

Latinx Studies Journal

An Undergraduate Student Journal of Chicana & Latina Experience and Thought

Volume 14, Number 1, Winter 2025



“Caracara” by Jaen Muñoz

A note from the cover artist: “My motive was to represent the Latine student body and greater community through nature that inspires my work. The Crested Caracara is the main subject, highly detailed and standing steady, taking up most of the space, representing the resiliency and motivation UW Latine students have had for many years. The Crested Caracara is native to and found across Central and South America, representing the wide diversity of Latine students all while maintaining a collective community. The colorful and complex background compliments the Caracaras stance, as well providing context to the beauty of the complexities and continuously evolving identities the Latine community carries.” - Jaen Muñoz

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The *Latinx Studies Journal*, previously named *Concientización*, is an academic student journal dedicated to promoting the study of Chicanx and Latinx experience and thought. We are committed to creating alliances across boundaries of nation, race, ethnicity, gender, class, language, and sexuality. Submissions include essays, poems, and artwork related to Chicanx/e and Latinx/e peoples in the United States. The *Latinx Studies Journal* gives students the opportunity to participate in the publication process as authors and editors.

The articles for this issue were gathered and edited during 2022, 2023, and 2024 by Jessica Isabel Gomez, Rubén Medina, and Peter Haney. Carmen Ibarra brought the journal issue to publication in 2025.

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Cover Photograph: “Caracara” by Jaen Muñoz

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LATINX STUDIES JOURNAL:

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This volume of the *Latinx Studies Journal* will provide the reader with a depth and understanding of the contemporary issues within the Chican@ and Latin@ issues that range from College Readiness to Generational Storytelling within the Latine Community. These topics are also part of what it is to be Latinx not only in Wisconsin, but in the United States as well.

Our journey begins with **SECTION ONE: RESEARCH AND REFLECTION** where we hear about the trials and tribulations of what it means to be Latinx in the United States. We then move into **SECTION TWO: POETRY AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION**, this is where we learn about the beauty of storytelling through an artistic lens. This journal provides us with an exploration of a global perspective through the Latinx experience.

These two sections serve two purposes. First, to develop a perception of the world that is beyond the surface level understanding. Only through the awareness of the barriers that surround us will change truly begin. Second, every piece in this volume is meant to be seen as a piece of history in time. We are constantly evolving, and greater change is coming. Let every writing piece and artistic expression serve as proof of the passion, culture and efforts that our contributors have experienced or witnessed as their testament.

**SECTION ONE: RESEARCH AND
REFLECTION**

College Readiness

by

Adrian Jauregui

INTRODUCTION

Before coming to UW-Madison and taking Chicanes & Latines in the Higher Education system, I have always known about the idea of a “social network,” and how the most successful people in their fields did not just arrive there solely on their abilities but also because of who they knew. In high school, I felt very much like a gigantic fish in a small pond. I knew most of the staff and faculty in my high school, and I also knew that I could use any of them for my own sake or needs. It got to a point where I was able to use the elevator without a pass and without a question because the teachers knew who I was. As study body president, I would sometimes even arrive late to school and get a late excuse pass from the principal to get the tardy off my attendance record. More specifically in terms of college readiness, I understood that the teachers and staff around me in high school knew the process of how to get to college. More importantly, I knew to ask them questions about the college admissions process and used that knowledge to help get me to Wisconsin, of course, with the support of family and friends as well. The only difference is that back then I did not know this was networking as my world and network was contained within the perimeters of my hometown.

After our discussion and lesson on social networks and social networking analysis, as well as on community cultural wealth, I learned that I needed to do some demanding work to expand my new network here on campus. I also learned that I have some valuable skills and knowledge that are useful for any aspect of my life. Being first generation, I am building the foundation for my own life solo and learning as I continue my undergraduate journey, but since that first lesson in February I have made it a conscious goal to expand my networks and resources for success. As the semester is winding down, I can confidently say that I have been succeeding at expanding my social network. I have connected with many different people from various parts of my undergraduate experience. For example, I connected with Annette McDonald, the assistant dean at the School of Human Ecology at UW-Madison. By creating this connection with Annette, I am also opening up opportunities for myself because of all the people Annette has connections with, even if they are “weak ties,” a term defined by scholars Pérez and McDonough in their article, “Understanding Latina and Latino College Choice; A Social Capital and Chain Migration Analysis,” as “individuals who are connected to other individuals in our social networks,” and these individuals, “can be invaluable resources for social mobility, especially vis-à-vis sources of information.” By creating this relationship and allowing it to flourish, Annette could quite possibly change the trajectory of my life because of who she knows and what they can offer a first generation, low income Latine student who is majoring in Human Family Developmental Studies which is housed in the School of Human Ecology.

Taking this idea of social networking and how crucial it is for college Latine students like me, I wanted to incorporate that idea of networking even BEFORE college. I mentioned how I was able to get information from my teachers and counselors in high school, making them individuals in my network, but I also understood that the idea of college came to me through my mother and family. I also feel the need to acknowledge that my experience is quite different from other Latine students as my social network in high school allowed me to be exposed to college and the lifestyles that come with different schools because I did the extra step and did the outreach myself. I was also a part of organizations like club volleyball which is typically expensive, and my teammates were no exception to the rich white persona that could afford club volleyball. Being exposed to lifestyles and having experiences with people of a higher income through a sport because my parents were able to afford to pay for club volleyball are things many other Latine students are not able to experience because of their socio-economic class.

I also need to acknowledge that I was able to obtain valuable community cultural wealth and gained many distinct types of cultural and social capital from my mother. She attended a community college and obtained her associates and received a certification. My mother currently works as a businesswoman, and she never fails to tell me how she is the only Latina in meetings and events in a field where the majority is white men. I am blessed to say that my mother is currently making a great salary after 18 years in her field and I am also blessed to say that she has provided many useful skills and tricks for me because of her experiences being the only minority in the group, which is something many

other Latine students in my community lack. Taking all this into consideration, through this final project, I hoped to better understand and answer, “How do Latine high school students' social networks affect their post high school decisions?”

CONDUCTING THE STUDY

The method of inquiry that I used to conduct my research was conducting interviews. I felt that through interviewing, I would get the most authentic information since I would be face-to-face with interviewees in the same room. I think of myself as very much a people person, and I thought conducting interviews would be the best option for my research as a survey conducted electronically or via a computer screen would not give me the most honest, and accurate answers from my population. I decided to interview three different Latine high students separately and I conducted a social network analysis for all three egos. I then asked all three students questions concerning two key topics: **Racial, gender, and educational homophily** and **the social capital gained from each relationship.**

Before conducting the interviews, it is important to know some background of where these three students live. These three students attend Morton East High School in Cicero, Illinois. Cicero is a neighborhood fifteen minutes outside of Chicago and according to Data USA’s website, Cicero's population in 2020 was 89.2% Hispanic. It is important to note that these students all attend schools and are in environments where everyone looks, speaks, acts, and knows them culturally and ethnically. Knowing the demographics of my hometown of Cicero, that gave me even more interest to conduct a social network analysis as it seems to be that there is not a lot of racial and ethnic diversity in Cicero as more than

half of the population are a part of the same marginalized groups. Yet, somehow, somehow, coming from Morton East, I learned that a college education was both valuable and attainable and I was not alone since many other students experienced this as well. Furthermore, according to the Illinois Report Card website, the school which these students attend, and I am a former student of, has a 91% low-income student population and a graduation rate of 80.8%. The Illinois average graduation rate is 87.3%. How are these Latine students making their post- high- school decisions when 9/10 students are living in poverty and when there are less students graduating on average compared to other schools in the state let alone in the town next to them? Taking all of these factors into consideration, it is important to know and acknowledge that the misconception of Latines not valuing education is false, and according to the article, “Navigating the Path to College: Latino Students’ Social Networks and Access to College” published in the *Journal of Latinos and Education*, differences in amounts of resources through schools, communities and families are critical for understanding educational inequities that impede college access. In other words, we need to first understand the context of these students' lives if we want to investigate their social networks and what is available to them through their networks in their communities as well as how it plays out into their college interests/aspirations or other paths like trade school or going into the workforce after high school.

Now that we have a better sense of the community and school that these students attend, we are ready to begin looking at the research and the first interview I conducted.

