

**A COMMUNITY COLLEGE HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTION:
THE EFFECT OF AN HSI DESIGNATION ON ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY**

A Dissertation by

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The following faculty members have examined the full copy of this dissertation for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Leadership.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, best friend, and life-long learning partner, Feliza for your love, patience, and encouragement

I also dedicate this scholarly work to my daughters Lindsey and Elizabeth and my grandchildren Logan and Hadley for your caring, intelligent, and thoughtful spirit

Last, I dedicate the result of my doctoral experience to my parents Cletus and Deborah Carter who instilled in me a work ethic, provided many learning opportunities, and supported me during all of my educational steps

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ABSTRACT

Most community colleges receiving the Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) designation have no specific mission to serve Hispanic students. A lack of attention to assisting organizational members with what Hispanic-serving means can lead to confusion and members hanging on to previous organizational identities and practices.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how receiving an HSI designation affects the identity and practices of a community college. A social constructionist view of organizational identity theory was used to examine administrator, faculty, and staff perceptions of organizational identity and transition to an HSI.

Study participants included eight administrators, eight faculty, and seven staff from a Midwestern community college HSI. Some participants were present before and during the time the college received the HSI designation while others were employed after receiving the designation. Ten years of institutional documents covering the HSI transition period and 40 individual interviews were analyzed for common identity themes and indicators of a commitment to serving Hispanic students.

The organizational identity labels emphasized a caring atmosphere, recognition as a quality institution, financial stability, being student-centered, and serving a diverse student population. Participants attributed no meaning to the HSI designation; however, the identity labels did have meanings associated with being Hispanic-serving. A “serving all students” ideology and the current political climate toward immigration, affirmative action, and public education were barriers to adopting an HSI identity. Researchers should consider unplanned organizational identity change when investigating development patterns in HSIs.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Background

Community colleges were established in the early 1900's for the purpose of providing local access to the first two years of a baccalaureate degree. Referred to as junior colleges, they were associated with branch campuses of universities offering lower-division courses, high schools offering college level courses, and state sanctioned two-year colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Ratcliff, 1994). Over time, the purpose of the community college has expanded to include a variety of different missions such as vocational-technical, adult basic education, and lifelong learning. Inherent in the multiple missions is meeting the changing needs of the communities the colleges serve. Community colleges in many areas of the United States have encountered a demographic shift in the members of their service area.

Hispanic Population in the Midwest

Since the 1990's, communities in the Midwest have experienced changes in the structure of agriculture food systems and the effects of globalization on their economies and demographics (Lichter & Johnson, 2009). Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population in the Midwest increased by 49%, more than 12 times the growth of the total population (Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, & Albert, 2011). Today, Hispanic students are matriculating to institutions of higher education in record numbers, particularly community colleges (Fry & Lopez, 2012; Santiago, 2013). The intersection of multiple community college missions and record Hispanic student enrollments has left college administrators, faculty, and staff confronting a shift in "who they are" as an institution (Contreras, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2008). For the purposes of this proposal, the U.S. Census Bureau definition of Hispanic or Latino was used because the study will rely on data,

policy, and program information based on the definition. The definition, regardless of race, identifies Hispanic or Latino as a person of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central and South

American or other Spanish culture or origin (Ennis et al., 2011). It is also important to point out that data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the student data collected by community colleges relies on self-reporting of race/ethnicity rather than confirmation of ancestry. The terms Hispanic and Latino were used interchangeably in this proposal; however, I will primarily use the term Hispanic for purposes of continuity and to reduce reader confusion.

Multiple Missions and Multiple Identities of Community Colleges

The first half century of community college history was a period of experimentation and search for legitimacy as an institution of higher education (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The economic and workforce development mission began to surface after 1910 and adult education and community services arrived on the scene in the 1930's. In 1947 the identity of the "comprehensive community college" was established when President Truman's Commission on Higher Education recommended community colleges meet all of the post-secondary needs of their communities (Gilbert & Heller, 2010; Quigley & Bailey, 2003). Since the Truman Commission Report, the comprehensive community college has had a variety of external and internal forces shaping its multiple missions.

External and internal factors have influenced the development of community college missions and the subsequent shifts in emphasis of one mission over the other. For example, emphasis on the vocational-technical mission (workforce and economic development) in the 1960's and its resurgence today are directly related to changes in the economy, demands of the business sector, and the influence of these factors in policy development and funding of public

education (Bragg, 2001; Rosenfeld, 1998). In the 1970's the interests of government policy makers and community college leaders in increasing educational opportunity and serving the needs of the community led to intense development of adult education and community services. Community services included non-credit courses in English as a second language, adult basic education, industry contract training, and work related non-credit instruction. The 1980's to the present has been a time of accountability expansion and refocused efforts on transfer, student services, lifelong learning, and economic development. In 1988, the Nationwide Commission on the Future of Community Colleges recommended that colleges help build community economies by creating partnerships with employers and making facilities available for workforce training (Kasper, 2002). Beginning in the 1990's and with more fervor since 2000, regional accrediting agencies and state governing boards have required colleges to identify measures, set targets, and be accountable for results in student learning, retention, graduation, employment, and program effectiveness (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The history of the 20th and 21st centuries demonstrates the staple of the community college has been the addition of new missions and shifting the emphasis of some missions over others.

A commonly accepted typology for community college missions include: 1) academic transfer; 2) vocational-technical; 3) developmental education; 4) community service; and 5) continuing education (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Academic transfer refers to programs leading to an academic associate degree, which can be used to transfer to a four-year college or university. Vocational-technical programs provide degrees leading to a terminal occupational certificate or applied science degree. Examples include automotive technology, manufacturing, nursing, and biotechnology. Developmental education services provide courses designed to prepare students with low academic skills for entry into degree programs. Bailey and Morest (2004) referred to

these three mission areas as the core purposes of community colleges. As described previously, community service programming includes work related non-credit instruction, adult basic education, industry contract training, and services such as small business development centers. Finally, continuing education refers to support for lifelong learning through a variety of programs targeting multiple age groups and interests from summer camps for children to art classes for seniors in both credit and non-credit formats.

Criticisms, Realities, and the Democratizing Role of Community Colleges

Despite the important role public two-year colleges play in providing post-secondary opportunities, they have been criticized for having too many missions (Bailey & Averianova, 1998; Desai, 2012; Dougherty, 1994; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006; Dowd, 2003). Some critics have argued for a return to the original academic mission while others see the vocational-technical mission as a priority (Bailey & Averianova, 1998; Bragg, 2001; Desai, 2012). Yet community college researchers find the management issues associated with multiple missions are outweighed by the flexibility provided by multiple revenue streams and public support for community services and continuing education (Bailey & Morest, 2004; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006). In times of resource scarcity and shifting state and national priorities, community college leaders have selected complexity and agility over simplicity and rigidity (Bailey & Morest, 2004), demonstrating an adaptive behavior toward social and economic change (Levin, 2000). In fact, Meier (2012) has suggested multiple missions and multiple identities are fundamental to the design of comprehensive community colleges.

Multiple community college missions and identities on the one hand reflect the hope for community colleges to act as a democratizing institution within higher education (Dowd, 2003; Rendon, 1999; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996; Shannon & Smith, 2006). On the other hand

community college multiple missions and identities have embedded within them the contradictions of American society (Dougherty, 1994; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006). Examples of contradictions include preserving open admissions while increasing graduation rates or meeting the goals of a democratic society (e.g. preparing responsible citizens, improving social conditions) while providing a highly trained, technical workforce (Dowd, 2003). Nearly half of all minority students and 40% of students living in poverty have accessed post-secondary education through public two-year colleges (Mullin, 2012). Failure to balance a focus on students and learning with the rapidly changing needs of private industry can further marginalize low income, minority, and first generation students (Mars, 2013). An increasing number of community colleges are attempting to address these issues as Hispanic student populations continue to grow.

Planning for Increased Hispanic Enrollment

Record numbers of Hispanic students are entering post-secondary education. In 2010-11, Hispanic student enrollment grew by 15% and was responsible for 74% of overall college student enrollment growth in the U.S. (Fry & Lopez, 2012). In 2011-12, 54% of undergraduate Hispanic students were enrolled in 356 community colleges and universities identified as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) in the United States and Puerto Rico. Of these institutions, 47% are public community colleges (Santiago, 2013). Community colleges are eligible to apply for HSI status through the U.S. Department of Education when they reach a 25% Hispanic enrollment threshold with 50% of Hispanic students being low income (1998 Amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965, 1999). When the HSI designation is granted, the institution is eligible for additional resources, primarily in the form of grants, to serve the Hispanic student population. For example, U.S. Department of Education Title V grants are designed to enable

HSIs to expand and enhance their academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) recognize all colleges meeting the 25% threshold as HSIs regardless of whether they have applied for the federal designation. The HACU was instrumental in getting legislators to support the HSI federal designation and Title V grant funding. In this case study, I plan to investigate the perceptions community college administrators, faculty, and staff have about the identity and practices of the college after receiving an HSI designation.

Research Problem

Public community colleges are attractive options for historically underserved populations (first generation, low income, and minority students) because of accessibility and low cost. Accessibility in this context refers to providing post-secondary educational opportunities and services for students with characteristics that may negatively affect educational goal attainment such as no high school diploma, delayed entry after high school, part-time enrollment, financially independent, and caring for dependent family members (Dowd, 2003; Mullin, 2012). Hispanic students, for example, choose community colleges over other options based on proximity to where they live, cost, and accessibility of the campus (Mullin, 2012; Anne-Marie Nunez & Bowers, 2011; Perez & McDonough, 2008). Comprehensive community colleges are applauded for responding to challenges such as the needs of underserved students, but are also criticized for trying to be everything to everybody (Bailey & Averianova, 1998; Dougherty, 1994; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006). The philosophical and resource driven decisions made by community college leaders to maintain multiple missions and multiple identities have been linked to retaining flexibility and agility in times of increasing enrollment, increased accountability, and reduced funding (Bailey & Morest, 2004). Thus, in response to the changing needs and

expectations of internal and external stakeholders, community colleges tend to take on additional missions and identities.

Community colleges are recognizing Hispanic enrollment increases, however, it is not apparent they are operating much differently in order to serve this population (Contreras et al., 2008). Missing is how community colleges transition to an organizational framework where the knowledge and experiences brought by culturally diverse students are acknowledged and valued as a component of student learning (S. Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012; Laden, 2004a; Rendon, 1999). The rapid nature of student diversification in community college HSIs requires a coordinated response to affect such an organizational change (García, 2012; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Levin, 1998a). In the few studies that have examined organizational responses to receiving an HSI designation, a majority of community colleges were found to be unaware of the implications of their changing student demographic based on an evaluation of institutional missions, student services, organizational practices, and marketing strategies (Contreras et al., 2008; Torres & Zerquera, 2012). Related to these studies is that most community colleges applying for and receiving the HSI designation were founded as Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) with no specific mission to serve Hispanic students in the tradition of a minority-serving institution (Bridges, Kinzie, Laird, & Kuh, 2008; Laden, 2004a; Perrakis & Hagedorn, 2010; Santiago, 2006). Although applying for and receiving an HSI designation is an intentional act by community college leaders, a shift in organizational identity and practice associated with becoming a minority-serving institution can be a difficult process.

Once community college enrollment reaches the 25% threshold, the HSI designation occurs rapidly over the course of a few months during the application process. Initially, the HSI designation may act as a label to gain access to a significant funding stream for the college. For

community colleges who receive funding, internal and external stakeholders may associate the HSI designation with the funding source rather than a shift in identity. The HSI designation acts as a linguistic label that symbolically communicates a shift in identity, however, an identity shift also involves organizational members making sense of the label (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). A lack of attention to language, meaning, and assisting organizational members with what being an HSI means can increase confusion in what members are supposed to do and what their role might be (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Pratt & Corley, 2007). Under these circumstances, organizational members tend to hang on to previous identities and practices.

Theoretical Framework

Community colleges enrolling an increasingly Hispanic student population have what Santiago (2009) calls an “acquired identity,” one that results from demographic changes that happen to the institution. This study was framed using organizational identity to inductively examine the acquired identity of a community college after receiving HSI status. For the purpose of this study, organizational identity consists of organizational member experiences and perceptions, and is central to social processes in organizational contexts (Corley, 2006). From this perspective the framework takes a social constructionist view supporting the possibility of multiple organizational identities, widely shared beliefs of organizational members, as well as the possibility that identities change over time (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al., 2000; Pratt & Corley, 2007; Ran & Golden, 2011). The next section discusses organizational identity as constructed by organizational members.

Social Construction View of Organizational Identity

According to Gioia (1998), the concept of identity is central to the conceptualization of the work organization and can be studied by extending individual identity constructs to

organizations. In their seminal article, Albert and Whetten (1985) described organizational identity as self-referential, where what is central, distinctive, and enduring determines “who we are” as an organization. The self-referential nature of the organizational identity construct identifies the essential characteristics of the organization as determined by leaders and members. The first component is what members recognize as central to the organization such as key services, labels, history, and values. Through the second component, members identify what is distinctive about the organization. In this study, distinctiveness is what members believe sets the organization apart from other community colleges even though many community colleges have values, norms, structures, and organizational practices in common (Levin & Montero-Hernandez, 2009). The third component proposed by Albert and Whetten (1985) links the present organization to its past and future. First proposed as what was enduring about an organization, empirical evidence now supports the position that identity can change and does change over time, although there is some continuity to values, norms, and practices (Gioia et al., 2000). Organizational members tend to view identity as stable because they use the same labels over time to describe identity, even though the meanings of the labels can and do change (Gioia et al., 2000). This expansion of the temporal view of identity reflects the growth in organizational identity research over the past 30 years, resulting in multiple perspectives and empirical approaches.

A key aspect of the social constructionist framework for this study is the concept that organizational identity is defined by members’ perceptions and beliefs about “who we are” as an organization. Used this way, organizational identity becomes reflexive, both self-referential and self-reflective, where identity resides in the minds of the organizational members (Corley et al., 2006; Pratt, 2003). Emphasis is placed on the labels members use to communicate who or what

they believe the organization to be and meanings associated with those labels (Gioia et al., 2000). Evidence of an identity shift would be found in a change in labels or a change in the meanings of those labels. In the empirical context of this study, I do not assume that administrators, faculty, and staff share a common understanding of the organization's identity, a stance often taken by organizational researchers. The complexity of community college multiple missions and multiple identities suggests a strong potential for identity differences along organizational boundaries such as work units (e.g. instruction, student services, operations), departments, and employee classifications (Corley, 2004). Organizational identity differences may also be reflected in organizational knowledge and practice.

Organization members' identity is also embedded within the routines, practices, and knowledge connected with an identity shift (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007). Simply declaring a shift in identity may not result in noticeable change without examining and revising organizational practices (Nag et al., 2007). For my case study, how organizational members use both existing and new knowledge in processes and practices can indicate identity changes. If an identity shift does occur or is in progress, organizational member perceptions of day-to-day practices within college structures should show a collective adaptation to serving a Hispanic student population. Examples include student learning and assessment, curriculum, instruction and delivery, planning and goal alignment, budget processes, and decision-making.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine administrator, faculty, and staff perceptions of organizational identity as members of a Hispanic-Serving Institution. The overarching question guiding my inquiry is: How does receiving an HSI designation affect the identity and practices of a community college? In support of this purpose, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do administrators, faculty, and staff describe the college's transition to a Hispanic-Serving Institution?
2. What are administrator, faculty, and staff perceptions of the college identity?
3. How do administrators, faculty, and staff describe the institutional structures and practices since becoming an HSI?

In the next chapter, a review of the literature will connect the research problem, theoretical framework, and community college structure to the issues surrounding organizational identity change in Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This literature review provides the reader with a synthesis of the empirical research related to the study of organizational identity in a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). One objective of the review is to clearly describe the key assumptions and conceptual boundaries of organizational identity for my study. A second objective of the review is to extend the research problem and theoretical framework by synthesizing the literature as it applies to organizational identity perspectives, community college identity, multiple identities, and organizational identity change in community college HSIs. Gaps in the research are identified and used to highlight the significance of the proposed study. The review concludes with a summary of relevant themes.

Defining Organizational Identity

Identity is a common construct in many of the social sciences, each with their own empirical traditions, theories, and assumptions. Organizational researchers are concerned with the lack of clearly defined traditions and approaches in organizational studies. They have emphasized the need for defining key assumptions, conceptual boundaries, and methodologies when designing and reporting empirical studies (Buchanan & Bryman, 2007; Corley et al., 2006; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Pratt, 2003; Pratt & Foreman, 2000a; Ravasi & Canato, 2013). In the next section I begin the process of identifying key assumptions and conceptual boundaries for this study through examination of three core perspectives of organizational identity research.

Organizational Identity Perspectives

Three perspectives most frequently discussed in the organizational identity literature are functionalist, interpretivist, and postmodern (Bouchikhi et al., 1998; Gioia, 1998; He & Brown, 2013). Functionalist perspectives are positivist and objectivist in approach while interpretivist

uses a qualitative, social constructionist epistemology (Gioia, 1998). Postmodernist perspectives are based on challenging the dominant beliefs and ideas such as questioning the notion of identity itself. The following sections examine the functionalist, postmodern, and interpretivist views followed by an in-depth description and justification for the interpretivist approach used in my study.

Functionalist perspective. Functionalist key assumptions portray organizational identity as a social fact existing outside of human consciousness which can be studied and measured objectively (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). From this perspective, physical and social phenomena are viewed as similar and can be described using the same rationale reflected in the methods of the natural sciences. The functionalist perspective also presumes that identity and its constructs are relatively stable and comparable over time. Most often referred to as the “social actor” perspective in the current literature, the primary research problem is how organizational identity affects members and how members then affect organizational actions (Corley et al., 2006; Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Whetten, 2006; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). To help clarify the social actor view, Whetten (2006) identified three central characteristics of a legitimate organizational identity claim. First, claims of one identity component are only valid when also possessed by the other two components. For example, a claim made about what is central to an organization (component 1) must also be what is enduring (component 2) and distinctive (component 3) about the organization. Second, member identity is separate from organizational identity. Only the organization’s identity matters in the social actor view. Third, organizational culture and organizational image are not organizational identity. Cultural elements may function as a part of the organization’s identity when they are experienced as distinctive, central, and enduring, but they are not in and of themselves the identity of an

organization. Image is typically a representation of the organization made available to stakeholders and parties external to the organization (Whetten, 2006).

