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**Title:**

Different Experiences of Anglo vs. Latina/o Students in Latina/o Studies

**About the Author:**

I am a senior in Latina/o Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I have a passion for Latina/o studies and issues affecting our community. EPS500pf1 is my first research experience in ethnography.

**Keywords:**

Latina/o Studies, LLS, Diversity, Latino students, Anglo students, white students

**Abstract:**

My research aimed to answer one main question: Is the experience of Latina/o classes different for Anglo students as opposed to Latina/o students? Furthermore, it sought to answer the following questions: Do the instructors of Latina/o classes perceive there is a difference between Anglo students and Latina/o students' experience? Why do students from different backgrounds take this course? How much does a Latina/o class contribute to the students' knowledge of Latina/o culture? As a Latina/o Studies major I have often wondered why there were Anglo students in LLS courses. I would ask myself if they were there because of a genuine interest towards Latinos or because they had to be there due to a requirement they had to fulfill. I decided to give many the benefit of the doubt and believe that they wanted to learn more about my culture. However, as the years passed and the classes got smaller, I realized that many were there because it fulfilled a general education requirement or a requirement for their major. To be fair, not all white students were 'forced' to be there. Many do register for the classes due to a genuine interest in wanting to learn about Latinos. I found that the experience for Anglo and Latino students in Latina/o classes are very different. Most of my Latina interviewees expressed genuine interest in learning about their culture while the Anglo students did not express much interest in the courses. The professor of the class did perceive a difference between Anglo and Latino students' experiences. She believes that from her experience, Anglo students tend to take the class because it is a required course while Latino students take the course due to interest in learning about their culture. Furthermore, the professor has noticed that Anglo students tend to be more anxious and hesitant when approaching the material. My interviews also revealed this notion but at the same time my observations in the class proved that many Anglo students were not that hesitant or anxious about the material. Furthermore, my observations and interviews revealed some hidden prejudices among the Anglo students. However, I do not blame the students but rather their background. Both Anglo students are from a predominantly white background and had never had much interaction with any minorities or any race other than their own. The promising note from this study is that although I may have found some hidden prejudices, the Anglo students I interviewed seemed to have learned at least one thing about Latina/o culture they did not know before. Thus, my hoping that students leave with a better knowledge of Latina/o culture was fulfilled.

**Initial Exercises:**

Upon my arrival to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign the first thing one notices is the immense size of its campus. It is very intimidating for a freshman that comes from a fairly small high school. The number of students let alone the size of the lecture halls is shocking to someone who is accustomed to classes of 25 students and a student body of just under a thousand. Given the large nature of the University it is no wonder that I had no relationship to my Econ and Math class professors. The professors always directed the students to the Teaching Assistants for questions and almost everything else. It made me think they did not want to be bothered or that their time was too precious to be wasted on students. This cold and unwelcoming atmosphere produced by the professors of large lectures was very disheartening. I had to learn to become very independent and rely on myself which became very stressful. I felt hopeless in ever being able to pass my exams let alone my classes.

Aside from its large size, I experienced somewhat of a culture shock. I attended a high school in which the majority of the students were African-American and there were a decent number of Latino students as well. I lived in a predominantly Latino community, more specifically a Mexican community. All my life I was surrounded by minorities. Once at U of I that all changed. It was predominantly White. There were hardly any minorities in the large lecture classes.

However, my perception of U of I changed when I stepped into Dr. Rodriguez's LLS 100 class. He changed my life forever. He

was a professor that cared about his students and encouraged us to attend his office hours even making it a requirement to pass his class. In his class I saw the faces of Latinos I hadn't seen before. Never before this class had I known that classes such as Latina/o Studies classes existed. I fell in love and developed a passion for the material and classes so much that I decided to make it my major. This was when I started seeing more minorities in my classes and each class kept getting smaller. I finally got the attention I needed and developed relationships with the professors. I also discovered the power of study groups and learned how to get by. My life was becoming less stressful. Now I could rely on my peers, professors, and TA's alike. I owe it all to the Latina/o Studies department who has been so helpful every step of the way.