Before conducting this research, I reached out to a friend named David who is still in high school back home in Cicero. I asked him to recruit two other students for this interview, students that I did not have personal ties to as I knew that interviewing people that I had firsthand connections with would give me biased replies and information. Coming from the same high school as these students, and being the former class president, I did not want the students to feel pressured to express interest in higher education because they knew that I am a college student currently. Before beginning, I began speaking about things entirely different to ease the tension between the students and myself. I wanted them to feel more comfortable and secure with me, thus I cracked a few jokes and asked questions outside of their academic life. This allowed for the students to view me and this interview as a normal conversation with a normal person instead of a final project for a student at UW-Madison. I reached out to all three students a week before our interview to accommodate times and locations and the first interview I conducted was with a high school senior named Emanuel.

Emanuel originally chose to be interviewed at 11am on a Saturday, but two days before the interview, he informed me of how he worked from 10am-10pm and that he was only available before or after his shifts. We settled on 9am on Saturday at a nearby McDonalds as he was awake before his family members on a Saturday morning. When I first arrived, I could tell he was nervous and so I began to ask him about his job and how long he has been working there. He informed me that he works as a cook at a restaurant

downtown and has been there for over a year. Shortly after, I began the interview process and here is Emanuel's social network:

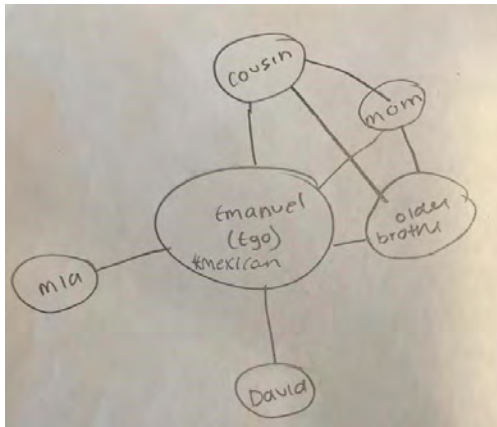


Fig. 1. Emanuel social network graph, CC-

BY-NC-ND 4.0

I first asked Emanuel if he could name four to six people with whom he has discussed important matters. I also asked him what he will be doing after high school. I also informed him that he did not need to name all six people. His first response was his mom. The second was his older brother, followed by a peer named David, another peer named Mia and finally his cousin. He checked and saw that he had five alters or people in his network, thought for a few seconds, and then settled with what he had provided. I then asked if anybody in his network knew anyone else, and unsurprisingly his family had connections with each other, but his two peers did not know each other.

My second interviewee was a girl named Ariana. She was a sweet girl and was very giggly throughout the entire interview. It was clear she was nervous, so I began to ask her

about her senior year and if she was excited for prom! After short conversations, I began the interview process again and asked Ariana if she could name four to six people with whom she has discussed important matters. I also asked her what she will be doing after high school. I also informed her that she did not need to name all six people. Ariana's first response was her mother, followed by her dad. She then named three teachers named Mr. Fischer, Mr. Smith, and Ms. Kane. Ariana did not try to find a sixth person as once she named Ms. Kane as her last alter, she said, "and I think that's it." I then asked if anyone in her network was connected to each other. Here is Ariana's social network:

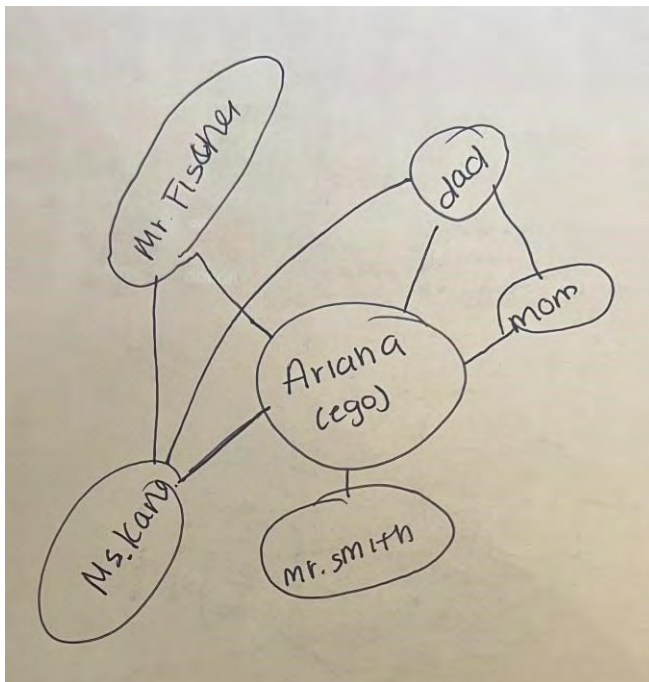


Fig. 2. Ariana social network graph, CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0

My third and last interviewee was my friend David. He is a tall, light complected boy who was excited to update me on his post-high school decisions. I did not have a

conversation with David before the interview, as he was comfortable with me and was honest. I began by asking David to name four to six people with whom he has discussed important matters. I also asked him what he will be doing after high school. I also informed him that he did not need to name all six people. David's first response was his mother, followed by his dad, then his sister. After naming his family, he named two peers named Waldo and Luis and finally, he named a teacher named Mrs. Lloyd. David was the only one out of the three students to name all six alters. I then asked David if anyone in his network knew each other and drew his connections (below). Here is David's social network:

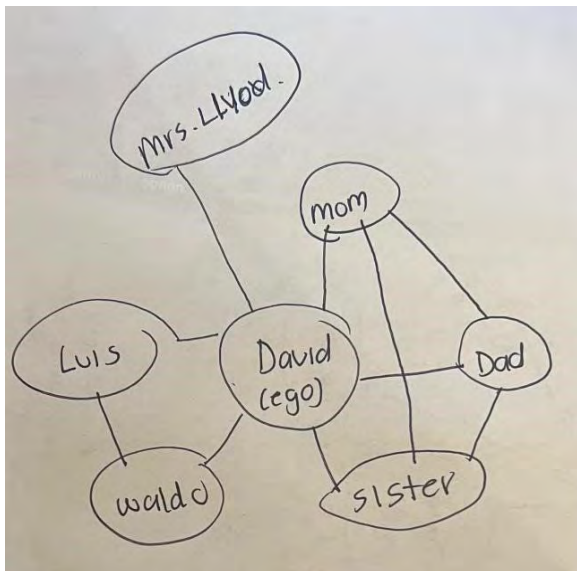


Fig. 3. David social network graph, CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0

In all three interviews, after I finished drawing out the social network analysis, I asked all three students about the racial, gender, and educational homophily within their network. I defined these terms as how similar each student was to each person in their network in terms of race, gender, and educational level. After their responses, I then asked

them about the community cultural wealth (CCW) that each of them gained from each person within their networks. In other words, I asked them to elaborate on what they gain from each relationship within their social network like career advice or emotional support which in turn shows us each student's cultural capital or familial capital. There are many different types of community cultural wealth and here are some that we discussed about in class with their definitions:

Cultural capital: embodied manners, tastes, values, preferences, & bodily markers of class.

Cultural capital: knowledge gained from family.

Navigational capital: skills gained to navigate institutions.

Social capital: networks within your community that can provide resources and support.

Resistance capital: knowledge and skills in persisting through challenges.

Through these questions, I was able to better understand how exactly each relationship is beneficial to the student and how alike each student is to those giving them advice about what to do after high school.

FINDINGS

In Emanuel's social network the racial homophily in his network was 100%. Everyone in Emanuel's network was, "Hispanic." Educationally, his mother had obtained a high school diploma, and his brother had attended Northern Illinois University for a semester before dropping out. His two peers were also high school seniors and

surprisingly, his cousin was a year younger than him, a junior in high school. Everyone in Emanuel's network seemed to only have high school as the highest level of education. In terms of gender, he had three males compared to two females in his network. In terms of community cultural wealth, he expressed how he does not get emotional support from his mom but rather reality checks about his college aspirations and dreams. His mother would remind him of how money is an issue when it comes to college, and to not go to the school that will cost the most money. Emanuel receives the most CCW from his older brother who attended college for a semester. Emanuel expressed how his brother pushed him to become a business major and even offered resources from his college like FAFSA aid, NBA programs and applications for scholarships. Emanuel receives a lot of navigational capital from his brother as well as at the same time receiving aspirational capital as he hopes to major in business the same way his brother did. According to the article, "Family Lessons and Funds of Knowledge: College-Going Paths in Mexican American Families," Mexican families in the study shared numerous examples of preexisting college knowledge. This knowledge came from first-hand experiences and extended family members' experiences. We can see this taking place with Emanuel as he also identifies as Mexican and is following a chain of migration. Emanuel acknowledged how his brother was a business major at his respective institution before dropping out and he is following in his brother's footsteps being a business major at his own respective institution. If it were not for his brother, Emanuel could have been interested in something different but since his brother

was able to give Emanuel information about being a business major, he is using his CCW to his advantage.