The purpose of inquiry in the functionalist perspective is to identify, describe, and provide guidance to executive leaders for the predictable and controllable presentation of organizational identity to stakeholders (Bouchikhi et al., 1998; He & Brown, 2013; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). The key data elements for functionalist research include objective characteristics such as decision making patterns, statements from leaders, organizational artifacts, operational structures, and core principles that make up the reality-like quality of organizational identity (Bouchikhi et al., 1998). This view supports positivist empirical measurement, hypothesis testing, and the determination of organizational identity claims and discourse (Whetten, 2006).

He and Brown (2013) view the psychodynamic perspective as complementary to the functionalist and interpretivist perspectives by addressing unacknowledged processes such as psychological threats, ego defense mechanisms, narcissism, and ganging behavior in organizations. Institutional and population ecologist perspectives are mentioned in a review by Gioia, Patvardhan, et al. (2013). Institutional views emphasize institutional processes and “sameness” between organizations in the same category (e.g. community college) (Glynn & Abzug, 2002). This view does not align with the “distinctiveness” component nor the self-referential aspects of the Albert and Whetten (1985) organizational identity construct. Population ecologists see identity as defined by organizational category (e.g. community college or bank) and the perception of the organization by outsiders. This view is more closely aligned with organizational image than identity (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia et al., 2000).

Postmodern perspective. At its core, a postmodern perspective challenges ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions, questioning even the basis of its own

perspective (Gioia, 1998). A postmodern view depicts organizational identity as fragmented, reflecting the moment, and an illusion that reassures we are the same organization (Gioia et al., 2000), or deconstructs identity and suggests it does not exist at all (Bouchikhi et al., 1998; He & Brown, 2013). The idea that a self-referential perspective has a purpose is incompatible. An approach to inquiry might involve a discursive and image dominated analysis that looks for silence or missing images. The postmodern perspective sees organizational identity as a power structure, reflecting the views of a few at the top of the organizational hierarchy (Boros, 2009; Bouchikhi et al., 1998; Gioia et al., 2000).

Interpretivist perspective. The interpretivist perspective proposes that the fundamental problem is how a collective understanding of “who we are” is constructed by members of an organization (Bouchikhi et al., 1998; Corley et al., 2006; Pratt, 2003). Referred to as a social constructionist view in the current literature, the interpretivist perspective is not only self-referential, it is self-reflective, believing that what is central, enduring, and distinctive about an organization is the result of shared perceptions and understanding of organizational members (Corley et al., 2006; Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013; Ran & Golden, 2011). Central to this perspective are the assumptions that identity is socially constructed and social groups have a need for stability and agreement in the meanings of labels describing identity (Gioia, 1998; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). During periods of organizational change, members engage in periodic sensemaking activities (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). If perceptions of organizational identity do change, they may or may not align with the views of organizational leaders (Corley, 2004).

Based on the assumptions described above, the purpose of an interpretivist inquiry is the discovery of meanings and structures negotiated between members of the organization as they

relate to identity (Bouchikhi et al., 1998). This meanings-based approach holds that organizational identity is influenced by social context and is deeply personal (Blader, 2007; Chreim, 2007; Gioia, 1998; Pratt, 2003). Data important for determining the meanings and structures associated with organizational identity are largely symbolic and include language, behaviors and practices, organizational structures, and documents (Bouchikhi et al., 1998; Pratt, 2003). The next section frames the research literature for community college identity.

Community College Identity

Since the 1970's, empirical research on community colleges has associated mission with organizational identity (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2008; Meier, 2012; Townsend, 1984; Young, Rue, & Gammell, 1981; Zigerell, 1971). In this section, community college identity research since the 1970's was evaluated for common themes and then compared to current views of organizational identity theory. The reason for starting with the 1970's is twofold. First, community college leaders and researchers were examining a shift in mission priority and a need for reform with more commitment than usual during this time period (McCartan, 1983). Second, during the 1970's, the student population served by community colleges became more female, minority, adult, and part-time. There was also a shift from transfer to more continuing education and vocational programs with a renewed emphasis on access (McCartan, 1983; Meier, 2009; Meyer, 1988). The association of mission with identity and the mission diversification debates from the 1970's are still active today (Desai, 2012; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006; Levin, 2001; Shannon & Smith, 2006; Ward, 2001).

This section begins with research that analyzed themes from the publications of community college leaders and a survey of community college presidents. The studies address empirically the claim that community colleges had an identity crisis (Zigerell, 1971). Next,

studies evaluating mission diversification of community colleges are reviewed looking specifically at the connections made between multiple missions and identity. Finally, studies using organizational identity theory constructs are reviewed, providing support for the selection of a social constructionist theoretical framework addressing the research problem and questions for my study.

Social actor studies in the 1970's and 1980's. Two studies by Young used the views of community college leaders to investigate community college identity. Employing an Hegelian dialectic approach, Young (1977) evaluated publications of the top ten community college leaders between 1963 and 1972 and over 300 other books and articles to determine attributes associated with community college identity. The top ten leaders were determined by surveying community college scholars at over 100 universities. The Hegelian dialogue format of Young's data analysis began with a thesis, which gave rise to an anti-thesis and was followed by a synthesis of the juxtaposed findings regarding community college identity. The conceptual framework of Young's study was the dialectic of the egalitarian ideal and elitist ideal of higher education (Wilson, 1970). His analysis showed an egalitarian (thesis) community college identity based on the publication authors' views of the organization, while their descriptions of practice implied an elitist (anti-thesis) identity.

Egalitarian characteristics identified by the participants in the study included a strong connection to the local community and school district, open access, a belief in the benefits of diversity, and an overarching goal of helping students become valuable workers and citizens. Low cost, comprehensive programming, an emphasis on being student centered, and instructional excellence were key principles associated with the egalitarian identity (Young, 1977).

Characteristics of the elitist identity were compiled from descriptions of community college practice in the publications of community college leaders. Young based the elitist identity on the university setting at the time of the study. Elitist characteristics included staff that preferred working with a select group of students, the use of traditional instructional methods, and an overarching purpose to prepare societal leaders. According to the perceptions of community college leaders, community college faculty were linked with a more elitist view of higher education (Young, 1977).

Young inferred that the real community college identity was somewhere between egalitarian and elitist, which he referred to as an opportunity identity model. In this model, the college is open to all students, but students of low ability drop out within the first year. There is high diversity in the student population initially, but students that complete a degree are a homogenous group prepared for college. The college responds to its local community, but is influenced by universities and state funding (Young, 1977). This study provided an interesting look at community college identity research prior to the availability of a formalized organizational identity framework.

Using an organizational identity theory lens, the results of Young's study demonstrate what is called a "hybrid identity" through a social actor perspective. As a social actor, organizations have contractual obligations in society and identity is constructed by leaders to address the organization's role in society (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Organizations with hybrid identities have two or more identities that are central, at least somewhat enduring, and distinctive even though the identities may be at odds with each other (Albert & Adams, 2002). Young's (1977) opportunity identity model for community colleges demonstrates hybridity in the egalitarian processes of open access, opportunity, and community and the elitism of practices

that, for example, weed out students with low academic skills and value students who transfer to a 4-year college or university.

A 1981 study by Young, Rue, and Gammell evaluated the results of a survey of 646 junior college presidents administered by the American Association of Junior Colleges (Young et al., 1981). The participating presidents shared the perception that they were responsible for the identity of the college. They believed that the junior college had a distinct identity different from the university in its approach to accessibility and comprehensive programming. A shift in emphasis from transfer to vocational education was also noted and attributed to the presidents. A comparison of the 1977 and 1981 studies follows.

Both studies used a social actor perspective by emphasizing a view of the community college as an actor in society and by focusing on claims describing the characteristics of the identity of the organization (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). For example, both studies identified open access as a core feature of community college identity, a claim also supported by other community college researchers (Dowd, 2003; Levin, 2001; Rendon, 1999; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). By looking for claims that were central and distinctive as evidence of community college identity, Young and colleagues followed the template of Albert and Whetten (1985) for determining the identity of an organization. An additional attribute of the social actor view in these studies was the use of leadership as the source of organizational identity. In contrast, a social constructionist view would derive organizational identity from the shared perceptions of college staff, faculty, and administrators (Corley et al., 2006).

Community college mission and identity. Community college mission is often used to describe community college identity (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2008; Bailey & Morest, 2004; Dowd, 2003; Levin, 1998c, 2000; Young, 1977; Zigerell, 1971) demonstrating a leadership

driven, social actor perspective. The community college literature is replete with opinion about multiple missions/identities and also recommendations for investigating the merits of mission diversification (Desai, 2012; Dougherty, 1994; Dowd, 2003; Eaton, 1993; Hanson, 2006; Kasper, 2002; Levin, 2000; Meyer, 1988). By associating community college mission with community college identity, researchers have used mission conflict, quantitative data on student retention, completion, and transfer, and a social actor view to debate who community colleges are and what they should be (Dougherty & Townsend, 2006). In keeping with the social actor view, some analysts have pointed to social and economic forces as well as the values and interests of government and college leaders in determining the mission/identity of the community college (Dougherty, 1994; Levin, 2000; Ratcliff, 1987).

In a qualitative multiple case study of seven urban and rural community colleges in Canada and the U.S., college mission perspectives of faculty and administrators were compared to an analysis of programs, policies, and practices. College faculty and administrators reported little change in the college mission. However, the data from analysis of programs, policies, and practices indicated a change in mission which was linked to changes in global economics (Levin, 2000). In previous work, Levin (1998c) described community college identity as embedded in the actions of the college. In this view, the defining features of community college identity are responsiveness, adaptability, and action, all identity claims from a social actor perspective.

In a related study, focus group data from college presidents suggested they questioned whether responsiveness, adaptability, and action might have a detrimental impact on the identity of their college (Gumport, 2003). The study focused on a demand-response scenario associated with providing employer training and basic skills instruction while trying to balance the transfer and vocational education functions. Role ambiguity was identified as a personal issue the

presidents were experiencing as a result of increasing demands and the perceived effect on college identity (Gumport, 2003). Role ambiguity has also been associated with managing multiple identities in the organizational identity research literature (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Pratt & Corley, 2007; Pratt & Foreman, 2000c).

The dominant view in community college identity research presented in this section has been the community college as a social actor with emphasis on the role of institutional categories (e.g. we are a community college) in determining organizational identity (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). Categories do matter, but critics of this view note that a lack of attention to sensemaking by organization members misses important information for exploring the relationship between identity change, actions, processes, and practices (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010; Weick et al., 2005). These are important aspects for understanding the implications of receiving an HSI designation. In the next section, studies using a social constructionist view are reviewed.

Social constructionist studies. A recent community college study used a social constructionist view of organizational identity to investigate how college conditions affect student experiences and how students and college staff influence college academic structures (Levin & Montero-Hernandez, 2009). In this qualitative, multiple case study of five community colleges, how organizational members developed organizational identity through interactions with each other was investigated. In one of the colleges, for example, the organizational identity dimensions of practices, structures, and understanding were what college personnel and students referred to when describing the college. Examples of the labels giving meaning to the dimensions included behaviors such as a caring atmosphere, structures such as programs and services, and how college personnel conceptualized the student population (Levin & Montero-

Hernandez, 2009). The study also explored how college personnel negotiated local, state, and federal systems as a collective.

Studies of mergers between community colleges demonstrate the diverse perceptions of organizational identity that can take place during a significant change. In these studies, administrators described organizational identity oriented with the future while staff connected the future with the past in their perceptions of identity (Brown & Humphreys, 2006; Puusa, Kuittinen, & Kuusela, 2013). Researchers also found faculty and staff may draw meaning from labels associated with place, nostalgia, and profession when negotiating an identity change. When organizational change affects identity, lower level members may hold on to past perceptions when new labels or meanings do not reflect a desired identity (Corley, 2004; Puusa et al., 2013). Members may also adjust meanings to incorporate a slightly different identity that may or may not align with other members (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Harrison, 2000). Multiple perceptions of identity among organizational members are particularly salient for organizations with multiple identities such as community colleges.

Multiple Identities

Studies exploring multiple identities in organizations have focused on how the identities affect organizational function and how leaders respond and manage them (Corley, 2004; Pratt & Corley, 2007; Pratt & Foreman, 2000c). In the community college literature, multiple missions and multiple identities are described as adaptive in nature, the basis for agility in responding to economic and community changes and development of resource streams (Meier, 2012). Multiple identities in organizations have been associated with both negative and positive outcomes.

Negative outcomes. Active management of multiple identities typically comes about when identity conflict or ambiguity are experienced by organizational members (Pratt & Corley,

2007). Ambiguities become apparent when “who we are” as an organization is no longer discernible using previous identity labels or when new identities do not have meaning developed for them yet (Corley & Gioia, 2004). Based on organizational theory research, increasing the number of organizational identities, as in adding the HSI designation for example, may have two effects on members. First, active management of the multiple identities may increase awareness of the identities, increasing uncertainty in individuals as to what their role might be and what they are supposed to do (Pratt & Corley, 2007). Second, the addition of organizational identities may cause competing work demands, resulting in organizational members experiencing role conflict (Pratt & Corley, 2007). For example, in the case of HSIs, faculty may feel they have to choose between their role as instructor and their role in student development when addressing the needs of first-generation, low income, English Language Learners (Greene & Oesterreich, 2012; Hubbard & Stage, 2009). The presence of multiple expectations associated with additional organizational identities can lead to negative outcomes such as anxiety, stress, low satisfaction, and loss of commitment (Pratt & Foreman, 2000c).

In a quantitative study examining faculty perceptions at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and HSIs, community college faculty teaching high percentages of Hispanic students showed significantly lower satisfaction with teaching undergraduate students when compared to faculty in all of the institutions (university and community college) in the study (Hubbard & Stage, 2009). The most significant difference was between community college faculty teaching at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and faculty teaching at HSIs. Faculty members from institutions with high Hispanic enrollment were less satisfied with the quality of undergraduate students, suggesting a faculty deficit orientation toward Latino students (Bensimon, 2005; Harris III & Bensimon, 2007; Hubbard & Stage, 2009). These

findings support observations that receiving the HSI designation by virtue of enrollment does not result in a change in organizational identity (Contreras et al., 2008).

Positive outcomes. Community college history and research has demonstrated the advantages of multiple identities (Bailey & Morest, 2004; Levin, 1998c; Meier, 2012) as do Pratt and Foreman (2000c) when they suggested that organizations with multiple identities are more appealing to internal and external stakeholders. As described previously, scholars have reported the management issues associated with community college multiple missions/identities are outweighed by the flexibility provided by diverse revenue streams and public support (Bailey & Morest, 2004; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006).

To assist members in adapting to additional identities, Pratt and Corely (2007) recommended that leaders first determine whether the organization's multiple identities are held by all individuals or whether specific identities are held by different departments. Second, leaders should determine the current roles employees are dealing with and how individuals identify with the organization (e.g. identifies, does not identify, or is ambivalent). Third, since individual perceptions may differ, organizational members should be involved in deciding which management response to use such as adjusting or reducing institutional roles (Pratt & Corley, 2007). When addressing organizational identity change, two overarching views influence the interpretation of meanings and structures associated with organizational identity.

Enduring and Dynamic Views of Organizational Identity

The “enduring” and “dynamic” identity views both accommodate organizational identity change over time with the primary difference being the speed at which change takes place. Enduring identity, one of three components of the Albert and Whetten (1985) organizational identity theory, depicts change as gradual and cumulative. Over the life span of the organization,

one identity may progressively be substituted for another or one identity may be added, resulting in multiple identities (Albert & Whetten, 1985). In contrast, dynamic identity depicts change as taking place over much shorter periods including radical changes that occur during mergers or change on a continuous basis (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). Organizational identity in this view is fluid yet demonstrates continuity where the labels used by organizational members to describe identity stay the same, but the meanings change as members address environmental challenges (Gioia et al., 2000). Support for the enduring and dynamic views of identity change is discussed in the next section.

Enduring view of identity change. Resistance to identity change is proposed as support for the enduring view where organizational members seek out perceptions of their organization's identity that verify a positive social identity for themselves (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Resistance to organizational identity change would be based on members' perceived effect of the change on their positive social identity and the desire to maintain a positive identity. Studies have also shown the enduring feature of organizational identity is most likely connected to what is central (e.g. key labels, values, history) and is intentionally preserved by organizational members (Corley et al., 2006; Whetten, 2006). Organizational identity can also act as an interpretation filter for organizational members when they encounter challenges and issues. When identity is preserved, it is difficult for members to engage information counter to what is central and distinctive about the organization (Dutton et al., 1994; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006).

Organizational identity is also deeply rooted in the daily social practices of organization members (Nag et al., 2007). Proposed organizational identity changes that do not address the examination and adaptation of daily work practices and dissemination of knowledge can lead to

members holding on to or going back to the previous identity (Nag et al., 2007). Evidence associated with the enduring view of organizational identity relies on a short term examination of the change process, ending when resistance to change is encountered (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). Longitudinal studies have provided a more in-depth analysis of the change process and support the dynamic view of change discussed in the next section.

Dynamic view of identity change. Longitudinal studies have demonstrated that organizational identity does change even though resistance to change was indicated early in the process (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia et al., 2000). These studies and others have shown that organizational identity can change, even during small time spans, while retaining a sense of continuity important to organizational members (Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Consistency in the labels used by members to describe identity even though meanings change is central to this view. Evidence supporting the dynamic view of organizational identity change aligns with the interpretivist or social construction perspective in that the labels are a collective construct from the shared experiences of organizational members (Ran & Golden, 2011; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). The gaps between actual and idealized identities or between identity and image can lead to organizational identity change.

Studies examining change processes have demonstrated how differences between identity and image can engage organizational leaders and other members in the change process (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). In a study examining the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM), Reger, Gustafson, Demarie, and Mullane (1994) found that gaps between the actual and idealized organizational identities played an important role in organizational members' rationale for change. In related studies, organizations dealing with

legitimacy issues change names, norms, or programming to reflect the category they are a part of such as higher education (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Glynn & Abzug, 2002). Some community colleges, for example, have dropped the technical school component of their name or have dropped community from their name completely (Clark, 2009). All of the examples given thus far were a part of planned change within the organization.

