhorn and Maestas et al. It was logical that one cannot make a commitment to strive toward persistence and graduation without access to the resources (e.g., financial) necessary to make a commit to the institution. Strayhorn emphasized the importance "that student attributes (e.g., background) and the institutional and degree commitment influenced retention-related outcomes" (p.505).

Although retention theory and persistence remained synonymous in the research literature (Hawley & Harris, 2006; Hurtado & Carter 1997; Hurtado et al., 2006; Jones, et. al., 2002), within this study, the distinction contributed to defining the latter as a measure of longevity. While retention theory explained the factors of why minority college students remained in college or dropped out, persistence provided the explanation

of how long students' commitment to the university and degree program remained intact as gleaned from the current literature (Hawley & Harris, 2006; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al. 2006). Tinto (1975, 1987, & 1993), discussed in Hurtado et al. (2006) for example, spoke descriptively of retention, cited "stop-out, dropout, and attrition" (p. 21) factors impacting first-year college students. Hawley and Harris (2006), for example, analyzed student characteristics familiar to the topic in previous studies and their impact on persistence within the first year. Halpin (1990), and cited by Hawley and Harris, posited the academic and social integration promulgated by Tinto's (1993) work served as predictors—the why—of persistence of first-year college students.

From this executive overview of the conceptual framework, detailed examinations of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpinned this study, unfolded in the literature review of Chapter 2. The development of those frameworks that guided previous studies along with the research methods and designs constructed the framework for this study.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the current study examined the topic of interest that addressed gaps identified in the initial development of the literature review found in Chapter 2. In the current literature on the topic of SOB influencing college students' persistence and retention among Hispanic students enrolled in 2-year and 4-year institutions, a gap emerged in the depth and breadth of the effects of SOB on persistence or retention for

nontraditional Hispanic college students (e.g., students not typical of traditional populations enrolled in undergraduate programs) attending colleges. In particular and central to this study, the 2-year community colleges in small or rural communities were underrepresented in the research literature. Also, in the current literature, the gap was further exacerbated by limited approaches to the research; more often, the traditional, quantitative approach filled the volumes of studies with a noticeable absence of qualitative and mixed method designs.

In selecting a qualitative approach and using a phenomenological design (e.g., interviews to examine the phenomenon), this study examined the experiences of nontraditional Hispanic college students enrolled in a community college located in a small or rural community in Southwest Texas. Face-to-face (F2F) interviews constructed with open-ended questions served as the instrument to elicit responses from participants who volunteered for the study and met the criteria defining the target population. In unfolding the nature of this study, then, the topic of interest, the gap in the current literature, and based on the recommendations noted in previous studies, I adopted the phenomenological design and qualitative tradition of research.

The nature of phenomenological design, data gathered using a qualitative approach and data analysis, required unique tools to codify the participants' responses that did not fit traditional, quantitative data, nor did the use of statistical analysis software such as SPSS that Walden University required of students taking statistics courses as part

of their doctoral program. To effect an efficient collection of data and later and its objective analysis, I adopted recommendations from Creswell (2007) on software applications for qualitative data analysis; the software, collection process, and analysis of data were elaborated upon in the measurement section of the current study.

Research Questions

The current body of literature examined the various factors that contributed to the SOB that influenced persistence of college students. Both traditions examined academic and social integration factors and a variety of background factors that contributed to a student's SOB and influenced his/her decision to continue in his/her education endeavor. Relying on the grounded theories speaking to the SOB and retention theory, as the researcher, I framed the research question (RQ) below.

What were the experiences and perceptions—real or imagined—of nontraditional Hispanic college students (Passel & Taylor, 2009) enrolled at a 2-year community college in Southwest Texas that influenced their sense of belonging and persistence to graduation?

Research Subquestions

The intricacies in defining and understanding a dynamic concept—sense of belonging—required a series of subquestions (RSQ) that illuminated the main research question. The following questions guided the investigation into the topic:

1. What were the personal or background factors that influenced the participants' sense of belonging within the first year of commitment to higher education?
2. What were the academic experiences that contributed to the nontraditional Hispanic college student's desire to remain committed to his/her program and degree attainment?
3. What were the social experiences within the institution and outside of it that contributed to the student's sense of belonging and persistence to graduation?
4. What other experiences and perceptions of the institution—real or imagined—contributed to nontraditional Hispanic college students' sense of belonging and persistence to graduation?
5. What role did cultural diversity or its absence in the institution have in contributing to a sense of belonging and persistence among nontraditional Hispanic college students?
6. Did the instructors' ethnicity influence sense of belonging and persistence of the student population?

Significance of the Study

Education remains the vehicle for upward mobility; the possession of a higher education degree carries the historical perception that leads to occupational, economic, and social stability in this country. Regrettably, the perception and reality remain a distorted reality for Hispanic, Latino/a, or the Chicano(a) as evidenced by the disparity

between the group's population and representation in college enrollment numbers (Esquivel, 2010). The Hispanic population, reported as the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population and representing a substantial political and economic force, remained in the margins or sidelined when it came to high school graduation rates and college enrollment through graduation compared to their White counterparts (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Hurtado and Kamimura, 2003; Lopez, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008). Lopez (2009) and Strayhorn (2008) indicated that college enrollment rates showed an increase across groups since the 1970s, but the gap between various ethnic/racial groups remained. Hawley and Harris (2006) concurred with the findings from Lopez and Strayhorn in their study conducted at a large metropolitan community college.

In reviewing the literature, a pattern showed that previous studies focused their investigations on how minority students enrolled at major research universities experience sense of belonging, influencing students' persistence. Reported in the literature, those institutions were as either descriptively predominately White institutions, or PWI (Esquivel, 2010; Jones et al, 2002; Nuñez, 2009), or in a limited number of studies initially examined, were descriptively identified as Hispanic serving institutions (HSI), similar to the setting found in Maestas et al. (2007). The location of those PWI, 4-year research universities in major cities with their enrollment populations of traditional students in PWI and HSI ignored a large population of minority students who attended 2-year community colleges in small and rural town settings (Nuñez, 2009; Strayhorn,

2008). Interpreting the disparity emerging in the initial review of literature as a potential gap in research, it was my intent to focus on how minority college students' sense of belonging influenced their persistence at a 2-year, small-rural town community institution of higher education in Southwest Texas.

As the gap in the current research existed, pointing out the limitation of the settings in studies and their populations—geographically situated in large cities and at large, 4-year institutions—the need existed to examine smaller institutions such as the 2-year community college. Even when the latter was the setting, such as in the study by Hawley and Harris (2006) who examined the topic of sense of belonging and persistence among Hispanic college students attending 2-year community colleges, the institution was located in a metropolitan region in the northeastern United States. By definition, the latter did not reflect the context of small-rural 2-year community colleges largely ignored in the current literature. Without further study that expanded the tapestry of higher education institutions such as setting I proposed, the voices that represented the nontraditional Hispanic college student enrolled in the smaller/rural located institutions would have remained silent; their struggles, challenges, and triumphs gone unheard. The voices of those nontraditional Hispanic college students attending 2-year institutions of higher education in small-rural towns provided greater diversity in the current body of literature and voice, advancing the perception and reality that diminished the disparity between the ethnic/racial group's population and their enrollment in higher education.

Social Change

The need for this study stated that it would contribute to the current body of research and narrow the existing gap in studies concerning the experiences and perceptions influencing a sense of belonging and persistence of nontraditional Hispanic college students attending small town or rural community colleges that were not the focus of many previous studies on the topic. The methodology and design for this study suggested that current literature was lacking and future researchers should consider the use of qualitative methodologies to offset the plethora of quantitative studies that were not reflective of the voices of the participants (Jones et al., 2002; Maestas et al., 2007; Nuñez, 2009; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010).

This study advanced the recommendations of previous studies on the topic and narrowed the gap. The study included a portion of a population whose voices represented three-quarters of Hispanic college students attending 2-year higher education institutions in an otherwise geographical location that remained largely unexplored by researchers who focused on 4-year major universities or large, metropolitan community colleges, and whose studies did not explore the experiences, perceptions, and needs of a growing population that was not the traditional college student. Furthermore, this study helped the local institution by increasing the awareness of the unique needs of a population that many institutions failed to recognize contributed to student success, persistence, and

eventual graduation garnered through the interview process. Finally, the nontraditional Hispanic college students' voices gained a forum.

Definition of Terms

The definitions presented below were relevant in this study and appeared throughout this study to help the reader better understand the research. The definitions follow the accepted vernacular in the research literature recommended by Creswell (2009).

Persistence: The student's relative commitment to the institution and degree plan that culminates in graduation; to a lesser level, a student's completion of a course or term.

Hispanic: Americans of Spanish origin or descent; Americans who identify themselves as being of Spanish-speaking background and trace their origins from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Central and South America according to Passel and Taylor (2009) and Esquivel (2010).

Latino/as: A heterogeneous people of Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban American, and South American backgrounds inhabiting regional communities according to Hurtado (1997). Latino is the masculine form and Latina is the feminine form of the word (Esquivel, 2010).

Chicano(a)s: Similar ethnic/racial background of a population and used synonymously with Hispanic and Latino peoples as promulgated in Velasquez (1999) and made popular in the political struggle (msu.edu, 2000)

Nontraditional [Hispanic] college student: The nontraditional college student is a person enrolled in a higher education institution having characteristics not traditionally associated with undergraduate students; these characteristics may include social class, ethnic group, age, and gender groups underrepresented in the normal population of higher education (Harvey, 2014).

Hispanic-serving institution (HSI): Under Title V, a higher education institution where the enrollment of Hispanic students is 25% of the undergraduate, full-time population at the end of an award year (United States Department of Education, 2011).

Small town or rural community: In the sample data products, rural population and housing units were subdivided into rural farm and rural nonfarm. Rural farm comprised all rural households and housing units on farms (places from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were sold in 1989); rural nonfarm comprised the remaining rural areas (United States Census Bureau, 1995).

Assumptions

The sample population was a convenience sample of college students enrolled at each of the outreach centers and the main campus of the institution that met the definition of nontraditional Hispanic college student defined in this study. Those perspective participants had the option to participate or opt-out at any time during the process of the interview. Furthermore, the assumptions included a balance of both men and women were part of the sample population. A third assumption was that each participant

responded to the open-ended interview questions in an honest, forthright manner, and the participant had not embellished the responses with erroneous sentiment.

In the context of this study, the assumptions presented were necessary for various reasons. With regard to the first assumption for the participants to opt-out from the study altogether and at any point in the interview process (e.g., preferred not to provide a response based on a particular open-ended question, or limited the detail of the response), I respected the rights of the participant under the APA Code of Ethics (2002) standards. Furthermore, the participants' commitments to family, employment, and pursuing their educational goals were potential sources of difficulty requiring the participant to withdraw from the study or not complete an interview session (e.g., dependent child became ill and the participant was unable to attend the interview or working schedules conflicted with participation).

In the second assumption, I established a convenient sample of the population fitting the criteria, and one that reflected a snapshot of the students who were representative of nontraditional Hispanic college students (see Definitions), the focus of the study. The sample, although small, according to Creswell (2009) and others (e.g., Esquivel, 2010; Rudestam & Newton, 2007), was appropriate for a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The inclusion of equal members of both genders participating in the study allowed me an opportunity to explore possible patterns of gender differences in interview responses later in the analysis of data.

The third assumption considered the interview format, the personal interview or F2F and optional telephone interview. Both approaches remained effective tools for gathering data in a qualitative designed study (Creswell, 2009); however, both Creswell (2009) and Opdenakker (2006) posited the F2F interview had the advantage of the researcher observing social cues. The interview was the genuine and efficacious tool for researchers seeking to capture the spirit and voices of participants' convictions and perceptions. Using a conversational approach to have participants respond to open-ended questions in a F2F format was consistent with traditional, cultural values of the Hispanic community. The personal and up-close interview reflected a degree of proximity, inferred intimacy, and acknowledged the participant's sharing was valued by me. In contrast to F2F, a self-assessment, preset series of questions with multiple-choice responses was effective but lacked the familiar connection regarded as meaningful and valued in the culture. As researcher, I established and maintained cultural sensitivity in using the approach and reduced the potential influence of socially desirable responding (SDR) that has occurred in similar interview processes.

Scope and Delimitations

This study included students who met the definition of nontraditional Hispanic college student enrolled in a community college located in a small or rural community of Southwest Texas. I purposefully narrowed the sample population to this segment of Hispanic students based on the literature review and topic of interest. Exclusion included

all students who were not Hispanic, did not identify themselves as Hispanic because of birth or marital status (e.g., a surname of Hispanic origin but were not Hispanic) or did not identify with the Hispanic culture in the public announcement seeking participants. Potential participants who identified themselves as mixed Hispanic and other heritages were excluded from this study. All full-time enrolled students (e.g., defined as taking 12 or more credits in a semester) were excluded as such enrollment status did not constitute the nontraditional student in this study. Marital status as an indicator of nontraditional was not excluded from the criteria of identifying as a nontraditional student.

I investigated theories related to this study that focused on those theories presented across the literature reviewed. Theories that promoted the investigation of the phenomenon and contributed to understanding the phenomenon of interest in this study were included. The evolution and refinement of related theories reflecting the two key concepts—belongingness and persistence (retention)—provided the foundation for this study were included; earlier or origins of SOB based on studies of suicide were excluded.

The transferability of the findings presented in the Limitations section of this study were not unfamiliar to the body of work related to the topic and approaches employed (e.g., Esquivel, 2010; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Stieha, 2010); collectively, however, each study advanced the topic of interest and social change that closed the gap between experiences of marginalized persons because of ethnicity or race and academic status—traditional versus nontraditional—college students. Transferability, then, became

an issue of deepening the pool of documented experiences by a broader population more than specifically targeting the population of nontraditional Hispanic college students as being representative of students enrolled at all colleges and universities.

In addition to the included and excluded populations in this study, I pointed out to observers and other researchers reviewing my research that the setting of the study was a community college with multiple outreach centers or satellite campuses; one that included servicing incarcerated persons' (higher) educational needs. The inclusion or exclusion of incarcerated persons enrolled through the Hondo Unit (a state penal institution), a satellite campus of the community college system, did not diminish the generalizability of this study nor impede the representativeness of the sample population based on the definition of nontraditional Hispanic college student. Within the current literature, that point was validated of nontraditional student identified in previous studies cited in the literature review (e.g., Schwartz, et al., 2009); however, in expanding the definitions of the nontraditional Hispanic college student, nowhere in the current body of literature on the topic of interest and focus of this study was the subgroup's voice of interest found. Thus, without being investigated in this study, the potential contribution to the body of literature of that group remained open for future research.

In the fairness of full disclosure and potential researcher bias, I acknowledged my awareness of former students serving their sentences in the penal unit of Hondo, located in a rural community of Southwest Texas. When I considered incarcerated persons as

participants in the sample who otherwise might have met the other criteria, I planned to exclude any participant with whom I was personally acquainted (e.g., extended family members and in-laws through marriage, and social support groups of incarcerated persons) similar to the Tier III criteria established in vetting potential participants.

Limitations

As in all research, no one study can provide the answer to solving all potential problems or record the voices of an entire population. The following factors were limitations of the study. First, participants excluded in the sample, incarcerated persons, who were from the same higher education, 2-year institution in a small town-rural community located in southwest Texas; therefore, this study was not a representation of all Latino/as at other institutions situated differently. Participants consisted of only nontraditional, undergraduate Hispanic students who met the selected criteria; therefore, their responses did not represent all Hispanic students enrolled at the institution. Third, the small number of participants and time frame did not capture the diverse voices of all Latino/as enrolled in the institution. Another limitation of this study was the institution was a predominantly HSI; therefore, the voices of other minority groups were not represented. Finally, geographical location and time restraints contributed to the limitations of this study.

With respect to my potential bias, it was noteworthy to the readers of this document, that exclusion of incarcerated persons in the limitations of this study was

illuminated. The community college setting for this study provided higher education opportunities for persons held in a penal unit in Hondo, Texas. The college offered a limited number of college-credit courses to the inmates of the penal institution. While I acknowledged having worked with former students who were incarcerated at similar facilities, I omitted members of the incarcerated population consisting of former students. My decision in planning the sample population demographic (e.g., exclusion of incarcerated persons) had no impact on my judgment to carry out the research. The plan to address the selection of incarcerated participants with who I was familiar followed the tier-selection model. If in the process of the selective sampling, incarcerated persons with whom as the researcher, I was familiar and contributed resources to their higher education endeavors, only those persons who had not received financial support for continuing their higher education while incarcerated were selected; in this study, I selected no incarcerated persons.

The third assumption listed in the previous section of this study has a corresponding limitation; the efficacy of the interview format of telephone interviews versus F2F interviews was a limitation in the study. To address this concern, I used telephone interviews if the participant was unable to continue in the study's follow-up interview and debriefing. In the absence of F2F, I accepted the loss of social cuing gained from observing body posture, movement and facial expression that may have an effect on detecting SDRs.

Summary

Research indicated a SOB had implications for the human mental health condition; a positive SOB contributed to the experiences of happiness and calmness while a negative SOB raised anxiety and fear (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Tinto's theoretical model examined the influence of academic and social integration factors on SOB and the likelihood of college students to persist in their higher education endeavor or their departure; following in the pursuits of Tinto (1997), Hurtado and Carter (1997) offered an alternative perspective and suggested that background characteristics and personal experiences during the first year in college contributed to the student's SOB. The plethora of research literature indicated SOB had implications on college students' persistence measured in commitment to degree program and retaining their membership in the institution and eventual graduation (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Esquivel, 2010; Maestas et al., 2007; Stieha, 2010).

This study investigated the experiences and perceptions—real or imagined—of nontraditional Hispanic college students enrolled at a 2-year community college in southwest Texas that influenced their sense of belonging and persistence to graduation following the models offered in the current literature on SOB and persistence theory. SOB and retention theory grounded the study and provided the framework to investigate the issue of nontraditional Hispanic college students' experiences and perceptions of their SOB and the influence SOB had on persistence expressed in commitment to degree

program and fidelity to the institution measured in continued matriculation. As in previous studies that examined academic and social factors and selected background factors (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, economic status, and family history), this study drew upon those facts through the lens of the students' personal experiences and perceptions to understand what motivated nontraditional college students to persist in their higher education journey. Using a qualitative method with a phenomenological design of opened-ended questions in F2F and telephone interviews, I captured their experiences in the voices and words of the population who had limited exposure in the current body of literature. In the cumulative responses voiced by those who traditionally were not heard, this research contributed to narrowing the gap and provided a forum for future research that addressed ways in which institutions can better serve their constituents.

In the following chapter, Chapter 2, the literature review unveiled two theories useful to this study and exposed through the literature found in the early works of Tinto (1975, 1987), the paradigm shift in examining the influence of SOB on persistence initiated by Hurtado and Carter's early works (1997), and development or evolution of the factors that predicted how the strength of SOB influenced persistence among minorities and in particular the sample population in this study, the nontraditional Hispanic college student community. The literature review continued the examination of an emergence in recent studies based on retention theory and SOB that revealed a paradigm shift. That shift in thinking and approach to researching the topic consisted of

(a) the emphasis on methodological approaches from quantitative to qualitative approaches; and (b) the illumination of themes and patterns researchers considered in the evolving body of research on the topic of interest that formed the basis for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This review of literature examined the topic of the sense of belonging, sometimes referred to as sense of community, and its relationship or influence on persistence (e.g., retention) among nontraditional Hispanic (adult) college students enrolled at a community college located in a small town or rural community in Southwest Texas. The approach to reviewing the literature began with a broad examination of the topic. Then, I moved toward separating the various studies reviewed into their methodologies: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches discussed in Creswell (2009), Rudestam and Newton (2007), and Pan (2004). While the former, Creswell and Rudestam and Newton, informed the general discovery plan, the latter, Pan, provided the groundwork for selection of topic, its development, and the pursuit of isolating theoretical and conceptual frameworks on the issue of belongingness and its influence on persistence/retention among college students. The sources of literature were gathered electronically through the Walden University library with its extensive databases and search engines (e.g., google.scholar.com). In the process, a pattern of gaps emerged in the recommendations from several studies; the gaps were those issues that drove this study.

With the initial topic considered and remaining relatively objective, organizing the review of literature in the initial process and constructing a rubric, I used the model provided from Walden University. I modified the rubric to meet my needs. Google

Scholar was selected as my default browser as the preliminary response to my curiosity on the topic and locating existing studies. I selected Google Scholar because of its immediate access, scholarly links, and ease of search. There was no need to sign-in with usernames and passwords once the user was online, the ability to browse a complete phrase or sentence was efficacious in the early stages of researching the topic, and the scholarly link shortened the search once I entered Walden's databases by knowing authors and titles of studies that were of interest. The EBSCOHost database collection that included Academic Premier and PsycArticles were the main source for reviewing the literature. Initially, keywords used in the search included phrases (e.g., sense of belonging, sense of community, Hispanic, college students, and community colleges) to isolate potential studies of interest. Grouping the studies by (a) methodology, (b) population, and (c) setting, I examined those studies for recurring citations and references to theoretical and conceptual frameworks employed in the studies reviewed. The intention was to isolate any perennial or seminal work(s) that formed the foundation for this study and provided a historical insight to the body of research. Once again, the emergence of patterns revealed gaps in the literature, potential criticism of past models, and the evolution of models already tried (e.g., Durkheim, 1961; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tinto, 1987). Later refinements included attaching specific results or outcomes, and recommendations for future research. It was from those data that this study built its focus.

Research on sense of belonging (SOB) influencing college students' persistence or retention had focused on students' academic and social integration from its early history. Tinto's theory (1975, 1987) was at the forefront of the investigation, and recent researchers reexamined Tinto's contributions (e.g., Esquivel, 2010). Within the investigating lens, much research had relied upon traditional methodologies, including the use of quantitative methods and a variety of statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, structural equation models (SEM), and factor analysis (Hawley & Harris, 2006; Marti, 2008; Nuñez, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008) in contrast to mixed and qualitative methodologies (Barbatis, 2010; Jones, et al., 2002; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Stieha, 2010). Second, researchers turned to 4-year research institutions of higher education to conduct their studies. According to the published literature, populations were drawn from predominantly White institutions or PWIs (Esquivel, 2010; Jones et al., 2002; Nuñez, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008). Little attention has been paid to college students' persistence at 2-year community colleges located in small or rural communities with predominantly Hispanic/Latino/a populations (Barbatis, 2010; Hawley & Harris, 2006; Marti, 2008; Stieha, 2010).

This review of the literature described several studies based on Tinto's (1975, 1983) work on retention or persistence influenced by factors within the broad categories of academic and social integration. The inclusion of variables categorized as background factors and diversity proposed by researchers who have followed Tinto's contributions

(e.g., Hurtado & Carter, 1997), proposed the alternative theory to Tinto's theory of college students' early departure, the SOB, Hurtado and Carter's theory (1997) examined college students' SOB with a broader array of factors that influenced the students' decision to continue toward graduation. This review particularly highlighted those studies focused on Hispanic/Latino/Chicano(a) college students at PWI and HSIs; Hispanic-serving institutions (HSI) were defined under Title V. This review also focused on a relatively new and emerging body of work examining 2-year community colleges.

The Two Models in Brief

Tinto's initial model of student retention/persistence (Esquivel, 2010; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2010; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, et al., 2006 Stieha, 2010) emerged from earlier works on the topic of suicide pursued by Durkheim in the 1950s (as cited in Owens, 2011). Durkheim's (1961) work provided the foundation for examining college students' attrition by Spady (1970) in the 1970s. Further refinements gave way to advance Tinto's application examining the relationship between academic and social integration and the likelihood of student persistence (Tinto, 1983, 1997; Tinto & Goodsell-Love, 1993). Tinto's model argued that a college student aligned himself or herself with an institution through his or her enrollment, and the student came to the setting of higher education with a variety of background characteristics, personal experiences, and expectations and goals expressed in terms of commitment. College students possessed a relative affinity for the institution in which they enrolled; their

enrollment choice formed the basis for their initial institutional commitment.

Membership entailed interaction with the environment. Membership composition had two elements: academic and social. Those elements interacted with the student's background, personal experiences, and goals for being in college; ultimately, the interrelatedness that developed created different degrees of academic and social integration and affects personal commitment and goals. The changes influenced the student's continued commitment or persistence, or his/her withdrawal from the institution (Halpin, 1990; Stieha, 2010).

Tinto's model of student retention/attrition first appeared in 1975 (Tinto, 1975). Tinto focused on freshmen college students and proposed a relationship between students who remained in college and their relationship to the institution. His early model drew on Durkheim's suicide model. Tinto reasoned the likelihood of someone committing suicide was the lack of integration with the social structures. Drawing from Spady (1970), who was one of the earliest researchers to recognize the connection between suicide and integration, Tinto redesigned Spady's model to examine the connection between integration and persistence. Tinto believed a similar lack of integration with the institution influenced retention. Later, revised in 1987, Tinto (1987) incorporated the dependent variables to student persistence: academic integration and social integration. Academic integration included a student's goal commitment and social integration focused on institutional commitment. Another revision to his work came with

acknowledging the lack of attention to diverse populations attending colleges and universities in previous studies on retention/attrition (Tinto, 1993).

Omitted in Tinto's (1993) model of college student departure (as cited in Esquivel, 2010), posited Maestas, et al., 2007, was the learner's subjective feelings that defined his or her connectedness to the institution. The student's sense of belonging to the institution accounted for a psychological dimension of integration offered by Hurtado and Carter (1997). The second model offered as an alternative to Tinto's modeling of student persistence of academic and social integration (Halpin, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Stieha, 2010) was proposed by Hurtado and Carter and formed the basis for many studies that followed from Tinto's earlier work (Barbatis, 2010; Crisp & Nora, 2010; Jones et al., 2002; Strayhorn, 2008). The alternative to Tinto, SOB, developed by Hurtado and Carter provided the explanation of the complex process of persistence for students of color and environmental conditions students experienced in relationship to students' characteristics (Velasquez, 1999). The origins of SOB were found in the work of Bollen and Hoyle (1990). Nuñez (2009) seized upon the conceptual design posited by Bollen and Hoyle as did Hurtado and Carter, who captured that a sense of cohesion was an alternative to social integration. They examined how students of color developed their sense of belonging. Early research pointed to generic factors such as racial climate pointed out by Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) and Nuñez (2009). Later, the evolution of understanding the student's perception of self-identity and racial climate revised by

Stieha (2010) were examined as sources contributing to the development of SOB. Immigrant status (e.g., Stebleton, Huesman, & Kuzhabekova, 2010), first-generation Hispanics attending college (e.g., Esquivel, 2010), involvement in diversity-related activities, and connections with external communities that included family, social, and religious communities outside the college environment (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Nuñez, 2009) influenced SOB posited Stebleton et al.(2010) and Esquivel, 2010. Collectively, the elements formed the variation of earlier and more cent models of the SOB construct. Individually and collectively, those factors helped predict SOB, and in later studies, predicted subsequent persistence/retention according to a paucity of researchers (e.g., Chow, 2006; Velasquez, 1999).

Studies Using Models of Persistence and Sense of Belonging

Scholarly research gained its acceptance by standing on recognized and accepted theories and the critique of those theories that formed the basis for future research. While Tinto's scholarly contribution to the literature on the topic of retention and persistence had drawn criticism, his contributions remained unquestionably foundational (Stieha, 2010). Braxton (2000) and Nuñez (2009) characterized Tinto's 1993 revised model of integration as pragmatic in explaining student success in transitioning through higher education. There remained weaknesses that other researchers addressed while proposing alternative theories and models (Hawley & Harris, 2006; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Maestas et al., 2007; Stieha, 2010; Velasquez, 1999). The earliest of those contending

Tinto's model lacked reflectively upon the changing social fabric and under representation of traditional minorities were Hurtado and Carter (1997).

Barbatis (2010) cataloged the experiences of college students of community colleges in the urban setting by using qualitative methodologies. Using a theoretical framework developed from Tinto's 1975 model of precollege characteristics, Barbatis pointed out that the college system did not address underprepared, culturally diverse students who demonstrated an absence of close relationships with faculty (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). To close the gap in the Tinto model at the time, Barbatis employed a third lens by using critical theory to destabilize established knowledge or power structures. Barbatis considered how social structures such as peers, family, and community groups influenced students' experiences and influenced success and persistence. Among the conceptual factors, interaction with peers and faculty members, race and ethnicity, gender, and SES, and sexual orientation were examined for their role in contributing to persistence. According to Barbatis, four themes emerged as a result and framed precollege characteristics that contributed to persistence: external college support/community influence, social involvement, academic integration, and social integration. The latter, academic integration and social integration drew on the Tinto model. The common themes reported by all participants were that of the influence of parents, faculty, faith, and personal characteristics such as independence; the latter,

independence, described as autonomy, was central to understanding student engagement in a study by Schuetz (2008).

Central to proposing an alternative to Tinto's (1993) model of integration were the works of Hurtado and Carter's SOB (1997) that stand as a post marker in the pursuit of understanding what kept students committed (persisting) in their educational endeavor to graduation. Focused on Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) first dimension of perceived cohesion, the SOB scale contained both cognitive and affective elements in the person's cognitive evaluation of his or her role in relation to the group results in affective responses. By studying SOB, Hurtado and Carter suggested that one determined which forms of social interaction enhanced students' affiliation and identity with their institutions. Within the framework, they indicated the campus racial climate inhibited or contributed to developing positive or negative SOB and subsequently influenced persistence. Their findings supported the assertion that a relationship between SOB and group/peer interaction outside class influenced student commitment to the second and third year pursuit of their program; however, contrary to existing studies, one academic factor that did not have a significant impact on SOB was the student's GPA. For Latino/Hispanic/Chicano students, working on independent projects, working with faculty on a project, and being a guest of faculty outside class were not significant to SOB.

In pointing out the weaknesses of the latest Tinto revision in 1993, Hurtado and Carter (1997) posited the resolve of Tinto, advanced the consistent finding of a variety of studies that engagement was central to students' development and success in college. Furthermore, integrating experiences that promoted involvement and affiliation examined from a lens that considered diverse background of students remained critical in future research but continued to be ignored in developing frameworks incorporated by many researchers. For example, other than attention given to race and ethnicity, capturing the students' perspective of their engagement and participation in college environments was ignored. Frameworks lacked understanding of the learners' culture through policy, practice, or structures with which the minority student related or identified (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, et al., 2006). More succinctly, on this point of the role of culture, were measurements of students' perception of their connection to the institution from a cultural lens that contributed to SOB remained elusive even with Tinto's revised model (Velasquez, 1999).

Hurtado, et al. (2006) designed a study in which their goal was to clarify Tinto's (1987) earlier study and the theoretical model of student departure by testing a conceptual model. The model presented a set of antecedents of SOB that showed background characteristics and college experiences contributed to SOB. Students that experienced a sense of membership or connection to their campus often saw themselves as a member of the college. The role of racial dynamics particularly effected academic and social

adjustment. The researchers found students experienced a negative influence on their adjustment to college life when they perceived a hostile racial climate in their institution. Students that experienced support from family and other community structures resulted in students experiencing a positive influence on SOB. The latter was a consistent finding in other studies (Barbatis, 2010; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Schuetz, 2008). Another dimension, critics of Tinto's (1987, 1993) models revealed in the study, was how family responsibilities had a negative influence on academic and social adjustment and SOB that Tinto did not address (Hurtado, et al., 2006).

Exploring the background characteristics and college experiences associated with a sense of belonging, continued as an eminent pattern in the current review of literature on the topic of persistence/retention and SOB. Nuñez (2009) followed in the tradition of Hurtado and Carter (1997) by drawing on Tinto's 1993 model. Nuñez focused on how Latino/Hispanic/Chicano students perceived and experienced SOB in 4-year universities. Researchers examined the role of racial climate, involvement in diversity-related activities, connections with external communities such as family, religious, and social structures outside the ivy halls. Consistent with other studies that examined the role of culture, race/ethnicity beyond identifying a subgroup, behavior not just psychological measures in making a distinction about a students' sense of integration, the actual participation or active engagement in campus life (behavioral measures) were central to research. The latter was a criticism raised by Hurtado and Carter (1997) in researchers'

refinement of Tinto's framework (1987) that ignored actual behavioral factors.

Significant to advancing student engagement, thus improving retention and persistence to graduation, promoting a positive sense of belonging emerged when students held a strong, positive perception of racial climate or absence of hostile racial/ethnic environments in the institution.

An emerging finding from recent research on acculturation and cultural identity promulgated by Rodriguez-Martin (2010), Stieha (2010), and Esquivel (2010) pointed out the role of immigrant status that had the effect of negatively and indirectly influenced SOB (Nuñez, 2009) not previously noted by Barbatis (2010), Hurtado and Carter, (1997), and Hurtado, et al. (2006). The development of Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) models of student departure/retention and the alternative models proposed over several years remained pragmatic and seminal in studies that emerged since even in light of post-research criticisms (Barbatis, 2010; Guiffrida, 2006; Hawley & Harris, 2006; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, et al. 2006; Museus & Maramba, 2010; Nuñez, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008; Stieha, 2010). The sense of belonging proposed later by Hurtado and Carter (1997), and subsequent revisions to the departure/retention model by Tinto combined with an elaboration on the conceptual content of the SOB framework remained as the evolving framework found in the current literature review. Those changes moved the body of literature and narrowed gaps identified by successors' research captured the change in the social of American colleges and universities. Demonstratively, the increased presence of

minorities enrolled in higher education and the challenges those students confronted in their journey (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Esquivel, 2010; Jones, et al., 2002; Maestas, et al., 2007). Following Tinto's model, successive studies also considered a plethora of factors upon which to indicate changing patterns of persistence and retention among college students through their first, second, and third year of higher education (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Jones, et al., 2002; Marti, 2008).

A continued absence of studies on minorities enrolled in institutions of higher education that were not predominantly White (PWI), 4-year universities dominated the vast body of literature on the topic of students' sense of belonging influencing their persistence and retention through graduation. This absence remained unaddressed even when researchers focused on minority population (e.g., African, Native, Asian, and Latino). On the other hand, a continued emphasis that employed revisions to a conceptual framework of SOB, a shifting focus to students of color enrolled in smaller colleges—colleges descriptively labeled as Hispanic-serving institutions or HSIs—and the community college where first-year college students (e.g., students of color) experienced perceptions of belonging emerged as part of the fabric in understanding the journey of minority students. This emerging shift in constructs focused on Hispanic/Latino/Chicano college students pursuing their dream of higher education at a variety of institutions of higher education, and researchers listening to an emerging Hispanic voice representing a

new generation of immigrants (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Maestas, et al., 2007; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Schuetz, 2008; Velasquez, 1999; Williams & Lou, 2010).

Emerging Trends in Post Hurtado and Carter Research

In recent studies, researchers collected descriptive data, employing traditional methodologies of quantitative studies, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches. An emerging trend in recent studies examined the topic through multiple lenses using the foundation laid by Hurtado and Carter (1997). Esquivel (2010) guided her dissertation using Hurtado and Carter's contribution to the field and addressed how the Latino/a student experienced their SOB at a PWI, Kansas State University using qualitative methodologies of multiple-case studies. Maestas, Vaquera, and Muñoz-Zehr (2007) relied upon a quantitative approach but set the study in the environment of a Hispanic-serving institution, HSIs, University of New Mexico, shifting the focus away from PWI as in Hurtado and Carter (1997), Hurtado and Ponjuan, (2005), and Valesquez (1999). Maestas, Vaquera, et al. reaffirmed the pattern that emerged in studies that linked campus diversity, and SOB positively influencing retention among Hispanic/Latino/Chicano(a) college students (Nuñez, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008; Velasquez, 1999). Furthermore, faculty interest in students and classes with peer discussion were significant factors affecting SOB cited in Jones, et al. (2002) who studied focused on the role of cross-cultural centers contributing to promoting diversity and peer involvement.

The ability to pay for college had a significant influence on SOB and persistence for those minority students at University of New Mexico (Maestas, et al. 2007). Other studies did not emphasize student financial aid and ability to pay as immediate to influencing persistence. Esquivel (2010) made no direct reference to the issue of an ability to pay for college in her study of students enrolled at a leading university, but she did consider socioeconomic status as a challenge to minority students. Hurtado and Cater (1997) emphasized membership in religious and social-community organizations as structures supporting SOB and influencing persistence but did not find significant, the ability to pay for college. Hurtado, et al. (2006) showed being a recipient of a financial support program for first-year, minority students had a significant influence on SOB. The mitigating factor in the student's SOB was the students' GPA and overshadowed by students' perceptions of hostile campus climate. Other factors such as positive cross-cultural interaction were an indicator influencing academic success and persistence as in studied previously cited (e.g., Barnett, 2010; Meeuwisse, et al., 2010). Stieha (2010) pointed out that the primacy of family relationships informed student persistence among the first generation, first-year college students attending a major urban university and made no point on the issue of ability to pay as being significantly contributory to persistence.

Unlike in the previous studies of Nuñez (2009), Strayhorn (2008), and Rodriguez-Martin (2010), for example, Schuetz (2008), and Museus and Maramba (2010) pursued a

mixed methodology to capture student engagement among students enrolled in community colleges in contrast to the paucity of studies that relied on 4-year, predominantly White (PWI), major universities and HSIs as previously noted. Crisp and Nora (2010), too, focused on community colleges as did Hawley and Harris (2006), and Barbatis (2010). Both Rodriguez-Martin and Velasquez (1999) relied on a mix of large universities and urban, community colleges settings for their studies; however, the absence of small-town and rural community colleges with large Hispanic enrollments was absent in the current literature. Both Schuetz and Rodriguez-Martin, who relied on qualitative methodologies, were the exception to the other researchers who continued in the tradition of quantitative design to the consternation of fellow researchers. Fellow researchers made the recommendation that included pursuing future research using mixed and qualitative methodologies to capture the essence of the Hispanic college students' experiences and perceptions through their voices (Jones, et al., 2002; Nuñez, 2009).

Schuetz (2008) represented a shift from Tinto's models (1993) and those proposed by Hurtado and Carter (1997) to examining the dynamics of adult college students' engagement through the lens of self-determination theory, SDT. Three factors formed the construct SDT: belonging, competence, and autonomy. Belonging included relationships with faculty, peers, and administration staff. The latter was a new factor in examining the issue and overlapped earlier constructs under labels of academic, social, and background factors in previous studies as in Barbatis (2010), Hurtado and Carter, and

Núñez (2009), for example. Competence, as Schuetz pointed out in the model, evolved through analytical thinking, clear writing, and solving numerical problems. The latter, solving numerical problems were synonymous with math and significantly influenced the success in the second year in community colleges for Hispanic students. Crisp and Nora (2010) pointed out the student's level of math courses taken in high school (academic factors). The third element, in which Schuetz devised the study, autonomy reflected those college experiences that contributed to self-understanding, development of a code of ethics, and developing career goals. Underscoring the last element of SDT model, freedom from adult responsibilities contributed to students' engagement. Significant to persistence and retention as mentioned in earlier studies, various forms and degrees of student engagement, both in and out of class, contributed to positive SOB that influenced a student's desire to persist (Hawley & Harris, 2006; Maestas, et al. 2007; Núñez, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008). Finally, Schuetz concluded engagement was the end product or 'universal outcome' of SDT versus the dynamic dependent of a series of demographics.

Unique to Crisp and Nora (2010) was their focus on students enrolled in community colleges. Although set in a larger urban, community college, it was a departure from the plethora of literature on studies taken from large 4-year, research universities. Their study examined Hispanic students whose intentions were to transfer from their 2-year community college to a 4-year institution. They examined factors that contributed to success in the second and third year of college and how those factors

influenced the success of students enrolled in non-developmental and developmental courses. Crisp and Nora used a conceptual framework that included those academic experiences, demographics with an emphasis on Hispanic origin, the role of English as a second language or ESL, and the sociocultural aspects of the student's background (e.g., parents' level of education). The constructs were similar with those factors examined by other researchers (e.g., Barbatis, 2010; Hawley & Harris, 2006; Strayhorn, 2008). Crisp and Nora found a strong relationship between math courses taken in high school and pre-college GPA (academic). Other findings included elements characterized as environmental pull factors (e.g., financial aid, working outside classes) that were significant in predicting success in the second and third year of college for both developmental and non-developmental college students in the second year.

Hawley and Harris (2006) found that financing one's education moderately related to persistence; however, the influence of developmental courses, as found in Crisp and Nora (2010), served as a significant predictor of persistence in first and second year success according to Hawley and Harris. Also, English as a Second Language (ESL), excessive activities outside college class (e.g., employment responsibilities), and those students who did not focus on their educational goals showed higher attrition rates than other students who demonstrated contradictory characteristics. Students who experienced lower attrition rates engaged in campus leadership activities. They enrolled in few

developmental courses. They were English proficient in contrast to those students with higher attrition rates posited Schuetz's (2008) model of engagement.

Central to evolving conceptual frameworks of sense of belonging and the early contributions by Tinto's (1975) model of persistence (e.g., early student departure), the unfolding model placed cultural adaptations as central to understanding of persistence among Hispanic/Latino/Chicano college students emerged in the studies of Stieha (2010), Rodriguez-Martin (2010), and an earlier study by Velasquez (1999). Stieha was among the earliest researchers who found the primacy of the family relationship informed student persistence. This was especially true within the Hispanic culture. Earlier studies on persistence summarily examined primacy of family relationships but not sufficiently, posited Stieha. Rodriguez-Martin used semi-structured group interviews and individual interviews to capture the voices of the Hispanic/Latino, college students enrolled at three higher education institutions. Focusing on women in particular, Rodriguez-Martin proposed cultural integrity and scholastic capital along with the unique experiences of Latinas informed persistence. Essential to success were family involvement, family expectations of their daughters, and support from teachers and friends, programs that help expand family social capital. Also, teachers and mentors (Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Schriener, Noel, Anderson, & Cantwell, 2011) played a pivotal role in the integration and development of a bi-cultural identity (Rodriguez-Marin, 2010; Stebleton, et al., 2010) as did overcoming racial stigma (Chang, Eagan, Lin, & Hurtado, 2011).

Nearly ten years earlier, Velasquez (1999) addressed the relationship between one's cultural development, sense of belonging, and persistence of Chicano college students. Like Rodriguez-Martin (2010), Velasquez approached the study at three institutions of higher education in California. Based on Hurtado and Carter's (1997) model of SOB, they measured student perceptions of their connection to the institution and the role of their cultural development had on informing those perceptions. They found that a high degree of bilingualism, a larger affinity for Mexican culture, and social affiliations with Whites were positive. The latter contributed positively to SOB. Parents' cultural heritage revealed a negative contribution to SOB. For example, if the parents of the student born outside the U.S. were dominant Spanish-language speakers, those students experienced a lower level of SOB. Knowledge of one's cultural history made significant contributions to SOB according to Velasquez.

Barbatis (2010), Crisp and Nora (2010), Deil-Amen (2011), Halpin (1990), Hawley and Harris (2006), Marti (2008), Karp, Hughes, and O'Gara (2008), and Schuetz (2008) focused their studies on minority students enrolled in community colleges. Some researchers (e.g., Halpin, 1990; Hawley & Harris, 2006) pursued the topic of persistence experienced by community college students and focused on the effectiveness of Tinto's model of persistence. Crisp and Nora, Marti, and Schuetz approached the issue of persistence/retention in terms of student engagement, alternatives to individual demographics or patterns/pathways, and multiple integration models.

To capture the diversity of attendance-enrollment of patterns that emerged when studying the variety of attendance-enrollment in higher education, the term pathways appeared in the literature. Pathways described patterns and nontraditional patterns of college students' attendance. Often those patterns differed substantially in a variety from patterns identified in 4-year institutions of higher education enrollment compared to community colleges or 2-year institutions of higher education. Typically, part-time enrollment, irregular term-to-term enrollment, accelerated enrollment, and multi-institutional enrollment signify the patterns in community colleges according to Marti (2008). Marti approached his study from a model of multiple levels of persistence using latent trajectory analysis to establish trends in persistence among community college students.

In part, Marti (2008) argued that most models that attempt to study persistence as a phenomenon constructed on models that reflect a variable-centered analysis in contrast to trend-centered or person-centered analysis. Second, he pointed out that models of persistence borrowed from 4-year institutions. Wild and Ebbers (2002) abandoned the model based on 4-year universities and adopted one suited to the mission of community colleges. Patterns of persistence neglected to consider student goals. Student goals and purposes varied. Students pursued college studies to improve job skills. Other students' reason for enrolling in college courses may be to pursue personal interests, and others students' purposes for attending college might be to pursue an avocation rather than a

formal degree as an outcome according to Bradburn (2003) and supported by Marti. Marti pointed out the problematic application of Tinto's (1987) model in the community college setting. Marti posited that student entry characteristics were the only tenable proposition and thus, the remaining propositions of the theory were untenable in relationship to the community college experience.

The factors of academic and social integration considered being applicable to students attending 4-year universities that influenced persistence of those students did not translate to the community college population Marti (2008) emphasized. The nature of student enrollment, for example, was substantially different across institutions. In the case of community college enrollees, Marti pointed to the patterns of enrollment that Tinto's (1987, 1993) models did not examine. In part, patterns of enrollment differed from the enrollment practices of 4-year universities were the result of the open-door admissions' policies, comparatively lower tuition costs, and locale of access (e.g., serving the immediate community). Access, liberal admission policies, and low costs defined the pool of students attracted to the community college. In contrast to the student body that enrolled in community colleges, students enrolling in the diverse, urbanized university, according Marti, experienced social integration differently. Those differences were significant in discrediting Tinto's model to explain student persistence/retention at community colleges versus patterns of persistence-retention found at 4-year universities. It remained the linchpin of the Tinto debacle causing the critics to view Tinto's model to

fall short of an authentic picture of social integration at the 2-year college since Tinto's model was based on 4-year universities' student enrollment.

In contrast to the objections raised by Marti (2008), another study that appeared in the current literature during the same year explored Tinto's model of integration as a framework for student persistence at community colleges. The argument against Tinto (1987, 1993) suggested by Marti indicated the inapplicable nature of the model with community colleges; the Achilles' heel of Tinto's model was the lack of social integration expected at the 2-year community college. In part, the expectation was that the mission of the 2-year college was significantly focused on immediate development of marketable skills. The evidence rested in the 1-year certificate programs, and 2-year degree programs, the mainstay of the community college. However, it was noteworthy to recall the historical role of the 2-year institution that undergirded the notion—the source of building communities of employable workers within a short period of time and service the personal interests and pursuits of the local community—were the foundation of community college missions. Of course, like with all institutions, they evolved to meet the changing needs of society. In more recent years, the community college was a gatekeeper for the 4-year university and served as a feeder institution to the 4-year universities within the respective region (e.g. state university system). However, narrowly defined, the social integration component of Tinto's model, according to Karp, et al. (2008) posited that students attending community colleges form attachments to the

institution and thus, experienced a degree of belongingness that Deil-Amen (2011) also found in her study. This perspective was in contrast to the perception that students in 2-year institutions had little or no time to pursue extracurricular activities as did those students enrolled at large, 4-year universities suggested in Marti.

The inapplicability of the Tinto models (1975, 1987, and 1993) of academic and social integration received further criticism. The second and popularized criticism led Tinto to reexamine his original model and address his critics; the applicability of the Tinto model was inadequate to examine marginalized and nontraditional students even though his later models (e.g., Tinto, 1993) examined the population, it focused on the population attending 4-year universities versus community colleges (e.g., nontraditional Hispanic college students attending a 2-year community college) pointed out in Guiffrida (2006), and in the research of Hurtado and Carter (1997). Karp, et al. (2008) concluded from their mixed methods approach the relationships formed between faculty, administration, and students was significant in predicting academic and social integration at the community college. Using the Tinto model—from the narrow focus of strictly out-of-the-classroom experiences that developed social integration and persistence to a broader interpretation that focused on sufficiency of integration—hinged on unimportant factors such as the relationship with the instructor and others outside the classroom for community college students was not significant to experience social integration and persistence.

Marti's (2008) study suggested that several factors influence persistence; those included curricular, academic preparedness, clarity of goals, and finances had an effect on college student persistence at the community college level. Some studies cited academic preparedness as a factor in college student departure (Barbatis, 2010; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; and Nuñez, 2009). Other studies found the ability to pay for college potentially contributed to students' persistence varied (Hawley & Harris, 2006; Maestas, et al. 2007). The value of trend-centered analysis that included attention to student goals particular to the community college environment, demonstrated variations in pathways that do not follow traditional formulae of higher education found in large, 4-year institutions. Clearly the community college student population exercises the access and use of the 2-year institution that "rarely follows standard time lines" Marti posited (p.327).

The patterns showed, for example, and characterized as unexpected according to Marti (2008), were the relationship between student engagement and persistence. The higher degree of student engagement the student experienced with the institution and its members, the student showed a higher level of persistence. In relationship to pathways, a student with irregular term-to-term enrollment was not an efficient pathway. Students with unproductive patterns demonstrated low persistence/retention to completion of their program. In contrast to irregular patterns of enrollment, long-term, continuous enrollment

was a more efficient pathway; those students revealed a pattern of higher engagement than those students pursuing less efficient pathways (e.g., irregular, term-to-term).

The literature on how one's sense of belonging influence persistence or retention in pursuing higher education maintains a number of constructs; the predictors of psychological measures or feelings of cohesion differ from objective measures of academic and social integration. The latter elements consisting of secondary math courses completed, high-school GPA, and SAT scores, for example, contribute to the likelihood of student success and persistence according to some studies (Tinto, 1993). Psychological measures that identified actual behavior and perceptions held by students about the institutional climate and elements of diversity were factors that influenced student success and persistence. Other measures such as the role of one's cultural background contributed to forming a sense of belonging that influences students' decisions to continue or dropout from pursuing their higher education dream (Barbatis, 2010; Esquivel, 2010; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Jones, et. al., 2002). One factor in which the current literature on student departure/retention and persistence offered limited or no abundance of illuminating college students' enrollment during the first two years (persistence) was the influence of geographic characteristics on the pattern of persistence (Williams & Luo, 2010).

An issue of acculturation and cultural identity arise in studies undertaken in large, diverse college communities where minority status (e.g., African Americans. Hispanics,

and Asian Americans) coexists in the community with the dominant culture (e.g., Anglos or Whites) and has been the focus of some researchers to understand SOB and its influence on persistence-retention. Although criticized for the lack of attention and inclusion of minorities in Tinto's earliest study (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), Nora and Cabrera (1996) noted the decline of enrollees that were from minority groups, undertook a study to examine the relationship of campus climate (e.g., perceptions of prejudice and discrimination) and minority students' adjustment to college life. The results of their work in this earlier study highlighted the indirect and direct effects of perceived, negative racial climate in the institution and the likelihood of persistence; for example, African Americans or Blacks were 22% more likely than the students of the dominant culture to dropout. Similarly, another early study by Hurtado and Carter focused on the Hispanic or Latino/a college student's perceptions of campus racial climate's effects on SOB had a direct, negative effect on SOB and persistence. Studies on Chicano(a) integration in the predominantly, White college arena, was undertaken by Velasquez (1999). He proposed the factors of cultural identity, campus racial climate, and the Chicano(a) subsequent persistence had a relationship to SOB using the Hurtado and Carter model from 1997. The findings specifically revealed data showed a significant but modest influence of biculturalism contributed to the Chicano(a) student's SOB and subsequent persistence/retention. Two other early studies in the literature reviewed focused on the issue of cultural identity and acculturation as prognosticators influencing SOB and of a

minority student's subsequent persistence/retention: Jones, Castellanos, and Cole (2002), and Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005). Jones, et al. included Native Americans and Asian-Pacific peoples and Hurtado and Ponjuan focused their attention on the Latino/a (e.g., Hispanic) enrollees and on recent immigrants. By varying degrees, they concluded as did previous researchers addressing the issue, campus racial climate, the degree of cultural identity, and biculturalism had an influence on SOB and subsequent persistence/retention among those persons of color.

The lack of a significant role of cultural identity and biculturalism influencing SOB and subsequent persistence of nontraditional, Hispanic college students in this study gleaned from the review of earlier studies (e.g., Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Jones, et al., 2002; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; and Velasquez, 1999) presented a two-fold argument for exclusion of further literature review on the issue of cultural identity and biculturalism. With the exception of Velasquez (1999), other researchers conducted their studies at large, 4-year university settings often described as predominantly White institutions (PWI). Second, those earlier studies as several current studies, pursued research with traditional college students as the population studied (e.g., Chang, et al., 2011; Rodriquez-Martin, 2010; Stieha, 2010). An exception was the study conducted by Rodriquez-Martin (2010), who focused her entire study on women of Hispanic origin and first-generation, college students, but she as other researchers, remained focused on students enrolled at 4-year universities. Esquivel (2010) situated

her study of Latino/a's SOB and its influence on persistence at Kansas State University; both settings were characteristically, PWIs.

The themes in the previous studies cited were set descriptively, 4-year universities, and PWIs. A second theme emerging from the review of literature related to the issue of cultural identity and biculturalism was sample populations drawn from traditional, college students. While researchers examined campus racial climate, SOB and subsequent persistence, and the role of immigrant status, biculturalism, and cultural identity in various mixes of potential factors informing SOB, they did not, with the one exception of Velasquez (1999) who, (a) focus on 2-year community colleges in rural or small town settings, (b) predominantly, Hispanic serving or minority serving institutions or HSIs, and (c) study nontraditional Hispanic college students enrolled in 2-year community colleges in rural or small town settings. Although Velasquez and other researchers (e.g., Barbatis, 2010; Barnett, 2010) studied SOB and persistence of students enrolled at community colleges, they pursued the investigation of the phenomenon at community colleges located in large, urban areas. In Barnett's (2010) words of "validation experiences" that led to persistence/retention or withdrawal (p.193). An overshadowing theme across the body of literature reviewed was the inadequacies of traditional quantitative measures studying social and academic integration of enrollees at 2-year community colleges (Deil-Amen, 2011) and with particular attention to capturing

the voices of traditionally, marginalized people of color (e.g., Hispanics) pointed out in the qualitative methodological approach used by Deil-Amen (2011).

The relationship to this study's setting, the population of the intended investigation, and the role of biculturalism/cultural identity play in directly influencing SOB and subsequent persistence/retention are relatively moot. The influence of an individual's cultural identity, for example, according to findings in both early and recent studies indicated the presence of structures that support, minority and cultural values (e.g., traditions, customs, sharing language, and immigrant experiences) such as through social activities and facilities integrated into the fabric of the institution mitigate the negative influence of minority status in large, PWIs (Barbatis, 2010; Esquivel, 2010; Museus & Maramba, 2010). In understanding first and second-year persistence, the approximate length of community college degree programs, consideration of incidental factors overlaying cultural identity was that of geographical location to the student's home because in the Hispanic culture, the concept of *la familia* (the family) and *mi casa, es su casa* (my home is your home) were significant factors in SOB and its influence on student persistence (Esquivel, 2010; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Stieha, 2010). Maintaining close family ties played a significant factor in the student's SOB.

To maintain close family ties and reinforce the sense of the family experienced in the traditional, Hispanic culture means the proximity between the student attending college and family residence. In a recent study that illuminated a tertiary factor

influencing SOB and subsequent persistence of participants, researchers concluded that the proximity or distance between home and institution and other factors (e.g., background characteristics of student and financial aid) established in similar studies, played a significant influence on SOB and likelihood of student persistence. Significant in the study, the degree of urbanicity of the student's home city in comparison to the university did not influence first-year persistence; the degree of urban culture of the respective environments did not have a significant impact on student persistence according to Williams and Lou (2010). As the researcher, I found it to be a moot factor to the extent that the population under investigation would be significantly situated in their home city or community.

This study investigated nontraditional Hispanic, college students enrolled in a 2-year, community college set in a rural or small town environment along the border with Mexico or within an hour's drive. The student enrollment is predominantly commuter-based with a predominantly, Hispanic student body with a similar presence of faculty and administration staff. Cultural identity inundates the institutional community and the community at-large. The majority of students resides with their families, and among the nontraditional students, who are the target of this study, will be found residing in the community or adjacent towns within 45 miles of one of the campuses. With regard to biculturalism, it was relatively absent with respect to the population make up in all but one campus's community unless the students had experienced living in other, multiethnic

and multiracial communities such as those students who had experienced coming from migratory working families. The second exception is in defining biculturalism. If it is the inclusion of second-language or English as a second language (ESL), engaging in dominant cultural activities (e.g., nontraditional Hispanic foods, music, and dance, integrating celebrations of traditional and dominant cultures), then, one may conclude the existence or presence of biculturalism (Personal communication, M. L. Maldonado, Chicana of the Year recipient for 1978).

Summary

This review of literature focused on two dominant models or theoretical frameworks. The first contributed by Tinto's models (1975, 1987, & 1993) of student persistence/retention and college student departure as some researchers in the literature characterized the concept. At the center, of Tinto's models and studies focused on the construct of academic and social integration informing college student persistence, objective measures of pre-college academic characteristics based on the student's high school standing, SAT, and first-year GPA. From the social, integrative aspect, researchers focused on how interaction with the institution through membership advanced a student's sense of integration and contributed to a student's persistence and degree completion. Well-intentioned research and effective models of studying the phenomena, Tinto's revised models (1987 & 1993), did not escape criticism for a lack of representation of minority students and their history of persistence and withdrawal (Guiffrida, 2006;

Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tinto, 1993). The second, an alternative to Tinto's models proposed starting with Hurtado and Carter (1997) and the foundation of several relevant studies that examined students of color and the psychological measure of integration that earlier models ignored. Esquivel (2010), Maestas, et al. (2007), and Nuñez (2009) among others previously cited advanced the idea of subjective measure being relevant or at least antecedent to Tinto's approach. A departure emerged as the initial construct of SOB expanded through the lenses of other researchers reflecting social changes. Researchers examined the inclusion of minority and under-represented populations at institutions other than 4-year universities, for example. Expanding the concept of diversity that contributed to a positive sense of belonging that predicted persistence of students' commitment to degree and institution, the emergence of the student's cultural background was the student's sense of cultural identity. The role of supportive structures, associated with psychological measures and other than the objective measures previously mentioned, included the role of geography. The idea of students' geographic location of home city to the institution attended was a factor that emerged in recent studies. The importance of geographic location underscored the contribution of regional cultures to sense of belonging influencing college student persistence in the crucial first and second year of higher education.

The intended purpose of this study built upon integrating the significant findings from the existing body of research that illuminated major gaps or flaws suggested by

previous researchers. In their recommendations to future researchers, on the topic of college students' sense of belonging leading to persistence and graduation, the lack of qualitative studies that captured the voices of the learner's SOB influenced on his or her commitment toward persistence and graduation were significant in shifting the methodologies of recent researchers (Barbatis, 2010; Esquivel, 2010; Maestas, et al, 2007). The second gap in the current body of the literature suggested by researchers had been the lack of attention given to community colleges; the absence of major studies examining two-year community colleges located in rural or small towns had not been adequately examined (Marti, 2008). Only in most recent studies had researchers paid attention to the voices of Hispanic/Latino/Chicano college students; however, the literature pointed out much of the research on community colleges were those institutions located in large cities (e.g., Hawley & Harris, 2006). This study focused on those three gaps and my interest as the researcher that had a significant import to social change. Through this study, I intended to investigate those gaps in the setting of a two-year, community college located in a small or rural region in Texas that served a predominantly Hispanic student body.

Finally, the evidence from this literature review presented a guiding and resonating theme underpinning the topic investigated and noted before moving on to Chapter 3. Persistence culminated from a psychological measure of a sense of belonging or community. A student reflects internally and asks him/herself if they belong. If the

student's resounding affective response was yes, then, the college student persisted in his/her higher education endeavor. Persistence-retention and eventual graduation represented the completion of a degree program and personal goal took place.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Chapter Three begins with an overview of this study followed by the main research question. Six subquestions illuminated the underpinnings of the study's main research question and reflected the theme of previous studies garnered from the literature review that was of interest to me (e.g., Esquivel, 2010; Kinser & Deitchman, 2008; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010). The development of the research design, its instrumentation, the demographic survey, and interview questions—to be distinguished from the research questions—presented in this chapter were modeled from various studies discussed in the literature review. The selection of data collection and analysis processes drew on the recommendations of Creswell (2007), a standard course text at Walden University; the study used a current version of Ethnograph.v6, a popular and inexpensive software program for analyzing qualitative data (Qualis Research Associates, 2008). My role in the study addressed the level of active participation in which I engaged during the study. In accordance with ethical standards elaborated upon in the APA Ethics Code (2002), I addressed those ethical considerations and manner to mitigate possible conflicts of interest or bias stemming from my role as a researcher in this study and an adjunct faculty member of the institution that was the setting of this study.

This study contributed to the research paradigm on the sense of belonging (SOB). This study examined the influence of SOB on Hispanic college students' persistence. The

study focused on the role of the students' cultural background influencing the students' SOB, and the study was situated in a community college that is a predominantly Hispanic serving institution (HSI) located in a small or rural community of Texas. In attenuating the appropriate methodology for this study, two factors informed the logical decision in selecting the research design. First, the literature review provided the fuel to isolate the most effective method to address the research problem for this study (e.g., Maramba, 2008; Museus & Maramba, 2010). In reviewing recommendations made by previous researchers, a recurring gap in the literature focused on the lack of qualitative studies on the issue that was the focus of this study. Second, in order to capture the essence of college students' perception of their relationship with their institution and the influence of students' cultural background on those perceptions of belonging (e.g., Museus & Maramba, 2010), creating a personal connection between researcher and participants was paramount in pursuing the qualitative approach and selecting personal interviews. This latter point on methodology was emphasized in previous research.

Research Question and Subquestions

The research question generated inquiry aimed at capturing the college student's perceptions and experiences that constructed his or her SOB and the influence of his or her SOB on persistence toward goal attainment; that goal varied from participant to participant and included improving job skills to earning a degree from the institution (Harley & Harris, 2006; Marti, 2008). Also, the questions fleshed out the role of the

student's cultural background played in the student's relationship with the institution and on influencing a student's SOB.

What were the experiences and perceptions—real or imagined—of nontraditional Hispanic college students enrolled at a 2-year community college in Southwest Texas that influenced their SOB and persistence to graduation?

The intricacies of sense of belonging require as a series of subquestions that supported and illuminated the main research question. The following questions guided the investigation into the topic. This study focused on six subquestions (RSQs):

1. What were the personal or background factors that influenced the participants' sense of belonging within the first year of commitment to higher education?
2. What were the academic experiences that contributed to the nontraditional Hispanic college student's desire to remain committed to his/her program and degree attainment?
3. What were the social experiences within the institution and outside of it that contributed to the student's sense of belonging and persistence to graduation?
4. What were the other experiences and perceptions of the institution—real or imagined—contributing to nontraditional Hispanic college students' sense of belonging and persistence to graduation?

5. What role did cultural diversity or its absence in the institution have in contributing to a sense of belonging and persistence among nontraditional Hispanic college students?
6. Did instructors' ethnicity influence sense of belonging and persistence of the student population?

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative study was to capture the personal experiences and perceptions—likened to concepts of ownership and stakeholder—that contributed to the sense of belonging and persistence (fidelity to the institution and commitment to program degree) of nontraditional Hispanic college students attending Southwest Texas Junior College, a 2-year institution of higher education in a small town-rural community of Southwest Texas.

This study examined nontraditional Hispanic college students; thus, the characteristics of the participants' background and experiences with which they arrive at the entrance to the ivy halls did not conform to traditional students in age, experiences, and motivation. The differences between traditional and nontraditional college students guided the choice of design and instrumentation. The use of the personal interview consisting of open-ended questions, and the use of multiple formats of interviews (e.g., face-to-face, telephone, and as an option, online) were effective and efficacious practices (Creswell, 2009). Those tools in the role of research design served in gaining insight

about the participants' experiences and perceptions of their relationship to the institution, commitment to their journey, and issues that contributed to their persistence in the educational endeavor. Research suggested the need to pursue qualitative methodologies in this area of research to capture the voices of a population that did not enjoy a strong presence in the current body of literature. The literature further reflected the need to examine the background and culturally significant factors that contributed to maintaining a positive sense of belonging and influenced persistence while retaining fidelity to academic and social integration factors in investigating the issue (Esquivel, 2010; Hawley & Harris, 2006; Reason, 2009; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Stieha, 2010).

The research paradigm engaged in this study drew from the recent developments in research that relied on the qualitative methodology and a variety of designs. For this study, I relied on the use of electronic and personal (F2F) interviews in familiar settings to the participants. Both decisions reflected a cultural sensitivity and practicality of convenience for participants and me as the researcher. Again those decisions reflected an understanding and integration of recommendations found in previous studies addressed in the literature review of this dissertation.

Discussion on selecting one of the various designs within the qualitative approach for social science research was flexible across areas of psychology. Adopted versions from anthropology, which were adapted to marketing research in recent years according to a decision analyst, a marketing company's senior vice president, Gwen Ishmael, for

example, demonstrated the utility of the qualitative approach and its suitability as a research tool within the field of psychology (Ishmael, 2014). Qualitative research (e.g., characteristically free-ranging and using open-ended interviews among a limited number of respondents) was primarily an exploratory and/or a motivational technique. The qualitative approach and its designs allowed researchers to identify salient variables and suggest the relationships among those variables so that quantitative techniques can be utilized. Thus, the predominant purpose of qualitative approaches was to lay a foundation for quantitative techniques if desired. A mixed methods approach in the former case of marketing research was appropriate; however, in this study and field, qualitative methodologies remained consistently focused on the individual and group participant's authentic experiences, captured the color of their culture, and genuinely recorded their voices through content analysis (Creswell, 2009; Qualitative Research Consultants Association, n.d.)

In the body of qualitative methods, there are various designs within this approach. Among those, the University of California at Irving and its Social Sciences Department, participant-observation, ethnography, photography, case study, historiography, and sociometry discussed an online article on the topic (e.g., North Carolina Wesleyan College, NCWC.edu, 2013). In this study, I elected to use an ethnographic approach examining the phenomena that defined participants' SOB illuminated later in this chapter. In choosing one method over other designs available, I examined designs used in the

current literature on the topic of interest and found a pattern of ethnographic, phenomenological, and case studies to be the predominant models when researchers chose the qualitative approach to their research (e.g., Ahmed, 2011; Chapman & Pyvis, 2006; Esquivel, 2010; Paltridge, Mayson, & Schapper, 2010; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Szmeczak, Brooks, Volpp, & Bosk, 2010). Further consideration in selecting the current method, model, and research design were based on the functionality of the other methods.

In the participant-observation model, immersion into the scene was done covertly in that the researcher did not reveal his or her purpose for joining or interacting with the intended participants who shared similar experiences, cultures, and backgrounds. The group was one with which the researcher had broad knowledge about or knew little to nothing about. The group's social culture or its place in the society characteristically varied from being secretive and amorphous to territorial (turf-conscious). To the extent that the group's (participants) disposition was in relationship to the greater society, the observer (e.g., researcher) needed to convert by adopting the behaviors of the group to immerse him or herself into the group to conduct research. The greater degree of amorphousness, for example, the higher the level of participation that was required. On the other hand, the greater the group's localized or turf-oriented disposition, the greater the need for observation by the researcher.