In Ariana's social network, the racial homophily was 40% similar as 2% alters in Ariana's social network were Latine while the other three were white. Ariana did acknowledge how most teachers at her high school are white and that there was nothing she could do because of the community that she lived in. She also expressed how she wanted more Latine teachers so she would feel comfortable asking for help. Educationally, her mother obtained her associate degree, while her dad has two certifications, one being in IT (Information Technology) and the other in Microsoft applications. We assumed for her three teachers the lowest level of education would be a bachelor's degree. In Ariana's social network, it is evident that education is valued, and everyone has some type of degree in a field they are interested in which in turn is no surprise as to why Ariana wants to obtain a degree of higher education herself. In terms of gender, there are three males compared to two females in Ariana's social network. In terms of CCW gained from each relationship she said that her mom's opinion, "mattered the most," This is not an uncommon theme that came up between all three interviews as evident by all three students naming their mothers as the first person with whom they have discussed important matters concerning life after high school. Ariana also made it clear that the counselors at her school were not doing their job and ended up using her AP calculus teacher, Ms. Kane, as a fund of knowledge when it comes to the college application process and the types of classes she should be taking. According to the scholarly article,

“Navigating the Path to College: Latino Students’ Social Networks and Access to College,” some students have difficulty getting enough information so institutional agents like teachers, play a critical role in providing first generation students with the resources they need to make informed decisions about high school classes and college planning. This is proven by Ariana’s relationship with Ms. Kane as Ms. Kane can give Ariana some navigational and social capital and acts as not only a teacher but as an academic mentor since Ariana also stated that she is basing her path on what Ms. Kane did, during her time in high school and college. Ariana also confirmed existing research in committing to a community college which is where, according to the scholarly article, “Latino Students’ Transitions to College: A Social and Intercultural Capital Perspective,” Latine students are overrepresented. Ariana also exemplifies how many Latina students in general feel the need to stay close to home which in turn has been linked to the lower rates of college applications and attendance of Latino students, particularly at selective schools according to the scholarly article, “Navigating the Path to College: Latino Students’ Social Networks and Access to College.”

In David’s social network, the racial homophily was 83% similar as 5% people in David's network were Mexican. Educationally, David's mom had only received some middle school education, and his dad received some high school level education. His sister obtained a two-year degree and works as a hospital technician. The two peers named Waldo and Luis were also high school seniors. Mrs. Lloyd, the only teacher David named, had received a master's degree. David's social network ranged from having little to

no education to having a masters. From this, David was able to gain some familial capital hence his mother always pushing him to do well in school. David also expressed how his father owns an auto shop, and with that auto shop, if needed, David could receive more opportunities. According to the scholarly article, “Latino Students' Transitions to College: A Social and Intercultural Capital Perspective,” Latine students can inherit other forms of capital that are considered "non dominant," and these “non dominant” forms of capital can also support Latino students who are navigating the K-12 system and college systems. David expressed how some summers he would work with his dad at the auto shop which in turn raised David's curiosity and interest in robotics. It was through working in the summer at the auto shop that David was able to transition, sharpen and display his skills in robotic competitions at school. David was easily the most outspoken student of the three, as he did not hesitate to inform me that his high school decision was made without the help of any school counselors or event at the College and Career center that I took advantage of when I was attending Morton East, which was very surprising to me. David expressed how since there is a difference between the racial homophily between teachers and students at Morton East, he does not feel comfortable speaking or asking for advice since most teachers will not understand or relate to some of the issues that Latine students have back at home. David expressed how he wishes there were more Hispanic mentors for higher education within his networks and even flattered me by saying I am a mentor to him. According to the scholarly article, “Funds of Knowledge: An Approach to Studying Latina(o) Students' Transition to College,” cultural capital has a significant impact on educational

aspirations, persistence, and attainments from the earliest schooling experience through high school and college and David seems to understand this as shown through his frustration with the lack of resources that were available to him.

CONCLUSION

After conducting this research and using a grounded method theory, let me remind you of my research question. How do Latine high school students' social networks affect their post high school decisions?

It is numb and ignorant of me to say that every Latine student experiences the same linear path to college as Latines are one of the most complex marginalized groups in America. After conducting this research and using scholarly sources with the information that experts have been exposing for years, there might be gaps in the research as there is limited recent research on social networks and CCW in the Latine community. I hope my research helps connect and fill in a part of the gap that lies within the context of social networks and community cultural wealth within the Latine community.

Each student displayed a unique social network that has been serving them up to this point in their lives. Now that all three students are in the college choice stage before beginning their undergraduate journey, it is important to note that these students will have to rebuild their social networks once they are attending their respective institutions. While all three students might have not known the influence of their social network on their lives and post high school decisions, after doing this analysis, they have received a better understanding of how the people and interactions with those individuals help or harm

them, and the choices they make unconsciously and consciously. Latine social networks have major influence on their post high school decisions, as all three students displayed having at least one alter that has influenced their post-high school decision, which for all three students involves receiving higher education. Latine social networks have a significant effect on their post-high school decisions, especially friends and family of students. According to the Rios-Aguilar & Deli-Amen reading, “social networks of Latina/o students are central to their lives and are resources that could be activated and expanded to facilitate successful postsecondary and career trajectories.” More specifically, it was family ties and each student's mother who had the greatest influence on my interviewee's decisions. While students like David expressed having zero help from resources at his school, other Latine students like Ariana made the most of her network and asked teachers and staff for assistance on her post-high school choices and decisions. Other Latine students like Emanuel are receiving valuable aspiration and social capital from family members who have had firsthand experiences with higher education institutions.

After conducting this research and being able to see the relationships between social networks and the success/trajectory of Latine high school students, it has made me more aware of my own social network and the importance and effects of it. Chicanes and Latines in the higher education system has exposed me to many different topics and conversations about Latine social mobility and through social networking, I hope to inform and be an alter for many more Latine students to come.

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How Can the Power of Storytelling Mitigate the Effects of Trauma Within Chicane and

Latine Communities?

by

Odilon Romeo Aranda III

The therapeutic and transformative power of storytelling allows members of Chicane and Latine communities to heal and liberate themselves from the trauma that they have endured, both collectively and individually. With the use of storytelling, these individuals can process their experiences of adversity, navigate social inequalities and envision alternative futures of prosperity and hope. Storytelling remains a tool for the use of self-empowerment, resistance, and building solidarity between members of the Chicane and Latine communities.

Trauma remains widespread among Latine communities. Trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), include abuse, neglect, and witnessing violence in the home or community, which can impair one's socioemotional development, academic achievement, and/or overall health and wellbeing (Padilla). It is stated that “nearly four out of five Latine youth suffer at least one traumatic childhood experience, like poverty, abuse, lack of proper care, support and environment they need for healthy development in formative years” (Despres). In relation to this, Latine children that have been exposed to such experiences are also at higher risk for obesity, future health issues, anxiety, aggression, withdrawal, and substance abuse (Aguilar, et al.). Additionally,

intergenerational trauma is also too common among the Latine and Chicane community and is defined as an increasing psychological and emotional wound that is transmitted from one generation to another (Cardeña et al., 2021). In a broader sense, intergenerational trauma, sometimes referred to as transgenerational trauma, notes how trauma experiences in one generation affects the health and well-being of individuals in succeeding generations. Latines are vulnerable to intergenerational trauma due to legacies of colonialism, political violence, and migration related stressors. Research has shown that there is an association between a Latina mother's ACE and her child's ACE score, based upon socioeconomic status and ethnicity, supporting the notion of intergenerational trauma (Ports, et al.). Intergenerational trauma is especially prevalent within Latine communities and remains an issue that persists today. Although research programs and conceptual frameworks for examining intergenerational trauma in refugee populations, First Nations, and other historically marginalized and oppressed people are a growing area of scholarly, public health, and social justice interest, less attention has been paid to the complexities of intergenerational trauma in Latine communities (Cardeña et al., 2021). Because of this, it is essential to provide a deeper understanding of how intergenerational trauma is prevalent within Latine communities and how its effects are translated from one generation to the next. Although *Latine* stands as an umbrella term that encapsulates diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic experiences, including those individuals who identify as Afro-Latine, Indigenous, or *mestize*, Latines are bonded by both linguistic and cultural ties, as well as their histories of colonization, dispossession, and migration

(Cardeña et al., 2021). It is true that not all Latines today have physically migrated from one country to another, however, separation from origin populations and the concomitant loss is a common shared experience among Latines (Cardeña et al., 2021).