Little empirical evidence is available for identity change that is not planned and tends to take place in response to other changes within the organization (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). Based on studies of Hispanic-Serving Institutions, identity change is unplanned. Contreras, Malcom, and Bensimon (2008) found that none of the 10 community colleges and universities examined mentioned the HSI designation in their mission statement. All but one of the institutions had an HSI link on its website, but seven of the links were associated with receiving the HSI designation or a U. S. Department of Education Title V grant. In a study of 19 emerging HSIs, Torres and Zerquera (2012) found that eight institutions were unaware of the implications of an increasing Hispanic population, six institutions were aware, and five were committed to serving Hispanic student and community needs. The methodology of these studies was a content analysis approach looking for key words or labels associated with criteria in the HSI literature (Contreras et al., 2008; Torres & Zerquera, 2012). As mentioned previously, evidence for identity change can be found in a change in the labels or a change in the meaning associated with the labels (Gioia et al., 2000). The studies looking at change in HSIs make the assumption that a change in labels demonstrates intentionality in identity change. However, the socially constructed nature of labels and meanings has not been explored, leaving organizational members' perceptions out of the equation. Insight into the connection between member

perceptions of organizational identity, organization structures, and organizational practice is important for extending the research of identity change in Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

Summary

Organizational identity answers the question of who we are based on what is central, distinctive, and enduring for the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). A social actor perspective considers organizational identity a social fact that is objectively measurable and can be managed by executive leadership to address the organization's role in society (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). This view has dominated the community college literature since the 1970's because of the association of mission, which is under the purview of organizational leadership, with identity. The absence of attention to sensemaking by organization members misses perceptions of identity important for understanding the relationship between identity change, actions, processes, and practices (Gioia et al., 2010; Weick et al., 2005). These are important aspects for understanding the implications of a community college receiving an HSI designation.

The social constructionist perspective is focused on the construction of identity by organizational members and the sensemaking associated with the meanings attached to their perceptions of identity (Bouchikhi et al., 1998; Weick et al., 2005). A few studies have explored how organizational members develop organizational identity through interactions with each other and how members have negotiated local, state, and federal systems as a collective (Brown & Humphreys, 2006; Levin & Montero-Hernandez, 2009; Puusa et al., 2013). These studies demonstrate the importance of member perceptions in understanding the organizational identity dimensions of practices, structures, and how college personnel conceptualized the student population. Using a social constructionist perspective also draws attention to differences in identity perceptions between administrators, faculty, and staff. Administrators tend to be more

strategic and future focused while lower level members may hold on to past perceptions when new labels or meanings do not reflect a desired identity (Corley, 2004; Puusa et al., 2013).

The enduring (Whetten, 2006) and dynamic (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013) views of organizational identity differ primarily in their outlook on the speed of change. The enduring view recognizes gradual change over time evidenced by consistent resistance to change when members strive to preserve what is central and distinctive about the organization. The dynamic view points to longitudinal studies demonstrating that identity change can occur rapidly by maintaining continuity through the use of labels for identifying who we are as an organization (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). A majority of the research has explored planned change, which does not reflect the response of community colleges to the HSI designation (Contreras et al., 2008; Torres & Zerquera, 2012). Identity change in HSIs has focused on the use of labels and meanings of those labels as identified by the HSI literature, not meanings constructed by organizational members.

Finally, multiple identities are a fundamental component of community college agility and adaptability (Meier, 2012). The addition of an identity in the form of a minority-serving institution designation has the potential to cause role ambiguity and role conflict for organizational members when label meanings change or are not yet developed (Pratt & Corley, 2007). If a social actor perspective were to be used in this proposal, it would place the level of analysis with the category (community college) and college leadership view of identity. This functionalist perspective ignores how organizational members negotiate the meanings of the labels used to describe who or what they believe the organization to be (Gioia et al., 2000). A social constructivist perspective is based on member perceptions and the subsequent influence on

programs, services, and interaction with students (Nag et al., 2007) which supports the purpose and research questions of my study.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methodology

This chapter begins with a description of the research methodology, context, and study participants. Next, data collection and the analysis process are explained. The section concludes with a plan for assuring research quality, which includes my positionality as a researcher.

I conducted an instrumental case study of a rural, Hispanic-serving community college using a qualitative research design. Instrumental case studies facilitate the understanding of something outside of the case itself (Stake, 1995). The case study method was selected because the organizational identity of an HSI is contextually complex, and cannot be adequately explored without considering the community, history, mission, and multiple identities associated with a comprehensive community college. Case study strategies are suited to exploring socially complex units such as community colleges and the multiple variables affecting the perceptions of college personnel, practices, and processes (Hartley, 1994).

The case study methodology was based on social constructionism, which aligns with my research problem, questions, and theoretical framework. A constructionist methodology relies on the context and views of the participants to establish meaning (Creswell, 2009). A descriptive approach was taken because of my interest in the perceptions and context of organizational identity within different groups of employees at the college (Stake, 1995). In the social constructionist perspective of my theoretical framework, organizational identity is defined by organizational members negotiating not only who they are as an organization, but also questioning who they want to be (Gioia et al., 2000).

In this case study, the perceptions of administration, faculty, and staff were used to examine a community college's organizational identity after receiving a Hispanic-Serving

Institution designation. In addition to creating meaning for members (who we are as an organization), organizational identity is also embedded in the processes, practices, and knowledge of the organization (Levin & Montero-Hernandez, 2009; Nag et al., 2007). My research questions explored the “what we do” facet of organizational identity because day-to-day processes and practices are owned by individuals and have been developed under the influence of organizational history, values, and efficiency. With this in mind, a shift in individual perceptions of organizational identity may not occur until work routines are involved (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Nag et al., 2007). Analysis of individual and collective perceptions and organizational processes and practices fit a case study’s strength, that is, its ability to incorporate a full body of evidence bringing to light previously unknown relationships and insights (Merriam, 2009). The next section describes the study site with enough detail to allow the reader to determine appropriateness of the chosen case while protecting the anonymity of the institution.

Context

The site of the study was Midwest Community College (a pseudonym), a rural, public, comprehensive two-year college located in Fairview (a pseudonym), a town with a population of over 20,000 in a U.S. Midwestern state. The Carnegie Classification was Associate’s for highest degree granted, public, rural-serving and of medium size (enrollment between 2500 and 7500). The college was governed by a local Board of Trustees and supported in part by county property taxes. When the increase in Latino students reached a federal policy threshold of 25% of the student population, college leaders made the decision to apply for the Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) designation through the U.S. Department of Education. At the time of the study, Hispanic students made up 40% of the total student population at Midwest. A more detailed description of Midwest Community College is provided in Chapter 4.

Study Participants

A case study research methodology bases sample selection on two levels. First is the case itself and second is sample selection within the case (Merriam, 2009). The case or bounded system for this study was a rural community college that had applied for and received a Hispanic-Serving Institution designation from the U.S. Department of Education. A purposeful sample of participants was selected from within the case in order to discover, gain insight, and better understand organizational identity in a rural HSI (Creswell, 2009).

Study participants were initially identified through a screening survey that asked Midwest employees how they felt about the HSI designation, in which area of the college they worked, how many years they had been employed, and if they would be willing to participate in individual interviews. Out of 200 surveys and 43 respondents, eight employees agreed to be interviewed. Snowball sampling was then used to develop a pool of key administrator, faculty, and staff informants (Patton, 2002). Participant selection from the pool was based on three criteria that reflected the purpose of the study.

Selection criterion one was temporal because organizational members evoke the past in different ways when making sense of new identity claims (Schultz & Hernes, 2013). In order to uncover the historical context of organizational identity, participants who were employed at least three years prior to the time of receiving the HSI designation were selected (Anteby & Molnár, 2012). Participants employed since the Title V Improving Hispanic-Serving Institutions grant was completed were included to compare the perceptions of employees who did not participate in activities initially associated with the HSI designation.

Selection criterion two was based on participant role in the institution. Variation in the perceptions of organizational identity between constituent groups is a widely documented

phenomenon (Ashforth, Rogers, & Corley, 2011; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Glynn & Abzug, 2002; Harrison, 2000; Hsu & Elsbach, 2013; Riantoputra, 2010). For example, Corley (2004) found hierarchical differences in perceptions of organizational identity. Individuals at the top of the organizational hierarchy tended to view organizational identity as mission and purpose. At the bottom of the organizational hierarchy, organizational identity was embodied in values and beliefs about the organization. Participants with different roles are likely to view categorizations of organizational identity differently because of what they encounter on an everyday basis in the workplace (Hsu & Elsbach, 2013).

In my study, the initial decision for Midwest Community College to apply for the HSI designation was at the executive leadership level, so executive cabinet members were included as study participants. Faculty were included because they are at the heart of the instructional purpose of the college and view the organization from a student learning and development perspective. Staff members were included in the study because of their perspective on how students navigate the higher education system at Midwest. Deans and directors were included because of their role in carrying out the goals of the institution, supervising personnel, and managing day-to-day work processes.

Selection criterion three was based on the multiple missions/multiple identities of a comprehensive community college. The unique way multiple missions and multiple identities influence the social and organizational design of comprehensive community colleges (Meier, 2012) was important for bringing to light previously unknown relationships and insights associated with organizational identity in Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). The broad role designations of administration, faculty, and staff were further defined by the five missions of a comprehensive community college identified by Cohen and Brawer

(2008): 1) academic transfer; 2) vocational-technical; 3) developmental education; 4) community service; and 5) continuing education. The rationale for this selection criterion was the affect multiple identities may have on member perceptions of organizational identity (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Pratt & Corley, 2007). Participants were selected to ensure each of the five mission areas was represented.

All participants were asked to sign a consent form. The form describes the purpose of the research and assures confidentiality and voluntary participation with the guaranteed option to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was given a copy of the signed consent form. The consent form can be found in Appendix A.

Data Collection

Case studies use a variety of data collection methods to develop an in-depth description and holistic analysis of the case (Merriam, 2009). In my study of organizational identity, individual interviews of eight administrators, eight faculty, and seven staff, field notes, and a review of documents provided the perceptions, rich descriptions, and historical context for building an interpretive case.

Individual Interviews

Interviews were used in this case study to gain access to what had been observed by the study participants during the transition to the HSI designation and to gain insight into their perceptions of organizational identity (Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995). The interviews provided data through a dynamic process where the participants and I collaboratively constructed meaning (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Holestein & Gubrium, 1995). Probing questions were used in this process for the purpose of clarification and to assist participants in thinking more deeply about their experiences (Marshall & Gretchen, 2011). My study consisted of 40 semi-structured

interviews of 23 participants between 30 and 50 minutes in length. The interviews were held in an office in the student services area or in participants' offices, depending upon scheduling issues as most faculty shared an office. Four interviews with administrators either retired or no longer employed at Midwest were conducted by conference call. The same open-ended questions were used for all interviews with minor adjustments for participants who had been employed after receiving the HSI designation. The interview protocol and questions can be found in Appendix B.

All interviews were recorded digitally with the permission of the participants, transcribed verbatim, unitized, and stored in an EXCEL file for analysis. Field notes were taken during the interviews to document a description of the setting and notes about responses. Field notes, interview recordings, and transcripts were stored electronically on a password protected server.

In the first six interviews, the responses to “this is who we are as a college” were very broad in scope, primarily identifying the transfer function, vocational-technical function, and meeting business or community needs. In the remaining first-time interviews and subsequent follow up interviews, participants were asked to describe “this is who we are as a college” to potential students, new community members, a person considering employment at the college, and a new employee they were mentoring. By adjusting the question to include different stakeholders, participant descriptions were more thoughtful and detailed (Patton, 2002). An advantage to having participants respond to different stakeholders was examining similarities and differences in the identity labels and meanings of the labels across all of the responses (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013). A disadvantage was the possibility participants might describe an idealized identity or what the college should be in response to some stakeholders, rather than the reality of “who we are” as an organization (Alvesson & Empson, 2008). To address this

possibility, each of the college identity themes were scrutinized to consider what extent they embodied an idealized form not supported by the analysis of documents, follow up interviews, member checks, and comparison across responses to different stakeholders.

Document Review

Documents played an important role in my case study research by providing access to historical activities and images I was unable to observe and by providing insight into interpretations, assumptions, and actions of the leadership of the college (Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995). I also used the results of my document analysis to generate probe questions, particularly for past events associated with the transition to the HSI designation (Bowen, 2009).

Documentary evidence was instrumental in the process of supporting or challenging data from other sources, increasing the credibility or trustworthiness of the findings (Stake, 1995).

For the purposes of this study, documents were defined as any written, electronic, or otherwise recorded material in existence prior to the time the study began (Forster, 1994). Before and during my visits to Midwest, I obtained documentation associated with the Hispanic-Serving Institution designation and organizational identity. The documentation included vision and mission statements, Board of Trustees meeting minutes, marketing information, college catalogs, research conducted by the college in preparation for grant applications, accreditation documents, institutional effectiveness indicators, process documentation, and annual reports. The volume of documentary data combined with field notes, interview recordings, and transcripts required intentional organization and management of the case study data set.

Data Management

I used a secure, online knowledge and project management program to store, organize, and manage the case study data. The program allows all uploaded content to be backed up via a

zip file that was stored in two separate locations. Audio files, transcription documents, spreadsheets, documents, email, and field notes were uploaded and organized using a nested folder structure to augment searchability.

Data Analysis

In this section I describe the data analysis process for my case study. Well-constructed case studies involve an analysis process that builds a holistic and in-depth description based on an organized data set or case record (Patton, 2002). The analysis process, strategies, and techniques for interpretation were selected based on alignment with the social constructionist perspective of my theoretical framework. In the following sections I provide an overview of the analysis process and general analysis strategy followed by a more detailed description of the specific analysis techniques employed.

Analysis Process and Strategy

Using a layered approach, the analysis process consisted of cross-interview comparisons of administrator, faculty, and staff interviews, grouping together answers and analyzing the perspectives of individuals and of each group (Patton, 2002). This kind of analysis process allows the reader to understand the variation within and between groups, revealing the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002), the collective organizational identity.

A general analytic strategy links the case study to concepts that provide a direction for analyzing the data (Patton, 2002). The theoretical framework for my study was used to guide and organize the data analysis process. The core content of interviews, documents, and field notes were analyzed from the social constructionist perspective of organizational identity. The purpose of inquiry for this view is to understand the meanings and structures negotiated between members as they relate to the identity of the organization (Bouchikhi et al., 1998).

Analysis Technique

Principal patterns or themes in the data were identified through multiple cycles of coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling (Patton, 2002). The themes provided a structure for extracting meaning, making comparisons, and building explanations during the interpretive phase. Analysis of data started after the first documents were analyzed and continued through subsequent interviews and additional document analyses. Data was prepared for analysis by unitizing or disaggregating the data into independent, standalone units in Microsoft Word. The unitized data was then copied and pasted into Microsoft EXCEL for content analysis.

Throughout data collection, the themes were checked against new data and adjusted until no new information or insights were identified and the themes were believed to be integrated (Merriam, 2009). The themes were tested for completeness based on whether they were consistent and appeared to be a complete representation of the data. Inclusiveness of all data and being descriptive of organizational identity were additional tests of completeness. All categories had the same level of abstraction, showing distinct differences between themes and subthemes. Finally, follow up interviews and member checks demonstrated credibility of the themes (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). The design of data collection, data management, and data analysis processes involves several aspects of research quality and researcher positionality.

Research Quality and Researcher Positionality

Qualitative research studies can address concerns of quality through the conceptualization of the study and the design of data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods (Merriam, 2009). Eight criteria for qualitative research quality have been proposed by Tracy (2010) from the best practices of interpretive, poststructural researchers. The criteria are 1) a worthy topic, 2) rich rigor, 3) sincerity, 4) credibility, 5) resonance, 6) significant contribution, 7) ethics, and

8) meaningful coherence. The eight criteria represent common end goals of the research process. I applied the first seven to highlight the strategies I used to address research quality in this study. I have embedded my positionality where appropriate throughout the criteria.

Worthy Topic

Worthy topics can be found in timely, relevant, and interesting societal, political, or personal events (Tracy, 2010). In my study, the Hispanic-Serving Institution designation was a political response to a societal issue of low post-secondary attainment in the fastest growing demographic in the United States (Santiago, 2012). The question of how organizational identity changes when a college becomes a minority-serving institution by virtue of demographics is timely, relevant, and interesting, particularly in an organization with multiple identities like a community college. On a personal level, I have spent the past 22 years working in a community college that has transitioned to an HSI and whose first-time, full-time student population is now 60% minority. In my current role as Director of Research and Assessment, I have seen how perceptions of the identity of the institution as an HSI might impact teaching, student learning, and service to the community.

Rigor

Rigor for this study was achieved through an appropriate theoretical framework, rich descriptions and explanations, and carefully constructed data collection and analysis methods. An organizational identity theoretical framework supported the social constructionist foundation of my research methodology. The framework was also appropriately complex, encompassing the individual, collective, and institutional aspects of organizational identity. My use of semi-structured interviews and document analysis provided a data set capable of producing a case

study with rich descriptions and explanations of organizational identity from the views of administrators, faculty, and staff (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013).

Sincerity

Sincerity means that the potential affect of a researcher's bias, goals, and personal experiences on the study are communicated through honesty and transparency in the research process (Tracy, 2010). Through self-reflexive practice I examined my own predilections and opinions, including them in a research journal in consideration of the needs of the participants and potential readers of the study (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). My data collection and analysis methods were detailed, demonstrating transparency in the process of collecting, sorting, selecting, and organizing the data. Field notes and journaling were used to disclose challenges and the unexpected.

In my institution, I have been a full time faculty member, division chair, grant writer, and grant director. I played a supporting role in the implementation of a Title V Improving Hispanic Institutions grant. I have also assisted in writing and implementing an HSI Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics grant. Some of the activities involved data collection, analysis of student success, and the facilitation of student and staff focus groups. For the past 10 years I have served as project director, student academic advisor, and research mentor for Hispanic students participating in a National Institutes of Health Bridges to the Baccalaureate program, which supports community college students in completing a bachelor's degree at a R1 university. Once students are accepted into the program, I am their primary academic advisor and get to know their family and work situations. I also mentor each student to conduct an original research project associated with his or her area of academic interest. An important part of the program is involving students' families in the transition process to the university level. I chair

the college assessment committee, working with faculty on issues of student learning associated with an underserved student population (first-generation, minority, low income). I also write the college systems portfolio, the primary document for accreditation. In my current role as Director of Research and Assessment, I facilitate the strategic planning and institutional goals process for the college and assist programs during their review process.