The participant-observation model was not appropriate by its definition that relied on covert operations and-or converting/adopting the group's norms. The obvious

drawbacks for me in this study—to pursue the topic of interest—was the population of participants were (a) a known group, established with a relationship to an institution, (b) classifiable because they were defined as an integral part of the community at-large and the institutional culture, and (c) as the researcher, I was a professional educator and consultant. It was difficult to convert into the realm of a student enrolled at a community college. For the aforementioned reasons, selecting the participant-observation model was not selected.

The photography approach, although an interesting possibility that I was entertaining was another model within the qualitative approach to conducting social science research. It was the video form of ethnography that had several advantages over a purely, ethnographic approach using note taking and audio-recordings of the participant's interview. There was little information on the photography model, but the model had found its function in studies of the homeless, for example, according to the University of California at Irvine (UCI) website (2013).

In two studies—Harper (2002) and Harrison (2002)—the photography design of qualitative approaches was utilized. Another study examined the efficaciousness of the design and its enriching attributes to the qualitative approach using an ethnographic methodology of traditional interviewing and researcher observation. The addition of photography recording interaction of participants (e.g., mothers with their premature/neonatal infants in intensive care units) with running records made it possible

for the researcher to use the photo images to capture the visual interaction and its impact on understanding the anecdotal record (MacDonald, 2008). Bijoux and Myers (2006) carried out research using similar designs as MacDonald; however, their focus of research addressed the concept of place rather than space in which participants were self-directed in recording their experiences; the self-engaged participant contributed to a deeper sense of control and ownership in the process according to researchers, and thus, captured more nuances than if the researcher conducted the photography (Bijoux & Myers, 2006).

I revisited the idea of using photography (e.g., video-camera) conduct interviews with prospective participants in this study. Although the use of video recording would be used only by me to collect and analyze data, after careful consideration about incorporating video, I believed that some participants preferred not having a permanent-like, visual record of themselves and their interview. Furthermore, the UCI discussion (2013) indicated that established ethnographers recommended against using the approach and sticking to the traditional ethnographic model with note taking and audio-recordings to assist in latter analysis of data.

It was upon those recommendations and the consistent threads of discussion within the review of literature that this study pursued the investigation of participants' SOB using the qualitative approach and ethnographic design that examined the phenomena defining SOB among the study's participants.

Setting, Population, and Sample

The setting for the study was a 2-year community college located in a small-rural community of the Southwest. The institution consisted of a main campus with five satellite or outreach campuses; one campus serviced the incarcerated population of a state penal institution; each of the campuses was located in a small city or rural community with an average distance of 55 miles separating each campus. The closest major city to any one campus varied between approximately 80 to 140 miles to the nearest interstate highway. The particular outreach center was chosen for its accessibility based on my geographic proximity to the institution, my past association with the institution, and the particular population. The current enrollment at the college's outreach campus was 1,130 students with a variety of enrollment patterns (e.g., part time, full time, day, night, and a mix of day/night classes). Because the focus of this study examined the nontraditional Hispanic college student, the sample drew from those students that met the definition. The population that fell within the defined subgroup of the institution's student body was approximately 400 enrollees as of the fall 2011 semester.

Following the recommendations in Creswell (2009) for researchers engaged in a qualitative research, recent studies incorporating qualitative designs, and my preferences, I used the interview method (phenomenological-focused) with a limited sample. Upon the recommendations of the URR of Walden University, the smaller sample identified in current studies and recommended by Creswell, did not satisfy the URR. To meet the

URR's recommendation, the sample size for this study was 16 students, and I acquiesced; the criteria were implemented. Rudestam and Newton (2007) made several recommendations for researchers using the qualitative methodology and sampling size in qualitative studies. Following their wisdom, in this study, a nontraditional student was a person enrolled in the institution who (a) had not attended college immediately after graduating from high school, (b) generally enrolled for less than three classes per term making his or her status, part time, (c) tended toward being older than the traditional college enrollee, and for the purpose of this study (d) identified himself or herself as being Hispanic.

Justifying the number of participants in this study reflected phenomenon identified in the literature review. The four-prong, criteria in making the decision rested guidance from references to Creswell (2009) and Rudestam and Newton (2007), and from published studies that were part of the literature review. Four factors guided the process in narrowing the number of participants to ten. (a) The methodology incorporated to reflect this study, (b) the research design: phenomenological; (c) the issue under investigation; and (d) in general, the underrepresented and often silenced voices of Hispanics. Schwartz, Donovan, and Guido-Brito (2009) focused on the gap in the current literature that examined self-identified Mexican male students enrolled in college who were outnumbered by women in undergraduate school, and the gap continued to widen according to their research. As significant as the gap identified by Schwartz, et al.

(2009), their sampling numbered five participants using purposeful sampling and F2F interviews. Following the F2F interviews, four of the five participants were asked to become a focus group. In examining the SOB and subsequent persistence/retention, Stieha (2010) focused her entire study on the issue using one case study. According to Esquivel (2010), the fastest growing segment of the college population complimented the change in U.S. demographics that reported that Hispanics represented the largest addition to the population from statistics cited in the U.S. Census Bureau record (2009). Hispanics were the youngest racial/ethnic minority in a report from the Pew Hispanic Center (2009). Yet, with such profoundly important demographics indicating social change, Esquivel, Schwartz, et al., and Stieha selected a small number of participants as their sample; the largest sample size consisted of 19 participants in the Esquivel study. As researcher, I saw no error in pursuing this study with 16 participants based on past studies cited.

Selecting and contacting perspective participants for this study focused on methods cited in previous research emphasizing the qualitative methodology and phenomenological designs incorporating the personal, unstructured and structured interview, case studies (e.g., Esquivel, 2010; Stieha, 2010), face-to-face contact (e.g., Deil-Amen, 2011; Karp, Hughes, & O’Gara, 2008; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010), and focus groups (e.g., Barbatis, 2010) that were found to be effective for those researchers. With the advent and expansion of telecommunication, and particularly, the availability of the

internet, telephone and online interviews served as efficacious techniques in qualitative research for the social sciences according to Opdenakker (2006). Purposeful sampling as defined in the criteria for selecting participants was guided by the process similar to an open casting call wherein, everyone eligible was allowed to apply. Consideration to incorporate a sampling technique known as snowball used in research examining Vietnamese-Canadian, college students' adjustment to college (e.g., socio-cultural and educational adaptation) by Schwartz, et al. (2009) was explored. Although Schwartz, et al. found it useful in their research, the use of snowball sampling was not an effectual method for this study because of existing time constraints to complete this study.

Contacting the pool of potential participants consisted of similar efforts incorporated by other researchers in the field using qualitative methodologies (e.g., Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Schwartz, et al., 2009). My recruitment followed similar strategies that included (a) the placement of flyers (Appendix A) in areas where students congregated on the particular campuses, (b) securing the cooperation of faculty to announce the need for participants, and (c) posting an online invitation to persons enrolled in classes at the college campuses using the college's website and instructor tools to reach the maximum number of potential participants. Since this was a passive intrusion, I, as the researcher, did not target students enrolled at the campus through the use of official rosters or educational records protected by FERPA regulations but waited until potential participants responded to the open invitation. There was no barrier and the

approach was more effectual in securing the data than from the official student information under FERPA.

Role of the Researcher

My role as researcher in this study was as a facilitator and an advocate. As a facilitator, my function was to schedule and arrange suitable settings for the interviews to occur that offered convenience and privacy to the participants, and maximize interaction between me as the researcher and participants. My responsibilities continued in the process; collecting the information garnered from the participants' responses, assuring confidentiality throughout the process, and dissemination of the data collected that culminated in a scholarly contribution to the field of research and the field of psychology (Creswell, 2009). My role of advocate hinged on contributing to positive, social change for those Hispanic college students attending two-year institutions located in small or rural communities in Southwest Texas.

As a researcher, I was associated with the institution for more than 10 years and was a member of the surrounding community for 30 years. While served as an adjunct faculty member for the institution, I worked with a predominantly, Hispanic student body at one of the five outreach campuses. My particular field of instruction was in education with an emphasis on development or remedial education in the community college. I had the unique opportunity to see the institution develop over years to the extent that the institution had its own campus rather than leasing space from the local school district's

high schools and community outreach centers, and the college expanded its curriculum, and enhanced student learning through improved infrastructure such as technology.

My relationship to the culture played a significant role in capturing the color of the culture as well as those academic experiences that contributed to defining the students' SOB. The small or rural-like setting in which I have resided has contributed to developing many positive relationships over the 30 year span. Multiple generations of students initially encountered in public schools (K-12) enrolled in the community college when choosing to attend college. Families of siblings now with their own children enrolled their children in local public school campuses where I remained an active member as a full-time faculty member. My extended family was Hispanic and native to the region (e.g., surrounding communities), and we shared similar values.

In my own educational journey, I was not prepared for college. When I made the decision to attend college, I did it by enrolling in a large, urban college in the Midwest where I resided at the time following my military discharge. I began my college career as a nontraditional student. The personal struggle to be successful was hampered by several issues highlighted in reviewing the current literature. Among the issues that confronted my first journey were (a) the ability to maintain family, work, and school responsibilities, (b) academic preparedness (e.g., no precollege preparation courses taken in high school), (c) neither parent was a high school graduate, and (d) while racial discrimination was not an issue being a white male, there were other stigmas that forced my persistence. The

collective influence of those experiences has provided a lens from which I was able appreciate the struggle and commitment of nontraditional students pursuing their dreams and goals in higher education.

In contrast to the adopted perspective of being an outsider taken by researchers in a study engaging in (a) qualitative methodologies, (b) attending to issues affecting Hispanic (e.g., Mexican, Latino, Chicano) college students, and (c) the relationship between persistence and self-identity (Schwartz, et al, 2009), I saw myself as one with the community and identify with the culture as my extended familia (Hispanic sense of family) discussed in Rodriguez-Martin (2010) and Esquivel (2010). This status or perception and the potential of researcher's biases were limited to similar experiences of struggling from an economic and social disadvantage coming from (a) a working class or blue collar family, (b) single-parent home, (c) limited economic resources preventing me from attending college, and (d) lack of academic preparation for the collegiate challenges among factors that might color my objective sense in this study. One did not and cannot genuinely leave the luggage at the door in pursuing any research as Creswell (2007) pointed out. Mitigating, however, the impact of any biases was possible.

To mitigate the impact of my biases, was first to acknowledge them; a *quid pro quo*. Then, in a spirit of full disclosure, a brief *vita* or autobiographical account of my background addressed in this section acknowledging the sense of kinship to potential participants in their challenges in pursuing a higher education. Third, if it became

necessary to defend the scholarly reputation of this study against the issue of researcher bias, I planned to use a review panel or use a focus group from the pool of participants to collate the emerging themes from a native, Hispanic perspective. For example, Schwartz, et al. (2009) resolved a similar concern about researcher bias in their research by using both personal interview and focus group follow up because of their outsider' status; that did not apply to my status.

In an effort to reduce possible conflict of interest and real or perceived coercion, with the former sense of coercion being an overt, unethical practice by any researcher with exception to it acting as part of deceit accepted in certain types of research of which, this current study did not entertain, I established precautions or gatekeepers in my role and selection process.

The use of tiered, selection methods that reduced the likelihood of including familiar participants such as students currently enrolled in any course taught by me (Tier 1), students with the possibility of becoming a future student within one academic year of this study (Tier II), and students who have been enrolled in classes with me within the past academic year (Tier III) reduced the chances of conflict of interest. Determining the tier status of potential participants took place during the call for participants when the prospective participant completed the informational survey (e.g., demographic survey) used to delineate the target population.

The pool of participants, after meeting the initial criteria that defined the person's status as being nontraditional, Hispanic college student enrolled at the institutional setting of this study were screened for the tier status. I included participants in Tier III and then Tier II; as the researcher, I did not call on eligible participants with a Tier I status.

In addition to the tiered approach, I had a contingency plan to draw participants from more than one campus or outreach center where my relationship to the population was less familiar. The location of the other campuses (outreach centers used interchangeably) was similarly located in settings defined in this study: small and rural communities near and along the Texas-Mexico border, and serving a predominantly, Hispanic population enrolled at a two-year, community college. The combination of tiered screening and alternative locations with the same institution contributed to a substantial likelihood that conflict of interest was not an issue that impeded the quality of this study.

Instrumentation and Materials

My background played a significant part in the qualitative study approach, and because a prior relationship existed with the institution, I safeguarded against the backyard effects that compromise the data collection and study's integrity. One method of safeguarding the quality of a qualitative study in which I had prior relationship was the use of multiple strategies of validity (Creswell, 2009).

Demographic Survey for Qualitative Research

A demographic questionnaire of my own design (Appendix B) was used to screen and collect information about the intended population to be the sample. Information about ethnicity, age, gender, marital status, dependents, financial aid status, employment status, prior college experience, and number of credit hours taken was collected and used to screen participants in the study. Verification of enrollment and number or credit hours came from the college's admission's office. In addition to the demographic data, screening for potential conflict of interest issues included the use of tiered-selection discussed in this section, and the role of the researcher in this chapter, was part of the documentation.

Researcher's Interview Questionnaire Guide

The interview questionnaire, IQs (Appendix C) will be used for both F2F and telephone interviews. This study did not use a focus group approach. The advantages of the former approaches were significant in this study based on the setting and population being studied. The setting was a small or rural community or 2-year college (e.g., sometimes referred to as a junior college) whose student body was predominantly made up of commuting students; the local setting had no student residence facilities (dormitories). The population had other commitments outside pursuing their higher education (e.g., employment and family commitments) that impeded just using one interview method. I planned for and used a tape recording device to record the

interviews with participants to insure a high degree of validity. The use of the interview in a phenomenological or case study was common and effective in earlier research. The participants' direct interaction with me as the researcher provided a historically accurate account and captured the experiences in the participant's own words (Creswell, 2009) as was the focus of a study by Rodriguez-Martin (2010). In a previous publication by Creswell on the topic of qualitative approaches, he put it in this fashion, "hear silenced voices" (Creswell, 2007, p. 40).

In this study, the use of F2F and telephone interviews were considered as data gathering approaches; thus, it was important to acknowledge potential strengths and weaknesses of this approach as they might influence participant's SDRs. In 2003, Green, Holbrook, and Krosnick (2003) pointed out that the survey response process in telephone and F2F surveys (e.g., interviews) differences in satisficing and (SDRs). Jäckle, Roberts, and Lynn (2006) in working papers reported there was no significant difference in using show cards while conducting F2F interviews or an absence of visual aids during F2F interviews; however, they continued, telephone respondents were more likely to give SDRs than those participants in F2F interviews. Opdenakker (2006) discussed benefits and costs of various forms of interview techniques, and he pointed out F2F interviews or synchronous communication of time and place allowed for the observer to note facial expressions and body language that can undergird the oral response; thus, the participant provided extra information making the verbal response more valuable than without such

cues. On the other hand, Opdenakker pointed out the disadvantages of telephone interviewing was the absence of those social cues available in the F2F interview process; however, if the responses required divulging sensitive information, the absence of putting a face to the response was effective in getting accurate and authentic responses on sensitive issues.

In connecting the idea of SDRs and the effectiveness of interview approaches discussed, I pointed to my faith background as a Roman Catholic. In post-Vatican II era practices, the sacramental activity of confession, now referred to as reconciliation hinges on the privacy of the confessional relationship between penitent and confessor. The place of the celebration of the sacrament of penance was prescribed in Canon law (Coriden, Green, & Heintschel, 1985). Furthermore, prior to Vatican II, the order of the sacrament formerly took place with a divider or screen in the confessional that obscured the penitent from the confessor or priest; thus, there was a degree of invisibility afforded the penitent easing the difficulty of revealing his or her infidelity to the faith. In the Vatican and post Vatican II, the faithful were encouraged to move out of the obscurity of the screened confessional and invited to sit with the confessor in a face-to-face arrangement and confessed his or her errors (e.g., sins). According to Somerville (n.d.), the differences between traditional and post councilor practices (other than the fidelity to the Church's teachings that were moot here), suggested the current approach discouraged practicing Catholics from regularly receiving the sacrament now that the invisibility of the penitent

was gone. Given the nature and content of the practice, revealing sensitive information, aka, sins, the penitent's anonymity was stripped away but for the well-trained confessor, the social cues (e.g., body language and facial expressions) were helpful in guiding the genuinely repentant penitent.

In view of information from Green, et al. (2003), Jäckle, et al. (2006), Opdenakker (2006), and perspective on penance promulgated by Somerville (n.d.), and in light of the nature and content of the data expected in this study, I interpreted the choice as having no particular disadvantage in using the F2F interview as the primary vehicle to gather data from participants, nor did I believe at this time, there was a substantial problem with participants providing SDRs to the interview questions.

Data Collection

Rodestam and Newton (2007) and Creswell (2009) provided guidance to researchers engaging in qualitative research approaches and to me in this study. Data collection was substantially different in content but did not differ in assuring degrees of reliability and validity that were expected in traditional models of research (e.g., quantitative). Fidelity and structure of data were keys in qualitative approaches, and Rodestam and Newton recommended the use of a tape recording device. To assure the high quality in accuracy of the participant's information being transcribed by the researcher and reduce potential misinterpretation; for this study, I incorporated the use of an electronic recording device.

The sample size for this study was approximately 16 participants; an equal number of men and women were interviewed. Given the potential situation of participants withdrawing from the institution after initiating the interview process, I contacted those students to ascertain their reason for withdrawing from the institution. The logic behind the continuation of interviewing a participant that had withdrawn from the institution went to the point of persistence and factors that influenced a student's persistence.

The role of pre-screening data collection established the validity of the sample. For that purpose, a demographic questionnaire developed by me was employed (Appendix B). Once established, the sample population was notified via voice (e.g., telephone, voice-mail) or by email using the student's email address issued by the institution.

I engaged in two data collection periods. The first or initial interview took place near the beginning of the semester or term, and the second interview or exiting interview took place at the end of the semester or term. In both interviews, the same research questions were used. Additional comments or reflection made by the participants in the exiting interview will be recorded by me using the same method of electronic audio recording and hand-written notation. The estimated span of time between the initial interview and exiting interview was approximately 15 calendar weeks following the recommended data collection approaches by Creswell (2009): (a) "conduct an

unstructured, open-ended interview and take notes,” and (b) “conduct an unstructured, open-ended interview, audiotape the interview, and transcribe the interview” (p.182).

I employed an interview protocol that consisted of the collection of demographic data collected from the demographic questionnaire and an interview question consisting of 16 open-ended questions (Appendix C) that comprised the interview. The model or format followed the general recommendations of the protocol presented in Creswell (2009).

The interview protocol consisted of six elements according to Creswell (2009). These components were designed into the interview document (Appendix C).

Appropriate to this study, I planned and used the following:

1. Time and place of interview, interviewee’s name and assigned participant number or alias as determined by mutual agreement of the participant and myself.
2. Standard set of procedures for the interview process. In part, the procedures were established through the process of using the demographic data questionnaire, notification process, and Walden’s Institutional Review Board’s (IRB) practices (e.g., confidentiality letter).
3. An introductory question preceding the subquestions on the interview form.
In this case, I relied on the central research question.

4. Probing the interviewee's initial responses to elucidate their thoughts and responses. These probes or questions varied depending on the participant's initial responses.
5. The layout of the actual interview form (Appendix C) provided space between questions to the interviewee's responses.
6. Recognizing and acknowledging the participant's contribution to the field of psychology, my goals as researcher, and the Walden University mission, I thank each interviewee at the end of his or her interview. A letter of appreciation (Appendix D) was sent to each participant at the end of the study acknowledging their contributions (Creswell, 2007).

In recognition of the participants' contribution to the body of research on nontraditional, Hispanic college students, I initiated the debriefing procedures of this study. As a follow up, a letter of appreciation (Appendix D), an invitation to review the results with the researcher was scheduled at the participant's request. A copy of the study after being accepted by Walden University was shared with each participant via electronic attachment to an e-mail announcement.

Data Analysis

Arguably, the soft data that researchers collect in the qualitative approach designs have failed to win over converts from the traditional, statistic or hard data that quantitative methods offer the researcher (Rudestam & Newton, 2009); however, a

plethora of studies in recent years have elevated the qualitative approach to an acceptable standard of research methodology (Rudestam & Newton; Creswell, 2007).

Data analysis began with a review of the researcher's notes and the audiotape recordings of each participant. The initial interview and then the exiting interview was examined for themes and emerging patterns as recommended in Creswell's (2007) four-step model; however, efficiency and effectiveness of analysis were improved by using recent developments in software technology that Creswell pointed out. At the time, I had not decided on which of the five qualitative analysis software programs I would use to analyze the data; however, I narrowed the choices to two of those cited in Creswell: Atlas.ti available from Scientific Software Development and Ethnograph.v6 from Qualis Research Associates (Creswell, 2007, p.179).

In further research on the choice of software, I believed the final choice was not an impediment to continuing the proposal process toward approval by my committee. Without an adequate opportunity to review two or more popular software programs used in analyzing qualitative data by accessing potential free demos, the university was in reality, forcing me to expend funds on the premise that the particular program was adequate for my purpose and sufficiently user friendly to make the investment worthwhile. In the light of the interest of the university and my committee, however, the elaboration on the coding and quality data analysis (QDA) was based on the common elements about coding discussed by Creswell (2007) and the reference source, Rudestam

and Newton (2009). The final decision came to rest after the proposal was approved, and my choice was Ethnograph.v6 (2008).

Initial coding employed the descriptive demographics (e.g., age, gender, credit hours completed). Establishing recurring themes in the initial phase of analysis was conducted manually by listening to audio recordings and transcribed notes. Once the initial patterns of recurring themes (e.g., phrases consistently in the responses from participants) were identified, I engaged in a second analysis that used a standard software program for QDA. Creswell (2007) pointed out that qualitative software allowed the researcher the power to capture volumes of data, various ways to code the data (e.g., by responses from males versus females), and the interrelationship between codes. Furthermore, Creswell provided a flow chart in Figure 9.1 (p. 185) on approaching data analysis in qualitative research. The process consisted of six main processes and two sub-functions.

The design of QDA suggested in Creswell (2007) was representative of a linear, hierarchical approach or descriptively, a bottom-up approach in contrast to trickle-down approaches. First of the six-step process, organized the data and prepare for its analysis. In this first step, as previously stated, I summarized the descriptive demographics, separating the participants by gender, then credit hours, and age. After noting the patterns that emerged from raw data, proceeded to the second process according to the Creswell model. While obviously, a perfunctory step, a first reading of the data completed the

initial step for organizing the data. Although the first reading was perfunctory, it set in motion the effort to construct a paradigm. The second step focused on strategic reading of the data with the intent to illuminate a general sense of the data's meaning with notes along the margins for each participant's interview. Beginning with a detailed analysis, the third step in Creswell's model of QDA, required me to chunk the data or information into meaningful syntax by relating potential descriptive words, action words, and nouns that can constitute "immediate constituents" or the placement of words within an utterance (e.g., a sentence) distinguishing morphology from syntax (Gleason, 1961, p. 127). At this point in the process, I determined if the analysis continued manually or to employ a software program to continue coding the data into narrower categories and themes noting the outliers or unusual patterns in responses. The analysis focused on individual themes and those patterns emerging across data from all participants suggested by Creswell. In planning the final presentation of the analysis, I engaged in the use of the descriptive, narrative model of writing; this approach, according to Creswell, was the most popular in presenting QDA findings. In the final steps of the QDA and presentation, I provided an interpretation of the data and its essence reflecting the voices of the participants and proposed questions that encouraged further investigation of the phenomenon under investigation in the sixth step of Creswell's model.

Issues of Trustworthiness

One difficulty in conducting qualitative research was maintaining objectivity and mediated researcher's bias; a point previously discussed in the role of researcher. The question that remained was how to address the trustworthiness of the data collected, and its analysis to represent the most accurate account reported. For my doctoral dissertation—adapting an idea from Paulson (1999), who speaking from the perspective of pastor–researcher, adapted a model of Spradley's (1979), Ethnographic Interview—I used a pattern of intermittent checks. The intermittent checks took the form of reflection and probing that kept me focused on the participant's responses. The process of—periodically—echoing a participant's responses maintained fidelity (credibility) to the participant's thoughts and provided me with immediate correction to any misinterpretation. The physical documentation (e.g., transcript of the electronically recorded information) supported evidence of credibility of the data captured in each participant's voice). Because of the nature of the semi-structured interview (e.g., participants' responses wondering, out-of-chronological order, utterances), the interview questions provided a springboard from which I engaged the participant, and the participant had a free range to articulate his/her thoughts—coalesce the individual experiences of each participant—that one cannot quantify those experiences as if they were numeric data.

Transferability, reliability, and validity were cumbersome issues in the process of qualitative models. Transferability was limited to general themes and patterns garnered from the analysis. Because each participant came to the study with unique experiences, variations in the themes, the import or significance placed on an emerging theme or pattern of responses reported by the participant had limited universality. The transferability of nuances codified in the analysis (e.g., construct a participant's unique responses) was limited.

Again, although cumbersome, the elements of trustworthiness (e.g., credibility, transferability, dependability) in qualitative research were the gatekeepers of compliance and assurance to the research community that the research approach was pertinent, and like quantitative research, had reliability and validity that made it a legitimate tool of research and contributed to the body of research tools. Despite the evolving interest and acceptance of qualitative designs to conduct research, several supporters of the qualitative approach and its designs indicated that there continued to be an attempt by traditional researchers to corner qualitative researchers into a box that conformed to their traditional views of those two concepts (validity and reliability) as pointed out some members of the qualitative school of thought (e.g., Golafshani, 2003; Stenbacka, 2001).

Transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability were essential elements in the qualitative approach and its designs in this study. They speak to the traditional qualities in quantitative approaches –reliability and validity–and were not

abandoned in my effort to contribute to the body of knowledge on the topic of defining people's sense of belonging. Stenbacka (2001) adopted the approach that reliability was irrelevant in the traditional sense in the evaluation of the qualitative research implied that "the study is no good" (p. 552); however, her position was not embraced by the entire community of qualitative researchers (e.g., Patton, 2002). Here, the idea stemmed from an absence of quality to the idea that without reliability there was no validity made the concept of validity moot; thus, Patton (2002) suggested, "reliability demonstrated was sufficient to demonstrate validity" (p. 316).

In meeting the rigors of qualitative research, I engaged the participants in a review of the initial analysis based on recorded interviews, researcher's notes, and the thorough use of an appropriate software program for qualitative data analysis, QDA such as Ethnograph.v6 (Qualis Research Associates, 2008). The idea of a cross-checking process, that was, returning to the participant and having his/her recordings reviewed and annotated as desired increased the reliability and validity of the data collected, its analysis, and the results reported. The precise transcriptions from recorded interviews and entered into the QDA program established credibility and undergirded the trustworthiness of the content of the study and its unbiased approach by me as the researcher. To the extent which this study engaged the participants in data collections and its analysis, the use of electronic recording devices to capture the complete interview—the voices of the participants' experiences and meaning of SOB—and current

trends in qualitative research designs entertained the concept of triangulation discussed by Creswell and Miller (2000).

In attending to issues of credibility, I used manual transcription (e.g., note taking), audiotape recording, and electronic coding (e.g., Ethnograph.v6 software) to maintain a high rate of dependability. Again, as researcher, I established and maintained reliability and validity through procedures in the interview process. Within the interview process, following upon suggestions of a recent study, researchers pursuing qualitative models of research should collect and analyze data concurrently and maintain isolation of each set of data (e.g., each participant's responses) to increase the rigor of data analysis that contributed to reliability and validity according to Morse, Barnett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2002). The use of open-ended questions in the semi-structured interview design of this study provided the source of data collected and analyzed.

Ethical Considerations

All participants signed a consent agreement stating that (a) participation in the study was voluntary, (b) participants may withdraw at any time without recrimination, and (c) I, as the researcher was not in a position of influence. Withdrawal of consent was accepted by verbally, email, voice call, not accepting the invitation to the initial or exiting interviews, or by any means of communicating or lack of contact with the researcher. There were no material rewards for participating in this study. Maintaining anonymity

was assured by the use of pseudonyms for the participant's names, aliases, and/or numerical coding that only the individual participant and researcher knew.

All hard copy data and audio recordings was maintained in a secured vault in the home office of unless otherwise required by policies of Walden University, standards of the American Psychological Association (2002), and-or federal, state, and local laws governing research involving human participants. The duration of retaining all documents related to this study was planned not to exceed five years after the publication of the manuscript or acceptance of my dissertation by the university. All electronic documentation related to this study was stored on appropriate storage media and treated like a hard copy file. All electronic files and folders representing the data were expunged from the hard drive of the personal computer(s) used in this study.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the methods for a qualitative study focusing on the experiences and perceptions of nontraditional, Hispanic learners enrolled at a 2-year, community college in a small town or rural setting in southwest Texas, and how those experiences and perceptions influence their SOB and desire to persist in their education journey.

The study employed a sample of 16 participants who met the criteria for the sub-population enrolled in the institution that were of interest to the researcher's study. The participants completed a demographic survey and two interviews: an initial interview and

an existing interview correlated to the institution's standard semester or term. Collection and analysis of the data fell to the purview of me as the researcher who conducted this study using both hand-written analysis and a qualitative analysis software program; the latter, helped in the examination of themes and patterns that emerged from the voices of the participants' accounts of their experiences that influenced their desire to persist.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover and capture the voices of nontraditional Hispanic college students' sense of belonging and how it influenced their persistence to graduate at a 2-year community college located in a small, rural community in Southwest Texas. In order to capture their voices, I selected a phenomenological methodology of F2F interviews and a demographic survey.

The topic derived from my personal interests, pragmatic and logistical considerations (e.g., geographical location to a suitable setting and access to an appropriate population), and four gaps in the current body of literature: (a) lack of research focusing on small-town and rural institutions of higher education, and (b) limited attention on predominantly Hispanic-serving institutions located there. A third gap was based on addressing population, the nontraditional Hispanic college students. The fourth gap, 2-year institutions or community colleges located and serving small towns, have been inadequately addressed in the literature.

In addition to selecting a topic and addressing the pragmatic/logistical considerations, I was guided by the literature review in selecting the research method and design of this study. From the literature review, I chose to pursue a qualitative methodology with a focus on phenomenological underpinnings through the use of case study (F2F interviews). Having received approval from the IRB at Walden University,

the study began in late March 2013, and concluded in the beginning of June 2013. The study paralleled the spring semester at the research site. The study's identification number was 02-26-13-0060060 assigned by the university and required to be noted in the study.

Research Question (RQ)

Chapter 3 introduced the central research question, and six subquestions illuminated the study's investigation into how the participants created meaning or defined their sense of belonging, and the influence on their persistence to complete the program in which they had enrolled. The research question asked the following: "What are the experiences and perceptions—real or imagined—on nontraditional Hispanic college students enrolled at a 2-year community college in Southwest Texas that influenced their sense of belonging and persistence to graduation?"

Research Subquestions (RSQ)

To investigate the topic of interest in this study, following from the review of literature, I compiled a set of subquestions that I believed would address the research question (RQ). The first of six subquestions that illuminate the central RQ focused on examining the personal or background factors that influenced the participant's sense of belonging (SOB) within the first year of commitment to higher education.

In the second subquestion, I sought to expand on related factors that built and strengthened commitment to pursuing the participant's higher education and focused on

experiences within the institution and outside of it. Those varied experiences had a core similar to the current body of literature. For example, the membership in clubs, organizations, and student government enhanced student SOB. Having outside contact with peers and community involvement also contributed to a positive perception and strengthened SOB. The third subquestion was similar to the social integration aspects of influencing SOB, the experiences related to academic integration examined factors about earlier college experiences, the parents' education background, and early education (high school prep). GPA and access to services to improve academic integration were included factors. Subquestion 4 raised the issue of cultural diversity and its influence on participants' SOB. The degree of importance it played in viewing the institution as being diverse and welcoming were influenced by the makeup in the student body's race and ethnicity.

Some literature varied in its conclusion on the influence of SOB and the race/ethnicity of the instructor. The fifth subquestion aimed at fleshing out the potential influence of the instructor's ethnicity because this study took place in a predominantly Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) with a limited number of non-Hispanic faculty members.

In the final subquestion, I sought to elicit responses from the participants about other experiences that were influencing their decisions to continue their education at the current institution or in general. Other experiences were those that did not fit under other

labels, for example, childcare services, flexible course formats, and ability to pay for college, family support, and future expectations such as goal planning.

Together, the central RQ and the RSQs helped form the development of a series of interview questions (Appendix C) based on the earlier studies examined in the literature review section. The interview questions (IQs) were designed to be open-ended, allowing flexibility in garnering the responses from the participants, with the leeway to regress to previously discussed questions linking responses across more than one question where it was appropriate.

Defining SOB and its potential influence on a student's decision to persist to complete his or her studies and graduate is a psychological, subjective measure of perception by the individual. SOB models have demonstrated that an overlap in factors, predictors, and general construct are the emotions and feelings the student experiences of being personally accepted, respected by others, included in activities, and supported by others in the environment. In the case of college students, it is the institution in which the student has enrolled (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Goodenow, 1993). In conjunction with defining this psychologically subjective measure, the use of student self-reporting and questionnaires are common tools to investigate the phenomenon (Kester, 1994) to capture the voices of the participants through their words and pursue a qualitative methodology with an appropriate design such as case studies and (F2F) interviews according to recent researchers (e.g., Esquivel, 2010; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010).

The Demographic Survey for Qualitative Research (DSQR) found in Appendix B created a macroview or profile of the participant and tied the demographic information to the broad themes underscored by the RIQG (Appendix C). For example, creating a profile from the demographic data contributed to my understanding—as the **researcher**—by being familiar with the participant’s background based on the participants’ response narrative. Similarly, the central RQ and its RSQs formed the basis for capturing the thoughts and voices of the participants’ lived experiences as nontraditional Hispanic college students, and linked findings—the patterns and themes—that emerged from the data analysis to defining SOB and persistence to graduation for the convenience sample population who participated in this study.

Study Setting

The setting for this study was a 2-year community college located in Southwest Texas and is part of the outreach or branch campuses of Southwest Texas Community College located in Uvalde, Texas; the Uvalde campus is the main campuses of the institution founded in 1946. The Eagle Pass Outreach Campus, also known as the Eagle Pass Outreach Center (EPOC) developed in the late 70s and made use of the available public school facilities to hold the classes in the evening for local residents of Eagle Pass and surrounding areas to include the neighboring city of Piedras Negras (black rock), Mexico.

In the broader context of the institution, with respect to student enrollment and geographical location, the small community college system and its local branches (Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Carrizo Springs, Crystal City, Hondo Unit, and Uvalde) mirror an international institution of higher education. The Eagle Pass Outreach Campus had an enrollment of 1,153 students for the semester in which the research study was conducted: the spring semester of 2013 and a minisemester, an overlapping academic enrollment term, with a majority of the interviews being concluded during the regular semester. The administration, its handful of fulltime faculty members, and support staff managed the campus; the majority of instructors were adjunct faculty from the professional cadre of public school educators within the community. Recruiting announcements (Appendix A) seeking volunteers for the study were made at the EPOC, and interviews took place on campus and annex facilities. There were two occasions in which the setting of the F2F interviews took place in my home office because it was the most convenient arrangement for the participants and me.

Demographics

Each participant was coded with an ordinal number and an F for female participants and an M for males. The numbers did not reflect the chronological order in which the F2F interviews were completed. The following represents a collective review of the sample population.

Of the 17 participants who responded to the call for participants, 11 participants were female and six were male. Two female participants (Case F.108 and Case F.109) withdrew prior to completing the demographic survey, and three males, M.106, M.107, and M.108 completed the demographic survey but did not complete the F2F interview. Thus, with the dissertation chair's approval, the population was set at 13, meeting Rudestam and Newton's (2007) suggested population of 10 participants.

The average age for female participants ($n = 9$) was 33.5 years, and the male participants' ($n = 4$) average age was 28.5 years. The difference between female and male participants' average age indicated a 5.0 years separation in age; the female participants were 5.0 years older than the male group. The average age for the sample population ($n = 13$) was 31.5.

In responding to the DSQR, the preliminary document used to screen qualifying participants (Appendix B), all participants provided an e-mail address, a phone number, and permission to use that information to contact them during and after the study. Each participant was asked to verify his or her ethnicity identifying with being Hispanic or not Hispanic. Thirteen individuals of the 17 respondents met the criteria for the population of interest. In addition to the common label of ethnicity to which the participants identified, the survey included a preference of ethnicity and a racial labeling.

The optional identifying labels included Hispanic, Latino/a, Chicano(a), Mexican American, or Mexican to preserve the respective of the participants' cultural heritage

based on the labels used in other studies (e.g., Esquivel, 2010; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Marti, 2008; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010) and my knowledge of the community based on my own familial experiences. The other preferences of ethnic-racial labeling helped eliminate unqualified persons from the sample; those labels were: White, Anglo, Mixed-race, Mixed-ethnicity, and Other. Anglo/White was not operationalized nor was the group label included in the table. Table 1 below gives the preferred ethnic description (label).

Table 1

Preferred Ethnic Description

Preference	Hispanic	Chicano(a)	Mexican-American	Latino/a	Mexicano/a	Other
No.	8	0	2	1	1	1

Place of birth and native language were not synonymous in the participants' background information garnered from the demographic survey and the initial interview. This was the nature of boarder communities like Eagle Pass, Texas situated next to Piedras Negras, Coahilla, Mexico that was a major city of social, economic, and cultural influences on Eagle Pass and Maverick County (the setting of this study). The use of native language or home language reflected the connection of the international border between the United States and Mexico.

Marital status played a role in the SOB and persistence among adult learners. It directly affected income and related financial stability. Marital status was a factor that

influenced the schedule and length of the workday in the workplace to sustain the family unit. Collectively, there was a direct influence on adult learners and their academic success when working 15 hours or more (National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, 2003; Orszag, Orszag, & Whitmore, 2001). Table 2 below summarizes the participants' place of birth, native language, and marital status.

Table 2

Place of Birth, Native Language, and Marital Status

Participant	Place of Birth	Language	Status
F.101	Eagle Pass, Texas	English	Divorced-Widowed
F.102	Eagle Pass, Texas	English	Single-Mother
F103	Eagle Pass, Texas	Spanish	Single-Mother
F104	Eagle Pass, Texas	Spanish	Married
F.105	Mexico	Spanish	Married
F.106	Eagle Pass, Texas	Spanish	Married
F.107	Ontario, Oregon	English	Separated-Divorced
F.110	Dallas, Texas	English	Separated-Divorced
F.111	Uvalde, Texas	English	N/A
M.101	Eagle Pass, Texas	Spanish	Single
M.102	Eagle Pass, Texas	Spanish	Single
M.104	Oceanside, CA	Spanish	Married
M.105	Mexico	Spanish	Separated-Divorced

The next series of questions in the demographic survey were used to clarify if the participant had minor children living in the same residence for which they were

responsible, and the filing status used on the most recent federal tax return. The first of these questions sought to identify if the participant had recently filed Federal tax return, and if the participant could be claimed on someone's tax return. All participants indicated they completed a tax return in the previous filing year and none of the participants stated that they can be claimed by another person. This was only significant connecting annual income, filing a tax return, and dependency as part of access to financial aid and grants that participants could access in order to meet financial obligations and in particular, paying for college expenses.

The question of unemployment and employment had a relationship to understanding the potential access to financial aid and guaranteed loans for the participants to meet college expenses. Single parent, mothers often were at an economic and social disadvantaged; they were responsible for daycare/childcare, securing sufficient financial resources to support themselves and dependent children, and balance those obligations with attempting to maintain their academic pursuits in contrast to single fathers who did not share in the childcare arrangements research indicated in recent publications by the Women Employed Organization (2013). Also, according to the current literature, employment and the number of hours that a college student worked had an impact on their academic performance; this was intuitive.

To ensure some anonymity with regard to the exact income, a range of incomes were presented to which the participant selected build one that best described their

current status. The average annual income reported by participants ranged from less than \$8000 per annum to more than \$18,000 per annum. In terms of identifying SES and poverty level, as the researcher, I did not consider the sources of income but only the dollar range. For example, while a participant indicated the annual income range of \$8000 - \$12000, the composition of the participant's income might have been derived from child-support, self-employment, social security, or SSI survivor benefits.

Within the body of current literature on the topic of income as related to being able to pay for college among the traditional students, some studies reported that as a predictor of persistence, although it appeared to be counter intuitive, paying for college did not significantly affect student persistence; from the studies noted, it was suggested that the students responding to the questions regarding their ability to pay for their college expenses were likely traditional students, attended four year universities, and whose parents likely carried the financial obligation of providing income to the students in meeting their college expenses. Table 3 below gives a breakdown of income and number of participant in that income range.

In meeting college expenses or paying for college tuition, fees, and books, 11 of the 13 participants indicated that they had applied for and received financial aid in some amount that was not disclosed. Two participants reported meeting their college expenses did not come from financial aid; one female participant reported that she was not eligible

to receive financial aid, and that meeting her financial obligations to the college would come from her income and applying for guaranteed student loans through a local

Table 3

Employment, Work Schedule, and Income (All Sources) by Gender

No	Gender	Employment	Schedule/Hrs	Income (\$)
1	F	Unemployed	0	≤ 8000
2	F	Unemployed	0	18000 +
1	F	Unemployed	0	8000-12000
1	F	Employed	≤ 30	8000-12000
1	F	Employed	≤ 30	18000 +
3	F	Employed	≥ 40	18000 +
5	M	Employed	≥ 40	\$18,000 +

financial institution, and one male participant indicated he had no need for financial aid because he received veteran benefits and disability compensation related to his military service that covered his college expenses. Five participants who were receiving financial aid also indicated they would be turning to their family for additional financial support in meeting their college expenses. Three participants indicated the likelihood of borrowing money from a financial institution or seeking a guaranteed student loan. All participants in this study reported being concerned about their ability to pay for their college expenses

and the resources that would be available without placing them in excessive debt after graduation.

Among the female participants, six of the nine participants did not complete a regular high school education program but did earn a GED (General Education Diploma), and all among the male participants, one of the five participants having completed the demographic survey, reported earning a GED. Seven participants, three females and four males, reported having earned a state-approved high school diploma.

In addition to noting that the participants' early education history, the demographic survey reported the participants' intended academic diploma expected at the completion of their programs. Five of the nine female and one of the male participants indicated that they would be earning the 2-year, Associates Degree. Two participants, one female and one male, indicated that they were seeking an 18-month certificate, and 1 female participant reported that she sought to earn a 1-year certificate. One female participant and 3 male participants were focused on transfer programs to a 4-year university earning BA degrees. Only M105 an optional question asking participants to add additional information, his personal challenge stemming from his combat experience in the military and subsequent PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) diagnosis.

Structure of the Interviews

The interview consisted of a welcome statement acknowledging the participants' contribution to the field of research and my research efforts at Walden University. An

introductory question posed to each participant asked them to characterize their experiences and perceptions in general toward achieving their educational goals while attending the institution, and frame those experiences as having an influence on their persistence to the completion of their program and graduation. The purpose of this introductory question was intended to set the tempo by opening the dialog between participant and researcher. The question laid out the framework for the remaining open-ended questions numbering 16.

Numbered IQ 01 thru IQ 16, the questions were divided into two broad categories; the first category, the open-ended questions focused on family and home background of the participant. The second category focused on social and academic integration, and institutional climate. There was a closing section to the interview in which the participant was reminded about the opportunity to attend a debriefing upon the completion of research and its approval by Walden University. An additional reminder about the assurances of confidentiality and the researcher's contact information were also provided (Appendix B).

Data Collection

Prescreening Selection Process

The prescreening instrument was a researcher-designed demographic survey that gathered information about the potential participant's likelihood of meeting the criteria for participants being identified as nontraditional, Hispanic college students. Basic

identifying information (Appendix B) was gathered to assist the researcher in making the appropriate determination of inclusion as participants in this study. The form, also a researcher-designed document, structured criteria to address potential conflicts of interest, and reduce the likelihood of coercion because I am an adjunct faculty member at the institution where this study took place. The criteria was presented in Chapter 3 and consisted of three-tier determinations; thus, the three-tier selection process.

Description of Tiers 1 thru 3 as a function of reducing researcher bias, conflict of interest, and coercion of persons to participate in this study was developed and presented in Chapter 3 of the proposal. As researcher, it was my mechanism to reduce the likelihood of conflict and related bias. Beginning with Tier 1, the consideration was the likelihood of encountering participants in this study as students in a future course within one academic year of the study. A participant classified in this tier was based on the academic schedule of courses in which I could be the likely instructor. Tier 1 classification of a participant meant a participant would not likely encounter me as the instructor. The second expectation was that a Tier I participant was not a current student in any of my classes (see Cases F.101 – 107, 111, and Cases M.102, 104, and 105). Tier II participants were assumed to have previously enrolled in one or more of my classes within the past academic year, but currently were not enrolled as one of my students. The third tier, Tier III, was comprised of participants responding to the notices announcing the call for participants (Appendix A) to this study, and who were enrolled in one of the

courses where I was the instructor. In this last tier, I limited the participation of my current students, and only after the academic semester was nearly at its end were those students accepted as participants in this study (See Case F.110 and Case M.103). Cases F.108, F.109, and M.101 did not stay in the study long enough to complete the interviewing process; therefore, those cases were not counted in the description of participants' classifications. I provided contact information on the public notices (Appendix A) about how the prospective participant could contact me to schedule an appointment to complete the next step in the process. After the completion of the demographic survey, the information from the document was manually transcribed into a word document and reviewed by me with the prospective participant in a brief interview. The prospective participant was informed of their eligibility to participate in this study. If the participant were unable to meet at the time he or she submitted the survey, then I arranged an appointment that was convenient for the participant to meet with me. With all initial documentation completed, I conducted the F2F interview. A transcribed summary of each participant's responses to the DSQR were presented in the appendices. The consent letter was modeled from the recommendations of Walden University and the IRB and subsequent approval number 2013.02 0.26 10:23:05 -06' 00' to fit this study. The consent letter consisted of two pages which were duplex-copied on yellow paper. The use of yellow paper for the printed consent form was to distinguish it from other documents associated with the study and generated from the university's URR. Each

participant was given a copy signed by me for their reference, and I retained a copy for the official documentation in accordance with the practices of Walden University. Contact information for both my role as researcher and Walden University's representative regarding questions about research studies, and the rights of participants were included. At the time of the interview, the participant was asked to review the information submitted on the demographic survey for any errors or changes, was presented the consent letter—approved in March 2013 and assigned 2013.02.26 10:23:05-06'00' date/time stamp—was presented to each participant for his or her signature, and the Interview was conducted. Upon the recommendation of the IRB, I adopted the use of a recording device to capture the dialogue comprising the F2F interviews of each participant. It assisted me to capture the tone, utterances, and mood of the participant's responses and ongoing dialog with me as researcher. It helped collect the most bias-free data possible by creating an ideal record with my annotated notes taken during the interview. As researcher, I made sure the device was visible at all times to the participant. In this chapter, the summaries of each demographic survey are presented followed by the summaries of the interview from each participant with selected participants' interviews complete transcription that can be found in the respective appendices of this dissertation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality of content in their recorded voices on cassette tape and my hand-written notes were coded. I maintained a log that contained the participant's true identity. As researcher, I maintained a log to

assist me in communicating with participants, processing the data collected, and data analysis. Also, the information provided a post-research contact for the debriefing of participants once the study was approved by Walden University.

Record Keeping

As researcher, I kept related notes and introspective thoughts on loose-leaf sheets, sticky notes, and marginal notes on the demographic survey and the interview documents as a metacognitive awareness strategy in organizing, analyzing, and presenting the data accurately while capturing the essence of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and thoughts verbalized during the interview. Also during my continuous enrollment with Walden University, I shared tentative observations, concerns, and reflections about my data collection and analysis within my Walden community via the blackboard, my colleagues, and Dr. Moore, my chairperson. Those discussion posts illuminated the importance of an ongoing process of cognitive awareness an evolving scholarly presence in the community, and as a product of the dissertation process. The latter will be appropriately disseminated with respect to time and placement in the dissertation document's reflection on the researcher's experiences presented in Chapter 5. No confidential information that identified any participant was revealed in sharing those data mentioned.

I created a matrix to capture unique phrases from interviewees' responses to the (IQs), which helped me isolate patterns across the answers to each guiding interview

question (Appendix G). Upon the recommendation of the IRB reviewer, I used an audio recorder to capture my thoughts and ideas as I developed Chapter 4. Also, it was expected to be helpful for persons examining the content of the dissertation because readers would have a quick glance of the participants' perspectives in responding to each of the interview questions.

I assembled a three-ring binder to organize hard-copy documents (e.g., copies of the interviews with hand-written notes and the demographic surveys) completed by the participants. The binder included the consent form signed by each participant as required by Walden University's IRB process, and follow-up correspondence to the participants for debriefing. The binder represented the collection of formal documentation from conducting the study. A researcher's logs, anecdotal remarks about the participants, the interview process, and emerging ideas and concerns noted in developing this study were placed in the binder for safekeeping and archiving as required by the university. Pertinent remarks from my diary were transcribed into word documents and used throughout the content of Chapter 4.

The information gathered through the DSQR—a document used as the initial interview and screening of participants (Appendix B)—was manually transcribed into the summary profile of the sample population, presented herein, and individually summarized for each participant (Appendix F). The RIQG (Appendix C) from each participant was transcribed using my field notes, documented information from the initial

interview using the DSQR (Appendix B), and audio recordings of F2F interviews or by professional services that I contracted to perform the task. The information transcribed from each participant's demographic survey was summarized and placed in the findings section of this chapter. The information was organized as a profile of the sample population studied in this research and illuminated participant's responses from their F2F interviews that proceeded from the initial interview. Each participant's demographic survey transcribed summaries were placed in Appendix F. The F2F interviews were divided into two sources of transcription: I manually transcribed one group of interviews using my field notes and audio recordings; the second group was transcribed by two professional services that I contracted. Five of the nine interviews from female participants and two of the four interviews from male participants were manually transcribed using the F2F interviews, field notes, and audio recordings. Four interviews of the nine female participants and two interviews of the four male participants were professionally transcribed (Appendix H).

Data Analysis

Demographic Survey for Qualitative Study

The data gathered through the Demographic Survey for Qualitative Study (DSQR) was a questionnaire (Appendix B) used to gather participant background that I manually transcribed into the summary profile of the sample population, presented herein, and individually summarized for each participant (Appendix G). The F2F

interview (Appendix C) from each participant was transcribed using my field notes, documented information from the initial interview using the demographic survey, and audio recordings of F2F interviews or by professional services contracted by the researcher to perform the task. The information transcribed from each participant's demographic survey was summarized and placed in the findings section of this chapter, as the researcher, I believed the information contributed to creating a profile of the sample population participating in this study and illuminated participants' responses from their F2F interviews that proceeded from the initial interview. Each participant's demographic survey transcribed summaries can be found in Appendix G.

The F2F interviews were divided into two sources of transcription: one group of interviews was manually transcribed by me using my field notes and audio recordings; and the second group was transcribed by two professional services contracted as part of the trustworthiness and creditability issues. Five interviews of the nine female participants and two interviews of the four male participants were manually transcribed using the F2F interviews, field notes, and audio recordings. Four interviews of the nine female participants and two interviews of the 4 male participants were professionally transcribed.

Quality Data Analysis Software

Analysis of the data by qualitative data analysis software or QDA was used to assist me in identifying emerging themes, patterns, and discrepant data; Ethnographic.v6

was used to complete this secondary analysis of data. To preserve the high level of confirmability in the data collection subsequent analysis, interviews recorded; seven of the 13 were professionally transcribed, in accordance with the methods literature (Holcomb & Davidson, 2006; McMellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003).

Enlisting a professional firm to record only 7 of the 13 original interviews was a matter of finances for me as the researcher, who bore the obligation to pay for those services. My decision was not without merit or inconsistent with the current literature on the topic of transcribing interviews posited in the review of literature conducted by Holcomb and Davidson (2006) who pointed to the excessive expenditure of physical energy and time, and even with professional services completing transcription, the costs involved could be prohibitive for researchers. A balance of full-transcriptions and granularity of analysis (e.g., use of field notes) was not without merit according to McMellan, MacQueen, and Neidig (2003).

Codes, Categories, and Themes

The use of coding for data was best described as unexpected connections derived from key words used with the QDA and visual search through transcribed interviews conducted. The premise of the codes was that they would emerge from the research subquestions and open-ended interview questions. The manual process of marking was a time-consuming labor but proved to be instrumental in validating the categories and themes described next. Participants defined their selves in relationship to family

background, the influences of parents and other adults within their earlier years, and how earlier educational experiences informed their decision to enter college. Such details were marked with sticky notes (color coding) and simple phrases such as parents, lack of education influenced my decision, and comments such as see F.102 patterns as cross-checks for similarities in responses.

Coding with color sticky notes, hand-written remarks with color ink were another means of developing codes for discerning category and themes discussed in the following section. The QDA software provided some direction and resources for my work to code.

I created categories and themes following a rational pattern that emerged from the research questions and subquestions developed for this study. The reader should refer to the appropriate appendix for the complete list.

The first category drew from research subquestion (RSQ.01) and consisted of five subquestions in the interview. The theme focused on family and home background experiences as a source of influence on persistence, developing a psychological sense of belonging, and how such issues as level of parents' education might have contributed to the participant's decisions to persist in their own higher education endeavor and the basis of defining their sense of belonging.

In developing and coding the next theme, I focused on the second research subquestion (RSQ.02) and the two open-ended, interview questions focused on social integration. The third theme to be examined was related to Research Subquestion 3

(RSQ.03) and focused on the academic integration experienced by participants who responded to three open-ended interview questions (IQ.08 – IQ.10). The latter two RSQs and the open-ended interview questions were significant components in the structure of the interview because the seminal studies on sense of belonging (SOB) and persistence focused on social and academic integration as key to predicting student persistence (e.g., Tinto, 1975, 1987, & 1993).

In the fourth theme, RSQ.04 addressed issues of institutional climate (e.g., Hurtado & Carter, 1997) influencing college students' SOB and here, defining the participants' SOB. Two open-ended interview questions sought to identify the elements in the theme of belongingness emerging from the relationship between the psychological climate of the institution perceived by the participants and the institutional structures that perpetuated the climate of openness, welcoming, and importance.

Expanding on the theme of institutional climate, the fifth subquestion examined the role of diversity in defining the participant's SOB. The investigation of the issue focused participants' perceptions on the lack of diversity within the college, and its impact on creating a multicultural experience of learning. The last theme to emerge was delivered through Research Subquestion 6 (RSQ.06) in which I identified as future plans, goals, and expectations of participants.

Disconformity in This Study

Since I pursued the study using a qualitative method and phenomenological (e.g., case study) design, the issue of disconformity arises when there are unusual, documented responses to open-ended questions presented during the interview activity. In considering this study and its findings, the literature review found in Chapter 2 of this study was the guidepost to draw comparisons between earlier studies that used similar methods, designs, and research to those used in current scholarly effort. Thus, I saw the dichotomy in the discussion of results from an internal and an external examination of data for patterns of disconformity. In the vein of my perspective as researcher, it was necessary to discuss findings from within the study and compare it with other studies.

While themes themselves tended toward stable or presence as common patterns across all participants' responses, disconformity in the priority of themes and the influence of those themes in defining the participant's SOB and likelihood of persistence did not.

Disconformity between responses of female and male participants was most noted across themes based on the F2F interviews conducted after the initial screening of participants' demographic survey (Appendix B). Second, within gender, age differences, indicated disconformity in response to similar interview questions. The third source of disconformity noted in the analysis of data came to illumination with short and long-term plans and goals.

The disconformity illuminated in the analysis of the last two subquestions (IQ.14 and IQ.15) in the interview (Appendix C) focused on the participant's grasp of potential sources of conflict and tentative plans that included academic, social, and personal goals contributing to the participant's sense of belonging and likeliness to persist. The range of responses included an absence of academic planning, planning based on the ability to meet financial obligations—to pay for college, living expenses—childcare, work schedule conflicts, and course offerings during the two summer sessions available at the college. Only one mention of family vacations was indicated by any participant (M.105), but spending time with their children who were out of school for the summer was mentioned by at least two participants (e.g., F.101, F.105). Overall, there was a greater preponderance of diverse responses to IQ.15 than to IQ.14.

Evidence of Trustworthiness of the Data

From the researcher's perspective, I began one of the earliest concerns illuminated in the current literature involving the use of F2F interviews and surveys; both of which were critical components in this study. Socially desirable responses, SDRs were one source that might have challenged the trustworthiness of the data gathered in this study.

Social Desirable Responses

Furthering the considerations focusing on trusting the data, at the onset of relying on qualitative data and the design using F2F interviews, my chairperson raised the issue of the potential influence of social desired responses by the participants. While the I

included structures in the research design to reduce bias, conflict of interest and coercion, reducing the likelihood of social desirable responses remained a concern among researchers conducting qualitative research. I believe the narratives and the content of those stories in recollecting events of earlier years growing up, and into adulthood to present, were accurately reported by the participants during the interviews. Central to supporting this assertion, I reiterated the statement, “You are free to share as much of the event that you are comfortable in telling.” Also, the phrase, “don’t feel pressured to...” was iterated. In establishing the credibility of the researcher, I gave a brief introduction and an overview of the process in a conversational tone bordering on the informal, encouraged a disarming and calming disposition in the participants opening the floodgates to their struggles and triumphs, defeats and accolades, and a sense of trustworthiness between the participant and me as the researcher. Some participants choked up as they told their stories in responding to the open-ended interview questions; other participants’ eyes spoke what their lips didn’t. All participants who were interviewed shared the dreams and aspirations of having a college education and using it as a basis to gain career promotion. There was some distinctive stereotypic patterns noted: (a) generally, if female participants choked up, it was in their voice and facial expressions; and (b) among the male participants, generally, I found in two of three cases, voice modulation. Finally, there was some difference between the scales (e.g., as part of my anecdotal collection, the use of emotion icons) that attempted to capture and quantify

responses. Designed to assess responses to attitudinal questionnaires, this study sought the personal narratives, voices, and meaning of individual experiences and perceptions (attitudes) shared by the participants.

Frequently, I probed the initial responses given by the participant in a further effort to establish authentic reporting of events, circumstances, and situations that defined the participant's perceptions contributing to their SOB and willingness to persist in their educational endeavor. Probing the initial responses often encouraged the participant to elaborate; in turn, elaborating as an extension to increasing the clarity of the initial response to the open-ended questions was paramount in developing the understanding and picked up on the emerging patterns and themes sought after during data analysis. From the researcher-perspective, I posited that such a combination of probing and elaboration established a sense of genuine interest in the participant's storyline, and thus, contributed to reducing the likelihood of SDRs.

The researcher can advance the trustworthiness of the data and its analysis, in part, by engaging professional transcribing services to perform the task of taking audio recordings as in the case of this study and contracting a professional and reputable service (Dressler & Kreuz, 2000); in this study, as the researcher, I relied on two services because of the mixed technology used in capturing voices of participants during the interviews. In the literature, "Issues of transcription quality and trustworthiness are central to transcription with qualitative approaches to research as transcripts are used not

only for analysis but as evidence of that analysis” (Duranti , 2007). The use of audio recordings was a testament to promoting trustworthiness. I recorded all interviews and maintained the physical media in a safe place in accordance with practices of Walden University.

Member Checks

Doyle (2007) and other researchers in earlier (e.g., Barbour, 2001; Byrne, 2001) studies indicated that member checking was broadly defined as a quality control process by which the researcher seeks to improve accuracy, credibility, and validity of what has been recorded during research interview. They pointed out that member checking was an effective tool for researchers to employ when engaged in qualitative research. To the extent possible and given the limitations of time to make multiple contacts with participants at the various stages of the process—initial interview and collection of information from the participant using the demographic survey, the scheduling a convenient time for the participant with the researcher to conduct the main interview (F2F) addressing the research questions, and post-interview meetings as the transcribed interviews took the form, for example—were attempted and completed. The final debriefing session was reserved after the study received approval; presenting the results of the study and recognition of the participants’ contribution to the field were planned. Communicating those checks was through electronic messages, F2F whenever possible, and voice calling when appropriate.

Triangulation

Related to investigator triangulation is researcher-participant corroboration—also referred to as cross-examination—among the methods presented on the website of Oklahoma State University (2013) and reviewed in addressing this issue. As researcher, I planned post interview conferences and email communication to share the manually transcribed interviews—those transcribed by my own hand—and a debriefing session for all participants to present the results of this study approved by Walden University’s IRB. I relied on the professional veracity of the professional services I engaged to transcribe the remaining interviews from MP3 and audio cassette recordings

Results of the Study

As researcher, I created a profile of each participant using the information gathered from the Demographic Survey for Qualitative Study (Appendix B). The profile served the purpose of illustrating a contrast to the current literature’s description of traditional college student and narrowed the description of nontraditional college student used in this study. From that point, I endeavored to summarize the results from the open-ended, F2F interviews. The findings from this study were reviewed by me prior to their presentation in this section. Having gathered, reviewed, and completed an initial analysis, I used a rubric that focused on the themes of the central research question, “What are the experiences—real or imagined—of nontraditional Hispanic college students enrolled at a 2-year community college in Southwest Texas that influence their

sense of belonging and persistence to graduation?” and the six subquestions that illuminate the construct sense of belonging defined in the words of the participants.

For clarity, the participants’ interviews were coded as ‘Case #’ followed by an ‘F’ for female participants and an ‘M’ for male participants. Case numbers were 3-digits; for example, Case F.101 indicated a female participant and the first of the participants to complete the interview. Similarly, the example, Case M.101 indicated a male participant and likely to have been the first male participant to complete the interview. This coding followed on all related documents and during the recorded interviews was used to associate the cassette recording with the hard copies of documents used in the collection of data. Similarly, the summaries developed from the demographic surveys, and subsequent interviews included in this chapter used the same identification system so I could keep an orderly account of participant data and the participant’s confidentiality.

The participant was asked to describe or define their conception of what it meant to have a sense of belonging and their perception of how the institution played a role in that definition as a nontraditional, Hispanic college student enrolled at the college. Case F.101 (I will refer to the participant with the alpha-numeric number henceforth, dropping the ‘case’ term).

Dialogue to the F2F Interview Questions

I initiated the F2F interview with a single, open-ended question that captured the state of mind of each participant's reflection on his/her experiences and perceptions about

being a nontraditional college student enrolled at the current institution that served as the setting of this study. This opening dialogue to the F2F interview questions, IQ.01- IQ.16 (Appendix C) helped me open dialogue with the participant and set the participant at ease.

Using Ethnograph.v6 (Qualis Research Associates, 2008), I collected the comments to the preview question; readers might characterize this question as an icebreaker for participants, and for me, a quick sense of what he might expect in tone and attitude as participants strive to find their voice in defining the meaning of sense of belonging and its role in keeping them focused on the ultimate goal of completing their academic program and attainment of the diploma desired. The emerging codes reflected positive perceptions of participants' sense of belonging and willingness to continue at their institution, particular among older nontraditional students.-The oldest student, a female said she thought that although hers was relatively less expensive than other colleges, the organizational culture lowered standards in order to increase success. This was especially typical as the age of participant increased in comparison to the typical age of college students (e.g., 18-21 years old among traditional students and from current literature of students enrolled in Texas' community colleges, an average of 29 years of age according to the Association of American Community Colleges (AACC, 2006)

The other limitation she felt impeded the likelihood of her concern over the limited programs of study and course availability in connecting her sense of commitment

or desire to continue at the institution. While F.101 exercised a relatively negative perspective on the institution's reputation, she gave a positive response in that having the college in the community was an asset in the long run.

F.102, F.103, F.107, F.110, and F.111 shared more positive regard for the institution in their perception of how the relationship between the institution and defining the needs that made them feel most comfortable, welcomed, and confident in pursuing their higher education at the college. Initially, female participants 104, 105, 106, and 110 indicated that they felt intimidated by the experience of the first semester, described it as difficult, or as making an adjustment because of their age and last time since attending school.

One theme that remained consistent across all female participants' responses was a perception and reality of a helpful atmosphere to newcomers experienced with administration (e.g., registration, degree planning), instructors and even peers (e.g., student body as a whole, peers in classes). The participants felt that the campus and classrooms were supportive; age disparity did not play a role in experiencing acceptance and welcoming.

The literature describes the 'nontraditional college student in broad strokes that range from older adults returning to college or starting their college career after their children have grown and were, in some cases, also attending college to the part time, non-matriculated (no major declared) enrollees attending for personal interests. There was a

difference in the perceptions of male and female participants’—interpreting welcome—and women tended to focus on the “Do I belong here?” issue (Tsui, Egan & O’Reilly, 1991; Lee, Keough, & Sexton, 2002). The issue of welcoming and belongingness indicated a consistent pattern with other social issues when women step outside the stereotypical norm of activities or pursuits that were not traditional for the age group. It was important for college admissions and support personnel to recognize those issues when helping nontraditional students make the transition into attending college later in life’s journey. On the other hand, male participants showed a laissez-faire attitude to age disparity and were less concerned with the social interaction—acceptance, welcoming, and collegial atmosphere—than female participants (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). In reviewing the prelude item, the male participants ($n = 4$) completing the interview shared comments that cross gender lines; none of the male participants voiced disparaging words about the institution as a whole—from facilities to access to support services or faculty (instructors)—with whom they had encountered through enrollment.

The 4 male participants’ shared similar academic goals with the female participants in this study to the extent that two of the four male participants (M.102 and M.105) anticipated earning an associate’s degree and continuing with their education by transferring to a 4-year institution. In their comments, they planned to transfer to the Rio Grande College of Sul Ross University. The other two participants (M.103 and M.104) indicated in their responses that their higher education endeavor was aimed at securing an

associate's degree that supports their current career and employment circumstances; however, they did not exclude the possibility of one day pursuing a four-year degree.

Other similar patterns and themes emerging from the introductory question, SQ.P, between male and female participants of this study ($n = 13$), the importance of being the first generation Hispanics college student (M.103 and M.104), the need to attain a higher education as a vehicle to improve the standard of living for their immediate family (e.g., especially in fatherhood), the source of pride eager to their parents, and support of aging parents.

Another particular comment that illuminated an issue that concerned all participants in this study were financing their educational endeavor and balancing it with other obligations (e.g., maintenance of the family and home). Pragmatic explanations such as marital status and family size (e.g., number of dependents) were not significant factors accounting for the concerns expressed about paying for their education among all participants in the study.

Of the issue of urgency or its perception in the words and voices of the male participants ($n = 4$), M.104 commented that he did not want to be working on his degree alongside his daughter—not for any pejorative reason other than he's getting older—although it would be a unique experience for him and probably as he stated, “probably somewhat embarrassing for my daughter than myself (me)”.

The sense of urgency or its perception detected in the words and voices of the female participants ($n = 9$) was not as pronounced but present to the extent that sense of urgency played a part in securing the single-parent family, home, and the relative present in contrast to the inference drawn from the male participants' responses with particular emphasis on the present and near future.