An example of intergenerational trauma can be understood through the case study of Nancy, a 29-year-old Dominican American mother, and her daughter, Libby, illustrated by Cardeña et al. Nancy brought her daughter, Libby, to the Pediatric Emergency Room when she began having multiple, prolonged seizures. Libby had been treated with antiepileptics; however, her seizures persisted, and when continuous electroencephalogram (EEG) monitoring illustrated that Libby did not have a seizure disorder, Nancy was then reported to child protective services. During Nancy's evaluation, she revealed much of her traumatic history. Nancy recounted stories of how her parents' marriage was damaged as she was growing up, how her father had physically beaten her as a child, and how her uncle had sexually assaulted her, resulting in the birth of his two children whom she was forced to abandon at the age of 15 years old. She then tells of a time where when she had returned to the Dominican Republic at the age of 24, where her uncle had raped her again and smothered her face with a pillow in the process of doing so. This trauma had caused her multiple seizures, what she calls *ataques de nervios*, which was understood as encrypted communication of her violent traumatic experiences. Her daughter mirrored this dysregulated affect, manifesting her own emotions through dissociative, somatic expression (Cardeña et al., 2021). Nancy's trauma was reflected onto Libby through her emotional distress, which had caused her pseudo seizures. This case study illustrates the

effects of intergenerational trauma from one generation to the next, where unprocessed experiences can coincide with the health and well-being of younger generations, which remain interconnected. As demonstrated within this case study, it is especially salient that intergenerational trauma among Latine communities is understood to strive for resilience and healing.

Although trauma can set the precedence for somatic and psychological conditions and symptoms, it is important to note that trauma can be processed through the restorative work of storytelling within Latine communities. Storytelling within the Latine community serves as a tool to connect Latine families through their collective experiences of trauma, that emphasizes the notion of processing trauma. As said by Ramona Beltrán in an interview, an Assistant Professor of the University of Denver, "...storytelling is traditionally seen as a way we learn about living in relationship to ourselves, the planet, to each other. We write stories with the way we live our lives." Beltrán continues by saying that storytelling is theory. It is method. It is intervention. And it is art. With this said, Ramona Beltrán denotes the importance of its numerous facets that makes storytelling a medicine that can help us heal. Through the research conducted by Ramona Beltrán, they have identified several mechanisms that can turn storytelling into healing. "One is finding language to name the pain. Two is seeing one's story in another, and likewise being seen, and that reduces isolation, finding community. Three is reclaiming and reauthoring dominant and marginalized narratives. And then four, finding solutions within those stories" (Beltrán). Within this quote, Beltrán makes note of how storytelling can bring healing to

those that engage, as well as connections to those who had been made victims of adverse experiences.

Bonding over traumatic experiences is a tactic used by many within the Latine community that allows individuals to further understand those moments of time filled with hardships and struggles. Storytelling remains an important aspect of this bonding as it allows members to truly talk about their life's struggles as a first-generation Latine. Many Latines are taking to social media to share their understanding and experiences of first-generation trauma, “a colloquial term that many Latin-Americans use to describe the emotional struggles of children whose parents are immigrants” (Garcia). What connects these struggles is that immigrant children are affected heavily, which usually, but not always include those that are born first, and/or those that are the first to navigate certain characteristics of American society. Some common experiences shared by children of immigrants that can contribute to first generation trauma include: parentification, when a child is obligated to act as a parent to their own parent or sibling, assimilation, integrating people or culture into a dominant culture and society, code-switching, when a person changes the way they speak, act or interact with others in specific settings, and attachment trauma, which refers to the trauma that can occur within family relationships (Garcia). Zamarripa, co-founder of the Institute of Chicax Psychology and Community Wellness, says that many clinicians talk about first-generation trauma within the context of the family but, “that’s a western way of looking at things” (Zamarripa). Zamarripa argues that “it’s important that our community doesn’t continue to internalize this notion of a

deficit within our Latinx cultural context” and “we should not internalize this narrative or idea that all of this comes from within us. A lot of times this comes from all the hits that we take outside of the family that we don’t realize we’re trying to negotiate when we come together.” Zamarripa discusses the fact that even after such traumatic events, we are not the ones to blame, and we should provide ourselves with grace in these moments. This continues to influence the prospects of storytelling, where Latines bond with one another after recounting adversity they had faced. It shows that no matter the story, Latines will always be valid in the way they’ve suffered and shows that storytelling builds empowerment and solidarity between the listener and the teller.

In the article, *Framing a Decolonial Future: Hurricane Maria in Independent Puerto Rican Comics*, the authors discuss how the use of storytelling pertaining to the hurricanes *Maria*, *Temporada*, and *La Borinquena*, analyzing how citizens bore witness to the ‘foreshocks and aftershocks’ of the hurricane while delineating a future for Puerto Rico. This analysis takes up the trauma that many endured in the wake of these natural disasters and how it impacted their physical and mental well-being, as well as how colonialism has affected their land, people, and culture. The comics modality enhances storytelling by format, size, placement of panels, and positioning of text to reinforce the simultaneous themes of physical destruction and confinement, the perception of time and its deconstruction, and the ways in which external forces—both political and physical—penetrate the borders of Puerto Rico in a destructive way (Humphrey). The comic provides both dialogue and illustration pertaining to the moments of hurricane Maria and how the

citizens had endured the traumatic experiences of this natural disaster, as well as how Puerto Ricans have faced colonialism within their land. On the one hand, this comic illustrates the loss and fragmentation that Puerto Rico and Puerto Rican society has suffered, on the other, the faded red, white and blue flag represents the long term and ongoing broken dependency on the colonial US metropolis (Humphrey). The final message from the comic follows as “Puerto Rico will be rebuilt from the inside out not by corrupt politicians taking advantage of this disaster but by Puerto Ricans.

People who dealt with tragedy with ingenuity, resilience and more importantly, empathy” (Humphrey). This comic finishes with a concurrent message of loss and fracture beside hope and flourishing. Although this comic had established the trauma of living through natural disasters, the final message comprises an image of unity, collaboration, sustainability from within the nation’s borders and a symbolic removal of the colonial colors being removed from the country’s flag (Humphrey). From this, it is evident that although the people of Puerto Rico and its citizens have endured many hardships from natural disasters, however, with community resilience and storytelling, hope for a more prosperous future is attainable.

The performance of *actos*, or acts, is another way that artists have illustrated the conditions that many Latines have endured while laboring in the United States. An example of the use of storytelling in the form of *acto* is by *El Teatro Campesino*, started by Luis Valdez. *El Teatro Campesino* (ETC) was a theater group that had formed in the wake of César Chávez’s labor strike during 1965, and its mission statement consisted of combatting

unjust pay, discrimination, and living conditions experienced by Chicane workers (Fielder). ETC would tour campesino camps, performing *actos* to support a message of worker unionization, with their actors consisting of Latine workers. The actors in these performances would use improvisation, as Luis Valdez noticed the language and literacy barriers that worker-actors struggled with. The use of improvisation had various benefits including actors able to perform their own experiences more effectively, with greater emotion, body language, creativity and self-reflection, with the language they used being more relatable to the audience, utilizing the dialect shared among seasonal workers (Fielder). The typical *acto* would consist of a *Patron* (representing bosses, landowners, legislators, etc.) and a *campesino* (representing the multitude of Latine workers), where these two would eventually swap tool; the *patron* received a hat and sheers and the *campesino* would receive a cigar and whip. In the end of the *acto*, the *patron* would realize the horrendous conditions they were subjugated to and would beg the *campesino* for social change and better work conditions, something that actual *campesinos* weren't granted when enduring various labor conditions (Fielder). All in all, the act of storytelling through art allowed these members of the ETC to convey their messages and struggles to fellow Latine workers to build solidarity, unity and hope among the Latine labor community. It allowed them to process the traumatic work conditions they had endured and allowed them to share those experiences with those who were a part of these struggles. In the end, these *actos* remained a key part of storytelling that reached wide audiences to empower Latine workers throughout the United States.