Denise Hurtado

EPS 500

October 14, 2008

Discourse Analysis of a University Text

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' about section begins with the words: "Within its more than 50 academic units, faculty and students are pursuing knowledge on scales that stretch from the subatomic to the cosmic and from the individual to the global. We fondly refer to LAS as the heart of the University because of its fundamental role in all education and research." From my personal experience this is relatively untrue. My passion for knowledge lies in the Latina/o Studies program, however, this does not exist as a major at the university and the only option is to make it a minor or go through the Individual Plan of Study which is a real pain. Although I would very much like to "pursue knowledge on scales that stretch from the subatomic to the cosmic" the university restricts how much "knowledge" I truly am to receive.

Furthermore, the LAS website claims that their students "graduate well-versed in their chosen field and with the analytical, critical thinking, and communication skills that are essential to success in life and the workplace." Yet to read and hear about so many students that end up in a job that has absolutely nothing to do with their major is discouraging and serves to dispel this assumption the university has. For example, a friend of mine graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering from U of I, which supposedly is one of the best programs offered at the University. However, it has been almost six months after graduation and he still cannot find a job or a job offer. In addition, big universities such as ours are often criticized for making students a "jack of all trades but master of none" with their wide array of required courses. Therefore, students graduate without really specializing in any particular field.

Moreover, the following claim is even more pretentious: "Professors in LAS are setting the curve and advancing knowledge. It's a simple but impressive fact about life at the U of I. The professor teaching our classes and running our labs may be a National Medal of Science recipient, a MacArthur 'Genius' Award honoree, a prize-winning novelist, or even a world renowned expert in number theory, a field that underlies much of computer science." However, like Rebecca Nathan has demonstrated through her book *My Freshman Year* most students never get to meet these "hot-shot" professors. Instead they are mostly instructed by teaching assistants who are often graduate students. When we do take a course with these MacArthur 'Genius' Award honoree professors, classes are almost always large lectures held in an enormous auditorium, preventing any personal contact with the professor and further alienating the student from the professor.

In conclusion, the University has various assumptions of what they believe their campus is like. However, school administrators should read Peter Ewell's article "Who Do You Think You Are? The Art of the Institutional Reality Check" and like he says, conduct a 'reality check' of the school campus and environment. Ewell states that at most institutions the mythology of the school (prestige, accomplishments, missions, etc.) is out of sync with reality. This cannot hold truer for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The university boasts about providing numerous academic units and preparing students for the "real world." Yet listening to alumni complain about not being able to land a job opportunity makes this assumption false. Furthermore, the University may have prestige as a research university and being home to world-renowned professors yet many students graduate without ever meeting any let alone taking a course with one.

Denise Hurtado

EPS 500

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Fortier

## Student Life and Culture

Browsing through the Student Life archives I could not help but feel a swirl of emotions while going through La Casa Cultural Latina's archives. Looking at the letters that Perrini sent to school officials pleading to open up a cultural center that catered to Latino students was heartwarming but at the same time heartwrenching. I have never given it too much thought and consideration about how lucky I am (and other Latino students) to have La Casa today. Latino students as well as faculty and staff went through a very hard time to get La Casa going. They encountered so many obstacles to give Latino students a place where we can all come together. As I dug deeper into the archives I came across La Carta's publications and came across an article by Ivan Ortiz, "My First Semester," published on December 1985.

I felt an instant connection and relation to Ivan and his experiences of his first semester at U of I to my own experiences. Ivan stated how he chose to come to U of I due to his desire to become independent. He wanted to make his own decisions and live with whatever consequences these decisions yielded. This is similar to my reasoning behind choosing U of I above all the other schools that accepted me. The close yet far enough proximity to my parents influenced my coming here. My parents were very strict on me and I wanted to be far enough where I can enjoy the college experience to its fullest. However, I love my family dearly and I am very close to them and I wanted to be close enough that whenever I was feeling homesick I can pack a backpack and go home without a problem. I am very glad, like Ivan, that I made the decision to come to U of I since I really got the feel of what a real college experience is like.

Furthermore, Ivan explains how he was having problems with his math classes at the university. I remember that I had the same exact problem at U of I my freshman year since I came in wanting to pursue an accounting degree. Ivan credits his fallback to his poor high school preparation and I can do the same. Although my situation was not as severe as Ivan's (his high school teacher taught two different courses in a 40 minute class period) I believe I had poor preparation in the sense that my high school did not teach us how to be independent enough for a large university. My classes in high school were small enough where we received special attention and help when needed. This was a huge difference when I came to the university. I was not accustomed to large lecture halls.