For both male and female participants, the pursuit of higher education was pivotal in their understanding for making career advancement and of those benefits which naturally flow from having a higher education and upward mobility in the career tracks participants were pursuing and anticipating in the future as a result of their educational efforts of present. Again, returning to the literature that bespeaks the difference in maturity (e.g., Kinser & Deitchman, 2008; Skogrand, Hatch, & Singh, 2005) and within the sphere, commitment to their goals between traditional and the nontraditional student were abundantly evident even in this relatively small and local sample population.

Face-to-Face Interviews

The findings garnered from the participant's responses to the F2F interview questionnaire, the document helping guide me through the interview, and on which his field notes and other observations were noted underpinning the research questions in this study were examined from two points of investigation. The first point of investigation was the researcher-selected interviews that were manually transcribed from the field notes and audio recordings maintained by me. Citing the participant's responses to

specific IQs (interview questions), I showed connections between an individual participant's responses and the body of current literature representing other, but similar studies and data basis of statistics related to the topic and population in this study. In the second point of investigation pooled individual cases and demonstrated patterns and themes emerging from that data were examined. The second point of investigation, the findings were presented from a pooled collection of participants' responses and those patterns and themes that emerged from the process. Together the two points of investigation form the findings presented in this study.

Research Subquestions (RSQs) and Open-Ended Interview Questions (IQs)

In the following section of this chapter, I present samples of responses from participants to the open-ended interview questions (IQs) underpinning the research subquestions (RSQs) enumerated previously. For clarity, I restated the six research subquestions (RSQs)

Research Subquestion, RSQ.01

Research Question, RSQ.01 stated, "What are the personal or background factors that influence the participants' sense of belonging within the first year of commitment to higher education?" IQ.01 thru IQ.04 addressed aspects of the participant's background underpinning the nature of RSQ.01.

Every participant verified the accuracy of their information reported on the DSQR. Every participant was given the official Consent Form to review, and they were asked to sign the form; with the official documentation completed, the interview started.

IQ.01 stated, “How would you describe your family background in contributing to your endeavor?”

F.103’s F2F interview lasted approximately 52 minutes and was conducted as one session in an off-campus facility shared with Southwest Texas Junior College.

Participant, F.103 indicated that she was both married and with a minor child, and her spouse was gainfully employed. F.103 described her family background, and how it affected her decision to pursue higher education focused on her parents' limited education: characteristically, SES indicated low-income, undereducated, and narrow path of opportunities to career paths advancement. The participant stated:

“It would have to be my parents not finishing school; they struggled to pay bills because of a low-income. I was youngest of eight in my family when my knee father died; dean of the middle child of three girls, I saw on nobody ever finished school.”

At this point in the interview, the participant’s voice crackled. I paused to accommodate the participant's composure and assured that the participant was ready to continue with the interview and was comfortable with the process. The participant indicated that she was ok and that her crackled voice was momentarily reflecting on

memories about how much she had grown since her childhood to her present circumstances.

IQ.02 stated, “What features about your earlier education experiences influenced your decision to attend college?”

IQ.02 was presented to the participant and addressed features of her early educational experiences, and how those experiences influenced her decision to attend college. Building on the responses to IQ.01, the familial background, she posited that in her parents’ wishes, hopes, and aspirations for all their children were that the children would build better lives than those that her parents experienced during childhood. In that vein, she stated:

My parents wanted it to be better; I am a parent and want something better for my children. It’s been five years since high school, and in between trying to attend college, I had to take maternity leave for my first child; time passed and didn’t return to college until recently.

Once again, even though she remained married, she and her spouse manage the household and childcare. The participant attended classes in the evening while her spouse attended to childcare at home. She explained that the arrangements were a blessing for them both. It afforded her the opportunity to pursue higher education and maintained quality time spent between a spouse and child.

Moving on to IQ.03, this interview question addressed the educational experiences (parents' level of education and career orientation).

The sense that the participant had already shared details of her background that included reference to her parents' education, this inquiry served as an opportunity for the participant to elaborate upon what she had already discussed with me. For her father, growing up in Mexico, meant he had the equivalent of middle school or junior high school education (eighth grade), and her mother eventually pursued a GED but did not complete the process. She stated,

“My dad was a truck driver, eventually my mother worked as a healthcare provider; part of their struggle and lack of education in this country had to do with the language; they don't speak English.”

In describing the participant's social and economic struggles that her family experienced, she indicated there were not the social issues encountered by her parents for her family (spouse and child) to confront. She indicated there had support from her extended family and of course, her spouse. She highlighted three circumstances that she thought characterized her economic struggle of present.

“...Struggling as a newlywed couple, my husband and I, it is tough; my job doesn't pay much and we are both enrolled in college. We work our schedules around our jobs and taking care of our child.”

IQ.05 explored the role of faith/religion in the participant's pursuit of higher education and his or her persistence.

Moving it to IQ.05, I turned to the issues of the role of religion and faith, or general outlook on life and its role in decision-making to pursue higher education. The participant stated:

"I feel like... well religion and faith is good; God gave us life, and it's my job to a better myself and my family. That's why nothing can stop us."

I did not ask the participant to elaborate about the level of active participation in an affiliation with a chapel, temple, synagogue, or church. I did not inquire to what form the religious and faith practices took in the family.

The F2F interview of F.104 lasted approximately 43 minutes and was conducted as one session held in a public high school facility shared with Southwest Texas Junior College.

The interview of the participant coded as F.104 was manually transcribed by me. The transcription based on field notes and recoverable audio recording of the interview conducted by me in March 2013 as part of my doctoral dissertation with Walden University and the community partner, Southwest Texas Junior College at Eagle Pass Outreach Campus, Eagle Pass, Texas. An individual profile for the participant was located in the appendices (Appendix F) and a matrix of key-word responses (Appendix

G). The interview took place off-campus in a facility used by the college that is the setting for this study.

F104 represented one of the elder participants in the convenience sample population selected for this study. The participant was eager to engage in the process and looked forward to the interaction between herself and me as the researcher in completing the interview and later participating in a debriefing session that would be planned after this study was accepted by the university.

In the initial greeting and moving into the interview, I asked the general question of all participants—SP.Q—that served as an icebreaker between participant and me as the researcher conducting the interview. The details of the response were placed in Appendix F. Moving to the first question, IQ.01, I asked the participant to describe her familial background and its influence on our decision to pursue higher education. To this question, the participant responded:

I'm first and family to start college; in the 90s, back then was in a relationship that team workout it was abusive, culminating circumstances and the loss of a family member back home, force me to return home and live with my family. So I had to stop going to school, and until recently, I didn't have much interest in returning to school because of the time that has passed. I am lucky today was my husband and two children whose support I have 100%.

Of the interviews that I completed and reviewed alongside my field notes, this was one of two cases where the female participant experienced domestic/spousal violence to the extent it was necessary for the participant to abandon the relationship and find shelter for herself and minor child. Those events in both cases impeded the original plans of the participants to pursue higher education during the traditional timeframe associated with attending college.

Other emerging pattern and not at all unfamiliar to many first-generation, Hispanic college students were the stories of immigration by their parents in search for a better life for themselves and their children in the United States. Case F.104 resoundingly pointed out that as part of her journey to today. She stated:

“From Mexico, I was 15 years old; my parents left all the family there because they believed this country would offer them and their children a better future. So that my five sisters could see the American dream in our lives, we are here.”

In connecting the participant’s early educational experiences and how those experiences’ influenced her decision to undertake a college career, she explained it in terms of emotional and material values. She stated in her remarks:

“It’s my dream. I know I wanted to have a college degree and lots of money of course, but I was intimidated (scared) to leave on my own. My parents might have had the same fear as I left home. If I had to do it again, I would do it again differently.”

In sharing the educational experiences of her parents—at least those on which she was aware—the participant indicated that her father had little education, stating, “up to fourth grade, maybe 6th grade in Mexico” and continued, and that her mother had less education but in Mexico, being a domestic worker—cleaning the houses of the wealthy Mexican people—was how she helped support of family with her dad. The participant particularly emphasized the dignity and pride of the family resided in the idea of self-sufficiency and the family working together. She also expressed the value of hard work that her father had experienced from the early ages six to 10 years old, and in the current atmosphere of immigration reform taking place in this country, she concluded with the following statement:

“Dad... Well, he is illegal, he’s not a citizen. He’s the one who went up north, work for four years leaving us behind to work on getting an education with our mother. He was gone that long and came back, and then did it again.”

Moving on to IQ.04, the participant described her own social and economic struggles and how to keep her family together. She expressed optimism and felt while things were rough at times; her spouse and children would accomplish the dreams that caused her parents to sacrifice as they did. She reflected on her marriage and children stating:

We are ok for now; not much money left after the bills, but they’re paid; this recent year has been the best for us so far. I am worried if I will have to go back

to work, it will interfere with the number of classes that I take next semester, but the opportunity to work for the state, well, is good, and I can make up time during the summer.

Asking about the role of religious/faith practices in guiding her decision to persist in her college career, IQ.05 also reflected one tenet of the traditional Hispanic family: the role of religion and the mother's management of developing the faith within the home for the children (Skogrand, Hatch, & Singh, 2005). The participant focused her response on the relationship about religion being a source of motivation that guided her decisions and kept the family central to her role as wife and mother. She briefly pointed out the idea of being the role model when the participant stated:

“(Faith) motivates—an example for my children—myself (me) being the model like their father. As they grow up, they can see options are real to my kids at any time. It is what we do with the gifts we have received.”

It was important to note that I made no specific distinction between religion/religious and faith practices; I avoided the labeling to reduce personal values and beliefs influencing the participant's SDR and intimidating biases. Rather than using a restrictive definition such as Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or other denominations within the broader categories of established religions, the idea was to allow for a free flow of ideas that expressed the participant's sense of internal and external forces that cannot be measured as in the number of hours one works, the time spent in managing a household,

or the number of credit hours representing their educational endeavor. Also, by this eclectic or nonsectarian approach asking participants to share the role of faith in their lives and its influence on their decision—such as to continue in their educational endeavor or retreat from it—participants were free to be candid about their practices.

The F2F interview of F.105 lasted approximately 42 minutes and as in previous interviews, was conducted as one session in the same facility as previous interviews. The participant identified as F.105 began with referring to the family's history and her background; the participant shared experiences about growing up. In describing her background, she explained:

“My dad went to 6 years of education, and my mother, 2 years; both in Mexico. My family (is) hard-working people. The important thing to be raised in my family was ‘respect’ more than education.”

In responding to IQ.02, “What features about your early education experiences influenced your decision to attend college?” the participant pointed out the need to do better than her parents. She stated:

Now that I'm older, I got my GED and worked in HEB being a cashier. I decided to go back to college because at my job now, I am a phlebotomist at the local plasma donation center; this makes me interested in becoming a nurse. I need to go to college.

As previously revealed in the background of the participant and family history, she indicated that her parents' level of education was substantially lower than viewed as normal in the United States for a similar age-group. The participant elaborated on the question, IQ.03 and stated:

Father is very good person; tells me stories of growing up with 16 brothers, and he was the oldest. In the Mexican family, especially in Mexico, that means he has to work to help the family. He managed factories later in the '40s and '50s and went to technical school later. My mother is so sweet (shy); I guess she was raised the old way working as domestic (housekeeping).

In responding to IQ.04, the participant's earlier comments—intuitively—pointed to a socio-economic status filled with struggle and a harsh range of poverty. Her responses to the question validated this assertion. In the current family structure and home life, her father resided with her family because of illness. She indicated there were some economic challenges in the beginning of the living arrangement but had improved.

The role of religion, faith, and personal philosophy (e.g., an outlook on life in general) was examined in connecting the meaning of SOB in IQ.05. The participant responded enthusiastically about her faith and practice as being an integral part of her plan.

F. 105 stated, “I believe in God. In a way, it’s about me trying to do my best with the things I have, ask in prayer for help (e.g., strength, energy, health), but much of it is on me.”

Drawing a connection to the inaugural address of JFK in 1961, that God’s work on earth is truly man’s responsibility; the participant agreed that was how she viewed her connection to faith, God, and her task.

I interviewed participant coded, F.107, during March 2013. The F2F interview lasted approximately 54 minutes. The participant and I met in a reserved, unoccupied classroom for the interview. F.107 was a female participant in this study. This participant’s was not selected to be professionally transcribed by either one of the services that I engaged to provide hard copies of participants’ recorded interviews for this study. The following content reflects the responses by the participant, F.107, to the interview questions (Appendix C) captured in the audio recording of the interview and in the anecdotal remarks written by me in this study. As researcher in the role of interviewer, I maintained creditability and trustworthiness of the data by the coalescing the participants' responses from both sources of data collection. The coalescence of that data follows.

Case F107 was a female student who enrolled in the institution where this study was conducted. She was a single parent with a minor child residing in the same home. After responding to SQ.P, the discussion moved into the interview proper.

In describing her family background and its influence on choosing to attend college, the participant indicated that she was the first generation member of her family to attend and hopefully, graduate from college with a 1-year certificate in a technical-related field with the potential of pursuing a 2-year program of study. She stated:

Of my mother, she never attended college, she got a GED, but apparently my father did it but in college and earned an associate's degree. At 40, years old, recalling that education in the home was limited, I wanted to get something before growing older, and maybe, I would regret not doing something more that helps me take care of my child. Before it was too difficult for me go to school. Now, that my child is older and more independent, I am free to pursue something I've always wanted without taking away from my family –son.

The basic motivation expressed by the participant in responding to IQ.02 was to provide a better opportunity for her as the child matured into adulthood and made her way into the world. She expressed the following thoughts in regard to that concept.

“Better myself, I don't want to work at BurgerKing, or Wendy's for a living; I wanted to be educated.”

The participant went on to respond to IQ.03 and shared some information that had already been noted by me in IQ.02; however, in a brief elaboration, the participant shared information about her younger sister.

My younger sister is earning dual credit in high school; those credits will transfer to this college, and when she graduates from high school, she will have ready a head start. That's more than I started with; she's my inspiration and supportive for attending college. She will be the second person in my family to attend college.

It was important and appropriately noted in the responses from the participant about her parents' background—especially, in regard to education attainment—the father's level of education could not be verified by the participant and thus, reflected those comments that placed her educational endeavor as being the first generation to attend college.

The interview continued as I presented next set of questions to guide the interview and capture the essence of the participant's experiences and perceptions in her words and voice. IQ.04 asked the participant to describe the economic and social struggles of her childhood family and that of her own family in the current situation. She began by sharing:

It didn't seem that my basic needs were not met; having children very early was a struggle for me, but I continued with high school briefly but had to drop out; I do get my GED. In that way, I continued with school even with a child. Fortunately there was no struggle with my divorce.

I noted the importance that the participant placed on continuing her secondary education by earning a GED; for her, as for other people, the GED opened the door to a

higher education. In other comments from the participant regarding divorce, the inference that the process was sufficiently amicable and relatively free of stress, allowed the participant to move on with her life and child.

Instrumental in many of traditional Hispanic families is the role of religion, its practice, and faith in guiding the person alone endeavors of individuals. The participant indicated that she was raised in the Christian tradition of Roman Catholicism; however, she stated that she was not practicing at this time. She concluded with the comment, “I’m not very religious.”

In the last few days of interviewing participants, the process coincided with the ending weeks of the spring semester at the institution where this study was conducted.

F.110 was a female participant who was interviewed at the conclusion of the spring semester 2013; the interview was held on the main campus in the administration building’s conference room. This case represents a person who was senior to all other participants in this study.

The F2F interview lasted approximately 58 minutes. The participant verified the accuracy of the information she provided on the demographic survey, was presented the official Consent Form and asked to sign the form, and then the interview started.

In her opening remarks to SQ.P (Appendix F), the participant with the sense of humor made it abundantly clear that she was enthusiastic about her part in the research on nontraditional Hispanic college students. In her later comments, the impression was

affirmed when she spoke of the different kind of transition or adjustment for students in her age group and life experiences went through in returning to college unlike those traditional students that walked from high school—across the proverbial street—and began their higher education experience.

The participant, F.110 responded to IQ.01 describing her family background and its influence on her decision to pursue higher education. She cited both early years of experience growing up, and our own experience as working through life as a spouse and mother, being separated and divorced, later widowed, and a son that was grown, and currently serving in the military service in Afghanistan. She stated:

Again, it's been over 20 years since I was in school; I have some credits in my background. As far as my family, ever since I can remember, my parents coming from Mexico my parents are unable to help me in elementary with my homework because of the language barrier. (Her parents spoke only Spanish.) And of course, it can get better as I went up in grades to high school. So I can say there was not lots of support for education, but told by my mother, 'you can do this' was not enough for me at the time. At 16, I was married and left home. I lived with my spouse through a marriage that lasted 12 years and ended in divorce. I had enrolled in school by that time for the semester. That only lasted a short time because of work and childcare, and emotional wear of coming out of an abusive relationship was too much for me.

In responding to IQ.02, the participants regressed connecting family background in growing up, the transition to being a younger mother and spouse, and sharing some of the ramifications of having experienced an abusive relationship that she was strong enough to leave behind and seek a new beginning in which she specifically stated that it wasn't easy. In further elaboration on IQ.02, the participant stated the following:

I moved out of the area, a mom with a child was growing up, I needed to work to support him in myself; the nest is empty now. Now I can look at myself, consider other skills that I have learned through life and work, and financial stability for later means a career in Health Care. Fear pushed me I think, and I am eager to finish what I started a long time ago. Finally, when I call my son I was going back to school, he was really excited.

F.110 inferred that she had resilience and continued to redefine her person, embraced new challenges, and brought with her a substantial amount of life learning experiences and a work ethic that translated for many nontraditional college students into academic success. The participant spoke of a pattern suggested in the literature on the SOB and its influence on student persistence in college with regard to nontraditional students (e.g., Kinser & Deitchman, 2008). Just as F110 pointed out, researchers indicated that those qualities were particular to older, mature students rather than traditional, first-year college students (Barnett, 2010; Shah, 2010). Continuing the interview, I turned to IQ.03. I sought to flesh out further detail about the participant's

parents' education and career background (e.g., work history) that contributed to the likelihood of attending college according to the current literature that examined parents' education as a predictor of college enrollment and persistence (e.g., Westbrook & Scott, 2012). The participant responded by stating:

I think my father was oldest of 11 children only way to the second grade in Mexico, and my mother went further, to the sixth grade. Most of the work needed support the family at the time was agricultural—they worked on farms much like migrant workers for some time—and later, because my dad had good math skills, he was able to work his way into concrete-construction once he was in the United States. Eventually, he became a supervisor for well-known engineering company here in town. My mom had the same kind of start: getting married about 16 years old, having me and siblings, and being the typical Mexican mother-spouse of the family comes first; they divorced, and mother is still alive.

The recurring theme within the traditional Mexican (Hispanic) family details the cultural values and beliefs transcend contemporary generations. The casual observer may incorrectly conclude in light of the rapid acculturation and assimilation of current generations that a potentially diminishing influence of maintaining the concept of *la familia* is consequential, but *la Familia* remains the quintessential construct understood from the traditional Hispanic family looking outward. *La familia* carries a great deal of importance and responsibility even in today's acculturation of the Hispanic people;

however, the current participant might be described as being on the cusp of the paradigm shift that we see in today's single-mother, Hispanic women that are not necessarily taking a spouse, but holding to their independence as much as possible and making their way through life and the challenges it presents to them.

It is difficult for the outsider, such as a person who has not lived within a predominantly Hispanic community and among its people in such proximity as I, to grasp the nuances or subtleties as participants shared their experiences and perceptions. In this study, it was particularly important from the observer's perspective as an insider—who experiences the values, beliefs, and practices of the Hispanic people and its unique local color (e.g., small or rural community along that Mexico-United States border)—where the influence and co-mingling of cultures is constantly reinforced through commerce, social and political, and familial factors. Thus, while I was vigilant in maintaining an unbiased interpretation of the data garnered from the F2F interviews, I cannot divorce myself of those experiences and bodies of knowledge gained from lived experiences as invalid sources to infuse in interpreting the data, presenting the perspective of an insider in contrast to one who has not lived and worked in the environments in which this study was carried out. ry much part.

Moving on to IQ.04 the discussion turned to speaking to social and economic struggles that the participant and her family had experienced, and the implications of for

moving ahead, changing the pattern of influence, and persisting her goals and aspirations defined here and within her heart. The participant, F.110 responded stating:

Of course growing up dad was the provider in the family and as far as lacking things, there was poverty by today's standard, but we had food, shelter, and clothing. For me, the first year I was married, my husband worked as a migrant in Montana; that was in for us, he joined the military, and we became a military family. Those are helpful experiences now that I'd look at back at them because the post-divorced life gave me some independence to start again. It was tough, but I manage on \$174.

The participant discussed in general, her perspective on the role of religion and faith in her pursuit of higher education and what role it played in her persistence. In response to IQ.05, the participant stated:

In my life's ups and downs, faith has played a role in my getting out and moving forward; I have resilience because I'm strong, strengths alone me to grieve as needed and pick up the pieces. Before my son left for the military, I had told him I have to do this for him – my guardian angel – the strength in my son is part of that faith.

The current literature that examined the characteristics of nontraditional college students such as participants in this study and particularly in the interview of F.110, I noted no specific reference to resilience among adults. On the other hand, the absence of

a discussion that focuses on adult resilience with respect to life's journeys and its challenges, particularly among women in pursuing higher education as in the example of Case F.110, seems to hinge on the resources that can be garnered from an intrinsic, nonmaterial source that combines faith and a parental love that continues beyond the developmental years and chastened into adulthood.

In the interview, I presented the same introductory information and overview to the process that was to take place. The participant was assigned the code, M.103. He received the confidentiality letter, signed it, and the interview commenced. The exchange and recording the interview with M.103 lasted approximately 57 minutes. M.103 was not selected for transcribing. I interviewed the participant during late April 2013 and electronically recorded the following responses in addition to my field notes to the IQs presented. The responses recorded and annotated with selected quotes represent an accurate account. Excerpts taken from the participant's responses were integrated into the narrative that follows.

In the third interview of male participants, M.103 stood as an example of a nontraditional student with a common set of experiences reflecting the traditional Hispanic family values that include the role of the oldest male member providing support to the parents in lieu of pursuing higher education. Typically, students from challenged SES backgrounds were more likely to postpone their own pursuits and work on behalf of the family. While the participant indicated that his family did not have as great of a

struggle as other families in the community, he pointed to a strong sense of family pride in being self-sustaining. The participant stated:

“My family didn’t struggle as much as others. I helped my family before considering college; we don’t take handouts.”

In addition to his familia first, he viewed his educational endeavor as investment for the future; getting married and raising a family was something that he wanted once he had graduated. He stated:

“I want to help people through my career of being an RN eventually. Get my degree and married; I want kids but need to be able to support the family.”

Returning to the beginning of the interview, M.103 had been a student in one undergraduate course that I taught; he was categorized as a Tier 3 participant as outlined in Chapter 3. He expressed interest in my research and believed it was something needed. He stated:

“It’s about time that someone looks at the nontraditional student going to this college. It’s tough on a lot of us.”

In responding to the interview questions and naturally occurring follow-up inquiries, the participant talked about his early experiences and source of inspiration. He drew from family members, eventual support for him to attend college, to advance his opportunity for a better life.

“My parents don’t have a college education (degree). My father and mother graduated from high school; my mother is a licensed cosmetologist in town.”

The noted pattern of responses across several questions indicated the importance of family. In responses to IQ.01, IQ.02, and IQ.04, the participant, M.103 pointed out the need to help his family to meet living expenses. Likewise, the purpose for pursuing education when the opportunity presented itself without impeding family obligations were to provide for the future family that he would have, and to help his parents through a high-income position as an RN noted in responses to IQ.05.

In IQ.01 – IQ.05 the participant emphasized the importance of helping others, helping the family, and postponing his education, through his work at the pharmacy and in the future career as an RN complemented those values that he expressed. He tied those ideas as defining his person, and how he saw his sense of community. In thinking about belongingness, he indicated that working with people, his family, and a sense of welcome were essential experiences to keep him focused.

In further elaboration, the participant pointed out the role of religious belief (faith), relationships with peers and instructors, and the opportunity to have a sense of social integration with the collegiate community were valued. He stated:

I am Catholic but not religious in thinking about my goals. I guess it comes out in my wanting to help others through my career in nursing. I have friends in some of my classes who were also in the high school with me. You know how small Eagle

Pass is. You get to see lots of people from high school somewhere or another. I would describe my social life more like an adult than being a college student. Working and classes don't leave me time to have the college life. I mean the clubs and stuff. I would like to belong to a career club, but it's hard with work and school. Goes the same for instructors; I go in and out of classes. My instructors are pretty easy to get in touch with. I use the portal and email them if I have a problem.

The issues of social-academic integration and institutional climate were considered in the literature to be circumstances affecting the participant's psychological sense of belonging/community. Those issues influenced the student's persistence in his or her higher educational endeavor and were examined. Interview Questions, IQ.06 and IQ.07 focused on participants interacting with fellow students. IQ.06 and IQ.07 corresponded to Research Subquestion.2: examining the role of social integration in defining the participant's sense of belonging and its influence on their persisting in their educational program.

Research Subquestion, RSQ.02

Research Question, RSQ.02 stated, "What are the social experiences that contribute to nontraditional, Hispanic college student's desire to remain committed to his/her program and degree attainment?"

The first of five subquestions within this theme on social and academic integration examined areas of traditional influences on a person's persistence to complete their higher education endeavor. IQ.6 asked, "What have been your experiences interacting with fellow students on this campus?" In responding to IQ.06, the participant stated;

I haven't had much interaction with peers or organized groups like clubs that regular students belong to. It is work from 8 to 5, school on the days I have class and family don't leave much time for much else. There are study groups for projects and assignments to help each other before class. I would like to, but all those things happen during the day when people like me, the older students, are making a living and supporting our families.

IQ.07 asked the participant to describe their involvement in student activities and organizations sponsored by the college. In part, while response to IQ.06 was confirmed with these comments made by the participant when she stated,

My major is criminal justice. It would be good to have an internship or hands-on experience earlier in the program. A psychology club that meets in the evening rather than the daytime and offered seminars would be good, too.

The statement decided points to schedules and functions focused on serving the traditional student and forgetting the nontraditional student attending the institution. It's about schedules that hinder nontraditional students' broader participation in college

organizations. The participant added, "Maybe if some of that could happen on weekends, my spouse and I (me) could get involved."

I noted during the interview with regard to IQ.06 and IQ.07 that family cohesiveness and school schedules were paramount in influencing the participant's continued effort to pursue higher education. In regard to sense of belonging, the participant's making of meaning can best be described as a function of the familiar set of circumstances. While it appeared important to be involved in student activities and college-sponsored organizations—that kind of involvement promotes positive experience and strengthens sense of membership—access to those organizations and their functions were not compatible with nontraditional college students enrolled at the institution where this study took place.

Responding to IQ.06 and IQ.07, Case F.104, the participant illuminated IQ.06, social integration, an established predictor of college student retention as a function of sense of belonging, and the participant responded by stating:

This last semester wasn't too well. Not too many friends, but it's the age difference that keeps me from moving beyond the necessary interaction like working with other students on a class project assigned by the instructor to be in a group.

As I took field notes and the cassette recorder captured the words of the participant, I noted one issue—that concerned the eldest participant who had been

interviewed and in two other interviews of female participants—age difference experienced by the female participants did not emerge in the two interviews with male participants at the time. The casual observation—at the time—began to lead me to an early conclusion that the difference in the level of concern between male and female participants required further fleshing out in the remaining sample population. There was an 11-year difference between the oldest male and oldest female participants; the male being junior. One comment that emerged in the conversation on the issue of age difference was the perception that younger students—encountering significantly senior students in classes and on campus—held a high degree of respect. The kind of respect that might best be characterized as paternal when F.104 stated:

“It’s generational. The younger students are respectful toward me, and I learn from them. It’s like my own kids. Maybe that’s why there is some kind of balance between our age differences and why we are all here in college.”

Once again, let the reader return to the concept of *la familia*, with attention to the role of the mother-wife (spouse) in the Hispanic culture. The age difference, dictates a degree of respect and courtesy toward F.104 by the younger students that she encounters in class and doing other functions related to her pursuit of higher education; in fact, it is more likely that she enjoys broader acceptance and deeper respect than peers-to-peers within the younger or conceptualized, traditional college student (Cox & Monk, 1993; Hispanic Research, 2006; Skogrand, Hatch, & Singh, 2005). Moving on to IQ.07, I asked

about the participant's involvement in student activities sponsored by the organizations on campus. The function of groups and clubs with various purposes fulfill a sense of belonging needs as the plethora of literature indicates (e.g., Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). The participant responses to IQ.07 while disheartening, reflected the reality for most nontraditional students attending college—generally, part time, limited number of classes, and usually night-time (after 5:00 PM) enrollment—when the regular business operations of the college have ceased. The participant stated, “I’m not involved at all; my days are work and all of the activities that I do are with work and family,” stated the participant, F.104.

The next participant, F.105 as previous participants, responded to the question on social integration that described the experiences with fellow students. F.105 stated,

Actually, I haven't socialized in that sense; my work, full time and classes, and then the time to study, plus take care of my family doesn't leave time to do that. I like to, but can't. I use the student center, and sometimes I can talk with other students.

F.105 responded and connected to her earlier statements saying:

Like I said before, I don't have time to do those things, but I do use the student center (tutorial services) – I have too! There is some time for interacting there; maybe when younger and different classes, I would do more.

The experiences of interacting with fellow students, while essentially a positive factor in building a SOB, was seldom possible for the nontraditional college student in contrast to the traditional college students; that pattern or comment remained central in other participants' responses to IQ.06. For example, participant F.107 stated:

Really good at working with classmates; the 18-year olds, I don't find problems with cooperative work in class, but it's a little different when it comes to out of class assignments like working on a class project in a group. Then, I try to get into a group of students a little bit older because they tend to be more serious than the younger students sometimes. Even the study group activities are limited because of my work (obligations outside of class).

In a similar pattern, another participant indicated that she was not active in the conventional SOB defined as connected with campus organizations such as sororities, career-oriented clubs, or campus-sponsored festivals and fundraisers. The participant's perspective focused on those in the latter category that generally benefitted only traditional college students enrolled at the institution. Generally, because those activities were funded by monies raised through student fees and held on campus during times when most nontraditional students—like the participant—were at work. Students like the participant rarely have the time and her focus, was the obligations after work to spend time meeting the family needs.

In starting with IQ.06, F.110 indicated that she had reservations about returning to school because of the time that had lapsed since last pursuing higher education. The participant responded as follows:

My earlier fears (was) were fifth in the classroom lots of younger people levels of life but in the same class. So my interacting with other students is very limited. I don't have a PC at home, so I use a library most of the time, and I noticed sometimes how some of the younger students do not take it seriously. It's supposed to be a place to study not play with cells and carry on about stuff that has nothing to do with being in the library.

The participant went on to elaborate about her background. Having worked around professional people in her previous employment grounded her study habits such as keeping on the task and using college facilities to meet the goals that she had set for herself. She felt because of her age, and of the distinction that life's experiences bring with maturity keeper focused and preferred to be independent of the cliques of students working in small groups unless she has no choice. Further elaboration indicated her perspectives were relatively positive when it came to interacting when necessary; she also alluded to the personnel and staff of the administrative offices as being helpful.

Moving to IQ.07, the second question aimed at focusing on social integration, was put to the participant. Endemic to the construct of social integration and nontraditional

college students, the participant's remarks reflected a similar pattern of disconnect of that which traditional college students experienced. The participant stated the following:

None, except for the time when I donated blood sponsored by college group, I think it was called the Awareness Project on campus, and going to the library where I might briefly encounter a classmate, it's very limited. One other group that I briefly associated with on campus was poorly organized, and it diminishes a broader appeal to people like me who found it to be wasting my time. Maybe spearheading a caring organization for older woman, support for women in my situation or just older women coming to college and have different obligations than younger students.

I continued to present the questions to each of the participants and process through the interview. I noted that most participants were engaged and enthusiastic about sharing their experiences; it took little effort to have the participant open up. IQ.06 and IQ.07 examined relationships and perceptions of belonging and sources that fed the psychological wellness of belonging and community of the participant.

In contributing to the participant's SOB, influencing his continued pursuit of higher education, M.103 emphasized the importance of being welcomed and feeling supported by others around him or with those persons with whom he engaged on a regular basis. Clearly established, was his importance placed on family and tied to his future, his current educational pursuits. In both male and female participants' responses

to IQ.06 and IQ.07 expressed similar values and beliefs about family, time management, and extra-curricular activities that traditional students took for granted as part of the college life experience.

Research Subquestion, RSQ.03

Research Subquestion, RSQ.03 stated, “What are the academic experiences within the institution and outside of it that contribute to the student’s sense of belonging and persistence to graduation?” Interview Questions, IQ.08 thru IQ.10 were directed at establishing a pattern of data to support the RSQ.03

IQ.08 focused on academic integration. S.Q.08 asked, “What are your experiences with accessing the college’s student support services at this campus?”

In regards to ease of accessing the college’s student support services, and the importance of flexibility in that access, and such access was described by the participant’s experiences related to his or her to persist in their educational endeavor. The researcher noted the response as being negative. It was not that the institution did not make a number of services available to students (e.g., computer labs, tutorial services, and other support services center on campus), but much of the access was limited to a business-day operation and further limited after 5:00 PM when many of the nontraditional students are in class. The obvious inference is the student at being two places at once; either the student loses out on class attendance and secures the additional support services needed to be successful in their endeavor, or are they attend class.

Students must place their hope in the instructor's help during or after class suffices in meeting the students' need. To that extent, the participant stated:

Not really any problems for normal students attending school; it's difficult to get to everything during the day when you work. The support center lacks people who can help you with some of the problems. The counselors, when you get an appointment, are helpful with planning the semester with me. I'm lucky because my husband and I can work together.

Ask and to characterize their interaction with their instructors in class and out of class, the next two questions related to academic integration, IQ.09 and IQ.10, revealed a mix of sentiments based on the participant's experiences. IQ.09 examined relationships and interaction with instructors, administrators, and staff in and outside of class. IQ.10 asked, "What is your sense about the instructors' commitment to helping you succeed for the classes that you are enrolled?"

In responding to IQ.09, the participant stated:

I find and then to be great; only need to ask when I'm confused, or I don't understand, there are any two explain. I can have a teleconference with some instructors and email them others; I you like that more than the personal phone call unless I am with the instructor in class.

In responding to IQ.10, the participant stated:

Instructors? They just never shared—active learning and getting the students involved in the class most of the time—they know the subject and how to explain it, but it would make it easier to study and be more successful at learning if we had different ways of doing it. They are interested in helping us learn and passing the course.

Addressing the issues of access to support services made available to all students through the institution, the responses to IQ.08 set the discussion to address academic integration. The participant known as F.104, indicated in her response to IQ.08 that contact with instructors outside of class for mentoring purposes was rare. She told me that she would not use most of the services of the support center (e.g., computer lab, library, and study center) because of her work schedule and the business hours of operations those services practiced.

Again, the participant's responses are endemic of the nontraditional college student interviewed for this study; the additional explanation, however, may be more revealing of the reasons the participant does not want to use those services and facilities. She stated:

“Not feel comfortable because of my age; not like when I am in the class. I use the city library and their PCs and print out things there, too.”

In responding to IQ.09, the issue focused on the participant's interaction with the instructor during class and outside of class and a capacity as mentor. Consistent with the

participant's comments of relationships with her peers and accessing student support services to enhance her academic likelihood of success, similar limitations were reported in based on work and family obligations. She did express, however, no willingness of her instructors to meet when she had questions about the content of a lesson or concerns about her progress. She explained:

"The two classes that I have, are taught by the same the instructor; she is available after class and students can even text message her cell phone if they have questions. I feel very confident talking her about any matter."

Access to the instructors outside of the class, level of confidence expressed by the participant also extended into a positive regard responding to IQ.10. Asked to characterize the commitment of their instructors to helping the students be successful and realize their goals for attending college, the participant indicated that this was where the age difference of being older than most students in her class, was of benefit because the instructor can see the genuine interest in seeking out the instructors help. She stated:

I think we older students can see it better than the younger ones because we have so much a life experience it doesn't color our perception of about the role of the instructor and my dedication to seeing us succeed as does the younger students who might the instructor's demands as a battle between them and the instructor.

IQ.10 concluded questions designed to elicit responses about the perceptions and experiences of the participants in this study regarding academic integration following that

Tinto models (e.g., 1987 & 1993) and derivatives from Tinto's recent adaptation of his models (1997) as found in, for example, Hurtado and Carter (1997).

Participant, F.105's interview shifted attention from social integration experiences defining the participant's SOB toward the academic realities of college education. IQ.08 asked the participant to discuss her experiences in getting support from the institution and accessing the services available to students (e.g., advisors for scheduling, career counseling, financial aid, academic support centers) as a nontraditional student.

"The student success center is very important to students like me that come later to school. Also, after 16 years of being out of school, the counselors are very supportive. This helps me continue in school."

In regards to experiences with faculty, (instructors), academic progress (e.g., grades, GPA), Next, I posed IQ.09 to the participant to solicit a response connecting the institutional functions (e.g., guidance, financial aid) with academic through interactions with faculty. The participant indicated that a similar pattern of interaction with her peers existed between she and her instructors were limited to those necessary to achieve the completion of course work.

"I have 2 classes this semester; the instructors are available before class and stay after for a while if students have a question. They can be called or send email about something that you don't understand. I can ask in class."

IQ.10 was an important consideration in contributing to a student's SOB and influence on their willingness to persist in their pursuit of higher education, and particularly at the specific institution. The participant's responses reflected a sustainable source of encouragement emitted from institutional support staff and instructional faculty that contributed to the learner's SOB. The participant saw this relationship as instrumental in her continued persistence.

“(I’m) Trying! They are doing it by the time in class to reinforce the lesson; they explain when I don’t understand. Instructors here want students to be successful.”

Shifting the focus to academic integration, the second prong of Tinto's model explaining the persistence of college students was addressed in IQ.08 through IQ.10 of the questionnaire. The participant (F.107) responded to those items, stating the following:

The student support center, but especially the writing center at Sul Ross, Rio Grande College, (are) was very important for students like me who had been out of school for a while. The counselors have been real helpful, and the financial aid office—I had no idea of that would be beneficial to my situation—I’m pleased with all the services that I have used.

In responding to how the participant characterized her interaction with instructors in and out of class, she indicated that in her interactions with students for other reasons than study groups, group discussions in class, and working on a group project outside of class, there was little to no interaction with the instructors that she had in the past or

current instructor. She expressed a very positive perception of about having access to the instructors before and after class to ask questions, and while she did not look favorably at using the Internet (email), that was available, too. The participant with great enthusiasm, F.107 stated,

“I have very good Instructors; you can ask some questions, and they help you even if you see them in the hallway between classes, if they have time, they will stop to try to help you.”

The participant's response to IQ.10 resounded within an old school paradigm that placed responsibility for one's success on the individual with the support of the institution rather than the contemporary attitude of the institution was responsible for my failure, but the student was responsible for his or her success endemic to the attribution function found in the self-serving bias construct. The participant expressed an acute need to sensing of the commitments by Instructors was made evident by their pedagogical practices. She stated:

The instructors are pretty fair...It is the hands on lessons that keep me involved.

When real life situations can be used, that helps me understand better. It's not just lecturing. As the student has to get engaging in the learning; college if not holding your hand anymore, like high school, and that some students think should happen.

Research indicated the reason why nontraditional and college students or withdraw or dropout has little to do with their academic integration respecting college

success, but it was a matter of familial and work (employment) obligations with that impeded their persistence. The institution's student support services were among the key ingredients for student success as literature pointed out (e.g., Ross-Gordon, 2011). The ability for a student to access those services would be a reasonable expectation of that fits within their life schedule—balancing to work and family obligations with being a college student—can be a problem for the nontraditional student. In response to IQ.08, the participant, F.110 indicated that access to a number of support services were impeded because of her other obligations that traditional students may not have to experience. She stated:

While positive, I'm not employed and can focus my time I'm getting things done during the typical business hours that rule their operation – open for business.

Unfortunately, professionalism among some staff that I come in contact with is lacking; for example, the financial aid staff that I have encountered is too accustomed to dealing with the 18 to 22 year olds and had no idea how to work with someone in my age group home tend to be more autonomous than younger students.

IQ.09 focused on instructional staff (e.g., instructors, tutorial) helping the student. The participant was asked to characterize his or her interaction with instructional staff. It is a matter of knowledge that within the faculty of the institution where this study was conducted, more than 60% of the faculty was part time and had no prearranged advising

schedule or for that matter, even an office where to meet with a student. The participant responded in a positive manner of about access to instructors before and after class to discuss academic concerns. She noted that in class, she never experienced a time when an instructor failed to provide additional elaboration when a student asked for it. She did, however, disengaged it might sound, explained her perspective on higher education, and the lax attitude that she perceived among many students attending college today. F.110 stated:

While it's good; access to instructors outside of class, for those who have an office, you can go there and talk to them about your problem. Sometimes you need to meet with them before or after class because they are part-time and hard on the campus all day. They are helpful, but for the tough questions; we're in higher education, and the idea is to develop, grow individually, and not be led by the hand to answer.

The participant's remarks once again emphasized issues addressed in the current literature on the differences between traditional and nontraditional college students; the latter group of learners was portrayed as possessing a substantially different perspective on responsibility for being successful, their obligation to meet the expectations of the instructor, and accepting of the institutional authority, notwithstanding any unfair practices. Also, as this interview unfolded, I could not ignore the importance that the nontraditional student placed on efficacious support from administration, their autonomy

to make decisions based on abundant information that was easily accessible to them, and then—educated with the information—approach the institutional personnel to put into action what they had perceived correctly and needed to be successful in their higher education endeavor.

IQ.09 and IQ.10 underpin the discussion on academic integration. Focusing on the role of instructors and their commitment to student success and how the participant perceives that commitment plays an important role in student persistence and in defining sense of belonging. The responses to IQ.10 by the participant reflect the emerging pattern of independence, maturity, and an expectation that respects her autonomy. She stated:

Individually, different reasons why they are engaged in teaching; good and bad. Send a lot of their way trying to get the most out of the subject to the student a few, frankly, have no place in the setting. There's a little of both. Like any experience, the more time in this institution, learn more about this place; some good and not so good.

For M.103, the male participant, in responding to IQ.08 and IQ.10, the participant, M.103 indicated that his instructors,

“Have been great; they are flexible and work with me on issues about attendance because of work schedules.”

He also indicated that the quality of expectations from his instructors was as he put it “...make you work for it; it's good that they challenge me.”

He believed that his instructors were committed to his success, but he had to do the job saying, “As long as the student is making their part (students).”

He described other faculty and staff at the college as helpful; remembering the first time he registered, the participant posited his experiences as being mixed. In the end, he explained his experiences as being good, helped him feel that he was part of the college. It was important to him to have the help of counselors who explained all the points about financial aid and the people who helped him set up his schedule of classes.

Research Subquestion RSQ.04

RSQ.04 addressed institutional climate or the campus environment with subquestions, IQ.11 and IQ.12. Research Question, RSQ.04 stated, “What role does cultural diversity or its absence in the institution have in contributing to a sense of belonging and persistence among nontraditional, Hispanic college students?”

IQ.11 opened the theme on institutional climate. IQ.11 asked, “How would you characterize the campus environment at this college?” IQ.12 addressed ‘welcomeness’ extended to students and asked, “To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statement about your institution, ‘This campus/institution makes me feel welcomed and important?’”

Turning to institutional climate, IQ.11 encouraged the participant to discuss those experiences and perceptions of interacting with the institution having contributed to making meaning for their sense of belonging and community. While there was relative

consistency across previous responses given by the participant and those responses can categorically be described as generally positive, perception of the institutional climate was due in part those experiences derived from engaging with faculty and support staff in both formal and informal settings, responses reveal no significant responses that can be characterized or construed as negative based on the experiences of the participant. In responding to IQ.11, the participant said that one concern arose from the increased enrollment and finding a parking space when coming to college; although this was not critical in this participant's meaning of sense of belonging or influence on her decision to continue in her endeavor, it was an observation worth noting.

Indirectly, access to parking that is convenient to walking distances and buildings, and consumers' perception of safety and secure surroundings is important; this seems to be especially true for unaccompanied, female students making their way to and from the buildings to attend classes reflect similar concerns exposed in a study of community colleges—Community College of Philadelphia—Grossett and Sears (2000) cited both parking access and well-lighted areas (parking lots) as elements to address in institutional climate's category of perceived safety of the campus.

Following the brief remarks made by the participant and me, the interview continued to and IQ.12 was addressed. The participant was asked to what extent does she agree or disagree with the statement, "This campus and institution makes me feel welcomed and important" as a function of institutional climate, How it contributed to the

participant's construct of SOB leading to the likelihood of her continued endeavor. The participant stated:

I agree, because it's my opportunity to finish school here, and it's easier for me and my husband than having to go out of town – even if it is just Uvalde's campus. The most I feel is that the instructors are the ones who make us feel important; I go to see the counselors about financial aid and getting my schedule already, they make you feel welcome, too.

Here, as researcher I wanted to note the reference to Uvalde's campus was referring to the main campus—the original campus founded in 1946 on the grounds that served as an auxiliary air force base during WWII and remained an active airfield for civil aviation purposes—at one time offered a technical program in aviation mechanics, but to my knowledge, no longer did. The distance between the Eagle Pass campus and the main campus located in Uvalde is approximately 75 miles that require travel along old highways and farm-to-market roads with the nearest town been 45 miles away from Eagle Pass. The average traveling time varies established 15 miles on the outskirts of Eagle Pass of that way if traffic delays at the checkpoint, the average traveling time characteristically will be up to 90 minutes.

I redirected the participant's (F.104) and moved on to questions about institutional climate, and how the environments (IQ.11 & IQ.12)—physical and psychological aspects of the institution—contributed to the participant's SOB and the degree of community that

she experiences, and the subsequent influence of SOB in decisions all about persisting in her educational endeavor. F.104 responded as follows:

First, I don't see lots of adults are older stored in some classes; so I am kind of by myself when it comes to really having peers in the true sense of that word; I take it also to mean someone that is not only doing what you're going, but if they have other things related with you like being close in the same age, maybe they are married, and have children.

The participant, while she meant to convey her experience of feeling out of place, she did give credit to the younger students for not making her feel bad. She stated in conclusion:

"It's a blessing that other students don't make us feel bad that we are here."

The interview continued focused on institutional climate. I posed the next open-ended question for discussion, IQ.12, asking the participant to indicate an agreement or disagreement with the statement, "This campus/institution makes me feel welcomed and important."

In a study on mattering and marginality of urban Latino males in higher education, Huerta and Fishman (2009) cited four recurring themes. One of those four themes was the importance of environments (e.g., physical space, literally speaking). In another study on the issue, a cumulative report on community colleges in Philadelphia (Grossett & Sears, 2000), the study focused on five factors constituting institutional

climate. In that report, one of those elements was a perception of the students feeling they were part of the community and belonged on the campus. In responding to IQ.12, F.105 (participant) stated:

"Yes, there's a lot of information on financial aid by the invitees are, and counselors are very helpful in planning my program. The counselor helped me make the decision come to school; I was afraid to return to studying because it's been a long time."

The goal was to flesh out the sense or perception held by the participant about how welcoming and important the institution contributed to his/her meaning of SOB, and the potential subsequent decision of the participant to persist.

Yes, I would agree that the school makes me feel welcomed and important; as much as anyone else here, that is. The first time I registered, I didn't know anything about what to do. The counselors and other people in the office explained) grades, requirements for my program; I had no clue about it. It was nothing like high school in Arizona; that was hard, and no one seemed to speak Spanish at the time.

The perceptions of institutional, campus climate, according to the responses given by F.107 were limited because as she had indicated, she spent little time on the main campus. The courses in which she was enrolled and attended took place at the high school. Contracted by the college to accommodate the overflow of college student enrollment, the campus facilities at the Eagle Pass Outreach Center have a limited

number of classrooms even after a recent expansion. The participant stated in regard to climate and perceived sense of welcome and personal safety (IQ.11), there was not much concern.

The main campus is a friendly place; I never had a bad experience except one time using the library; I need some help but of the work-study students that were there did not help me or didn't know what to do. As far as safety, I'm not too worried about it because none night classes using the high school has lots of other students coming and going, and there are security people out in the parking lot.

The main campus doesn't have any security people that I know of, but I usually go there during the business day.

In responding to IQ.12, the participant stated that she agreed with the statement of a feeling welcomed and important by the institution and his representatives, both administration and faculty, and her peers comprising the student body also contributed to her perception of being in a friendly place and part of a community of learners. One of the contributing factors that she believed was that most students felt the same way. The college is a small campus, and its enrollment is predominantly local residents of whom, many students have prior friendships through their high school years. The participant stated in closing,

“You can't have that in a large college or city where the colleges because there are too many people from different places, not like here” (Case F.107).

The participant, F.110 responded with some unfavorable comments. Among those comments, she stated:

“If I weren't (wasn't) from this area originally, having resources that make my effort to attend college easier, I wouldn't go to school here. I wouldn't send my son here because the institution is lacking a lot.”

Among all participants interviewed to date, as researcher, I found F.110 expressed the most provocative remarks concerning institutional climate and in particular, the participant's perceptions about an institution of that holds the distinction of being recognized as one of the top 10 community colleges in Texas and within the top 120 colleges nationwide in 2011 by the Aspen Institute. While that distinction earned through responses made by students, faculty, and administration through a number of surveys, the review of hard data such as graduation and retention rates, enrollment, transition to a four-year institution, and assorted demographics does not invalidate the participant's perceptions or experiences that bring her to believe things that are counter intuitive to the recognition given to the institution. The participant went on to elaborate about this issue when she stated:

Universities and colleges invite perspective students, but this' too often those students end up coming back home for a number of reasons; one it seems, it's too difficult out there, and they are used to any easier way of earning their grades. We don't have any programs that stand out or facilities. The structure seems off

unprofessional or limited professionally because much of the faculty and staff are not from a lot of the area as I have seen in other places. It makes for the same kind of politics in the community that also overrun the school in some ways.

IQ.12 focused on a statement and asked the participant to what extent that she agreed or disagreed with the statement (e.g., feeling welcomed and important as a function of institutional climate). The participant indicated that almost everyone smiles, engaged in perfunctory greeting when encountering them on campus, and to some extent, feeling welcomed was not as important as getting the resources for the student to experience success. F.110 stated,

Important? No, too many of them (instructors) here are doing the job for a paycheck. An example is the library—one of the few things I do use—the staff, just don't seem helpful.

On the other hand, M.103 indicated there were some points of concern regarding the differences that he perceived in being a part-time, nontraditional college student versus the typical post high school graduate entering college within a year of that event. Comments to IQ.11 and IQ.12; for example, he emphasized while the community is small enough to get to know other people there isn't enough support for the nontraditional student's access to services.

“Most of the college runs on business hours, and we students who work during the day can't make it take care of business unless we can get a day off from our boss,”

The participant explained. He indicated it was important for the college to look into changing some of those shortcomings.

Moving through the last few questions, I asked of the participant, a recurring pattern of engagement with peers, instructors, and administration (e.g., counselors and department advisors) was an important element of defining the participant's belongingness and sense of community with the institution. He emphasized the importance of the institutional structures needed to support his continued investment in education because of his future plans to transfer to a 4-year university in Texas, University of Texas in San Antonio (UTSA). The quality of learning that was happening experiences that connect to the career he was pursuing, and course transferability.

Research Subquestion, RSQ.05

Research Subquestion RSQ.05 stated, "Does instructor's ethnicity influence sense of belonging and persistence of the student population?"

RSQ.05 focused on cultural diversity within the institution among its faculty, instructors, and the general student body influenced the participant's emergent construction of a sense of belonging and its role in motivating the participant to persist in his or her educational endeavor in the current college setting

IQ.13 examined the relationship of cultural diversity respecting the student body and the participant's sense of acceptance, belongingness, and safety; and second, it sought to establish the relationship of the instructor's ethnicity/race as an influence on the

participant's sense of belonging and community affecting his or her continued engagement with higher education and the current institution. Both research subquestions and the interview questions addressed in the F2F interview are categorically related; however, because of the overspill between IQ.11, 12, and IQ.13, I focused on the latter in this segment of the findings based on the participants' responses that connected to organizational culture and institutional climate as naturally occurring themes.

The Interview Question, IQ.13 from the interview guide (Appendix C) stated, "This is campus is best characterized as a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) because of the ethnic makeup of a predominantly Hispanic/Latino/Chicano population. Do you sense that a lack of ethnic and or racial diversity diminishes your opportunity to learn?"

The findings, based on the responses recorded from the participants, suggest that cultural diversity in the broad sense and specifically the role of ethnicity of the instructor does not have a significant influence on SOB. Responses to the question, IQ.13 indicated a level of influence characterized by such phrases as "culturally, not significant," or "yes, critical issues on student achievement," and then, a mediocre perception characterized by "in a way, migrant college students" with respect to responses based on gender, there was not a significant pattern of differences between recorder responses from male or female participants. For example, four of the nine female participants believes that the issue of diversity was not important or significant in contributing to their sense of belonging or likelihood of persistence at the current institution; two of the four of the male participants

were equally committed to the perception shared by the four female participants who indicated that diversity was not a significant factor or predictor in defining their sense of belonging or persistence.

On the other hand, the findings indicated a relatively neutral sense of importance of about cultural diversity all among the faculty and staff of the institution, and the student body as a whole. For example, the practicality of diversity in the institutional setting being in a predominantly Hispanic community and its geographical location to the Mexico to the border diminished the likelihood or expectation of a diverse faculty and student population in the perceptions all of both female and male participants in this study. For example, F.105, F.103, and M.103 indicated in their responses that geographical location and demographics of the community were reflected in the institution's and ministration, faculty, and general staff, and equally represented in the student body; as one of the participants stated,

“It's no surprise, who would want to come to a small community that is removed from any major city, with the close interstate highway more than 100 miles away, and a varied limit limited employment opportunities?”

Within the neutral-oriented responses, of those perceiving the importance of diversity, and of those responses by participants suggesting lead diversity is not a significant factor in the overall issue of sense of belonging and their willingness to persist at the current institution, the underlying impetus or basis of their responses falls within

broader categories or themes: cultural diversity as a means of enriching the educational experience and the other, safeguarding or maintaining cultural heritage. Among female participants' responses, while saying it was not culturally significant because of the size of the college and its location, the participant (F.101) acknowledged the potential value in having a more diverse to the student body add faculty then the current status. F.102, while stating that it "was not really important" made the distinction with the proviso that it's "the learning that is more important" but did acknowledge in a similar fashion, diversity would contribute to creating a more interesting environment. Among the male participants, other than the factor of geographical location and demographics of the community, M.104 believed it was not a disadvantage to have a narrow body of demographics represented in the institution because the institutional focus was on developing marketable skills within a short span of time, and this was especially true for nontraditional students.

Both male and female participants suggested that the lack of cultural diversity contributed to a less efficient or efficacious institution affecting academic rigor and student enrichment, and to some extent, an extension of the political montage of sitting and ecology an agency's corrupted officials found the community at large that is becoming a state-wide and to some extent, on the national stage, a "little Columbia" because of its drug related activities. For example, among male participants, M.103 posited

“There is too much familiarity, and an attitude of "Go with the flow and instructors who seemingly are more concern with their ratings then academically challenging students for fear that they (students) would not meet the expectation.”

Similar sentiments were found in the responses of female participants; F.104 was not as prolific in her pronouncements of hollow the lack of cultural diversity negatively contributed to the institutional climate and academic quality of programs and courses offered by the institution. She stated, "There are some critical issues on standards that are set by instructors. In some cases, a student passes with a higher grade than should be.” By default, a more diverse faculty and student body would bring a broader perspective and new ideas for students to experience, was suggested in the participant closing comments on the issue.

F.111 responded with similar patterns that focused on enrichment, broader and more diverse thinking, and a reduction in the biases because of the saturated influence of the Hispanic culture although she is Hispanic. The participant stated,

It was very important and a lack of diverse background all among instructors affected the quality of instruction that could be passed down to students who themselves in several cases, have limited cultural experiences outside the immediate community.

Along similar thoughts of hollow a lack of diversity among the faculty impeded enriching student learning through authentic and vicarious experiences. F.110 stated,

It's a loss of learning opportunity; (instructors) use the same old ideas and ways of teaching it. Both instructors and students would benefit from diversity among instructors and students, and it might down on sum up of the biases students experience at this college.

Some students spoke to the political tones of the institution and its cultural organization in connection with enriching or limiting quality of instruction that students experience in the classroom. Their responses varied, but a significant theme emerged. The institutional climate was defined in terms of diversity as a solution to existing systems of bias, political overflow from the community structures into the institution that was perceived as impeding the quality educational experiences that might otherwise be happening if it were not for those negative forces born from a lack of diversity evidenced in the response of F.104, 106. 110, and F.111 and among the male participants M.103 and M.105 indicated similar concerns in speaking to their perceptions that help define what it meant to them to experience a sense of belonging.

Certainly, if the dicho, '*familiaridad rasas desprecio*' (familiarity breathes contempt) has an impact on the institutional climate as perceived by the participants in this study; their response to IQ.13 underlying RQ.5 is evident from the findings by me. The responses to IQ.13 in examining the research question, RQ.5 on cultural diversity and its role in the construct of participants' SOB in this study as disseminated from the qualitative data are at best, of minimal influence on participants' decision to persist, too;

at worse, some of the participant's responses may be tell-tale signs of underlying problems of organization culture.

In responding to IQ.13, the concerns of students' perceptions of cultural diversity as a function of institutional climate and the absence of racial hostile environments, according to the current literature, indicated a mix of sentiments except in the extreme and obvious cases of ethnic and racial biases that students experienced on campus and in the institutional-related community (e.g., Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007), cultural diversity in the student population contributed positively to developing a greater sense of belonging than under circumstances and in institutions where diversity among the student body and faculty was less prevalent; for example, in predominantly white institutions (PWI). No evidence in the current literature addressed the issue from a perspective wherein the institution is predominantly HSI with a predominantly people-of-color student body and faculty (e.g., Sanchez, Colon & Esparza, 2005). In responding to IQ.13, the participant stated,

We see a lot of bilinguals here because we are so close to the border. The mentality, can't have a degree is less important here are than other issues because that's one fight that doesn't take place here because we are mostly Mexican.

I noted the response to IQ.13, and I asked the participant to elaborate. The participant suggested that within the culture was a strong presence of that commonly called, *envidia* or envy. Within the culture, the term does not carry lightly across the construct of Spanish or the Hispanic cultural connection. On the contrary as it was explained in times past, ‘yo tango mucho *envidia*’ (I have lots of envy) directs a cultural imperative to undermine and even sabotage, plans and aspirations of fellow Hispanics out of resentment for making it out of the depths of disparity.

In my experiences since the early years of coming to the community and in the process being welcomed into a Hispanic family, I had the opportunity to learn firsthand about the inner intricacies of the Hispanic culture. I learned about the nuances held within the values and beliefs that underpin the central core of values and beliefs commonl shared across the culture. Anecdotally, I recalled two significant accounts and explanations of the concept, *envidia* as an interwoven construct based on a history of disparity within the people’s experience stemming from a nearly relentless onslaught of conquistadors starting in the 1500s through their own revolution in the 1900s that finally gave some relief to social and economic woes for the common citizen and independence as perceived in our contemporary political society. Dr. Jose Lujan’s anecdote about Hispanics and achievement and Martha Linda Bermea-Maldonado, an activist in the late 1960s with Jose Angel Gutierrez with the La Raza Unidad movement in Crystal City, Texas and in the southwest regions of this state serve as the two sources of explanation.

Ms. Maldonado also served on the board of directors for the first women's clinic established in Crystal City as a result of her activists' activities with La Raza Unidad (RUP). Among the accolades associated with Ms. Maldonado, the clinic's dedication plaque and bears the names of all directors; her name being one of those directors. She was a recipient of the Chicana of the Year award for her efforts in promoting Hispanic access to services and government's programs and citizens' rights. Ms. Maldonado's contribution to social change took place before the term became a buzzword in the literature and historical conjuncture that was difficult at best for anyone of color to pursue stands testament to her resume and authority on the issues.

Dr. Jose Lujan served as a professor with Sul Ross State University for some time. He reminded his students (e.g., this researcher was one of the students, and who, at the time was beginning his career in studying for an endorsement to teach ESL/Bilingual education) the problems confronting Hispanics were sometimes from within the Mexican culture. One of his favorite anecdotes on Hispanic culture was a story about envidia. He used the story of two ant jars. One jar had a lid, and the second jar was left opened on the storekeeper's counter.

As my recollection goes, in telling the story was a lesson for all students about themselves and the children they were teaching. Simply, the Anglo observer asked the shop keeper, a Mexican, about the two jars with ants, and reason for only one of the jars

having a lid. The Anglo reasoned that the shopkeeper had an explanation about keeping the ants from getting out all over the store from the lidded jar.

The shop keeper explained the ants in the lidded jar were the Anglo-like ants.

“You see them climb up and as these ants reach the top—before one gets out—he lets another grab his leg, creating a chain-like effect; you know how,”

The shopkeeper continued the tale.

“and eventually, they will all get out,” he said.

“On the other hand,” explained a shopkeeper, “these are the Mexican-like ant, and they don’t need the lid on the jar to keep them in.”

“You see,” said the storekeeper, “As one of us nears the top of the jar and is about get out, the ants strain to bring down the escaping ant. The Mexicans don’t help each other as do your people help each other.”

The current body of literature on the contribution that cultural diversity makes to the institutional climate in defining students' sense of belonging to the extent that it influences their decisions to continue in the pursuit of higher education remains mixed to some extent (e.g., Anderman & Leake, 2005). IQ.13 reflects on the topic of diversity in both respects of the composition of faculty and staff, and makeup of the student body. Unlike urban settings, either in four-year major universities that are generally located within urban or suburban areas, regional or community colleges, the 2-year institutions located in small towns and rural areas can experience limited cultural diversity as a

reflection of the communities' composition of its ethnic and racial population as in the current setting of this study.

The example illustrated here, was the setting for this study—Eagle Pass, Texas—was a predominantly Hispanic community situated along the Texas-Mexican border. Its location places it far from any major interstate or city—the nearest major city by a distance of at least 125 miles—is Laredo, Texas. Similarly, the geographical isolation, also limits the institution's pool of potential and qualified faculty from the local areas. SWTJC, according to its website and public information, nearly 70% of its faculty were adjunct members teaching part time who resided in the communities and held adjunct faculties at one of the three major campuses comprising the college system of Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC). The participant indicated that she believed it would be beneficial to increasing the diversity of both faculty and student population. One of the barriers, she believed, to improving language learning, and those skills associated with good language knowledge, would begin to break down from the lack of practice in the language of using English instruction that does not take place at the college level at times. She stated:

My experience with classes is that because many of the students are not efficient users of English, to say that they don't speak the language very well and often, are even less able to express themselves in writing when it is necessary for an assignment, forces many instructors to lower level of learning so not too many

students will fail; the instructors that don't do that I am not as popular with the students are one of those instructors who expects those students to learn because this is college- and I like that.

After that stunning revelation, and while I probably regained facial composure from glowing red compared to my generally pale face, and not sure if the participant's last few words were a backhanded compliment, I continued with last few questions in the interview process.

The campus's location to the international border with Mexico and the predominantly Hispanic community in which the college sits forms the characteristics of the institution being a predominantly Hispanic serving institution (HSI). The ethnic-racial diversity of both faculty and student body are dictated by those factors. While research indicated diversity was influential in students' decision about persistence, the findings were mixed but worth some attention in research on SOB. IQ.13 focused on this issue. Participant, F.105 shared her perceptions about the importance that she placed on having a diverse student body and faculty. Her response polite and terse, she stated:

“No, most of us are Hispanic; we are used to each other – the language (e.g., Tex-Mex, Spanglish), but it would enrich the environment some.”

Finally, on the concept of institutional climate's characterization of the campus environment: sense of safety, ease of access, and friendliness of atmosphere, I asked the participant, F.105 to describe her perceptions in IQ.13. Because the participant spends

little time on campus, utilizes online services as often as possible to accomplish scheduling and registration, and functions other than attending classes, her remarks were limited to the classroom and peers, and encounters with faculty already discussed. She did state,

“We get along really good; students; it’s not like in the college movies (e.g., referring to movies like *Animal House*); everything is pretty calm. It is warm and inviting climate (campus) and stress free mostly.”

In the responses to these IQs illuminating RSQ.5, F.107 stated that she – rhetorically speaking –

What can we do? It’s where we are, and that won’t change, but limited culture can be good for students who need to focus on learning all about themselves and the studies they need to earn their degree. People know one another, and that can be good, but at the same time, I would like to go to college in San Antonio, there are more classes, other opportunity that’s not here-or maybe Austin- you give up the sense of knowing things you were used to.

In noting the response to IQ.13, I wanted to ensure that the readers of this study would understand the geographical references to San Antonio and Austin, Texas; the former is a city with over a million in population situated some 150 miles east of the community in which the participant resides. Austin, well popular with the traditional college crowd, is about 200 miles away and is the capital the state of Texas. Both cities

host branches of the largest state university systems within the state. University of Texas attracts many students transferring from the 2-year community colleges from around the state and especially from the Eagle Pass community. In fact based on my own experience as a faculty member of the institution that as the setting for this study, students generally refer to San Antonio as ‘little Eagle Pass, UTSA’ because of the number of college-age Eagle Passians that flee to the big city.

The next interview to examine response to IQ.13 was, F.110. Cultural diversity as an issue for discussion on the topic of sense of belonging and community, its influence on students’ decisions to persist in their educational endeavor barring evidence of ethnic and racial hostility, is inconclusive in some studies and offers a mixed result influencing those decisions discussed in other studies. Much of the research behind those studies took place at predominantly white universities or PWIs where people of color are relatively new to the institution; often, a very small population of the entire student body is where at times those students reported a sense of disconnect with the institution.

In so much as the institution that was the setting for this study can best described as a predominantly Hispanic-serving institution (HSI), the issues of ethnic-racial bias or hostility was a mute concern that was a focus at PWI according to some studies (Hayden, 2010; Hurtado, et al.,2006). In regard to how any larger and diverse student body and cadre of instructors—from outside the community—who bring with them multiple experiences that contributed to broadening students’ awareness of multiculturalism and

instructors' pedagogical practices were of interest in this study. As researcher, I saw the participant's responses to the last few questions and IQ.13 as inter-related. The more diverse the experiences that a student brought to the institution—in this case, the setting of the study in which she or he enrolled—the greater perspective to draw from in the learning process. Those experiences informed their perceptions about the character of the institution. F.110 indicated the following in her remarks:

Yes, it's a loss of opportunity for students to experience how other people live and work, how people come to decide about their careers, and along with book learning, we become educated and a better person because we now have more understanding about people outside our own community and culture. It's difficult being on a border in a small town no matter where the border is or where to a small town is. This might be especially important since we are a small town and get most of students from here if there would be more faculty member from other areas or at least with experiences outside our area.

M.103 was not overly concerned about the issue of diversity on campus. He pointed out that it was unlikely to change given the location of the community being a border town. He stated:

"It's a border town! What else can you say (Rhetorically speaking)? If you never lived along the border of Mexico, you wouldn't understand. You know that commercial about Texas, 'being a whole other country' fits Eagle Pass to a T."