Lastly, through documentaries containing firsthand accounts of Latine struggles in the workforce, we can see how storytelling persists in the healing and processing of traumatic conditions that workers are subjected to, as well as denoting the resilience among these Latine populations. Within the documentary *Made in L.A.*, Latina-identifying women recount their experiences while working in garment factories, where they create clothing for major corporations, such as Forever 21. These women tell of their stories where they are constantly mistreated, discriminated against, exploited, and hardly paid for their labor. As the documentary progresses, the Latina women share their experiences with one another, realizing that they aren't all that different, and although they may not work beside one another, their experiences are as similar as can be. After realizing the calamity they have all endured, they process their experiences together and begin to protest and share their stories with the world. They travel around the United States, from universities to Washington D.C., recounting their experiences as Latina garment workers to educate the public, and continue to hope for a better future. It is through their storytelling that allows them the opportunity to acknowledge their mistreatment, have conversations about their hardest moments, and learn to cope together with their setbacks for a more prosperous time to come. This documentary commemorates the resiliency Latina identifying women contain that provides them with empowerment and pushes them past adversity to build a better sense of self and future.

Storytelling remains an important tool for healing and empowerment throughout Latine and Chicane communities. Regardless of its form, it commemorates the pain many

had to suffer through and opens dialogues that aid those in moving forward. Although the Latine community faces many challenges due to exploitation, colonialism, and marginalization, it is important to illustrate the amount of resilience that is a part of these communities. Latines and Chicanos have shown relentlessly that no matter the pain they endure and how much blood is spilled, they will continue to grow, flourish and prosper as individuals and as a community.

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Exploring the Significance of Belonging for Latinx Students at a Midwestern University

by

Ava Peplinski

Literature Review

Over the last few decades, the enrollment rates of Latinx students in higher education have been steadily rising due to the significant growth of the Latinx population in the United States (US), as per 2018 The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report. Despite the increased enrollment, the NCES also reported that the Latinx students continue to have higher dropout rates than their White and Black peers. This issue has prompted scholars to focus on the educational contexts and personal experiences hindering Latinx students pursuing higher education in college. Professors in Higher Education, Carter and Hurtado (1997), conducted fundamental research highlighting the importance of ensuring a sense of belonging for people of color at their universities. This sense of belonging refers to a psychological connection or integration of one's community and is crucial for academic success and overall well-being. According to previous studies, it is widely recognized that fostering a sense of belonging in college holds significant importance for the academic and personal well-being of students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds (Peoples et al., 2023). Thus, it is becoming increasingly important to comprehend the factors that shape and reinforce Latinx students' persistence decisions,

particularly the relational processes that facilitate their sense of belonging within the university setting (Dueñas & Gloria, 2020).

Latinx undergraduate students pursuing higher education are more likely to be the first members of their family to attend college, compared to individuals of other races. Consequently, scholars have reported that first-generation college students, in particular, have lower levels of belonging, struggle with cultural alignment between themselves and their university environment, and feel a reduced sense of importance within that setting (Dueñas & Gloria, 2020). These challenges further compound the mental health difficulties faced by these students who are already dealing with the challenge of finding their place in communities where they have historically faced marginalization and discrimination. A recent study conducted in 2023 on mental health and sense of belonging has revealed that student mental health continues to be a major concern in the United States (Peoples et al., 2023). The study emphasized that depression, among other mental illnesses, poses a significant obstacle to students' academic performance and is linked to negative outcomes. As more racial and ethnic minority students enroll in predominantly white institutions (PWIs), it is concerning that there is limited research and resources for mental health and related outcomes for these specific groups of college students.

Findings suggest that racial and ethnic minority students are often subjected to campus climates that are racist, unwelcoming, hostile, and unsupportive. In fact, it has been reported that 20% of Black students and 15% of Latinx students experience some form of discrimination or bias at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) (Hussain & Jones,

2021). Ensuring resources dedicated to the mental health of students of color is crucial as negative experiences, such as discrimination and bias, have been associated with poor mental health outcomes such as depression, suicidal ideation, increased risk of dropping out, and long-term consequences beyond college (Peoples et al., 2023). Therefore, prioritizing the mental well-being of these students is essential to enable them to adjust to college in a healthy manner, seek support for their diverse needs, establish meaningful relationships, and identify and participate in (available opportunities that can help foster a sense of belonging on their university campuses (2023).

Study Purpose and Research Question

Existing research shows across many studies that a sense of belonging plays a critical role in the educational and personal experiences as Latinx students at 4-year institutions (Dueñas & Gloria, 2021). Educational psychologist Maryam Hussain (2021), concluded in her research that not only do different racial groups experience their sense of belonging and campus climate environments in divergent ways, so do students within the same racial group. What influences one Latinx student's sense of belonging on campus may not influence another Latinx student's sense of belonging. As a result, there has been a growing body of scholarship and research focused on exploring the variety of factors that influence Latinx students' sense of belonging in college. Intrigued by the scholarly conversation and my own personal experiences as a first-generation Latinx immigrant from Colombia and an undergraduate student at a PWI, I was inspired to conduct research on the sense of belonging of Latinx students within my community on campus. Considering

previous works have revealed that students of color often struggle with a sense of belonging at PWIs, I formulated the following research inquiry: What factors influence the sense of belonging of Latinx students?

Method and Procedure

To initiate my research, I determined the most suitable approach to obtain reliable and accurate data. I chose a Midwestern institution of higher education and decided to use the mixed-method research design, which involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative data to study a phenomenon. This approach entailed creating a survey questionnaire consisting of fixed-alternative and scale questions to obtain quantitative data and collecting qualitative data through open-ended testimonies from Latinx students. The survey was distributed to students who participated in an on-campus event aimed at building community space for Latinx students on campus. The survey received 26 responses, with participants aged between 18 and 23 years old. Two crucial demographic questions were included in the survey, one pertaining to the participants' self-identified racial or ethnic group and the other related to their generational status in the US. Among the respondents, 53.8% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 23.1% as White, 11.5% as Asian, and 11.6% as Black or African American. Furthermore, only 34.6% of participants reported having either grandparents or both parents born in the US, while the remaining 65.4% reported that one or both of their parents were not born in the US.

The survey consisted of five close-ended questions to explore the factors that positively or negatively impact the sense of belonging of Latinx students at the school. The

first question measured the extent to which participants agreed that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are institutional priorities at the school. The second question asked whether they had experienced any form of discrimination, racism, or prejudice due to their racial or ethnic identity. The third question assessed their overall sense of belonging on campus. The fourth question explored whether their sense of belonging (or lack thereof) affected their academic performance and college experience. Lastly, the fifth question examined whether designated spaces exclusively for students of color would help establish a more diverse community at the school. In addition, I conducted interviews as a means of inquiry to further investigate the experiences of Latinx students in higher education in the United States and the institutions that enroll them. As Acevedo and Solorzano (2021) note, interviews are commonly used in research on the experiences of historically marginalized students, as they permit respondents to speak freely about their experiences in contexts that are familiar to them. Thus, the interviews enabled the students to share their own narratives, helping me gain a deeper understanding of how their experiences shape their sense of belonging at their PWI.

Findings

Upon completion of my research, I found several significant results. Regarding the first question of the survey, 42.3% of participants did not consider Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as institutional priorities at their PWI. Furthermore, more than half of the participants reported experiencing discrimination, racism, or prejudice at their school due to their racial or ethnic identity. Only 26.9% of participants reported feeling a sense of

belonging at the school, while the majority, 73.1%, did not. It was also found that 65.4% of participants believed that their sense of belonging (or lack thereof) has negatively affected their academic performance and college experience. Interestingly, although 19.2% of participants were unsure, the majority, 73.1%, agreed that there should be designated spaces on campus exclusively for students of color. During my interviews with participants, a consistent pattern of responses emerged when I inquired about their thoughts on why their PWI should create more designated spaces exclusively for students of color. Participants commonly expressed a lack of daily representation and sense of belonging for students of color during a typical school day. For this reason, designated spaces would enhance the educational experiences, overall health and well-being of students of color at PWIs. Additionally, it was shared among all the students I interviewed that a recent incident of racism at their school contributed to their lack of a sense of belonging. They believe that the school's tolerance and lack of punishment for students who use racial hate speech has perpetuated an environment of hostility and exclusion. My research findings align with previous scholarship on the factors that influence the sense of belonging of Latinx students in higher education.