In addition, Ivan expresses how he feels that as a minority student he has to prove to himself and to others that he can make it at the university. I can say that I have felt the same way on many occasions. I have found that my ability to succeed has been questioned several times by students (Latino and White), by faculty, and by family alike. I still have to answer questions like "Well, what are you going to do with a Latina/o Students major?" and "How much money are you going to make with that major?" As well as hear comments made to me like "You're only here because of Affirmative Action." A comment made during a discussion in one of my classes has been deeply engraved in my memory and will forever haunt me. After a heated debate regarding affirmative action, a White student turns to look at the three minorities in the class (I was one of them) and says "If minority students are coming with poor preparation from these inner city schools then why come to college at all? They are only setting themselves up to fail." Although I was enraged at the comment it has kept me even more committed and motivated to prove them all wrong.

Denise Hurtado

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Fortier

University Narratives

In the Diversity Initiatives Planning Committee Report the University claims that it recognizes a need for diversity. Furthermore, the University sees a need in "examining and transforming existing institutional practices and beliefs that maintain structures of power and privilege based on race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexuality, economic class, religion, and disability." In my previous analysis of the LAS web page I suggested that the University should consider Peter Ewell's reality check and see that most of what they claim is untrue. However, it seems that the University has done a reality check and now realizes that it marginalizes underrepresented groups. At least now they recognize this fact and this report is an attempt at addressing the issues as well as finding solutions for the problems.

Moreover, the report states that "we recognize that a critical evaluation of Illinois' strengths and weaknesses and the key aspects of assessment (e.g., data collection of current efforts, dissemination of relevant practices/policies, clear benchmarking, collection of data performance) are needed to document, assess, improve, and modify Illinois' efforts, as needed." I believe this recognition is

possible due to the collaboration of different cultural and ethnic programs and offices at the University on this report such as the African American Cultural Center, Minority Student Affairs, Women and Gender Studies, and Asian American Cultural Center among others. These groups made their concerns and issues heard and the University has finally been forced to listen and accommodate these underrepresented groups.

**Question:**

Is the experience of Latina/o Studies different for Anglo students as opposed to Latina/o students?

**Plan:**

Will attempt to answer the following questions:

Is the experience of Latina/o Studies different for Anglo students as opposed to Latina/o students? Do the instructors of Latina/o classes perceive there is a difference between Anglo students and Latina/o students' experience? Why do students from different backgrounds take this course? How much does Latina/o Studies contribute to the students' knowledge of Latina/o culture?

I plan to sit in and observe a LLS course and take field notes. Also, I will be interviewing the professor of this course. I will be doing in depth interviews with six students from this course. My interviewees will be all female; three self-identified Anglo and three self-identified Latinas.

Interview Questions: Students

Have you taken a midterm yet? How did it go?

List 5 people you are closest to. What ethnicity are they?

What is your major? Year?

How do you identify yourself?

What neighborhood are you from/where do you live?

What race/ethnicity is the majority of your neighborhood?

What high school did you attend? Where?

What race/ethnicity was the majority of your high school?

How many LLS classes have you taken? What classes?

What made you enroll in this LLS class?

What have you learned in this LLS class about Latinos that you did not know before?

How satisfied are you with the class?

Was there ever a time you were uncomfortable in this class?

Do you think that the professor's viewpoint leans in favor of Latinos? Is she not objective enough? Does she have a bias leaning towards Latinos?

Did this class turn out to what you thought it would be?

What is something about this class that you found surprising?

Will you take any more LLS courses?

What do you think the future of LLS classes should be?

Should everyone be required to take an ethnic studies course? Are LLS classes worthwhile?

May I do a follow-up interview with you if needed?

Interview Questions: Professor

How do you identify yourself?

How long have you been teaching LLS courses?

Where else have you taught?

What interested you in Latina/o Studies?

What made you want to be an LLS instructor?

Based on your teaching experience, how many Anglo students enroll in your classes? Latino students?

What are some reasons Anglo students say they take the class? Latino students?

Do you think there is a difference between what an Anglo students takes from the class in comparison to a Latino student? If so, what do you think it is?