IQ.14 and IQ.15 were intended to refocus the dialogue on the participant's effort to synthesize the quintessential factors or predictors of their willingness to persist in their plan of higher education, and how they made meaning from their experiences and perceptions in defining their SOB or community as nontraditional Hispanic college students. Refocusing the discussion that underpinned the last few interview questions brought the interview back to the central research question; "What are the experiences and perceptions (real or imagined) of nontraditional, Hispanic college students enrolled at a 2-year community college in Southwest Texas that influence their sense of belonging and persistence to graduation?"

Research Subquestion, RSQ.06

Research Question, RSQ.06 stated, "What are the other experiences and perceptions of the institution—real or imagined—that contributed to the nontraditional Hispanic college students' SOB and persistence to graduation?"

IQ.14 and IQ.15 examined predictive events and expectant outcomes reflecting the body of experiences already accumulated by the participants influencing their SOB and likelihood of persisting into the next term.

Interview Question, IQ.14 stated, "As a prediction of your future success, what factors, issues, and events might influence your persistence at this college?" Interview Question, IQ.15 posited, "What are your expectations for this semester (e.g., academic, social, and personal)?"

IQ.14 and IQ.15 addressed concerns over issues and circumstances that might impede the participant's future success and help clarify the factors that would most adversely affect his or her higher education plans. In these last few interview questions, I wanted to flesh out any nuances that added meaning to participant's SOB. The participant stated:

“Barring tragedy, nothing will interfere with (my) finishing college and getting my associate's degree in criminal justice. While it is a struggle, my family that is to say, I mean my husband, and I am stable enough to manage.”

In predicting her future success, the culmination of the current semester and general outlook on life, the participant indicated that she was within a few semesters of completing her program. She would graduate, finding a job as quick as possible, and stated:

“Making my family proud of my accomplishments and building a better future for my own children with my husband,” saying with a familiar ring, “we can do this!”

She concluded her response.

The interview concluded with thanking the participant and reminder the participant of the contact information to use if she had any questions or concerns.

I asked the participant to share her thoughts and predictions about her future success and those things that would contribute to or hinder her in pursuing her higher education. IQ.14 was intended to elicit a sense of planning for the next academic term

(persisting) and how the participant would manage the challenges that might present themselves in the process. Again, keeping in mind the differences between traditional and nontraditional college students was paramount in capturing the essence of the nontraditional student's world of realities rather than the theoretical frameworks frequently that inundated quantitative methods of research while ignoring the national voices of those participants studied. To this end, the participant responded to IQ.14 as follows:

My husband and I are expecting another child, and when that happens, I take time off to take care of the baby. The opportunity to work for the state—it's a good position—and the money is good, too; it will help me and my family with a new baby coming. I can save some of money to pay for classes when I return after taking maternity leave. There's time before the baby take care of a few things.

In responding to the last question to the interview, IQ.15, I asked the participant to share some of her expectations that embraced academic, social, and personal areas of the participant's life for the current semester. The participant responded to IQ.15, she stated:

For now completing the two courses successfully will be very important. They will help me professionally as I work my way into a career centered on nursing. I want to work in the medical field, maybe like a Home Care nurse because the hours can be flexible, and that is important to me as a mother and wife. I want to

spend time with my family, but (I) also want the resources that financially help my family (, so). We can enjoy a better life than struggling (to struggle) from paycheck to paycheck (like we do now). (But) In my personal life, well, you already know part of that is going to be with a new baby coming. For the summer, I want to take two classes that are prerequisites for the nursing program in fall, 2013; if I don't get and then, there's like a year waiting until the next group starts. It's going to be a challenge.

The interview was concluded. I expressed my appreciation for the participant's effort in sharing her story about the journey of pursuing her higher education dream, and her aspirations that would result from a better education. I recognized and thanked the participant for her interest in my scholarly efforts to give the voices of the nontraditional Hispanic college students' presence in the scholarly body of research that addressed SOB, and its role in influencing whether some students give up or keep on trying to reach their goals.

Asking the participant to reflect on her journey to this point, I sought to capture a sense of the individual hopes projected in the words and voice of the participant. The participant responded favorably to both SQs. She began by stating:

I want to continue with education; my job helps) with school schedule. Love to have a degree and money too. Two things make me stay or go: financial aid and

well, GPA: how well I go in my classes. I missed the THEA by a few points and can't take certain classes until I pass it.

In continuing with IQ.15, the participant focused on three areas of importance: academics, social, and personal goals, and achievement. Two of the three areas were of most concern for the participant: academic achievement and personal wellness.

“Continue to try my best; I have 85 in math class and 77 in psychology. I don't have any social expectations like joining clubs at school; I want to set a goal to finish school in December.”

Bringing to a close the interview with F.107, she shared her thoughts about future success and what she needed for her to achieve it. IQ.14 asked the participant to discuss the factors, issues, and potential events that might affect her continuation in working cord earning her certificate. Her response, as I noted, was became a familiar refrain among single-parent mothers participating in this study. F.107 indicated the need among all women in her situation with minor children was having access to child-care being paramount in their continued effort. This participant indicated her concern by stating:

“Kids! It's all about my kids, I don't want to live with our oat been able to a provide for them; I don't mean the luxuries, but the things all kids need from their parents—in my case—as a single mother, I'm it.”

The last question, IQ.14 was intended to elicit the participant's perceptions from a predictive nature in which she viewed her expectations about the present semester and

her sense of planning for continuing toward earning the certificate or diploma she was currently pursuing. The participant reiterated a number of considerations that influence her future decision to persist. The refrain of family obligation and balancing employment while attending school could be a source or impediment to continuing. The second refrain as mentioned previously, was the availability and affordability of the childcare as needed, and a third factor predictive of the participant's continued enrollment was access to financial aid—especially monies that would not increase her personal debt after college graduation—and remaining qualified to receive it. She stated:

Support from my family, the source of me having a sense of belonging, is an important if I will continue in school; keeping the important things first—my kids, my work because that is where I get my money to support us all. The other stuff I already said; you know, child-care, financial aid, and probably the courses that I need, so it doesn't take longer than it has to for me to graduate.

Once again, as in bringing closure to previous interviews, I extended my sincerest appreciation for the participant's willingness to engage in this study. I expressed positive regard for her plan to earn her certificate and plans for the future. I encouraged the participant to stick with her decision to persist in her educational endeavor and graduate with the certificate/degree is pursuing. In closing the interview, the participant remarked that she had enjoyed the experience of being part of a research study.

Cases that did not come to fruition included two initial case interviews—completed the DSQR—but those respondents failed to accept the invitation to the interview. I noted that Case F.108 and Case F.109 were not completed due to participants' withdrawal from study and only portion of demographic data were collected prior to the main interview.

Again in thinking of the current body of research on nontraditional college students in contrast to those traditional college students that were often the center of many studies, I reiterate the point of distinction for nontraditional students leaving college had more to do with familial and employment obligations than academic integration. Of course, one concern among nontraditional students will often tend to have dependent minor children for whom they are responsible to shelter, clothe, and feed, there is the relative importance of being able to pay for their college expenses without impinging on the family budget. In this vein, the participant, F.110 indicated that she had noted some change from the beginning the semester of her educational endeavor to present. She stated:

Of course finances are always part of a problem, but it's workable. The support of my family, in particular, my son, and the resources of living in the familial home ease some of the challenges that I deal with at this age. I feel more at home than and the beginning as far as in conquering the younger students, but wish the staff were more compassionate for nontraditional students; they really don't understand

a higher education mechanics of students like me. The counselors need improvement.

The participant went on to discuss some of her plans as they pertain to continuing her educational endeavor. Once again the pattern of making a personal meaning of sense of belonging follows closely along the line of *la familia* connecting success in their higher education and pride of the family seeing that happen, a source of security for their children, and future security in their own declining years. IQ.15 sought to eliminate a sense of planning and aspirations that would fuel the participant's continued effort in pursuing higher education. The participant summarized her position as follows:

Is very difficult for nontraditional students to pursue and complete their education and build a career especially for Hispanic female students who were brought up to think—family first, and then you, if there's time—traditional Mexican values.

Being a single parent added to the challenge; financial stability is probably one of the biggest challenges that face single parents like (myself) me at the time and my son was younger. The possibilities of attending school need positive thinking and emotional thinking too, to get to the goal of graduating.

With the last response recorded and no further comments from the participant, I thanked the participant for her time and contribution this research study, and I offered the participant some words of encouragement to persist in her endeavor toward earning her degree; I referred to my own life's journey as an example that we were never too old to

go back to school and learn. After all, I was the researcher of this study with the goal of earning my PhD at the age of 62. Of course, that brought some chuckles and smiles as the participant and I parted ways.

M.103 brought to the center of many underlying issues and themes that emerged from the findings as he expressed his concerns about the institution. His plans called for transferring to a 4-year university to complete his BA responding to IQ.14 and IQ.15.

By the pattern of response across IQ.14 – IQ.15, it was not difficult for me to conclude importance on those issues related to academic integration (e.g., grades, GPA, coursework credit, and transfer to the 4-year institution) played a greater role in defining his belongingness and sense of community than concern about social integration (e.g., belonging to clubs, engaging in college-sponsored extracurricular activities). As in many of the other cases in this study, the ability to pay college expenses and limit debt after graduation was characterized as being critical to the participants' continued engagement.

The fluidity of engaging research participants and seeking volunteers was evident by the loss of two prospective female participants, and 1 male participant. The latter, began the interview process but was interrupted by an emergency, and he never was able to reconnect with the researcher to pick up from where the interview had stopped.

Participant, F.101's F2F interview lasted approximately 59 minutes and was conducted as one session in the one of the local high schools shared with Southwest Texas Junior College.

F.102 lasted approximately 41 minutes, and as in the previous case, was conducted in the same location. F.106, the F2F interview lasted approximately 59 minutes, and her responses to the RIQG were inserted (Appendix H). F.111 represented the last case involving a female participant who responded late in the process and near the point when my chairperson recommended closing the data collection and begin the analysis; this F2F interview lasted approximately 49 minutes.

Among the male participants, the shortest of all completed interviews recorded was M.102; his interview lasted less than 32 minutes (Appendix H). M.101, a participant who withdrew from the study and left a brief history to draw upon for this study, showed his F2F interview lasted approximately 25 minutes. The brevity of this interview was due to an interruption (cellphone call to the participant) at which time the participant terminated the interview. Unfortunately, the participant was unable to continue the interview at a later date and withdrew.

The longest of F2F interviews took place with the only veteran in the pool of participants; M.105; his interview lasted more than an hour and 10 minutes before concluding and thanking him for his participation. M.102's F2F interview lasted approximately 39 minutes.

F.101 was selected for transcribing of the interview and its inclusion in the appropriate section of the dissertation (Appendix H). F.102 was also selected for transcribing the recorded interview and inclusion in this document. This was the second

interview of a female participant in this study that was selected for a full transcript (Appendix H).

With a limited number of male participants, I selected three of the four male participants' interviews for transcription and included those in the appendices. In the matter of transcribed interviews, M.102 was selected and transcribed by Asher Consultants. The participant's responses to the open-ended interview questions were inserted in Appendix H).

Among the last participants to respond and complete the interview process, M.104 responded to the second call for participants coming to study in late April 2013, and while I sought to encourage additional male participants, I was only able to advance that goal by two male participants: M.104 and M.105. The F2F interview of F.104 lasted approximately 52 minutes and was conducted as one session in the CC Winn Campus, one of the local high schools shared with Southwest Texas Junior College. M.104 was the second of 3 complete interviews where the participant was a male, and the interview was selected for transcribing. Transcribing the interview was completed by Asher Consultants, and its hard copy transcript is located in Appendix H.

Having completed the transcribing of the interviews, those sent to a professional service and interviews that I manually transcribed using my field notes and the recorded interviews, I turned my attention to the general discussion.

The effort on my behalf as researcher, consisted of actively recruiting an equal number of men and women to represent both genders in this study; however, in the end, there were more female participants ($n = 9$) than male participants ($n = 4$) for a total of 13 participants completing the interview process. The latter number did not include the three participants who initially expressed interest in participating but were unable to keep that commitment for unexplained and explained reasons. In the end, the intended sample population in the proposal was 16; unfortunately, the sample was not attained. Further discussion follows in Chapter 5.

Summary of the Chapter

The body of Chapter 4 focused on the purpose of this study as a qualitative and phenomenological design using the F2F interviews or case studies of nontraditional Hispanic College students attending a 2-year community college located in Southwest Texas along the international border with Mexico. The study used a convenience sample of students ($n = 16$) responding to research study announcements that had been posted throughout the campus in conspicuous places such as a student lounge area and library, and public bulletin boards in the three main buildings that comprised the Eagle Pass Outreach Campus (EPOC) of Southwest Texas Junior College. The convenience sample was later reduced to 13 participants by expression of three student-participants' the voluntary withdrawal from the study.

The data collection methods consisted of three documents: Appendix A, Call for Participants, a flyer; Appendix B, Demographic Survey for Qualitative Research (DSQR); Appendix C, Researcher's Interview Questionnaire Guide (RIQG); and the essential, Letter of Consent, with the study code assigned by the IRB: 02-26-13-0060060. For further details about those documents, refer to the respective appendices at the end of Chapter 5. Aiding my efforts and increasing the efficiency of data collection and its analysis, I purchased and used on a limited basis QDA software. I selected and used Ethnograph.v6 (Qualis Research Associates, 2008) to organize the data collected from the narrative documents (e.g., DSQR); once I had organized the data, the software was employed to assist in the analysis of data.

A summary of the procedures in conducting this study were reviewed, and a summation of their content reported. Among those particular structures that comprised the procedures, was the structure of a 3-tier selection process designed and used by me to reduce the likelihood of bias, conflict of interest, and coercion of participants. Explanations of coding for identifying participants, maintaining anonymity, and confidentiality of interview content were also discussed at length and were consistent with the Walden University's IRB approval. Ethical and moral conduct standards related to me in the role of researcher-participant relationships were addressed in the content of the consent document.

Managing the study was a keystone for me as a researcher to be successful in the effort to complete this study and the Walden University program in the School of Psychology, PhD program. Organizational tools were strategies that were a good fit with my personality type; on the Myers-Brigg, I scored as an INTJ. I employed the use of binders to store documentation such as my annotated comments, a researcher's log in documenting cases and their status, and a rubric (Appendix G) highlighting words and phrases extracted from the questions that comprised the interview and underpinned the central research question and six subquestions. The use of audio recordings, both magnetic tape and electronic recorders were used to capture the voices and experiences in the words and thoughts of the participants that served as the basis from which I gathered the data reported in Chapter 4. All documents were stored in my home office safe that I maintained for related professional purposes. The security of a safe with only myself knowing the access code, assured that the confidentiality of the research documents and tapes were not compromised.

In preparing to report the findings, my chairperson, Dr. Rachel Moore, recommended that I use an approach that integrated the research subquestions (RSQs) with its interview questions (IQs) rather than presenting the findings in a case-by-case scenario. Adopting the recommendation was one major change that contributed to a stronger organization of the chapter. Within the body of findings, I summarized the data

collected from each participant's DSQR (Appendix B) and created profiles for each participant (Appendix F).

An opening dialog centered participant on the nature the interview using a single open-ended question, SQ.P (Appendix E). Those responses to the initial ice-breaking interrogative were recorded and summarized. Findings from the data analysis garnered through the F2F interviews were recorded and transcribed following the order of RSQs and Interview Questionnaires, IQs. I completed the summaries of interviews that were not transcribed by the professional consultant services that I contracted to perform the transcriptions. The summaries of those interviews were appropriately placed in the body of Chapter 4.

SQ.P was incorporated as an icebreaker and opened the dialogue between the participant and me. The responses from participants were summarized within the chapter. The professionally transcribed interviews of selected participants were placed in the appendices (Appendix H); that action was another recommendation from the chairperson, which as in previous actions, enhanced the quality of this study and its efficacious reading.

Moving into the discussion section of Chapter 4, I briefly restated the focus of this study, identified the population, and described the setting for the study. The chapter briefly discussed the theoretical and conceptual framework that helped structure this study. The discussion relied upon an extensive literature review and the original review

found in the proposal as approved by the IRB. The use of information from the other studies that were not represented in the proposal contributed to the scholarly structure of the chapter. I also addressed the influence of Hispanic family values reflected in findings, and I examined characteristics of the general population of community college students in compared to the population of the sample population in this study. I presented the potential problem of participants' responses to fit their perceptions of acceptable responses expected by me as researcher; the role of social desirability bias theory (SDB theory). SDR theory unveiled within this study was addressed adequately and reduced the occurrence of SDRs. As researcher and writer, I closed the section with assurances that SDR had not influenced the quality of data (e.g., participants' response) and transitioned to the next section within the discussion, issues of trustworthiness.

Along with issues of the trustworthiness of data, the equivalent of reliability and validity of data found in quantitative methods was disseminated under 3 headings: the effect of social desirable responses, member checks, and triangulation. The latter, triangulation continued with the writing of this chapter. A discussion about the thematic patterns that emerged from the findings was presented and made a connection in the broader body of literature on the topic of sense of belonging and persistence. Throughout the discussion section of the chapter, I referred to the body of current literature and made connections to specific studies cited. Because the study took place in Texas, I believed it

was necessary to limit portions of the discussion with evidence from the research that targeted Texas population of community college students at large.

In bringing the discussion section to its close, I briefly discussed issues that focused on age difference, gender, and comparison of traditional and nontraditional students as significant to this study.

In Chapter 5, I brought closure to the body of research emerging from this study and with it, upon the approval of the chair and IRB, the completion of the dissertation as a scholarly product of several years in preparing to attain the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology, PhD. Beyond the additional initials behind my last name, in my reflection at the end of the coming chapter, I revealed socially significant issues of the scholarly pursuit in which I endeavored for these past years.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The chapter opens with a brief overview of the purpose and nature of this study. Next, the section Interpretation of the Findings, addresses the meaning garnered from thematic patterns identified earlier, and the influences of cultural diversity, and differences in traditional and nontraditional college students are examined. The influences of Hispanic family values and social desirable responding (bias) theory (SDB theory) in this study are addressed briefly. Moving from the Interpretation of the Findings and its subsections, I address the Limitations of the Study that emerged while conducting the study and make recommendations. The Recommendation section is subdivided into three topics: actions to pursue, agents of positive social change, and future study of the phenomenon (defining nontraditional college students' SOB and persistence). A discussion about the impact of this study is presented in this section; it addresses implication for positive social change followed by my conclusions. The Conclusion section consists of three parts: agents of social change, reflection on the researcher's experiences, and the closing statement. The study concludes this dissertation followed by the peripheral pages (e.g., references and appendices).

Purpose, Method, and Design

The purpose, method, and design of this study was inspired by the gaps in the literature reviewed on the issue of sense of belonging (SOB) and its influence on college

student persistence from the perspective, words, and voices of those persons ignored in the multitude of studies conducted at major 4-year universities and 2-colleges located in metropolitan areas examining SOB and its influence on persistence to completion (graduation).

Further examination of the literature on this topic and issue revealed additional gaps in the populations addressed and their academic status (e.g., part-time) in isolation from those traditional college students enrolled at respective colleges and universities to include nontraditional Hispanic college students, those students who did not represent the typical freshmen (first year) student. Thus, the purpose of this study evolved from those gaps in addressing the issues and experiences of a smaller group of college students who were not represented sufficiently in the current body of literature.

The literature review provided me an anchor for my choice of qualitative methods and a phenomenological design using F2F interviews, instrumentation, and measurement. Several studies were examined in the literature review. Some of those studies were seminal to the topic (e.g., Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tinto, 1975, 1983) and others presented a recent emergence of people of color (e.g., Hispanics, Asian, and Blacks) becoming part of the fabric of higher education students (e.g., Esquivel, 2010; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010; Strayhorn, 2008); and other published works, including books, were instrumental in making my choices of methods and design, instrumentation and measurement (Creswell, 2009; Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

Interpretation of the Findings

Meaning From Thematic Patterns

The evolution of patterns that emerged from the F2F interviews intertwined in several ways. Clearly, the popular phrase that “we don’t leave our baggage at the classroom doorstep when the bell rings” served as the mantra for the participants, whose words reflected their journeys. Their words, facial expressions, and body language revealed participants’ endeavors and persistence as they sought to earn a college degree and the role of SOB (e.g., common community). To guide the interviews, 15 open-ended questions—none of the question could be answered with a simple yes or no—were presented to each participant that hinged on a thematic or categorical relationship to one of the RSQs illuminating the central RQ (Appendix C).

Interview Questions IQ.01 through IQ.05 focused on the participant’s family and background experiences. For example, IQ.01 sought to have the participant identify factors that contributed to his or her educational endeavor. Current research and much of the pedagogical theory associated with student success hinged on early intervention and support in the home that promoted and valued education; in particular, early language development (including reading) contributed to student success in the early years of schooling (NCLB, Pubic Law PL 107-110, 2002). The evolution of fostering positive regard for education and its benefits in making college the likely choice after high school graduation and accessible to students was significant according to research studies

described on the government website for NCLB (2002). Respecting the cultural background in the relationship of early home intervention by parents and the likelihood of being successful in school played a significant role in the traditional Hispanic family; here in the community, the proximity to the United States-Mexico border played a significant influence on maintaining the traditional cultural practices and values among many families.

Responses to IQ.01 – IQ.05 formed the set of values, beliefs, and experiences that brought the participant to this point in his or her life's journey and what he or she defined, believed, and valued as factors of his or her sense of belonging and their influence on his or her life choices. In particular, the influence of a family connection that served to encourage or discourage the pursuit of higher education and sustain that pursuit to its logical conclusion, the student's graduation.

The next section of the interview document (Appendix C), IQ.06 – IQ.15 focused on the broader phenomenon of sense of belonging and common community influences on student persistence based on a thorough review of the current literature presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 traced the development of the theoretical and conceptual framework applied in earlier studies beginning with Durkheim's (1960) study of causes of suicide—suicide model and Spady's (1970) model—adopted by Tinto (1987) in the earliest of his work focused on academic and social integration as predictors of persistence to graduation. In the later formation of understanding the relationship between a student's

commitment to institution, program, and eventual graduation, the conceptual framework that defined SOB and common community emerged in the works of several later researchers broadening the framework to include the social and cultural paradigm shifts in United States society through the 70s, 80s, and well into the 90s reflecting progress in social diversity, recognition of the multicultural nature of traditionally-held, predominantly White institutions of higher education (PWI) having relatively large enrollments of minorities (e.g., Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians), and the advent of what can only be described as an emerging predominantly, Hispanic institution of higher education but not at the 4-year, university level. The 2-year colleges (e.g., community colleges, but technical or trade schools) geographically located in rural areas and small cities (e.g., population < 50,000), and those institutions in major cities, in southwestern states with large Hispanic populations (e.g., San Antonio Community College, San Antonio, Texas population of over 1 million people) with a Hispanic population of 58% had a population in which 49% is single, and the median age was 31 years old (Texas.com, 2014)). The San Antonio (SAN) Community College enrollment attracted 25,000 students according to the most recent enrollment for summer sessions, and 53% of the enrollment identified as being Hispanic according to the website State University.Com (2013) as depicted in graphic found in Appendix I

The relative importance of the former demographics supported the assertions made in related studies and by me of the magnitude of the growing body of Hispanic

persons attending college; they did not leave their culture at home. Unfortunately, the persistence rate, for example, at San Antonio College (SAC) was about 42% for part time students and about 53% for full-time students enrolled at SAC. In studies cited in the review of literature of this study, family matters influenced a student's persistence (continued enrollment to completion of the program). This appeared to correlate when the cultural factor was examined for the Hispanic student (State University.Com, 2013).

Fervently attended, I garnered the items in the section on social and academic integration from previous studies—both quantitative (e.g., Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tinto, 1987) and qualitative works (e.g., Esquivel, 2010; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010)—on which I designed this study's methodological and design considerations. The inclusion of an item that focused on institutional climate was added to this section based on recent conceptual frameworks of predictors and factors that either contributed to persistence or defined SOB, or in some cases, both defined the phenomenon of belonging—perceived and real—and the likelihood of persistence in the presence of negative experiences regarding the institution's karma of welcoming students, particularly minority students (e.g., Esquivel, 2010; Nuñez, 2009; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010).

IQ.06 and IQ.07 focused on social integration of the participant, IQ.08 – IQ.10 (Appendix C), academic integration, and IQ.11 – IQ.14 addressed institutional climate as perceived and experienced by the participant. The last two questions were included under the category institutional climate. The questions focused on the participant's predictive

measure of how their construct of SOB influenced their persistence, affected their continued enrollment, completion of the degree plan, and graduation. Those factors were influenced by their academic success and IQ.¹⁵ endeavored to approximate a future plan of action (Appendix C).

In relating themes to the research literature on SOB—the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of predictors or factors influencing the decision to persist, perception of belonging, and the personal definition of belonging (defining the parameters)—it was incumbent me as the researcher to mention the intertwining of terms that complement each other. The SOB from the individual perspective based on needs, wants, and desires, and sense of community did not differ as much as both described micro and macro levels of association and the effects of those associations perceptually or in realities. McMillan and Chavis (1986), although dated, believed that the psychological sense of community consisted of four elements or attributes: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. In the earlier works of researching SOB, Tinto's (1975) theoretical framework hinged on reasons for committing suicide and applied them to persistence citing a 2-fold construct: academic and social integration. Researchers such as Hurtado and Carter (1997), Rodriguez-Martin (2010), and Esquivel, et al. (2010) expanded the construct as one would add pieces to a table puzzle. Thus, the construct of sense of community (SOC) likened to SOB contributed to the apprehension of the thematic undertones in this study.

Influence of Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity within the institution as a significant factor influencing a student's persistence and defining his or her perception of SOB (IQ.13) was significantly divided along lines of gender and experiences prior to enrollment at the current institution; similar findings were derived from other research (e.g., Hayden, 2010; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Four of the nine females indicated that diversity in either student body or instructors was not a chief concern contributing to defining their sense of belonging and welcome. Responses included such phrases as "Not really important," (F.101), F.102 stated, "Earning the degree is most important," and F.104 indicated it was not important saying, "*No, es mexicanos.*" One participant took a neutral position. The other four female participants indicated the importance of having diversity at least among the instructors and then possibly building a student enrollment that attracts outsiders. F.104, 107, 110, and 111 indicated a positive attitude toward diversity and its role in enriching their educational experiences that contributed to a sense of belonging in the broader sense of community among people pursuing higher education. The comments garnered from the latter participants responding favorably to the concept of diversity contributing to SOB included "Yes, we are too familiar and this keeps things closed." F.110 stated, "Yes, I feel that I am losing a chance to expand my educational experience at this college. The lack of diversity causes us to lose new ideas," stated F.111 in her response to IQ.13.

Expanding on their responses regarding cultural diversity, participants indicated that a lack of diversity in either student body or faculty did not significantly contribute to their SOB and persistence. A key phrase in extending the response included a focus on earning their degree, the likelihood of remaining within the same community or area dominated by Hispanics, and was closely tied to their cultural heritage. No significant patterns based on age were detected in the responses by female or male participants to IQ.13.

M.102 and M.103 responded in the affirmative while M.104 shared sentiments along the general perspective of F.102, who indicated that her focus was on earning a degree, not necessarily on who was in the class or teaching the course. M.104 elaborated and stated, “It’s a 2-year college for job market...not scholarly pursuits like advanced degrees here.” One student (M.102) who had been an exchange student felt it was a matter of perspective; he indicated “Having had the experience of diversity while in college prior to being here (current institution), it was helpful and enriched his sense of community.”

In the current literature on the effects of cultural diversity or lack of it within the institution, according to literature appearing on education.com Sponsored by the Gale Group, Anderman (2011) revealed noteworthy findings from studies included in the literature review found in Chapter 2. Baumeister and Leary (1995) reiterated the need to belong is paramount in the healthy disposition of the human psyche; furthermore,

focusing on cultural diversity as adding value to SOB, Sanchez, Colon, and Esparza (2005) spoke of transcending effects of SOB on ethnic/cultural diversity in students, as was found in grades—middle school thru high school—and into the first year of college (Anderman, 2011; Maestes et al., 2007; Osterman, 2000); especially in interest in this study, the latter, Osterman (2000) highlighted the relationship to the thematic, affective domain of part-time students, and Maestes et al. (2007), among students at a Hispanic-serving institution as it described the setting of this study, revealed a variation in the importance placed on diversity affecting SOB. Accounting for the narrow presence of diversity in the setting of this study, the limited number of participants, a reasonable conclusion supported by the current literature indicated the likelihood of the student population being predominantly Hispanic nontraditional college students attending part-time routinely focused less on cultural diversity of the institution than on other concerns that directly impacted their completion of the programs in which they were enrolled (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007).

In a final point connecting cultural diversity, the perception of the current body of research participants and the body of literature culminating this discussion, past research as early as the 1990s and within the last six years indicated differences in the focus of students; nontraditional students (e.g., part-time, older than typical freshman) were more likely to show greater commitment to their program of study and academic responsibilities versus traditional students (e.g., typical freshman, full time) according to

Wintre, Bowers, Gordne, and Lange (2006) and Blais and Pulido (1992) who used comparative studies to examine similarities and differences between both groups of students. In examining reasons for departure, nonpersisting first-second year college students rested on issues of mobility, changing career paths, and adulthood issues according to Wintre, et al. (2006), while Blais & Pulido (1992) indicated their sample population issues differed on family, social life, and leisure. Neither one of those studies pointed to negative university experiences. Romano (1995) posited similar findings. Romano indicated that persistence and attrition among first/second-year students was more a function of life circumstances than institutional conflicts at 2-year colleges and among nontraditional students. He especially noted this phenomenon among Hispanic students more than among other minorities. There was no mention of issues in highly valuing cultural diversity.

From cultural diversity having a relatively neutral impact on persistence among the participants in this study, the factors and predictors weighing on student persistence remained central to this study and understanding the participant's conceptual framework forming their SOB—the factors influencing their affective domain and subsequent willingness to remain engaged in their higher education at the current institution—were queried in IQ.14 of the interview document (Appendix C).

IQ.14 was phrased, “As a predictor of your future success,” the participant was asked, “what factors, issues, and events might influence your (decision to persist)

persistence at this college?” The goal of inquiry using the framework of IQ.14 was to elicit responses from the participant that defined the quint-essential elements of the framework of their SOB having an influence in their decision to continue in the endeavor of pursuing their higher education goals. Goodenow (1993) provided an essential conceptual framework for defining SOB—“a psychological sense of belonging or membership in the school...(P.80)”—while broadly interpreted, most associated with the construct found in literature since Hurtado and Carter (1997), and according to Anderman (2011) remained focused on the subjective perceptions of connectedness with multiple, positive academic and affective variables. In recalling the literature review found in Chapter 2 of this study, Hurtado and Carter brought to the forefront in the field a new paradigm that examined the theoretical body of knowledge that shifts from the earlier works of Tinto (1975, 1983). The latter measurement of belonging focused on academic (e.g., grades, GPA) and social integration (e.g., membership in college organizations), and critically didn’t address minority students sufficiently, used preferred quantitative methods rather than qualitative designs of research, and generally relied upon populations at major 4-year universities (e.g., Esquivel, 2009; Hurtado & Carter 1997; Rodriguez, 2010).

Patterns that emerged from SQ 14 responses from the participants ($n = 12$) indicated consistent inclusion of three factors: financial (e.g., ability to pay for college); next, college schedules (e.g., multiple sections of same course and flexible registration);

flexibility in work-school schedule; and family obligations, such as childcare, spending quality time with members, and third, contributing to parental support (e.g., varied between genders, but essentially maintaining the family's needs). In Appendix G, various key comments (e.g., words, phrases) were included to provide a general sense of the patterns discussed herein.

In financial matters, the ability to pay for college, included in that theme was the recurring pattern that federal grants, low-interest loans, and specialized scholarships were important in determining the participant's return to college in the upcoming semester (e.g., fall and spring). Alternative ways of paying for their educational expenses and in an attempt to keep debt at a minimum, participants indicated the ability to pay for college was a direct function of their income from employment. In this latter circumstances, 3 of the 12 participants indicated the source of funds to meet college tuition was mostly from income earned from current employment; thus, a balance between working sufficient hours to maintain an income and pay for college was a significant factor in the decision to continue their educational endeavor. Even though they might have received some funds through a grant, it was not sufficient to meet the financial obligation to the college. The remaining nine participants responding to IQ.14 and ability to pay for college indicated a need for financial assistance in some form and level (e.g., meaning financial aid in grants, guaranteed student loans, and scholarships while level indicates the amount of funds made available from those sources).

In related studies, the literature indicated variation in the degree of impact that the ability to pay for college had on student persistence to completion. For example, Marti (2008) focused on 2-year colleges' patterns of enrollment by students and found curricular factors, academic preparedness, clarity of goals, and finances were related to persistence; other than the ability to pay for college—counter intuitively revealing—was less of an influence on persistence than other factors such as curricular factors; the pathways (e.g., 18-month certificate program, 2-year AA degree) chosen by students was greater on influencing persistence. Similarly, Nevarez (2001) study following Mexican Americans and other Latino groups engaged in pursuing higher education indicated while financial aid and related student support services had a positive influence on persistence among minority students, financial aid did not directly influence the decision to persist. Research continually pointed away from financial aid support and toward culturally relevant factors that defined SOB and influenced persistence among minority students. Closed to one's intuitive conclusion, the ability to pay for college was relative to persistence in the study by Maestes, et al. (2007); on a scale of 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy), a result of 2.5 ($SD = 0.95$) indicated little effect. The institution was a factor; Maestes, et al. carried out their study at a major, not a 2-year, community college where generally tuition, fees, and general costs to attend were less than major universities. To illustrate this point, I included a brief table; refer to Table 4 below. Since this study was conducted in Texas at

one of the institutions of higher education, the table below used data about institutions located in Texas.

Table 4

College-University Tuition Costs

Institution	Type of Institution	Tuition* (Per year)	Source of Data
Baylor University	Private	\$21,839	Baylor School (2014)
Southwest Texas Junior College	Public-State	2,484	College Calc (2014)
Sul Ross State University	Public-State	3,264	College Calc (2014)
Texas A & M University	Public-State	8,506	College Data (2014)

*Note.** In-state tuition only for state residents; does not include housing, course materials, course lab fees; undergraduate programs.

Especially important for nontraditional students was the institution's ability to provide adequate course enrollment opportunities to meet the unique needs of the nontraditional student because of their outside obligations (e.g., work and family) and the restraints those obligations placed on the student's ability to select courses casually and schedule the semester around the college structure designed for predominantly traditional students. While comments regarding scheduling and availability of course to meet their program requirements indicated an improvement over past semesters, there were gaps in schedule of courses offered in any given semester. Those gaps that impeded continuous enrollment by some students affected four of the 12 participants measured in their responses to IQ.14 (Appendix C); the ability to access services was pattern within the theme of factors that might influence persistence. Those comments included, the need for

courses offered on weekends after 9:00 pm; the availability of core courses to meet program requirements during every semester at each campus of the institution—the college consists of the main campus at Uvalde, outreach campuses in Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Carrizo Springs, and Crystal City; and the Hondo penal institution—rather than the rotation pattern of scheduling core courses between those campuses. The connection between comments within IQ.14 (e.g., patterns and themes on ability to pay for college and work-school schedules) were documented in a report by Arnold (1999)—although dated—useful to my research and this study because it spoke to student persistence in higher education, function of financial aid, and employment obligations of students in Texas institutions. Arnold (1999) on behalf of the Texas Guaranteed Loan Corporation, the key lender of money to finance a college education for students in Texas who cannot get debt-free money or grants, turned to the corporation for assistance. Three significant statistics pointed to the concerns raised by participants in this study that had potential impact on their decision to persist were cited in the executive summary of the report issued in March 1999 by the corporation. First, 4-year institutions had better retention (persistence) rates than did 2-year institutions: 70% at 4-year higher education facilities versus 50% at 2-year colleges for first-year students. Second, in focusing specifically on the relationship between financial aid or economic assistance in meeting college expenses, the corporation found studies indicated financial aid increased persistence for students who needed and received financial aid; and third, among minority populations,

focusing on Hispanics, research reported by Arnold pointed out that students working 30 hours or more per week and first-generation students (Hispanics) experienced problems with persistence (e.g., continuously enrolled and pursuing their educational program toward completion with a certificate and diploma). In 1995, Romano's study pointed to first-year, college students' retention was the result of academic standing more than for lack of means to pay their way for college expenses.

The combination of the above mentioned factors gleaned from the report from the corporation and prepared by Arnold (1999) strongly hinted of underpinnings about the sample population in this study. Most participants reported working at least 20 hours per week, and they were dependent on financial aid to continue their educational endeavor. Not receiving sufficient aid to cover their college expenses, forced those nontraditional (e.g., older than the average college students) to extend the hours of employment to meet family and college living expenses. Without sufficient financial aid resources it created a potential Catch 22 or for a better analogy, damned if you do and damned if you don't situation. Students needed to work to support themselves and often dependent children. Working a typical 30-40 hour week increased income to meet living expenses and support themselves and dependents but decreased the likelihood of qualifying for financial aid (e.g., grants and scholarships). Balance between work-family versus college enrollment forced participants to make many choices: increase debt (e.g., loans) to meet college expenses, reduce the frequency of enrollment, or select fewer courses. The latter

choices were pursued to keep tuition and fees within a range that met their financial capacity to pay for college. Forging ahead, many students risked overload—work, family, and college obligations—and subsequent academic failure consistent with the contents of the corporation report.

In the final pattern of thematic revelations that emerged within IQ.14, participants indicated a factor that influenced their continued efforts in pursuing the degree and program in which they were enrolled had to do with familiar situations, events, and circumstances. A qualitative research study by Schwartz, et al. (2009) shed light on the cultural complexity of the Hispanic student and focused on a much-neglected segment of the Mexican population, Hispanic men who were—and continued to be as this study concluded—a minority within their marginalized population. Women outnumbered men in higher education, and the gap between men and women enrolling in higher education was greater among minorities than the dominant social group posited Linder (2007). By the recent enrollment for the college used as the setting for this study, the Linder statistic resounded in two measurable data: informal observations based on my own experiences as an instructor for the college and supported by my enrollment records for developmental and undergraduate courses over the last six semesters. From both data points, the majority of students enrolled in those classes were women. Second, the official statistics from the public records of the research site supported the Linder assertion that more women than men were enrolled in college: 192 students were

classified as part time during the spring 2013 semester; and of the 192 students in that category, 140 were women and 52 were men at or above the age of 25. The roughly 3:1 ratio of women to men students approximated the assertion presented by Linder.

One accounting for the shift in enrollment was attributed to the acculturation taking place among first and second generation Hispanics; contemporary social values among Hispanic, and voiced by one of the nontraditional college students in this study stated, “*Sé que podemos hacer Este (it).*” (Translated, “I know, we can do this [it] meaning attend college) suggested F.104 and F.106 as did F.110 in a slightly ornate manner of speaking, “*Puedo ser una madre y esposa y estudiantes, ¿por qué no? ¿Porque soy una mujer?*” illuminated a paradigm shift. Again, challenging the traditional perspective of gender roles in the Latino/Hispanic/Mexican family, translated, “I can be a mother, wife, and student. Why, because I am a woman?” illuminated the stereotyped role of Mexican woman as mother, spouse, and housekeeper expected in previous generations. In some cases, because of the geographic proximity to the border of Mexico, a continuous influx of Mexican tradition remained active and valued within the local community in which the participants lived, worked, and attended college. Remaining pivotal in the Hispanic community, gender roles were clear and separate for men and women; men were the breadwinners and women tended to the home and children (Schwartz, et al., 2009); in classical Chicano literature such as Anaya’s (1994) *Bless mi Ultima* religious education, potential formation of at least one male child to serve the

church as a priest, and relaying the genealogy of the family to the new generation fell within the purview of the mother/wife in the traditional Hispanic family structure. Within the study previously cited, a special place in the genre of the current literature emphasized the shortcomings of research on SOB and its influences on persisting among marginalized peoples—again, the Hispanic/Latino/Chicano and Mexican—the preferred label of self-identity of participants in Schwartz et. al. (2009).

The participants focused on the concept of *familia* as their central motivation in pursuing higher education; the construct of their ideological accounting for higher education was it increased the likelihood of their success in being a better breadwinner for the family; thus insuring the avoidance of the woman/wife having to take up the slack of a low-income earning husband because he lacked sufficient education to have upward mobility through career enhancement. Both those ideas while complimentary did not necessarily resonate in the accounts from 12 participants responding to IQ.14's familial theme.

In accounting for differences cited in the Schwartz et al. (2009) study, and although relevant to contemporary social movements in an emerging and expanding Hispanic population, the Schwartz et al. study did not consider smaller, 2-year colleges, in the data. While the researchers used a qualitative method of crystallization versus triangulation, meaningful narratives emerged in the study that had relevance and implications for this study, and provided some insight to the four male participants'

responses that alluded to Schwartz's findings "It's a way to pay back my family and support them (parents in their later years," posited M.102 (IQ.14). M.103 similarly stated, "I want to provide for my family like my parents did for me, but better." Within the responses recorded from the female participants, the theme remained similar, but the motivation was of greater necessity than for male participants. Among single-parent female participants, they were the breadwinner for their dependent children and wanted to set the example of success—especially in circumstances—where single, parent mothers had female dependent children (e.g., F.111).

Examining IQ.15, participants were asked to elaborate on their future endeavors, relationships, and a prognosis of how their sense of belonging would sustain them. The question, "What are your expectations for this semester (academic, social, and personal) that you would like to share in this interview?"

Looking at the male participants, M.102 illuminated the topic by projecting his completion of the 2-year program in which he currently enrolled; he indicated,

"I want my master's in business administration from SR (Sul Ross State University), but first, the AA and bachelor's degree."

He also stated,

"I have high expectations for myself and won't let anything stop me."

A noteworthy connection between IQ.14 and this SQ was that the participant had experience as an exchange student in Europe, his father had a college degree and his ability to pay for college was of little concern.

In high contrast to M.102, M.104 had 5 children, a wife who recently graduated from Sul Ross State University (Rio Grande College) in Eagle Pass, Texas, epitomized the typical case of nontraditional students—statistically and his narrative (story)—that unfolded through the responses to the open-ended IQs. In the rarest of participants, M.105 shared similar faculties with M.104; however, the matter of M.105's military experiences defined his pursuit of higher education. Both participants fluctuated between—according to Marti's (2008) definition of pathways, a typology consisting of 5 distinct patterns—attending sporadically (e.g., an equivalent of fractured or part-time, long term) and one-term/out group characterized by enrollment for one term (e.g., semester and withdrawing before the conclusion of the semester) during their attempts at higher education.

Like the explanation for dropping out among nontraditional adults cited in Romano, (1995), Arnold (1999), Nevarez (2001), and Marti (2008) pointed out that an inability to pay for college was not problematic in the overall scheme to persist, nor was it problems with the institution that frequently influenced the student's decision to terminate his or her education. Rather, those researchers pointed out a matter of priorities encompassed in family obligations—maintain wellness and security—inundated the

findings of earlier works such as Blais and Pulido (1992), and recent studies that ushered out the 20th century such as Nevarez (2001) and closed the 21st century's first decade (e.g., Spradlin, Burroughs, Rutkowski, & Lang, 2010). The common thread in the literature those researchers identified was persistence and completion were synonymous with family and work obligations, balancing family and college life—in a narrow sense of the concept for nontraditional college students—and the at-risk pool of freshman characterized as minority, people of color, and often, Hispanic.

For M.104 and M.105, the reasons for their delayed entry into pursuing education reflected the findings of those studies. Similarly, both these participants continued to face challenges of balancing work-family obligations and those as a student attending classes in a split schedule of daytime and online courses, with labs that took up parts of their evenings and thus, minimize familiar opportunities to be engaged with their children and spouse.

In the case of M.103, his willingness to pursue his degree program as a part-time student was influenced by the practical. He had to work: in part to maintain his own needs, and second, to contribute to his parents' well-being. The participant explained that being single and male in the traditional Hispanic family placed the responsibility in difficult times, of financially supporting the family unit on the eldest male. For example, while health issues affecting the well-being of parents fell to the females in family, matters of finance fell to males according to Hispanic, familial values

Differences in Traditional and Nontraditional College Students

Discussing the unique, rare, and other anomalies noted during the analysis of data from all sources that were used in this study may help flesh out aspects of the nontraditional Hispanic college student who attended a small and relatively rural community college in contrast to a similar population enrolled at a large, metropolitan community college or 4-year major university as shown in research studies (e.g., Halpin, 1990; Hurtado & Fishman, 2009; Hurtado et. al., 2007; Waller & Tietjen-Smith, 2009).

Beginning with the earliest studies cited in the research for this study, Halpin (1990) examined community college retention based on the Tinto model. Hurtado et. al. (2007) addressed sense of belonging of urban Latino students enrolled at community colleges with predominantly White (Anglo-identifying) populations, and Hurtado and Fishman (2009) focused their study on the issue of mattering and marginality of urban Latino students. Waller and Tietjen-Smith (2009) examined the relationship between persistence and the institution's urbanicity. LaClair (2010) examined issues of transfer from 2-year to 4-year colleges by students attending geographically, rural, community colleges affecting their persistence.

In general, when Hispanic students went to the institutions of higher education—and for most Hispanics, this meant community colleges—the Latino/an arrival unlike their counterparts, the population of Anglo-European or Whites, the Hispanic students found themselves more likely carrying personal, emotional and intellectual luggage that

presented challenges to their success. First, less social capital than their counterparts; second, dealing with financially supporting the family; third, being a first-generation college student; and last, encountering and resilience in confronting ethnic/racial strife or the perception of racial hostility (Hurtado & Fishman, 2009).

The broad range of age difference, for women participants the average was 35.0 years, and for male participants, an average of 30.0 years. The men in this study were more representative of the average age of students entering community colleges (29 years old) according to the National Center for Education Statistics, NCES (2006) and the AACC (2006) but within the sample population identified in this study, the difference was narrow compared to the female participants' range of ages. In this study, men's chronological ages ranged between 26 and 30 years old while female participants' chronological ages ranged between 22 and 49.

Men's entrance experiences—the first time enrolling and attending college—compared to those noted by the women's experiences were substantially in tune with issues of self-confidence. In general, female participants frequently indicated their concern with fitting in and how their younger peers would receive them; female participants used words like colleague, protégée, and estranged member. On the other hand, while female participants concerned with fitness that contributed to their sense of belonging and community, the male participants' perspective was opposite of their female counterparts' perspective. Male participants believed while it was a benefit,

viewed peer-relationships and perceptions were not focused on self-assurance or confidence about fitting in with their peers. Rather, it was viewed at worse as, refueling old high school friendships thus keeping the influence of age gap between these nontraditional Hispanic (male) college students and their traditional, college-age peers. The idea of fitting in is rudimentary fodder underpinning the psychological, subjective meaning of sense of belonging and experiencing community (e.g., Goodenow, 1993; McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

General background illuminated the diverse experiences on nontraditional Hispanic college students participating in this study. On one hand, the mature mother with her eldest son serving in the military in a war zone (F.111) and at the other end, a male participant's (M.105) military service in the Army's well known 82nd Airborne Division familiar to any person with military and combat mission background. Somewhere in-between, other than age disparity previously discussed in discrete cases and discontinuity in data analysis, marital status (e.g., single, separated-divorced, widowed) were well represented of common categories. For male participants describing their family size, the number of children fell between zero (M.102 & M.103) and six dependent minors in the household (M.105) a major concern was for balancing single-earner household expenses and attending college with its related expenses (e.g., transportation) among the male participants responding in the interviews. For female participants transportation and childcare expenditures were issues of balancing their

single-earner incomes and budgets. In contrast to students in urban settings and attending community colleges, rural and small town community colleges experienced isolation, had fewer employment resources within the community, and had no or limited, public transportation systems (e.g., buses). The absence of those resources directly contributed to limiting income-earning activities; interpreting the retention rates and causes for withdrawal posited in some research studies pointed to a lack of various opportunities and resources in small or rural communities (e.g., Waller & Tietjen-Smith, 2009). This study took place in a relatively rural, small town setting at one of the community college's major campus; the Eagle Pass Outreach Campus (Center).

According to LaClair's (2010) use of the terms rural, and based on the IPEDS data (NCES, 2009), classifying a community college as rural was likely to be a function of geographical location to major cities, infrastructure, and enrollment. Rural-small town colleges, for example, in Alabama, the site of the LaClair research indicated a population ranging from 1600 to under 3000 students; rural-medium enrollments follow on the heels of rural-small high range of 3000 students and upward toward 5000 students; and the pattern noted in the statistics reported reflecting populations in excess of 7000 students enrolled, were categorized as rural-large, community colleges. Waller, et. al. (2009) emphasized there were observable differences in retention, transfer, and completion rates when urbanicity was examined; in part urbanicity was connected to geographical location and the resulting population was the pool from which the enrollment emerged. In general,

retention for part-time students was lower than for students attending full time regardless of categorical urbanicity.

The enrollment at the college where this study was conducted has an enrollment of less than 1,600 students for the spring semester; the combined enrollment—all major campuses and extension sites (Carrizo Springs, Crystal City, and the Hondo Penal unit)—did not exceed 7000 students in 2010 (Bing.com). Because one unavoidable reality was while commitment to program completion (retention-persistence) to graduation or fulfillment of requirements for transfer to a 4-year institution, the ability to meet financial obligations (e.g., supporting the family and paying for college) superseded the woes of academic success (e.g., meaning while the commitment was in place, the money to stay the course became an issue that outweighed desire) reasonably accounted for the disparity in the gaps between rural/small town versus urban community college retention, and transfer and completion rates for students attending those institutions according to Waller, et al., 2009).

Maturity or what elements constitute maturity was difficult at best to capture in some form of a construct or conceptual framework, but people seemed to know it when they saw it. Even though the field offered guidance—saying to the effect, people acting or responding to the environment in an appropriate manner—what remained appropriate in one scenario might not be interpreted as appropriate in another situation. Maturity—defined—seemed at best, a circumstantial construct played a role in the process by which

people came to higher education, engaged in learning, made commitments in spite of challenges, and persisted to the end. The participants in this study showed motivation for achieving their higher education goals were in part, for others (e.g., their children, to support their parental home, and in the declining years of their parents, contribute to making those sunset years comfortable and secure) demonstrated altruistic values. Altruism, in and of itself, one might construe as high level maturity (e.g., Marti, 2005; Skogrand, Hatch, & Singh, 2005).

In another perspective that seems counterintuitive to much of the recent literature focused on the role of *la familia* (the family) within Hispanic culture, the evolving concept reflects—if not the purpose—then, by the responses recorded by the participants in this study as sure of motivation for “sticking with it” (M.105) to put in simply. In a love-hate subtly, both male and female participants shared comments that would appear to be contrary much of the *la familia* concept among Hispanics; similar responses to explaining the reason for choosing college, “I don’t want to be like my mom,” cited one participant in the Huerta and Fisherman study (2009). The latter sentiment was expressed more often by female participants than males in this study: F.105 and F.110 indicated they did not want to end up like their parents: hey did not want to life-long economic struggles, lack of future security in declining years, and the first-generation participants, emphasized the importance of making it better for their own children (e.g., F.103, F.107). Male participants focused on family in two respects: creating a sense of pride for the

family and building a future for their own spouse and children. Generally, those concepts, ideas, values, and plans are not the central focus of typical, college-age students as perceived by the participants in this study.

In a study of traditional and nontraditional college students' experiences, resurfacing were the familiar differences advanced in earlier literature presented in this study and explained those findings by the researcher (Adams & Corbett, 2010). In their study, as pointed out by me in this study, obligations to employment and existing career functions, and the complexity of managing family responsibility play heavily on all decisions made in the pursuit of higher education among nontraditional students; cultural factors, such as those espoused in the literature and in particular for the current population of Hispanic college students who participated in this study is part of their reality Skogrand, et. al. (2005); particularly fluid is the impact of the construct of *la familia* for first-generation college students (e.g., Rodriguez-Martin, 2009).

Influences of Hispanic Family Values

Summing up the essential construct of '*la familia*' expressed in the Hispanic culture, Clutter and Nieto (n/d) at Ohio State University's Family and Consumer Sciences Department, the authors of the FactSheet publication stated the following:

Traditionally, the Hispanic family is a close-knit group and the most important social unit. The term *familia* usually goes beyond the nuclear family. The Hispanic "family unit" includes not only parents and children but also extended

family. In most Hispanic families, the father is the head of the family, and the mother is responsible for the home. Individuals within a family have a moral responsibility to aid other members of the family experiencing financial problems, unemployment, poor health conditions, and other life issues.

In developing a diverse perspective on the sense of belonging and connection to the role of family in defining one's belongingness as a source of influence in the individual family member's decision-making, I noted the 10 (most) essential family values according to Kruger (2010) writing for the website, ZenFamilyHabits.net, a blog site. Among those habits (e.g., values, practices, beliefs), the construct of Zen's simple happiness included—belonging, respect, tradition, and responsibility—and paralleled those values expressed in the words of the voices from the participants in this study.

In another discussion on the Hispanic's family values and beliefs, the BellaOnline website's Hispanic Culture Site's editor, V. Aguilar (2013) took on the discussion from the woman's perspective as seen through the eyes of a guest author, R. T. Cuevas de Caissie. Once again, the construct of *la familia* spoke to the values and beliefs identified in the patterns and theme of this study.

Family by far is the most valued part of any Hispanic's life I have ever met. When I say this I mean that in a very different way than anyone outside the Hispanic family would understand it. To this end I will explain what I mean by the statement of the family being most valued. Beginning with growing up, as a

young Hispanic, we do not look forward to the life ahead of us with thoughts of ourselves outside the family. We are not independent of the family unit. To the contrary, what are you without your family? To another race you are yourself, to the Hispanic, you are nothing. Everything you go through as you are growing up is shared with some member of the family.

Age Differentials (Age Differences) Influence

Age differences were an area of mixed responses with gender demographic revealed distinct patterns of divergent responses. For female participants, the longer delay between leaving school (e.g., high school, earlier attempts at higher education) and return to college (e.g., first semester of the program) was more traumatic than for all male participants regardless of the time elapsed between high school and initial return to higher education. Holding to an inductive reasoning perspective, the difference between female and male participants' responses characterized the differences about delayed pursuit of higher education. Female respondents used various negative phrases in describing their delayed return to higher education. For example, phrases like “a (feeling) sense of being out of place” and “nothing in common with a majority of peers in class,” were common. In cases where an extreme difference, the elder participants' responses pointed out 'having more in common with the instructor' especially when the instructor was female. With respect to the affective domain, female participants responding in kind manner also indicated it was something that gave pause for reflection on continuing their

educational pursuits, and they indicated it was a factor that would continue to influence their decision beyond the 2-year, community college environment.

Gender and Gender Roles Influences in the Hispanic Culture

Gender and gender roles inculcated through the Hispanic culture and across generations varied. The older the participant, the greater the challenge experienced in balancing cultural expectations with contemporary roles. When female participants revealed their reasons for delaying higher education, the central reasons were to care for their own children, aiding an elderly family member (e.g., parent with illness, geriatric parent, or younger sibling), and primacy of being mother-spouse. The notable differences between female and male participants noted stand as testament to the enduring cultural values and beliefs, too. Among male participants, after graduating from high school, male members of the family were expected to contribute to the family's economic well-being; especially played out where the male participant was the oldest male or only son; for example, the need to support the family in the absence of the senior or parental, male as breadwinner. Additionally, the pattern of participants reflects an emerging and growing trend in higher education according to Schwartz, et al. (2009) who indicated women outnumber men in undergraduate programs; especially true in this paradigm shift in enrollment, the women of minority presence such as in the Hispanic presence (Linder, 2008) making men of minority groups, a super-minority.

Faith and Religion as Influences

Examining the contribution of faith, religious practice, and related values to the sense of belonging, career choices, and source of emotion energy toward persisting in the endeavor, IQ.05 stated, “What role, if any does your faith/religion plays in your pursuit of higher education and helping you to persist through graduation or achieving your goals?”

Among the Hispanic values and beliefs, practices, and family member’s role, religion and faith, historically have been important in the formation of the practices in Hispanic families and perpetuating the lineage through matrimony. Roman Catholicism (RC) has a centuries-old relationship with Hispanic values when examining religious practices and faith base of the family. The long-standing influence of RC has become deeply integrated to the extent that dismembering RC from the Hispanic religious identify can no longer be achieved from the rest of the Hispanic cultural construct (Skogrand, Hatch, & Singh, 2005). From this study, the question of religious practice, faith, and the role it played in decision about choosing a career and persisting reflected a mix of beliefs and practices among the participants that did and did not support the findings of Schogrand, et al. (2005; at least not directly as indicated in some of the responses to IQ.05. For example, among female participants responding to IQ.05, F.101 stated, “It’s not a priority even though I am Roman Catholic Christian (RCC), but I will go back after graduation.” F.103 explained along similar senses on the role of religion in her life as upholding biblical teachings of the golden rule and the New Commandment, “...Love

one another...” (John 15:12, NKJ). Also, F.107 indicated that she was raised RCC, but not very religious.

On the contrary, a majority of participants reflect the current findings in the connection between cultural values and religious practices and faith. More typical of the research on the role of religion and its influence in Hispanic construct of cultural values and beliefs, participants, F.104, F.105, and F.106 portrays the role of religion along the traditional perspective; F.104 stated, “...motivates me to be an example for my children.” F.105 responded that religion, and being RC was a strong influence and had deep convictions in believing in God and His role in her life. F.106 shared similar thoughts of F.104 and F.105; “I was raised RC, and I am involved in my church activities.” F.110 and F.111 found their religious beliefs and practices helped ‘ground them’ in their journey and plans, and overall, in their daily lives’ activities, but especially in making big decisions.

Among the responses to IQ.05 from male participants, responses were mixed. M.102 reported his mother had strong religious convictions and practices the RC faith while he described his approach to religion and faith along the lines of the golden rule and new commandment previously cited in remarks of F.103. In the case of M.103, the participant indicated he came from a RCC family but was not particularly religious himself; his field of study, nursing as a helping career that serves people in need, served as living out the new commandment. M.104 considered faith as a dome-like source of

energy; although he had mixed experiences since childhood that included RC practices and non-denomination Christian affiliation, all his children have been baptized in the RCC church tradition, received the related Sacraments of the RCC church (e.g., First Communion, Confirmation). He believes that sacrifices lead to a better life.

Overall, in reviewing the responses associated with IQ.05, I must conclude that the limited sample population places the role of religion and faith practices as having an Integral relationship to their cultural experience and at varying levels of influence in their decision-making, in sustaining them during difficult times, and as a reflection of their humanity—directly and indirectly—religion and faith, and the general belief in God were effective sources of influence in their lives.

Influences of Social Desirable Bias Theory

Although not directly involved in making meaning of the participant's sense of belonging and its projective nature on persistence, the selection of the design from the cast of phenomenological and methodological choices made by me, the use of F2F interviews served as an essential component of appreciating the Hispanic culture of personalization, proximity to the speaker, and the sense intimacy when sharing personal experiences. In step with Kester (1994), although dated, encapsulates the value of utilizing F2F interviews. Acknowledging the broad meaning of the subjective nature of SOB, it's best measured by relying on the participant's self-reporting indicators selected by the researcher, and this was commonly done by using the questionnaire but also

interviews with students. Also, in reviewing several recent studies' approaches of the qualitative method, the personalization through the use of the F2F interview and case study that may incorporate the interview—sometimes researchers use audio-videotaping in conjunction with the interview—pointed out in studies by Esquivel and during the same era, Rodriguez-Martin (2010).

Basic theory explains that SDR was a response by the participant (e.g., as in researcher-participant interaction) that provided the perceived, expected, and appropriate social responses to questions presented verbally in a F2F interview or in responding by completing a questionnaire independently. One of the recent developments was the Brief Social Desirability Scale (Haghighat, 2007) to measure distortions in F2F interviews and those completed independently (e.g., paper and pencil by participant). Rather than the lengthy Crowne-Marlowe Scales (Johnson, Fendrich, & Mackesy-Amiti, 2012) developed and revised since World War II, the BSDS was characteristically short and required much less time than the longer Crowne-Marlowe. In all, both scales performed with various expectations of validity and reliability. On the other hand, acknowledging the general parameters of SDRs when using F2F interviews as in this study, the potential distortions of facts and details, and misrepresentation of the participants' recollections presented were minimal because there was no high stake outcomes involved in their participation. The likelihood of loss of freedom, incarceration, restrictions on activities,

and social stigmas were moot in contrast to the research in which Johnson, et al. (2011) and Haghighat (2007) applied the use of BSDR or CM.

Limitations of the Study

Prior to presenting the interpretation of the data, as the researcher, I deferred to the original section of the limitation presented in Chapter 3 and through discovery during the actual research—interviewing participants—those unexpected limitations that were illuminated. Again, in the role as researcher, I believed that my original limitations identified at the onset of this study were accurate, and my effort genuine in uncloaking potential limitations of the study based on several factors.

First, participants, including incarcerated persons were from the same higher education, 2-year institution in small town-rural located in southwest Texas; therefore, it was not a representation of all Latino(a)s at other institutions situated differently. Participants consisted of only nontraditional, undergraduate Hispanic students who met the selected criteria; therefore, their responses did not represent all Hispanic students enrolled at the institution. Third, the small number of participants and time frame did not capture the diverse voices of all Latino(a)s enrolled in the institution. Another limitation of this study was the institution is a predominantly, HSI; therefore, the voices of other minority groups were not represented. Finally, geographical location and time restraints may have contributed to the limitations of this study.

Unforeseen circumstances often arise during the research phase of a study; so was the case for this study and me. Two events culminated in creating limitations to the study and may have impinged on the broader, or generalizability of the study. The first unexpected or unplanned limitation emerged once I began the interviews with participants. The following is an account of the limitation added to the original set presented in the proposal.

The participants' responses were noted and captured on audio recordings. The responses were reviewed, entered into Ethnograph.v6 (Qualis Research Associates, 2008) software to help flesh out patterns and themes in those responses. Unfortunately, I discovered that only certain output was capable of being saved and converted to a generic format compatible with MS Word (e.g., the .rtf format was not compatible with .COB used in Ethnographic.v6) and coded segments of the responses recorded in Ethnographic.v6. Since the QDA required a document transcribed into the framework for analysis, the following document was produced. It contained the response to the general question as a prelude to the F2F interview questionnaire of 15-items discussed in the findings. For detailed responses refer to the appendices and the participant's individual profiles (Appendix F)

Not anticipated or addressed in the limitations of this study when the proposal was submitted to his Chairperson and the IRB, was the unforeseen circumstance of recruitment goals not being met. In this realm of findings, I conceded that it might have

been beneficial to include the possibility of the event but felt by doing so, he was already prophesying for an uncertainty that the IRB would not accept. The concern was resolved by his Chairperson, Dr. Moore, who indicated the event would merely be one of the issues to address in the closing chapters of the dissertation

In either case for generalizability or validity of the scholarly product emerging as this study, I believed it continued to make a creditable contribution to the body of literature on the topic and related issues of SOB and persistence experienced by nontraditional Hispanic college students attending small or rural community colleges.

Recommendations

With respect to recommendations for action and further study, as researcher, I have drawn from these most recent experiences garnered through this study and his professional training as an educator and respective credentials (Ed. D., Curriculum and Design for Systematic Change, CDS from Nova Southeastern University). The Walden model delineating recommendations might also consider the two-prong approach in addressing the topics examined in this section. Interpreting the idea of recommendations for future study suggests scholarly work—as it should be—but an absence of practical/applicable recommendations contributes little to nothing in making positive social change. It is turning research into practice that really makes research beneficial and addresses implications for social change at the most logical level.

Recommendation for Action

While the results of this study represent a sliver of possibilities that should raise concern, and the limited generalizability of those findings to the broader population, the emerging patterns and themes focusing on nontraditional, Hispanic college students enrolled in the institution that served as the setting for this study should be of interest to researchers and institutional planners such as administration and support services.

In making meaning of their experiences and constructing a paradigm of SOB and its influence on the participants' decisions to continue in their endeavor of higher education, the nontraditional student has some needs unique to their situation or status. Evidence in the literature supported by studies out of the AACC (2005) and NCES (2006) indicated there is no particular definition pigeon-holing the nontraditional college student. The basic needs of those college students did not differ much than the needs of the traditional college students attending the same institution; however, accessing the resources and services to fulfill those needs—real and perceived—was the source of concern among the nontraditional student. Convenience and access to support services beyond the current business-hour model is something that institutions must address and plan for in their operation. There is little sense and even less ethical worth in attracting nontraditional students to enroll and then, leave paradigms in place that do little to meet the unique needs of the nontraditional learner.

By gender, the single mother finds the challenge in balancing class attendance and childcare; availability of safe, convenient, and affordable services remained their concern and an impediment to persistence in higher education according to those participants in this study. Among male students, there was a need to balance their work obligations and class attendance; the flexibility of class schedules and more options such as scheduling classes beyond 8:00 or 9:00 pm, and on weekends might be considered by institutional planners.

There was in the history of emerging higher education institutions around the time of post WW-II veterans returning home and using their GI bill benefits, a surge in college enrollment that also gave energy to forging 2-year community college institutions to compliment the traditional 4-year universities. In their effort to help the new generation of college students—clearly the fore-persons of the nontraditional college student that research speaks about today—institutions provided space on campus for young couples to park their travel trailers (housing). The institutions helped the post-WWII college student maintain a relative normalcy of family life while—at the time—men enrolled and attended college class to earn a degree. Within the private sector, corporations invested and promoted on-site childcare facilities to ease the difficulty of working women who prior to the war effort had been domestic/homemakers. This idea also spilled into the educational institutions and in some remnant remains on a limited basis as indicated in the responses of one single-mother participant in this study.

The expansion of a program that accommodates students with childcare needs might easily be accomplished by internal resources that would not add to the already strained finances of institutions. For example, several community colleges have childcare and development programs as part of the curriculum; these programs usually entail some form of practicum or direct engagement in the field. Students enrolled in those programs could be assigned a specific number of hours as lab or practice, receive credit for the course. In another approach to addressing the need to expand childcare services while single-parents attend classes on campus, the volunteer from within the immediate community could be pressed into services; retired people are living longer and healthier, and they seek to continue an active engagement. This is no more evident especially within Texas, than with what locally is termed snowbirds (people that visit the warmer states during the winter northern season). Public schools have seized upon the human resource of retirees; many of whom themselves have professional backgrounds and expertise that will easily transfer to addressing the childcare issue.

Second, changes in operations of facilities such as the college library and support services through the use of technology and extended hours.

On meeting the needs of nontraditional college students other academic challenges, loaner program that makes hard technology and access to the internet for students whose residential areas still are without internet services (hard wired)

With respect to the affective domain and the correlate of social integration of the fringe groups such as the nontraditional college student described in this study, the institution take steps to create a better invitational atmosphere by hosting family-oriented activities on weekends when a number of nontraditional students are free from work and attending classes to spend time with their children in the collegial community: network with other nontraditional students and their families.