Analysis and Discussion

Conducting interviews as part of my research provided an opportunity for students to share their personal experiences and shed light on how those experiences shape their sense of belonging at their school and helped me draw connections between my findings and existing literature. The results of my study revealed a concerning trend: many students

of color feel disconnected from the campus community and lack a sense of belonging. My research identified two main factors that significantly impact Latinx students' sense of belonging: counterspaces and a supportive campus climate from administration. Students explained that these factors play a crucial role in determining whether they feel welcomed and included at the school. Counterspaces refers to spaces on campus where marginalized students can gather to challenge stereotypes, construct counter narratives, and learn adaptive strategies from others who are facing similar struggles (Dueñas & Gloria, 2021). My research supports previous studies that suggest Latinx students at PWIs use counterspaces to establish a sense of belonging and find comfort in a community that serves as a home and family, helping them manage racism and racial microaggressions on campus. While some scholars argue that awareness of racial divides and involvement in community and social issues can cultivate critical consciousness and further divide racial communities, Latinx students receive much-needed communal support to navigate a PWI within counterspaces (Nuñez, 2009).

My findings also revealed that many students from minority backgrounds at PWIs perceive the institution to be unsupportive of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This aligns with existing research that suggests a supportive campus climate and institutional engagement in diversity efforts can lead to positive perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity, especially for historically excluded students (Hussain & Jones, 2021). Students who feel a sense of belonging through a supportive institution may also initiate more social interactions and form better relationships on campus, which can

facilitate their social integration and further benefit their well-being, performance, and health. Furthermore, when students of color perceive that the institution is actively engaged in diversity efforts, it can mitigate the negative effects of discrimination, on their sense of belonging (Hussain & Jones, 2021). My research findings indicate that having positive experiences and feeling connected to the institution, especially through supportive administrative policies and actions, is crucial for positive college outcomes such as persistence and graduation rates. Despite being a minority group, Latinx students and other students of color benefit greatly from an inclusive and diverse campus environment that actively supports their success. When institutions take active steps to combat discrimination and bias, it can have a significant impact on the well-being and success of students from marginalized backgrounds.

Conclusion

After conducting my research and reviewing existing literature, it is clear that a sense of belonging is crucial for Latinx students to succeed and thrive at PWIs. The findings of my study highlight the need for PWIs to take action in addressing the issue of a lack of belonging experienced by students of color on their campuses. Improving the sense of belonging for Latinx students can help close the academic completion gap and support the mental health and well-being of this student population. As the number of Latinx students enrolling in higher education continues to increase, it is important for scholars to continue researching the factors that impact their sense of belonging at PWIs. Moving forward, I

hope to conduct more in-depth research on this topic to gain a better understanding of how PWIs can better support and serve its underrepresented student population.

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Queer Latino Intersectionalities

by

Rachel Lang

Intersectionality is the concept that each individual has various aspects to their identity. Looking at how various forms of difference interact one can analyze the experiences of multiple socially constructed identities and their layered oppressions. People can be grouped by gender, race, nationality, sexuality, religion, class, ability, and much more. Although it is arguably narrow-minded to whittle a person down to these labels, a person's affinities can often indicate their experiences or hint at the forms of discrimination or oppression they may have endured because of their identity. In Chicano and Latino studies, scholars often consider the multi-faceted aspects of the lives of Latinos,¹ as well as the various intersectionalities that may be part of an individual's identity. This paper will discuss people who identify as both Latino and LGBTQ+, examining the term "Latinx" in relation to how queer² Latinos fit into the Latino and LGBTQ+ communities, while also considering how the geography of the United States Midwest affects Latinx LGBTQ+ placemaking as well as the nuances of coming out.

The term "Latinx" has long been a source of controversy. The word originated with young LGBTQ+ activists who wanted a gender-neutral term to describe Latinos without privileging the word's masculine form. It is also widely used by people who identify as non-binary to avoid choosing between the masculine "o" suffix and the feminine "a" suffix, instead opting for a third option. However, as "Latinx" becomes increasingly popular and mainstream, it

¹ I choose to use "Latino" instead of "Latinx" or "Latine" to describe a group of Latinos because of the linguistic controversy surrounding "Latinx" and the relative obscurity of "Latine."

² I use "queer" and "LGBTQ+" interchangeably.

is ironic how this word, initially created to be inclusive to people of all genders, has become linguistically exclusive. “Latinx” erases the Spanish-language roots of the word “Latino,” incorporating the letter “x,” which rarely appears at the ends of Spanish words. In his essay “X Marks the Spot,” Richard T. Rodríguez questions the too-easy adoption of the term “Latinx” as potentially exclusionary (Rodríguez, 2017).

A proposed solution is the word “Latine,” which has the gender-neutrality of “Latinx” but uses an “e” instead to keep to natural Spanish pronunciation. This is not to be confused with “Latiné,” which places the stress on the last syllable in a similar manner to “Latinx.” “Latine,” in contrast, keeps the stress on the second syllable, reminiscent of the pronunciation of “Latino” and “Latina.” The primary issue with “Latine” is that it is not as widespread as “Latinx,” especially outside of the Latino community. Outsiders may also argue that there is too much discourse over a singular letter, which can be regarded as trivial. However, this is an important issue among Latinos, and this debate especially affects people who are part of the LGBTQ+ community and those who identify beyond the gender binary.

Another challenge queer Latinos face is placemaking within the separate Latine and LGBTQ+ communities. Both groups have reputations of being relatively welcoming to members, however, geographical location also plays a big part in the prominence of these communities and their progressiveness. Richard T. Rodríguez writes in his essay “Beyond Boystown” about the importance of Antronio’s Bar, which is distinctly not in Chicago but instead in the suburb of Berwyn. Antronio’s served as a gathering place for LGBTQ+ Latinos in the Chicago area beyond the more prominent Mexican neighborhoods Pilsen and Little Village, the Puerto Rican neighborhood Humboldt Park, and the gay neighborhood Boystown. Even in

the 2010s, when Antronio's was in business, Boystown was a "predominantly white gentrifying gay neighborhood," and Latino neighborhoods, which tend to be more traditional, were also hesitant to be openly accepting of LGBTQ+ people (Rodríguez, 2020). There is a sharp contrast between how much the LGBTQ+ and Latino communities overlap in the United States Midwest compared to coastal cities such as Los Angeles and New York, where there are more people of Latino descent and where public reception of queer people is more positive. Because of the overall smaller population and the region's shorter history of LGBTQ+ and Latino people, it's significantly more difficult for queer Latinos to find community in large cities such as Chicago, but even more so in smaller towns. They often find themselves on the fringes of Latinidad and the mainstream LGBTQ+ community. Although the queer community is known to be very inclusive in the present day, people were still prone to racist ideals in the past, establishing prejudiced notions that may remain today.

Even if LGBTQ+ Latinos manage to find community, there is still the consideration of being publicly "out." In "Compañeras in the Middle," Lourdes Torres examines the history of two groups prominent in Chicago in the 1990s, Amigas Latinas and LLENA. These organizations were established as a place for Latinas and lesbians to find belonging (Torres, 2014). However, one of the main topics of debate was the conflict of wanting to increase visibility for Latina lesbians by, for example, marching in gay pride or cultural day parades, versus the potential dangers of being publicly out, especially for women who might be heterosexually married or undocumented. This is a distinct difference that sets queerness apart from most other intersectionalities. More so than race or gender, queerness can be hidden or closeted. Even in the 2020s, there are still potential repercussions to consider when coming out,

depending on the circumstances. This is why having distinct queer Latino spaces that operate independently of others is critical in placemaking.

The ideas discussed here do not even yet consider the other intersectionalities queer Latinos may identify with, such as being female, coming from a mixed-status or intra-Latino family, overcoming language barriers, and more. There are many intricacies to identifying with more than one minority group, and queer Latino studies is a still-emerging field, especially in academia. However, the conclusions and implications drawn from these studies can be further broadened to other populations as well.