Why do you think a difference exists?

What would you want all your students to take from your class?

What would you want an Anglo student take from your class vs. a Latino student? Is there a difference?

Did you ever think that some students left your class without any further knowledge of Latinos/Latinidad after class ended? Was there a difference between Anglo and Latino students?

What difference, if any, did you see in the way Anglo & Latino students approached the material? In asking questions? In genuine interest?

What do you hope your students learn from your courses?

Initial Assumptions:

My initial assumptions regarding this project are that I will find that Latino students will get more out of LLS courses than the white students. Given my background and experience with LLS, I have seen that many white students, if not most, are taking the course solely because it fulfills a requirement. I believe that once I interview the white students I will find that they are going to be uncomfortable talking to me and may not answer the questions honestly. I also believe that the white students' interviews will reveal hidden prejudices. On the other hand, I believe that once I interview the Latina students they most likely are not in the class because it fulfills a requirement but rather due to a genuine interest in the material and class. I believe that the Latina student will have learned and taken more from the LLS course than the white student. I also believe that the professor of the LLS course will have noticed major differences in the way that Latina/o students approach the material versus a white student. I believe that the reason that white students may have these prejudices may be linked to their background of where they are from (in terms of location), what high school they attended, and what race/ethnicity they have interacted with the most. I believe that Latina/o students take more from the courses due to the fact that much of the Latino history has been erased in the dominant history students are taught in grammar school and high school. Latinos have been ignored and completely erased from "American" history.

**Data:**

Reflections on Interviews:

Upon interviewing the professor and one Latina student I have encountered some very interesting things. The professor stated how Latino students might take LLS courses to learn about themselves and because they may feel a direct link to the material since it is talking about them. Curiously, one of my interviewees stated that her reason for taking the course was because she was interested "to see how my ethnicity is perceived in this subject area." Also, similar to one of my assumptions regarding the project, my interviewee stated how she feels that two of her white group members had made very prejudiced comments. She cannot remember what in specific she heard them say but recalls that for an assignment the two women's proposal seemed like they wanted Latinos to assimilate to American culture. My interviewee remembers thinking "wow, I have to work with them."

Furthermore, my interviewee and I are pretty close friends. Therefore, I know she was very comfortable and was very open with me. This expressiveness may have to do with the location as well since the interview was held at her apartment: a space that she is familiar with and is unthreatening and therefore leads her to feel more comfortable.

Like the professor stated in her interview, she perceives the Latino students to more interested in the material and more enthusiastic. This enthusiasm was very evident among my interviewee's response to wanting to take more LLS courses, being enrolled in two more for the following semester and expressed being very excited for the classes. According to her she feels like she learns something new in each class. Therefore, similar to what the professor stated, Latino students may often find that they learn something about themselves they did not know before and thus will bring the students to a new level of consciousness. Like my interviewee stated: "Personally they [LLS classes] have been very worthwhile to me. I came to the University not really having a sense of Latinos as a culture, with a history in the United states, so starting with LLS 100 it really taught me a lot and got me interested in the social movements." The professor would be proud since one of the things she wanted her students to take from her classes was that they learn about Latinos' long history in the U.S.

My interviewee also believes that some students may not believe the course to be as worthwhile as she credits them to be due to the fact that some are required courses. Therefore, people will only see it as such and will not go beyond that one LLS class. I am very excited to interview a white student to see how much (if at all) their responses to the questions differ from my Latina interviewee.

Like my assumptions, the professor has stated that she believes that white students take LLS courses because the class may fulfill a requirement. However, she brought up a good point when she stated that other students may take courses such as LLS/XXX333 to further their professional careers since some of these students are journalism or advertising majors and with the growing Latino market they know that Latinos are an important source. Therefore, stating that white students may take LLS courses for their personal advancement. This sharply contrasts the reason why my first interviewee is taking the course: because she finds them interesting and fun.

#### **Discuss:**

Ancis, Julie R., Sedlacek, William E., & Mohr, Jonathan J. "Student Perceptions of Campus Cultural Climate by Race." *Journal of Counseling & Development* 78.2 (2000) : 180-185.