In addition to the recommendations stated, addressing the real or perceived notion that the college curriculum (instruction) is reduced in its academic rigor for an undergraduate level course, for example, was disconcerting to me as the researcher. Although similar comments during the interviews were limited to a few participants, I have heard similar remarks from other students in my role as adjunct faculty member.

Making the assumption the problem of a less-than-rigorous undergraduate level curriculum (instruction) is limited to a handful of courses and instructor's approach to teaching the subject matter, requires a systemic change beyond raising standards; it requires improved content and delivery. The latter sentiments were evident in reading Clemens' (2012) dissertation, a fellow member of Walden University.

Dr. Clemens pointed to the literature on professional development and actual practices in the classroom at the community college level. Changing the hearts and minds of some 'seasoned' faculty was challenging, but the explanation a mirror of the issues facing the institution serving as the setting for this study. The literature supports

an ongoing need to develop a diverse repertoire of teaching strategies to meet the diverse makeup of the community college students enrolled in 2-year institutions (Spellman, 2007).

One solution to removing the perception of a watered down curriculum or slackness by some instructors is a focus on quality professional development (Clemens, 2012). Providing adequate professional development and improving the teaching tools available to the instructor improves student success. Moving the curriculum into the active learning range of practices, course syllabi should clearly state as part of the learning environment and even grading system, all instructors expect students to participate in group/class discussions. Fourth, a reduction in the use of lecture by instructors and diversify teaching strategies. Clemens pointed out in her literature that upwards of 75% of instructors relied upon lecture and it consumed 50% of a class session.

Recommendation for Agents of Positive Social Change

In a previous doctoral program candidates aspiring to earn their doctorate in Curriculum Development and Systemic Change at Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida were taught to be agents of change. Graduates were to become scholarly practitioners engaged at bringing positive change to their institution by micro-level changes based on their research and body of literature. As researcher, educator, and

agent of social positive change, I continue to embrace that philosophy in his current professional development and position as adjunct faculty member.

Armed with a plethora of teaching experiences, a thirst for continuing education, and a willingness to engage in calculated, risk taking defined as instituting positive changes in processes—in this case—teaching strategies, for example, as researcher, I recommend that other educators in the community college arena consider several actions for adoption. Among the most critical based on the current literature, student engagement through the use of active learning. This means a reduction in the length of lectures and a shift toward active learning in which students are directly engaged with each other, the instructor facilitates the learning, and where appropriate, hands-on demonstrations, and linkage to technology are evident in the repertoire of the instructor's planning and delivery of instruction. One source to which instructors might refer is the work of McKeachie's Teaching Tips (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006) and Weimer's (2002) Learner Centered Teaching. Both texts provide a wealth of strategies and explanation supporting the pedagogical soundness of practices such as active learning, peer-to-peer assessment, and student choice in the processes that may be uncomfortable to some seasoned educators married to their ways and doubtful of recent developments in teaching at the college level.

Incremental change is sometimes the best because it is the least in-your-face change that usually meets with resistance over systemic-wide changes such as adoption

of new curriculum. Also, as an agent of positive, social change, colleagues may be apt to entertain suggestions about trying new approaches or diversifying their teaching repertoire coming from a colleague rather than the institution. A paradigm shift can be micro-level change that expands to other structures in the organization. By teaming up with colleagues and sharing ideas on improving student success through effective teaching strategies, those changes may become systemic adoptions.

Recommendations for Further Study

In reviewing this study, its original purpose, the literature review, and proposing the research questions and subquestions, the prospectus was sufficiently structured and presented a scholarly approach to the topic and issues selected. Expanding the body of research to include other small and rural, 2-year community colleges serving large populations of people of color is needed.

This study, while contributing to the body of research on the (SOB) and its influence on college students choosing to persist in their higher educational endeavor does not capture a significant enough population to validate those patterns and themes identified in this study; thus, it is difficult to generalize the findings to the larger population of nontraditional, Hispanic college students enrolled at 2-year community colleges in rural and small town communities.

Convenience sample size versus other approaches to securing an adequate sample size that reflects some percentage or model ratio to the actual population at a given

institution is another area of consideration for future researchers to explore. While the literature review and supporting text readings by me as the researcher of this study indicated qualitative methods using a phenomenological investigation and personal interviews were appropriately restricted to less than 10 in the studies reviewed (e.g., Rodriguez-Martin, 2010) and in planning for a qualitative study suggested small samples (e.g., Creswell, 2009), the use of larger samples may provide stronger evidence of the meaning that participants make of their SOB and those perceptions influenced their desire to continue toward completing the program of study that each participant had set as a goal.

In the manner of announcing the call for participants to this study, the use of a flyer in campus buildings where one expects a reasonable congregation of students transitioning between classes and posting myself in similar locations was useful; however, to increase the likelihood of responses to the announcement, future researcher should consider the use of internet and mass mailings, publish the call for participants in the college paper, distribute flyers to course instructors, and if acceptable, seek permission to approach instructors' class body to maximize exposure to the study and call for participants.

The use of a survey to initiate the process of selecting and including potential persons as participants in this study was a useful tool. In retrospect, given the nature of the population of interest (nontraditional students) by definition, already are 'squeezed'

for time and struggle to balance various obligations (e.g., work, family, and attending college). It might be efficacious to the potential pool of participants and future researchers to make use of the internet by creating an electronic version of the survey that persons interested in the study could download the survey respond to at their convenience and then email the completed survey to the researcher. The researcher would have the essential information to determine if the person submitting the survey met the criteria of the study and then, made the appropriate contact such as acknowledging the interest in the study, and if the person meets the criteria for inclusion.

On the matter of design of the DSQR and accessing the document (Appendix B), I investigated the idea and re-engineered the survey with pull-down menus. The response choices, including those categorically discrete items (e.g., gender), were coded with typical single-digit identifiers, interactive calendars (e.g., for date of birth), and instructions to choose an item where appropriate. This design may serve researchers pursuing mixed-methods where a combination of descriptive statistics, non-parametric tests, and F2F interviews define the method and design of the study.

Looking critically at the RIQG (Appendix C) intended to assist the researcher in guiding the interview process, future researchers will find the need to develop their own questions that uniquely help them focus on the particular topic and issues of interest. One area in need of enhancement that I noted in this study was the area of cultural diversity (CD); subquestions such as those that specifically seek to understand the participant's

perception of cultural identity, perceptions of the value in having cultural diversity within the institution's faculty, student body, and organizations may help in fleshing out the role CD plays in SOB and persistence.

The paradigm or model of SOB defined by Goodenow (1993) and expanded across multiple studies (e.g., Esquivel, 2010; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rodriguez-Martin, 2010) remained constant in being a subjective, psychological measure of membership, but the content construct varied substantially posited Freeman, Anderman, and Jensen (2007) and made it difficult to synthesize the findings of previous studies and likely, limited the generalization to the population of interest of this study. One emerging pattern, again, for future researchers to examine, is the role of family in defining SOB and with respect to persistence being a function of other obligations of the population.

On the idea of maintaining journals, logs, and other anecdotal records during research, as researcher I recommend the use of a combination of documentation. This approach should include audio recordings of personal notes about observations—those, ah ha moments—that illuminate the discussion and interpretation of findings. It is essential in conducting F2F interviews effectively capturing the thoughts and voices of the participants. Within this recommendation, I strongly suggest that future researchers invest in a quality, digital recording device with a high capacity storage and MP3/4 compatibility with one's computer system. I do not recommend the use of cassette tape media for two reasons: first, researchers may likely encounter difficulties in securing

professional transcribing services with the technology to convert magnetic tapes into contemporary formats such as MP3; and second, unless the recording device is of substantial quality as are the cassette tapes, the researcher may find a low-level of audio quality that impedes transcribing those recordings.

Convenience and comfort of participants, especially where the format is an interview and dialogue ensures, the need for the setting to be well lit, have comfortable seating, and climate control that allows for all stakeholders to be relaxed is essential. While the issue of convenience remains mixed in this researcher's review, (e.g., accessing the survey used in this study), I recommend that future researchers conducting interviews choose a conference room with padded chairs or those most commonly considered appropriate to conference rooms. Temperature control should follow common practices of the location, and the issue of door-close versus door-open remains a matter of personal comfort of the participant and equal assurances of propriety for the researcher, and for both people, maintaining the privacy during the process. Providing refreshment such as bottled water may also enhance the interview environment and contribute to the comfort of the participant.

In the current literature and common business practices, creating a physical level of comfort, an inviting atmosphere, and sense of privacy and security contribute to openness of participants in the interview process. The likelihood of reducing SDR and

increasing candid responses to the researcher's question improves with increased levels of comfort (physical, emotional, and cognitive) and likely, SDRs.

The use of token economy practices or the use of incentives to lure and sustain participants in research studies has a strong body of literature addressing its use with behavior studies involving patients with mental disorders, children in crisis, and within the educational setting of schools. Similarly, the workplace shows a mixed result of using employee incentives to motivate workers and increase productivity. The use of incentives in research also has mixed perspectives on its efficacious role in the social sciences, for example, DataStar.com (2009) an online resource for survey researchers, discussed five potentially effective types of incentives tied to the participant population. The limitations placed on the use of incentives may be resolved at the researcher's institutional affiliate and prescribed in the ethics code (APA, 2002) under which researchers abide. In this researcher's opinion, I think that providing water would not constitute an incentive. Thus, the recommendation here is to consider a token of appreciation after the research study is accepted by the IRB and the researcher meets with participants in a debriefing conference at which time the token can be presented.

Implications for Social Change

The Nature of the Social Change Examined

There are no magic globes, nor are there any one-model, fits all solutions for improving the circumstances of the nontraditional, Hispanic college student attending

small or rural community colleges; certainly, the institution that served as the setting for this study is no exception to the diverse needs of the modern student population attending institutions of higher education. There exists a plethora of possibilities wrapped in resources already in place; it seems to be a matter of matching resources to the needs of the student body and in this study, the focus continues to be in serving the needs of nontraditional, Hispanic college students.

Statistically, the fastest growing segment of the US population is Hispanic; in similar patterns as educational opportunities have improved, the number of minority-labeled persons, in this case, Hispanics are enrolling at community colleges and 4-year universities. The former, because of convenience, costs, and eligibility seem to be the preferred choice of many Hispanics; in some cases, the only choice that Hispanics may be able to select because of geography and family commitments. Thus, it is reasonable to focus on the implications for social change in those smaller, rural, community colleges such as the one that served as the setting for this study.

Academic rigor appeared to be of some concern by a few of the participants in this study; they believed that the curriculum was getting ‘watered down’ to keep passing rates up. Their observations were based on previous experiences and common knowledge; while not highly reliable data to base arguments for social change, useful from the perspective of the student is the consumer and the institution provides the

product. While the business model applied to education is riddled with controversy, it will suffice in this discussion.

Concerned with the likelihood of being ill-prepared for the academic rigors students will encounter at 4-year universities, it is a valid concern needing attention from the institutional bodies authorized to examine the issue. Sending ill-prepared, students transferring to larger institutions recalls the problem of persistence. While the first two years—usually completed in a community college setting—are critical markers in the likelihood of persisting to graduation (e.g., from a 4-year institution), those students seeking 2-year degree certificates are also at-risk of failing to complete upper level courses within their 2-year program if ill-prepared to meet the next level of academic challenge.

Instructional styles and methodologies were also of some concern by participants in this study—although limited to a few participants—it appeared that their concerns were well-founded because their motivation was at stake. Research supports active learning; active learning is especially important within the adult learner community. Adult learners do not wish to be treated as ‘blank slates’ with nothing to contribute in class. On the contrary, unlike the youthful, traditional college student arriving at the ivy halls, nontraditional college students bring with them an amassed body of life knowledge and skills that have value. The luggage (e.g., experiences and skills) that students bring to

the doorstep must find its way into connecting the theoretical with the practical in the learning process used in the classroom.

In active learning, the literature demonstrates its effectiveness in promoting critical and creative thinking, and supports stronger problem solving abilities. Active learning gives a sense of having some skin in the game or ownership in the process as a real stakeholder. Instructional methods must adopt and adapt to a growing population of nontraditional, college students in order to serve their academic and social, and sense of belongingness needs in order to achieve higher retention rates, increased completion to graduation rates, and students that are prepared to meet the challenges of advanced study and career success.

Some challenges are beyond the scope of change by the institution; these include student status; one particular status is the single-parent with children (e.g., usually, the female student). Although beyond the institution to change, mitigating the luggage that students bring to the institution is possible. From the perspective of the participants in this study, commenting on childcare was a significant factor in their decision to persist. Among male students, meeting family obligations—support the familial home, for example—played a key role in their decision to persist. In part, among the participants in this study, participants acknowledged that cultural beliefs and values influenced their education pursuit as being secondary to support of the family primacy. Those challenges to students placed their academic pursuit and persistence to graduation at-risk unless the

institution recognizes and acts to mitigate the impact of childcare and potential inflexibility of current scheduling practices.

Agent of Positive Social Change

This was not my first encounter with advanced studies, written proposals, and dissertation processes as researcher. I studied at Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida where I earned a doctorate in education (Ed. D) emphasizing curriculum and systemic change in 1998. The logical choice construed from the perspective of a life-long learner and advocate of positive social change was to pursue a second doctorate in a field strongly allied with education; for me that meant the field of psychology. The road traveled was not without challenges above those expected in a scholarly pursuit.

Given the late start in this new endeavor, at the age of 57 and after the loss of my adopted son to drug-related cartel incidents in Mexico, this journey began as a self-induced therapy of keeping myself engaged while processing through the human emotion of grieving; it has proven to be successful and enlightening.

As a researcher, I came to Walden University in spring 2007 and enrolled in two courses as designed around the program of study in the School of Psychology, general education tract. I grew in knowledge and expanded my understanding between educational practice (pedagogy) and the broader field of psychology that underpinned much of what educators did in the classroom (e.g., beyond methodologies). Seeking the

answers to the investigative “why” of the methodologies substantially increased. I came with several areas of interest—criminal or forensic, organizational, and social psychology issues—and over the journey of my studies at Walden University, I entertained various possibilities of research: token economy mentality and its influence academic achievement, Judeo-Christian values and how the contemporary social order of convenience, disposability, and instantaneous gratification influence the psychological measures of sense of belonging, and the relationship between architecture (e.g., communities, schools, and college facilities) and its influence on a person’s sense of belongingness or community. Obviously, I found a match of interests and topic to pursue in this study.

In the course of these 7 years to earn his PhD in psychology at Walden University, I faced challenges akin to those persons that I characterized in this study as nontraditional college students; in this case, maturing students pursuing post-graduate studies while maintaining a professional career. Since my enrollment, I have seen one family member go missing, another member going through a live transplant, and for him, open-heart surgery in the middle of a quarter. He’s lost his mentor for spiritual and religious development, and taken on the church establishment with a resounding ostracizing by local and diocese clergy for challenging the status quo. Alas, I endured; a testament to my resilience.

Reflections of a Researcher's Experiences

In the role of researcher, I selected the topic of interest based on a series of personal experiences in a setting where the population of interest was predominantly Hispanic with respect to both the community and the institution serving as the setting of the study. The second motivation in pursuing the topic of SOB and its influence on persistence was inspired by the literature reviews conducted as part of courses leading up to the dissertation, PSYC 9000 in which the student explored topics of interests. The lack of attention (research) was compelling and cited in published works on the limited body of information on nontraditional Hispanic college students attending small or rural-located 2-year institutions of higher education solidified my direction.

Concluding Statement

This study has helped me grow in the breadth and depth of my scholarly agency. It has changed my perspective on issues concerning nontraditional Hispanic college students, the need for further investigation, and advocate social change at the institutional level. Although I did not hold the status of a full-time faculty member with the institution where this study took place and as such, my professional voice was not prolific in shaping policy and practices that contributed to significant positive social change, I was—in the position of adjunct faculty member—able to achieve change through pedagogical practices. My ability to initiate small, incremental changes opened the proverbial doorway to institutional change through adoption of positive, social change

and relentless pressure by selling issues follows in the models of researchers on creating change within systems and institutions (e.g., Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009).

Making changes is difficult and increases individual resistance to change unless the appropriate atmosphere exists. Research shows changing the institution is more difficult because of existing structures like organizational culture; ownership in the process reduces resistance works well for the individual assenting to the organization, but the complexity of organizations do not easily embrace paradigm shifts (e.g., Battilana, et al., 2009; Bennis & Nanus, 1988; Fulton, 1995). It is incumbent upon the individual working within the framework of the organization to demonstrate those alternatives (e.g., pedagogical practices) and create an opening for the organization to consider. Consider the model program H.O.S.T. (Helping One Student at a Time) that focuses on academically, at-risk learners to address the wide educational problems confronting the organization. In the case of my role as adjunct faculty member who, working toward positive social change with his classes, one at a time over the period of a semester, encapsulated the spirit of bringing change to the institution.

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Appendix A: Call for Participants

Some important details before you contact the researcher of this study. Can you answer 'YES' to the statements below? Then, you would be a likely participant in contributing to the body of research that focuses on a segment of the college population that is often ignored or overlooked in the field and issues that fill the content of the current study.

- 1 Do you define yourself as being of Hispanic heritage?*
 - 2. Has it been more than 3 years since you last attended high school and/or, graduated (including GED)?*
 - 3. Are you older than the 'typical' freshman college student enrolling in SWTJC?*
 - 4. Are enrolled in a combination of all night classes, day-night classes, and/or including online courses, but may be less than full-time?*
- This researcher needs You!*



Dr. Ronald E. Zawacki-Maldonado, Adjunct Faculty Member, for SWTJC, and a student in the School of Psychology, PhD program at Walden University seeks Hispanic college students enrolled at the Eagle Pass campuses to participate in a research study about the influence of sense of belonging on student persistence among non-traditional students. Please read on if you might be interested and meet the definition of non-traditional college student.

Researcher Contact Info

<Insert confidential info>



DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

To set your mind at ease and to encourage you to participate, there are a few things that you should know.

First, you will be contributing to the research community and giving voice to a segment of the Hispanic community that does not currently have a strong voice in the research community.

Second! The study requires a nominal amount of your time as a participant.

Third! All your information is confidential, and you will not be identified in the published research.

Fourth! A simple interview with the researcher is necessary.

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire for Qualitative Study

GENERAL and PRESCREENER INTERVIEW**Date:** _____ **Participant's Name:** _____**Participant's Code/Alias/Pseudonym:** _____**Email:** _____ **Voice/ Phone:** (____) _____**May the researcher contact you using this email? (Circle one):** YES (1)
NO (2)**May the researcher contact you using the voice/phone? (Circle one):** YES (1)
NO (2)**Gender (circle one):** FEMALE (1) MALE (2)**Ethnicity (check one):** Hispanic (1) _____ Non-Hispanic (2) _____**Preference of ethnic/racial labeling (circle one):**

Hispanic (1) Latino/a (2) Chicano/a (3) Mexican American (4) Mexican (5)

White (6) Anglo (7) Mixed Race (8) Mixed Ethnicity (9) Other (10)

Age (in years): _____ **Date of Birth (optional):** Month ____ Day ____ Year _____**Place of Birth (optional):** _____**Native Language (check one):** English (1) _____ Spanish (2) _____ Other (3): _____**Marital Status (check one):**

Single, Never Married (1): _____ Divorced/Separated (2): _____ Married (3): _____

Other (4): _____ Prefer not to answer (5): _____

Conflict/Coercion Reduction (Check the appropriate response for the next three questions):

1. Are you a student enrolled in a course in which the instructor is the researcher?
YES ____ NO ____
2. Have you taken a course in which the researcher was the instructor?
YES ____ NO ____
3. Do you anticipate enrolling a course where the researcher will likely be the instructor?
YES ____ NO ____

FINANCES

Circle the answer that best describes your federal/state tax return status.

I filed a federal tax return for the most recent filing year. YES (1) NO (2)

I can be claimed as a dependent on someone's return. YES (1) NO (2)

If you filed a tax return for the most recent filing year, did you receive a refund? If you did not file a claim or someone else claimed you as a dependent, circle "SKIP"

YES (1) NO (2) SKIP (3)

Do you have any dependent minor children? YES (1) NO (2)

If YES, how many persons are dependent on your income resources? _____

EMPLOYMENT

Are you employed? YES (1) NO (2)

If employed, which best describes your employment situation? (Check one)

Full time (40 hours or more per week): ____ (1)

Part Time (25 hours–39 hours per week): ____ (2)

Part Time (Less than 25 hours per week): ____ (3)

PAYING FOR COLLEGE**Financial Aid Status**

Have you applied for state or financial aid? YES (1) NO (2)

If you applied, do you receive financial aid? (If you did not receive financial aid/grant, circle SKIP).

YES (1) NO (2) SKIP (3)

Do you plan on borrowing money to pay your college costs? YES (1) NO (2)

Source of borrowed money will be (circle all that apply) –

Parents/Family (1) Banks/Credit Unions (2) Combination of Sources (3)

EDUCATION/COLLEGE EXPERIENCES

Prior College Experience(s) Circle those that apply to your situation.

Did you graduate from high school with a state-recognized diploma? If you did not graduate from high school with a state-recognized diploma, circle SKIP.

YES (1) NO (2) SKIP (3)

Did you earn a G.E.D. through a program or military service? If you answered YES the previous question, circle SKIP.

YES (1) NO (2) SKIP (3)

Did you earn college credits prior to enrolling in college? YES (1) NO (2)

Did you attend a previous institution of higher education before enrolling in this institution?

YES (1) NO (2)

How many credit hours (not classes) are you undertaking in the current semester/term?

Are any of the credit hours from the previous question part of a remedial/developmental program? If YES, indicate the number of credit hours.

YES (1) NO (2) # of Credit Hours (3): _____

What is your educational/career goal(s)? Check the situation that best describes your plan.

1-Year Certificate (1): _____ 2-Year Associates Degree (2): _____

Transfer to 4-Year Program (3): _____ Not Sure of Plan (4): _____

Personal Interests/Not Seeking a Degree (5): _____

Is there any other personal information that you wish to share with the researcher that may help in this study?

YES (1) NO (2)

If YES, please write it here or dictate it to the researcher.

VERIFICATION (Optional)

May a representative of Walden University, the School of Psychology, and/or the director of Academic Programs contact in regard to the information provided on this form?

YES ____ NO ____

Contact Information: Telephone #: _____

E-Mail: _____

DEBRIEFING SESSION (Optional)

Would you like the researcher to contact you after the study is completed and published?

YES ____ NO ____

Contact Information: Telephone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Appendix C: Researcher's Interview Questionnaire

Welcome to the study!

On behalf of Walden University and this researcher, please be assured that your time and participation in this study are most valuable to growing the body of knowledge about nontraditional, Hispanic college students attending two-year community colleges in the scientific community and the field of psychology. If you were not given the Informed Consent form from the researcher, please ask for it before any engaging in any further activity related to this study.

I would like to begin with the earlier form that you completed in the initial interview to determine if your background was appropriate to the sample population for this study. This will help us begin to form a sense of how you define your sense of belonging in relationship to the institution and the potential influences on your willingness to persist in your educational endeavor. From there, I would like you to freely share your thoughts about what is important to you in making your feel supported, welcomed, and experiencing a sense of belonging, community, and ownership. In essence, anything that you believe that is tantamount to influences on your defining your sense of belonging and persistence to graduation.

[Notice to the Participant: At this time, I will activate the voice recording device in clear view of the participant].

GENERAL

Date: _____ **Participant's Name:** _____

Participant's Code/Alias/Pseudonym: _____

Email: _____ **Voice/ Phone:** (____) _____

May the researcher contact you using this email? (Circle one):

YES (1) NO (2)

May the researcher contact you using the voice/phone? (Circle one):

YES (1) NO (2)

Gender (circle one): FEMALE (1) MALE (2)

Type of Interview (circle one): Face-to-Face (1) Phone (2) Internet (3)

Setting of the Interview & Time:

Interview Question(s)

In this interview, I would like you to reflect on the following questions and provide a response. You may digress from the current question and elaborate on previously asked questions.

SQ.P

Q. In general, as a nontraditional, Hispanic college student attending this institution, how would you characterize your experiences and perceptions as influencing your persistence (continued participation and enrollment) toward achieving your educational/career goal(s)?

The intricacies of sense of belonging requires as series of subquestions supporting and illuminating the main research question. The following questions will guide the remainder of this interview. Please be frank and forthright as much as you are comfortable in doing.

Family & Home Background

IQ.01 How would you describe your family background in contributing to your endeavor?

IQ.02 What features about your earlier education experiences influenced your decision to attend college?

IQ.03 What were the educational experiences of your parents that you are aware of taking place in their lives?

IQ.04 How would describe your social and economic struggles that you and your family experienced?

IQ.05 What role, if any, does your faith/religion play in your pursuit of higher education and helping you to persist through graduation or achieving your goal(s)?

Social and Academic Integration, & Institutional ClimateSocial Integration

IQ.06 What have been your experiences interacting with fellow students on this campus?

IQ.07 How would you describe your involvement in student activities and organizations?

Academic Integration

IQ.08 What are your experiences with accessing the college's student support services at this campus?

IQ.09 How would you characterize your interaction with your instructors in and outside of class?

IQ.10 What is your sense about the instructors' commitment to helping you succeed for the classes that you are enrolled?

Institutional Climate

IQ.11 What How would you characterize the campus environment at this college?

IQ.12 To what extent would your agree or disagree with the following statement about your institution? Please elaborate and share experiences or examples. “This campus/institution makes me feel welcomed and important.”

IQ.13 This campus is best characterized as a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) because of the ethnic makeup of a predominantly Hispanic/Latino/Chicano population. Do you sense that a lack of ethnic and/or racial diversity diminishes your opportunity to learn?

IQ.14 As a prediction of your future success, what factors, issues, and events might influence your persistence at this college?

IQ.15 What are your expectations for this semester (academic, social, and personal)?

IQ16 Is there anything that we have not discussed that you would like to address, questions that you have of me, or any issue that you believe needs further elaboration?

Closing (The Interview)

Acknowledging the Participant's Contribution

Thank you, again for your participation and willingness to share your experiences and thoughts about what it means to experience a sense of belonging and how that perception influences your willingness to continue to pursue your educational endeavor at this institution and beyond to completion of your program.

Assurances of Confidentiality

As a reminder, all our conversations are confidential and the information obtained in this interview will be used only for those purposes addressed in the Consent Letter you signed prior to joining the study. You have consented to having this interview audio-recorded.

Debriefing Session

Once Walden University has approved this study and granted the degree for which this study was developed in meeting the requirements for my doctorate in philosophy, you will be notified and incited to attend a debriefing session where I will share the results of the study. You are not obligated to attend.

Researcher's Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, feel free to contact me at < deleted confidential information >. You may wish to contact me by voice mail at my home office in Eagle Pass, Texas; the number is < deleted confidential information >.

Appendix D: Letter of Appreciation: Participants

Dear Research Participant,

You may recall in late March through June 2013, you accepted an invitation to participate in the research study conducted by Ronald E. Zawacki-Maldonado, a dart oral student with Walden University. The area of interest for the study was examining how non-traditional Hispanic College students experience their sense of belonging and its influence on their decision to continue in their educational endeavor. You were one of 13 participants completing the research study.

On behalf of Walden University and the researcher, Ronald E. Zawacki-Maldonado, a special thank you is extended to you for your support through the participation in the study. Through your generous participation, you have made a valuable contribution to the body of literature focusing on non-traditional Hispanic College students. The reason you are being contacted at this time is that you had indicated in the demographic survey of that you wish to be contacted to attend a debriefing session in which the overall study would be presented by the researcher. This letter is to reaffirm your interest in participating in the session.

The researcher has selected one common session in which all participants will be present; confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity with respect to the information collected in the demographic survey, the face-to-face interview, and D audio recording of your interview remain confidential. In the presentation of the final study approved by Walden University, and no reference to any specific person will be made; thus the information presented at debriefing will be only recognizable by the individual who submitted it. On this session will specifically focus on the findings from the research studying as interpreted by the researcher; the above discussion section of the starting will be part of the information presented to the audience. The last section of the study to be presented to the participants will be the researcher's recommendations and on further study and development of the topic and issues related to sense of belonging, persistence, and how non-traditional Hispanic College students making meaning from their experiences with the institution.

If you do not wish to participate in the common session arranged by the researcher, if please indicate your preference in arranging an individual debriefing session with the researcher at a later date. You may contact him directly through the Walden University e-mail portal: < deleted confidential information> (this is an active link) or through his home office at < deleted confidential information > and leave a recorded message. Please note, when leaving your message, use the case study code assigned to you at the onset of the interview; if you do

not remember your case number, simply leave your first name. The home access phone number has limited privacy; therefore, we've only the minimum information necessary for the researcher to contact you.

Please complete the following form and return it to the researcher at your earliest convenience but conveniently before the actual date of the debriefing session, [Click here to enter a date.](#), so that arrangements can be made to accommodate all participants wishing to attend. Refreshments will be served during this session and tokens of appreciation distributed to all participants.

Because of the nature of the session, the content presented, and the limited facilities to accommodate participants in the session, the researcher asks that only the participants attend.

Once again, thank you for your interest in the research efforts of Ronald E. Zawacki-Maldonado with Walden University. I hope that your future endeavors bring you much success and happiness.

Gracias, Usted!

Ronald E. Zawacki-Maldonado, Ed.D. (Nova Southeastern University, Class of 98)
Doctoral Candidate, Walden University
Dr. Rachel Moore, Chairperson

Open and complete the Debriefing Invitation Form attached to this letter.

Appendix E: SP.Q Face-to-Face Interview Ice-Breaker

KEY: P = Participant/Gender/ID R = Researcher SQ = Subquestion #

R: In general, as a non-traditional, Hispanic college student attending this institution, how would you characterize your experiences and perceptions as influencing your persistence toward achieving your educational goal?

PF101: It's a lot easier than other institutions academically and also cheaper to attend; there is the drawback of fewer choices in programs and courses that prepare you for other career paths.

PF102: All instructors or teachers are very helpful; much better at this college (institution) than larger university; if not engaging me as student, I wouldn't come to school.

PF103: I'm basically satisfied with the college, its instructors, and the programs available; for me, they have all I need here, for now.

PF104: Intimidated by all the experience of returning to school (college) after more than 20 years, but instructors and fellow students were helpful in making the adjustment.

PF105: Hard at first; actually, the administration (advisors, counselors, office staff) were really helpful; after 16 years of being out of school, was not prepared for the transition to college.

PF106: It's been hard at times; keeping up with school, family, and work responsibilities is demanding, but I feel like it's worth the struggle; I feel like I'm part of the college with my classes and friends that I make.

PF107: Very welcoming place; I never feel uncomfortable; teachers (instructors) support the students when we need help.

PF110: Over 20 years since attending school; it was intimidating in the beginning because I didn't know anyone near my age; I felt out of place; some support people (college-work study, younger) didn't know how to interact with me when I came to get help; overall, given some time and adjustment, things are a lot better now. I feel welcomed by peers.

PF111: Positive toward the idea of being in college and having other people in my situation makes me feel like I belong; instructors are helpful; it's a good college.

PM.102: This College has everything you need for the AA/AS programs: classes, programs, and ability to transfer to a 4-year institution after the basic courses you finish. I think it is very good school and different from big places like UTSA. I was there, and it is a different experience; here everyone is friendly but the student has a mindset if it is good or not. It's lot less tuition.

PM.103: My parents never attended college, so I will be the first to go and graduate, maybe. So far it's been good for me. Classes are average. Some instructors are more demanding than others but that's almost anywhere you go. This (college) gets me to where I need to go next. I have friends from high school here, so it's almost like another year in high school; maybe tougher.

PM.104: Most of the staff and teachers are pretty good; the technical program that I am in is more about hands on than learning about Shakespeare or how a frog grows. I started later after my wife; she went here then to SR Rio Grande. Now she's got her degree, it's going to be me next. I have a daughter in high school now, and I want to finish before we are doing college together. The program is good and lets me have the time I need to work at my job.

PM.105: (it's) ...Been a while since I was high school – and pursuing academics – although in my job, I take the opportunities to train with border patrol programs; my EMT training, and bicycle patrols when I was stationed in El Paso. One difficulty with college is that I'm not typical student – my focus is on achievement, success, and moving on; not the festivals and student groups; work with peers on class assignments (e.g., projects) at times but choose who it is; no dead weight or students just messing up.

Appendix F: Participants' Individual Profile

Case # F.101

F.101 responded to the approved notice seeking participants in this study and contacted the researcher through email, the source contact indicated on the posted flyer. The researcher acknowledged the email – via Walden University's portal – and took the appropriate steps to secure demographic data from the potential participant for this study.

She indicated her willingness to allow the researcher to contact her by electronic message (email) and telephone; the respondent provided email and telephone contact information to this end F.101 is a 22 year old female cross-enrolled with the STWJC at Eagle Pass, Texas and Rio Grande College (Sul Ross State University holding an associate degree from the former institution; however, requiring a course available at the community college, the participant has enrolled and currently is engaged in earning a 3-hour credit course for a undergraduate psychology course. She identifies herself as a Hispanic female residing in the community; she is married, and has no dependent children at this time. Her native language is English.

F.101 has not been, is not currently, nor anticipates being a student in any classes taught by the researcher; According to the screening process to reduce conflict of interest and coercion, this potential participant falls within Tier 1 of the researcher's criteria addressing conflict-coercion reduction.

Information gleaned from the demographic survey used for screening potential participants indicates that she is a non-dependent and cannot be claimed on another person's tax return, and she does not have any dependent children living with her at this time. The participant reported that her annual income exceeds \$18,000 per annum.

In referring to her employment status, she indicated that her work schedule was limited to part time employment outside the home of less than 25 hours per week.

In paying for college, the applicant indicated that she had applied for and does receive at this time, financial aid in the form of bank/credit union loans and assistance from her parents/family with no specified portions of assistance stated.

The participant indicated she graduated from high school with a state-approved diploma in contrast to receiving a GED as an alternative process for people seeking a high school diploma. Also, it appears by her response, she earned college credit prior to enrolling in college. It is speculative on the part of this researcher that she may have enrolled in a local/state program

sponsored by the school district in which high school students enjoy the opportunity to 'dual-register' while attending high school to earn college credit; barring any further explanation from the potential participant, this is purely conjecture but would be consistent with common knowledge held by educators in this community of which, the researcher is an active member.

Currently, the participant is enrolled at the SWTJC, Eagle Pass Outreach Campus and pursuing 16 credit hours in a traditional semester form. No credits reflect any remedial or developmental course work. She lists her current goal as seeking an undergraduate degree but did not specify the program and/or major course of study in which she is engaged. She did indicate she has earned an AA through the local community college.

F.101 did indicate an interest in receiving a debriefing after the study is completed and published upon the approval of Walden University. She provided contact information for the same purpose.

In reviewing the data provided on the demographic survey, an initial document to ascertain the eligibility of a participant in accordance with the researcher's criteria, F.101 presents a unique opportunity in that she is continuing her educational pursuits beyond the 2-year programs but remains enrolled at the community college and taking undergraduate courses that will transfer to her 4-year program at Rio Grande College of Sul Ross University's local branch. While the tiered criteria created by the researcher, intends to reduce the likelihood of conflict/coercion, which < deleted name > clearly meets, the question of her 'non-traditional status may be raised. Other factors indicate she does indeed, qualify under the broader category of defining non-traditional, Hispanic college students enrolled at a 2-year institution located in a small or rural community. I am reasonably satisfied with including this participant in this study and feel strongly that her inclusion will not undermined or violate the criteria set in the research proposal. On the contrary, F.101's presence in the study will provide a window into the educational journey of younger women persisting in their educational endeavors but already independent heads of households and/or married. END

Case F.102

Case F.102 responded to the approved notice seeking participants for this study and contacted the researcher through email, and the initial meeting took place during March 2013 in the college facility of the Eagle Pass Outreach Campus all the Southwest Texas Junior College. The researcher received the Demographic Survey for Qualitative Research Study. The following is a summary of the information provided to the researcher on the perspective participant.

The respondent is a female whose age approximation is a 53 years old; this is based on the date of birth provided on the survey of 1959. Furthermore, the respondents indicated her willingness to allow the researcher to contact her by electronic and voice communication; Case F.102 provided the information to execute communication between herself and the researcher conducting this study.

As indicated on the survey, the participant identifies herself as the group Hispanic but prefers of the self-identity of Mexicana. She was born in Eagle Pass, Texas; her native language is English. Case F.102 indicated that she is a widow.

Case F.102 is not enrolled in any courses in which the researcher is the instructor; she indicated there are no previous courses in which the participant was enrolled where the researcher has been the instructor; the participant indicated that it is unlikely that she will enroll in any classes where the researcher will be the instructor because she has completed the required courses for her degree program where the researcher would be the instructor. According to the criteria set in the proposal of this study addressing the reduction of conflict of interest and possible coercion of participants, Case F.102 meets the criteria and falls within Tier 1 category.

Case F.102 has no minor children living with her at this time, I'm described her at annual income in a range of less than \$12,000 per year. She is currently not employed.

In meeting her college tuition and related expenses, she indicated she has applied for, and receives financial aid. She does not plan on borrowing money to pay for her college costs.

The participant's early education show that she did not graduate from high school, nor did her history show that she had not earned a GED through any extension program or military service, and has no prior college credits from any program before enrolling in the current institution which she now attend. Case F.102 indicated that she is enrolled in the current semester and undertaking for classes (12 credit hours) in a regular semester format.

Case F.102 is that did not indicate a specific educational goal at this time; however, she indicated a desire to complete the basic undergraduate curriculum for an associate's degree without a specific major. There was no other information that she wished to share of demographic survey wins submit it. END

Case F.103

The participant is a student enrolled at Southwest Texas Junior College at Eagle Pass Outreach Campus (Center), consented to be considered for participating in this study and submitted the Demographic Survey for Research Study document in March 2013. The following is a summary of responses completed by Case F.103 as a potential participant.

Case F.103 is a female student, whose age was not disclosed on the survey; however, with respect to age, the submitter appears to be within an age category representative of the requirements stated in the research proposal. She provided contact information and agreed to be contacted in regards to her selection as a participant in this study; both voice and email contact information was provided. The DOB indicates the prospective participant to be 23 years of age and was born in Eagle Pass, Texas. Her native language is Spanish and is a second-language learner (English). Case F.103 is currently married.

The participant is not enrolled in a course in which the instructor is the researcher; she had not taken a course in which the researcher was the instructor; and the participant indicated the possibility (re: yes) of enrolling in a course where the researcher may be the instructor; however, upon reviewing the current schedule and course requirements, the event would not take place until after this study is completed. In accordance with the proposal's design to address potential conflict of interest and reduce coercion, Case F.103 falls under Tier 1 of the selection criteria.

The respondent indicated that she cannot be claimed as a dependent on another person's federal tax return, she has dependent children living in the same home, and in describing her household's annual income range, selected *\$18,000 and above* from available categories.

The respondent indicated that she is employed and works 40 or more hours per week outside the home.

Paying for college, the respondent reported having applied for and receiving financial aid (grants) and did not expect to borrow money to pay for her college tuition; however. If the situation changes, it would mean borrowing money in forms of bank loans and from family.

The respondent's educational history indicated that she had graduated from high school with a state-approved diploma and had earned college credit prior to enrolling in college five years later. She has no prior college credit from any institution of higher education and is currently taking 12 credit hours (semester-format). The respondent indicated that no credit hours are part of a developmental/remedial course. Case F.103 stated that her academic goal included transfer to a 4-year institution of higher education upon completing the basic or core courses at the community college.

The respondent indicated that she did not wish to share any other information with the researcher at the initial completion of the demographic survey. She did indicate a desire to be notified and invited to the debriefing after the study is approved by Walden University and published. To that end, the respondent provided an additional contact – telephone number.
END

Case F.104

Case F.104 responded to the approved notice seeking participants for this study and contacted the researcher through email, and the initial meeting took place in late March 2013 at the college facility in the Eagle Pass outreach campus of the southwest Texas junior college. The researcher received the Demographic Survey for Qualitative Research Study. Upon receiving in processing the demographic survey, a narrative summarizing the information received from the perspective participant follows.

The respondent is a female with a chronological age of 41. The respondent provided contact information for the researcher to use in this study. This information will be used to contact the participant as needed.

She identifies herself as being of Hispanic and identifies with the group label, Hispanic. She was born in Eagle Pass, Texas; the participant indicated that her native language is Spanish and she is a second-language learner (English). Her status is married.

The participants indicated that she is not enrolled in any course where the researcher is the instructor; furthermore, she has not taken a course in which the researcher was the instructor; and having completed all courses in which the researcher is an instructor, she does not anticipate taking a course in which the researcher will be the instructor. According to the criteria set in the proposal of this study addressing the reduction of conflict of interest and possible coercion of participants, Case F.104 meets the criteria and falls within Tier 1 category.

The participant reported that she is independent and no one can claim her as a dependent on their tax return; she has minor children living with her at this time; and indicated that her annual income is more than \$18,000 per year. She is not employed at this time and thereby assumed, according to marital status indicates your spouse is the main source of income for the family.

Case F.104 reported that she has applied for financial aid and is currently receiving financial aid to help pay for college expenses. She does not anticipate borrowing any money from lending institutions or family members.

In reporting her earlier education experiences, the part II this event indicated that he had graduated from high school and received the state-recognized diploma; thus there was no GED involved in her secondary education attainment; Case F.104 indicated that she had no college credits prior to enrollment at the current institution. She identifies herself as being of Hispanic and identifies with the group label, Hispanic. Currently, the participant is enrolled in two classes with an equivalent of six credit hours in a regular semester format. Furthermore, the participant reported that none of credit hours earned are part of a remedial or developmental program.

Case F.104 indicated she had no specific educational goal in mind at this point in time must simply wanted to begin the foundation of a formal education leading to a program major and eventual degree. The participant entertains the idea of two-year degree program in a business-related field.

There was no other personal information that departures that wish to share at the time the receiving a demographic survey. She did indicate an interest in participating in the debriefing session after Walden University approves this study, and the study is published in accordance with the university's regulations. She provided an e-mail address where she may be reached beyond their current semester to facilitate an invitation to the debriefing session. END

Case F.105

Case F105 responded to the published flyer located in the main campus of southwest junior college in Eagle Pass, Texas on March 2013 where he submitted the demographic survey for quality research study to this researcher. The responded provided contact information in both electronic mail and voice telephone number for the researcher to contact her for the purposes of communicating details of the current research study.

Case F105 is a female and she identifies herself as being Hispanic but prefers identifying with the group Mexican; although she did not state her age in years, her date of birth indicates 1977 that translates to approximately 37 years of age. The participant's place of birth was the country of Mexico. Her native language is Spanish and she is a second-language learner (English). She did not indicate being single, married, or divorced.

According to the participant's responses, P is not currently enrolled in a course in which the researcher is the instructor; she has not taken a course in which the researcher was the instructor; and he does not anticipate enrolling and course in which the researcher will likely be the instructor based on her current academic standing and courses completed.

The respondent reported that she is not dependent on another person for her income; she does have minor children living with her at this time; and she described her annual income as being more than \$18,000 per year. The participant indicated that she is employed and that currently she works full time; her work schedule require sure to work 40 hours or more per week.

In regard for paying for college, Case F105 indicated that she has applied for but does not receive financial aid to meet her college expenses. She does not plan on borrowing money to cover college tuition and fees but will rely on your income from employment.

Case F105 indicated that she did not graduate from high school with a state-recognized diploma; however she did earn her GED through an alternative program; prior to enrolling in the

institution, he had not earned any college credits. She is currently no enrolled and taking 6 credit hours; three credit hours reviews and a remedial or developmental course for students who are in need of college preparation in one of three major areas: mathematics, reading, and writing. Her educational goal is to earn an 18-month certificate; the participant did not indicate the program major.

The participant did not wish to add it any other comments to the demographic survey; however she did indicate an interest in being contacted by the researcher wants the study has been completed and approved by Walden University. In that context the participant provided contact information. END

Case F.106:

The participant is a student enrolled at Southwest Texas Junior College at Eagle Pass Outreach Campus (Center), consented to be considered for participating in this study and submitted the demographic survey for research study documents on April 2013 to the researcher. Upon receiving the document, the researcher reviewed the information provided and determined of that case F.106 met the criteria for this study. The following is a summary of responses completed by the participant.

A native of Eagle Pass, Texas, Case F.106 is a female student, was age was 29 years old upon entering the study. The participant identifies herself as Hispanic and prefers the ethnic labeling term as Hispanic in referring to her background and culture. The participant indicated that her native language (first language) is Spanish, and NT indicates that her marital status is single. She provided contact information in both forms of any e-mail address and voice phone number where she could be reached as indicated by the responses to having the researcher contact this participant at a later date.

The participant responded to the conflict and coercion reduction prompts as follows: to participants is not enrolled in a course in which the researcher is the instructor; the participant has not taken a previous course in which the researcher was the instructor; she indicated a possibility of enrolling in a course where the researcher is the instructor but unlikely while she as a participant in this study. According to the criteria set in the proposal this study, case F.106 meets the criteria of Tier 1 and presents little to no risk of conflict of interests or potential coercion by being part of this study.

The respondent indicated that she cannot be claimed on another person's tax return, and she has minor children living in the same household at the time of the study. She described her

annual income in the range of \$8000 - \$12,000. She is employed and works part time approximately 25 hours per week.

Case F.106 indicated she had applied for financial aid and was receiving assistance to meet her educational expenses. She also indicated that in meeting those expenses, she would be borrowing money from family members (parents) to meet expenses beyond the financial aid received.

The participant indicated she had graduated from a high school program and received a state-recognized diploma. Prior to coming to the current institution, she had not earned any college credit. He also indicated she had not attended any institutions of higher education. Nor did she indicate that any of the credit hours earned or currently earning were from remedial or developmental courses. She currently is enrolled in two classes attending six credit hours in a traditional semester format. Her long-term goal is to earn a two-year Associates Degree through the current institution.

No further information was supplied on the demographic survey, and a participant expressed interest in being contacted after the study was completed and participate in the debriefing session. To that extent, the respondent provided contact information. END

Case F.107

F.107 is a student enrolled at Southwest Texas Junior College at Eagle Pass Outreach Campus (Center), consented to be considered for participating in this study and submitted the Demographic Survey for Research Study document April 08, 2013. The following is a summary of responses completed by Case F.107 as a potential participant.

Case F.107 is a female student, whose age was not disclosed on the survey; however, with respect to age, the submitter appears to be within an age category representative of the requirements stated in the research proposal. She provided contact information and agreed to be contacted in regards to her selection as a participant in this study; both voice and email contact information was provided. The participant is Hispanic and identifies with the label, Hispanic. The DOB indicates the prospective participant to be 24 years of age and was born in Ontario, Oregon. Her native language is English and speaks Spanish. Case F.107 is separated and divorced.

The participant is not enrolled in a course in which the instructor is the researcher; she had not taken a course in which the researcher was the instructor; and the participant indicated the possibility (re: no) of enrolling in a course where the researcher may be the instructor. In

accordance with the proposal's design to address potential conflict of interest and reduce coercion, Case F.107 falls under Tier 1 of the selection criteria.

The respondent indicated that she cannot be claimed as a dependent on another person's federal tax return, she has dependent children living in the same home, and in describing her household's annual income range, selected *\$18,000 and above* from available categories.

The respondent indicated that she is employed and works 40 or more hours per week outside the home.

Paying for college, the respondent reported having applied for and receiving financial aid (grants) and did not expect to borrow money to pay for her college tuition; she did not indicate any other financial plan in place should her financial status change.

The respondent's educational history indicated that she had not graduated from high school with a state-approved diploma but earned a G.E.D., and had no college credit prior to enrolling in college. She has no prior college credit from any institution of higher education and is currently taking 6 credit hours (semester-format). The respondent indicated that 3 credit hours are part of a developmental/remedial course. Case F.107 stated that her academic goal included a 1-year certificate program at the community college.

The respondent indicated that she did not wish to share any other information with the researcher at the initial completion of the demographic survey. She did indicate a desire to be notified and invited to the debriefing after the study is approved by Walden University and published. To that end, the respondent provided an additional contact (e.g., email address).
END

Case F.110

F.110 responded to the approved notice seeking participants all this study and contacted the researcher through email as well as a follow up contact at the college office all the researcher. The researcher received the demographic survey completed by the participant. Upon receiving in reviewing the document, the following narrative summarizing the information collected was prepared. The following narrative is that content.

Respond is a female of approximately 42 years of age according to the date of birth indicated, and she identifies herself as Hispanic; she also prefers the label Hispanic when referring to her heritage and ethnicity. F.110 was born in Dallas Texas, and her native language is English. Her current marital status indicates that she was married but is now divorced.

In accordance with the criteria for reducing conflict of interest and coercion, the respondent indicated that she is a student in one of the courses that the researcher is the instructor, she indicated that she had taken a previous course where the researcher was the instructor, but she indicated it would not be likely that she will enroll in any classes where the researcher is the instructor. Given the dual relationship of the researcher as instructor to the participant, F.110 falls under the Tier 3 status for selecting participants.

The participant reported that she is independent and no longer can be claimed as a dependent on any other tax return; although she indicated there were no minor children in the same household, the status of household members as a recent change with the graduation of her son. The respondent indicated having an annual income in excess of \$18,000; however, she indicated that she was not employed.

Case F.110 indicated that she had applied for financial aid in the current academic year but was not eligible to receive financial assistance. She intends to borrow money to pay for her college costs by applying for consumer loans to local financial institutions and family members.

The respondent indicated that she had not graduated from high school or earned a state-recognized diploma. Using the alternative general education diploma program (GED), she then enrolled at the current institution and was required to enroll in remedial education preparing incoming freshmen college students for college level work. Her current goal is to earn a 2-year associate degree from the current institution where she is enrolled.

There was no other information that she wished to share at the time of completing the demographic survey. The respondent provided contact information to be included in the debriefing session once this study has been approved by Walden University. END

Case F.111:

The participant is a student enrolled at Southwest Texas Junior at the College at Eagle Pass Outreach Campus (Center) represent it's the last qualifying participants to respond to the announcements seeking participants in this study. He submitted the Demographic Survey for Research Study document. The following is a summary of responses completed by Case F.111.

F.111 is a female student between 19 and 22 years of age and a single parent raising a child under three years old. She identifies herself as being Hispanic, but the respondent indicated a preference for being labeled as mixed race origins. Our native language is English, and she was born in Uvalde, Texas; a rural community 45 miles east of Eagle Pass.

By the responses to the statements on reducing conflict and coercion efforts, the participant indicated that he has not enrolled in the course where the researcher was the instructor, nor does she anticipate enrolling and course where the researcher would be the instructor following the conclusion over participation in this study, and he is not currently a student in the course where the researcher is the instructor. According to the criteria, Case F.111 falls within the least biased category (Tier 1) classifying participants within the convenience sample population.

Case F.111 indicates that she is non-dependent and has a minor child living in the same household at this time. She reported to have an annual income of less than \$8000, and he is not currently employed.

The respondent indicated that she had applied for and was receiving financial aid to meet her college expenses; she does plan to borrow money from parents and family members in order to continue her educational pursuits.

Case F.111 graduated from the public high school and received a state-recognized diploma. She also indicated having earned college credits prior to enrolling in the current institution, Southwest Texas Junior College. The credits were earned it through the Texas initiative for high school students commonly referred to as dual enrollment. Of those credits earned, 15 credits were earned through remedial and developmental curriculum. The participant indicated that her long-term goal was to earn a four-year degree after completing the required course of study at the community college level. There was no other personal information that she wished to share at the time of submitting this document.

As in several of the participants' responses to their interest in hearing the results of this study, Case F.111 provided contact information to the researcher in that endeavor. END

Case M.101:

This participant is a student enrolled at Southwest Texas junior College at Eagle Pass Outreach Campus consented to be considered for participating in this study and submitted the Demographic Survey for Research Study document in March 2013. The following is a summary of responses completed by Case M.101 as a potential participant.

Case M. 101 is a male student, whose age was not disclosed on the survey; however, with respect to age, the submitter appears to be within an eighth category representative of the requirements state it in the research proposal. He provided contact information and agreed to be contacted in regards to his selection as a participant in this study; both voice and e-mail contact information was provided. But DOB indicates the perspective participants to be 28

years of age and was born in Eagle Pass, Texas. The respondent indicated he was Hispanic His native language is Spanish, and identify mostly with the label, Latino. He is a second language learner in English. Case M.101 is currently married.

The participant is not enrolled in a course in which the instructor is the researcher; he had not taking a course in which the researcher was the instructor; and the participant indicated the possibility (RE: Yes) of enrolling in a course where the researcher may be the instructor; however, upon reviewing the current schedule and course requirements, the event would not take place until after this study is completed. In accordance with the proposal's design to address potential conflict of interest and reduce coercion, case M.101 falls under Tier 1 of the selection criteria.

The respondent indicated that he cannot be claimed as a dependent on another person's tax return, he has dependent children living in the same house, and in describing his household's annual income range, selected a \$18,000 and above from the available categories.

The respondent indicates that he is employed and works 40 or more hours per week outside the home.

Paying for college, the respondent reported he had applied for and receiving financial aid (grants) and did not expect to borrow money to pay for his college tuition; however, if the situation changes, it would mean borrowing money in forms of bank loans, and he does not anticipate financial support from his family.

The responder's educational history indicated that he had graduated from high school with a state-approved diploma and did not earn college credit prior to enrolling in college. He has no prior college credit from any institution of higher education and is currently taking 8 credit hours (semester format). The respondent indicated that no credit hours are part of the developmental/remedial course. Case M.101 stated that his academic goal included an 18 months certificate in mechanics.

The respondent indicated that he did not wish to share any other information with researcher at the initial completion of the demographic survey. He did indicate a desire to be notified and invited to the debriefing after the study is approved by Walden University and published. To that end, the respondent provided a telephone number. END

Case M.102:

The participant is a student enrolled at Southwest Texas Junior college at Eagle Pass Outreach Campus consented to be considered for participating in this study and submitted the

Demographic Survey for Research Study document in early April 2013. The following is a summary of responses completed by Case M.102.

Case M.102 is a male student, of 23 years of age. He provided contact information and agreed to be contacted in regards to his selection a participant in this study; both voice and e-mail contact information was provided to this end. The perspective participant was born in Eagle Pass, Texas. The respondent indicated he is Hispanic, and he identifies with the label, Mexican-American. Case M.102 indicated his native language is Spanish and English is his second language. The respondent indicated that he is single has not been married.

The submitter is not enrolled in a course in which the instructor is the researcher; he had not taking a course in which the researcher was the instructor; end it T annotated that he does not anticipate taking a course where the researcher will likely be the instructor. In accordance with the proposal's design to address potential conflict of interest and reduce coercion, case M.102 falls under Tier 1 of selection criteria.

The respondent indicated that he cannot be claimed as a dependent on another person's tax return, he has no dependent children living in the same household and in describing his household annual income range, and the respondent indicated an annual income of more than \$18,000 per year.

The respondent indicated that he is employed and works 40 hours or more per week outside the home.

Paying for college, the responded reported he had applied for financial aid and was receiving financial aid for the current academic semester. Case M.102 does not anticipate bowling money to pay for his college expenses; if it became necessary, he indicated the source of lending would come from his parents.

The respondent's educational history indicated that he had graduated from high school with a state recognized diploma, and that he had earned college credits prior to enrolling in college; however, he did not attend an institution of higher education before enrolling in the current institution. The college credits earned prior to enrolling in an institution of higher education result from a dual-enrollment program (the nature of the pre-college credits are part of an enrollment program sponsored by several school districts throughout the state of Texas). The prospective participant currently is undertaking 13 credit hours on the semester format that the community college at which he's enrolled. Case M.102 stated none of the college credits were part of a remedial or developmental program. The further indicate it and that his educational and career goal consisted of transferring to a four-year program at a larger institution of higher education.

The respondent indicated that he did not wish to share any other information with the researcher at the initial completion of the demographic survey. He did indicate a desire to be notified and invited to the debriefing after the study is approved by Walden University and published. To that end the respondent provided an additional contact: a telephone number where he could be contacted. END

Case M.103:

Case M.103 as a student enrolled at the local community college; the setting of this study in Eagle Pass, Texas. The recipient of the demographic questionnaire for qualitative study (Appendix B) is one in the same person and submitted the document for this researcher's review to determine the eligibility for inclusion in this study. The following is a summary of the information gathered from the document.

The respondent indicated that he identifies as being of Hispanic and prefers the label of a Hispanic. He is a 25 year old male born in Eagle Pass, Texas. His native language is English, and his marital status as indicated is single never married.

In responding to the questions regarding conflict of interest and coercion, Case M103 indicated that he is not enrolled in a course in which the instructor is the researcher, he has taken a course in which the researcher was an instructor, and he does not anticipate taking further courses where the researcher is likely to be the instructor. In accordance with the criteria set in the three tiers profiled to reduce issues of conflict of interest and the appearance of coercion, the respondents falls under Tier 3.

Financial status precludes anyone other than the respondent himself being claimed as a dependent on another person's tax return. Being single and never married, he also has no minor or dependent children living with him at this time. The best estimate of the respondent's annual income is in the range of 12 and 18K from an employment position all that ranges from 40 hours per week or more.

Paying for college, case M.103 reported that he had applied for and has received financial aid to meet his college expenses. The financial aid received is in a form of Federal guaranteed student loans which will need to be repaid upon the completion of his educational program. Additionally, his plan to continue his educational endeavor and meet the expenses related to

that endeavor will make it necessary to borrow money from family members as well as financial institution.

He indicated that he had graduated from high school with a state-recognized diploma. Net upon enrolling in the current institution he had not earned any previous college credit. Currently, the participant's is enrolled and undertaking three courses with an equivalent of nine credit hours all undergraduate work. His plan includes a transfer to a four-year university to earn an advanced degree in nursing.

The participant indicated he had no further information that he would like to share at this time, but he did express interest in being contacted after the study was, completed and published; to this extent he provided contact information in both telephone and electronic message address.
END

Case M.104:

Case M.104 represents the last responding male participant in this study. Although delayed and fragmented, the demographic information to evaluate the likelihood of the respondent's inclusion in this study was completed over three brief meetings. The following is a summary of the responses garnered from the document.

Case M.104 consented to participate in the study and submitted his completed demographic survey to the researcher. He provided contact information (email and cellphone) to facilitate communication between the researcher and his roles as a participant in this study. Case M.101 indicated he is Hispanic in origins, and prefers the label, Hispanic in regard to his person. The participant is 32 years old and was born in Oceanside, California in 1980. His native language is Spanish and speaks fluent English as his second language. Case M.101 is married.

Responding to the concerns to reduce and minimize potential conflict of interest or coercion, the respondent indicated that he is not enrolled in a college course where the researcher is the instructor, nor has he previously enrolled in a course where the researcher was the instructor, and the likelihood of enrolling in a course where the researcher is the instructor is unlikely due to his field of study and credits earned to date. According to the criteria for selecting participants regarding the matter of conflict and coercion, the respondent falls under Tier 1.

Responses to items regarding finances, the participant indicated that he cannot be claimed by another person as a dependent, and has minor children living in the same household at this time. He described his annual income as more than \$18,000.

Case M.104 is employed in a full-time position in the community and his workload frequently exceeds 40 hours per week. He is the sole bread winner for the family of his spouse and five children. He described his work history as stable and relatively secure in the other information or incidental comments while answering the category, employment.

Paying for college, according to the participant includes having applied for financial aid and receiving it to help cover college expenses. Without financial aid, the respondent indicated that he would be unable to attend college. It is highly likely that borrowing money through a financial institution will be necessary in the future (e.g., student loan).

Case M.104 indicated that his education and college experiences did not include graduating from high school, but earning a GED prior to entering the current institution of higher education. He did not earn any college credit prior to beginning his educational pursuits at the current institution, and he indicated that he has earned 8 credit hours to date. None of the credit hours earned are from remedial or developmental coursework. He indicated that his educational plan includes continuing at the current institution and seeks to earn his 2-year, associate degree in a technical field to compliment the 12 years in the field in which he is employed.

Case M.104 expressed an interest on attending the debriefing session once this study is completed and approved by Walden University. He provided email and cellphone contact information to execute the process. END

Case M.105:

General

Case M.105 provided information on the demographic survey prior to being considered for inclusion as a participant in this study. He provided contact information to the researcher in order to have the researcher contact him if there were questions about the information supplied and to the extent necessary to complete this interview. The interview took place well after the 2013 semester closed. Due to conflicts in schedules of the participant and this researcher, arrangements were made to hold the interview in the home office of the researcher; the participant consented and a date was arranged that was mutually beneficial.

Ethnicity Preferences

Participant, M.105 identified himself as being Hispanic, but preferred the label, Mexican American given his perspective as it embraces his heritage and the background as a veteran

fighting for the United States he calls home. He is approximately 30 years of age, born in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, but raised in Laredo, Texas, USA. His early language is Spanish.

Marital Status

He currently is separated and processing a divorce decree in courts of the local community in which he resides. M.105 is the father of two previous marriages: the first bearing 2 children and the last and most recent marriage, he fathered 4 children; the latter family unit consists of 4 minor children.

Conflict of Interest & Coercion

In review of the effort to reduce conflict of interest and reduce coercion, the participant answered the following way: He was not enrolled in a course where the researcher is the instructor; he had taken a course in the past with the researcher in the role of instructor at the same institution where the participant is currently enrolled (Note. The course as a developmental course more than 5 years prior to this research study); and he indicated that he did not expect to enroll in any courses where the researcher will be the instructor.

Finances & Employment Status

Case M.105 indicated that he could not be claimed as a dependent on another person's tax return, and that he had no minor children living with him at this time; the exception noted by the participant was those periods of visitation arranged between the estrangements of spouse under pending divorce decree. He stated his annual income to be more than \$18,000 derived from employment as a government employee.

Indicated he was employed, Case M.105 is a U. S. Border Patrol agent and stationed locally; he has been in the service more than 9 years. His work schedule tends toward more than 40 hours per week, rotating shifts, and frequently requires his traveling out of state on behalf of the agency.

Paying for College

M.105 has not applied for federal financial aid or the Texas Guarantee Student Loan, but has other means of financial support, including from the Veterans' benefits he earned while in military service. Additional expenditures were paid for out of pocket. He did not anticipate borrowing money from family members or seek bank loans, nor did he plan to use credit cards to cover expenses except as a convenience payment.

Prior College Experiences

The participant indicated that he had graduated from a public high school in Texas and earned a recognized high school diploma. He did not earn pre-college credits while in high school. He made no indication of having earned college credits while in military service to country, and other than developmental courses chosen to refresh his skills, he was exempt from required

entrance exams under regulations for veterans enrolling in a Texas public institution of higher education. He currently enrolled (Spring 2013) in two courses or 6 credit hours; none of the current courses were developmental/remedial courses. His academic goal and program of study includes completing a 4-year degree in a field closely related to his current career in federal government services in law enforcement.

Additional information was forthcoming during the completion of the demographic survey. The information has a sensitive nature to it and was regarded as preciously confidential. Serving in the U. S. Army and now a veteran, my record consists of two overseas tours of duty, both in heated, combat environment (Afghanistan and Iraq); my combat MOS (military occupation service) was an 11B or combat soldier in the 82nd Airborne. As a result of the combat experiences, I was diagnosed with PTSD and receive disability services and support from the Veteran's Administration.

The participant indicated that he would like to be notified once this study was completed and approved by the university so that he may review and discuss his contribution to the study and its findings. END

Appendix G: Matrix of Thematic Patterns & Marginal Notes

[M.1: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.01	Q.02	Q.03	Q.04
F.101	Pushed me more than siblings; older sibling graduated; Parents emphasized role of education is key to success (1)	H.S. undecided career goal for college; discouraged by professor (instructor, teacher)	F. H.S. graduate; M. GED F. labor M. Home-maker. Values of honesty and hard work	Difficulty balancing family obligation(2) (comes first) and work outside home conflicts with college goals (stressful)
F.102	No one in family ever finished(3) school; 8 in family; I'm the middle child; father died early; saw mother struggle (no education)	Parents wanted for us to be better (education, career); 1 st to graduate HS; but limited resources had to help family	F. No HS – worked to support his family; M. Jr. HS; In Mexico – about right 'Family' 1 st ; M. GED in US; F. truck driver	Childhood – struggle in early years; tough on my spouse; we both attend college; that's our money besides living expenses
F.103	Traditional roles of parents; family(4), work, and then - Delayed college – 1 st family; grown up; time to focus on my education;	Male siblings went to school; married very young; HS experiences good; future goals require higher education.	Hard-working parents with limited education; F. 11 th grade; M. traditional Hispanic role of housewife/mother; no schooling as child (girls)	Difficult; labor-oriented; parents worked 7-days to provide us with basic necessities; no time for education.
F.104	20 years since in school; graduated HS; attempted in '90s; violent relationship; dropped out; home with family; supportive family.	Wanted to have degree; parents supportive; better career choices; priorities were problem. Intimidated to leave on my own (scholar).	Born in Mexico; 15 yrs. old parents(5) left all family to USA 5 siblings & me; American dream; F. 4 th M. 6 th 6-10 yrs. working...F. illegal worked.	Typical bills and expenses; we are ok; Work may interfere with attending college or # of classes enrolling.
F.105	Hard work; respect for family; then came education; career change; more security for my family.	Better life than parents; better for my kids than when I grew up; to advance in current position need it.	F. 6 th M. 2 nd (Mexico); go to work to support family; Family of 16 siblings, eldest son went to work; M. domestic services to feed us.	Single-parent with 3 kids (6); taking in parent became ill; getting better, but is a factor in continuing college if not help.

[M.2: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.01	Q.02	Q.03	Q.04
F.106	Nobody has ever attended college before me; younger sister inspired me; worked w/family business (tienda) store; need education. (7)	H.S. graduate in family; migrant experiences in northern states was negative; help other migrants by my education (degree).	F. 23 yrs. (cantina) M. housewife & kids; self was expected to help when old enough; 'women' need to stay home	Early yrs. very tough; better now; migrant workers when younger; all family worked fields.
F.107	Separated/Divorced; limited educational activities in home; Sibling is inspiration and supportive.	Sibling (5 yrs. junior) in HS w/dual-credit; My GED; better myself and for my kids; BK and Wendy's not a future; I want to be educated.	F. degree; M. GED, no college;	Young, single mother(8); struggled with balancing family obligations, finances, and school commitment; no struggle with divorce itself.
F.108	Incomplete Interview – See 'Comments' in last block of Table A.			
F.109	Incomplete Interview – See 'Comments' in last block of Table A.			
F.110	20 yrs. since in school; parents unable to help me in early yrs. (from Mexico, no language skills); not much academic support; parents encouraged;(9)	12 yrs. marriage/divorced, & widowed; child (now 18 yrs.); housewife on my own; future not certain; nest is empty, and still have career yrs. ahead.	F. 6 th oldest of 11; M. 2 nd (Mexico); agricultural /farm workers; widowed mother remarried.	S.F. not in 'poverty' (food, shelter, clothes); my spouse joined military early in marriage (Career); military wife w/child.