My experiences in a community college HSI are in-depth and range from the classroom to the organizational level. This can be an advantage in the field and during the analysis process, but it was also a challenge to avoid transplanting my organizational view and experiences onto the community college I was studying. An HSI is my lived experience and recognizing when and where that experience comes into play during my study was an important reflective activity. Consistent self-talk in asking “Is this my experience or what the case is revealing?” was an important part of my research process.

Credibility

Credibility or trustworthiness was achieved through rich, thick description, triangulation, multivocality, and member reflections. Thick description provides enough detail so that the reader can come to his or her own conclusions (Stake, 1995). Verbatim transcription of interviews and detailed field notes were used to explore assumptions and implicit knowledge that often remains hidden, guiding participant action and behavior. Document analysis provided a historical view of Midwest’s transition to the HSI designation and insight into the organizational identity. Triangulation, in qualitative terms, assumes that making use of multiple data sources, theoretical constructs, and research methods allows different aspects of a research problem to be explored, deepening understanding and interpretation consistency (Marshall & Gretchen, 2011).

Multiple data sources for my study included semi-structured interviews, field notes, document analysis, member checks, and peer review of my findings and conclusions.

Multivocality suggests that researchers are aware of divergent viewpoints from the dominant participant perceptions (Belzile & Öberg, 2012) and cultural differences between the researcher and participants. Participant selection methods, data analysis, and my interpretation process allowed for recognition of divergent viewpoints. I also spent over 60 hours during a five month period on the campus at Midwest.

Throughout my data analysis and interpretation processes I acknowledged that I am a 55 year old White male who grew up in a predominantly White rural community in the 1960's and 1970's. Even though my experiences since that time have changed how I view people different from me, the childhood and adolescent experiences are still parts of me and require acknowledgement. I have been a member of a mixed race, Hispanic family for the past 35 years and grew up working with Mexican immigrants employed on my family's farm. My family experiences are with people that have chosen assimilation rather than acculturation, so the knowledge I have about Mexican culture has come from a few stories, working with farm employees, and interacting with students and their parents. It is my work with students and their families through the NIH Bridges to the Baccalaureate program that has helped allay some personal biases and stereotyping. Reflecting on my own biases and stereotype views helped me to understand the thoughts and feelings of people who have limited experiences with a different culture. My field notes and research journal were used to document my thoughts and feelings when divergent views were communicated by participants and when I encountered my own biases during observations, data analysis, and interpretation of findings.

Member checks improve credibility by seeking input from participants during the data analysis and reporting process (Marshall & Gretchen, 2011). I used follow up interviews and email as member checks to corroborate the study findings with the understandings of the participants. Member checks were also incorporated as an additional data source, providing participants an additional opportunity for reflexive input. Seventeen of the 23 participants in my study agreed to do follow up interviews as part of the member check process. The participants who were unable or unwilling to be interviewed a second time responded to the organizational identity and Hispanic-Serving Institution findings via email.

Resonance

Resonance refers to the study's ability to affect the reader and can be achieved through aesthetics and transferability (Tracy, 2010). Transferability is achieved when readers feel the research story may apply or transfer to their situation. My case study describes the transition of Midwest Community College to Hispanic-serving status and the organizational identity from the perspective of administrators, faculty, and staff in a rural community college HSI. The findings and conclusions allow others with an interest in community college HSIs to determine the relevance to their situation.

Significance

A study's significant contribution may be judged on several criteria. For the purposes of this study, extending knowledge, generating further research interest, and improving practice are addressed (Tracy, 2010). Research may offer a theoretical contribution by exploring how existing theory makes sense in a different setting. My study examined organizational identity within a community college that received a federal Hispanic-Serving Institution designation. Organizational identity theory has been used in a few higher education studies concerned

primarily with managing organizational image issues, mergers, and new institutions developing an identity (Brown & Humphreys, 2006; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Hastings, 2000; Levin & Montero-Hernandez, 2009; Puusa et al., 2013). This case study is of interest to HSIs, minority-serving institutions, community college researchers, and organizational theorists particularly since community college operations are based on a multiple identity structure. Administrator, faculty, and staff perceptions of organizational identity are important to understand when identity changes do take place in a community college (Corley, 2004). This knowledge is also important from a practical standpoint in helping community college leaders make decisions associated with managing multiple organizational identities (Illia, 2010; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Pratt & Corley, 2007).

Ethical Practice

A variety of practices address ethics including procedural, situational, relational, and exiting ethics (Tracy, 2010). Procedural ethics refer to actions dictated by Wichita State University and the Educational Leadership program. Protection of participant confidentiality was a key procedural ethics consideration. A participant consent form describing the nature and potential consequences of the research was used. The consent form also described the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Participant confidentiality was assured through secure data storage in a password protected electronic environment and the removal of all identifying information before being published.

Situational ethics assumes that each situation is different, requiring the researcher to reflect on his/her decisions. In my study, observations of participants in interviews provided the opportunity and behavioral data to reflect on the appropriateness of my methods from the perspective of the participants.

Relational ethics values respect, dignity, and the relationship between researcher and participants. Empathetic listening, keeping appointments and promises, following up with questions and concerns, and sharing findings were ways I addressed relational ethics.

Exiting ethics was concerned with how to present the research without unintended consequences. Negative information at the individual, collective, or institutional level was weighed against the danger of further marginalizing individuals or groups, its potential for helping the institution, necessity in answering the research questions, and making a substantial contribution to understanding of the case (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Every effort was made to minimize harm to participants and the institution.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Chapter four presents the findings from data collected during this case study. Insight into the organizational identity of Midwest Community College as it transitioned to a Hispanic-Serving Institution was gained through an analysis of interviews and documents. This chapter is organized around recurrent themes associated with participant perceptions of “this is are who we are” as college, what being Hispanic-serving means and looks like at Midwest, and what changes in practice have taken place as the Hispanic student population increased. The chapter begins with a reintroduction of Midwest Community College and the study participants followed by an analysis of college planning documents and reports. In the next section, the document analysis provides context for interpretation of the history of Midwest’s transition to a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Next, organizational identity themes are identified and used to gain additional insight into the transition process and Hispanic-serving qualities of Midwest. The chapter concludes with participants’ reaction to receiving the HSI designation and an analysis of changes in practice. In order to protect anonymity of the participants and institution, references to specific dates and some types of grants have been removed from the text. Relevant historical data about the community and the college are not cited if it could potentially lead to the loss of anonymity.

Midwest Community College

Midwest Community College was a rural, public, comprehensive two-year college located in Fairview, a town with a population of over 20,000. The service area of the college was categorized as nonmetropolitan, a combination of countryside, rural towns with populations of less than 2,500, and urban areas with populations of less than 50,000 (USDA Economic Research Service, 2013). The Carnegie Classification was Associate’s for highest degree

granted, public, rural-serving and of medium size (enrollment between 2500 and 7500). The college was governed by a local Board of Trustees and supported in part by county property taxes. State funding was also part of the revenue stream, though the amount had been steadily decreasing, making local tax support very important to college operations.

Economy. The economic base of the college service area was primarily agriculture and energy. The agriculture sector had shifted from family owned farms to corporate farms and livestock operations over the past 25 years. The agriculture and energy sectors relied on semi-permanent labor, the majority coming from Mexico.

Population. The population served by Midwest Community College was predominantly White until an increase and expansion of a primarily Mexican population started in the 1990's (Hamann, Wortham, & Murillo, 2002; Lichter & Johnson, 2009). By 2000, Mexican immigrants made up 59% of the foreign-born population in the Midwestern, nonmetropolitan "offset" counties in the United States. In these counties, declining native populations were offset by immigration and relocation of the Mexican population (Donato, Tolbert, Nucci, & Kawano, 2008). The service area of Midwest Community College had experienced a loss of White population, but a net gain in total population because of Mexican immigration and relocation of permanent and undocumented residents (Lichter & Johnson, 2006). The college had been a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) prior to industry and labor shifts in the agriculture and energy sectors.

A minority-majority shift in the local P-12 school system followed a pattern of elementary to middle school with the high school lagging because of high dropout rates for both documented and undocumented Mexican immigrant students. In 1998, the school system reached minority-majority status and had a 70% Hispanic student population at the time of the

study. As high school graduation rates improved, more immigrant students began matriculating to Midwest Community College.

When the increase in Latino students reached a federal policy threshold of 25% of the student population, college leaders made the decision to apply for Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) status. Shortly after receiving the HSI designation, the college was awarded a federal Title V Developing Hispanic Institutions Program grant (U.S. Department of Education, 2013) to add programs and services targeting Hispanic students with some of the funding set aside for long-term investment by the Midwest Community College Foundation. The grant funds were not limited to providing Hispanic students with additional services and programming, but were intended for improvement of Hispanic student degree completion, transfer, employment opportunities, and organizational financial stability. At the time of this study, the student population was 40% Hispanic.

Educational services. Using an accepted community college mission typology (Cohen & Brawer, 2008), Midwest Community College offered programming and services in 1) academic transfer; 2) vocational-technical; 3) developmental education; 4) community service; and 5) continuing education. Community services and continuing education frequented by the Mexican immigrant population included Adult Basic Education services such as English as a Second Language, family literacy, American citizenship classes, and a GED high school equivalency diploma in Spanish. The Small Business Development and Business and Industry offices offered classes in English and Spanish for the workplace.

Campus experience. The main public entrance for Midwest Community College was a recently constructed addition to the administrative building which housed a one-stop shop for student services and partnership programs with the community. Upon arrival to the campus, I

noted visitors, community members, and students were greeted by friendly information desk staff that also answered and directed calls for the main college phone number. I used an alcove with seating and a coffee table inside the first floor entrance as a staging area to prepare for upcoming interviews. An intermittent flow of students accessing advisors, counselors, financial aid, business office, and registrar were met with smiles and “how can I help you?” Hispanic student services staff and maintenance staff greeted each other in Spanish. Walking through the student services area there were financial aid and other college brochures in bins affixed to the wall. Some of the federal student aid information was in Spanish.

The Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Education Diploma (GED), and associated grant programs had been moved from an offsite location to this building in 2006. Staff and administration said the move was intentional in order to get the ABE/GED students comfortable with the college campus and atmosphere. Exiting the building, I entered what employees and students called the “quad,” an area of tree lined walks, benches, and flowers surrounded on four sides by an academic classroom building, the library, math and sciences building, and the student services/administration building. The quad was where I saw students gathering, usually outside the academic classroom building and the library. An electronic sign along a walkway connecting to the student center posted calendar events such as enrollment deadlines, athletic events, and student activities. Reception areas where faculty and staff offices were located always had someone present to help students or visitors like me find their destination and connect with the person being sought. The grounds and buildings were well kept, adding to the comfortable and welcoming atmosphere. The interactions between students and employees were relaxed and good-natured, as were the student-to- student interactions I observed. I was always greeted in a friendly manner when meeting students and employees on my walks across campus.

Study Participants

The 23 study participants, 16 females and 7 males, represented current and past administration (8), faculty (8), and staff (7) including presidents, and representatives from instructional services, student services, and administrative services. Five of the participants were employed elsewhere or retired at the time of the study. Nineteen had been employed during the time the HSI designation was received, four had been employed after receiving the designation, and 10 participants had been employed long enough to experience a significant part of the transition from less than 10% Hispanic students to 40% at the time of the study. Because of the low racial and ethnic diversity among professional employees, race/ethnicity data are not shared in order to protect anonymity. The participants also represented the five commonly accepted typologies for community college mission and identity: 1) academic transfer; 2) vocational-technical; 3) developmental education; 4) community service; and 5) continuing education (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). In the next section, an analysis of events leading to the HSI designation will provide context for the organizational identity discussion later in the chapter.

Transition to a Hispanic-Serving Institution

The analysis of mission statements, information on college websites, and student success data have been used by researchers to evaluate institutional action in response to increases in Hispanic student enrollment and the transition to Hispanic-Serving Institution status (Contreras et al., 2008; Torres & Zerquera, 2012) In the next section, a similar analysis of Midwest Community College is described with an emphasis on college planning processes and performance results for student success indicators.

College mission and planning processes. A review of Midwest Community College mission and purpose statements, 2004-2013 Annual Reports to the Public, Board of Trustees

minutes from 2004-2014, and strategic plan showed no reference to the college as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. These college documents, with the exception of the mission and purpose statements, referred to the student population and local community (Fairview) in general as diverse. References to the Hispanic demographics of Midwest students and Adult Learning Center students were reported in Board of Trustees minutes during the time period the college was applying for the HSI designation and Title V grant. There was no record of similar documentation prior to or after this time period. Student race/ethnicity data was not disaggregated to include Hispanic demographics in the Midwest Annual Reports to the Public until 2012-13.

Performance indicators. The state Board of Regents requires each college to submit performance indicators indicating plans to achieve 3-year targets or goals. Performance indicators identified during the time period of receiving the HSI designation included targeted increases in Hispanic student enrollment, increased retention of Hispanic students, and an increase in the number of ABE/GED students transitioning to college. After the HSI designation was received, no specific indicators addressing Hispanic student success were included in new performance agreements (developed every three years) until the current agreement which targets an increase in Hispanic graduates in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. An additional performance indicator in the current agreement focuses on increasing the success of non-native speakers of English in the first college level writing course, which would likely have some Hispanic students as part of the cohort. The Regents have changed the format for the next round of agreements, removing the option to focus an indicator on improving the performance of a specific student population.

Strategic plan. One reference to a college strategic plan was found in the 2007 Midwest Annual Report, which documented the launch of a five-year, 2008-2013 plan. The goals of the plan were meeting workforce needs, recruiting students, increasing enrollment, facilities improvement, and developing local partnerships. The proposed strategies for meeting workforce needs, recruiting, and increasing enrollments were for all student groups with an emphasis on non-traditional students. There were no strategies specifically directed at Hispanic students. Aggregate total enrollment was the only metric associated with the strategic plan that was reported annually.

Key institutional outcomes. Midwest Community College also had a set of key institutional outcomes that included essential skills, academic advancement, and work preparedness for students, personal enrichment for the community, and workforce development. The key outcomes were developed by the Board of Trustees and administration and functioned as institutional effectiveness indicators. None of the institutional outcomes addressed diversity in any way.

I analyzed board minutes and annual reports from 2004 through 2014 and found references to the key outcomes throughout. There were no specific metrics listed, however, the Board of Trustees meeting minutes and annual reports documented how the key outcomes were accomplished as a result of student activities, recognition of students, student organizations, grant projects, partnerships, and recognition the college received at the state or national level. Hispanic students were a part of the key outcomes report narrative, but there were no institutional measures specifically tracking Hispanic student success. Aside from the documents produced during the application period for the HSI designation and Title V grant, references to improving Hispanic student access and success were not found.

Midwest had an inconsistent history of data use for setting goals and tracking equity in student outcomes for Hispanic students. Between 2000 and 2012, goal setting and data use associated with Hispanic student access and success was primarily through grant preparation and meeting grant objectives.

The next section depicts the history of Midwest as described by administrator, faculty, and staff participants. Study participants were not directly asked to describe the transition of Midwest Community College to HSI status; however, they consistently referred to a history of Hispanic presence in Fairview and at the college. Three of the participants were lifelong residents of Fairview and six had lived in the community for 20 or more years. Recorded history and census data for Fairview are referred to throughout the section in order to provide context for my interpretation of the interview data.

History of Fairview

Participants residing in Fairview for more than 20 years stated there has always been a large Hispanic population in the community. The community had a history of Mexican immigrants working in various agriculture industries. The actual size of the population fluctuated with the growing season and long-term economic swings, but a barrio has consistently had a presence in the community since the early 1900's. The community recently celebrated its 88th annual Mexican Fiesta, an event started by the Mexican immigrant population to celebrate Mexico's independence from Spain. To put the participants' claim of always having a large Hispanic population in perspective, one respondent noted "when the beef packing plants came in it [Hispanic population] just catapulted, so that's really when we as a community turned that corner of being a little White farming community." The beef packing industry moved into the

area in the 1980's. Prior to that time, Fairview was over 80% White with a small permanent Hispanic population.

Racial/ethnic diversity. Study participants described the racial/ethnic makeup of Fairview as highly diverse. Longtime residents related the impact of the relocation of Southeast Asian refugees in the 1960's and 1980's, and the recent relocation of refugees from Burma and Somalia on the diversity of the community. One participant who has been employed at the college for 25 years described the community as "so diverse that . . . it's normal, I mean, walk around our town, walk around our grocery stores. Who do you see? You see all kinds of different people." Based on the racial/ethnic diversity of small rural towns in the surrounding area, the community would seem diverse in comparison. According to Wong (2007), interacting with people from different race/ethnicities in a community setting such as a grocery store may give one a feeling of being in a highly diverse community, but the actual scale of what highly diverse or large Hispanic population means can vary based on the environment being referenced. Another participant described their experience as "living here for 15 years, I'm overwhelmed as far as the way the community embraces diversity, because I think there are very few communities overall that would support and embrace the multiple races and populations that Fairview does have." It is important to again note that in 1980, Fairview was over 80% White and the refugees mentioned previously made up about 5% of the population. By 2000, Fairview was 50% White, 44% Hispanic, and 6% Black or Asian. At the time of my study, Fairview had reached minority-majority status.

Large Hispanic population. Long-time employees described always having a large Hispanic population at Midwest. What do *always* and *large* mean with respect to the student population? Participants referenced a large African-American student population associated with

athletics, which was 7% of the total student population. Comparatively, Fairview was 2% Black or African American. Using 7% as a scale for what respondents called large, the Hispanic student population had indeed been large for a number of years, crossing the 10% threshold in the early 1990's and increasing to 40% at the time of the study.

Commenting on the size of the Hispanic student population, one of the participants who had been at the college for 28 years put it this way, "We've always had a fairly high number, it's grown a bit . . . some of that is probably just in culture, because some of them [Hispanics] never had a dream of going to college and I think that has changed." Based on a comparison of interview responses and data from the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS), participant perceptions of always having a *fairly high* or *large* Hispanic population were skewed. I quantified their perception of fairly high and large as between 7% and 10%, which may have seemed large at the time, but did not compare in size to the 40% level at Midwest during the time of the study. The perception of always having served a large Hispanic student population had been continuous over the past two decades even though the actual percentages were quite different. Interview data and document analysis showed institutional action in addressing the needs of the Hispanic student population was not a priority until the population had reached 20%.