Students of color enrolled in predominantly white institutions often experience a lack of support and unwelcoming academic climate. The study found that African American, Asian American, and Latina/o students were significantly more likely than their white counterparts to experience pressure to conform to racial and ethnic stereotypes regarding their academic performance and behavior, as well as to minimize overt racial-ethnic group characteristics in order to be accepted. The study also found that Latinos reported greater comfort with their own cultural background as well as with individuals who are culturally different. These students' acceptance of self and others may buffer the negative effects of discrimination. White students seem relatively immune to from such a hostile climate. This article is helpful to my research project because it may reveal that Latinos experience comfort with their background due to the fact that cultural programming exists here on campus. La Casa and Latina/o Studies department may help in creating this comfort of their cultural background.

Solorzano, Daniel G., Villalpando, Octavio, & Oseguera, Leticia. "Educational Inequities and Latina/o Undergraduate Students in the United States: A Critical Race Analysis of Their Educational Progress." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 4.3 (2005) : 272-294.

This article analyzes the educational inequities and racialized barriers faced by Latina/o college students when navigating the educational pipeline leading to a college degree. The impact of racialized structures, policies, and practices is examined in the context of how they influence the educational attainment and academic progress of Latinas/os. Furthermore, the authors argue that the lack of achievement and attainment at each point in the educational pipeline has resulted in both a loss of talent to U.S. society and a loss of important role models for the next generation of Latina/o students who aspire to educational and professional careers. Latina/os represent the largest ethnic/racial group in the United States but have the poorest educational transition rates among all groups. This

article will help my research because I believe that Latina/o Studies professors and courses can help alleviate the problem. Like the professor stated, she wanted to be a role model for Latinos in higher education since she lacked such important role models in her undergrad career. Furthermore, LLS courses can help Latinos transition better into the University by providing a safe space in which they can interact with others share the same cultural background. Denise Hurtado EPS 500pf1 Fortier December 12, 2008 Different Experiences of Anglo vs. Latina/o Students in Latina/o Classes INTRODUCTION My research aims to answer one main question: Is the experience of Latina/o classes different for Anglo students as opposed to Latina/o students? Furthermore, it seeks to answer the following questions: Do the instructors of Latina/o classes perceive there is a difference between Anglo students and Latina/o students' experience? Why do students from different backgrounds take this course? How much does a Latina/o class contribute to the students' knowledge of Latina/o culture? As a Latina/o Studies major I have often wondered why there were Anglo students in LLS courses. I would ask myself if they were there because of a genuine interest towards Latinos or because they had to be there due to a requirement they had to fulfill. I decided to give many the benefit of the doubt and believe that they wanted to learn more about my culture. However, as the years passed and the classes got smaller, I realized that many were there because it fulfilled a general education requirement or a requirement for their major. To be fair, not all white students were 'forced' to be there. Many do register for the classes due to a genuine interest in wanting to learn about Latinos. In my research I hope to find that if white students do take the course because it fulfills a requirement then they leave with a better knowledge of Latina/o culture. I decided to focus my research on one specific class offered in Fall 2008. The class is cross-listed as a Latina/o Studies course with one other department. As the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign course catalog page explains the course, "examines the portrayal and participation of Latinas and Latinos using a variety of interdisciplinary approaches." The course also, "addresses historical and political movements that have been critical to Latina/Latino print, broadcast, and electronic communication within the broader context of cultural diversity" (courses.uiuc.edu). The Professor is an Associate Professor in the Latina/o Studies Program as well as in XXXXX Department. (lls.uiuc.edu). Since I was registered for the class it was easier to take notes on my observations. Furthermore, I decided on this class due to the racial demographic of the class. About half the class were white students, something I found very surprising given my background as a senior in Latina/o studies. In most of the Latina/o classes I have taken the majority of the classes were Latino students. Thus, this sparked a curiosity in me to find out the motivation behind the white students' registering for the course. In order to focus my research and therefore to begin to analyze the answers to my research questions, I decided to focus only on female students in the class. Originally I was set to interview three self-identified Latina students and three self-identified Anglo/White/Caucasian students. However, as I will later explain, I ran into various complications when trying to find white students to interview. All of the women I interviewed were upper classmen and have very different backgrounds. I approached all of the women individually either in person or through email to ask if I could interview them for a research project regarding the experience of students in that particular class. Based on my own assumptions I approached women who I believed to be Latina or White. Fortunately, my assumptions proved correct and all the women I interviewed either self-identified as Latino or White/Caucasian. RESULTS Before I proceed with my findings I would like to express my initial assumptions before beginning the interviews and observations. My initial assumptions regarding this project were that I would find that Latino students would get more out of LLS courses than the white students. Given my background and experience with LLS, I have seen that many white students, if not most, are taking the course solely because it fulfills a requirement. I believed that once I interviewed the white students I would find that they were going to be uncomfortable talking to me and would not answer the questions honestly. I also believed that the white students' interviews would reveal hidden prejudices. On the other hand, I believed that once I interviewed the Latina students they most likely were not in the class because it fulfilled a requirement but rather due to a genuine interest in the material and class. I believed that the Latina student would have learned and taken more from the LLS course than the white student. I also believed that the professor of the LLS course would have noticed major differences in the way that Latina/o students approached the material versus a white student. I believed that the reason that white students may have these prejudices may be linked to their background of where they are from (in terms of location), what high school they attended, and what race/ethnicity they have interacted with the most. I believed that Latina/o students would take more from the courses due to the fact that much of the Latino history has been erased in the dominant history students are taught in grammar school and high school. My first interview was the Professor. Upon interviewing the professor she proved one of my assumptions when she stated that she believes that white students take LLS courses because the class may fulfill a requirement. However, she brought up a good point when she stated that other students might take courses such as this one to further their professional careers, since Latinos represent a growing demographic. Therefore, stating that white students may take LLS courses for their personal advancement. This sharply contrasts the reason why my first interviewee is taking the course: because she finds them interesting and fun. This same assumption was proved both correct and incorrect. One of my white interviewees, Katie, was taking the course as an elective and the class did not fulfill a requirement. The reason she enrolled in this class was because she "was looking for classes that were open that would fill up my time slots" and consequently this class did the job. Therefore, although for Katie it was not a required course she did not seem to display a genuine interest in the material, at least upon registering for the course. My other white interviewee, Lauren, did enroll in the class because she "needed an upper level communications class and the class fulfills the areas of study" for her major. Like I had predicted Lauren was taking the class because it was a requirement and proving Jenny's belief, Lauren was taking the course not as a Latina/o studies class but rather as a XXXX course. The professor also proved another of my assumptions. I stated that the professor of the LLS course would have noticed major differences in the way that Latina/o students approach the material versus a white student. In her interview the professor stated, "Sometimes the non-Latinos are more anxious