F.111	Divorced/remarried/divorced mother; 2 nd sibling (girls); limited education dropped out/no GED; works as cook/cleaning; don't want to live like that for my kids.(10)	Sibling – dropped out; I have 1 child; want it better; strong points of my academic in math & Chemistry; H.S> trip to colleges opened up idea to pursue Rx.	M. dropped out @ 9 th w/sibling; sibling dropped out; didn't want to follow tradition/2 nd S.F. college grad; encouraged me to pursue degree.	Prior to 2 nd marriage, struggle; no F. since baby; M. 2 jobs, & unskilled to advance; F. not much achievement in my family.
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[M.3: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.01	Q.02	Q.03	Q.04
M.101	withdrew (11)			
M.102	From Mexico; 4 siblings; USA was opportunity for family; better life thru parents; return investment to family because they set stage.(12)	3yrs. ago – self-help/motivation book; never read until; read book every 2 wks.; school is helping me grow;	F. Exchange student, BA; M. HS grad; small family business (Flower shop); internet business to prominent people (13)	Before 'boom' in Mexico, much struggle; want better growing up for my kids; school is involved.
M.103	Inspire me to go higher in life/education; I get married, need to be able to care for family.	Since 4 th grade 'hit the books; HS went quickly; had to work couldn't attend college; helped family. (14)	Parents HS grads; no college; sibling is HS grad. M. license in cosmetology.	My family didn't struggle as much as others; I helped out family before considering further (15) education; no hand outs!
M.104	Combo of my wife (earning degree); important people in life have education; pushed because I procrastinate; work	Don't matter your age; liked math & sciences, art in HS; work experiences but need the paper to move up. @ 16 married;	Raised by GM; not surrounded by idea of education; few of my aunts had some college.	Very hard; worked migrant, pay bills; lived check-to-check; daycare expensive. We struggle w/5 kids.(16)

	incentive.	20's need to do it.		
M.105	Neither parent had chance to attend college; military (17) experiences had some influence; investment for family; open doors to career advancement;	Too young, had family; HS and then family; college was a dream delayed – military was stepping stone; military experiences open doors.(18)	F: HS – like most Mexicanos, priority family – means go to work then worry about more education: money and time M: 1 yr. college in Mexico (19)	M: struggled as single-parent; education not promoted as much as family togetherness – survive (I worked at 11 years old) (20)

[M.4: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.05	Q.06	Q.07	Q.08
F.101	Faith/religious convictions not priority even though I am Catholic/Christian. Will go back regularly after graduation (22)	I don't see myself as a college student – like the younger students; prior membership in Psych Club but time was problem/my schedule	Psych Club – meaningful because it's my major. Perfunctory rather than long-lasting/goals	Beginning experiences – rough; limited access to services due to work schedule – business hours only doesn't help me
F.102	Biblical context gives order or priorities in my family; family & home, children, spouse, & then serve self needs (outside the home)...now ok.	Positive sense of acceptance; almost renewed in youth; new friends; model for my children to do well; nice environment; helpful.	No organizations; study groups; schedule interferes with association (work v. merrtng); Want a Non-traditional College tudent(23)	Very good; important counselors/advisors, F.A. influence my reason to stay; I'm a member of community.

F.103	Not directly; God gave us life; we need to better ourselves; nothing should stop us.	Only in class (assuming small group activities); PT student, family, mother; no time to have interaction, belong to (24) groups; don't feel like part of.	None; student government? Not during week; more flexible on weekends, but no one has activities for people married & student.	Not experienced any 'real' problems (Financial Aid); counselors helped with planning; library hrs. weekends (limited)
F.104	Motivates me; be an example for my children as my parents were for me; worked to make it better for us.	Positive; not familiar with many students; age difference is factor; respectful of my age; I'm learning from them, too.	None; My work schedule, classes, and home take up all the hours that might be when groups meet or have activity.	Limited; same reasons as SQ.07; use alternative sources to meet my (25) academic needs (public library); not comfortable!
F.105	Strong influence; believe in God; about me and doing my best with what I got; ask for help in prayer; JFK s you need to do the work on earth.(26)	Don't socialize with peers; only classroom activities; schedule and focus on work, home, and classes.	Student Success Center – I have to! That's my socialization with peers while I study and get help; younger students different channels.	Student Success Center; Counselors help plan my program; financial aid; very supportive feel like being here; 16 yrs. wait.
F.106	Raised Christian Catholic; involved in church activities (Matachinas); migrant parents pray for children 'not' to become migrants	10 yrs. since school; all (27) students younger than me; freaked out when told I'm 29 (why after yrs. you here?); found other older students.	Study group(s); academic-related function; no time to get involved; church group activities (Matachinas).	Student Service Center; library & ACE lab; no internet at home; (28) understaffed to help students; effects my work.

[M.5: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.05	Q.06	Q.07	Q.08
F.107	Not very religious; I'm Catholic;(29)	Really good; limited to study group/cooperative work w/peers mostly; younger H.S. types, find problems with collaboration.(30)	Not active except for needed study group/group projects; family obligations; employment to support family.	Student Support Center (SSC); counselors helpful; F.A. and other services good; makes me feel supported; important in my going on.
F.108	Incomplete Interview – See 'Comments' in last block of Table A.			
F.109	Incomplete Interview – See 'Comments' in last block of Table A.			
F.110	Has played a role in my picking up (resilience) & moving forward; doing it for my son, too. (31)	Begin w/fears 'out of place' & lots of younger (kids) in classes; little to no interaction; in-class but even 'projects' prefer by 'self' vs. immature students.(32)	None: again, it's my age, lack of 'age-oriented' activities; work schedules; donated blood at blood drive; organize group for other women	Positive; access to services; 'lack' professional background (F.A.); (33) counselors geared for 18-22 yr. olds; not ready for non-t's

			in age-group	
F.111	Grounds me; daily part of life in some way – share with others; college has ethnic/religious connections; prayer gives me hope.(34)	Didn't know anyone; activity center (social dances); single-parent 'odd ball'; mentor was 1 st connection/friendship.	Catholic Club; religious retreats; catechism w/other single mothers; more single mothers need to form group for support.(35)	Positive 1 st experiences; F.A. hectic & troublesome; computer lab – limited capacity; use internet to locate services & materials.

[M.6: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.05	Q.06	Q.07	Q.08
M.101	Incomplete Interview – See 'Comments' in last block of Table A.			
M.102	M. strong religious convictions; I'm not as much; golden rule & #1 thing to do good to others, it will come back to you.(36)	Score it a 9; satisfied with meeting at school with peers; academic collaboration most common because P.T. people.	No other activities because of work obligations; go to class & go about life's business; not seriously important; I use time in other ways.(37)	Never used the student support center; (38) counselors help planning schedule important; wifi connections problematic
M.103	Catholic family but not religious connection to goals; field of study RN; helping others is	Classes tied to relationships but from here so have HS fiends I catch in a few classes, too; help from	I would like to but must work; have social life as adult; I would look into career-oriented	Limited access because of work & classes; hrs. opened are business & conflict

	where it comes out; personal values & beliefs.(39)	portal stay connected & sense of group.	groups to help me build network.	with my schedules; try to online.
M.104	Faith around me; having faith; belief that sacrifices lead to better life; going to school for Hispanic kid to work hard trades v academic	Working in group; hands –on technical program goes w/my work; intrigued by background (self-learned); age doesn't matter in field.	Technical lab w/others taking classes; work-study briefly; academic nature.	Success Center (academic); like to work extra at technical lab; access & work schedule already stretched; daycare shared w/wife in school.
M.105	You can see it through actions – things you do – and providing for your children; building a better life for them than your own growing up	Mostly older peers; have children, married, & working – like me, better interaction (in-class) than younger peers esp. see I'm BP agent	Fraternity..LOL..my kids make one; never involved any clubs or groups; no free time to do that stuff; work, family, & school (40)	Very helpful; knowledgeable staff & faculty; maybe because I'm older, my job. Rarely use services; go online

[M.7: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.09	Q.10	Q.11	Q.12
F.101	Limited access due to work and office hours; outside of class – via email regarding assignments; don't like calling; not social. (41)	Instructors can be helpful, feel like I'm not alone; sometimes after class meets; it's their job but only so much; rest up to me.	Campus makes me feel safe; some sense of feeling like stranger (admissions' people); environment is ok; Move to larger university	Not really! I'm not the dean's son or daughter; getting \$\$ from me; good service; sense of being welcomed - neutral

F.102	Available to help; can approach with problem; I feel most instructors are interested in me; that is big thing for me.	Encourage me to continue; interested in my graduating. (42)	Very comfortable; I feel safe; small campus makes me feel good. Access to bookstore is not good for working students or PT nights	Yes, I agree; teachers and administration try to help students with problems & needs; connected face/name they know you.
F.103	I'm quiet and only when necessary approach instructors; there's teleconferences & e-mail; sometimes, call; no more.		Security is ok; difficulty parking a distance at night makes me feel uncomfortable; office hours but friendly.(43)	Agree with statement; smaller college can get to know teachers and students than out town; it's important at first.
F.104	Instructor welcoming and I feel confident in discussion my goals and problems; instructor is available thru email, too.	Yes; maturity may be part of reason compared to younger students; but it's still my job to meet expectations; I feel supported.	Not a large population of older adult learners; younger students don't make us feel bad; be good to attract more non-traditional students.	Yes; make lots of (44) information available thru internet, too. I feel helped when I visit the office; Could do more to help
F.105	2 classes; they are available after class; e-mail; can call them; good professional relationship; that's all.	Supportive; trying by reinforce (academic).	Get along really good; stress-free; not like 'college movies' warm, inviting climate. (45)	I agree; 1 st time went to register – counselors/advisors explained all; I had no clue about it; Felt good after.

F.106	Some helpful; before/after class meet w/students; flexible in some cases; enrollment cancels classes I need; counselors are helpful.	Some instructors 'push' you; others leave it up to you; it makes me think if I want to be here at time; adjuncts (46)difficulty to reach.	I like the campus; especially 1 st yr. experience; I feel secure; everyone there for own benefit; instructors & staff most important.	Yes; especially 1 st yr. experience (overall); F.A. counselors; most staff helpful; very important to me to have support.(47)
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[M.8: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.09	Q.10	Q.11	Q.12
F.107	I have great instructors; accessible and approachable almost any time I see them; before & after classes give time to students needing help.	Pretty fair; especially when teachers approach rely on student's life experiences; engage students; not just lecturing us; meet us at our level (48)	Main campus (EPOC) friendly; never had bad experience; sense of security; part of the college.	I agree; feel safe; welcoming college because of its size; wouldn't have it at large university.(49)
F.108	Incomplete Interview – See 'Comments' in last block of Table A.			
F.109	Incomplete Interview – See 'Comments' in last block of Table A.			

F.110	Good; access to instructors helpful; self-directed so don't run to them often; higher education means 'not being held by the hand'	Varies across the college; some good; can tell engaged in (50) teaching; some have 'no place' in setting; getting the most out of class is your task.	If I weren't from area w/family to support me in effort, I wouldn't go to this college; I wouldn't send my son here; too many instructors lacking (51)	'smiles' everywhere; compadresitos mentality like the city (politico); not (52) important if they make me feel welcomed; do their job.
F.111	Generally 'positive' no confrontations; they have high expectations; frustrating at times couldn't get help; flexible schedule helped me; limited.	Overall '10' but had at least 1 instructor who I think didn't really care; gave me experiences to deal with different types of instructors.	I feel very safe; friendly; the administration makes me feel welcomed; campus police are helpful; no conflicts on campus.	I agree; whenever I'm on campus and go to classes, office, run into students, (53) respectful of one another; on campus, I have a good day.

[M.9: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.09	Q.10	Q.11	Q.12
M.101	Incomplete Interview – See 'Comments' in last block of Table A.			
M.102	Trusted; confidence to approach if I have a question; usually in class; significant to overall	Seem very committed to helping students.	Image of college same as what I see when on campus; distance learning has	I agree; never had problems with teachers; students are friendly; facilities & services

	scheme of enrollment; (54)		camera, but online classes, I wouldn't think makes one feel belongs to group.(55)	in general meet my needs; not like a stranger. (56)
M.103	My instructors have been great; flexible & worked w/me on issues affecting my attendance & success; make you work for it; it's good.	Committed to the student's success as long as the student is making their part.	1 st time registering counselors helped set up plan; F.A. (loans) explained so I know what I will owe later; good sense of community.	Yes; not important as much as regular students; important to feel welcomed; community is small enough.
M.104	Some of them do work in technical fields understand flexibility; open lab to visit w/instructors; email when need more help.	Majority of instructors are; 1 very receptive, helpful, talk w/him; programs need more 'hands-on' than lecture seems to be problem for me.	Mostly friendly; majority from EP and several seen from HS days; directories not necessary; small campus; helpful whoever you ask.	Agree; check if you miss class via email; instructor's check on your progress; you're paying for it; your loss.
M.105	Shift work – flexible (57) instructors, so far been able to manage attendance w/help. Can reach them through e-mail, works for me	Work site not as flexible; work before education; faculty committed to teaching and student success; not just passing...	Front office staff, instructors are friendly; no negative experiences w/people; security is no problem for me for obvious reasons; feel ok	See instructors, faculty in academic efforts non-Hispanics; appreciate success – rubs off on me (esp. known personally...)

[M.10: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.13	Q.14	Q.15	COMMENTS
F.101	Culturally, not significant because size of college and location is Hispanic community; can see the value in diverse body(58)	SOB through symbols and logos on clothes, etc. not a strong identity for PT students like myself; financial aid process -	Pass all classes in current semester; attend summer sessions; Fall 13 2 classes and graduate in Dec. 13; next BA (financial aid-dependent)	Selected for professional transcription & inclusion with dissertation
F.102	Not real important; more classes and teachers; content learning is important; other people would make it interesting.	Factors – financial aid; class and work schedule; no other obstacle to stop me.(59)	Positive: achieve my goal of AA degree; go into the profession (radiologist); secure my future; maybe additional degree.	Selected for professional transcription & inclusion with dissertation
F.103	Very bilingual (Spanish-English) but that's it; a few Whites, and Asians; getting degree more important; feel at home with my culture.	Nothing will interfere with my plan to graduate; could have tragedy; finances always concern me; help to pay school.	Finish the next semester; pass all my classes; make my family proud of my success; career.	
F.104	Yes; critical issues on standards so student passing is higher than should be; broader perspective and new ideas could be exposed.	Finances; academic success (passing classes); schedule conflicts between work and college.	Complete current classes (psychology); education to help me with personal life not just career; delay (60) possible due to limited class.	

F.105	No! Most of us are Hispanic; we're use to each other; language and culture are the same; but would enrich the environment.	Success in current classes; help balance school schedule; degree open doors; college expenses; daycare by college on campus needed.	Complete current semester; attempt registration for summer session; no particular social goals;	
F.106	In a way, yes; migrant college students get chance to compare institutions & ways of teaching classes; learning more about each other races.	Parents support (time to attend) & balance family obligations; F.A., classes available; instructors & services available.	Passing all my classes; train in Uvalde's campus for radiology; organizing older students (women) into group/club. (61)	Selected for professional transcription & inclusion with dissertation:

[M.11: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.13	Q.14	Q.15	COMMENTS
F.107	Too closed; familiar w/ students; it's where we are; what can we do? Prefer S.A. or Austin for more classes & different people; but larger campus means less...(62)	Kids' care; want to provide for my kids; support from parents; F.A.; sense of community comes from family.	See no problems; F.A. apply. Summer w/kids.	
F.108	Incomplete Interview – See 'Comments' in last block of Table A.			

F.109	Incomplete Interview – See ‘Comments’ in last block of Table A.			
F.110	Yes, it’s a loss of learning opportunity; same old ideas and ways of teaching it; both instructors & students benefit; maybe solve some of the biases.	Finances; support of family; more at home; staff training to be more compassionate toward non- traditional students; counselors need improvement.	It’s very different for non- traditional student to pursue & complete degree/career goal; especially Hispanic women; will continue struggle. (63)	
F.111	Very important; lack background from other places & people; no perceptions of other people than ‘we’ might think is; miss out on other countrymen.	Instructors make a difference in motivating me; academic success (grades); access to program (courses); F.A. career placement; daycare! Feel good.	Continue in program; graduate into Rx program; more interaction w/peers; importance of single-parent & career planning.	Selected for professional transcription & inclusion with dissertation

[M.12: Matrix of Thematic Patterns of Participants Responses to Open-Ended Interview Questions]

Participant	Q.13	Q.14	Q.15	COMMENTS
	With great regret, participant withdrew without further notice;			

M.101	unfortunate because few male students responded to participate in study.(64)			
M.102	It depends of people's view; as exchange student experience, it can have effect.	Motivating teachers – 'you can attitude' F.A. make a difference in continuing.(65)	Working toward AA; I want to go on to advanced degree in business administration; I will try to stay here and attend SRU.	Selected for professional transcription & inclusion with dissertation
M.103	It's a border town; Mexican community 98%...not too (66) many outsiders that aren't; Yes, too much familiarity; go w/flow; instructors – yes, yes	Help people thru RN career; inspired by working for Rx services; degree, get married, start family; go on to UTSA; finances!	Academic success; F.A. (loans) to pay for college; family is ok with my plans.	
M.104	No; 2-yr. college basics and job market; especially for non-traditional to get skills & increase career opportunity. No disadvantage at this time.	Finances; full-time work vs. classes available can hamper me; tough on family time together; more flexible programs even late at night.	Depends on my work schedule & classes available; summer w/kids & their programs. (67)	Selected for professional transcription & inclusion with dissertation:
M.105	Military experiences gave me opportunity to experience diversity; unfortunate that	Staying in community limits instructor's ability to enrich learning; plan includes moving on to larger (69)	Closer to graduation; transfer to 4-year university; keep on truckin' Time with kids esp during	Selected for professional transcription & inclusion with dissertation:

	small town mentality and (68) population limited interests	community & university after	summer vacation.	
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Marginal Notes to Matrix

01. Role of parents; encouraging; see value in education as tool for advancement/better way of life.
02. Common theme among female, single, parent with minor children living in same home.
03. Relative recurring pattern in 1st generation Hispanic to attend college discussed in Rodriguez-Martin
04. Traditional roles within the Hispanic culture dictate men's job is to bring home money; women stay at home. Repeated SQ.03
05. Most parents of participants in this study did not graduate from HS, immigrated to USA, laborers.
06. Among several participants a reality of their continuing in college tied to finances; personal income, employment, and financial assistance in meeting college expenses... Debt avoidance has not become a factor.
07. 1st generation to attend
08. Single parent with minor children in same home; balancing family & education... a repetitive theme
09. 1st generation; postponed thru child's majority reached.
10. Negative experiences in early years inspired to break chain of poverty/lack of education.
11. With great regret, participant withdrew without further notice; unfortunate because few male students responded to participate in study.
12. With great regret, participant withdrew without further notice; unfortunate because few male students responded to participate in study.
13. Family in Mexico had some degree of "American Middle Class" GPs loss from revolutionary period;
14. While among males, childcare is not issue of source of delayed higher education, often among the Hispanic family, sons must help family and delay own pursuits.
15. Family dignity means no handouts; family figures out struggle; education same way.
16. Shifting education plans to accommodate spouse, then self; remains a challenge even in two-parent families.
17. Continuing pattern indicating first-time or generation to pursue higher education.
18. Pattern with the Hispanic experience among lower SES families – early, sexually active resulting in unplanned pregnancy.

19. Force of the family on decision making Family is #1
20. Working early to support family!
21. NOTE - SQ.11 – recurring point of view is that PT/Non-Traditional schedules and life journey substantially impedes authentic interaction with peers beyond the necessity of group projects. Key reasons cited: home/work schedules; planned events during business hours.
22. Role of faith, religious training did not indicate a significant influence on the decision to or continue in college. See F.102
23. Several participants indicated the most interaction supported by need to collaborate on academic tasks.
24. There is a noted difference in female and male responses; this typically was a result of child-care obligations experienced by single-mothers of all ages.
25. Age-differences a factor in feeling comfortable with younger peers. The older participants – being out of school for more than 10 years, for example, indicated a reasonable expectation of anxiety upon returning to pursue their degree; those with 3-5 years made no reference to it.
26. Only participant to refer to historical speech JFKs '61 inaugural..."God's work on earth is truly our own"
27. One of the few participants that reported negative encounter(s); caused to reflect if was right decision until met other 'older students' and formed community
28. Note the institutional problem perceived by participant.
29. Once again, the role of religion doesn't appear to have a significant influence on the participants' decision and goals.
30. A notable distinction emerges for non-traditional vs. traditional students; older students are more focused on their purpose for attending college – literature points out that maturity significantly contributed to persistence.
31. Maturity & resilience overcomes difficulties;
32. Expressed more/less strongly depending on age of participant.
33. While considered the interaction of 'professional' staff positive; believes much of support staff inadequately prepared to handle their position; institutional support services are not oriented for non-traditional.
34. Grounded!
35. Emerging commentary on women's issues as probed further; trait commented on by female participants about women, single mothers across age groups.

36. Not unusual among traditional Hispanic/Mexican families – M. holds the reigns over religious training, F. generally concedes to wife. In popular, Hispanic literature, Bless Mi Ultima, it is well-established and a theme throughout the novel. (Anaya)
37. Not a significant factor in defining sense of belonging; looks to family & career to define belonging and willing to persist..
38. Schedules and classes available when need in sequence to complete my program and go on.
39. In making a career choice and pursuing his education to follow dreams of RN, is way of making connection to faith, values, & beliefs.
40. Sharing a sense of humor. However, reveals the role of family obligation over personal interests at times.
41. One common area of concept limiting the participants' access to instructors due to business hours while working hours; most common approach – in-class, email, and briefly after class.
42. Overall, the elder participants while having reservation, didn't feel the need for much contact; younger participants thought it an integral to their success; generally, positive about instructor's commitment to helping them achieve goals.
43. Female students tended to focus on access, convenience, and sense of feeling safe on campus – especially at night; In reviewing male participants' responses, 'safety' wasn't mentioned.
44. Overall, positive regard. Feeling of welcome and belonging defined by experiences – interaction with staff, peers, and general atmosphere of campus.
45. Interesting how participant's plausible images are based on popular movies – Animal House – or Spring Break...
46. Instructors' attitudes – perceived or real – contribute to participant's decision to persist. Similar patterns in literature 'predictor'
47. The need for administration & support staff to be accessible and helpful is important to participant and has an effect on sense of welcome/belonging.
48. Instructional design/methods important to keeping student interest and engaged; practical value of education.
49. Noted perception of small 2-year vs. 4-year institutions; greater sense of connection.
50. While finding a wide spectrum of quality instruction, clearly picks up on negative perception of faculty, overall institution doesn't impress participant; only because only option at this time.
51. Strongly disappointed with college's record for academic rigor and quality instruction/instructors narrow teaching methods

52. Matter-of-Fact, is not important to me; Example, library/Lab – staff of no help when working with technology; familiarity is problem; culturally, do want to offend very important but interferes at times with making right calls.
53. Notes that campus has good record of safe environment, helpful people – peers and instructors, administration, too. Sense of belongingness and community with college.
54. Instructors play important role in encouraging students to continue education; key element in making choices to persist; flexible schedules also key to this participant's commitment
55. A degree of social integration contributes to his sense of belonging and community
56. Reinforces the idea that facilities, s6ervices, are good, but instructors and peers make him feel that he' part of community.
57. One of the central issues for non-traditional students, managing work schedules with college attendance
58. This was unexpected; diversity is not a significant contributor to the participants' sense of community, enriching their educational experience; more about a practical, right to the bare necessities to get degree; no objections if diversity was to take place.
59. Predictors-Factors that could influence participants' persistence: ability to pay for college among female and male respondents; conflict between work/school, work/family, and school (especially among single parents – females); supportive environment making feel comfortable about being here.
60. Common response: focused on academic integration – successful in completing current courses; ability to enroll in course required for degree plan at times problematic; earning their degree in reasonable amount of time; career-oriented, apply knowledge and skills immediately. Social integration was not significantly advanced as need among these non-traditional college students. Age difference can be attributed to outlook.
61. Student seeks to be proactive in her educational journey; wants to bring about positive social change for non-traditional, Hispanic women attending college – support group
62. While diversity is important and enriches educational experiences with other cultures' values/beliefs, give up small campus, too. Recruit different races of students to stay here for 1 yr.
63. Participant exemplifies struggles of non-traditional, Hispanic female students attempting to improve education and build career: typically must battle and overcome – cultural taboos (older the more of an issue) of women's place and role; often, single/divorced parent with child(ren) care issues; financially challenged.
64. In reviewing the institutional data available to the general public, the researcher found that campus enrollment of part time students was 650 during the period of the

research; 192 students were at or above an age of 25; 140 (f) and 52 (m); nearly a 3 to 1 ratio of female to male part time students. Given these demographics, the 9 (f) participants to 3 (m) participants seems closely correlated to the population.

65. Suggested that instructors should be like motivational speakers in class.
66. Note the difference in responding to diversity; peers is not as important as having instructors with different backgrounds & experiences in teaching - instructor's methods (McKeachie,)
67. Supporting family, active role in homemaking, supporting spouse in her education (degree); now will focus on mine.
68. This is a rare situation of background experiences; only participant being veteran.
69. Barring he family and work obligations, continue education is dependent on those responsibilities but has goals to advance education.

Appendix H: Sample Transcripts of Interviews

F.101

Interviewer:

All right, it should be—yes. Today is April 10th, 2013. This is Dr. Ronald E Zawacki- Maldonado 00:12 with Walden University doctoral study, School of Psychology. I am at the [REDACTED], the extension for Southwest Texas Junior College here in Eagle Pass, Texas, the setting for this study.

Before me I have one of the participants. The case number will be F.101 as an identifier. The participant has reviewed the demographic survey she submitted, and there is nothing that needs to be changed or modified on it. It is approximately 7:15 and we're going to conduct the interview. I'm going to present the participant with the official consent form and we'll go over it, and if there's any questions, I'll be glad to answer them for you.

This just simply tells us about what your rights are as a participant in any research. This is the ethical assurances that you have that anything that we discuss, anything that's recorded on the recorder, any information that I take and write is confidential, and no one can have access to it, either via, say, your instructors here at the college or the administration. I will retain it for up to five years in a secure manner, after which time it will be destroyed. That's standard procedure.

On the next page, you have an area to print your name, then I believe the date, and then your signature. I'll make sure that you get a copy of the consent letter as well.

[Pause 02:19 - 02:36]

Interviewer:

I thank you.

Participant:

You're welcome.

Interviewer:

Okay, even have orange *[voice fades 02:42]*. Well, we'll start then. Today, as I said, is April 10th, 2013, and we're going to initiate the interview with the participant F.101, who is a student here at Southwest Texas Junior College. The setting is in the C.C. Winn Building, the extension of Southwest Texas Junior College, as stated previously. We are conducting a face-to-face interview, and it's approximately 7:15 p.m.

Well first of all I'm going to read a few things to you and the formalities. I'd like to welcome and thank you for choosing to participate in this interview for my doctoral research study. As a reminder, all our conversations are confidential

and the information obtained in this interview will be used only for the purposes addressed in the consent letter you signed prior to joining the study.

In this interview, I'd like you to reflect on the following questions and provide a response as much as you feel comfortable in doing. You may digress from the current question and elaborate on previously asked questions. I'd like you to think about it in terms of a conversation.

In general, as a non-traditional Hispanic college student attending this institution, how would you characterize your experiences and perceptions as influencing your persistence or your continued participation and enrollment towards achieving your educational goals or career?

Participant: Can you repeat the question?

Interviewer: Sure. Let me synthesize for you. In general, as a student here, how would you characterize the experiences and your perceptions about the institution, in general. If you would, a blanket or an umbrella-like statement or two, what would you say about this institution, your sense about it, how do you see it, and the experiences? Are they positive, negative? What would you say if a person approached you who wasn't from our area and decided, "I want to go to college, and I'm not sure if I want to stay here or go over to the San Antonio." How would you characterize your experiences to give that person a suggestion? Why would they stay here? Why would they come to this institution?

Participant: Why would they stay here [cross talk 05:41]?

Interviewer: As an example, mm-hmm.

Participant: I would say, it's a lot easier than other institutions, but the thing that is not good, though, is that they don't have a lot of selection of careers. It's like you're tied down to business, education—they have recently added criminal justice, more classes of that, and, if I'm not mistaken, two or three years ago they started—actually they brought down the nursing program from San Marcos. So there really isn't a lot that you can do. If you do go into business, you're just on the broad—it's just like that. You can't really go into it, into a specific field. It's just general.

The classes are a lot easier than other institutions, 'cuz I have seen where some of my friends have taken classes, same subject, and we could be going over the same things, but they're doing so much different work, and it's more hard for them. I've heard that when they've come over here, they take all these summer classes and just transfer from over there, because they're so much easier and they're closer to graduation. It's also a lot cheaper here.

- Interviewer:* Now, what I'd like you to do is—we're going to focus a little bit on yourself, particularly your family background. We're going to look at family background in terms of how this contributes to your sense of belongingness, your sense of community that you carry with you and sort of forms a foundation for you to make other choices and feel a sense of belonging when you engage in other institutions. How would you describe your family background in terms of contributing to your endeavor, this current endeavor, to pursue your education here?
- Participant:* They've actually pushed me more to—they've always been there supporting me to finish—graduate from school. I have an older sister who graduated not that long ago, and so it's me and I'm almost finished. Then, well, they've always made it—they've always stressed, actually, that school is very important and should be my number one priority. I do believe that, 'cuz that is what's going to get me further in life.
- Interviewer:* All right, now, thinking about your own education, your early years of experience, say, high school, and how this ties into your—or junior high—and how it ties into your connection between your family and their importance, their emphasis on education, and your own actual experiences, how would you say those experiences together, in thinking also with your family background, had contributed to you attending college? For example, in high school, what kind of things—or junior high—what kind of programs or things were there that were encouraging you to keep that in mind?
- Participant:* I had actually—in high school, I was actually very undecided on what I wanted to major for college, as my career. I had gone from basically all the fields, from nursing to criminal justice to computers to media tech to education, and I liked the whole education, so throughout—from junior high and through high school I started taking all those child development courses and all that.
- I was at first interested in the doctors program to actually become a pediatrician. I had gotten discouraged because some of my professors had actually commented, "You're not smart enough for that," because I would slack off. I wasn't studying enough for my exams so that my grades weren't high enough. They made me feel like I wasn't good enough, so I got discouraged from that, and they would tell my parents that, so my parents also, in a way, had a ruin it that I had gotten discouraged from that. That probably is why I switched majors twice—no three times, but I finally found one that—I'm finally with my major and that's what I'm gonna graduate.
- Interviewer:* Are you happy with your major?
- Participant:* Yes.
- Interviewer:* Again, what it your major?

Participant: Criminal justice, and I have a minor in psychology. Well, I'm gonna get a minor in psychology.

Interviewer: Okay, well, that's a good connection.

Participant: Yes. I was at first—I almost finish with my education, but I got discouraged because I was substituting for almost two years in the school district here. I didn't like it, because of what I saw. That some of the teachers, they just didn't like helping the students. It's like they would—the teachers get there and it's like, "This is your work. Figure it out. Do it."

Then one time, my cousin actually told me, because she was almost a substitute, she was eating in the teacher's lounge and she actually was conversing with the teachers. One of the teachers came in and she told them that, "In my class today, I only had one student finish their assignments." They all started laughing. It's like they were mocking their students.

I wouldn't want to work in an environment like that. I believe a teacher to be there to help the student excel to the next level and do their job instead of mocking them. I really did get discouraged with the school district, because here they hire you by—forgive me for saying this, but this is how it is—it's who you know, like that. It's like, no, 'cuz it really doesn't matter what credentials you have or your education and all that, because at the end of the day, if you don't know someone in there they're not gonna hire you.

I know for a fact that there's people who don't even have their degrees who are still teaching. I'm over here—how do you say it—pulling all-nighters on my work and then—just so somebody else can get a job and not me. Because I don't know anyone, they're not gonna hire me, and because they know someone, they get hired. So it's like—

Interviewer: I understand. Now, what were the educational experiences of your parents. That could include their formal kinds of education, high school graduation—

Participant: My dad went all—

Interviewer: - and then work.

Participant: My dad went all the way through high school. My mom dropped out and got her GED.

Interviewer: Now, in terms of their work, as far as their skills for their job, their work, did they go to any other kinds of training or anything like that that—?

- Participant:* Well, my dad does a lot of labor work. He right now works at the oil rigs, and I don't know if that would count as training. I would assume, yes, because he had to do all those tests that show him how to—what to do with the tanks and all that. He did that, and my mom's a housewife.
- Interviewer:* That's fine.
- Participant:* Yes, she's a housewife.
- Interviewer:* All righty, now, how would you describe your social and economic struggles that you and your family are undergoing?
- Participant:* By social do you mean going out and stuff like that or—?
- Interviewer:* Well, it could be a anything from going out, being able to socialize in terms of college, university experiences, and things like that. You mentioned some of your upward mobility already about the district, your local school district, feeling, experiencing some difficulties and constraints. In a way that's partly social.
- Participant:* Yeah.
- Interviewer:* Yeah, social structures. Now, in terms of your economic struggles, difficulties and balancing as a non-traditional student generally, you may be balancing family. You may be balancing a job and education and then all the things that go with that. Sometimes that creates social or economic struggles.
- You may have to—some people are engaged in helping take care of a parent if not their own children. Do I skip my class this week or this semester I don't register because right now I don't have home care for my—or I don't have sitters, a baby sitter. Those would be social type struggles and economic struggles. Simply, "Where am I gonna get the money to pay for this, that, still go to college." That would be your—that would be the category of things.
- Participant:* For the social, I would find it really hard on balancing because I—well, last year I had gotten married. I was still adjusting to it, 'cuz they always say, "Your husband comes first." Your family comes first more than anything, which I don't think that's the way it should be. Then I have, well, school. I'm talking, well, five classes, four on-line and one that I attend. Then I have a part-time job, so sometimes it's like I have—I fall behind on classes to actually spend time with my family or—because sometimes I bring work home, even though it's a part-time job, sometimes I have to be writing stories for my job or stuff like that. It's like I have to prioritize to see which I do first or more.

Usually more, I actually do work first, because my husband he's—most of the time he's working, so I also have, when it's his days off, I have to find time to actually spend time with him. Not only that, get to the housework.

For the economic, I would say, I've always gone to school straight on, but sometimes there's been that where my financial aid is late and I have to wait probably to the last month before the drop the fee from their classes for it to finally go through, but it does go—it does stress me out that— it's like, "Where am I gonna get the money?" Because at one point I didn't have good enough credit that if I would have gone to the loan agency or whatever, they say my—they wouldn't have given me anything.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, what role, if any, does your faith, your religion, your outlook on life, your philosophy of life, if you will, if not necessarily faith, religion, but some sense of philosophy, value system, your beliefs, how do those play into your pursuit of higher education and helping you to stick with it, not give up, not throw in the towel, if you will, through graduation or achieving your goals that you've set for yourself?

Participant: I've never really given that a thought—religion into education. I'm not—my religion is Roman Catholic, and I'm not—what's it called?

Interviewer: Practicing?

Participant: Well, yeah. I haven't gone to church in a long time—well, a while, actually, 'cuz I used to go with my parents every time my dad would come from work. We would go every Sunday. Well, every Sunday that he was here of course, but it really has been a while. I've been meaning to go back, but it's just the fact that I've been so busy that the weekends is like—the little social life that I used to have last semester, it's completely gone because of my classes, because I end up doing essays and exams and all this other stuff to catch up on my work that I don't even go out anymore. I would like to go back to—at least start going to church, but I just haven't had the chance.

Interviewer: All right, now, in terms of your values, your beliefs, your philosophy toward life, how does—with those things that guide you that you chose in your belief system—how do those things come into play with keeping you, let's say, either focused on your goal of pursuing higher education and attaining that goal of graduating? What do you think? What keeps you—

Participant: The fact that I'm close to graduating with my masters.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant: 'Cuz hopefully—if everything goes right, I would graduate this fall. Just knowing that—what's it called—that I'm finally gonna have that, my diploma, that's really what's really keeping me motivated.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant: I do sometimes feel like throwing in the towel, but it's like I'm too close and I worked this hard and it's, like, all that for nothing.

Interviewer: Sort of a light at the end of the tunnel?

Participant: Yes, almost there.

Interviewer: Now, let's switch gears a little bit, okay, and a little focus. I want you to—I want to explain a little to you so you don't—we're going to talk about the social and academic, what we call social and academic integration and the institutional climate.

Now, social integration is where you as a student fit in a mesh well with the community, the college community. That is, the other students and the interaction those students have in class, outside of class, before or after. We look at the services like clubs that—student sponsored clubs and organizations that one might belong to.

Now, in terms of non-traditional students, because of the number of things, the work, the family, often many non-traditional college students, A, don't have access to it, and if they do have access to such things, they may not have the time to participate in things like that.

The academic integration is in part where you yourself as a student, and other students, interact to pursue your academic program, your plans for projects and—anything from projects to working together, study groups, as well as interacting with your instructors and the services, the administration of the college, the support services that may be available, and how easy are those for you to access, what you make use of, what you don't make use of and why or why not.

Then the overall institution climate is kind of—if you were to walk onto campus and just mingle, no one would know you, right, per se. How do you find it? When you think about the university, you think about college life, how does that environment come off when you see it? So we're going to look at those things, if that's okay.

Participant: Okay.

- Interviewer:* As we do, let's start with what have been your experiences interacting with fellow students on the campus including over at the main building there? How would you describe it, and how does that define your sense of your belonging to the institution and the community of college students?
- Participant:* I really don't see myself with the college students, because of—I talk more to employees since I work there, since I work in [inaudible 24:52]. Since I'm more around employees, I know most of them there, so I feel like I fit in most with them and when I do talk to students, it's mainly because they come in the office asking for help or something that they need, so it's not really that I socialize with them.
- Interviewer:* From an employment perspective, then, let me maybe understand, that's part of your interaction is basically providing a service to other students?
- Participant:* Yes.
- Interviewer:* Now, but in terms of you being a student and your relationship with other students, not in terms of your work, how—for example, are you engaged or involved in any organizations?
- Participant:* I was, at the beginning, involved in the psychology club, but since I didn't have time, I stopped. I didn't go no more.
- Interviewer:* So you basic—you had a conflict in your schedule?
- Participant:* Yes.
- Interviewer:* All right.
- Participant:* I have met other students by some of the classes that we're taking because—since I usually take online classes—we all have to go take tests at the same place, and we notice who's taking the same exam, and that's how we start talking, but nothing that's—it's just something like a little acquaintance, like, "Hi," or "Bye," or, "Did you understand this assignment," or other—if it's not nothing to do with the class, there's nothing there.
- Interviewer:* Now, you sort of answered this already. Since you mentioned the psychology club and you mentioned the difficulty was the conflict to your schedule, balancing all these things that you're doing and you just kind of stopped getting involved. Your original intent was of joining that organization?
- Participant:* Yeah, it was to join that organization, because I had originally wanted to join the club, because they had the educators club, people who were majoring it. I would have like to do something, since I'm majoring in psychology, stay there.

Since they didn't have a criminal justice club—it's like I saw that as the next thing.

Interviewer: To interact with other majors and—

Participant: Yeah, there were others who weren't majoring in the same thing I was.

Interviewer: Let's see, now we'll look at the academic part. Okay, so, I want you to think about your experiences here as a college student over the time that you've been here in terms of your experiences and your perception about the kinds of services that support you in your endeavor to be successful as a student. It could be student support services. It could be anything in the administration from scheduling to counselors, getting financial aid filed, applications, support services, or if you need tutoring; any of that. That's what we're going to look at in this segment of the interview.

Participant: Okay.

Interviewer: How would you discuss or what would you say about your experiences and how they encourage you or build upon your— defining your sense of belonging or sense of community associating with this institution? What support services have you chose to access? Have you found some that you could not because of the way they operate, the times, and things like that?

Participant: At the beginning, the only one that I had actually gone to see, but I was really hard to get a hold of her, it's because she had a long list, was the financial aid. Because I wanted to see when my stuff was going to her, what my status was, but she was always with somebody else. Even when she got to you, you were there, even though she was helping you, she would take other calls and she would start helping the person on the line. That would make it more longer that you had to be there—that you were there than what you actually had to be there. It could have been just a simple five minute appointment that, "Oh, you're missing this page. Please bring it," but because she started helping other people who were just walking into the office or calling, it's like it went to an hour or more.

Interviewer: What else about support services, in general? Access to the different—you have a computer—have the library, computer lab, you have the tutorial center, you have tutors, and things like that.

Participant: Well, I've never visited the—I think only once I visited the tutor centers, but from what I have seen, they're always packed and the tutors always have their hands full, because everybody wants their help.

Interviewer: Now, but when you did go, did you get help? Were you able to access the service or say, "I need some help with this," or—?

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: Any other service, like the library, when you go to the library—?

Participant: Well, in that library, there's not really much access to books, because it really is just like, probably this room and that room together combined. That's how big it is. You have the computer lab. Well, the computers are all around there, but even like that, you have restrictions on websites that you can go. I mean, we're paying for the services, so why can't I access a website? I mean, I understand that you're not gonna go look at porn or whatever, obviously, at a school, but why put restrictions, say you can't get on Facebook or social media. It's like, "Why not if I'm paying out of my pocket or with my financial aid money to access these computers."

Interviewer: All right, let's see. Anything else about services? You talked about—mentioned financial aid, the tutoring. How about—you mentioned computers over the library and the general—what do you do when you need resources and things like that, in terms of to complete papers or to do project that's assigned?

Participant: If it's something that—the way that I've done my papers is, well, I've done 'em at home. It's only when I'm really in a rush that I really need the computers at work—I mean, at school, sorry, is that I actually do go.

Interviewer: Now, when you think about instructors as a whole, all right, it could be in current classes, classes in the past, you don't need to mention anyone's name, but in terms of characterizing your interaction with the—in the instructors, in class or outside of class, before or after class as well, how would you—how do you feel about your relationship with your instructors, past and present?

Participant: Actually I don't think I've ever had a relationship with a professor. Well, maybe the only relationship would be, it's like, "Here's my work," and my grades. Other than that, it's, no, nothing too personal. I think right now the only one that I kind of would have a little relationship with—no—well actually I just say, "Hi," to my professors, but I really don't actually carry conversations or with them. I think the only ones that I would be my criminal justice professors, but that would only be to ask career advice or stuff like that or something that I wouldn't understand. Other than that, that's it with my professor and that.

Interviewer: You would say you just limit most of your conversations and interaction to questions and academic concerns?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Now, in terms of that limitation, accessing, getting access to your instructors?

- Participant:* I usually email them. I really don't like calling them, to their office, or if I really have to and if they're there on campus, I'll go visit them at their office to ask them whatever I need to ask them. Other than that, it's through email, because they reply faster.
- Interviewer:* Now, again, thinking about your instructors and your experiences while here at the college, how would you—and again, thinking about your sense of community, begin part of the institution, as a student that attends, how would you—what is the sense you have about your instructors when it comes to their commitment to helping you meet your goals?
- Participant:* My professors here, well, I like that if I need something from them, to ask them something, *[inaudible 36:42]* the other time I texted her, because I missed class and I wanted to know what we were doing. She actually replied pretty fast. Most of the professors that I take classes with, I know that they can easily be reached and that they will help me, because there's some that simply don't care or they won't even reply to your emails.
- Interviewer:* What is it that you seek from your instructors in terms of—how do what they do or don't do contribute to you feeling that you're important or—well, I guess important and that they really want you to succeed in what you're doing?
- Participant:* That they're actually willing to help you. They're actually willing to help me, and they'll actually set up meetings to discuss how you're doing in class and what you need to do to raise up your grades. 'Cuz there's not a lot of teachers who do that. You actually have to ask some of the professors, too, "How am I doing?" There's some who'll actually tell you and I think that's good, because you don't want to be all the semester wondering, "What could I do to raise my grade?"
- Interviewer:* Now, in terms of the institution as a whole, okay, and you're sense of belonging, does it make you feel—how close do you feel to the institution, how would you characterize the campus environment? If you were anywhere on the campus, in terms of the friendliness, the sense of security you experience, the sense of not being a stranger?
- Participant:* Well, I think, that everyone pretty much feels like a stranger because nobody is really talking there, because it's more like everybody interacts with only the people they know and they don't start talking to other people. The only way that I've seen that actually happen, that they start talking to other people outside of their social group, is by classes, but other than that, you don't see—you're walking down the hall and someone just randomly tells you, "Hi, how are you?" or like that. 'Cuz even when you go to the administration office, it's like everyone's just staring at you. They kind of make you feel awkward for even going in there.

- Interviewer:* Are you speaking of other students?
- Participant:* Yeah, other students and, yeah, well, the admissions people. It's not until actually that you get up to them that they say, "Hi," or whatever.
- Interviewer:* Well—
- [cell phone ringtone]*
- Interviewer:* Okay, but if you say—for example, you would see some of the admission people in the halls elsewhere on campus do they greet you? Do they—
- Participant:* Only if you do it first.
- Interviewer:* Oh, okay, all right.
- Interviewer:* Well, then in terms of a phrase or word, how would you encapsulate—would you say it's a positive environment? It's—
- Participant:* It's an okay environment, because the institution is small, though, that's the thing. If it was bigger, I'd be like, "Oh, okay it's a good," or whatever. More people would come, but it's small.
- Interviewer:* All right, so, here we go. I think we've got a—I think this is how to bring all that, all this together about the social and the academic integration. Now, I want you to think about to what degree you feel you agree or you don't agree with this statement, and then if you'd like to elaborate, that's fine. The campus institution, or this institution, makes me feel welcomed and important.
- Participant:* Not really. I don't think not important, but welcome—
- Interviewer:* Not really important?
- Participant:* Not really important because there's so many students. What makes me more important than somebody else? I'm not the dean's son. The way I see it's just—I see them as they're getting money out of me because I'm taking classes there, so they have to make me feel—try to give me a decent service, so if I need anything, go back to them.
- Interviewer:* How would you characterize your sense of welcomeness with them, with the institution?
- Participant:* In what way? In general or—?
- Interviewer:* No, well, yeah, in general. Overall, when you put everything together, do you feel welcomed when you're on the campus, when you walk into an office, when

you walk into a facility? For example, if you walk into the library and the people that are working—sort of turn your job around where you're the student coming to seek the services from the different people that you're going to encounter on the other side. As a student now, you walk in and you're in the library, you go up to the library aide or librarian and you have a concern, you have a question, how do you feel? I mean, how do they make you feel? Like you're being a bother or—?

Participant: No, I guess they would make me feel welcome because they would answer my questions.

Interviewer: Now, do you agree with this strongly—strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, kind of neutral?

Participant: Kind of neutral.

Interviewer: All right, we have only a couple more questions to go. This campus is best characterized as—or I'm sorry—the institution is best characterized as a Hispanic-serving institution because of the ethnic makeup of a predominantly Hispanic-Latino-Chicano population. Keeping this in mind and understanding the importance of cultural diversity, do you sense that the lack of ethnic or racial diversity diminishes your enrichment of your opportunity to learn?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: Would you like to elaborate on that?

Participant: No because they always—let me see. I've seen where more students are coming over here, and we're also getting new professors. It's not only—'cuz the majority is Hispanics, but we are getting more—even if it's not in-person, we are getting more, other, how to say—?

Interviewer: Ethnic?

Participant: Okay, yeah, that's the word—ethnic people whether they're white or they're African-American or different ethnicity, we are getting more professors and we are seeing more people of different ethnic backgrounds here, so it is growing as an institution.

Interviewer: To you, in this still relatively limited institution when it comes to cultural diversity, how do you see the roll of culture diversity in contributing to your opportunity to learn, that is, to enrich it? I mean, we can all say we have a degree from—for example, in thinking in terms of criminal justice, our perspective is local. It's the county, the city, maybe state. Now if many of these people are from this region, this area, they don't bring with them other

kinds of experiences and learning. Therefore, they cannot convey to you and somehow share and enrich your learning. Do you think that's important?

Participant: Yes, I do think that important, because I actually have a—some of my professors that I've actually had in the past, they've actually had the opportunity to go teach somewhere else or get their education somewhere else, and what they have learned, they have brought it over here. It really has made a difference on the different stuff that you learn, because it is a completely total different environment from here and somewhere else. Even if it is in our neighbor town, it's completely different.

Interviewer: All right, now, as a prediction of your future success, what factors or issues or events might influence your persistence through graduation? Either thing that definitely you need to have in place to make sure can complete your program and graduate as you'd like to? What kind of things would cause you to delay that graduation?

Participant: I think the only thing that would cause me to delay, and I think this would go for both that I need to have, would be my financial aid, because even if I were to have a kid, say, the day of tomorrow, I wouldn't think of the kid as, "Oh, because I have a kid, I have to stop going to school." No, I actually think of it as more motivation to finish where am at, because it's somebody else that I have to think of and I need to be at a better place, not only for me but for that child too.

Interviewer: Anything else in particular that you could see either as looking at it as help you to make sure you stay the road, on course, or that would possibly interfere with you staying the course?

Participant: No, not possibly interfere, because I had actually talked to my husband about that. He is actually a manager there at Walmart. When you're a manager, they usually transfer you out. He told me that—because he wanted me to finish my school, that he wasn't gonna get transferred out, 'cuz usually you have to apply for that, and we had been wanting to leave, but he wants me to finish my school first, because if I go somewhere else, maybe my credits might not transfer and it's gonna get delayed. No, I would have pretty much that under control. It would just be the financial aid.

Interviewer: That would be the thing that—?

Participant: Yes, that's the only thing.

Interviewer: Now, our last item here or question I want you to think about, again, reflecting on your sense of—my sense of community and how do I define my sense of community, my sense of belongingness. What are your expectations for the remaining semester and the near future?

- Participant:* My expectations of the remaining semester—just for it to go by fast so I can—and to get all my work all together and pass my classes. That would also be for the future, pass the rest of the classes that I need to graduate.
- Interviewer:* In terms of your plans for future semesters, summer school, going to the summer sessions, what have you considered?
- Participant:* I'm actually gonna go both summers fulltime and then by fall, I think I would only be taking two classes, if I'm not mistaken, and, well, graduation. Then after that, seeing if—I'm thinking of starting on my master right away.
- Interviewer:* Now, let me ask you this one last—or extending this. If I was to ask you, how do you define your sense of a community or a sense of belonging? What is it that is important to you that you have to have as a person from the various institutions—it would be as a student, as an employee somewhere, as a member of the community, your family, as a wife—how do you define your sense of belonging? What's important for you to have?
- Participant:* I think really what—and this might seem silly, but they're nice to you. You already go to the institution, but you know how sometimes they have shirts with their logo or "I'm a Southwest student" or whatever. Having shirts like that and you wearing them, it shows that, "Oh, you belong to that campus. That's where you're going." Stuff like that.
- Interviewer:* You're saying to have that available?
- Participant:* Mm-hmm.
- Interviewer:* Like in a bookstore or a student store where students could buy things?
- Participant:* Mm-hmm, who would buy them. If they were to have it here, personally, not where you had to order it online. Like how in *[inaudible 52:40]* they have their little bookstore and then right there next to it, they have their actual store with all their merchandise that you can buy. I think that makes a student feel more belonging that, "I'm going to this institution and I'm here."
- Interviewer:* Anything else you want to add?
- Participant:* No.
- Interviewer:* Well, I think we have come to the end, and I just simply want to thank you for your participation again. Again, I want to remind you about all our conversations and the documentation that I've collected, including the cassette recording here, are all confidential and will only be used for the purposes addressed in the consent letter that you signed prior to coming into the study.

You have consented to this interview being audio recorded and the device has been present and visible throughout our interview.

In terms of the debriefing session, once Walden University has approved the study and granted the degree for which the study was developed in meeting the requirements for my doctorate of philosophy, you will be notified and invited to attend a debriefing session where I will share the results of the study. You're not obligated to attend, but if you wish to, you'll be notified if you left the information—I believe I have—contact. Now, if you have any questions, you can contact me as you did through Walden and/or my office phone number that was there. Well, that's it and thank you very much.

Participant:

Thank you.

[End of Audio]

F.102

Researcher:

Today is March 27, 2013. This is Dr. Ronald E. Zawacki-Maldonado with Walden University School of Psychology. I'm about to begin an interview with one of the participants. The case number will be F102. The participant is present. Our cassette recorder is in sight of both the participant and this researcher.

I have the documentation from the demographic survey completed as submitted and the participant has acknowledged that it is her survey and the information is correct to the best of her ability.

I'm going to present the consent form and answer any questions that the participant has regarding the consent form. This consent form shows what I'm doing, what I plan to do with the information that I gather, that everything you say and share both in writing and in speaking in this recording that we're making is confidential and no one will have access to it, including anyone related or associated with this institution.

The college asks that I retain all the data up to five years and it will be secured in a vault. If there are no questions or you have no concerns, you'll note on the back side there's an area that requests you print your name, today's date and then a signature. Then I'll sign it as well.

Very good. Thank you.

Participant:

Yes, sir.

Researcher:

Good. I'm glad to hear that. I know testing's always a little stressful. So I will try not to be stressful. Just think of this. You're in charge of this event. I'm going to read some statements to you and all that and then set us up in terms of what exactly we're going to do now.

Welcome to the study on behalf of Walden University and this researcher. Please be assured that your time and participation in this study are most valuable in growing the body of knowledge about non-traditional Hispanic college students attending two-year community colleges to the scientific community and the field of psychology.

If you were not given the informed consent form from the researcher, please ask for it before engaging in any further activities related to this study. We already have that and it's on record so we'll continue.

I would like to begin with the earlier form that you completed in the initial interview to determine if your background was appropriate to the sample population for the study. This will help us to form a sense of how you define your sense of belonging in relationship to the institution and the potential influences on your willingness to persist in your educational endeavor.

From there I would like you to freely share your thoughts about what is important to you in making you feel supported, welcomed and experiencing a sense of belonging of community and ownership. In essence, anything you feel or believe that is tantamount to influence on your defining your sense of belonging and persisting to graduation is what I'd like you to elaborate on.

So, we are here presenting face-to-face and we're at the **CC Winn** building extension for Southwest Texas Junior College. It's about 7:30 P.M.

_____ review, I would like you to reflect on the following questions and provide a response. You may digress or go back from the current question and elaborate on previously asked questions if you'd like.

I'd like to start with a general question. In thinking about yourself as a non-traditional Hispanic college student attending this institution and your general or overall experiences and perceptions about the institution and how they have influenced your persistence toward achieving your educational goal or career through the institution that you're enrolled at.

Participant:

What was the question?

Researcher:

In terms of how would you look at your experiences and your sense, you're feeling about what you need as a person and how this institution, Southwest

Texas, helps you or supports you or makes you feel welcomed or have a sense of belonging, that the institution is invested in you and your success.

Participant:

I think all teachers are very helpful. That makes it a lot better so that you would understand and like to keep on coming to school to study. So those are the main idea that I would say and helps the students.

Researcher:

As we go on, I'd just generally like you to think about _____ that your life is about. We have a work life, all of our career life, we have our family, and we have other parts and components. Work maybe. Family here and school, obviously. So as a non-traditional student all of your life package of components is much different than say an 18 or 19, 20-year old student who just graduated high school, comes out of high school and goes to college.

So this is particularly we're focusing on because there's a unique population of college students out there _____ 19 and 20-year olds coming into especially two-year community college such as Southwest Texas Junior College.

So with that you have all these other things to balance. So I'd like you to talk a little bit about your own family background as a young person growing up and how it perhaps either delayed or encouraged or motivated you to undertake this current endeavor about attending college.

Participant:

Well, I guess it delayed my coming to school because I had to attend my kids and I thought about family first, my children instead of my own. So to me it was more important my family than coming to school, but now that they're grown and they're gone, I'm thinking about I should have done it while they were young, but nonetheless, it's still a lot better now because I don't have to worry about taking care of the kids, doing housework. I can concentrate more on school.

Researcher:

What features of your own early education would you like to share about how they helped form, even from your parenting to your decision to what day to come to college _____?

Here, for example, what were your early educational experiences, either in your home, going to school, as a young person growing up?

Participant:

I saw that all my brothers were going to school, but since I got married very young, I saw that that was not possible for me, but to take care of my kids.

Researcher:

How would you describe your early education? Or should I say high school or junior high.

Participant:

Junior high?

- Researcher:* Or high school.
- Participant:* Well I think I liked it very much. It was a whole lot better than now a days.
- Researcher:* Unfortunately, right.
- Participant:* Unfortunately, yes.
- Researcher:* Thinking back to that time as best as you can, recalling, what was your ambition then?
- Participant:* My ambition was to finish school. My ambition was to graduate, go to college and have a job.
- Researcher:* Thank you. _____ that. Now, I'd like to focus now about talking about education in terms of your own parents. That can include their career work and how they wrapped their career and education together, whatever educational experiences they had and it can be their work experience, which was also educational as you know as an adult. Whatever you're aware of and you'd like to share that took place in their lives.
- Participant:* My parents had very few schooling, but they were very hard working parents.
- Researcher:* In particular, do you like your dad, your mom _____?
- Participant:* _____.
- Researcher:* Work, what kind of work _____?
- Participant:* My dad, he was a truck driver and he was a very good worker. My mom was a housewife. She didn't go to school. She didn't have any schooling. My dad went up to the 11th grade.
- Researcher:* Dad was 11th grade, right. Now how would you describe your social and economic struggles that you and your family experienced?
- Participant:* My experience in?
- Researcher:* Social, economic issues. What kind of struggles have you experienced?
- Participant:* For example, like.
- Researcher:* For example, social, it could be as a Hispanic woman early on has in some way that's been a barrier ever, that you felt that has been a barrier in some way, some treatment.

Economically, as far as sustaining yourself, your family, your children. Making sure that obviously you have food, shelter. That you don't end up homeless or things like that. Those would be kinds of struggles that some people experience, even if it's temporary.

Participant: Struggle would only be that we had to work. I'd say Monday through Sunday, Monday through Friday we had to work. That would be the only struggle.

Researcher: What role, if any, does your faith or religion, your beliefs, your philosophy about life play in the pursuit of higher education and, of course, helping you to continue through graduation in achieving the goal or your career that you've set out in your plan to do?

Participant: Our religious.

Researcher: Well, it doesn't have to be religion, but faith. Maybe it's your philosophy about life. Something that your parents instilled in you way back and you carry it with you. Something you learned as you yourself matured. This is what I believe and I live by this idea.

Participant: Well, we believe that we have to do the right thing, try to go the right path and learn to run.

Researcher: As far as thinking about this in terms of motivation, what are the things that help you or motivate you to continue to try to work on that goal of achieving your educational --?

Participant: Like for example right now what motivates me?

Researcher: Now, yeah.

Participant: My motivation right now or before, it was to show my kids that they can do it. Now it's to show my grandkids that school is the best path that you can go because education, nobody can take that away.

Researcher: Did I _____ some of the questions last time? From your survey, right. This is our first one, right?

Participant: Yes.

Researcher: Alright. Yeah. _____ read it. Okay. Sometimes the mind and the numbers are going all over the place. _____.

Now let's look at -- we're gonna talk about socially integrating yourself as a student in the institution and things that are related to that. How do you see yourself fitting in and what is it that you need from the institution? The people

that are part of the institution, the faculty, the student body. How you fit in as part of the overall member of this community.

So what have been your experiences interacting with fellow students on the campus or with Southwest Texas?

Participant: I feel accepted. I feel good about – it's just like if I was a young kid again 'cause I feel accepted. I make lots of friends. It's a very nice –

Researcher: Environment?

Participant: Yes.

Researcher: How would you describe your involvement in student activities in and out of class and organizations sponsored by the institution, the college?

Participant: How do I?

Researcher: How would you describe your involvement with student activities in terms of the student activities and organizations?

Participant: I like it. I feel very comfortable.

Researcher: Now, can you tell me what student activities that you engage in? For example, they might be a mix of academics and social. For example, going to the library and studying with your peers or meeting there to go over a project. Using the student _____ or at the main campus here to get together and prepare for something. These are the kind of things that I'm looking at. What experiences have you had along that line?

Participant: As of right now, I haven't. The only experiences that I love studying with is my student friends. I like to communicate, whatever. For example, if we're in one class, whatever studies we have to do, the activities of doing a project. I'm very comfortable. _____.

Researcher: As far as organizations, do you know of any organizations that are really focused on the non-traditional college student that would somehow enrich you or your educational experience? For example, we have student groups that are sponsored, different clubs, like psychology club. Do you engage in any of those organizations?

Participant: No, I don't.

Researcher: Now, may I ask is it in part because of the access? Is it because of access or your schedule?

- Participant:* Well, because of my schedule right now. I have a full load that I'm taking.
- Researcher:* Are there any particular organizations that you might if you had the time, like to look at?
- Participant:* Yes, I would like to.
- Researcher:* Any particular one?
- Participant:* Well, there is the science, the nursing _____.
- Researcher:* Alright. _____. Next, now we want to look at the academics. What are your experiences with accessing the college student support services at this campus?
- Participant:* _____.
- Researcher:* What have been your experiences in accessing the different support services, that things are available to students to help you be successful.
- Participant:* Like the student center?
- Researcher:* Yes, that would be one.
- Participant:* I think that is very good because it helps us students like myself that don't understand the material. I have been able to use that, which to me has been very helpful.
- Researcher:* Are there any other services? How about the counseling, financial aid?
- Participant:* I haven't had any trouble. They have been very helpful. In the financial aid whenever I need any help, they're there to help. The counselors, they help you to even just to talk. They're always available.
- Researcher:* Would you say that the ability to access the people and the resources, like the library, the student success center, your counselor and people in financial aid, would you say these are factors that influence your continuing _____?
- Participant:* Yes, sir. They do. Because if they weren't there, I wouldn't know how to go about it.
- Researcher:* How would you characterize your interaction with your instructors in class and out of class? How would you think about your relationship with your instructors in class and outside of class in terms of do you have access to them, like that?

- Participant:* It's a teacher/student relation. It's to the point and they're there to help.
- Researcher:* Now, since you mentioned they're available to help, are you sure that they're available to help you outside of class?
- Participant:* Yes. In their office. You stop by, they do stop what they're doing and answer your question. Whatever you need.
- Researcher:* Now, thinking about your instructors or the experiences that you've had with your instructors, how would you sense their commitment to help you be successful. In other words, sharing your goal, your dream of earning your degree or certificate, what is your perception or feeling --?
- Participant:* I think, well, the teachers that I have, I think they encourage because they help you and like I said, they answer your questions and they're there to help. Even if any of it's not on their hours or if mine, but still if you see them in the hallway, they'll stop and answer the question you ask.
- Researcher:* Now, in terms of the institution itself, the environment _____ it overlaps, now think more broadly of the whole campus of Southwest. How would you characterize the environment if you were visiting? Say you just walked onto the main campus or even here, some of your classes are in this building. How do you see the campus in terms of your image about college and what you really see? How do they match?
- Participant:* I love what I see. I love that just by driving up to where the college is, Southwest, and look at it, I love it. I'm very happy that they have something like this and the _____.
- Researcher:* In terms of appeal, the aesthetics, the appeal of the campus, the buildings or location, parking lots, library, computers, places to get things printed, bookstore, these kinds of structures that are part of the college, what would you say about those? Anything particular --?
- Participant:* I think the only thing would be that doesn't appeal to me is the bookstore. It's not open and they only open during the first month of the school when it starts, but other than that, the appealing of the college I like.
- Researcher:* Now I'm gonna read a statement to you and I want you to think about it very globally, broadly and then maybe even then think about it with a specific example or two. To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statement about the institution.
- This campus institution makes me feel welcomed and important.
- Participant:* Yes, it makes me feel welcome.

- Researcher:* In what ways? Could you give me some examples of ways that make you feel welcomed and important?
- Participant:* I think because it's a higher education.
- Researcher:* I'm sorry –
- Participant:* Welcoming because all teachers there know you by name. They know who you are.
- Researcher:* Now, this campus is best characterized as a Hispanic serving institution because of the ethnic make-up of a predominantly Hispanic, Latino, Chicano population. In looking at cultural diversity, does the lack of ethnic and/or racial diversity diminish the opportunity to learn more on a global stage?
- Participant:* No, I don't think that it has nothing to do with that. I think the only thing would be that they would need more teachers. They would need more classrooms for a bigger _____.
- Researcher:* Would you feel then that a broader diversity of instructors from different background, different colleges, universities coming to Southwest Texas would enrich your opportunity to learn?
- Participant:* Not because coming from other towns or?
- Researcher:* Well yeah. Distance. When people come together, as you know, we bring with us who we are. We don't leave everything at the door and walk in as a teacher or a student. Sometimes we call it our luggage, our baggage. Sometimes those have a negative connotation or negative meaning.
- But let's say you have instructors that did not grow up here, traveled in other places, received a degree outside of Texas or outside of _____ Southwest Texas Junior College, et cetera. They bring with them different experiences. So in their teaching that often comes out. Would you think that that would be an opportunity to enrich your educational experience or do you feel that it's not that important?
- Participant:* It would help, but I believe that – how would you say it. What they show you, what there is to learn I guess that is the important thing.
- Researcher:* Now, we have two more questions. In thinking, if you will, a prediction of your future success and that is your plan, your academic goals, career plan through this institution. Continuing along that path. What are the factors, the influences, those things that happen or don't happen that might influence or affect your continuation?

- Participant:* My influence affected?
- Researcher:* Yeah, things that would affect you continuing through your program here and graduating, meeting your goal.
- Participant:* The only thing would be financial aid. If I didn't get any help from them, but other than that, to reach my goal there is no obstacle that would stop me.
- Researcher:* Well, one more. Then I'm going to read a couple statements to you. What are your expectations for the rest of the semester and into the summer next year, the plans you have, academic plan, social things you're dealing with or personal goals. Not directly necessarily related to your educational endeavor. What do you hope to accomplish?
- Participant:* Well, my goal to accomplish would be to get my associates, but not necessarily just my associates. Going to _____ to a master's degree.
- Researcher:* What field would that be in do you think if you pursued up to a master's degree?
- Participant:* I would think in mathematical or sciences.
- Researcher:* What do you think you'd like to do with your education?
- Participant:* I would like to share it.
- Researcher:* In terms of career?
- Participant:* In terms of career, I would like to go into radiology technician or a pharmacy tech. _____ future.
- Researcher:* Good. Well, first of all, thank you again for your participation and willingness to share your experiences and thoughts of what it means to experience a sense of belonging and how that perception influences your willingness to continue to pursue your educational endeavor at this institution and beyond to completion of your program.
- As a reminder, all of our conversations are confidential and the information obtained in this interview will be used only for those purposes addressed in the consent letter you signed prior to joining the study.

You have consented to having this interview audio recorded and the device has been in sight throughout our interview. Once Walden University has approved this study and granted the degree for which this study was developed and meeting the requirements for my doctoral degree, doctorate in philosophy, you'll be notified and invited to attend a debriefing session where I will share the results of the study. You are not obligated to attend this meeting though.

I provided you with contact information that you'll feel free to contact me at any time using the e-mail addresses and/or the voice telephone of my home office if you have any questions or concerns. Is there anything else you'd like to say or add before we end?

Participant:

No. Thank you, sir.