Acknowledging the Needs of an Increasing Hispanic Student Population

Administrator participants present during the application process for the HSI designation described thresholds of 50% for Hispanics in the community and public school as a trigger for prioritizing and taking action at the college. The assumption was, as the population increased, there would likely be an increase in Hispanic students that could benefit from educational

services at Midwest. The action taken by Midwest, however, did not result in Hispanic-specific programming or services.

During the time period between 2000 and 2005, the Hispanic student population at Midwest had increased to 20%, and there were grant activities designed to address the needs of underserved and at-risk populations. One administrator participant described a “serving all students” approach:

We had the transition coordinator as part of a [grant]. That would have started in 2000. But outside of [transitioning students from] ABE and GED, that was really the only activity we were doing . . . You know, yes we had been serving all students that walked in the door, but we had not been making a concerted effort on [Hispanic students] prior to 2005 or 2006.

Another administrator described providing several professional development opportunities for employees via grant funds from 2000 to 2005; however, faculty and staff participants could not recall having attended any training specifically for working with Hispanic students. Faculty and staff participants also reported the Hispanic population increase and the opportunity for additional funding to improve services and programs for all students as justification for applying for the HSI designation.

Justification for the HSI designation. Even though long time faculty, staff, and administrators said Midwest had been serving a large Hispanic student population for several years, they identified an increase in the Hispanic student population as playing a role in defining a need to take action. One administrator participant described the realization as “we were starting to see our overall percentage on the demographics change, and so I think we saw there was a need to become more involved in the conversations and discussions about how to serve

Hispanic students.” Faculty participants present during the same time period did not communicate similar perceptions of a Hispanic demographic shift triggering discussions. Conversations had been taking place among administrators and a participant involved in the HSI designation application described the role of one of the college leaders in bringing focus to the situation.

[Administrator] was very passionate about making sure that we served the community and serving the community means we need to have 50% Hispanics on campus. It just made sense that we do that. And so what can we do to make that happen? We were fighting for that [Title V grant] because we thought that we would have some resources then to maybe make that happen.

Faculty and staff participants described an absence of college-wide conversations about focusing on the needs of Hispanic students, an experience much different from what had taken place among administrators. Based on faculty and staff participant responses, the conversations and push toward applying for the HSI designation took place at the administrative level.

When asked who was involved in the decision to apply for the HSI designation, all participants who were present during that time answered by either identifying the administrators involved or assumed that it was the President’s cabinet that made the decision. The college president at the time of the HSI designation confirmed that it was a cabinet decision. The administrator in charge of the application described the events leading to filing the application this way:

We knew we were getting hopes high in terms of a possible [Hispanic student population] percentage of 25% and there was a real focus at the time of trying to get us to mirror or more closely mirror the community population. Fairview is pretty diverse in terms of

race and ethnicity and we weren't matching that in the student population. The work we were doing in the . . . grant was getting us closer. We thought we were getting closer in terms of percentages. We started making a concerted effort towards reaching that magical 25% mark and obviously had to apply.

The focus on more closely mirroring the community population was not a common justification among interview responses, although participants did refer to a Hispanic population increase as part of the justification. Faculty and staff participants were making assumptions because they did not remember a justification being communicated college wide and they were not part of the discussion.

Motivation for the HSI designation. While study participants described the increase in the Hispanic population as the justification for applying for the HSI designation, most also described the opportunity for grant funds as the *motivation* to apply for the designation. A staff member who had worked on the application said:

You do it for the grant. You do it for the dollars, the benefits to your students, the things that we can improve on for our students. I mean, otherwise, who cares that we are a Hispanic-Serving Institution? Our numbers will tell you that . . . What does the designation do for us and our students? And I think that's the bottom line is the students and what you can do for them.

Grant funding as the motivation for applying for the HSI designation was a frequent perception among participants employed during the application period. Title V grant funds were an attractive opportunity because of the focus on new program development and expansion of facilities through brick and mortar projects. A common theme among responses from all participants was if there were no possibility of external funding, it is not likely the college would

have applied for the HSI designation. It is important to note that participants hired after the designation was received did not know the college was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Communication of the HSI designation. When asked how receiving the HSI designation was communicated to faculty, staff, and the community, participants either did not remember, did not think it was communicated, or assumed that it was communicated via email and press release. Most of the administrator participants made the assumption it was communicated through campus email, the college website, and local newspaper. The administrator participant responsible for the application, however, did not remember doing anything special to communicate with faculty and staff. Participants did remember a formal announcement about receiving the Title V grant. My review of Board of Trustees minutes, college annual reports, and the community newspaper found no mention of receiving the designation while communicating receipt of the Title V grant.

A more in-depth exploration of Midwest's transition to a Hispanic-Serving Institution was evaluated through the analysis of participant perceptions of the organizational identity. Participant reaction to receiving the HSI designation and responses to what Hispanic-serving means and looks like at Midwest were also analyzed to corroborate the organizational identity findings. The next section explores participant views of "this is who we are" as a college.

Perspectives on the College Identity

Participant perceptions of the organizational identity of Midwest were based on responses to questions about this is who we are as a college. Overall, administrator, faculty, and staff perceptions of the college identity were nearly identical in the types of labels and meanings of the labels used to describe Midwest's organizational identity. One exception was staff did not

initially mention financial stability as part of the organizational identity, but did agree the label was accurate in follow up interviews. Common themes or labels for organizational identity at Midwest were the college is a community, quality, financial stability, being student-centered, and serving a diverse student population.

College is a Community

Both longtime employees and those employed less than five years agreed the college had a community feel, providing a caring environment and a sense of belonging for students and employees. One participant described communicating to potential employees, “The one thing that I try to impress upon people is the family environment. It is a family environment here. Everybody gets to know everybody, and we kind of look out for one another.” Most participants referred to an area in the student center that provided clothing, bedding, toiletries, school supplies, and snacks for students in need. A majority of the supplies were donated by college employees. A faculty participant shared, “When we have students come in and talk to us, I always tell them we are their lifelines. There is somebody here that is always going to help you and that leads to that [feeling of] family.”

A few participants described their perception of the college as safe and having a very comfortable feel. Two faculty and a staff participant described student athletes from large urban areas wanting to remain on campus rather than return home over holidays and the summer because they felt safe and a part of the college. Another participant described working at the college as, “You go to school here and your kids can go to school here tuition free and family comes first. If you have something happen, you can go. For me that is comfortable, security.”

When asked if the “college is a community” identity had changed over time, one participant replied:

No, it's been the norm. I always tell students . . . and I truly, truly believe this, I think every person on this campus cares about the students except for a couple of handfuls. But otherwise, I think that our intentions are good, that we want them to succeed. We would help any student.

Participants also talked about the challenges at Midwest, but the campus climate and attitude of employees and students reflected a caring and supportive environment. My personal experiences aligned with participant claims of family, community, and caring as part of the college identity and are described below.

I spent over 60 hours during a five month period traversing the Midwest campus while conducting participant interviews and reviewing documents. I visited briefly with employees at all levels and exchanged greetings with students on my travels to academic buildings, student and community services, administrative services, the library, maintenance, residence halls and student center, the technical center, and athletics facilities. As a visitor, I experienced an open, welcoming campus environment and a commitment to be of service by employees and students alike.

Midwest did not wait until students were attending classes to make them feel comfortable coming to campus. The Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO), a student organization, sponsored a Hispanic Student Day for area high school juniors and seniors. Students went on campus tours and engaged with speakers about college life and educational goals. Representatives from admissions, financial aid, counseling, and faculty from different programs met with the students to answer questions about college processes, support services, and academic expectations. Faculty also went to the local high school to assist students with enrollment.

In some cases the college community was extended to Fairview with employees serving as a resource for new families. One staff participant described assisting immigrant families with basic necessities and college information upon their arrival to the community.

There have been some families that are migrants and since they don't realize that the students can go to college, I tell them, "Look, there's everything at the college." They can think people look mean, but they are not mean. It's just you have to get to know them. They [migrant families] come in here, they are lost. I try to give them information and then go ahead and set them up, meaning find them that apartment, find them the resources they need for them to stay. We have [sometimes] collected money to get them started. We try to help them as much as we can.

The college was not the only source of assistance for families and students in need, but the study participants' view was of Midwest as a community supporting its employees and students while also serving as a resource and partner for Fairview and the service area.

Participant interview data and my interaction with students and employees demonstrated a caring atmosphere at Midwest and a personal investment in students by employees at the college. The interpersonal relationship aspects of the "college is a community" identity were also evident in participant perceptions of quality and being student-centered, discussed in the sections that follow.

Quality

Study participants described quality as a core identity component of Midwest Community College. Participants identified a faculty and staff whose strength is teaching and being available for students as characteristics of Midwest's quality identity. I did not observe teaching practice, but as I waited outside faculty offices for interviews, I was often sitting with students who had

appointments or were dropping by to visit with faculty. There was an atmosphere that welcomed student-faculty interaction with division secretaries assisting in managing the flow of appointments and drop-ins. Faculty participants noted the low instructor student ratio as a benefit to students, an attribute associated with a quality teaching environment. Participants relied primarily on their personal experiences and did not reference specific data to support their quality claims.

Midwest participated in quality initiatives such as the National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP) and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The use of a student satisfaction survey was stopped after the college began using the CCSSE. I found no reference to the results of the benchmark data or surveys in college documents or in interview responses associated with “quality” identity label. Student services administrators referred to the use of retention and graduation data in their review of processes and policies. The only other formalized use of performance data associated with institutional quality was during the preparation of grant applications. Midwest tended to rely on external recognition as validation of their perceptions of quality rather than internal measures.

Midwest was recognized as one of the top 150 community colleges in the U.S. by The Aspen Institute (2015). The selection process used performance on metrics in three key areas: (1) student persistence, degrees awarded, completion, and transfer; (2) consistent improvement in these areas over time; and (3) outcome equity for students of all racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. According to one administrator, Midwest has had a focus on improving retention for the past 10 years and has devoted considerable resources to retention of students on academic probation over the past five years with measurable improvement.

The college was also recognized by external agencies for its graduation and transfer rates, accommodation of U.S. service personnel and veterans, and work with rural community colleges. Midwest athletic, academic, and technical programs have been successful at the state and national level in collegiate competitions. One faculty member described the college as “an institution that doesn't settle. I think that goes across the board. We are an institution that strives to be top in our areas.” Another faculty member noted the dynamic programs and the freedom and support to be creative and “carve out your niche.”

Participants were proud of the recognition the college and students had received for exemplary performance, although the Hispanic-Serving Institution designation was not identified as part of the recognition or as a quality identity component. Participants attributed their success to many components of the college identity such as the family atmosphere, quality, and financial stability.

Financial Stability

During follow up interviews and member checks, all participants agreed that financial stability was a component of the college's identity. One administrator described Midwest as, “a very stable community college, particularly when you take a look at the financial situation across the state. Midwest Community College is in a very stable position with the tax base and population base that we have.” Financial stability does distinguish Midwest from other HSIs, which, on average, have less funding support than other institutions (Ann-Marie Nunez, Hoover, Pickett, Stuart-Carruthers, & Vasquez, 2013). The amount of funding support at the local level also distinguished Midwest from other community colleges in the state.

A recent change in administration had shifted Midwest to a growth-oriented tact, which meant shutting down programs that are no longer viable and pursuing new programs through

partnerships with businesses and other colleges. One administrator described the changes as being progressive with respect to enrollment growth and new programs.

Midwest is a very progressive community college. Basically from the president on down the viewpoint is that we're trying to grow the college. You know if you're not growing, you're moving backwards. It's one of those where it's not about quantity. We're not going out there and trying to recruit students just for the sake of recruiting them, we're also trying to be quality about it. We've really taken concerted efforts toward being able to grow on the academic side so we've brought on some new programs. But we're also being progressive in the sense that we see there is a potential for growth on the athletic side as well. [We are also] trying to enhance some of the services for students . . . trying to kind of stay, in some respects, one step ahead of the students on what they would like to see available from their college of choice.

Midwest's financial stability allowed a more aggressive approach to enrollment growth through program development and expansion. Participants also identified low cost and financial aid availability as part of the financial stability identity.

Financial stability allowed the college to keep the cost of attendance down, which is a key barrier for low-income students attending Hispanic-Serving Institutions (de Los Santos & Cuamea, 2010; Anne-Marie Nunez & Bowers, 2011). At the time of the study, over 60% of operating revenue for Midwest came from local support, about 15% from state appropriations, and less than 20% from tuition and fees. In addition to low cost, the Midwest Endowment Association had strong support from donors and was able to provide scholarships for students and grants for new program development and program improvement. Students were granted free tuition if they lived in the county from which the college received tax revenue. Undocumented

students were charged an in-state tuition rate and they were also eligible for the county tuition grant and scholarships. According to one administrator, undocumented students had received these financial aid options for several years. Financial aid support at Midwest demonstrated a long-term commitment to providing higher education access for Hispanic students.

Being Student-centered

All administrator, faculty, and staff participants described the core purpose of the college was to meet the needs of students in support of attaining their educational goal. An administrator participant said, “our one goal is to take people where they are and help them get where they want to be. And it's not always, maybe going to go smooth. There will be some bumps, but we're here to help.” A student-centered approach at Midwest consisted of recognizing where students are in their education and development process and providing the one-on-one support when they need it. A faculty participant related a personal story as an example of the college being student-centered.

I'm in the hospital having a baby at 3:00 in the morning. I have a student emailing me and I went in the hospital right after birth with a baby in the ICU, taking care of my students. You want that, you come here.

Perhaps an extreme case, other faculty, staff, and administrators related stories of providing assistance and having a consistent focus on student needs and student learning. When asked what they would tell a potential student, participant responses were all focused on what the college as a collective of people, services, and instruction could do for students, a student-centered approach to higher education.

Meeting individual student needs. One faculty participant described students at the college as usually first-generation or facing some kind of challenge or barrier to attending and

completing a college degree. The participant also noted students with challenges can frustrate some people, but “you are either dedicated to working at a community college or you are not. So, I would say to a student who comes here, you are going to receive assistance across the board, whether it is financial aid, emotional, academic.”

Student educational goals may or may not be a college degree. A staff member shared a story about working with an adult student whose only goal was to learn how to read and write.

I have right now one student that is learning how to write his name in Spanish and I help him one-on-one. And that is his goal. His goal is just to write his name because he’s been in the United States for about 45 years, he is probably around 70, and he never went to school. When I ask him how he communicated with his family in Mexico, he was paying. He was paying somebody to write a letter. And he was paying somebody to read the letter. He is making progress. He can read a little bit right now. He can write his name and he is attending ESL classes too.

A staff participant also described a maintenance department connection to serving students. One creative example involved an arrangement whereby the college provided maintenance services for a local day care facility in return for reduced rates and a specific number of slots for children of students attending Midwest.

Two of the participants who were graduates of Midwest described positive experiences as adult students at the college, and were continuing their education by pursuing bachelor’s and graduate degrees. The student-centered identity of the college was summed up by one of the participants, who stated, “There's no way to fail here. There really isn't.” Students, of course, can and do fail, with the point being if a student needs assistance, it is available.

Building relationships. Knowing where to go for help and who to ask can be a challenge for some students. As described in the “college is a community” identity section, building relationships was an important part of the college identity and was a core component of being student-centered. I observed relationship building, a constant communication of “you are important” happening on many occasions in all the campus buildings I visited, whether it was the student services area, administrative offices, faculty offices area, or athletics facilities.

Hispanic students, particularly first-generation students, may not have the academic, financial, cultural, or social capital to navigate a higher education system. However, I found evidence of networks at Midwest between Hispanic students and families in the community that guided new students to a trusted contact on campus.

The most well-known network was the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO). According to all of the study participants, HALO was the largest and most active student organization on campus. HALO had promoted and sponsored programs that involved all students in campus cultural activities and social functions for over 25 years. Just prior to Midwest receiving the HSI designation, HALO had taken a more advocacy-based role for Hispanic students, serving as a primary connection for first-generation Hispanic students. One staff participant described it this way:

There's times that, especially the Hispanic students, when they come, sometimes they [say], “I don't know what to do, I want to go to school but I don't know how to start.” Because a lot of times, students, they are afraid, they don't know how they are going to pay for school. . . . Most of them are first generation, so the parents don't know that there is money here for the students to go to school. So they come and [we] go ahead and give them that information so they feel a bit more comfortable . . . So [we] will take them to

admissions and then they come back and say “but now how am I going to pay for school?” “Let's go to financial aid, that's no problem.” Whether this student is documented or undocumented, [we] try to get them in contact with certain instructors so they can go ahead and talk to them about scholarships.

The HALO network promoted a consistent message of concern and respect for Hispanic students through practices that embraced being student-centered.

Being student-centered was a component of the organizational identity also recognized by new employees. A participant who had been employed within the past year said, “Overall, everyone cares and has a vested interest in the students. I think they [students] can feel that. So that's kind of who we are.” Participants repeatedly described a perception of Midwest being student-centered in the sense that faculty, staff, and administration as a whole were willing to meet students where they are and assist them in achieving their educational and personal goals.

Participants described meeting the needs of all students, and I highlighted the responses specific to Hispanic students in this section, but missing was a willingness to acknowledge race/ethnicity as a factor in a minority-serving institution. The next section explores the reluctance of participants to acknowledge race/ethnicity in their perceptions of serving a diverse student population at Midwest.

Serving a Diverse Student Population

A diverse student population was consistently communicated by participants as a core component of the college identity; however, at no time did participants refer to Midwest as a minority-serving institution, despite a student population at 50% minority. There was pride in pointing out the diversity of the Midwest student population, but there was no institutional priority toward being a Hispanic-Serving Institution. As mentioned previously, there was no

reference to diversity in the college mission and purpose statements or in the key institutional outcomes for student learning and serving the community. Faculty participants reported no professional development in serving a diverse student population, relying instead on trial and error with students. Participants emphasized serving all students, treating all students the same, and used a broad definition for diversity that excluded a focus on addressing the inequity in Hispanic attainment of post-secondary education.

Defining diversity. All participants described the student population at Midwest as diverse and pointed out the meaning of the term diverse encompassed more than race/ethnicity. According to participants, the definition of a diverse student population included age differences, gender differences, disabilities, regional cultural differences, differences in academic skills and background, commuters and residents, students who are parents, students who are working, and students who are taking advantage of life-long learning opportunities. For example, when asked if the college would have the same identity should the student population become significantly less diverse, one faculty member responded:

If we were no longer diverse? I can't even imagine not being diverse. You know, it's been that way the entire time I have lived here [over 10 years] and it has a long history of it. I can't imagine having just all farm kids. [laughs] That's just not Midwest. It just isn't.