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SECTION TWO: POETRY AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Lost and Found
by
Oscar Mireles

It started in 1949, when my oldest brother
came home from school in Racine, Wisconsin
after flunking kindergarten
It said in his report card that he 'spoke no English'
and he declared to my parents
that 'the rest of the kids have to learn to speak English
if we planned on staying here in the United States.'

so my parents lined up
the rest of the seven younger children
had us straighten up our posture
tilt our heads back
reached into our mouths with their hands
and took turns
slicing our tongues in half

making a simple, but unspoken contract that from then on
the parents would speak Spanish and their children would respond
back only in English

How do you lose a native language? does it get misplaced
in the recesses of your brain? or does it never quite stick
to the sides of your mind?

for me, it would always start with the question
from a brown faced stranger 'hables espanol?'
which means 'do you speak spanish?'

which meant if they had to ask me
if I spoke Spanish this was not going to be a good start
at having a conversation...

my face would start to get flushed
with redness and before
I had a chance to stammer the words 'I don't'
I could see it in their eyes looking at my embarrassed face
searching for an answer that they already knew

as I walked away
I knew what they were thinking

'Who is this guy? '
'How can he not speak his mother's tongue? '
'Where did he grow up anyways? Racine? '
'Doesn't he have any pride in knowing who he is? 'or 'Where he came from? '

I tried to reply, but as the words in Spanish
floated down from my brain they got caught in my throat,
by the rocks of shame I had piled up in 20 years.

I spoke in half-tongue which was only good enough
to be misunderstood.

my future wife

taught me how

to speak spanish

mainly

by being Colombian

and secondly

by being patient

and thirdly

by not speaking english

I had already knew

the language of hands and love

which got me confident enough

to find the beautiful sounds of latin rhythms

that laid deep within me

and although

I still feel my heart jump a beat

when someone asks 'hables espanol? '

now the spanish resonates within me

and echos back 'si, y usted tambien? '

and today as I talk with the Spanish speaking students

in our school
they can not only feel my words
they can feel my warm heart
splash ancient Spanish sounds off
my native tongue
that has finally grown whole again.

My Mother Is a Social Worker Who Works in a Hospital

by

Oscar Mireles

My mother is a social worker who works in a hospital

she makes daily visits
checks her charts
and shares small talk with the patients
as she brightens up their rooms

My mother is a social worker who works in a hospital

she is always the first one at the scene
just like the television doctors
whether in the birthing room
at my niece Amanda's arrival

or at the operating table

medicines trap door

My mother is a social worker who works in a hospital

my mother translates for the Spanish patients

especially after surgery

she touches their fear

with words that can heal

My mother is a social worker who works in a hospital

Surprisingly there is little blood

on her pink uniform

just a day's sweat and dirt

you wouldn't know

she was a cleaning lady

if you looked in her eyes

My mother is a social worker who works in a hospital

Elvis Presley was a Chicano

by

Oscar Mireles

In the latest edition
of the National Inquirer
it was revealed that
Elvis Presley,
Yes...the legendary Elvis
was a Chicano

Fans were outraged
critics cite his heritage
as an important influence
I was stunned
Can you believe it?

Well...I didn't really at first
but then I remembered...
his jet back hair
you know with the little curl in front
sort of reminded me of my cousin "Chuy"

Elvis always wore
either those tight black pants
like the ones in West Side Story
or a baggy pinstriped Zoot Suit
Pachuco Style
with a pair of blue suede shoes to match

Then I figured no, it couldn't be

So I traced his story back to his hometown
a little pueblo outside Tupelo, Mississippi
son of migrant sharecroppers
looking for a way out
of rural poverty

Let's see... Elvis joined the army
Maybe he enlisted with his "buddies"
They never made a movie about it
But they fought hard anyways

I read somewhere that Chicanos
have won more Silver Stars
and Purple Hearts than any other ethnic group
Maybe Elvis was a Chicano
I wasn't convinced yet!

Elvis was a Swooner, a dancer, a ladies man
and always won the girl
that hated him
in the beginning of the movie
he had to be a latin lover or something
even Valentino and Sinatra has a little Italian in them

Elvis played guitar
like my Uncle Carlos,
always hitting the same four notes
over and over again

But now, I think I have figured it out
It was probably Colonel Parkers idea
To change his cultural identity,
Since it was just after the second big war
And the Zoot Suit Riots

it wasn't the right time
for a Chicano Superstar
to be pelvising around the Ed Sullivan Show,
late on a Sunday night

I think it was just a hoax,

to convince more people to buy that newspaper

If Elvis Presley really
was a Chicano
He wouldn't have settled
to die alone,
in an empty mansion
With no family around,
No "familia" around

Who cared enough
...to cry

Generational Stories

by

Andi Hernandez

This is a collection of generational short stories and family “rumors” that date all the way back to the Mexican Revolution (1910s) to present day (2023). These are all women in my life starting from my great-great-grandmother, my great-grandmother, my grandmother, my mother, and lastly, me. Although I do not truly consider myself a “woman” so to speak as a non-binary individual, I still have a very powerful connection to this lineage. I had the privilege of meeting and spending many years with my great-grandmother who recently passed at the age of 103, and she told me a bit about her story and her mother’s story which I have included in *Negrete* and *Jiménez*. Other sources come from all the gossip, or rather *chisme*, that I have gathered throughout the years. It is also heavily drawn from the stories my mom and aunts would tell me from their lives back in Mexico. I decided to write the collection of these short stories as they were all impactful and at the end of the day have eventually all led up to this point in my generation and life. The titles are all their last names and as the reader you will notice how some change and how some remain the same. I decided to only keep the last names as it helps show the change and shifts in generations.

For this creative project, I have also included a self-portrait that is heavily inspired from the deep thoughts of *Hernandez-Ruiz-Machuca*. I call this portrait, *Andi’s Got the Blues*, as it is symbolic to many of the recurring themes of self-imagery, intergenerational trauma,

religion (Catholicism specifically), death, isolation, love, and resilience. This piece means a lot to me because it is a raw reflection of the beauty behind the pain that generations have held and suffered, but they all still find a way to heal and connect even after death.

Negrete

Una mujer de pocas palabras pero con tanta fuerza. Muy débil pero sin miedo.

When the soldiers would come she would hide her brothers and sisters in fear of them being taken for the revolution, or the girls being taken for good. The boys hid on roofs, hidden walls, crawled under the floors of the houses, and she prayed to La Virgencita with her rosary that their souls were hidden. Some were taken for the revolution, and others taken for sinister reasons. She was the eldest and vowed to protect them at the cost of her mind, body and soul.

Jiménez

Una mujer de dinero y poder, le belleza del pueblo. A girl being married at the age of 15 to a man of 27 to keep the money in the family, although her heart resided elsewhere. She longed for the days she could see her true love but was told he moved away for school without saying goodbye. Her parents did not approve because of their familiar history. She hoped and prayed to her rosary that one day they would reunite at the secret creek where they met. She resented her days in la hacienda that offered her silk dresses and bed sheets, servants who would cater to her every need, her own personalized chapel, but married to a man she had unrequited feelings for. Her husband was made head of the family after his father's passing and inherited his family business and land. He always vied

for her affection but it was never truly returned. He was a businessman, a scholar, and a hunter. She learned to care for but never loved him the way he loved her as she knew where her heart truly lied.

Although their relationship blossomed into friendship it was very clear she always had reservations, and he could feel it. Bearing eight children over the years, something was wrong. Two children had distinctive features that none of their other children possessed. Their first six were born with melted caramel skin, eyes that were as dark as night, and light brown hair, all closely resembling their mother. They were all slender, short but athletic and intelligent. The last two had dark brown skin, clear brown eyes, and pitch-black hair. Their build both tall and frail making them a carbon copy of her past lover. As the years passed her husband made the connection and sought him out. They said as soon as he knew he left without saying a word and only took a gun, some rope, a knife, the clothes on his back, and his horse. He hunted for her lover with pure rage and one thing on his mind: murder.

Ruiz-Lopez-Jimenez

Una jovencita de 16, one of eight children and fresh out of an all-girls Catholic school getting married to a man of 25. The inherent riches were gone, but she never missed a thing in her life. Married young with three daughters living in Mexico City with a husband that dragged her across the floor by her hair but put food on the table. He spared no expense and bought nothing but the best for his wife and daughters, he was unfaithful, yet she understood it to be love. No one taught her right from wrong, but what was the point when you had everything you needed? It was not always like that. They would go to Cancún

and take many family trips, always spoiling their daughters when they could. They would attend many parties, always visited family, were affectionate with each other, went to church, always had the latest fashion, and most importantly: they were well off.

Conforme pasaban los años sus hijas crecieron. All three were beautiful young and educated ladies who simultaneously began to blossom into rebels, college students, and wives and mothers. One-by-one they migrated to Madison, Wisconsin, and she was angry. Angry that her daughters attended the best colleges in Mexico and left to get married and start from nothing. “Después de todo que hicimos para darles una buena vida,” she would say. Despite her anger she prayed with her rosary that her daughters would take care and were loved and safe. Until one day, she was gifted with something so beautiful it washed away all her pain and anger. Her first grandchildren.