Researcher:

Well, thank you very much. This concludes our interview. I really appreciate your help for case F102.

[End of Audio]

F.106

I:

Today is April 3, 2013. This is Dr. Ronald E. Zawacki-Maldonado 00:15, Walden University. For my doctoral studies, I'm conducting an interview with one of the participants. The case will be F106. The participant is present. In full view, we have the audio recording device.

I have received from the participant the demographic questionnaire for the study and it's completed. We're going to move to the consent form, and I'll be answering any questions that the participant has before the document is signed over. Okay, what is this here is the consent. Basically what it does, it explains that what I'm using the information for, that all the information including this recording, any written notes, anything that we discuss, are all confidential, and by no rule can anyone make me divulge it. Okay, I cannot and I will not divulge it to instructors now or in the future, to the institution, to administrators, to other people, individuals, etc. It's strictly the information that you give is protected by law, okay. Same with the recording. It's protected by law, and I must retain it for up to five years in an appropriate, secure manner. The information, the way it will appear in the study will be using a case number, case number like F106 in your case. You will not be mentioned directly by name or any specific information that identifies you as the person that who you are. The information that's used here will be developed into a summary, okay on or as you will, an introduction. Names,

addresses, phone numbers, those will not be used, okay. Here what we have is just an outline to assure you of the confidentiality of our interview and all the recordings and documents, and on the back what we have is a place for you to print your name and then the date and then your signature, and then I'll sign it as well. Then I just want you to browse over the demographic questionnaire. Is there anything you would wish to add, change, or delete, take out of there, and of course, the information there is your information?

P: No, everything is okay.

I: Everything is fine. All right. Thank you. Well, let us begin then. Welcome to the study. On behalf of Walden University and this researcher, please be assured that your time and participation in this study are most valuable to growing the body of knowledge about nontraditional Hispanic college students attending two-year community colleges to the scientific community in the field of psychology. You have already been given the informed consent form from me, and you've signed it, and it's been documented here. I like to begin with a quick reminder that you may stop this interview any time you wish.

You may withdraw from the study at any time, and no explanation for your withdrawal is required. Okay. Again, this will be case F106, and today is April 3, 2013. We are in the C. C. Wind Building on the extension of Southwest Texas Junior College in which the participant is a student attending classes. Well, again, welcome, and thank you for choosing to participate in this interview for my doctoral research study. As a reminder, all our conversations are confidential, and the information obtained in this interview will be used only for those purposes addressed in the consent letter you signed prior to joining the study. Now as we begin, I'd like you think about these ideas in broad terms and then be more specific as you're willing to share about the experiences or perceptions, your thoughts, your feelings, and your opinions. I want you to reflect on the follow questions. Provide as many responses as you wish. You may go back to a previous question and elaborate on previous questions or change your responses as you feel comfortable to do. Let us start with a general question.

Since we're going to be looking at your sense of belonging, how do you feel, how do you experience your college education in this institution as a nontraditional Hispanic college student attending a two-year community college? I'd like you to think about how you would characterize your experiences in those perceptions, and how they influence your continuation or your persistence at following your plan and achieving your educational goal, and then, of course, the role that this institution plays in that overall goal.

How would you describe your family background in contributing to your desire and your endeavor to come to college? That would be your mom, your dad, or those who, persons that are significant in your life that helped raise you.

- P:* First of all, nobody in my family has attended college before except the first one was my little sister, which she told me to go ahead and keep on studying and everything, so I thought about it and she was mostly the one. That's why I started attending college. My parents, they will push me to go to college, but sometimes they will just stay back because the reason is that I had to help them out with the—at the house or with the business, and it was pretty difficult because both of them are sick, so it was hard for me to just keep on going and studying, but I guess probably I just want to make them see that I can with all the responsibility for the family and the business and going to school and most of all with helping my children that they will see that their mom is trying to do something for them so they will go ahead and go to school and not stay back like I did.
- I:* Thank you. Now, what features of your early education experiences influence your decision to attend college that is, looking a little bit back maybe through high school or perhaps, since there's a gap between high school and coming to college, what was it that you were hoping or thinking of? What were your aspirations, your dreams, as you were coming through your earlier education before college?
- P:* Before college, when I was in high school, I was the first one to graduate from my whole family from high school, and I was so excited that everyone was excited that there was one person from the family that graduated, so I guess that pretty excited me to go own, and the other one was that as a migrant since I was five years old, I used to go up north, and I see all those people having trouble and being discriminating, and I stood up for them, and I talked to them from other people, so that made me do something to help them out, because up to now, I keep in touch with them, and I want to still help them out, so probably that's one of the things that I just decided just to go on and probably because I feel the way they feel in being hard, being as a migrant, being discriminated also and having all these problems, like sleeping in parks and finding jobs, so probably I look back at those things and that's what made me go on ahead and probably finish and help others like for them and their family.
- I:* Thank you. What were your educational experience—well, I'm sorry. What were the educational experiences of your parents? Now that would be any kind of basic education, formal education; it would be work, work experience, where they say through their employment, they were promoted from one position to another with experience. Anything that you'd like to share about your parents or with whomever basically you spent a greater part of your childhood.
- P:* Well, it's kind of weird because my dad has this business for almost 23 years having a bar, so it's different from other families, so they always told me finish

high school, finish high school and then you have to help us out and stuff, so probably college maybe was mentioned sometimes a lot and sometimes it just when ever the hard times came in, college wasn't mentioned at all. It was just work and work. It's kind of different because you always have to be there helping them out, and sometimes I got upset because I wanted just to after college, go to, attend—I mean after high school, attend college. That made it impossible, because I had to help them out, because my dad was one of those persons that because you're a woman you have to stay at the house and help out, and so it was kind of hard, and my dad's decision and my mom's decision. My mom wanted for me to go to college right away, and my dad said he just wanted for me to help them out a couple of years, then go on.

I: How would you describe now your social and economic struggles that you and your family experienced?

P: Right now, it's not that bad because probably the three of us work. Well, most of all I work for them, but before that it was kind of hard, because the traveling and the money, and sometimes we just spent like a lot of days without a job or without a field to work on, so we spent the money that we had earned. We spent it in three, two weeks until the job started, but right now, it's all right but it's just like too much work. The money's coming in, but it's just too much work, too much time, and sometimes I just get so tired of not having those hours that I want to study and get more college hours because I have to work.

I: Now, what does, or in what way, if any, does your faith, your religion, your outlook on life, your philosophy of life, your values and beliefs, in what way do those values, those concepts affect or influence your pursuit of higher education, to continue to go to college, to earn a degree, and perhaps to move on, and go on, and helping—how does that help you, perhaps if at all, continue to meet the struggles and achieve your goals?

P: Most of all probably because I was raised Catholic and I saw a lot of families, migrant families, which they always pray for their young children to finish school and go to college and not be like their parents, always being migrating, and I listen to their prayers that whenever we go to church and stuff, so probably just that kept me going to college, because I saw my mom praying for same thing, and I heard her prayers, like whenever she prayed to god. That's why that made me just go on, and even though sometimes I even hear her by herself telling god that for me not to feel angry or tired and just to give me all these strengths to keep my work and keep on going to studies, and even though sometimes she knows that is she's wrong and keeping me—giving me a lot of work so that that's probably I don't see that, that side of my mom. I just see her that's it's work that has to be done, but at the same time she doesn't want to give me all that work. She wants me to give me more time to go to college.

I: Good, thank you. Let's now look at I want you to think about how your—all these experiences that you've been sharing, form with our values and our beliefs, and when we come into an institution, a college, university, how we bring that with us, and how it creates a perception about and a feeling of a sense like I'm here, and I'm part of this, or I'm not part of this. It's called institutional climate, a sense of being welcomed and belonging, and there are two areas that I want you to think about, the social part of being a student at the institution and, of course, the academic part, studying, the grades, completing assignments, I mean that's the academic part, and how, sometimes what those do, our interactions, our relationships with the institution, the faculty, the administration, our classmates, and academics that we're engaged in, sometimes are—fit well together, and they contribute or affect our influence, our—sometimes our academic work, our social life, our social work, and as well as our willingness to say, “Why am I here or why am I staying here?” or, “I'm glad that I'm here because.” Okay, so that's integrating, the bringing the things together. I would like you to talk about your experiences as far as interacting with other students. Either those who are actually in a course with you, or have been in classes with you, those you may meet on campus here, or if you're over at the main building, but outside of class, in terms of your relationship or your communication with your classmates, and things like that. Or via a social media or the e-mail or things like that, all right?

P: The first semester that I took before at college after ten years, it was kind of hard because I had a class, and all the students in those class, they were younger than me. They were actually just finished high school, and I was the only one older than them. It was kind of weird because whenever—one time one teacher just asked us to stood up and say like our career, and if we wanted to say our age and everything. They thought that I was the same age that they were, and when I said that I was 29, they all freaked out, and they just looked at me. One of them asked me why after so many years you came back to college, and then I talked to her and explained her, and she say don't you feel weird, like, with us and everybody. They knew each other except for me. That just make me feel like I didn't want to go the next day, because I was embarrassed, and I was afraid I didn't know anything, because I forgotten so many years, and it was gonna be hard, and if they asked me any questions, they were gonna laugh, or probably I was gonna look stupid, I don't know. That class, I just wait—well, I waited that day. I remember that was on a Monday. On a Wednesday, my other class, they were five other ladies that were older than me, so that made me think about it. They asked me, they were shy, and they asked me like, can you be in our group, because they were, they feel the same way that I feel. They thought that I was even younger, like the other kids, so I was like no, I'm 29. They were even older than me, and they were like, can you explain this to me, and I was explaining something that I thought I forgotten but I didn't. That made me feel that I had to keep on going. Just try the semester and see what's going on. If they're still here then why should I be embarrassed if they're older than me?

I: Thank you. How would you describe—now this is sometimes a problematic area for students that are not traditional as you know, the college, the university life is sort of like that group, that younger, out of high school within a year or two, and they go off to the college. They go to the universities and their priorities, what they think is important may not necessarily be the same priorities a person who's older, who's lived some life and says you know what, I understand the purpose of my education and I have a very absolute goal. These things influence us, and at this time, more often than not, both colleges, even small colleges, and universities still kind of tend toward having organizations and services and social activities that are geared toward the younger people, not necessarily someone with children, a family, a single parent, married couple, or, as you mentioned, those women that were a little even older than you that you teamed up with.

With that in mind, how would you describe any of your involvement in student associations, or organizations, or student activities that are sponsored by the college, or through the student activity association, or some student union group? Now, the reason why I'd like you to, if possible, to link that back to when you were talking about your experiences as a migrant person with your family, and then seeing some of the unfair treatment of people who are migrant workers, and that you got involved in trying to work and help them. This part of why you also want to pursue your education is to contribute and make things better in that sense. With that in mind, you could bring those two ideas together and share with me your involvement in student activities and college organizations.

P: Whenever we gather up as a group and just discuss something, I ask them why they're here, because they say I don't want to do anything, and I told them then why are you here, and they say because my parents make me go to college. I have nothing else to do, and I think about the migrant, well, young adults, or probably even kids or teenagers, and they always—some of them as immigrants they even say I want to go to college, and I hear this other version that they just here because their parents made them, and the other one, they want to go but they can't go because they're—they can't. They just don't have any papers to go to college. I see each side and I go then I'm right in the middle. Why? Because I've been associated with all these people who are immigrants and migrants and, on the other side, people who are illegal. They can do anything they want in their life because they have so many resources that can help them out, and these people really do want to do it, and these ones just don't, so that made me, I don't know, sometimes just explain to each one of those that, hey, there are some other people who do, and you have the chance, so why don't you just take advantage of those chances, so that made me—probably that's one of the things that I just go on and go on, because, if I'm saying that, and if I'm in—like them, then probably I would feel the same thing like the immigrants, migrants?

- I:* Now, in terms of associations, student activities, do you get involved in any student activities other than like a study group or groups within your classes that you take?
- P:* No, since I enter college not until right now. That probably I'm just going to have my first student activity, and it's just started because of a project. I don't know. It's just weird because this kid, he seems really smart, and he's like, you better do this because I want to get a good grade. He started telling me and the other lady, so I'm like oh my god, I don't want to be rude or anything just like go off on him say like, hey, it's been ten years. I barely started, you know, like let me—so probably I'm just so—I'm scared just to have my first group activity.
- I:* That's in the academics. How about social groups, like student clubs, or student organizations of some kind, like when we—in high school, remember they had the different clubs and groups that you could join. College has a number of these, right, and they vary what campus we're on, but how about those? Any?
- P:* Right now no, because I don't have that much time.
- I:* Now we'll focus a little bit more in terms of academics, taking classes, getting assignments done, academic help that would be about the services that are available to all students and how easy it is for you to get access to those services given that you work and you come to school and you have to balance family, a work life, and your academic life, your study life, your coming to school. I'd like you to share your experiences about getting access to student support services at Southwest Texas Junior College, and that starts for anything about the ease of registration, enrolling in classes, available classes, how flexible are the schedules, if you're having trouble, what kind of resources are available? If you use those resources, what do you think about them? If there's anything that you think that the college needs that it doesn't have, especially for students who are older when they come to college, who have to work for a living and are maintaining a family and they're trying to balance all these parts of life and be successful. Maybe there's something the college should be doing or should have available that's not available.
- P:* The resources and the helping out. Like in the office first when registered, I thought I was gonna have a big problem doing that, but they really helped me out so it was so easy. In the hours, in hours of school, if they're flexible. Some are and some they're not because sometimes, like, in a class there were only five students and the class wasn't gonna be as a class because of five students. I was really anxious to just take that class during the summer, but they canceled that class, so now I just didn't get the class. It was hard for me, like

trying to get that class now, because I had time on the summer there right now. That was one of the things that I just say like, come on, just for five students, wouldn't there be someone who just go for the five students? That kind of like made me sad. The other resources at school, were they helping? They're helpful. In every way, they help me out and it's easy for me. It's just sometimes for the class and the students.

I: One of the things that I've heard in terms of support services is the counseling department or counselors and their role in terms of helping identify things like financial aid or support services or community agencies that can help you. What has been your experience with that?

P: It depends, like sometimes which counselor you talk to because some of them, they want to just give that class that they want to and they don't ask you. They tell you no, first take this and this when you want to take the other ones because you think you're gonna first get the information to be useful for the other classes. They just want to give like the classes that they want, so sometimes it depends like which counselor you go to talk to.

One of the things that I really like on this school is that I know they don't have like all these many classes. Like, for example, radiology. They don't have the training right here. You have to go over to Uvalde. I think about it when I get there that's, like, I prefer it to be here. When I first attended a class that we need for radiology, there was like 11 people, and they all say that oh, we have to save money because then we have to go over to Uvalde. If you guys want to give me your numbers for whenever the training comes so we can pitch in for the gas. That's kind of hard because like for me that I have so little time like the traveling, go one hour drive and then come back. If it would be here then it would be more easier, so I prefer for them to get more classes here than have to go over to Uvalde.

I: How about in the Student Success Center, I believe. Yes. Have you been able to use the Student Success Center? Have you been able to get there and get help if you need it in the Student Success Center, or is it the same thing between work hours, and their hours that they're open, you can't really make use out of that?

P: No because sometimes you can go there and they have just one person helping out, and there's like so many persons there. It's just like, oh my god, you have to wait for somebody to help you. I rather like just go somewhere else and ask somebody else. Sometimes they tell you that they have three or four students helping out, but it's not true. They're not there.

I: Let's see. The library and those resources including the labs, the computer labs and stuff? How about that for you? How does that help you or hinder you?

How does it help you or make it more difficult for you to continue and be here and continue your enrollment?

P: For library and the hours time, it's just I guess they close at 9:00. I prefer a little bit later because I get here at 9:00 and we have work to do and it's already closed. If I have, like, if I can be able to do my homework, it would be after 9:00. But already, I don't have access internet at the house and at the library campus, it's already closed at 9:00, so I can only study after 9:00. That's the only time. All the days that I study after 9:00, so it would be easier if they just stay open more later.

I: Now we're gonna talk about your interaction. How do you feel about your sense of feeling that you are the focus, that you're important as a student, that you feel comfortable, feel welcomed by and with your instructors in class and then before or after class, any of your instructors from when you started until now. You don't need to name anyone.

P: Some instructors, they do really help you out. Whenever I tell them after class, that I told them it's gonna be hard for me because probably most of the information like I forgot, so I guess I am going to have trouble. They do help me out like after class, but some of them will just keep on going. It's embarrassed to ask in front of the class something, so I stay after class and ask them, and they're just like oh, you'll get it, you'll get it. Then probably because they're tired of all the hours that they been teaching or something, but in that way, I don't know. If they choose to be a teacher and I guess instructor, it's for helping out others. In the way they're helping out probably. I believe they have to leave their stress back, and I understand that you go home and you can rest and there are some students that were not that smart or that fast in learning, but some of them do really just say "You'll get the hang of it" and then just say that's all, so they're meaning like just go; you'll get the hang of it, you know.

I: Would you like to see in terms of your instructors' access, getting access to your instructors? For example, all students have e-mail and all the instructors do. Do you try to use your e-mail? Well, no, you mentioned that you don't have internet at home.

P: No.

I: The only place then would be while you're on campus?

P: Yes.

I: How about phone calling, calling them on a number? Do they give you some of your instructors have numbers?

P: Some of them they do, but some of them they just don't answer because either they teach before here, so they're teaching at elementary or high school. You know that they're teaching and they're not going to be able to answer you and stuff. Then afterward you're waiting for their call, and probably because of other work, they just forget to return the call back. It's either way you have to wait until you go to that class, and then you didn't do what they tell you because you have a question and you didn't know what to do because they didn't call you back.

I: How would you say—I'm sorry. What is your sense about the instructors' commitment to helping? In a way you've kind of been talking about that but if you were to characterize overall, all the instructors that you've had or have, how would you characterize their commitment to saying, "Student, I'm human; I have so much time and energy, and obviously responsibility too, but I really am interested in you and your success?" How does that influence your willingness to continue to remain a student in this institution?

P: Some of the instructors, they push you and they know that if you ask for help, they will and after every class, they ask you. Some of them they do ask you do you need any help? Do you have any questions? That makes you feel like if your sister or somebody, like, it's helping you and you're not embarrassed to let them know yes, I need help on this and that. You feel comfortable whenever they're say that so some of them probably, I'd say like five out of one, they all act that way except for one and probably that was the one that you're having more trouble in that class.

Most of the instructors their performance and teaching and they really do want to help everyone, like, probably because I have one instructor that I had, she just, I don't know. She's some lady and she just wanted for everyone to get a higher GPA. She'll stay for every student that needed help; she would stay after class and help them. She'll tell you I can help out. Where can we meet and I can help you out, and she'll go there. Probably assume instructors, they really see their performance in helping out.

I: In your sense of then their commitment to you, do you feel that it influences your willingness to continue to attend the college?

P: Yes. Yes because if they didn't help me probably like, I will say I know it's hard and they're not giving me the support and helping me out, and probably I would just drop out.

I: Now, we're gonna talk about a little bit more about the generic, the wholeness of the college, and how you feel how you perceive. Like "I'm a Southwest Texas Junior College student," or "yeah, I take classes here." Your perception, your feeling about the overall institution now. In terms of the campus

environment, how would you characterize the campus environment? Would you say it's friendly? Unfriendly? It's friendly if someone knows you? Do you feel a certain level of security, comfort if you're on the main campus walking around the buildings? Anything like that in terms of how does this environment strike you. If you were a stranger, you walked onto campus here, or you went over to the main campus, what would be your sense of what would be your perception? What would you be thinking?

P: I like the campus and I feel, probably because I feel secure in a way that whenever I ask somebody like in the office for any help that I need, they tell me where to go at and they help me out. I see the campus, everyone is there for their own benefit, and they want to improve so nobody sees the other person as a stranger or probably because they're all there for one reason that they just want to get a higher education, so the campus is okay. It makes it okay because of the instructors and the staff. Why? Because they're the most that are there are for your benefit. They're there because they want to help you out because if you see the student, like they don't care. Some of them they don't care because they don't know you, and they're just there because they want to go on.

The thing is that you just ignore them because it's for your benefit and if they're younger, make fun of you, then you don't feel unsafety because you know they're younger and probably they're gonna be, they don't know what they're saying. If instructors or staff didn't help you or didn't make it comfortable, then like probably I wouldn't say it was an okay college. Probably was just interesting and it depends on one student.

I: Now, I'm going to read a statement to you and I'd like to know more or less how much you agree or disagree. This is about the institution. "This campus or institution makes me feel welcomed and important as a person

P: Welcomed, yes. I agree with the welcome and important because I did receive all the help when I first entered. Like I said before, I was afraid that like that would troubles getting my financial aid ready and everything but no. The staff, they really helped me out especially there the financial aid and probably just. I know we have like several counselors, but in a matter like if this counselor didn't help me out, I went to other one and she did really help me out. I did feel welcomed by her enough because of the other one or helpful I did feel by the other one.

I: How important is this for you? How much would it influence your decision to continue your enrollment? How much would it influence you to say "I don't want to do this here"?

P: It's very important to me. Very, very important and each day that passes by I just think about all that I left behind so many years. I think about and it say if I

did like school, why did I just waste all these years, and that pushes me on to just finish because I like school. I just, I just love it. Even though it's hard sometimes for me, I just, I like it. Every time I feel so like I'm not going to make it; it's gonna be hard; I'm just gonna flunk a class, but I think about it and I say I don't care. I could take it as many times as I want to, and probably like next semester I'll do better or something, so probably just because I see my family and I just want to let them know that I can and let them know that someone in the family can push the other ones behind, you know.

I: Wonderful. Now, we have a few questions left and we'll be finished. Please list to the following statement:

One can characterize the institution Southwest Texas Junior College as a predominantly Hispanic-serving institution because of our ethnic makeup is predominantly Hispanic of Latino or Chicano population. We're a border community, and so obviously the larger population throughout this region is Hispanic. "

Having been a migrant, I know you've traveled. Being a migrant student, I have worked with migrant students in Illinois and things like that. Do you see or feel that there's—do you sense a lack of opportunity to learn because there's this very narrow ethnic, racial diversity? Do you see this as you, as a learner now, are missing out or perhaps your education is not as enriched as it could be because of the lack of diversity?

P: In a way, yes. I know there's still migrant high school—I mean college students, and it's not like in elementary that they have migrant and they take the migrants out and talk to them and see in what class they need help and stuff like in here. If they will have like a class just for the people who are migrants and say well, you travel, you have to—it's difficult because you're here and, it's not that quick learning, you know. I don't know if I'm explaining it right, but I if go over there like in Minnesota.

I went to one college just to see and because I wasn't make sure if I wanted to stay here or there. They have a class for those migrants that they know that they have so many years going from Texas and migrating over there. For the college student, they do have a class that there's just one teacher that he puts his volunteer hours in helping out migrants college students. In what level are you and what are you trying to improve on? I guess that one of things that's missing in this community. Why? Because we're in the border and mostly all of them are people are migrants students. Even though like I know that I'm like old, but they still have 23, 24 that's still go up north, and they're not even married, and they have difficulties. Why? Because they're in college and they just scared because you miss some months of school because you have to work, and then you have two months to go to school over there. You have to come back and you enroll in school back here, you know, so you don't go all

those months to school. I guess in those, one of those things that I guess it will be a nice thing to have just like somebody volunteer or extra pay or something to have those extra hours for migrant people that need help or get behind or in helping them out like in all kinds of other classes.

I: How about the sense of if we had a student body population that came from other more diverse experiences, not just Hispanic, and instructors tam bien. Would you think that this would contribute to making your education better, like accessories, you know, it improves, it gives you—it enriches you, okay.

P: Yes, because they have a different, like you said, different culture. They see different stuff. They're raised differently, and some of their experiences like help you out in a way if you think about it. If you're having trouble in something like you hear them and they can help you out. It could be the instructor or some other student, and sometimes they even bring different learning method that probably is more easier than the ones that we are taught here by instructor or by even a student or something. Because everywhere, not only in the United States, they are different learning methods. Sometime they make it easier than the ones that were learning here in the United States.

I: Now, we're going to do some predicting . Thinking about everything you shared this evening during this interview, all your experiences, your own children, your family, your parents, everything here, what you're doing now, your goals, what your dream is or dreams are, as a prediction of your future success, I want you to think about what factors, what events or issues, what things will influence you to reach your goal? In other words, if you think about all things one needs to do, whatever balances you need to maintain to continue your enrollment to the point where you graduate, what are some of the roadblocks or things that you need, either one, through your social or academic integration, need from the institution, you need from instructors, you need from your own self, you need from your home, your family your home life? What are the things that would say, "These are the things I need in order for me to continue and to graduate?"

P: Probably gonna sound funny, but in school, if there were teachers still giving class after 9:00, I would enroll in those classes, but I'm not saying instructors who teach out of just college, no. Well, probably we just need instructors just in college, not teaching other elementary or other schools so that way probably because I want advantage of just taking extra classes and in that way. Like instructors will help me in that way. School will help me in that way. In my family, probably just more my parents giving me more time, helping me a little bit more out with my kids and the work. In that case, they will help me more. My sisters will help me more if they will take care of my mom or my dad and each one, you know, they will give me time to go. I just need the time and extra instructors that would teach after probably the latest 9:00, so I can still go and have more classes to attend so I can finish it like faster.

- I:* Finances, financial aid services. What services besides that might you think would help you continue or make it easier for you to continue or you would want to stay here and continue? Or things that would not. Things that would say, "If this was going on, I would have to stop. I'd have to quit."
- P:* I guess I probably just stay here and continue because looking, I would like to go to other college out of here, but it's hard because there's no—the financial aid will help you anywhere I know, but you need extra money for wherever you're gonna stay. Even though I can see it that way because I have to carry with my kids, and it would be a problem. Who would take care of them? Here, financial aid helps me a lot, but sometimes I have to put extra money. Why extra money? Because they look back at my parents' background saying that a business and they calculate the income, and sometimes they don't believe that you don't depend on that income, because they're taking care of. With that money, they're paying my sister's college and they can't pay mine. Why? Because I will feel like a little girl if I let them pay mine. Even though they waste a lot of money with my sister because she goes to law school and they have the business, so she doesn't apply for financial aid. Just maybe because I'm by myself and sometimes I don't even like to pay out of my pocket for my books and stuff, so that way, like I do have a problem.
- I:* That would be something important, the financial aid.
- P:* Yes.
- I:* To make sure that there's enough money to help cover the basic expenses.
- P:* At least.
- I:* Now we have one question left, and this kind of sums everything up. Then I am going to read a couple statements to you. What are your expectations for the rest of the semester? Your academic, social, and personal goals? Where would you like to be? What would you like to have finished or accomplished by the end of this semester, and what are you looking for into the next semesters?
- P:* Passing my classes. I'm worried about passing my classes, and by the end of this semester and the following semester, this year, I want to finish all my classes that I need for radiologist, for them to be done with and just wait for the training. I want to push myself to finish before the training because I really want to say just might be just on the training, so I expect to finish my classes and really, really try hard to pass them with a really, really good GPA.

I: Any social goals that you have in terms of maybe finding opportunity or organizing maybe a club or a group, say for nontraditional students, men and women, probably more particular women? I would think by what I've seen so far in terms of older students like yourselves who have all these other obligations and still have decided to improve their life through education. I don't know of any organizations or groups. I know students get together do a project and things like that, but outside maybe more formal study groups, either through the internet through e-mail or having a certain day maybe after a class if possible or before class, depending on people's work schedules and all this, where you come together and you meet to give each other the moral support, the emotional support, the positive reinforcement. Do you foresee anything like that, or would you maybe even entertain the idea of saying "I want to start a group that focuses on students like myself"?

P: Well, I thought about it, having an organization for probably older women who have, even though single moms with kids and other, just like with their family and trying to gather up and helping each other, like see each other where they need help and talk with a counselor or somebody that will give us the opportunities to tell us, "I can help you in this way. The school can help you out in this way." If you need extra study hours, that somebody will help you, or if you need instructor help you out, but if we don't make a group like that, probably nobody will listen to us. Then that would be really nice if we had like all these ladies that I meet before, the five older ladies, myself. If we could gather more up, just talk about what we need, what we're having trouble. If there's somebody that could expend their hours in helping us like an instructor or it depends on whatever they're enrolled in, but just having talked to the staff and the dean and helping us out.

I: Now, since you mentioned that, you mentioned about your children and your siblings or your parents helping with your children, what about child care as an issue, as far as a factor that influences obviously how many class you take and when you enroll, your schedule? What about that? How do you see that? What do you think might be a solution or at least part of a solution that the institution, the college, could help with in some way?

P: I know they have, like, they give you some help with child care, but out of the school, and the child cares just help you like certain hours but they have evening classes. It would be nice if we had from the school, a child care that, a facility that you say I drop my kid and go to that class. That will help us out a lot because the hardest hours are, the hardest classes are in the evening when the kids, like, who takes care of them?

You know, there's nobody. The day cares, it's only up until 6:00, the latest 8:00, but after 8:00, who can take care of them? I manage myself. My sister gets one hour from 8:00 to 9:00, and then the half an hour right there that I can come. Why? Because one day's my sister and the other day's my mom, so it would just be easier not for them to give headaches, just come and you know that there's a room for their kids and just drop your kids, come to class, go get your kids, and then. Probably who knows, probably that's gonna happen later after so many years.

I: What I would suggest, and I am not trying to influence your actions or anything, but some other people have expressed very similar ideas, and it would not hurt that if you and some of your peers, your classmates who are in a similar situation might look at a couple things. One thing is approach the administration and ask them and their people there, the resources that they have. Maybe they could investigate and look for a grant, money that they get for free and come up with some kind of a child care program for students who attend evening classes where they would get money to hire an appropriate person, that they could have a facility somewhere used for that purpose, right, and funded. It wouldn't cost the college anything because it would be money from a corporation or some other type of grant, so that would be something I would encourage you to talk to your peers about it.

P: I have this—

[End of Audio]

- I:* Okay, what I'm going to do is I'm just going to give some information, so I can keep it correct on the—on my research, okay?
- P:* Okay.
- I:* All right, today we are going to suspend the date. It is June 12th, but we had originally started on April 25th. I'm going to keep that as is, and that's from your demographic survey that you completed and gave to me. All right, look as **they say 00:00:35** what we're going to look at—let me know if you can hear me all right, all right?
- P:* Okay.
- I:* What we're going to be looking at is, in terms of your experiences, your thinking, your perceptions and feelings about how you define your—a sense of belonging, a sense of, "Hey you know what, I'm part of this, the people that are around me," in terms of your educational endeavor and what have you, the institution. You feel a connection, and what kind of connection do you feel? How did you find that connection? I have a series of questions that are open-ended, and you can go through 'em, as I—and then come back to another one, if there is something you want to add, and stuff like that, all right? Today, our case number interviewing is case F111, a student enrolled in Southwest Texas Junior College. We have the following being conducted through a telephone interview today.
- P:* Great.
- I:* First of all, in general we consider you a non-traditional Hispanic college student attending the institution, and I'd like to know how you would characterize your experiences and your perceptions as influencing your desire, your persistence to continue to pursue your educational program, at the current institution. Do you feel positive? Are you positive about it, the relationship you have with the institution and the staff?
- P:* Well basically I am very positive about the college that I have attended already. It's not to the fact that I'm just positive because of it, it's basically because my first year at college was pretty a good experience for me. I met new people basically, in different backgrounds, especially in different countries. To know the fact that I've grown to become friends with them, and have them still contact—which is pretty good for me.
- I:* All righty, now let's—what we're going to do now is we're going to go on to a series of items that are related to family and home background, all right. You can elaborate as much as you want, or you can prefer not to answer, all right?
- P:* Okay.

I: All right, first of all, I'd like you to describe your family background, in terms of how the—your background, in any way, has inspired or motivated or encouraged you to pursue higher education.

P: Well, first of all, basically the only reason why I'm motivated more into continuing my education is because my mother did not graduate from high school, so she had to basically suffer so much, in order for me and my sisters to survive in this world. The fact that she struggled with two jobs, and hardly seeing us, most of the time of the day, I really didn't want to live that way. I have a daughter, and seeing how she struggled does not want me to put my daughter in that position of seeing me struggle. Well, I'm not the first one in my family to go to college. My father inspired me as well, to the fact that he is very smart, for his own good, sometimes. He showed me that there are so many other doors that I can open with a college education.

I can—my main dream, my major in college, is to become a pharmacist. To the fact that both my parents showed me so much, so much positive interest into what I want to become in the future, it's showing that I can be a role model also, to my siblings, my younger ones.

I: Now what do you—when looking at your own education—I want you to think back maybe through high school, or somewhere. Where do you think your earlier education experiences influenced this decision? Now we talked about the influence of parents and family, but in terms of your own educational, if you will, enlightenment or growing, development, maturity, where—what in your early education experiences seemed to point you in, first, [*non-interview 00:06:42*] in the direction of attending college? Then also, perhaps the—even the field that you're interested in?

P: Well, when I was a sophomore actually, I had—we had a trip during our sophomore year, and well, to others of my classmates it seemed very boring, and kind of—no reason to be going. When I went to one of these colleges that—and they were showing these programs of pharmacy, to me it seemed very interesting. I mean I love—well somewhat love math. I love chemistry, I'm very good at it, and to the fact that with the pharmacy, it does—basically it's tied with each other, with math and chemistry, is basically what I like to do.

Well, as I am the second-oldest child, it—to me, I would love to help others. I am very helpful when it comes to it, but in [*inaudible 00:08:15*] others, it would be a remarkable thing for me. Basically, that's how I saw it, as pharmacy goes.

I: All right, thank you. Now let's—I believe you answered part of this, but if there's anything else you'd like to elaborate on, it's fine. In terms of your—the educational experiences of your parents—let's see. You mentioned mom did not finish high school.

- P:* Yes, my mother didn't finish high school. She dropped out ninth grade.
- I:* Okay now you have siblings, and your older sibling? Any college or—
- P:* Actually, she also dropped out of ninth grade. Basically, that was a chain that I did not want to follow.
- I:* Let's go on to the next item then. Now, we're going to discuss your social and economic struggles okay, of you and your family. It can be your parents, growing up, and then we can shift over to your own current social and economic struggles that you see, in terms of how they can affect you, or influence your goals, your aspirations, and things like that, all right?
- P:* Okay.
- I:* So let's start with your—the background of the home, in terms of growing up okay, in terms of your social and economic struggles. How would you—in terms of helping you build a sense of belonging out of that?
- P:* Well I'm not really sure how I can put it in words. In my family's background?
- I:* Mm-hmm.
- P:* Well, on my mother's side, it's not really that much of an achievement. My father's background, a lot of achievements, which is not very—it's suitable, but yet I feel like there is so much expectations of everybody in my family, basically. They expect us to do our best, and strive to be the best at what we can be, and well—I really don't know how to put it in words, actually.
- I:* Now in terms of just growing up, what kind of difficulties do you recall, or how they may have impacted your sense of belonging, and wanting to do something more, you did mention about helping. You did mention about not following the chain of events that have taken place. What else can you—[non-interview 00:11:58]. What else can you share with me about this, about any struggles, perhaps academic struggles in school that you experienced?
- P:* Well, in school, academically—basically the new things that they did not teach us in high school. There was so much that I was so behind in, that I didn't really understand. With the professors, and with friends that I had in class, they were able to actually help me understand more about the things that look simple, but were not really simple to me.
- I:* Now let's see. The next item is about the role of your faith, religion. This can also mean philosophy, your perspective about life, your life view. It doesn't necessarily have to be an organized religious belief that drives you, that

sustains you, that keeps you grounded, and is a—perhaps an influence, or a source of energy in continuing your desire to continue your education, and better yourself. What role does that outlook on life, or your religion, your faith play in this endeavor that you’ve taken, to pursue higher education?

P: Well, the religion is basically every day, for me. Let’s see, well it is every day for me, because with the religion, there are so many others who don’t believe in what I believe in, and the fact that I can show people my religious beliefs, it tells me that with the college education that I have, and meeting others who have a different ethnic background than I do, it can—to me, it can seem a lot more influencing.

I: In terms of your particular source of energy, in terms of looking at faith and religion, do you see it as a source that helps you sustain yourself when things seem to get difficult? What role does your faith directly play in your trying to be successful at college?

P: Well I am a single mother, which is very difficult in my ways 00:16:00, ‘cause I am only 21, so that makes it even more harder for me. Just to the fact that I know that I can just pray and hope that things will come out good for me. With the whole school, I know that I can count on that to be able to help me go through these times that I have with school, trying to get better grades, trying to have a positive influence on others, to do the same thing. I have met so many people at college who are single mothers, as I am, but really don’t have faith in themselves, or in God, in order to be able to get through the hardships that they have.

Especially with me, being to the fact that I’m not working now, and money is a struggle for me, I know that all I have to do is just know that I can be taken care of easily, just have to believe in myself, and to the fact that I will graduate. I will make a better life for me, and my own daughter.

I: Now we’re going to shift a little bit—the attention now, and we’re going to focus on—in terms of—as you think of your sense of belonging, how you feel, in terms of, “I’m part of something, that I am a welcomed person, that I belong to a group, and there are people that are there supporting me, believing in me, etc.” I want us to think about the social and academic aspects of going to college, and the institutional—what we call institutional climate. That is the campus, how you feel about it, the people that you interact with, the instructors, the administration, and things like that, all right? We’re going to—that’s where we’re going to go, in terms of how do those events, people, systems, facilities, how do they contribute to defining your sense of belonging, or being a part of a community?

The first question within this category is what have been your experiences interacting with fellow students on the campus? How would you describe your

interaction, and that is social interaction, in terms of not necessarily studying for a test, but social interaction as well as academic interaction with fellow students? They can be students that are in the same classes that you are in, people that you mentioned. Now you did mention about single mothers, so maybe you'd like to start talking about this point from that social aspect, how it relates to your broader sense of belonging?

P: Well, I am—when I started college, I basically was alone. I didn't really know anybody, until I went into this group called the Activities Center. They were a bunch of—they were like a group of students basically, who are in charge of the activities at the college, the junior college. To me, it sounded very interesting. When I entered into the group, it became more and more to me to the fact that they were my friends. We did so much activities with each other, we did dances, we basically—we did fundraisers, we put on a show for the children who visited. The fact that I kind of felt a little off, because I am the only one in that group who is a single mother, I kind of was hoping that there would be more.

Later on in the year, more people started showing up, then I started realizing that I wasn't the only one. I have a friend whose name is <deleted> they are both single mothers as well, and for us, to be able to connect to each other is—very grateful, because I know that I'm not the only one who's struggling. I am not the only one that is being hurt. I know to the fact that I can relate to these women who are going almost the same way I am.

I: Now—go ahead, I'm sorry.

P: Oh no, go.

I: No, good. All right, let's see. In terms of your—you've mentioned your student involvement in student activities and organizations, starting with the Activities Center. Is there anything else that you—clubs or student groups that you joined, or belong to, or periodically are active in?

P: There's—there is a Catholic club. They—I am also involved in it, and it's basically where we all go to a retreat for a week. We have ceremonies, or we have church on the days that we are supposed to have churches on. We classify what we do believe, and what we don't believe, and it's a real good thing that I have this club also, because I can talk to others who are kind of my religion, but have other ways of seeing it. I can teach them what I know, and they can teach me what they know. Basically, we can all teach each other what sort of religions we have, and anybody is actually welcome into the Catholic club, even though you're not a Catholic.

I: Okay, now we're going to look—we're going to talk a little bit about academic integration. That is, as a student who is a single parent, and you've mentioned

already there are demands and struggles that are unique to yourself, and women who are in the same situation, in contrast to a 19 or 18-year-old girl who's single, no children, goes to college, and things like that, or the traditional student. Let's talk about the academic aspects of going to college. Now, what have been your experiences in accessing—or accessing, I'm sorry, student services, as a part-time student and non-traditional student?

What have been your experiences in being able to get the support from the institution's support services, access to the support services, the facilities, and all that you need to help yourself, one, to sustain yourself, in terms of being able to continue to enroll, and continue your college education? Of course, while you're enrolled, the kinds of services, support that help you to be successful in the academic endeavors that you undertake.

P: Well, that's kind of a hard question.

I: Okay, well would you like me to break it down for you a little bit more?

P: Yes please.

I: Let's think about enrolling—let's say your last semester that you were enrolled in, all right. Now, obviously—how did the process of enrollment go? For you it may—having a child, it's simply—you just can't take off at whatever time, and spend untold hours waiting in line to enroll, or to see an advisor, or things like that, or getting financial aid applications completed, those kinds of things. What have been your experiences when you say, "You know what, I need to go enroll. I need to see a counselor," or, "I need to see somebody in financial aid." How have those things gone for you? Do you get there, and the office is closed, because whatever, it's late? You can't keep an appointment, because the baby gets sick, or things like that. How flexible and accessible have the services been on campus? That help you?

P: Yeah, the campus, the counselors are very, very helpful, actually. When I first started my college experience, I really didn't know what I wanted to be that well. I mean I did want to be a pharmacist, but I was thinking, "Well should I go for a much smaller major; not push it all into one thing?" My counselor actually talked me into taking basic classes. She showed me that with these basic classes, I can—while I'm doing the classes, my mind can start thinking, "Okay, well you want to be a pharmacist, these are the classes you need to take."

She looked at my college—my degree plan, and told me, well—she broke it down simple, for me to understand the major classes I need to take, and the classes I didn't need. I didn't have to waste my time with, and she made it very flexible for me, because well, I do have a daughter. She made it to where my

classes were at a period of time to where I am able to do the work, go to class, and be able to come home on time.

With financial aid—was a little hectic, somewhat. They didn't really have that—they had answers for me that I understood, but some of the answers were a little confusing. The fact that my financial aid came in a little late, even though I was—I registered on the days I was supposed to—it was a little hard, because to the fact that I don't have a job right now, and well, money in my family's a little tight. In order to do—to be able to do it, I had to do payments, and I really was hoping that financial aid would help. The more and more I asked questions, the more and more people tell—were telling me, "It will come sooner. It will come on this day. It will come on that day," but would never come on the days that they said.

I: Now how about anything else? For example, library services, computer lab, tutorial center, any of those things? How well do you feel that those facilities, those services were easily available to you, given the restrictions and all that you have, and obligations?

P: The library was very helpful for me, to the fact that now, instead of just going through every book in the library, they have—they showed us this program to where if we want to rent out a book, or if we're looking for a specific book, we can go on to the webpage, and go straight to the library webpage. It'll tell us what exactly book we're looking for, and from there they would tell us what section it was on. Instead of having to constantly look around the whole library, in order to find the book, the most easy way for me, especially with time very important—it helped a lot, because I wouldn't have to spend so many time—so many hours looking for that specific book.

Computer lab was helpful. Wasn't really that much interesting to me, because most of the computers were taken up basically by students who had nothing else to do. It wasn't really that much of a help. The people that worked there, they were really helpful, because they helped me with my essays. They helped me, if I made errors, or if I did too much spacing, or too much questions, or periods, or commas. They were really helpful for me to understand it.

I: Is that the writing lab?

P: Yes.

I: Okay, the writing lab. Now let's look at the—your interaction with your instructor, your professors, all right. What I'd like you to think about is—obviously there's obligations as a student, and the instructor has his or her obligations, but—to meet standards of the college and things like that, but how would you characterize your interaction with your instructors, within the class, and outside of regular class hours? In terms of if they have office hours, if you

run into them on campus, things like that. Can you characterize your overall interaction with your instructors, and other faculty as positive, negative, or mixed, or neutral?

P: Well once my professors actually—I did have, once in a while, interaction with them. They're very nice, very hard to be able to do the work. Some professors actually expect you to know the work by the time you enter their class. Well for helping, for extra help, they actually gave us a—they gave me a lot of help, because if I did not understand one problem, or if I didn't understand what was the whole majority of it, they would tell me to go to their hours. *[Inaudible 00:31:45]* I was a little hesitant to go their hours, because they had hours to where I wasn't able to attend, but I had to find some ways. There was email, they were able to email me back exactly what I needed to know. It still made it a little confusing, but I got a hold of them, and I was able to understand the work.

I: All right, so how would you characterize then your overall experience with instructors? Say just based on last semester, would you say it's positive, negative, it's a mixed sense that you get of feeling that they're interested in you, and as a student, or you're neutral, you really—it doesn't really matter?

P: I'm very positive about it, because there were so many times where I just wanted to give up, and my teachers kind of noticed it, my professors. They would pull me aside after classes, *I mean 00:32:52*, "Don't give up, this is really important for you to know, because in the near future you don't want to be like, 'Well I don't know this, and I learned it in school, but yeah I still didn't care.'" Every day matters.

I: Now what is your sense about instructors' commitment to helping you succeed for classes that you are enrolled? How do you—what role, or what sense of the instructors' commitment would you say—if you were going to give 'em a grade, or evaluate overall, your instructors in general, and adding—including facilities, tutors, what would you say would best characterize their commitment to helping you be successful, and achieve the goal you want to achieve?

P: I'd give 'em a *[inaudible 00:33:58]*.

I: Oh, you there? I think we lost our connection. Okay we're going to stop recording momentarily, 'til I get the connection back. *[Pause 00:34:24 to 00:34:50]* We're redialing, after 34 minutes, 52 seconds, we're reconnecting with the participant.

P: Sorry, I lost signal.

I: I figured something happened there. Okay, now we were about to talk about the sense—your sense about your instructors' commitment to helping you

succeed, and meet your goal of earning your degree, or moving on to your pharmaceutical program. How would you characterize their commitment to you?

P: Like I said before, there are some times where teachers are frustrated for the day. In my experiences, I did have a teacher who it seemed like didn't really care as much as actually of any of the students reaching their goals in life. To me, most of my teachers that I've had, I actually rate them a 10, because they—if I had a problem with something, if I didn't understand something, I had one-on-one time with them in class, or out of class. They will show me an easier way. They would have two different methods, exactly. There was one way where I didn't understand, so they would give me another way to where I would understand it, and from learning these different methods that they had in learning, it actually gave me a better way to understand the work, and I would be able to pass my test, or my homework I had, or my midterm, *[crosstalk 00:36:42]* the grade that I deserved.

I: Okay good, now we're going to think about the institution, the college as a whole, all the aspects of the college institution, from the administration, and the support services for students, instructors, the physical campus, in terms of how well—secure you feel, how welcome you feel when you're there. How would you characterize the campus environment at the college, in terms of both social—a sense of being welcomed, and feeling good about being there?

P: I would feel—the whole campus overall, I feel very safe, because the administrative—they are very nice, and very welcoming. They always—every time I walk into the main building where you register, you see everybody, “Hi,” and, “How are you? Good morning.” There is the campus police, who make sure everybody's where they need to be, and to make sure everyone's safe, especially at night. There—the students there, you never see any fights at the colleges, ever. Everybody respects each other, and there's no conflict with anyone. Basically, overall for the college, I rate it as a 10, because I never—there is never one day I do not feel safe.

I: Good, all right now the next item—we're coming up to a near end here. To what extent—I'm going to read a statement to you, okay? I want you to think about it, I'd like you to elaborate on it, as much as you'd like. To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statement about the institution? I want you to elaborate, as I said, and share any experiences that highlight positive or negative responses. This campus institution makes me feel welcomed, and important as a person. *[Pause 00:39:16 to 00:39:23]*

P: Since I have elaboration for this 00:39:23 question, well it's basically an opinion, I would have to say that I agree with it, basically. I don't—every time I go to the college, I—when I look around, I see people who are—yes, there's some who will have bad days, but it doesn't involve the college. What I see

myself, I never have a bad day there. My teachers are very respectful with students. Also my college peers are respectful to me, and to—I am respectful to them. With the whole opinion to them, I really do agree with it. I know—they're not—like I said before, there is not one day I don't feel unsafe.

I know that if I have a problem, or if they—I locked my keys in my car, the campus police is right there, in order to help me. If I lost a book, I know that the teachers can help me by borrowing another book, or looking through their main books, in order to see what I am missing.

I: All right, now I have three more questions for you. The next question—in a way, you've sort of mentioned a little bit about this earlier, about the diversity, of meeting the different people, particularly when we talked about the role of religion and faith in your academic pursuits. This goes a little bit to the character of the overall institution. Now because the institution is a—has a predominantly Hispanic population enrollment, the majority of the students generally are Hispanic, as well as many of the instructors, do you sense that there's—that the lack of ethnic or racial diversity takes away, or diminishes your opportunity to learn, and to be—have a culturally diverse learning experience? How important is that to you?

P: To me, I feel like it is a—very much important, because... to the fact that we don't have as much people... to the fact that we don't have that much people from different places, we won't really understand, because of all this whole terrorist thing, we—some people say that everybody from that country, or that continent is evil. I thought I would really like to see more people from other places go to the college, so that we know that not everybody is that, or not everybody is poor, or they're ugly in some way. I feel like there should be more people than Hispanics, because then you won't really know exactly their ways, and they won't know our way, so that's not really much of an experience.

I: All right, so next item. Now we're going to talk about predicting, a prediction of your future success, in terms of understanding how you feel about—how you define your sense of belonging, your sense of community. What are the important things that you need, you want to see, you want to feel, you want to perceive in—by attending the college that you're attending, and how it's going to contribute to you saying, "Yes, I'm glad I'm here. I want to continue, and achieve my goals?" As a prediction of your future success, what are the factors or the issues or events that might influence you to continue, or to withdraw from college?

P: Well, let me think about that actually.

I: Would you like me to rephrase?

P: Excuse me?

I: Would you like me to rephrase the question, or break it down?

P: Yes please.

I: If you were to make a list, like a shopping list of things that you believe are important to you, as a person, and that you need from the institution, and the people that make up the institution, that would help you decide, “You know what, I’m going to stay here and continue,” or you know what, “No, I don’t like this, because they’re not meeting my needs. I don’t feel a sense that I’m really part of something here. I’m going to look to go to another place to learn.” It could be like a list of factors, and the kinds of resources that are available, or not, what kind of issues that you’re dealing with. You mentioned about being—feeling secure and safe on campus. Well that would be, obviously, something probably you would consider to be a factor, a predictor about deciding if you would stay, and continue your education at this college. It could be also personal things as well. You could be—priorities, what are the things that might interfere with your continuing your education, unless there was some kind of help, or intervention available for you?

P: Well, the college does have many flaws, in some ways. To me, I really do love going to school there, at the junior college, because in other schools that I have heard from my friends, maybe the teachers are not helping them, and they’re falling way behind, because the schools are either getting cancelled, or something is going on. The college is actually more considerate of how students feel, so the teachers are very helpful. They do give you one-on-one time with them, to understand what you need to learn, and what you need to know.

In my ways I will continue going to school there, because it’s not that it’s easier, it’s helpful. Instead of being confused, and being lost, then basically failing, to the fact that that *[inaudible 00:47:32]* I would prefer to be there, because not only did my grades go up, but it isn’t just for them. They do help me, and the fact that the pharmacy does—after you graduate, helps you get an interview for a job. They’ll help you get started in life, in the real world, once you’ve finished with the high—with college.

I: Okay, so let me see. We’ve got your instructors, of course academic success is important, the program that you’re interested in, and you have career placement after graduation. Those are the things that are—that would contribute to you staying on, and hopefully being successful, and graduating, right?

P: Yes.

- I:* Okay now there are some other things. How about other issues, besides those? What would be—for example, as a single parent, how does daycare and childcare services influence your plans? How much of an obstacle can that be for you?
- P:* Well, daycare at the college is kind of a very hard thing for me. There are so many students there who do have their children on their own, and do have them in daycare. In order to get my daughter into daycare, it's first come, first serve. That's kind of a hard thing for me, due to the fact that both my parents are working. There are times where I do have to take my daughter with me to school, or there are times where I have to leave school, because I don't have a babysitter. I really wish that the daycare was a lot more open, and allowed other children to be there, instead of having a minimum of how many children are allowed to be there.
- I:* Okay, so an increase in the service itself, how—that program would help, include more children?
- P:* Yes.
- I:* All right, is there anything else that you can think of, that would be critical to your continuing your education?
- P:* No. Basically, everything is—from my experience of college, everything is basically set in stone.
- I:* Okay well that was the—let's see. There's one more question we're going to cover, all right, and then we're going to complete another couple of things I'll read to you. What are your expectations for either this semester, or the coming semester? That is your plans, academic plans, any social things, social plans that you have, and/or personal goals or plans that you have coming up, from now to—or your next semester?
- P:* My expectations for it?
- I:* Mm-hmm.
- P:* I am hoping to—well this semester, hope this year, I am hoping to graduate, if I can get all of my credits done in time. That's what I am expecting. To be more involved with school, with my college, with my peers, to be more involved in helping others, doing our clubs, and hopefully that more and more people will be likely to put more time into helping us not only grow as a club, but to expand it.

- I:* Anything else you have? Any other particular personal goal you wanted—you have that you're working on, that somehow might relate back to your studies, and your goal of graduating?
- P:* Well actually, the main thing is just to be able to get the career that I want, in order to support my own child, and not have to live on food stamps, or to live on welfare, or anything like that. That is not—my main goal is to just get the job that I want, in order not to be living that way.
- I:* Now I'm just going to read a couple things to you. I'm supposed to, it's part of the—I want to thank you again for your participation, and your willingness to share your experiences, and all that's about, what it means to experience a sense of belonging, and how your perception influences your willingness to continue to pursue your educational endeavor at this institution, and beyond, to the completion of your program. As a reminder, all our conversations are confidential, and the information obtained in this interview will be used only for the purposes addressed in the consent letter you signed prior to joining the study. You have consented to having this interview audio recorded, and we have done so. A debriefing session will follow, some time after the university approves the completed study.
- You have provided contact information, and you'll be notified about the completion of the study, and the results, and be invited to attend a debriefing session, which is purely optional on your behalf. If you have any questions of course, regarding the study, you may feel free to contact me at ronald.zawacki-maldonado@waldenu.edu, or rezawacki@southwesttexasjuniorcollege.edu. My home office is (830) 773-7189, and that concludes our interview, and I do thank you for your participation. This ends case F111 interview.

[End of Audio]

M.102

- Researcher:* Today is, uh, March 27, 2013. It's approximately sometime after 6:00 PM. We're at the C.C. Winn extension at Southwest Texas Junior College, and I am about to engage, um, a participant for my doctoral studies, uh, with Walden University. This is Dr. Ronald E. Zawacki-Maldonado with Walden University.
- Before me will be identifying Case M102. In the end, I'm going to present and go over with him the consent form, and then we will initiate the interview.
- All right, this is a consent form. It spells out what I'm going to do with your data. It is all confidential, no one can have access to it, and I will retain the data up to five years at the university, uh, to review it. Those would be the only ones who would have access to it.

On the backside, there's an area at the side. Uh, here in print, okay, the date and then your signature. Print your name.

Participant: [Writing]

Researcher: Okay. [Writing] Having completed the consent form, we'll begin the, uh, study. I have some items I need to read to you, uh, before we start.

I'm at the Walden University, and this researcher, please be assured that your time and your, uh, participation in this study are most value to growing the body of knowledge about non-traditional Hispanic college students attending two-year community colleges, in both the scientific community and the field of psychology. If you were not given the consent from, uh, from the researcher, please ask for it before any further engaging in activities regarding – related to this study. Having done so, we, we have that on record.

I'd like to begin with the earlier form that you completed in the initial interview to determine if your background was appropriate to the sample population for this study. This will help us begin to form a sense of how you define your sense of belonging in relationship to the institution and the potential influences on your willingness to persist your educational endeavor.

From there, I would like you to freely share your thoughts about what is important to you in making you feel supported, welcomed, and experiencing a sense of belonging, community, and ownership. In essence, anything that you believe is tantamount to influence on your defining your sense of belonging and persistence to graduation. The information submitted on the demographic survey is correct?

Participant: Yes.

Researcher: Okay. And this is your information.

Participant: Yes, sir.

Researcher: Would you like to see the document again?

Participant: Sure. [Silence]

Researcher: Thank you. Very well. And let us commence.

Welcome and thank you for choosing to participate in this interview for my doctoral research study. As a reminder, all our conversations are confidential, and the information obtained in this interview will be used only for those purposed addressed in the consent letter you signed prior to joining this study.

In this interview, I would like you to reflect on the following questions; provide a response. You may digress from the current question and elaborate on previously asked questions. Let us start.

A general question to begin with here is looking at how you sense your belonging or community, and the things that affect you in terms of continuing your persistence, uh, in your educational endeavors, especially with this, uh, institution.

So in general, as a non-traditional Hispanic college student attending this institution, how would you characterize your experiences and perceptions as influencing your persistence, that as you continue participation in enrollment toward achieving your educational goal or educational career?

Participant: That'll be like how – I mean what has inspired me to keep going on my –

Researcher: In part. Uh, if you'd like to start there, we can start there. I'm looking in terms of this particular institution, okay. How would you characterize your experiences as being a student at a two-year community college in your sense of belonging, community?

Participant: Okay. Well, I mean I think, uh, this college, I mean it has everything you need in order to succeed. I mean basically, if you go to another college, and then they will give – they have the same classes, they have probably the same things. In regards to the credits, they, they finally – I mean you finish the college with a – whether it's an associate's degree. I mean you can get an associate's here or in San Antonio, it doesn't matter.

But I think, uh, I really categorize this school like a very good school in the sense of, I mean comparing the teachers and, well, the prices, because people have, uh – I mean they have a better opportunity than paying, uh, for a full-time student, I mean you get to pay like around \$2,000.00 comparing to another school that pays up to \$10,000.00.

I mean it's a big difference, what you give us, the opportunity to – well, like a lot of people have opportunity to continue on with, with their studies. And so, um, I mean what we're paying. And like the teachers we have, we have very, very experienced teachers. I mean I, I personally think – I mean it's a good investment.

They ask me if I, I – I use, I use to be – I went, uh, one semester and used UTSA, and like the difference, I mean it was way, way, way more expensive. And comparing the classes and the teachers, I mean I'd rather be somewhere near my family and basically getting the same help, the same credits, the same

opportunities. I mean I think it all depends on the, on the mindset of the student. So I think this, this institution gives you the tools in order to succeed.

Researcher:

Thank you. Um, let's, let's focus on, uh, if you would talk about just right here your family background – your family, not necessarily as an adult, but as in growing up your, you know, your early years, high school years – anything that you feel that, you know, in terms of looking at your story, your life story, um, in contributing to the endeavor that's brought you to this point?

Participant:

Okay. Well first of all, we, we use to live in _____. My parents, they're Mexican. Uh, since the, the American dream is on the other side of the border, uh, I was born her in Eagle Pass. All my three sisters, they were born in Eagle Pass, and my brother, he was born in Eagle Pass. I mean we're all US citizens.

They basically – well we were basically born here, because of the opportunity of what the US citizens have. Uh, I mean throughout – we, we – my parents, they had a, a flower shop like 50 years, and well, they wanted a better life, so they moved to Villa Naros and we started little-by-little, and, uh, I mean we started to grow. But I mean I, I, I've seen them, they, they will always try to give us a better life, so I mean in return, I mean we are already on the other side of the line.

I mean we already have the opportunity to work in the US. Like I will that – I will like to give – return them the favor, and that's why I am very persistent with my studies, I mean work. I mean, I mean I try to do everything as perfect as possible, because I mean at the end, what they thought of us having a better lifestyle, I mean I don't think it will be fair of them fighting all their life for life, like between my brothers and sisters, just to make it not worth it. So, so, yes, that's my, that's my spill.

Researcher:

What teachers or events, uh, about your earlier education experiences influenced you or your decision to attend college. Now I, I see that you mention your – about giving back to your parents through bettering yourself. But what particular educational experience can you think of in terms of, um, seeing the importance of, say, higher education?

Participant:

Well, three years ago, I mean there was racism. My dad gave me a book. It's called – I mean it's not directly at teaching, it's not a class or anything. He gave me a book, it's from Robert Kiyosaki, and he talks about basically a self-help, a self-motivating books. I mean what you need to study to become financially successful. I mean – and since that book – I've never read all my life; never, ever.

Since that book, I usually read a book for every two weeks. I mean I try to – I mean I think we're, we're, we're basically – I mean we are living things. Either we're growing or we're dying. So pretty much I think staying in school.

It's – I mean it's very important for the self – I mean for growing on the inside. I think, uh – I mean you can say you have your associate's, you earn your bachelor's or you earn your master's. But I mean the education never stops, so I think that's very incredible.

Also, I mean I've got – I went to several events regarding like some, uh – in familiar real estate – real estate events or stock events. I mean usually, what, what, what I focus on is basically education that they don't teach at the school. There's some, there's some classes or some events that they usually don't give classes in school. I mean I definitely, to be a successful person I think the building blocks, it's like this institution, right. But I mean there is also tons of seminars, events, I mean everything that helps you out as well.

Researcher: All right. *[Flipping papers]* I'd like to talk a little bit about the educational experiences of your parents – that can include both the education in terms of formal education, you know, attending school, as well as career-type education, and their work, their line of work; because you did mention that they had owned a flower shop and things, and then they moved up into _____. So we'd like to focus a little bit, a little bit of your parents background.

Participant: How?

Researcher: About their education. Whatever you would like to share and what you know about would be helpful.

Participant: All right, first of all, my grandma, she use to have the flower shop where my mom use to work at. She finished high school and she, she just – she didn't go to college, she, she stayed, uh, helping my grandmas.

And my dad, he was a very – he is a very resourceful, a very good, uh, person. So he went through high school, he went a year as an exchange student to London, and he came back and he did his bachelor, uh, degree, and actually it was on, uh, international business. So with his knowledge and my mom's, I mean college, um, flowers and everything, they started, they started with like a little, a little flower shop. And now they're making big, uh, like events for the governor in Mexico – I mean big event. They travel a lot to different cities here in the US just to see the markets, what's new. I mean catering and everything.

My dad did a, a _____ change and he has bachelor's, but my mom only finished high school.

Researcher: All right. Um, how would you describe – and I'm going to focus a little bit more on you and your family, okay. Um, how would you describe your social and any economic circles that you and your family experienced?

- Participant:* Well first of all, I mean if we're doing the big boom in the new, in the new company my parents opened, we had a lot of bad struggle. I mean most of the Mexican families do. And I mean there was a point where I said, uh, "I don't want my – I mean I don't want my children to live – to go through the same things I went through."
- Luckily, my parents, I mean they, they opened a new company and it was very, very successful and still is. And while I still have that trauma. I mean my parents, they're not going to be always there. I have to do something by myself to not, not go through those places again. So I mean school's involved and that's pretty much it.
- Researcher:* What, what role, if any, does your like faith or religion play in your pursuit of higher education helping you to persist through graduation or attaining your, your goals?
- Participant:* Religion-wise?
- Researcher:* Faith, religion, uh, philosophy?
- Participant:* Well, my, my, uh, my mom, she's very, very religious and she has all those, um, like plates – I don't know how to say it.
- Researcher:* Uh-huh.
- Participant:* So as we have a church, I do pray every now and then, but I'm not as religious as she is. I, I just live by the philosophy, the Golden Rule, you do, you do to other what they – what you would like them to do to you. That's basically my, my number one rule which is do good to others; it'll come back to you.
- Researcher:* Now in terms of that – of this idea, um, as a source of motivation, I'm thinking about it perhaps in terms of motivation. *[Clearing throat]* What would you say – what are the – if you could put your finger on it, what were some of the things that motivate you to continue to follow?
- Participant:* Well, I went two years ago as an exchange student as well. I went to – I was a year in Nice, France. So it's 20 minutes away from Monaco, and I use to travel every week into Monaco and I saw – I mean the people, the lifestyles they had, I mean it's something incredible, I mean it's unexplainable.
- And there and then, I was like you've got one life, and now I see what this life can get you, I mean all the opportunities, all the – I mean the lifestyles and everything as well. I want it. I will do whatever it takes; I mean that; whatever it takes.

- Researcher:* The, uh – we'll focus now a bit on the institution, the college. We'll talk about, you know, your experiences with the instructors, classes, resources that are available, uh, the environment in terms of how you feel. How does the campus, how do the teachers, how do the other people that attend the institution – how do they contribute to your, your, uh, environmental sense?
- Participant:* From 1 to 10, I give a 9 – a 9.5. That 0.5 is because the Wi-Fi is sometimes – it does not work.
- Researcher:* Oh, oh, okay.
- Participant:* I am very satisfied with the school teachers. I mean, I mean I could go to any school right now, but I'd rather stay here, because I mean I feel very comfortable with the environment every teacher had – the school has basically. But now good.
- Researcher:* Um, I, I'd like you to maybe if you could elaborate on your experiences, interacting with your, your peer, your, your fellow students, if you could on that and use a very positive – you know, talk about, a little bit about what it is that makes it positive, particulars, or something particular, or particular things or –
- Participant:* Well, I _____ and I meet at the school basically and we start, um, helping with each, each other's work, homework, or projects, or whatever. I mean in, in the – like here in school –
- Researcher:* Mm-hmm.
- Participant:* – the environment – like, like you said in France, yeah, I, I would start in a positive conversation or a positive friendship by helping – what we have in common. I mean I don't know them personally; but what I know that we have in common is we're in the same place, so we can start that way.
- Researcher:* Okay. Um, how could you describe your involvement in student activities and organizations of the institution? What kind of – and obviously, you're enrolled, you take classes. Uh, are there other things that you're involved in, uh, related to Southwest?
- Participant:* No.
- Researcher:* No. Would you then – would you best characterize your enrollment as attending classes and then going about your life's business?
- Participant:* Yes, yes.

- Researcher:* *[Flipping papers]* Do you feel that you're – that, that you're missing out on, um, a really well-rounded educational experience by not having some of, let's say, when not being involved or engaged in, uh, student activities and organizations of the, of the college?
- Participant:* I really don't because at the same time, I mean if I'm spending that time on those activities or whatever, I mean I use the time to study, read, or look at webinars. I mean that's pretty much the same thing. I mean at the end, it's _____ – I mean I use that specific time for education. So _____.
- Researcher:* All right. Now we can talk about academics here. In looking at your classes, how you relate in terms of working with students, your peers, how you relate with your instructors and things like that. All right? All right.
- What are your experiences with accessing the college's student support services on the campus? Now you did mention problems with the Wi-Fi. A lot of times it doesn't work, okay.
- Participant:* I, I – honestly, I've never been to the, to the support service like, uh – you mean like successor – or, uh, I've never been in that industry.
- Researcher:* Mm-hmm.
- Participant:* Yeah, I've never in there.
- Researcher:* Okay. Well, how about in terms of planning your schedules, the counselors, financial aid, um –
- Participant:* No complaint. I never have a problem with them. Fast, efficient.
- Researcher:* You're, you're pleased with the –
- Participant:* The staff?
- Researcher:* The, the – like your counselor and – would you say that these things help you want to continue? *[Brief silence]*
- How would you characterize your interaction with your instructors in class and out of class – that is, uh, being able to, uh, communicate with them, uh, outside of class?
- Participant:* _____, yeah. I mean – yeah, it's actually – I, I haven't had a problem in these two year. But I mean I think I have the confidence to speak with them in and out from the classroom.