According to this participant, the homogenous student population at Midwest would be “farm kids.” Another faculty member noted the biggest change in the student population over the past 20 years has been an increase in non-traditional students and minority students.

Participants did not describe any other changes that might occur organizationally should the student population become less diverse.

A common theme among participant responses to “this is who we are” as a college, were the many types of students that attended Midwest rather than how the college responded to being a Hispanic-Serving Institution. While participants described an institutional focus on the needs of the individual student, a broader goal of equity in higher education attainment for Hispanics as a group was neither communicated nor found in college documents.

Experiencing diversity. All faculty respondents referred to the diversity of the student population as an important part of the educational experience at the college. In describing what some of the important experiences might be, faculty related opportunities for traditional age students to participate with adult students who have a variety of life experiences. Students were also from different parts of the United States, bringing regional cultural differences to the college experience along with international students, immigrants, and refugees from different countries. As one faculty member said, “That's good for [pause] especially people who haven't really faced diversity, I think that's good. I think from a diversity [standpoint] it helps, especially if people break out of those intercultural stereotypes.” Addressing the needs of a diverse student population has been an educational experience for faculty, staff, and administrators, too.

When asked what had prepared them for their role in a diverse, minority-serving institution, participants described previous work experience at a different institution, trial and error, or a combination of both. One administrator mentioned the college had provided professional development activities, but none of the other participants could recall any type of diversity training. For most, the process of gaining knowledge and understanding of their diverse student population was through their relationships with students. The relationships were developed on many levels such as classroom interaction, individual consultation, the academic

advising process, student services, and day-to-day interaction outside of class. A staff member described their learning process as:

Trial and error, I would say. Um, not something you learn in the classroom or that I did. You just, you're working with so many students on a day-to-day basis in student services. In that sort of a job, you really see multiple times a day the struggles that people have. Whether they are financial, whether they're in the classroom . . . so I think it was just being immersed in student services and working with multiple students all the time. You learn it, you figure it out. You make mistakes, you learn from them. You listen to the stories that they've got and really just develop that knowledge. I don't think there is really any other way to do it. People can tell you, people can give you their experiences so you can have a little bit of peripheral knowledge, but you've got to get in there and really see it, and feel it, and touch it, and make it work.

Building trust and insisting on open communication with students has, according to participants, worked well for increasing knowledge and understanding of student cultures and needs.

At times, the reaction to differences between student lives and the lives of the participants was unsettling. One faculty member described a specific instance of confronting gender inequality in the Mexican immigrant culture for the first time:

Now they [Hispanic students] also have some other things that over a period of time you sort of learn. I still think back to when I had a test, not many years ago. A little bitty, short, Hispanic woman, mother of 4 or 5, 30 some, coming back, typical non-traditional. She shows up the day of the test and she was bawling her eyes out. Her husband hid her books. He wasn't supportive at all. He had stolen her books so that she couldn't study. I

think, wham! Are you kidding me? Wow, but you know, over the years you see some of those things and realize not everybody has the same sort of support.

Experiences of non-traditional female students being expected to follow gender norms and expectations from the family's country of origin were most frequently shared by participants as one of their significant learning experiences with a Hispanic culture.

Participants also identified financial challenges and the importance of family over the individual as key knowledge they had acquired through experience. A faculty participant said that in her division, they do talk to new instructors about the language barriers and cultural differences of some students from the Mexican culture in particular. However, despite their experiences with Hispanic students, participants were reluctant to do anything that might be interpreted as favoring one student group over another.

The color-blind perspective. Serving a diverse student population was a consistent perception of participants when describing "this is who we are" at Midwest. Less clear was what was meant by *servicing*. Participants emphasized serving all students, but were opposed to actions or behaviors that might give the appearance of special treatment for one student group over another. These actions and behaviors included ignoring the racial/ethnic identities of students by using a color-blind frame.

Services provided to students based on race/ethnicity were tolerated, but not supported by some participants. A meritocratic approach of treating all students the same, for example, was expressed by an administrator participant:

I struggle with singling somebody out and saying, we have a Hispanic scholarship.

Really? Okay, so we have an African American one and a Somalian [sic] one, and a

Burmese one. Why don't we have one for a student who wants to go into nursing? So to me it's not that nationality that's really important, it's meeting the needs of students.

The administrator used the term nationality instead of race/ethnicity and described meeting the needs of students in general rather than addressing the educational inequity of Hispanic, African American, and other groups at Midwest.

Another administrator referred to low Hispanic high school graduation rates and the role of Midwest in addressing hard to serve and at-risk populations as educating our society so they become tax payers “instead of tax takers.” An additional administrator referred to not seeing color, just students. I included these perspectives to demonstrate the variety of ways a color-blind frame was used by some participants in the administrator group. I did not find the same variety in the responses of faculty and staff.

The most prevalent reference to a color-blind perspective found in faculty and staff interview responses were statements about not seeing color. One faculty participant described their view as:

I don't see colors and I never have. I have good students and bad students. I have students that need help and students that function very well on their own. I haven't really seen a big difference whether it comes from a certain culture ... it just doesn't seem to matter. Socio-economic seems to play a bigger role in terms of their attitude and learning strategies than culture does.

Describing students as “good” or “bad” and “needing help” or “functioning” removed race/ethnicity from conversations about students and learning. Faculty participants described an understanding of the Mexican culture based on their experiences with students and the

population in Fairview, but they did not describe changes in curriculum design or instruction based on their experiences.

In follow up interviews, participants who did not express the color-blind view were asked if there had been discussions about the color-blind approach with other colleagues. One faculty participant said, “It’s a nice way of saying I don’t see those differences, but I think sometimes you need to see those differences because students have different needs.” A staff participant said, “Yeah, I truly have not had that conversation so I can’t comment. I like that comment though . . . we categorize into whether it’s race and ethnicity or whatever it is, but the entire population is diverse.” The faculty and staff member above had not referred to a color-blind frame in previous interview responses and had not participated in conversations about a color-blind perspective, but saw value in not seeing differences in race/ethnicity of the diverse students at Midwest.

Faculty and administrator participants from the instructional area of Midwest said conversations about race/ethnicity differences had taken place between individuals, but there had been no opportunities for faculty as a whole to engage in dialogue about diversity and teaching a diverse student population. In contrast, the student services area reported meeting on a regular basis to discuss processes, practices, and policy impacts on Hispanic students just prior to and after receiving the Hispanic-Serving Institution designation. Overall, student services staff referred less to a color-blind perspective in response to interview questions.

The Hispanic-Serving Institution Designation

The next three sections explore participant reactions to receiving the HSI designation and their responses to what Hispanic-serving means and what Hispanic-serving looks like at Midwest. There had been a notable absence of participants identifying Midwest as a Hispanic-

Serving Institution when describing “who we are” as an organization. The following sections explore why that was the case and describe how a “serving all students” approach was a source of resistance to being recognized as a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Response to Receiving the HSI Designation

In the screening survey sent to full-time employees (approximately 200), 32 of 51 respondents replied to the question, “What are your thoughts about Midwest being a Hispanic-Serving Institution?” Of the 32 respondents, 28 stated it was the right thing to do based on the student population and the population of Fairview. Three of the 28 did not think the college was doing anything specific to address Hispanic student needs. Despite a majority of survey and interview respondents indicating the designation was the right thing to do, most interview participants communicated the designation had little personal meaning. One administrator said, “I think it opens up the doors for a lot of opportunities. I don't think the designation itself meant a lot to me, but the possibilities of what that designation brought along with it.” Another administrator said, “I guess it was more of a chance to reevaluate things rather than sitting here saying it’s a good thing or a bad thing that you’re an HSI.” Opportunities and reevaluation for these participants referred specifically to the opportunity for additional funding and evaluating the needs that should be prioritized in grant applications.

Faculty participants either did not perceive the HSI designation as making a lot of difference or said they did not understand the implications from a personal and student standpoint. One participant said, “From my perspective it didn't make a lot of difference. I didn't see anything different in the classroom. . . . It didn't change what I did. I didn't see it change what we did instructionally.” Another faculty participant worked through her understanding of the HSI designation by saying,

I mean it's not a bad thing for sure. But the thing about it is, I don't think I fully understand what it means for us. What benefits do the students have? What benefits do I have as a teacher? I am not reaping any benefits from it that I know of.

From a faculty, staff, and administrator perspective, the HSI designation was not a watershed moment for Midwest. Participants consistently referred to having always served Hispanic students and described the college as being successful with Hispanic students. However, the minority-serving institution aspects of addressing inequity in Hispanic educational attainment were not formally communicated, discussed, or incorporated into organizational priorities.

Participants' reactions to receiving the HSI designation did not support a connection to the organizational identity at Midwest. A long-time staff member said, "Does being a Hispanic-Serving Institution define us? Not in and of itself. I think it is one of the things that defines who we are, but there are a whole lot of other things, as well." The study participants more intimately involved in the HSI designation application process were aligned with the perception that being an HSI was one of the things that defined Midwest's identity, but the other participants were not. The most prevalent perception about the HSI designation label among those not involved in the HSI application process was it had no meaning, suggesting the label was not a part of the organizational identity. A pattern of contradiction between participant perceptions of organizational identity and their perceptions of Midwest as an HSI was evident in the responses of what it means to be Hispanic-serving.

What Being Hispanic-Serving Means

Most participants initially identified Hispanic-serving as having a large Hispanic population in the community, public school, and at the college. They typically described an increased focus on meeting the needs of Hispanic students and acknowledging cultural

differences. These responses contradicted the color-blind perspective that some participants either subscribed to directly or had agreed with conceptually when describing how Midwest served diverse students. A staff member who did not know the college was an HSI until the interview said, “Implementing very special programs or accommodations for Hispanic students, I assume that's what serving means. Or promoting, come be here, we accept anyone including Hispanic citizens in the county or wherever.” The participant had been employed at Midwest for over 5 years and reported never encountering anything at the college that would indicate Midwest was an HSI other than the presence of Hispanic students.

Publicizing the HSI designation. In follow up interviews, a few participants thought it would be difficult for the college leadership to emphasize the HSI designation when they could not be sure what the reaction from stakeholders might be. One administrator participant said, “I think in the day and age we live in, when there is less and less support from the state, you have to be more cognizant of what you are doing locally.” Participants proudly described Fairview as a diverse community and Midwest as serving a diverse student population in broad terms, but recognition as a minority-serving institution was not perceived by participants as “this is who we are.”

In contrast, one staff member identified the promotion of the HSI designation as part of what it means to be a Hispanic-serving institution.

I think we need to promote more for the [Hispanic] community. We need to promote and we need to have different practices. One of the things that makes me feel we're not serving the Hispanic population, if you take a look at our website, we are military friendly, we have been [national recognition], but there is nothing said about Hispanic-serving.

When asked about using and publicizing the HSI designation, participants indicated either it was not used or they had never seen it used for that purpose. Two participants thought it was on the website, but could not find it. I have been reviewing the website periodically over the past 18 months and have not seen the HSI designation. I also reviewed the current marketing materials and public information and found no reference to the designation.

Publicizing the HSI designation was not viewed by participants as part of what it means to be a Hispanic-Serving Institution. As mentioned previously, some participants thought it would be difficult for the college leadership to emphasize the HSI designation when the reaction of stakeholders is unclear. The approach of college leaders to the transition to HSI status can also have an impact on what it means to be a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

College leadership and Board of Trustees. Analysis of Midwest's Board of Trustees minutes during the time immediately after receiving the HSI designation showed the president engaged the Trustees in public conversations about immigration policy, education of undocumented students, and the college serving as an agent to assist the community with Hispanic related issues. However, the activities were limited to the Board of Trustees and President's Cabinet.

The administration's approach during the transition to the HSI designation was described by one administrator participant as "very liberal, student oriented, and keen on external funding if it met a student, employee, or community need." The current administration was focused on student retention and engagement, partnerships with business, and what administrator participants described as "being progressive" in the sense of growth in programs and enrollment.

The college leadership at the time of this study was a mix of individuals who were at the institution during the transition to the HSI designation and individuals who have been hired in

the last one to three years. The change in leadership over the past three years has been marked by increased enrollments and an emphasis on hybrid course delivery. Faculty expressed concern about the affect of reduced student contact through hybrid course delivery on all students, but particularly on first-generation and low income students. According to faculty participants, there were no discussions among faculty, staff, and administrators in the instructional area about how to address Hispanic student needs in the hybrid format.

All participants experienced difficulty in articulating what Hispanic-serving means at Midwest. Overall, the responses were generalized, pointing out meeting the needs of Hispanic students and acknowledging cultural differences. Most participants said the HSI designation had little or no meaning to them which is understandable taking into consideration there was no acknowledgement publicly that Midwest was a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Participants also had difficulty in describing what Hispanic-serving looks like at Midwest.

What Being Hispanic-Serving Looks Like

When participants were asked to describe what Hispanic-serving looks like at Midwest, some had difficulty understanding the question. I rephrased the question as “What would you see around campus that would indicate this is a Hispanic-Serving Institution?” Participants were limited in their responses, the most frequent response being the presence of Hispanic students on campus.

An increasing Hispanic student presence on campus was a consistent theme for “What being Hispanic-serving looks like,” although some participants also reaffirmed previous responses that there have always been Hispanic students attending the college. After a long pause, one faculty participant said,

I'm not really sure because to me it doesn't look any different. But I'm sure if I stepped off this campus and went to a non-Hispanic serving institution it would stick out to me like a sore thumb as to wait a minute, we have this, or our student body does this, or our instruction is in this way. I guess it is so engrained into who we are in our culture, that I probably just take it for granted on some of those things.

A staff member referred to what Hispanic-serving looks like as *normal*. When asked what normal looks like, the participant said, “Normal looks like what we are used to. I guess it just looks like the everyday working environment,” referring to the presence of Hispanic students. Another staff member had similar thoughts about the reality that Hispanic-serving looks like what they’ve been doing for a long time. The staff member added,

I think that we try really hard to think about what we’ve been doing forever, and is it the correct thing to do, and how might we change it in order to be a little more thorough in getting students to the right place.

Outside of a Hispanic student presence, perceptions of what Hispanic-serving looks like at Midwest fell into five main categories: Academic support services, Hispanic student participation and cultural activities, service to Hispanic community members, employee diversity, and marketing.

Academic support services. Academic support services identified by participants included bilingual tutoring, a bridge program for STEM transfer students, ESL courses, writing support services, and services offered through the Student Support Services grant. Six of the 23 participants also mentioned undocumented students and the difficulty in attaining assistance since they cannot be served by programs supported by federally funded grants. As described in the financial stability identity component, Midwest provides in-state tuition, in-county tuition

grants, scholarships, advising, and career planning services for undocumented students. The main concerns communicated by participants dealt with the difficulty of undocumented students receiving permanent resident status or citizenship and being able to achieve their career goals. A faculty member said, “We have some students that over the years have come in and they did not have their citizenship status and we've worked with some of those students. Quite honestly, it breaks your heart when you find out how long it takes them to get citizenship when they're trying to do it legally. It's just wrong.” Hispanic student participation in campus organizations and activities were common responses to what Hispanic-serving looks like.

Hispanic student participation. Participants described an increase in Hispanic student and family presence at graduation, participation in campus student leadership positions such as the Student Government Association, and involvement in campus activities through HALO as examples of what Hispanic-serving looks like. HALO was also recognized by participants as the most active student organization on campus, sharing Hispanic culture through sponsored activities and giving back to the college and Fairview through community service. Based on the most recent IPEDS data, the number of Hispanic graduates has tripled since 2003 and the percentage of Hispanic graduates equals the percent representation in the student population. According to a faculty participant, the student media staff had transitioned from primarily White students to 90% Hispanic at the time of the study. The diversity of Midwest’s student population was well represented in the college newspaper, magazine, and online media.

Educational services for the Hispanic community. Participants also pointed out the community educational services provided through Adult Basic Education, GED, Talent Search, a migrant high school equivalency program, and a program through the Mexican consulate. Talent Search is a TRiO grant funded program that supported high school completion for first-

generation students with a desire to pursue higher education. The services targeted elementary, middle, and high school students. A high school equivalency program for migrant and seasonal workers supported students in earning a high school diploma or equivalent, preparing for college, technical school or other post-secondary education, entering a chosen career, or entering military service. Classes were available in English and Spanish. Plazas Comunitarias was an educational program for Mexicans living abroad. It provided youth and adults with literacy courses and the opportunity to start or continue a Mexico elementary, middle school, and high school education in Spanish.

Midwest employee diversity. Four participants commented on employee diversity, specifically that the student services area had made progress in their staff mirroring the student population while the instructional area (faculty) had not. One participant said, “There are employees on this campus who are Hispanic, who can serve as mentors or just be good examples. I think that matters, too.” Follow up interviews confirmed that Hispanic employees not only served as mentors, they served as a connection between the Hispanic community and the college. Midwest’s attention to its connection with the Hispanic community and its public image as a minority-serving institution was limited, but had improved over the past 10 years.

College marketing materials in Spanish. A review of Midwest’s Board of Trustees meeting minutes showed the completion of a goal to develop a Spanish language radio advertisement in 2007. One administrator described trying to put more marketing materials in Spanish and also pointed out a virtual online tour of the college with a Spanish language option. The virtual online tour in Spanish was available at the time of the study, but my review of current marketing and information publications found federal financial aid was the only Spanish

language information available. An administrator also described Midwest's approach to marketing and external media:

I think a lot of when you are doing media and marketing campaigns, we try to be aware that it is not just White males that are all on the front covers of our marketing brochures. It's females, it's Hispanics, it's African American, trying to show the diversity of what Midwest Community College is. I think that's a focus we try to place a lot of management on as far as making sure we are, we're showing the college meets the needs of all students not just your traditional aged, Caucasian students.

An increase in attention to how the college is portrayed through its public information images was supported by an analysis of the college viewbook, college catalog, and Board of Trustees Annual Reports.

Analysis of college publication images. An advantage to analyzing archival images is that changes over time can be documented by comparing historical images to present images (Ray & Smith, 2012). When images are analyzed as part of a publication, a more accurate interpretation of the context can be determined. The current college viewbook, a marketing publication, represented the racial/ethnic diversity of Midwest, but did not represent the non-traditional age population or the non-western cultures identified by participants as an important part of the community and college diversity. In the case of Midwest, viewbooks were used primarily at college planning conferences, which targeted traditional age students.