Ruiz-Lopez

The eldest of three, she was labeled the heartbreaker and was known to beat anyone up who bullied her younger sisters. She is headstrong, confident, and highly intelligent with the brains to match the beauties. She was 20 when she met the love of her life, dating long distance as he lived in Texas and her in Mexico. They wrote each other letters constantly and when he had the chance, he would ride his motorcycle down to visit his family, friends, and of course her. She was 22 when she graduated college in Mexico and moved to Madison, Wisconsin, and got married. Her mother's disapproval never stopped her. When she arrived the newlyweds stayed with her husband's friend's family, crammed in a house for four with nine people. She was scared and frustrated, no sisters,

no parents, no friends, and not knowing or understanding the language or culture made it even more isolating. But with the help of her husband, she learned by taking English classes at the local community college and found community with the few Latine couples and families that were slowly arriving in Madison. At age 25, she had her first child, a boy. Then at 27 her second and last, a *girl*.

She loved her family and adored her children. They moved and she had the privilege of being a stay-at-home mother during the day while her husband worked and then she would work in the evenings as he cared for their children in her absence. Their children would have never known or guessed that they lived in poverty, that their parents would go hungry just so their children could be happy and eat. Her husband worked long hours as a bartender at night and laborer by day. She worked as an accountant under the table because despite her degree, they told her that she would have to take classes in the US and get her degree here to practice.

“No vi el caso en regresar si es la misma cosa. Puras pendejadas,” she would say. As time went on, she managed her family's finances enough to buy and move into a real house. Her children would finally be able to run around in a yard, they would not have to see the drugs that were being dealt in their neighborhood, they would not have to worry about their bikes getting stolen again, they would not have to hear guns go off in the middle of the night, and they would finally be safe. She cried from happiness and could only reassure herself and pray to her rosary that things would get better from there.

Hernandez-Ruiz-Machuca

La beba y princesa de la familia. Growing up the only *girl* in a family full of boys but also being one of the eldest cousins brought them great privilege as they were one of the first children in the family. Their grandparents were like another set of parents who absolutely adored them and their older brother. They were always spoiled with beautiful dresses that made them look like a real princess.

Their grandparents would ask them: “¿Te quieres regresar a México con nosotros?” They never gave a response. The child would simply walk to their room and grab their tiny suitcase filling it with the dresses their grandparents gifted them and walked out saying; “¿Ya nos vamos?” The child cried and cried when their grandparents would leave, it was never for forever until one day it was.

It was the first week of Spring semester freshman year, they went to bed one night feeling awfully ill. Something was off. They awoke at one in the morning with no air in their lungs, their chest clenched and felt like there were a thousand pounds weighing on them. They sprung from their bed gasping for air that was almost nonexistent, drenched in sweat as if someone threw a cold bucket of water on them. Sobbing and in a panic they reached for their phone and called and texted her parents, brother, aunts, and friends. Everyone was seemingly fine but it still felt like someone had ripped into their chest and was gripping their still beating heart. The day after, they had taken a break from their studies and decided to go back to their dorm to take a nap. But before they could rest their eyes and relax their breathing a phone call. *Bubby*. My dad never calls me, they thought. They answered.

“¿Hola hija, estás sola?”

“¿Si papi, que paso?”

“Tengo unas noticias, pero creo que te debes de sentar.”

They laid on their bed quietly waiting as there was a moment of silence before they heard a deep breath come from the other line.

“Nena, tu abuelita falleció. Y tu mamá y yo nos vamos a México hoy en la noche, vas o te quedas?”

Me voy.

They gathered all their things, emailed all their professors, and were picked up from their dorm by their brother who consoled them the whole car ride home, never shedding a tear to appear strong for their younger sibling. The trip to Mexico was lonesome. The one AM flight was practically empty and silent but occasionally filled with quiet sobs and sniffles from their mother sitting in the row over. But all they could feel was numb with the recurring thought: Why didn't I call her? I called everyone but her. *This is all my fault.*

The guilt was there but it had not settled in yet. They imagined that when they arrived both of their grandparents would be greeting them with warm hugs and kisses like always. Instead, they arrived at the airport and were met with other relatives whose eyes were puffy, and noses were running. It had not settled in yet. When they arrived at their grandparents' house it was full of cars and relatives, the front gate had a black ribbon tied to it and the day was sunny, warm, and beautiful. It had not settled in yet. Walking into the familiar home full of family pictures, crosses, and the scent of grandma's perfume but she was nowhere in

sight. It had not settled in yet. There was a coffin in the living room, and everyone was surrounding it sobbing, wailing, cursing to God, holding onto the coffin as if God were to reach down and take it from them. Others were sitting on the couches and surrounding chairs quietly with tears running down their faces holding rosaries and tissues. It had not settled in yet. Everyone turned and looked at the newly arrived family members and managed to clear a path for them to make their way up. With their mother, they walked up hand in hand to the coffin and at first glance they both gasped and their mother fell to her knees never letting go of them nor the coffin.

“MI MAMI!”

She wailed while they stood there staring at the glass rectangle that showed their grandmother's once light tan and rosy complexion now blue, her once kind and loving smile gone, her once light brown eyes closed as if she were laying in the box sleeping peacefully. Standing there felt like an eternity; they had never seen a corpse before. They managed to pick up their mother as she cried, and they both kissed the glass one last time and prayed over it all night until it was taken by the church in the morning. The feeling was overwhelming, but it had not settled in yet.

After three days they said their goodbyes to their parents as they stayed behind to take care of their grandfather and their paperwork.

Their grandfather looked at his grandchild with sad eyes but still managed to smile and prayed for them to have a safe journey back. He planted one last kiss on their forehead and cheeks and said, “Te cuidas, nos vemos pronto mi princesa.”

The plane ride back was lonely, and the thought of death slowly consumed their mind as they gripped their grandmother's rosary, desperately trying not to choke every breath. When they got back, their grandfather also shortly passed as the doctors categorized it as *un corazon roto*. For a month they cried themselves to sleep alone in their dorm room and dreamt of memories from childhood filled with joy and love only to awaken in tears and loneliness. For a month they attended class, studied with others, and ate lunch with their friends. But all they could think of is what it felt like to be blue and laying in a box, what it was like to have others pray over your ashes for nine days, to fall asleep and leave the world behind forever. It had settled in.

One night they went to sleep but had a dream that was different. They saw their grandparents having a normal day as usual. Their grandmother cooking their favorite dish as always and their grandfather sitting at the couch listening to the news with the dog sitting on his lap. They could smell the freshly squeezed pomegranate juice their grandmother so dearly loved, and they could almost taste the savory and delicious *albondigas* that their grandmother had perfected years ago. She smiled at them, giving them a warm welcome with hugs and kisses, leaving them stunned.

“Qué bueno que ya llegaste princesa, ven acompañanos.”

They walked outside of the house, and it was beautiful and bright. The concrete streets that were once there seemingly vanished, the air smelled like fresh linen and roses, the once blue sky turned into a collision of pink, orange, and yellow that swirled all round them as if the colors were dancing all around them. There was no concept of time or space,

it was just them. She held them one last time bidding a bittersweet farewell praying for them one last time and left. They woke up and felt the weight that was deep in their chest was finally gone. No one was clenching their heart anymore. Their eyes were dry, and they felt nothing but pure relief. There were no tears left to shed, only the love, warmth, and kisses that they held onto from a dream that was all too real. They explained their dream and feelings to their mother, and she said that all the women in the family have a gift of intuition and spiritualism.

“Brujas que rezan a Dios y la Virgencita, que loco no?”

It felt more comforting knowing that their connection to their family went beyond physical but transcended into soul ties. From time to time, they held the beloved rosary that was passed on for generations admiring its scratches, the red beads, and silver that still shined years later. Despite not being as religious as the rest of their family, they still live in hopes that one day they will pass it on too.

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2020



"Andi's Got the Blues" by Andi Hernandez

Guidelines for Authors

The *Latinx Studies Journal*, previously known as *Concientización*, is a student academic journal dedicated to promoting the study of Chicanx and Latinx experience and thought. We are committed to creating alliances across boundaries of nation, race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. Submissions include essays, poems, and artwork related to Chicanx/Latinx in the United States. The *Latinx Studies Journal* also gives students the opportunity to participate in the publication process as authors and editors.

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