- Researcher:* So are they – would you say that your instructors are available outside of class – work with them if you're having a problem? I would – or would you say this is significant or important in your overall –
- Participant:* Yes, because I mean you never know when you're going to need their help, and it's very important for them to be available.
- Researcher:* What is your sense about the instructors commitment? Think about the instructors you had, all right.
- Participant:* Mm-hmm.
- Researcher:* Uh, what do you think – how do you perceive their sense of wanting to invest in you in terms of your success is their success type of philosophy or approach to?
- Participant:* I, I personally think they are very committed. You can say _____ when they want you to learn.
- Researcher:* Now as far as the institution, thinking about the campus environment, it seems that you don't really spend time on the, the campus environment here – or especially at a building at the campus across the street, so you know, other obligations and all that. But if you were to be on campus maybe during registration or at other times, when you look around the campus, what is your sense of the, the image of a college? Does it match your image of a college, or is it something more or something less? And if it is, what are those things that will make it more or less?
- Participant:* Um, I mean what I have – my image of a college I mean it's pretty much the same image I have right now. Students come and go, they're always walking around. It's a very like – I don't know how to say it. What I, what I see right here, I mean it was less people, _____ it's purpose the same thing.
- Researcher:* Now, are there any facilities, services, at the campus, you know, via face-to-face directly or through online access, uh, that you, uh, particularly think help you that are –
- Participant:* Face-to-face definitely.
- Researcher:* So would you be more likely then to register for your classes face-to-face versus online?
- Participant:* Yes.
- Researcher:* And would you be more likely to take courses that are face-to-face than distance learning –

Participant: Yes.

Researcher: – and online?

Participant: Yes.

Researcher: All right. We're going to have – I have a statement here, and I'd like you to think about it and elaborate as much as you can; though you have already mentioned some things here, I'd just like you to, you know, kind of rethink or kind of look globally at the whole, uh, experience. To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statement about your institution? Okay, I want you to elaborate your experiences or examples you've kept to help me understand more thoroughly what your answer is.

"This campus or institution makes me feel welcomed and important." Okay. Would you agree or disagree with that statement?

Participant: I do agree, because I, I, I do feel like I'm taking a place in this environment. I mean I've never had a problem with teachers. They're always there for me. And the services as in the computers and library, I mean you've got everything, all the tools you need for you to go on with your studies here in college. The, the teachers are very prepared. The students, I mean they're very friendly. I think you can't ask for more, I mean except what you need for, for your studies.

Researcher: Okay. This campus might be less characterized as a Hispanic serving institution because of the ethnic make-up of the predominately Hispanic Latin Chicano population. Now, in comparison to other campuses, universities, colleges, whether there's a more cultural diversity. Uh, do you sense a lack of this, uh, ethnic or racial diversity somehow diminishes your world view or – of, uh, of learning?

Participant: I don't feel everything. I think it all depends on, on the goals someone has. I mean it won't happen for me personally, it wouldn't vary, the ethnicity than the tech school is you and you only.

Researcher: *[Clearing throat]* Now you mentioned, you know, looking at webinars that you had already – you had in fact, uh, studied abroad in France, and your dad had his educational history, uh, studied in London. Now how would you say, when thinking of that, that your own experience that sense of diversity seeing another part of the world, living among other people that are not necessarily from your background and your region of the country or world. Uh, this is what we're talking about diversity, cultural diversity. Would that not or did it not enrich your own experiences?

- Participant:* Well, yes, because I mean you learn from, uh, different ethnicities. I mean you get – I mean you, you learn from different cultures and, well – and that's, that's right.
- Researcher:* Now thinking about that, do you feel that you are more enriched because of that experience?
- Participant:* Yes.
- Researcher:* Okay, now let me kind of reverse it a little bit. Do you then – do you believe that the lack of diversity –
- Participant:* Oh, well, yeah.
- Researcher:* – in this community –
- Participant:* Yes.
- Researcher:* – okay, is – takes away from or limits some of your more global opportunity to learn?
- Participant:* Well that, I mean that being abroad. But here like in this area, I mean we're pretty much the same ethnicities.
- Researcher:* Right.
- Participant:* If it would be a different ethnicity, I mean I would have learned that, yeah.
- Researcher:* And I think you contributed to your own, uh, enrichment by, by going abroad. So I mean just, you know, I was just wondering how you – *[Brief silence]*
- For example, you know, you're talking about, uh, if we could have people from Australia or something and , you know –
- Participant:* Mexico, there –
- Researcher:* Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. Exchanges like coming over here, right, uh, and let's say that had some of the same interests that you do, what is their perspective about real _____, or how do they do webinars in terms of their – in broadening their educational experience? Oh, so we've got two more questions.
- As a prediction of your future success, okay, uh, what factors or issues, what events might influence your persistence, uh, at this college in your continuation, in other words, toward graduation? What might influence positively or negatively your influence – uh, your continuation? Or, or factors on how it could be, um –

- Participant:* Well, basically, motivating, uh, teachers I guess. I mean the people that tell you that you can, you can, you can with a can do attitude, I mean I think they're the field for you to stay in school –
- Researcher:* Mm-hmm.
- Participant:* – I mean and be successful.
- Researcher:* Okay, talk to us. Do you see any situation or factors via the social, economical, uh, personal that contribute – or would contribute or take away or change, uh, your opportunity to continue in graduating? What would be like something that would interrupt or your fear?
- Participant:* I mean it could be, I don't know, financially I guess. Uh, without money, you can't go to school. Well, I mean all depending if you get much later.
- Researcher:* But I mean in your own situation.
- Participant:* Oh, no, no. I don't think.
- Researcher:* No. Okay. Get their Wi-Fi fixed, right?
- Participant:* Yes, yes.
- Researcher:* Okay, okay. Uh, what are your expectations for this semester – your academic expectations, social expectations, personal goals during this?
- Participant:* Well I'm about to, um, get my associate's; and probably my goal is my master's – probably the next step.
- Researcher:* Okay. And let me ask you, what field will – would you consider getting your master's in?
- Participant:* Business administration.
- Researcher:* Have you, have you looked at where you're going to get that?
- Participant:* Yes, Sul Ross.
- Researcher:* You're going to go through Sul Ross. Okay. Well, this concludes our, our survey – or, I'm sorry, our interview; and I really wanna thank you again for your participation, your willingness to share your experience and thoughts about what it means to experience a sense of belonging, how that perception is relative to your willingness to continue to pursue your educational endeavor at this institution and beyond to completion of your program.

Um, again to remind you, all our conversations are confidential. The information obtained in the interview will be used only for those purposes addressed in the consent letter you've signed prior to joining this study. You have consented to have this interview auto-recorded and the device has been in sight while we discussed, uh, the, uh, the items on the interview. Um, Walden University, uh, will review all my work; and then once the study is approved and the degree granted for which a study was developed and meeting the requirements of my doctoral degree, you'll be notified and invited to attend a debriefing session where I will show the results with you. And you are not obligated to attend. I believe that you were already provided contact information where you can reach me if you have any questions. And, um, that's it.

Participant: That's it?

Researcher: That's it. I really thank you.

Participant: Oh, not a problem. Whatever we can do to help.

Researcher: All right. Well, good luck.

Participant: Thank you very –

[End of Audio]

M.104

Researcher: Welcome to this study. On behalf of Walden University and this researcher, please be assured that your time and participation in this study are most valuable to them that knowledge about non-traditional Hispanic college students attending two-year community colleges in this, uh, scientific community in the field of psychology. If you were not given the informed consent from the researcher, please ask for it now before engaging any further activity related to this study.

I would like to begin with your form that you completed in the initial interview, and to determine if your background was appropriate to the sample that I provided you for this study. Having reviewed it with you and discussed it, I find that you would – uh, you are in fact, uh, a member – you would be in fact a member of the, uh, sample population of non-traditional students. And this will help us to get informed with a sense of how you define your sense of

belonging in relationship to the institution that you attend, and the potential influences on your willingness to persist in your educational endeavor.

Uh, from there, I would like for you to freely share your thoughts about what's important to you in making you feel supported, welcomed, and experiencing a sense of belonging.

Uh, let's see, community and ownership: In essence, anything that you believe that is tantamount to influences on defining your sense of belonging and persistence to graduation.

Today is, uh, May 13, 2013 and this is a face-to-face interview with one of the male participants. This is M104 with a student M identifier. Um, the setting is in my home office in Eagle Pass, Texas, associated with Southwest Texas Junior College here in Eagle Pass. I have a – the recording device present and visible to both the participant and the researcher.

Welcome and thank you for choosing to participate in this interview for my doctoral research study. As a reminder, all our conversations are confidential, and the information obtained in this interview will be used only for those purposes addressed in the consent letter you signed prior to joining this study. As we progress in this, I would like you to reflect on the following questions and provide a response. You may digress, go back from any question, and elaborate on previous asked questions.

In general as a non-traditional Hispanic college student attending this institution, how would you characterize your experiences and perceptions as influencing your persistence, your willingness to continue your participation and enrollment for achieving your educational career and goals?

So in general, when you look at everything – the institution, the programs, the services – what, what sense do you have of feeling like that institution and the people there, the administration, the instructors overall, the support people, uh, make you feel welcomed and important, uh, and give a sense of like, "I feel like I belong here; I feel like I'm welcomed."

Participant: Uh, most of the staff is, is pretty good. Uh, you do have some teachers that seem – I don't know what the proper word is, uh –

Researcher: Whatever you want to described.

Participant: – telegraph, I guess, which is, uh, it seems like they're just going on and just talking and not actually teach you like – really all they're doing is reading a book. But then under – I think it's on the willingness on the student itself.

Uh, a drawback sometimes is, uh, just people that have been out of school for a while such as myself is, well, new kids coming out of high school courses that they're required to take, prepare them for many of these other courses that they're taking. So sometimes you do feel a big step behind.

Uh, most students are very approachable and there is a lot of group activity. For the most part, I have only taken technical classes, and I'm taking, uh, basics. So the atmosphere is very different, and the instructors are very well, very approachable, and base it on a sense of your knowledge as well as your participation with attendance.

Um, I feel I belong. I mean I can pass my classes. I mean giving up, providing some knowledge because I have a lot of work experience for other students that are very smart and quick to learn, but don't yet grasp and understand the content. So I don't feel out of place.

I did my first class, my first actual class in, uh, something different.

Researcher: Now, let's talk a little bit about your family background and what you do. If you want to share or don't want to share, it's up to you. I want you to think about your own background, uh, be honest, you know, highlights that have – that somehow kind of contributing to your endeavor. Like everyone goes through a kind of osmosis transformation. But where, where are the markers maybe along your life, uh, that seem to have provided on some –

Participant: A foundation?

Researcher: Yeah, a foundation for –

Participant: For me wanting to further my education?

Researcher: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Participant: Uh, it's been a combination. My wife and a close acquaintance of the family that always encourage to follow through and to do a little bit more because we always from. So, um, afterward would be – after years of procrastinating, you know, finally saying, "You know what? I do need to do something," you know.

Uh, close friends still with the school, still working, um, in the school, I'm not showing that. It doesn't matter your age, you know, your background. If you're will or if you want to, you can accomplish it.

My wife is a year older than me, you know, _____ can come to school. I have five kids, you know. They wake up, they got to put up with me and, I don't know, work and everything. I'll still be able to go to school and take two, three classes show me that, you know, I can do it as well.

I started as a goal, as a combination of self-accomplishment as well, uh, making goals around helping the same and probably pushing me, you know, to give you sense of ____.

Researcher: All right. Now, um, I want you to think about your early education experience – maybe, you know, going back to junior high or in high school in terms of the kinds of things that you were interested in, uh, academically, uh, you know, uh, that somehow treated you – even though you were delayed in pursuing a higher education; but at one time you may have envisioned higher education shortly out of high school. But what kind of areas that somehow that call that were, uh, of interest to you that you, you have found your way, uh, with those interests into your current pursuits by making new hobbies or –

Participant: Actually, it's funny _____. I used to like math, science, and art, which is something actually that has nothing to do with what I'm following now. I mean that's what I like, that's what, uh –

Researcher: Mm-hmm.

Participant: I would like looking forward to. I can't say that while I was younger in high school, I did plan of – have the goals of going to school. I think it was till a little bit I got older age, being married so soon at the age of 16, you know. In my mid 20s, I started to realize, I started to think, you know, I needed to do something more with my life.

Researcher: Okay. Now, let's – I'd like you to reflect a little bit. And you can give a little bit of background about your family, uh, in terms of their education experience, their work career since – so much as you would like to share, uh.

Participant: My family growing up or –

Researcher: Yeah, mm-hmm. It'd be like your mom, your dad, where you're from – people that basically – either that raised you or –

Participant: Well, I was raised with my grandmother since I was one. Uh, her and my grandfather worked in the fields. A few of my aunts that I knew, who I'd see a lot, went to college and, you know, at a later age in life. So I really wasn't surrounded by many people that, uh, from my family that were educated.

I do have a lot of educated family that are professors and counselors and all whatnot; but I don't – I wasn't raised around them and I don't even know them. But they've been an influence. I can't say that I was around, um, education in my family back when I was, you know, working in the fields, just doing hard work, manual labor, making trades.

- Researcher:* Now did you, did you also do migrant work?
- Participant:* No. I did, but for fun I guess. But to actually be an actual migrant worker, mm-mm.
- Researcher:* Now keeping that in mind, how would you describe your social and economic struggles that you and your family experience?
- Participant:* Um, very hard. No education and being at a young age, it's hard to get employed and to make enough to, to pay bills. Outside here at Eagle Pass and San Antonio I've been trying to ramp – get a vehicle to get around, uh, with kids. Between daycare and, and rent and food, uh, that's our check.
- So you actually get – you know, we, we live check-to-check. Sometimes just there wasn't enough and, you know, you had to fall behind a little here and there and try to catch up, do little side work and – yeah. But it is very hard without an education.
- Researcher:* At a young age, not having any type of trade
- Participant:* No.
- Researcher:* Just, uh – now what role, if any, does your faith or religion _____ like a how it would become my philosophy of life. Where do you think that, if at all, uh, fits into to pursuing your higher education and helping you – assist to graduate or achieving your goals – that, that, that phase of – it could be a philosophy of like, you know, examples of really important people around you that somehow influence your – or support your emotional, uh, sense of longing in a desire you're going to want to do what you're doing?
- Participant:* Well my faith and those around me, uh, have very strong faith or beliefs. To me, you see people sacrifice so much, uh, and it makes you realize that, you know, putting in a couple of hours a week to going to school to better yourself, better for your family, is a sacrifice that is well worth it. You know, that may not seem like it at the beginning. You think that people and Hispanics, uh, tend to be a little – to work hard, but you're used to doing trade instead of going to school.
- Researcher:* So now, we'll look at the, the, the, uh, institution and, uh, the social and academic integration and the institutional climate. And that's basically in the original, in the original studies research, what they did, they looked at how your interaction with the college community [*Coughing*] and your academic pursuits in reaction to what instructors, uh, the faculty, the support, the administration of the institution, uh, contribute to your defining like, "I'm part of this institution and they have their – my interest at heart or with mine."

And then just like when you go to the institution and you'll be walking on the campus and what have you, what – you know, your interaction with organizations of students, organizations of like support services, things like that. So that's what we're going to focus on next, okay?

Now, now, what have, what have been your experiences of interacting with fellow students on campus? Some in classes and stuff.

Participant: Oh, we'll work in groups. Uh, that's very surprising how intriguing one is because they're older –

Researcher: Mm-hmm.

Participant: – because I'm older and I've been out in the field and working, you know, and maybe – I would think that will be less interested and be like, "Ow, well somebody so old in here, you know, what – you know what's going on."

But now they're actually very intrigued, because they, they had that enthusiasm to actually know what it's like to work; because they don't – and they don't know what to expect. But I found that the – in a younger, the younger students now, they're very approachable and they're just kind of shy.

Researcher: Now, um, realizing that, you know, your balance of family and work, and obviously taking classes, may limit your involvement in student activities [Coughing] in organ – [Coughing] excuse me – in organizations. What, if any, activities other than attending class, uh, etcetera, um, have you been able to entertain or, perhaps follow, or get involved in, or would like to get involved in?

Participant: I haven't. The only other thing I have participated in was in, uh – the guy who works at the resort. Student Success Center?

Researcher: Okay.

Participant: Where you go get tutoring and get help and work in groups with other students to understand, you know, to have a period of – then all you classes – okay, how to focus.

Researcher: So that's where you hadn't – most of your interaction with other students other than in the class?

Participant: Other than the classrooms.

Researcher: Okay.

Participant: And what I'd like to do is, uh, in technical field, I want to do some labs where you can go and do a hands-on, which you read on the book, uh. _____.

Researcher: Okay.

Participant: I'll see if I can straighten it.

Researcher: *[Flipping pages]* Let's see what I want – and now for the academic. In the academic aspects, we kind of look at how we're doing in our courses, because obviously, if we're not doing well, we don't feel a sense of accomplishment. And that sometimes interferes with our sense of feeling like, "Why, why, why am I here?" or, um – you know, you don't have that sense of –

Participant: Belonging.

Researcher: – belonging, mm-hmm. So what are your experiences with just accessing the college student support services at the campus? That would be like you just mentioned about your success center. I mean based on the hours of operation and the services, they're still geared traditionally – or for traditional students; and you as a non-traditional student, having to balance work and family and going to school – how – what kind of experiences have you had with getting access to the kinds of services and support, and personality that like we need to help with the success of that.

Participant: Uh, it's a lot harder and you work the full week. Uh, most of these services are offered to 6:00. But, you know, most jobs end at 5:00. And then when you have kids, you have to go pick them up, drop them off, and get _____. Well, you're only at 3:00 until, say, 8:00 PM. By that time, there's nobody there, uh, either.

Library is open till 9:00. But there's just very happy computers to actually have somebody tutor or a teacher that's around to be able to help out. But that's what make it hard, when you can't get a waiver in the day. Most of this stuff is offered during the day. So what is the equivalent as a working day. Professors are at – you know, it's their work day. So that's very – you met him, yeah, that both does hurt. It just hurts you.

Researcher: Now, we talked about when you characterize your interaction with your instructors, and are outside of, outside of class, uh, how you know, in terms of their accessibility. Contacting them would be out of the question. Uh, you know, what – how are they available to you, uh, other than within the class that you attend, uh. Do you have a rapport with them outside of, of, of class perhaps, because of your field, the technical field of, you know, people are over –

Participant: Yes. So I want actual – to do some work and help out and assist the _____, especially one of my technical teachers.

Researcher: Mm-hmm.

Participant: Um, you know, if I had – for the most part, they were very assessable. They do respond to emails, um. They don't provide you with your cell phone directory. But you can send them an email or, um – yeah, they'll reply and try it again – can contact you, you know, to reach you.

Researcher: It must have been. Now, in terms of the instructors again, and thinking about their commitment to you, uh, in helping you succeed [*Coughing*] for the classes that you're enrolled, okay, how do you – what sense of, of commitment do you think they have in terms of helping you succeed?

Participant: I have approximately 26 college credits, 26 hours, and the majority of my hours have come with one instructor.

Researcher: Okay.

Participant: Then actually, I find it really helpful, that parts be –

But actually, find it very helpful that actually talk to him and explain that some of it – by the way, he was providing his lesson – then that _____ a lot of students. So providing more hands-on can force the students to do more of the work at that point and can understand better for them here, you know, for _____ who changed some of his, some of his teachings to reflect partial study, you know, and dictation, but more of a hands-on and fortunately move I actually research instead of telling me, "Okay, this is, this is a virus."

Researcher: Mm-hmm.

Participant: And explain everything to you. Just give you the basics, give you a notion of where to find it, and force it to – so marinate it to research it, and actually do project regarding _____ helping you research, helping you, uh, communicate, you know, reach out to your neighbor.

Researcher: Now, in terms of the, the college itself, the institution, U Cinco campus, the administration, and the services that are available, uh, how would you characterize the campus by that? I'm sure you're just walking around the campus. [*Coughing*]

You know, it's not a real big one, you know – but if you were walking around the campus and say you were looking for something that you were not familiar with. You were looking for a particular building or office, and things like that, what's your sense about being on campus, or you know – and if you would stop and speak to someone or ask them a question. Not necessarily an employee of the university, but it could be just in general.

- Participant:* Hmm, the majority of the people are actually pretty friendly and helped and kind of show you or explain to you, tell you where things are. And that's amaze – it's pretty raw, the signs on buildings and on inside of them, or to show you how to get where.
- Researcher:* Okay.
- Participant:* They have pretty good maps that explain the whole thing.
- Researcher:* Now, does, um – okay, no, I think we're okay. Now, I want to read a statement to you and I would like you to tell me to what extent do you agree or you disagree. And if you'd like elaborate, that would be even better.
- Okay, so one thing – to what extent do you – would you agree or disagree about the following statement about your institution? And I want you elaborate and share experiences or examples: "This campus or institution makes me feel welcomed and important." To what extent do you agree or disagree?
- Participant:* Well, I actually agree.
- Researcher:* Okay.
- Participant:* And that's part of a job. But if you – the realness you get, and most of the trainers contract you to make sure that everything's okay, you know, _____. You can't make your work going out, and the instructors will also try and contract you to see – which is usually pretty rare, because in this environment, you're paying for school, and you don't go, it's your loss. So that shows a commitment and, uh, interest in faculty at _____. Just, just from the time of completion _____. I was certain.
- Researcher:* Okay. This campus is characterized as a, uh, predominantly Hispanic serving institution because of the ethnic makeup is, of course, predominantly Hispanic like, you know, Chicano in population, uh, because of our geographical location. Now because there is a narrowly defined, uh, cultural diversity here – that is we're limited to basic need – the Hispanic culture and all that it brings with it, uh, do you sense a lack of ethnic and/or racial diversity, uh, diminishes your opportunity to _____ versus if you had, you know, these instructors and/or students from other regions of the country, or even foreign exchange students that were not necessarily Hispanic. They could be from Africa, the Middle East or –
- Participant:* No. And being that this is a two-year college, you've done your basic – it's to prepare you for a higher education for real life. I believe that to be – to have an effect on more of a university, uh, more of a – like in your third year of your

junior or your senior year where you take these higher education courses. But I don't think – I don't believe it to be a disadvantage at this point.

Researcher: All right. Now as a predictor of your future success, what factors or issues and events might influence your persistence at this college? So, you know, we mentioned some things here and there, you kind of would look at it and say that, "Oh, this is the top three, top five events or issues or factors or anything that would keep you, or prevent you, from continuing to, to your completion of your goal in getting your degree that you wanted."

Participant: Is it more with a financial, uh, uh, a failure to get financial aid or some support to pay part of –

Researcher: Okay.

Participant: – of, uh, of school. I would think it would be, since I work a full schedule and I work during the day, that they look at the classes that I would be able to take.

Researcher: Okay.

Participant: That would be to have a major – have a major, uh, factor. And another factor would be if since I was taking a couple classes here, it's going to take me several more years to finish to be trying to _____ your classes I've already taken have no value.

Researcher: Anything else here?

Participant: Well, another thing that would be the major.

Researcher: Now in terms of these, these look both at personal and your academic life, right, in terms of the institution, is there anything that you feel that you believe that would be helpful to you to kind of almost like an insurance policy [Coughing] of continuing at the institution? For example, uh, access to certain services, service in terms of support, uh, change in, uh, uh, structure that would make it easier for you to access support services and, you know, make it even more attractive for you to continue.

Participant: Yes. So is that more or online accessibility. Maybe some type of a online tutoring or interaction that, you know, having the support team that you can contact if you're working on studies, you know, let's say, 8:00 to midnight, more or less, you're working, because the majority of the non-traditional students is when they do their work. You know, after they get home, they take it to school, even to bed, and things are ready.

I usually won't sit down till 9:00, 10:00 to start working on a paper. If you have a question, you can't answer – or you can't ask anybody. And whenever you

email your instructor, you're gonna, you're gonna get an answer in the morning, but you won't have time because you're at work. You're _____. The accessibility to have resources to, to be able to have someone to help you or tutoring, or instructors and, you know, in the field, they're available for later hours for daily help.

Um, and yes, that, that basically we have more online class and then more on the weekends as well on a Saturday and Sunday, because you're, uh – for someone that's married, has kids, and works, doesn't really have time during the week. On the weekends, it makes it a little bit easier, okay, your spouse or your kids don't have school and you have more time that you can dedicate to school. But there's not that many, uh, classes offered.

Researcher:

[Clearing throat] So they're limited then, the hard classes. I thought so. Now, as a, as a last question in terms of looking at how you define your sense of belonging, your sense of this is a community, you know, in terms of your institution or college, um, I'd like you to think now. Uh, we know the semester has ended and you're, you're, you know, kind of in between before summer sessions begin. But what are your expectations, um, for the upcoming, uh, semester, or if you're going to take summer sessions, what kind of plans and goals do you have for to now and then to December, whether it be the summer and into the first of fall, the fall semester?

Participant:

Uh, the winter time, probably just some work for scheduling projects. This semester, I found it very hard. I took three classes, and my three-year-old – but I couldn't extend my hours at work because my family, uh, gave me little less time to dedicate to my studies and my class time. And, uh, instructors were pretty good and were able to work with me, but it just made it very hard. I think, uh, about slowing down and maybe taking class at time instead of at night.

Researcher:

Right. *[Flipping paper]* All right, let's see. Well, we're finished. Thank you again for your participation and willingness to share your experiences and thoughts about what it means to experience a sense of longing and how the perception influences your willingness to continue, to continue your educational endeavor at this institution beyond to complete, uh, your, uh, program.

Again, just a reminder – all our conversation, recorded notes, and etcetera are in fact confidential and will only be used for the purposes set forth in the consent letter you signed prior to joining this study. Okay. You indicated that you would like to be briefed once my research is completed and published; and I have contact information for you, uh, to make sure that is taken care of. Of course, you're not obligated to attend, uh, that, uh, debriefing session.

All right. If you have any questions, of course, you're always freely – feel free to contact me at, uh, my email through the college university, uh, and you have

a phone number where you can reach me in my home office as well. Uh, do you have anything you'd like to add – comments before we –

Participant: What is this study geared towards?

Researcher: Okay. This study is geared toward looking at non-traditional Hispanic students that attend two-year community colleges in smaller communities such as Eagle Pass. You probably – another Southwest Community College. The reason is, in looking at the research, we're always asked as a researcher to identify what's lacking in the current research, or gaps as they're called.

So in reading and reviewing literature of other researchers on the subject of, "How do students perceive or define their sense of belonging and persistence toward, um, graduation since from a long line of development out of – and believe it or not, studies on suicide. Why do people, uh, sometimes choose suicide is that they feel alienated, or not a sense of belonging to a community or group, or some form or function in which they're related to," but there's nothing there. They feel that they're there, but they're like invisible.

Now that starts from the 1950s. We come up through the '60s into the '70s and we've got people like, uh, Tinto and all, and they say, "I wanna use that model about suicide and I wanna look at the social and not the academic integration of, uh, students at colleges." And so that's where they start and they say, "Why is it some students stay and they continue in spite of certain things and they graduate, while other students drop out?" okay, um, at different points.

And especially, uh, later on, at, at the university level. The thing they have been done over the years – they've looked at African Americans, they've looked at Hispanics, they've looked at several of the subgroups.

Participant: They haven't seen what type of support group they have at home or in their daily lives. Because it's usually hard for me in the event – you know, events that happen that change. And depending upon what stage in your life you're at, they have a big impact.

Researcher: That's right. See, in all – basically, in all the research that has been done, has been done at major universities. And even though they have a diverse population to look at, we're talking about large universities located in large areas; and we're looking at the likelihood of traditional students. You know, the 18 to 25 I get out of high school, maybe I fart around for a year, and then mom and dad give me some money, get me a car, and then go to college.

Participant: I think that's what the problem is. They don't offer enough of free services. So a lot of people – I'm not saying it pays you, but _____ that deal with certain things or comprehend it, uh, themselves and they need to speak with

somebody. But everything costs; everything's so expensive. And I know there's free services that – you know, where you're attending school and in order you feel it's confidential and you can, you know – I think it will make a difference.

Researcher:

Well that's, that's where it starts from. I mean so as I looked, I said, "Wait a minute. There was some research done at large community colleges," like SAC, San Antonio College. Now that's a metropolitan community college and it has a relatively – even in San Antonio, it's relatively diverse, but it's big. Yet more than 70 percent of most students, especially Hispanics, start their educational – higher educational experience at two-year community colleges. More than a half are located in small communities like Eagle Pass, Maverick County, you know, it probably would be of populations of less than 6,000-7,000 student enrollment. So, uh, there wasn't much research on that.

And then it still didn't speak to non-traditional students who are tied down. You know, they've got a job, uh, they've got family. They're balancing job, family, homes; and as you said in your interview, uh, with the, with a deal of going to class. And then a structure that's still, for the most part, is traditionally set from 8:00 to 5:00 PM, the business day, when these non-traditional students are out there making their living for their family. So there's a disconnect, and the – I want to look at what it is the students that go through are non-traditional students coming to class, maybe split days and nights, working around family obligations, working around their, their, uh, job, what they're feeling and what their, their sense of belonging is.

How, how connected do they feel to the institution, the college, because part of it has to do with their willingness to continue. As things mount up, there's a point, a breaking point, and everyone's breaking point is different, and they say, "You know, to heck with it. I can't do this because I've got all this."

And the institution isn't flexible enough, or sensitive enough, to make that adjustment. And so what I wanna do is get a sense of these patterns that, you know, people like yourself and –

Participant:

The statistics or incentive made.

Researcher:

Uh, yeah, and say, "Look, here are some things." Now, you see, interesting as a man, as a married man with a family, uh, the, the – it's a little different for a woman that's single, okay, and say, with children. I, I have had more women respond to the, the research, but there's patterns that are similar both among men and women who are non-traditional, and there's a couple that are not. And one of the things that we share, um, for women is, "Well, you know, I have risen my kids, they're old enough, I can do something. I'm divorced," uh, you know, issues with, uh, child care and things like that and they're on their own.

Now you did allude to some of those same issues in terms of you and your wife – balancing work, family, and, and going to school; and yet you both have managed – I know your wife has managed to graduate with her degree already, uh, from the university, and, uh, the, the close interplay of both you and your planning, even around having five children, you're both struggling, but you seem to make a very strong commitment to support each other in this. And now it's like you're trying to do your part in your field, that you feel you can best excel. So these are some of the struggles that the institution doesn't talk about.

Participant:

Well, and back to what you were saying about, uh, one of what may keep you from going to, you know, a higher education _____. It's also there's a lack of resources. But the financial aid, your counselors who are doing the schedules, mostly that. You can do – is limited where you can go online. For everything else, you have to go in to a counselor.

But as being a full-time _____ employment with a family, you don't have to be able to get out miss work to go spend for five hours at school to wait to see a counselor, to wait to get all this paperwork done. And then 6:00, I mean when you get there at 5:00 and they can no longer see, you know, it's very limited now.

So that's what discourages many people that wanted to further their education, but they can't because they don't know where to start. And when they're free, there's nobody available to guide them.

That's it.

Researcher:

We're done. Thank you very much for your, uh, participation and all. I can assure you that your contribution is much valued.

[End of Audio]

M.105

I:

Today I'm interviewing the last of the male participants in the doctoral study that I'm conducting with Walden University. With reflection on documentation, the participant completed the demographic questionnaire for qualitative study, and it's been received. The consent form has been completed and signed, and a copy of the consent form will be provided to the participant.

We are conducting this interview at my home office at the convenience of both myself as researcher and the participant. This is Dr. Ronald E. Zawacki-Maldonado 01:00. I'll be conducting the interview today with this participant.

Okay, here we go. I'm going to be reading some statements to you briefly before I start asking you questions just to give you a few reminders and make you feel at ease. I'd like to welcome you to the study, and I thank you for participating in this interview for my doctoral research study.

As a member of all our conversations, I want to remind you that they're all confidential, including the recording that we're doing right now, and all the notes that I take are part of the confidentiality agreement, and that all the information, the data, will only be used for those purposes stated in the consent letter that you signed prior to starting this interview. Do you have any questions?

P: No.

I: Okay. Okay, let me start with—we're going to look at, if you will, a ice-breaking question, and then we'll progress into the different areas of discussion. All these questions are intended to be open-ended; that is, you can just talk, and if it so happens that as you're discussing things and offering comments or responses, they overlap another guide question that I'm using--the questions are simply here to help guide the conversation we have, the interview, so that we try to get a real good understanding of your sense of belonging, how you define it, how it influences the decisions and the choices you make as a nontraditional student.

Let's see. In general, as a nontraditional Hispanic college student attending this institution, how would you characterize your experiences and perceptions as influencing your desire to continue in your endeavor to complete a degree?

P: Okay. This is based on the institution?

I: Well, in terms of how do you feel towards the institution, or what are those experiences that you've had that you bring to the institution, and how well do they fit your needs for what you're trying to accomplish?

P: Well, I know it's been a while since I've been back to, say, like a school attendance and experiments in the academics on a daily basis. It was a transition, but as far as the institution, I believe it has everything that I need to start off and start moving towards my goal, and I do appreciate the stepping stone there.

I: Mm-hmm. In terms of your sense of welcomeness and feeling that you're part of that community as a nontraditional student, what's your sense towards kind of identifying—or how well do you identify with the institution?

P: That's one of the difficult parts to—I don't feel as part as the school as maybe somebody that's starting right after high school. I do feel somewhat of an outsider, but I do feel welcomed when it comes to class time, to come to my courses. In that sense, I do, but when it comes to, say, events or particular festivals for school and such, I don't really feel like I should participate. I think I'm there for the education part, the academic part of it, so it's kind of like show up to class, do your work, learn, and move on. That kind—that feel.

I: Alright. Thank you. Now, we want to look at family and home background. Okay. We'll step back towards growing up, if you want, a little bit, in terms of what kind of ideas floated in your home, maybe through high school, about choosing what you have actually done today—that is, now you're enrolled; you're attending college. We want to look back a little bit through your history and look at some of the high points of how your family background, including those experiences that you've had growing up, have influenced your sense of belongingness and your desire to pursue higher education.

P: Okay. When you start growing up and you're in a family home where priority is just family, the importance there is family family family, and the struggles that family partakes kind of become you, and you get involved in that more than you do in school, just, I think, as the background—the Hispanic background, but it has to do with breaking a mold, I guess.

My mom got to—she did, I think, a year, she said—about a year of college after her education, or I guess high school background, cuz she studied in Mexico. The mentality there that she said she didn't continue was because she wanted to work and priority for the family.

I look back at my dad. My dad—I believe he finished high school, and same thing—he started working, and he said without education—as far as higher education, he didn't, and he hasn't gone back. My mom, on the other hand—she's gone back for certain—like, her GED. Since she studied in Mexico, she didn't have a high school diploma over here, so she had to go back and get her GED and stuff like that. She was always interested in education, but her priority was still work.

As far as me, I think that's where I've had to break that mold, and it's difficult, I think, because I started real young, too, in a marriage. My sense of how I see myself is: you're the head of the house as a married man, and after a family, it becomes a lot more difficult to go to school. After high school, my thinking was I wasn't ready for higher education. My thinking was: I need to go and find work.

Growing up, though, one of the things that was one of my passions was the GI Joe era and all that stuff, so the military for me was always a good option to start working, mostly for the adventure, and so I did it. I joined the military, thinking that I can do school at a later time, and, of course, they always have that—that's sort of how they pull you in, as well. They always offer you the opportunity to go to school.

It stayed in the back of my head, but once you're in there, it changes. Once you're in there, you're absorbed by the adventure, the travel, the guns—you know, just being active. You have other people from all over the country coming together, and you become friends, and the camaraderie. You meet people and stuff. I never reached that part where education was a priority. Everybody joining has, I think, that has that same idea. A lot of people that joined actually already had education—had degrees and stuff. I think everybody's in the same boat there with adventure.

I: Okay.

P: Then I continued to—right after my career in the military, I still kept thinking about work, looking for work, for career. I was already in a career mindset.

I: Mm-hmm. Let me ask you a couple of things since you're talking about your military career. How long did you serve in the military? Okay?

P: Active, I did three years and four months—no, six months, six months.

I: What is it that you—what was your—I believe they still call it MOS, or your specialty?

P: Yeah, my job there in the military was infantry. In the military it's known as 11 Bravo. I was in 82nd Airborne Division. I did jump out of airplanes. I was light infantry parachute unit.

I: Clearly combat.

P: Yes. *[Laughter]*

I: Okay. Where did you serve?

P: I was in Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

I: And your overseas service in combat?

P: I did two tours in combat. My first one started off in Afghanistan. I was there for nine months. My second tour was in Iraq, and I was there for six months.

- I:* Okay. Let's see. Now, when did you first go to the military? How old were you?
- P:* I was still in high school when I actually applied. I knew I was gonna graduate soon, so I went and contacted the recruiter, and I enrolled in this program called a delayed program. They take you in while you're 17, and then as soon as you finish school, you can take off, having your parents' signature. That's what I did—signed up when I was 17.
- I:* Now, at that time, were you already married, or did you have a significant other, spouse, children?
- P:* I did. I had children. Well, I had one. I had a child.
- I:* Okay.
- P:* A boy.
- I:* Okay. How old was he at that time, when you left?
- P:* At that time he was—I believe he was two, going on three.
- I:* Alright. Now *[inaudible 16:02]*. That's okay. That's alright. We've got—the questions are in order. It's just my notes are gonna be a little off. S, P, Q, 2. Alright. We're gonna move over to now talking—we did speak already a little bit about your parents' experiences with regard to education, and so I'm just gonna make a note, cuz that was in the next thing I wanted us to talk about—was about your parents' education.
- In terms of career, work, profession, what is it—as a reflection of their levels of educational attainment, what is it that they do for work or have done for work? How would you describe their work history: as a laborer, skilled craftsperson, unskilled laborer, domestic homemaker, being just staying at home like mom or something? How would you characterize overall, just generally? Not, okay, here. Just more or less. If you want to give an example or two, that's fine, too, but you don't have to.
- P:* I believe it's more in the laborer side. My dad always—he worked in the police department, but he wasn't a police officer or clerk. He used to work in the maintenance.
- I:* Okay.

- P:* He was always into labor. My mother—she was a domestic—you know, housewife—and she also did labor, working in the cleaning—like housekeeping and stuff like that.
- I:* Okay. Now, how do you think that—when you look back at that experience, how do you think those experiences give you, first of all, a sense of family, the importance of family in relationship to decisions and choices that you make, particularly as it comes to education and pursuing a higher education, in looking back at your parents in terms of their efforts, their struggles, and such.
- P:* Growing up, I remember my mom always—or hearing my mom always talk about issues, struggles, that they would have—you know, financially and such. That's why she went into work, but I think, like I said before, their priority there was more family-oriented, so they always—no matter what they did or how we were as a family, like financially or where we were living at, they always had that where their motivation was to move forward, as far as whatever means necessary. By that, I mean like any type of job that they had to do. To them, it was important to keep us happy, keep us together, and it was important for them for us to go to school. My mom always instilled the importance of school while growing up, throughout elementary, middle school, and high school. She did push us to do and try our best, but I feel it wasn't—education wasn't the most important thing there at home. You know?
- I:* Mm-hmm.
- P:* I dunno. Maybe it's a combination of their struggles while trying to keep and maintain home for us and things that we need, and a combination of their education level, whether they had to—maybe if they would've had more education or degrees, maybe they would've influenced us a little more in that sense, but since they were always about family and working, they always asked, "What are you gonna do when you get out?" or "Where you gonna work once you get old enough?"
- It's funny, too, because getting pushed to and asked, "Where you gonna work? How you gonna get money? How you gonna support anybody?" I always working real young, too. I remember working in a cardboard box company where they would make cardboard boxes and ship 'em out to farms. I started working there since I was 11.
- I:* Now, that was here in the States or in Mexico?
- P:* Here in the States? We lived in the States.
- I:* Okay.
- P:* It was actually in Florida when I did that.

- I:* Oh. Okay. Now, thinking about these things, about these ideals that your parents floated and their effort to foster family first and to make sure that the children—you as a child—had a home, were secure, and you had the things that you needed, as best as they could provide you. How do those issues, ideas, values, beliefs—how do they unfold in your own family now?
- P:* Well, they do. I think you can see it in—or at least I—I know I do some of the things where I can see my parents doing as far as valuing the family and putting yourself out there for them and doing anything for them. You try to—I guess you try to do all you can do. You try to provide as much things as you can for your family so that they can get out and have the things that you didn't have and experience the things that you didn't experience, hopefully, instilling those ideas where education is priority versus going to work directly.
- I:* Do you see any sense of thinking about the unity and how this whole series of priorities in terms of the family and the life that you've been talking about—do you see—two things: one, do you see breaking that chain or that cycle from your parents when they were young, to them when they were parents of you, you as a young fellow or young man, young boy, growing up with these ideals? Now, of course, you have experienced and lived that by going to work at 11 and what have you. Now, looking at your own children, where does that fit in in terms of defining your sense of belongingness and unity, and how that transfers over to what you're trying to do?
- P:* I definitely believe that I'm the key to their success. Like I said before, I do see a lot of things that were in the parents and me but, I try to, like you said, break that chain. Like I said, I know I'm the key to where they have to do the things differently, one, and it's a little difficult not to be how you were raised because that's what you know. Just the morals change, but the values change, but at the same time, you want to keep the same values and the same ethics going through what you know, what you went through growing up. It's a little difficult balancing those ideas.
- I:* Okay. Now, in terms of balancing those ideas, okay, into action, I'd like you to start thinking now—we're gonna move toward the sense of belonging, of community, of family, balancing that with work. I know from your information and all that, you're a Border Patrol agent and that in itself can be very demanding in terms of switching of schedules, hours that you work, and how that can impede the sense of quality time with family, time for study, time for rest, etcetera.
- In balancing these ideas into action, I'd like to talk about how that influences or defines the kinds of decisions you make about pursuing your education, the amount of effort, time dedicated or committed to pursuing your education, and the likeliness or the willingness of that commitment. How strong is that in

terms of saying, "I am going to complete this educational endeavor, blah blah, these are my goals. more or less within this timeframe," etcetera, and what you need in terms of the institution support? That would be your instructors, working interactively with peers, from your home itself, because when you do walk into the classroom—like anywhere else, when you walk into work—we don't leave everything who we are back there at home.

P: Mm-hmm.

I: It's kind of a mix of looking how the whole picture starts unfolding. We're gonna talk about social and academic integration and what we call institutional climate. Okay. Are you familiar with those ideas?

P: Institutional climate? I'm assuming—

I: It could be how it is at work, the kind of relationships you explore or have or experiences you have at the worksite and in your job. In this case, it would be the institution of the college—

P: Mm-hmm.

I: —okay?— and your interaction with the faculty, the services that are there, support services, your peers. The academic and social integration are two broad aspects of what we call non-psychological factors—GPA, credits, credits earned, financial aid, scholarships, how you pay for your school, schedules. Then the other part is the interaction you have with your peers and/or instructors in and outside of the classroom.

P: Mm-hmm.

P: Okay. With that in mind, let's start with thinking about relationships; how you perceive a sense of your community; how you define that about belonging, fitting in, feeling comfortable, if you will, even, in terms of your college relationship experience. What have been your experiences interacting with fellow students in the campus going to college? How would you define the relationships you have in terms of your peers?

P: I really haven't built up much in the institution. I met some people in classes and, of course, you have from the straight-out-of-high-school peers and, of course, since I attend most of the night classes, I meet a lot of the older crowd.

I: Okay.

P: You tell the different profiles. You can tell who's there to really actually do the work and learn somethin', and who's there just to do what they have to do to get what they want. I fit in a little bit more with the older people, just cuz we

relate to the same goals. Most of the people who have jobs, like I do, also might have families, have children, and they know that failure is not even an option. You have to go, and you have to do your best, and there's no excuses. Everybody wants to come out successful, and I can relate to them more.

I: In terms of interacting, other than perhaps the perfunctory things—you know, you're walking down a hallway, you might see someone you know, and "Hey, man, how's it goin'?" as you're going to a class or leaving or going to the parking lot—what kind of interaction, in terms of dialogue, conversation, participating together in some activities, how would you—first of all, are those important things to you in defining the sense of belonging to a group or the community of learners, and do you have those opportunities to experience such things?

P: Yeah. To me, it was important to meet the type of people that wanted to advance and learn—people who wanted to keep their GPAs up, and they concern themselves with that—but to me it was important to meet those people and establish a good relationship. It was always academic relationship, and I rarely had a conversation that led to—other than, "Where do you work?" and such, and family. We'd compare and relate as far as family and work and such, but it was mostly always academic conversations.

I: Okay. In terms of class interaction, working on a project or study group or having to go to the library and—for a better word—hook up to study for an exam, how about those kinds of experiences?

P: Whatever I didn't get out of the classroom, I always tried to consider a tutor, so I would try to look for institutional tutoring.

I: Okay.

P: I rarely got together with a group of people from class to study. I really can't recall.

I: Okay. You haven't had opportunity to have to work on a project as a team that might take you outside of class as well. "Okay, we gotta meet over at the library," or "Hey, I'll get online with you to—

P: I did have a project in my psychology class that involved a group effort, and we had to reenact certain—I guess it was like—we were trying to do certain types of therapy. That's what it was. We had to demonstrate therapy and a little research on it and stuff like that, so I would get together with them. We'd get together at the library. We used the school library. We also used somebody's home as well.

I: Okay. Now, I think you mentioned this earlier on—about student activity and organizations, clubs, fraternities, festivals, kind of the social component of interacting with students, faculty, outside of the academic setting for relaxation, pleasure, or career-oriented organizations, clubs, leadership roles at the college.

P: I had a fraternity. They all called me Daddy.

[Laughter]

P: It was my kids.

[Laughter]

I: My kids.

[Laughter]

P: No, I was never involved in college with a fraternity or anything like that or clubs. They seemed interesting, but I was busy with work and home and too tired if I have to go. When you have a home, everybody's got needs, and everybody wants wants, and so I didn't see myself ever attending one of those.

I: Okay. Alright. Let's see. Alright. Now we'll talk very quickly about academic aspects and what's important to you in terms of your relationship with the institution, such as instructors, support services. You mentioned a little bit about a institutional tutor when you need help, so we'll talk a little bit about that, about grades, GPA, courses that you've taken, how they help you identify or not identify, or how they help you move toward your goal, how they contribute to your sense of feeling successful and being motivated to want to continue, and like that. Alright?

P: Okay.

I: Alright, so what are your experiences with accessing the college's student support services at the institution?

P: It was easy, accessible, very helpful, also very knowledgeable, usually with other students that already had—who were, I guess, advanced in their degree, and they would—

I: You're speaking of—I'm sorry.

P: The tutors?

- I:* The tutors. Okay. Okay, and that's part of the support services they have available?
- P:* Mm-hmm. Computers, library. I can count on probably my hand how many times I used the computers there, cuz you gotta make it back home, and you gotta use their computers at home, either your laptop or your desktop, and it's more convenient cuz you're already home.
- I:* Mm-hmm. Okay. How about in terms of—well, you mentioned the library already. Access to online—you know, communicating with instructors, communicating with administration in terms of registration, in terms of needs that you may have, financial aid or scholarships, anything in that nature—how do those contribute to your wanting or persisting in keeping enrolled, or what level of importance do they play?
- P:* Well, financially I think is one of the greatest roles. My VA benefits, actually, which fully funds my education. I think without it, it would have been a lot more difficult for me to actually consider going back to school. Thank God that I served and I got my benefits through the VA, and the State of Texas actually funds 100 percent tuition, so that helps out a lot, financially at home. That's I guess one of the major reasons why I went back to school and continue going to school.
- I:* Okay. Alright. Now let's briefly talk about your interaction with your instructors in and/or outside of class. That could be in terms of addressing within class—you know, answering questions about concerns or issues—how accessible are they to you if you need to talk to them about whatever issue might arise.
- Sometimes having a full-time job and family—I've seen that sometimes students don't make it to class, and they will say it's not that they don't want to. There're so many things they get caught up with. Sometimes their employer changes their work schedule, and the employer is insensitive to their schedule at the college.
- Balancing work and family schedules, obligations, in terms of the time in relationship to class, going to class, and the obligation that you undertake when you decide to go to college. You talked a little bit about that relationship between you, the instructors, and the administration.
- P:* Mm-hmm.
- I:* In terms of supporting—
- P:* Right. My job is shift work, so I have three shifts where we work, and we rotate every month. Say you start off days, you'll stay on days for one month, then go to nights the following, and then you go to the middle shift the third month.

That played a good role in my education. I tried explaining to the professors. I'd keep in touch, keep 'em notified where I was at as far as work, and of course the same thing at work. I would try to communicate with them and request that I needed to be in school.

Of course, online coursing was always an option, but I just don't like the communication back and forth. I don't find myself well connected in a learning environment when online coursing.

At school here, professors worked with me just fine when I had to either take off early or I arrived a few minutes late because of the shift work that I came out of. When I had to miss, I always asked for the work in advance, and they worked with me, so that was a benefit. That was always a plus.

I: Alright. Would you say that that relationship in terms of your effort, your endeavor to continue to earn your degree and the instructors that you have encountered thus far are supportive?

P: Yes. Very supportive.

I: Now, as an institution overall, accessing various services, do you see the administration and the various services as being supportive, flexible enough that you can access 'em within a reasonable time when you need 'em?

P: They were accessible. They were flexible. Of course, everybody has different types of work, and so they're not gonna be flexible to every single body—you know, work environment or their schedule—but they supported the same idea. They knew that a lot of their students had full-time jobs and families, so I believe the school worked with students who wanted to go back and further their education.

I: Alright. Now, in terms of the instructors' commitment to helping you be successful, not just in the courses and their class that you're enrolled in but overall in helping you be inspired or motivated to continue your education to the point of completing your program and earning your degree, how would you characterize or how would you define that commitment? As positive, negative, neutral, etcetera, not more than expected?

What is it that you need from them to show you that they are committed? How important is that to you about being committed to helping you succeed, not only in their class, but reaching that goal of earning your degree?

P: Of course, instructors' involvement and their dedication is always very important. You meet a lot of instructors that are committed to teaching you values and teaching you their course curriculum and instilling the importance of not just passing but retaining information. I valued instructors. I valued

instructors like that. They helped you out a lot. They knew how important it was for you to continue your education and to keep you motivated.

I: Okay. Now let's see. Institutional climate. This is the overall institution. Some of these things you've commented on already, but, again, you can elaborate on any of it if you'd like. How would you characterize the campus environment in terms of being friendly, receptive, welcoming, kind of cliquish?

If you were to walk onto the campus at whatever particular time of day, and you make your way about—and I know it's not a large campus, but the main campus they have in Eagle Pass—and you were walking around, and you don't have any paraphernalia on that suggests that you might be a student enrolled at that institution, how would you perceive the sense of welcomeness/openness of people/faculty that you might encounter, just walking around the mall of the campus or walking through an administrative building, and encounter someone?

P: Most people I encountered, which was in the front office, other instructors, say, like counselors, everybody always acted friendly. I never had a negative vibe from anybody. Like I said, I really didn't interact with a lot of people, but the people that I did see in the halls and such were always friendly.

I: Okay. In terms of your sense of safety and welfare while you're on the campus?

P: Um.

I: *[Laughter]* I have to laugh a little—I mean—

P: I carry my gun with me.

[Laughter]

I: Yeah, exactly. You know. You're carrying a weapon, but in general, I just kinda—if you didn't have—

P: I feel safe!

[Laughter]

I: If you didn't have the weapon, or let's say, maybe—I don't know if you go to class sometime wearing your uniform—your Border Patrol agent uniform—because of sometimes a tight schedule that you might have—cuz there's no real security there.

- P:* Right, right. There's no security there. You don't see—like, you know, universities have their own cops and stuff like that. The school does with what it has, and you don't see security, but then again, I don't feel—well, you never know, but I don't feel like there would be any really big threats there in that school.
- I:* Okay.
- I:* I can say I felt safe.
- I:* Let's see. Now. Alright. Here we go. I'm gonna read a statement to you. I want you to think about it and, of course, you can elaborate on it to whatever extent you feel comfortable. If you want me to repeat it or explain it a little bit or provide an example to help you focus on it, just let me know.
- P:* Okay.
- I:* To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statement about your institution. I want you to elaborate and share your experiences or examples to help kind of illuminate your answer: This campus or institution makes me feel welcomed and important.
- P:* Just answer like, "It does," or, like, "Yes," or you want me to elaborate how?
- I:* You can answer "yes," "no," "I'm not sure," but I can see through your pattern here, you sort of answered, but perhaps you could approach it now for "yes" or "no," to what degree—strongly agree, disagree, strongly disagree—"I'm neutral," "It doesn't matter to me." If you want to characterize it in a phrase like that and then maybe something that you haven't mentioned, that maybe you just thought about as you've been going through the interview here that you'd like to throw in there about, again, your sense of your person and how you would define—how does this bring you to help you define your sense of belonging or community?
- P:* One of the things I did like from a lot of the faculty and instructors is they want to see people grow and be successful in their academics. I did see a lot where counselors and instructors both see the necessity, the importance, for this community to expand and grow. Everybody comes from different places and has seen different things, and from their experiences, I'm sure they wanted to motivate, and they wanted to keep—I guess cuz it's Hispanics, larger community Hispanic, they wanted to see them be successful.
- I:* So you're saying—you didn't see what now?—a lot of the counselors—
- P:* Oh, that's one of the things I did see.

I: Oh, I'm sorry. You did see.

P: Yes.

I: Okay.

P: I noticed, and I did appreciate that. It made me feel welcomed and their same motivation and commitment—it motivated me, too.

I: Alright. If you wanted to capsule it in a word or a phrase, to what extent on a scale of one to five, would you agree with the statement, one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree, how would you rate it?

P: The school?

I: Yeah. That statement about feeling welcomed and important to the institution?

P: Strongly agree.

I: Okay. Now. Let's see. We only have two more. Okay. The campus is best characterized—I guess you sort of touched on it already—as a predominantly Hispanic-serving institution because of the ethnic makeup of a predominantly Hispanic or Latino/Chicano population that also reflects the local community and our region of the state.

The question here, as I'd like you to think about it, having noted that you obviously have had some diverse experiences. You have been in the military, where certainly the population represented in that institution is very diverse and from all walks of life in terms of an American society—people from all geographical regions of our country.

Then, of course, having overseas duty and combat duty in two different countries, and probably interacting with the local people other than in combat situations, can inform us in terms of how we see the importance of culture or the role culture plays in our sense of belongingness, defining who we are and what's important to us, as well as understanding the community and how inviting the community becomes when we have or don't have ethnic and racial diversity in terms of the university being the community.

Okay. Do you sense that this lack of ethnic and/or racial diversity diminishes your opportunity to learn or fails to contribute and enrich your educational experience?

P: Yes and no. It might interfere because diversity is good. Going to a bigger school is also good. You learn different things, and you experience different

ideas. If, say, somebody goes from Eagle Pass and studies in one of the big universities and learns and experiences their ways and ideas and thoughts, and then comes back here and teaches 'em in a small community with Hispanics, that in itself is beneficial, versus growing up here, learning just what you pick up here, and then say you would become an instructor and teach more of the community here, then you wouldn't be able to offer them as much diversity as you would if you got to experience.

I: Mm-hmm. Okay. Basically, you would say that, for example, in terms of instructors, that if their experiences, while they are competent and knowledgeable of their craft in terms of instruction, that perhaps a lack of diversity not only among or within the faculty makeup, but their individual experience, regardless of their ethnic or racial makeup, because they have remained within the region here, would diminish your likelihood of having more enrichment in your education.

P: Mm-hmm. Right.

P: How about the population in terms of the students? Obviously, we're gonna draw from the local community for your faculty, but how about in terms—how about diversity ethnically and culturally within the student body?

As a Border Patrol agent, I know, knowing our community, we have—I believe there are some African American agents that are stationed here. We have some Anglo or white agents stationed here. Of course, there's a large number of Hispanic agents stationed here. I don't know of any Native people that are Border Patrol agents that are stationed here and/or people of Asian descent that are also Border Patrol agents that are stationed here.

Taking that idea and looking at the student body of the institution, do you feel the same about the diminished diversity among student population would also impinge or influence the lack of enrichment in interacting as a student?

P: No, as a student, I don't believe so, especially if they grew up here. They're Anglo or they're African American. You'll tend to grow part of the community and sort of, I guess, become Hispanic cuz you'll become somewhat fluent. You'll become familiar with the culture, with foods and stuff, but—I dunno, just maybe me, I'm thinking it is, but I think anybody else, even Anglo or African American, would probably go study somewhere else instead of starting here, but that's just me. I mean, I dunno exactly, but I'm sure that they'd come up with other values and ideas in their family units and homes and stuff, and perhaps they get persuaded to go elsewhere because they have experienced other things.

I: Okay. Let me ask you this part—kind of extend this idea a little bit—because of thinking of some things here as you're telling me these things. Would you say

in terms of defining your sense of community and belonging that it is necessary, that it gives you a stronger sense of community, a stronger sense of belonging in terms of your relationship with the overall institution, faculty, administration, student body, your needs as a nontraditional college student—to what extent would you say diversity overall makes a difference in your perception of your sense of belonging and being part of the institution? I mean, how necessary is it?

P: To me, even when I was in the military, diversity brings a sense of competition. It brings different things up on the table and makes you think and get motivated in different ways, versus when you're interacting with other Hispanics, you kinda have the same ideas, same values, and it doesn't really motivate you as much. I would see diversity in schools possibly motivating you a bit more.

I: Alright. Would you encourage the administration to draft people from outside the regional area to attend the college that were from diverse backgrounds? For example, perhaps, even though San Antonio has a large metropolitan community college system called SAC—San Antonio College—I think, as does Laredo—you think there'd be a way, and would you encourage the administration to bring in students or attract students to come and attend classes here and reside here for a semester, a year, academic year, to create a more diverse student body?

P: Definitely. I would like to see that, and I'm sure it would start moving things differently as far as the student body, but will the school have that flexibility or be possible to offer school that other people need, or classes, or courses? That would probably be one of the killing factors for anybody wanting to come down. You know?

I: Now, we've got two more items. Okay? I want you to think of all the things we've discussed in this interview and anything that you might want to add that we haven't covered or you're saying, "Hang on. I want to share this with you." Experiences, thoughts, ideas, what have you.

When thinking about your future success, predicting your future success, kind of lay out a plan and say, "Okay, I know where I want to go. Here's my plan," and in order to get there, there are certain things, obviously, that have to happen or continue to happen. I believe you mentioned one of 'em had to do with your VA benefits. What are the factors and the issues, the events, relationships, that you see as important to you that will influence, encourage, your continuation in school, if not at this institution, another one by transferring to one, until you complete your degree? It could be like a shopping list if you want.

- P:* My kids, for one. I want 'em to see the importance of an education, and if I can be that example, I think they would be able to follow in the same footsteps. Work would be another one for career growth—open up more opportunities for myself and, in doing that, my family would benefit from that. I guess just do it for me. You know?
- I:* Now, in terms of work obligation and family, most assuredly your work schedule would have a lot to do with your ability to continue.
- P:* Mm-hmm.
- I:* Do you see, between the flexibility of the college, in terms of the courses, the times that they're offered, in relationship with instructors, and, let's say, your work situation and supervisors, what have you—is there enough flexibility between one and/or the other that work obligations, though obviously necessary—I mean, you have a family and all, as you said, to support—
- P:* Mm-hmm.
- I:* - but as a consideration or a factor that could influence or impede, in other words, or help advance your continued enrollment—do you think there's enough—do you perceive enough support between the institution of your workplace and the educational institution that—
- P:* It's a combination of the school and work and at home—to be able to manage attending school, finishing it, and being a family man, and then being good at work or being able to complete your assignments at work. So far, it's been working out. It does not always work out as scheduled or as planned, and it's not guaranteed because of work. Of course, work comes first and then school.
- I:* Alright. One last item. In terms of your expectations for this semester or coming semester, in terms of the academic goals or expectations, social goals related to experiences and personal goals, what are some of those? Where would you like to see yourself? Let's say this is by spring semester 2014, which would be a year from the semester ending in May.
- P:* Closer.
- I:* Closer.
- [Laughter]*
- I:* I'm assuming you mean to graduation.
- P:* Yeah, closer to graduation, but I'm gonna be transferring over to a four-year school.

I: Okay.

P: You know? Just keep on truckin'.

I: Okay.

P: If I can continue going even after a four-year degree, I would like to.

I: Oh, you want to give me some competition, huh?

[Laughter]

P: Get my doctorate. No, no.

[Laughter]

I: You should!

P: I would like to continue.

I: You should, by all means. Okay, so closer to graduation. Now, when looking at the transfer to a four-year university, do you have that in terms of how far away you are from that event or goal?

P: I wish I had that written, and I wish I could, but because of work schedule, because of work assignments, because of details within work—sometimes I get sent off, and I go to other states and work—it's not possible for me to say, "By such-and-such date, I should be completed," because it's hard to see that with work.

I: Alright. Well, we have come to the end of this interview, and I want to thank you again for your participation and your willingness to share your experiences and thoughts about what it means to experience a sense of belonging and how the perceptions influence your willingness to continue to pursue your educational endeavor at this institution and beyond to the completion of your program.

Once again, as a reminder, all of our conversations are confidential, and the information obtained in this interview will be used only for those purposes stated in the consent letter you signed prior to starting the interview. You have consented to having this interview audio recorded, the recording device has been visible throughout the interview session.

In closing, the alias case file is MP3 M105.

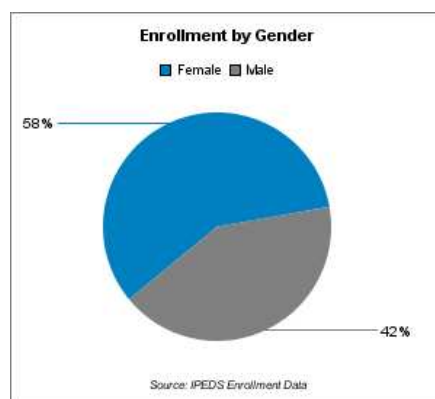
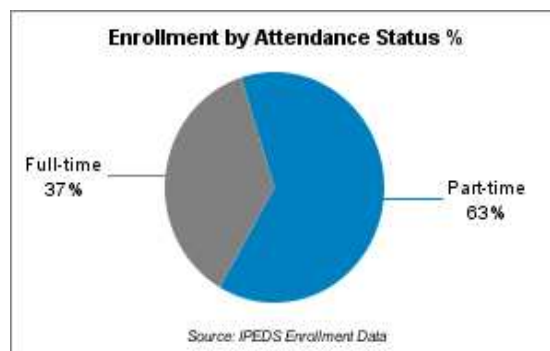
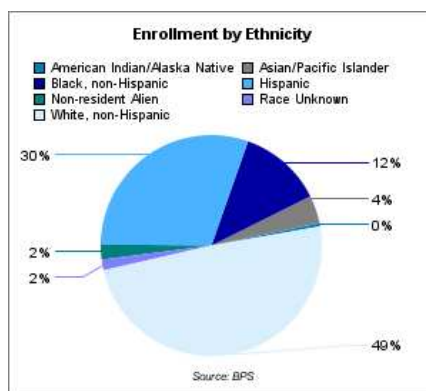
If you have questions, you have contact information that I provided you, and I'll provide you with the copy of your consent letter, and I do thank you, sir.

P:

Thank you.

[End of Audio]

Appendix I: Community College Statistics



Source: Hurtado, S., Cuellar, M., Wann, C. G., & Velasco, P. (2010).

Appendix J: Researcher's Vita

Ronald E. Zawacki-Maldonado, Born in Chicago, Illinois, attended public schools for most of his elementary and secondary education through his graduation in 1970. Upon graduation, he went to work for Continental Illinois National Bank in Chicago until his induction to the Army. Ronald served three years of active duty between 1971 and 1974. Upon his honorable discharge, he returned to his childhood home in Chicago, joined the work force, and attended a community college as a part time student; neither employment nor pursuit of higher education lasted long. Ronald was determined to make a substantial change in the direction of his life and his relationships—with family and relatives—to pursue an independent and self-directed career path and life journey. The following information depicted below serves as his vita.

EDUCATION

State University of New York, College of Buffalo
B.S., Education. 1980

Sul Ross State university, Alpine, Texas
M. Education (Reading Specialist), 1992

Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Doctor of Education, 1998

Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas
Avocation Learning (Graduate Credit): Theology (1999)

Franciscan University, Steubenville, Ohio
Avocation Learning (Graduate Credit): Theology (2000)

Texas A & M University, College Station, Texas
Post-Graduate: Educational Psychology (Gifted & Talented Certification), 2003

Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota
PhD, School of Psychology (Education Tract): 2007 – 2014 (present)

EMPLOYMENT

1970-1971	Continental Illinois national Bank Chicago, Illinois Commercial Bank Wire Transfer
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1971-1974	United States Army VII Corp, Europe DD214: Honorable Discharge Clerical and technical, data processing, and human resources
1974-1975	Sargeant and Lundy Engineers Chicago, Illinois Document storage and retrieval security regulatory compliance
1975 – 1976	Arby's Restaurants, LaGrange, Illinois Food service Management
1977-1980	Part time employment while enrolled in college
1980-1981	City of Buffalo, New York Advocacy Office for Persons with Disabilities (Caseworker)
1982-2014	Eagle Pass Independent School District Eagle Pass, Texas Public education
1987-2014	Southwest Texas Junior College Eagle Pass, Texas Adjunct faculty member
1992-1994	Sul Ross State University Eagle Pass, Texas Adjunct faculty member

PERSONAL INTERESTS & PURSUITS

I enjoy traveling as a authentic form of learning and developing an appreciation for cultural diversity; some of my earliest travels were a result of military service; I immersed myself in local custom and traditions, made friends with the residents of the communities in which I lived, and spent time engaged in dialogs that contributed to broader understanding of the cultural assets, values, and beliefs of those regions. Additional opportunities arose out of pursuing higher education over the years—starting with my enrollment at the State University of New York and through my most recent higher education experience with Walden University—where I anticipate being awarded my PhD. At the State University of New York, diversity was central to my socio-political interests; I worked with and supported campus-based groups: Veterans Association and the GLBT movement, Students Alliance for Gay Equality. Because of my desire

to engage persons of color and breakdown socio-political structures—to deepen my ethnographic perspective—I resided in neighborhoods and communities where people of color were the dominant makeup of residents. I lived, worked, and shopped in the community, and I engaged in social activities with the established residents.

Outside the arena of career, pursuing higher education, and traveling, I enjoy photography, model-building, and being a classic car collector. I spend time collecting memorabilia from Coca Cola™, M & Ms™, and the Bradford Exchange. I recently revisited hobbies from my youth—not an unusual behavior—of coin and stamp collecting. I especially enjoy a return to model railroad building and model paper crafting as sources of relaxation. Two major life experiences are unfolding starting in June 2014 that free up my time to pursue those avocations and hobbies: the completion and approval of my dissertation and my retirement from full time teaching in the public schools.

In the spirit and manner of an agent of positive social change, pursuit of my heart-felt concern for domestic animals' welfare, and contributing to the betterment of the community at-large, in January of this year, I founded a nonprofit, private foundation that works to rescue and recovery abandoned-strayed, abused-neglected, and animals in distress. The mission and goals of the foundation will be my central priority in the coming years along with a limited adjunct faculty position with the local college.