A review of the college catalog showed a transition in the images from over 95% depicting traditional age, White students in 2002 to the current catalog which had 30% depicting the traditional age, White demographic. The change was gradual with incremental increases between 2006 and 2010. The most recent catalog had images representing the most student

diversity in race/ethnicity and age when compared to the other catalogs. The current catalog contained the only image among all catalogs between 2002 and 2014 of adult students from non-Western culture. I was unable to determine when the photograph was actually taken, but its inclusion in the catalog coincided with moving the Adult Learning Center from an off campus location to a new facility on campus.

Images of students on the website and in the virtual tour were representative of the current traditional age college student population. Students served by the Adult Learning Center do not generate revenue through credit hour production and would not be targeted from a college recruitment standpoint. They may have been less willing to have their images placed in public documents, also.

The Board of Trustees Annual Report, written as a synopsis for the people of the county supporting the college, began including images of students and campus activities in 2007. In contrast to the college catalog and viewbook, the annual report images showed an emphasis on portraying diversity as part of the message. The images depicted students and participants in campus activities from many of the race/ethnicities and age groups described earlier by participants as part of the diverse student population identity of Midwest.

Participant responses to what Hispanic-serving looks like emphasized the increased presence of Hispanic students rather than changes in practice or college structures. A few participants identified specific academic support services such as bilingual tutoring and ESL courses or educational services for Hispanic families. Some participants referred to improving employee diversity in student services and marketing to the Hispanic community, the latter having little substance. Through an analysis of images in college documents, I was able to track Midwest's increased publicity of a Hispanic student presence. In the next section, changes in

organizational practices and structures identified by the study participants were analyzed for connections to serving Hispanic students.

Changes in Organizational Structures and Practice

Participant responses about changes that have taken place at Midwest over the past 5 to 10 years focused on elements of technology, organizational leadership, and overall student preparedness rather than becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Some changes had implications for Hispanic students, particularly in the student services area, but direct connections to changes made specifically for Hispanic students were rare. Changes in instruction, academic support services, community education services, and student support services with at least some connection to being a Hispanic-Serving Institution are described in the following sections.

Instructional changes. Faculty participants described making changes according to student needs, but recalled nothing specific just for Hispanic students. One faculty participant said, “I am always changing the way I teach. . . . I am always trying to improve things, to figure out what would work better. Get through better.” Another faculty participant said, “No, it's pretty much the same day-to-day practices. The only thing for me that has changed is my delivery methods, but that's me. I try really hard to keep up with what's going on.”

One faculty participant described a bilingual approach to instruction, but this was the only participant who mentioned using such an approach in the classroom:

I know about this much [small amount] Spanish and I have had students that were having a hard time understanding. So the little bit of Spanish I do know, I would use it in class. And then I would say things in Spanish and then repeat it in English. And I do that today. I say it in Spanish and repeat it in English.

An administrator provided additional evidence of faculty making changes to meet student needs:

I had an instructor who taught developmental reading. Afternoons she had work to do and had a student sitting in her office so she opened up a study hall for reading students many of whom were Hispanic. She was, I mean for right at the end of school, she was crowded, every day. They were in there and she was having trouble keeping up with her own work.

The change in this case was made for students in general, and Hispanic students were included in the group. With the exception of using a bilingual approach in the classroom, participants described making instructional changes to improve learning for all students, but did not give specific examples of the types of changes. Only one faculty participant talked about using a multicultural or universal design approach to instruction.

Participants from instruction and student services described changes that had been made in granting ESL course credit to improve student attitudes about taking the courses. ESL students at the intermediate or higher levels could receive up to three hours credit toward an Associate's degree, demonstrating to students that the courses were moving them closer to attaining a degree.

One faculty participant described a structural change in the emergency services programs to develop bilingual degree pathways. Fairview and other towns in Midwest's service area had identified a need for emergency services personnel that mirror the populations being served. While bilingual Hispanic students have been graduates of the programs, the college was in the process of finding qualified bilingual instructors or bilingual support specialists for Hispanic, Burmese, Somali, and Southeast Asian students. Although these specific examples demonstrate

modification to instruction and program structure, most of the changes participants described relative to instruction were academic support services.

Academic support services changes. Grant funded projects from 10 years ago had been used to provide bilingual tutoring services, developmental education curriculum changes, and curriculum changes for gateway courses in math and English to better serve underprepared and underrepresented students. A more recent grant provided bilingual support in allied health programs where an ESL course was linked with a reading course to assist students entering a Certified Nurses Aid (CNA) pathway to the nursing program. The linked course approach was successful, but there had been no replication in other degree programs. When the bilingual support specialist left, Midwest was unable to find a replacement with the appropriate skill sets.

A transition specialist for ABE and GED students entering technical programs was funded through a federal grant and now a state workforce grant. Some of the students were adult students with degrees from outside the United States, retooling for employment.

A recent change at Midwest was the transition of all courses to a hybrid format which was a concern for faculty. In a hybrid format, face-to-face instructional time is reduced and replaced by online instruction. At Midwest, classes are Monday through Thursday with Fridays set aside for assisting students and college meetings. Faculty concerns included access to the internet at home for students who work, have families, and are low income. The effect of reduced faculty-student interaction on first-generation and Hispanic student success was of particular concern to faculty. One faculty participant said, “I do think students are less likely to ask for help now because they don't know us as well with the hybrid classes. They are not willing to come in on Fridays and talk to us.” Another faculty participant described the positive aspects for students who have to work, “Thursday is now the new Friday over here because kids

go to school Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and they're done. A lot of kids go home and it's good for them because they can go home and work.” According to other faculty participants, student perception of Thursday as the new Friday contributed to the low numbers of students using Fridays to get assistance.

There were pockets of activity across the college demonstrating instructional adaptations and academic support one might expect in a Hispanic-Serving Institution, however, participants reported no overall plan or strategy by the instructional services area of the college to address Hispanic learning experiences. Evaluation of the college website did show additional grant funded academic support for migrant families which was not mentioned by participants. However, there was no centralized listing of services or programs for Hispanic students and families seeking assistance.

Community education support changes. Literacy for migrant families was a service provided through state grant funding and partnerships with the local school district, a child development center, the county health department, and a Mexican American ministries group. The goals were to increase the functional literacy level of adult migrant participants, improve English communication and literacy skills, enhance child development, and increase parent awareness of child development and education. As mentioned previously, the college was also a partner in a high school equivalency program for migrant and seasonal workers with instruction in English and Spanish as well as assisting elementary, middle school, and high school students in preparing for higher education.

From a historical perspective, there were a few changes in the organizational structures that could be considered Hispanic-serving. Examples include allowing ESL credit toward a degree, bilingual degree pathways in emergency services programs, transition coordinators for

ABE/GED and nursing program students, bilingual tutoring services, and community education partnerships. All organizational structure changes were grant initiatives except for granting ESL credit toward a degree. According to faculty, changes in instructional practice were associated with serving all students, and participants identified no strategies specific for Hispanic students aside from one bilingual example. The student services area at Midwest followed a more intentional track.

Student support services changes. The student services area had taken the most direct approach to evaluating services and processes in light of serving Hispanic students. One administrator participant described the process as:

I can't speak for the faculty side, but on the student services side, we spent several weekly directors meetings talking through protocols and things we need to do on our end to basically replicate or show that we are Hispanic friendly institution. It's one thing to say you're Hispanic-serving, but if you're not putting the services out there and showing you're welcoming them into the college, then it's kind of pointless to be Hispanic-serving.

Some of the structural changes in student services included adding a bilingual recruiter and strengthening the HALO student organization by adding a Student Support Services grant employee as one of the sponsors. Students in HALO assisted the Student Support Services program in collecting textbooks and other school supplies that could be given to students in need. The direct connection with Student Support Services through the HALO sponsor helped HALO take on more of an advocacy role for Hispanic students. The student services area also addressed other processes and practices such as course placement and advising.

Student services staff identified communicating how the course placement process works and student understanding of placement scores as needing improvement. One participant described the conversations as, “You know, what’s our ESL course sequencing look like? How do we place students into ESL courses? How are we going to communicate to them that ESL is not a waste of time?” Student services personnel thought placement in general had become a problem for first-generation students testing into developmental courses. One student services participant described the issue as being too easy to give students their scores and send them to their adviser to get enrolled without explaining how these courses helped in attaining a degree. An administrator participant said, “We did a lot of talk on the assessment side about just the ways that we communicate scores to students and being there to answer questions for them.” Additional changes directed at first year student success included a revised college orientation course and intensive centralized advising for first year associate degree students. The academic probation policy was also revised requiring students to take an academic skills course and reduced course load. Another change in student services involved using technology to get students more involved in the process of being a college student.

A significant change in the student services area was moving from pencil-paper processes to more web-based tools so students were not completely reliant on an appointment with an adviser for graduation checks, financial aid, and degree plans. The web-based tools give advisers an opportunity to help first-generation students in particular develop knowledge and skills in navigating a higher education system. An administrator participant described the process changes as:

We’re trying to make the students a little bit more involved in the process. Before it was come meet with your adviser the semester before you graduate and make sure you’ve got

all your classes ready to go, versus now trying to make things available on the web for students so they can track their graduation - their work towards graduation on their own. But then also being able to have more of an engaged conversation with their adviser and faculty members on transfer and some of those things.

Faculty and staff also pointed out learning about the problems undocumented students face and the difficulty in meeting their needs.

Undocumented students. During the initial interviews, four of the participants described their experiences with undocumented students and the barriers students must overcome to attain a college degree and enter the workforce. One faculty participant reflected on the increased numbers of undocumented students being served as a change that has occurred at the college:

We have a lot of kids that go to school here that don't have citizenship. And because of that, they can't get financial aid. And so they have to work to pay for their tuition and I don't know if it was like that ten years ago. Maybe it was and I didn't realize it. And maybe people are just talking about it more. I don't know what it is. But that is a shift.

A staff participant related Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to the increase in undocumented students because they are able to legally find employment and can pay for school.

I mean, wherever they come from, that [DACA] will open up the doors for them. So there are a lot more kids now. I have seen a lot more. This is the fourth year that HALO, what we started doing was to find scholarships for students that were in that situation. But just to help them and try to get them to stay in school.

As described earlier by an administrator participant, HALO has taken on a student advocate role at the college in cooperation with Student Support Services. Through HALO, undocumented students have a place to go for assistance and a student organization that provides a community; a comfortable space. Midwest also provides undocumented students tuition grants, scholarships, academic services, and student services that are not grant funded and available to all students.

Summary

A review of Midwest Community College documents showed no reference to the college as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Midwest also had an inconsistent history of data use for setting goals and tracking equity in student outcomes for Hispanic students. Specific references to Hispanic demographics and related performance targets were found only when the college was in the process of applying for the HSI designation and a Title V grant. Hispanic students were included in the narrative used to document Midwest's institutional effectiveness indicators, but there were no measures specifically targeting Hispanic student access and success. Despite the lack of institutional focus on being a Hispanic-Serving Institution, participants who were long-time employees described having served a large Hispanic population for several years.

College documents showed a lack of institutional focus on Hispanic students until a year or two before applying for the HSI designation. However, faculty, staff, and administrators all identified an increase in the Hispanic student population as the justification for applying for the HSI designation. On the one hand there was a perception of always serving a large Hispanic student population and no need for change while on the other hand there were administrators recalling a priority to address the needs of the Hispanic student population as justification for the HSI designation application.

According to participants, the motivation for applying for the HSI designation was access to Title V grant funding. Participant perceptions were supported by college documents showing the public announcement of receiving the grant, but no communication about receiving the HSI designation. Faculty and staff participants described an absence of college-wide conversations about focusing on the needs of Hispanic students, yet administrators referenced a collective “we” when describing a need for discussions about how to serve Hispanic students. Administrator, faculty, and staff perceptions of organizational identity, however, were very similar and reflected the lack of institutional importance placed on the HSI designation.

The five components or labels representing Midwest’s organizational identity emphasized a caring, family-oriented atmosphere, recognition as a quality institution, financial stability, being student-centered, and serving a diverse student population. A diverse student population was consistently communicated by participants as a core component of the college identity; however, diversity was not mentioned in Midwest’s mission and purpose statements or in institutional expectations for student learning and service to the community. Participants defined diversity very broadly, minimizing race/ethnicity and a focus on addressing the educational disparity of Hispanics as a group.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Implications

Chapter 4 provided insight into the faculty, staff, and administrator perceptions of the organizational identity and changes in practice at Midwest Community College during the transition to 40% Hispanic enrollment. My conclusions from this case study address Midwest's transition from Hispanic-enrolling to Hispanic-serving without having a specific mission to serve Hispanic students (Contreras et al., 2008; Malcom, Bensimon, & Davila, 2010). I also address a gap in Hispanic-Serving Institution and organizational identity research associated with unplanned organizational identity change. Chapter 5 begins with organizational identity change as unplanned change. Next, participant perceptions of the organizational identity labels and meanings are analyzed using indicators that demonstrate a commitment to serving Hispanic students. I conclude the chapter with implications for practitioners and researchers.

Unplanned Organizational Identity Change

The majority of research on organizational identity change has been focused on understanding teleological or planned identity change (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). In contrast, Midwest's transition to a Hispanic-Serving Institution was unplanned, largely the result of a demographic shift over time in the community, public school system, and the college. Researchers taking a critical stance dubbed this approach Hispanic-serving by enrollment rather than by design (Contreras et al., 2008; Herber-Valdez, 2008; Santiago, 2006) meaning the college enrolled Hispanic students, but did not necessarily change practices to meet their needs. My study found the transition to Hispanic-serving had a mix of intentionality through grants and changes in student services while instructional responses were left to individual faculty, relying on their sense of responsibility to meeting student needs.

Researchers investigating change in community college and university HSIs found limited to no mention of the HSI designation in mission statements, college websites, and planning documents (Allen, 2006; Contreras et al., 2008; Torres & Zerquera, 2012). My study supports the findings as Midwest Community College showed no overt focus on being a minority-serving institution in college mission, strategic planning documents, institutional effectiveness measures, or annual reports. There were aspects of the college identity that were Hispanic-serving, although the specific attributes went unrecognized which was evident in the difficulty participants had in describing what Hispanic-serving means and looks like at Midwest.

Some identity changes are not intentional, taking place as the organization responds to environmental shifts or to changes inside the organization (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). In this case, the organizational identity change process would be undetected by organizational members when identity labels are stable and subtle changes to the meanings have occurred over time. Administrator, faculty, and staff participant perceptions of Midwest's identity were nearly identical in the types of labels and meanings of the labels used to describe their organization's identity. In the sections that follow, changes in the meanings of organizational identity labels and analysis of a commitment to serving Hispanic students were used to draw conclusions about Midwest's identity as a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Indicators of a Hispanic-Serving Organizational Identity

Community college and HSI researchers have identified indicators that demonstrate a commitment to serving Hispanic students. The indicators include improving student services to better support Hispanic students, instructional practices that value student-faculty interaction, partnerships with school districts and communities, a supportive campus climate that welcomes diverse students, and leadership that demonstrates a commitment to Hispanic student success

(Benitez & DeAro, 2004; Bridges et al., 2008; Cuellar, 2014; S. Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012; Laden, 2004c; Maestas, Vaquera, & Zehr, 2007; Perrakis & Hagedorn, 2010; Santiago, 2008). In this chapter, I have used the indicators to evaluate the findings for evidence of a change in the meanings of Midwest's organizational identity labels. According to organizational identity theory, a change in the meanings of the labels would indicate a change in identity (Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

Based on my findings, there has been no change in Midwest's organizational identity because of the Hispanic-Serving Institution designation and no indication of a planned change to incorporate a Hispanic-Serving Institution identity. Administrator, faculty, and staff participants emphasized serving all students in their descriptions of Midwest's identity. My conclusions address any adjustments to the meanings of Midwest's organizational identity labels, indicating a shift in commitment to being more Hispanic-serving.

College is a Community

There were no intentional plans reported by participants or expressed in college documents to create a culturally relevant atmosphere of *familismo* or *comunidad* in response to the HSI designation (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Ibarra, 2001). However, the institutional emphasis on building relationships with students has nonetheless resulted in a supportive campus climate (Page, 2013). Study participants representing both longtime employees and those employed less than five years agreed that Midwest had a community feel, providing a caring environment and a sense of belonging for students and employees.

A caring and supportive campus climate has been identified as an important factor for Hispanic student success (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2014; Sylvia Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). According to participants, the campus climate has always had caring and supportive qualities, a

part of their commitment to serving all students. Through trial and error, employees at Midwest adjusted their approach with Hispanic students over time, based on a better understanding of Mexican culture. However, there had been no college-wide initiatives outside of periodic grants to incorporate changes in practice or organizational structures specifically addressing Hispanic student cultural values. Using unplanned change and a dynamic view of organizational identity (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013), my study findings support the conclusion that subtle changes in the meaning of “college is a community” toward being more Hispanic-serving have taken place over time. Building relationships that generate a supportive campus climate were important parts of the “college is a community” identity and fostering relationships with students was directly connected to being student-centered.

Being Student-Centered

The meanings associated with the “being student-centered” identity changed over the past 10 years and included indicators of a commitment to serving Hispanic students; however, the changes were not in response to the HSI designation. Small faculty to student ratios, emphasis on teaching and student learning, intensive advising programs, and providing personal support for students are attributes often associated with student-centered community colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Decker, 2013; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006; Levin & Montero-Hernandez, 2009). These attributes have also been associated with high impact practices at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Santiago, 2008). In the following sections I discuss changes in the meanings of “being student centered” as they relate to a commitment to Hispanic students in the instructional and student services areas. The identity change process ranged from an unplanned, laissez-faire approach in the instructional area to directed structural changes in student services.

Instructional area. Subtle, unplanned identity changes in the instructional area associated with “being student centered” took place over time and were not associated with the HSI designation. Through developing relationships with students, faculty increased their knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for Hispanic cultures (Barnett, 2011; Cejda & Hoover, 2011; Ibarra, 2001). Significant experiences communicated by faculty primarily involved learning about gender roles, particularly for female Mexican adult students, financial challenges, and the importance of family over the individual.

Faculty-student relationships were facilitated by small faculty-student ratios and an emphasis on student learning within a caring atmosphere. These Midwest characteristics support research on the importance of faculty-student interaction in the success of Hispanic students (Barbatis, 2010; Barnett, 2011; Bensimon, 2007; Chang, 2005). Knowledge of student instructional preferences are also important considerations for developing classroom environments that engage Hispanic students.

A grant project from 2005 had a faculty professional development focus on addressing the diverse learning needs of underprepared and underrepresented student populations. The grant objectives also addressed building faculty development capacity at Midwest through a teaching and learning center which was still operational at the time of the study. However, faculty participants could not recall taking part in any training directed at meeting the needs of Hispanic students. Still, through their relationships with students, faculty recognized Hispanic student preferences for interaction and understood some of the challenges students faced outside of the classroom.

A recent example of faculty applying their knowledge of Hispanic student instructional preferences and challenges was the concern with moving all courses to a hybrid online format.

In a hybrid format, face-to-face instructional time is reduced and replaced by online instruction through a learning management system. Faculty concerns included access to the internet at home for students who work, have families, and are low income. The effect of reduced faculty-student interaction on first-generation and Hispanic student success, over 70% and 40% of the student population respectively, was of particular concern. I found no indication of any planned student success comparison or student satisfaction follow up with Hispanic students associated with the instructional delivery changes.

In contrast to the reliance on individual faculty action in the instructional area, there were initiatives that specifically targeted Hispanic student needs in the student services area at Midwest. The changes were not driven by the HSI designation, but were directly related to a previous grant project that some administrator participants credited with the first action taken to address Hispanic student needs.

Student services area. One could argue the intentional structural changes in student services represented a planned identity change and a difference in perception about organizational identity. Student services administrators and staff referred specifically to becoming Hispanic-friendly, something the other participants were reluctant to acknowledge or support. However, a claim that “we are a Hispanic-Serving Institution” was not mentioned in interview responses or college documents, including marketing and informational materials specifically from the student services area. So in reality, the student services area was more intentional in adjusting the meanings of the “being student centered” identity label to include indicators of being Hispanic-serving. They were not, however, engaged in a planned identity change to be recognized as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. The meanings of the “being student

centered” identity in the student services area involved practices, organizational structures, and developing understanding of Hispanic student culture.

Student services staff met on a regular basis to evaluate process and policy affects on Hispanic students. Specific processes and policies revised included developmental course placement, ESL course value in degree plans, a revised college orientation course, mandatory skills courses for students on academic probation, and centralized, intensive advising for first year students. These changes have been associated with being student centered and have been recognized as high impact practices in Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Benitez & DeAro, 2004; Mitchell, Wood, & Witherspoon, 2010; Person, Rosenbaum, & Deil-Amen, 2006; Santiago, 2008). Student services administrators also sought opportunities to improve Hispanic student advocacy at Midwest.

The HALO student organization was directed by student services administration to take on an advocacy role for Hispanic students. The importance of the HALO organization for Hispanic students was identified by all study participants and its transition from primarily celebratory to an advocacy role demonstrated a student services leadership commitment to Hispanic student success and a more supportive campus climate for Hispanic students (Torres & Zerquera, 2012). The advocacy role included the development of a higher education network for Hispanic students and their families through the students in the HALO organization and the student services sponsors of the organization.

Quality

Participant perceptions of Midwest’s quality were primarily based on student success stories and external recognition associated with college rankings, athletics, and student organization competitions. Institutional level effectiveness indicators and strategic plan

measures were aggregated or also associated with external recognition and student success stories instead of institution-wide attention to equity. Quality in the HSI literature has focused on equity in resource allocation and Hispanic student outcomes (Bensimon, 2005; Harris III & Bensimon, 2007; S. Hurtado et al., 2012) although there are no reported models demonstrating the characteristics of quality HSIs (Malcom et al., 2010). Midwest has received national recognition for equity in student outcomes for underserved student populations through the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. Unlike the HSI designation, this recognition was displayed on the college website. The findings of my study showed some shift in the meanings of the quality identity label toward Hispanic-serving, almost exclusively based on data use in the student services area.

Equity in Hispanic student outcomes. According to the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence (The Aspen Institute, 2015), outcomes for underserved student populations at Midwest were in the top 10 % nationally. Specifically, the metrics were in three key areas: (1) student persistence, degrees awarded, completion, and transfer; (2) consistent improvement in these areas over time; and (3) outcome equity for students of all racial/ethnic backgrounds. High performing HSIs demonstrate equity in Hispanic student retention and completion when compared to other student populations being served (Contreras et al., 2008; Santiago, 2008). Based on the Aspen performance measures, Midwest had consistently met high standards for equity in Hispanic student outcomes over the past four years. However, ensuring equity in student outcomes at Midwest was not the focus of the instructional area.

The instructional area at Midwest, which includes transfer, career and technical education, developmental education, and business and industry, had no history of working together toward common Hispanic-serving goals. Participants related there had been no formal

conversations about meeting Hispanic student needs which was also evident in the institutional effectiveness measures and strategic plan.

Equity-based quality models tend to be found in student services programs, but the instructional area is more apt to control institutional culture and is often lacking in diversity initiatives (Ibarra, 2006). As described previously, the student services area was involved in grant projects targeting underprepared and underrepresented student success between 2000 and 2005. Staff working in this area met on a regular basis to address processes and policies related to Hispanic students over the ensuing years and retained the equity in student outcomes measures from grant projects as part of their operation. In the instructional area and at the organizational level, equity metrics from grant projects were not institutionalized as measures of quality, a problem for Midwest who used grants as the impetus for improvement in meeting Hispanic student needs.

Financial Stability

It was difficult for Midwest's leadership to make the HSI designation public with the college dependent on local support for financial stability. Uncertainty in what the reaction from stakeholders might be was one of the primary reasons the designation was not publicized. Under these circumstances the HSI designation is a closeted organizational identity (Contreras et al., 2008) where such fears are merited given the larger social and political context of the United States toward immigration, taxation, affirmative action, and funding for public education. Despite the lack of an HSI public image and participant resistance to the HSI designation, the "financial stability" identity label had several meanings associated with a Hispanic-serving identity that had been present for many years.

Indicators that demonstrated a commitment to serving Hispanic students in the financial stability identity included enhancing student services to better support Hispanic students and developing a campus climate that welcomes and supports diverse populations. Enhancing student services was accomplished through a tuition grant for in-county students and locally supported scholarship availability. There is substantial evidence suggesting financial support for Latino students plays a critical role in persistence and degree completion (Crisp et al., 2014). Financial aid support at Midwest demonstrated a long-term commitment to providing higher education for underserved populations and a Hispanic-serving meaning for the “financial stability” identity label.

A campus climate that welcomes and supports diverse populations was addressed by low cost of attendance, excellent facilities, and offering financial support to documented and undocumented students alike. These indicators do not demonstrate a shift in the meaning of the financial stability label, but do suggest a long-term commitment to providing Hispanic students access to higher education.

Serving a Diverse Student Population

The “serving a diverse student population” identity at Midwest was the least developed with regard to meanings associated with indicators of being Hispanic-serving. Descriptions of diversity at Midwest were very broad, essentially listing all student groups, and reduced the significance of race/ethnicity in perceptions of diversity. Mission and purpose statements and the key institutional outcomes made no reference to diversity at all.

Administrator, faculty, and staff participants at Midwest understood intuitively that the effectiveness and value of the college was contingent on the success of their Hispanic students. However, the colorblind perspective expressed by some participants negated race/ethnicity,

suggesting the issues and characteristics of Hispanic students were representative of all students (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). That is not to say participants ignored student differences. Caring and being student-centered were core identity elements with substantial indicators of a commitment to serving Hispanic students. However, White participants demonstrated limited knowledge and understanding of the racial and equity issues faced by the Hispanic population. Participants were also unaware of the significant role Hispanic-Serving Institutions play in addressing issues of equity in higher education and had difficulty in articulating what being Hispanic-serving means.

A diverse student population does not necessarily translate into changes taking place in other areas of an educational institution (Smith, 1995). It is the responsibility of institutional administrators, faculty, and staff to understand and acknowledge that while there are some issues representative of all underserved students, other issues are not and require specific attention (Cobham & Parker, 2007). Even though the meanings of Midwest's organizational identity labels contained some indicators of being Hispanic-serving, resistance to being recognized as an HSI was strong.

Resistance to the Hispanic-serving designation: The insistence by administrators, faculty, and staff on Midwest's purpose as serving all students inhibited the development of any planned change toward a Hispanic-Serving Institution identity. Organizational member conceptualizations of identity can positively or negatively influence the enthusiasm for addressing strategic issues such as adopting a new identity (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Penner, 1993). Participants viewed Midwest as Hispanic-serving or Hispanic-friendly in practice by *servicing all students* throughout a long history of Hispanic student presence. However, portraying Midwest as an HSI was met with resistance. According to Dutton (1991), organizational identity and image influence organizational members' interpretation of an issue

and motivation for action. Serving all students was a consistent theme throughout all of the identity labels and was how participants viewed the image of Midwest. At no time did participants refer to the college as an HSI or a minority-serving institution despite a student population of 50% minority.

Multiple Identities

The Hispanic-Serving Institution designation was not viewed as an advantage by Midwest's leadership outside of access to Title V funds. The president during the transition to the HSI designation had started working with the Board of Trustees on becoming more involved in Hispanic issues within Fairview, but the efforts were not extended beyond the leadership level and disappeared after receipt of the Title V grant.

Community college and organizational identity scholars describe multiple identities as adaptive, the basis for responding to changes in the economy, community, and student population (Bailey & Morest, 2004; Illia, 2010; Levin, 1998c; Meier, 2012; Pratt & Corley, 2007; Pratt & Foreman, 2000c). The Midwest leadership did not view the Hispanic-Serving Institution identity as adaptive or needed for the college's response to Hispanic population increases in Fairview and on campus. Their approach to managing the multiple identities at Midwest was to never recognize the HSI designation. When an identity is new and has the potential for serious political issues with major stakeholders, as was the view at Midwest, the costs associated with not incorporating an identity may be small compared to the gains (Pratt & Foreman, 2000c). The core identities and the serving all students theme were consequently held on to by participants (Nag et al., 2007), while rejecting the HSI identity which had no meaning.

Implications

My study findings and conclusions show the Hispanic-Serving Institution designation was a means to an end with respect to federal funding rather than a symbolic representation of organizational identity and impetus for planned change. Unplanned changes in the meanings of organizational identity labels did occur as organizational members adapted institutional processes and practices to a changing educational environment. In this section, I make suggestions that may assist college leaders and staff in current and emerging HSIs in becoming Hispanic-serving within the intent of the HSI legislation.

Serving All Students vs. Being Hispanic-serving

Community colleges are open access institutions with a democratic mission to serve all students. My study shows a focus on serving all students can result in college staff resisting institutional attention to better serving Hispanic students. Related to the focus on serving all students is limited knowledge and understanding of the broader social justice role Hispanic-Serving Institutions play. In this setting, organizational members place emphasis on the individual rather than equity for Hispanics as a group (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). From an organizational identity standpoint, role ambiguity tends to cause organizational members to hold on to previous identities and practices (Nag et al., 2007).

College leaders could address role ambiguity by engaging employees in exploring and then identifying what Hispanic-serving means at their institution. College staff could more clearly connect their work with being Hispanic-serving through understanding and sensitivity to the social justice implications in the HSI legislation. In an environment that emphasizes serving all students, college leaders should acknowledge and communicate that taking action to better serve a particular group of students does not limit the ability to serve all students (Santiago,

2008). Leaders should also take into consideration that faculty and staff need opportunities to make sense of new organizational practices in order to meet expectations (Weick et al., 2005).

Determining Quality in Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Accountability requirements from the state level, regional accrediting agencies, and federal government have made the reporting of performance data a significant part of higher education operations. Use of the data for improvement, however, is highly variable among and within institutions (Dowd, 2005). If the outcomes for Hispanic students are not treated as a measure of institutional quality, inequities remain structurally hidden and unaddressed (Harris III & Bensimon, 2007). My study found limited organizational learning about being Hispanic-serving when institutional goals and effectiveness indicators were an aggregate of all students. Institutional performance data should be disaggregated by race/ethnicity and leaders should be responsible for facilitating equity-minded inquiry so students or their cultures are not blamed for inequities in performance. Adding the analysis of equity gaps to institutional performance measures demonstrates a significant investment in being a Hispanic-serving Institution.

Recognizing Indicators of a Commitment to Being Hispanic-Serving

Community colleges, by virtue of their multiple missions and multiple identities, have at least some policies and practices that demonstrate a commitment to serving Hispanic students. An identity based on a sense of caring, for example, is indicative of a colleges' interest in learning how to serve underrepresented groups (Levin & Montero-Hernandez, 2009) and is an organizational climate valued by Hispanic students (Bridges et al., 2008). The key for HSIs is to identify their policies, practices, and behaviors associated with being Hispanic-serving and incorporate them into institutional planning and effectiveness processes that acknowledge student diversity and multiple missions. Recognition at the institutional level, for example, is

critical for sensemaking and sensegiving activities associated with organizational change (Kezar, 2013; Weick et al., 2005) and organizational identity change (Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

My study documents an intentional approach to being Hispanic-serving in the student services area compared to a Laissez-faire approach in the instructional area of the college. Sharing practices and learning experiences would provide opportunities for thinking collectively about being adaptive and responsive toward Hispanic students (Levin & Montero-Hernandez, 2009).

HSI Organizational Research

Studies that evaluate the presence or absence of an HSI identity have relied on evidence of planned or teleological changes such as mission statements, evidence of related planning or performance indicators in institutional documents and websites, and exemplary practices associated with high-performing HSIs (Contreras et al., 2008; Malcom et al., 2010; Santiago, 2008; Torres & Zerquera, 2012). Unplanned identity change (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013), however, has received little empirical attention in the HSI literature. My study demonstrates that in a higher education institution with no formalized plan to become Hispanic-serving, shifts in the organizational identity toward being Hispanic-serving can take place. Since many HSIs have chosen not to engage in a formal identity change (Allen, 2006; Contreras et al., 2008; Torres & Zerquera, 2012), evidence of a shift toward Hispanic-serving would be overlooked without including an unplanned identity change construct.

The Hispanic Higher Education Research Collective has proposed development of an HSI typology for comparison between institutions and a maturity scale to determine patterns of development in HSIs (2010). Empirical data from unplanned organizational identity research

would be necessary to accurately depict development patterns in HSIs who have not undergone a planned effort to legitimize the HSI identity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM



*Department of Counseling, Educational Leadership, Educational and School Psychology
Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142*

Individual Interview Consent Form

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a study that will examine administrator, faculty, and staff perceptions of organizational identity as members of a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Participant Selection: You were selected for participation in this study based on your position at the college and length of employment with respect to the college receiving the Hispanic-Serving Institution designation. Approximately 40-60 individuals have been invited to participate in a focus group interview.

Explanation of Procedures: As a participant you will be asked to be involved in an individual interview conducted by me. The interview will consist of 8-10 open-ended questions to seek your perception of the college's identity. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes and will take place at the college. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview so an accurate transcript can be created which will facilitate data analysis and assist me in reporting accurate findings.

Discomfort/Risks: There are no risks, discomforts, or inconveniences expected from your participation in this study. However, if a question makes you uncomfortable, you are under no obligation to respond. You also can skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Benefits: The purpose of this study is to explore how receiving a Hispanic-Serving Institution designation affects the identity and practices of a community college. The results of the study will inform readers about the perceptions of administrators, faculty, and staff as a college transitions to a minority-serving institution. This study hopes to add to the body of knowledge about organizational identity in community colleges and Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Results may be published in journals and presented at conferences so I can share with others what is learned from the study.

Confidentiality: Any identifiable information obtained in this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Recordings and transcriptions of the interviews will be stored in a secure, online, password-protected program. At the conclusion of the study, transcripts and recordings will be stored in a single password protected file and maintained indefinitely at WSU by my dissertation committee chair. Transcripts and recordings will not be labeled with identifiable information. The anonymity of all participants will be preserved in presentations of the research findings, written and oral, published and unpublished. No one other than me and my dissertation committee chair at Wichita State University will have access to the raw data.

Refusal/Withdrawal: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University or myself. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You will be provided with a copy of this consent form for your records.

Contact: If you have any questions about this study, please contact Todd Carter, (580) 528-1130 (cell phone) or my advisor Dr. Jean Patterson, (316) 978-6392 (office phone). If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0007 at (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature indicates you have read the information provided above and have voluntarily decided to participate.

Signature of Subject

Date

Print Name

Title

Signature of Witness

Date

APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello, my name is Todd Carter and I represent Wichita State University as a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program. I appreciate your willingness to participate in my dissertation research. This study will examine administrator, faculty, and staff perceptions of organizational identity as members of a Hispanic-Serving Institution. You have been selected because of your position at the college and length of employment with respect to the college receiving the Hispanic-Serving Institution designation. Please keep in mind this study is seeking your perception of attributes associated with working in a community college that has applied for and received a Hispanic-Serving Institution designation.

Before we begin, I would like to share a few procedures for our conversation. With your permission, I would like to audio record our conversations for response clarity and accurate analysis of data when reporting the findings of this study. After the initial transcription, any names referenced will be replaced with pseudonyms and subsequent analysis will result in text without identifiers. Although we are on a first name basis, no names or identifying comments will be used when I report the results of this session. You can be assured of complete confidentiality. This focus group session will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Again, thank you for your participation.

Individual Interview Questions

1. In order to set the context for our conversation, I am going to ask a couple of questions about how you view Midwest Community College.

- a) Describe the college in a way that would communicate “this is who we are” to potential students, new community members, a person considering employment at the college, and a new employee you are mentoring.
 - b) Which of the things you have mentioned, if lost, would make you feel like this is no longer Midwest Community College?
 - c) How would you describe what distinguishes this college from other community colleges?
2. Tell me about the decision to apply for the HSI designation.
 - a) Who was involved?
 - b) When did you first hear about the application?
 - c) What was the justification for applying for the HSI designation?
 3. When the college received the HSI designation, describe how it was communicated to faculty, staff, and the community.
 4. How did you feel about the college receiving the HSI designation?
 5. What do you think it means to be a Hispanic-Serving Institution?
 6. What does being a Hispanic-Serving Institution look like at this college?
 7. Thinking about the practices in your work area, how would you describe them today compared to before receiving the HSI designation?
 8. You have used the terms (descriptors from question 1) to describe “who you are” as a college. Have they changed in any way?
 9. Are there other comments or information you would like to share?