about approaching the material. Many people are not comfortable talking about race. Latino students are not as anxious even though they may not have familiarity and seem to be more comfortable in talking about it. For white students they are less comfortable it may be because it is their first time taking a culture course. Maybe it is their first time learning about stereotypes and discrimination. For Latinos they live with it all the time so they have more experience with it. White students don't expect race and ethnicity to be the focus of the class." I also noticed the white students' hesitation and anxiousness. It was apparent when they were hesitant to being interviewed. Also, as I will discuss later, they were hesitant in answering some of the questions. In addition, the anxiousness was further reiterated when I could not find a third white interviewee. Aside from my interviews I also observed a couple of the class lectures. What I noticed from the class lectures was that a lot of the participation came from the white students. This observation contradicts the notion that white students are anxious and hesitant in approaching the material. If they were uncomfortable and anxious in the class then they would not want to participate for fear of retaliation from the Latino professor or the Latino students. It was very surprising to me that it being a Latina/o studies course, that most of the class participation would come from Latinos. One theory I came up with, for the majority white participation, is that it might be that the white students are anxious about the material and therefore prepare well for the course and do all the assigned readings. Thus, they come to class fully prepared and maybe even more prepared than the Latino students and are more readily available to answer the professor's questions. Another curious thing I noticed was that when the white students would answer the professor's questions or would make a comment the professor almost always wrote what they said on the board. I am not saying that she did not do the same for the Latino students but it was more noticeable among the white students because they were the ones that were participating the most. Upon trying to scrutinize and analyze why the professor might be writing things the white students say on the board, one theory is that she may be doing it to get the white students more excited about the material and build their confidence and enthusiasm about the course. An interesting thing I found was that Ashley believes that some students may not believe the course to be as worthwhile as she credits them to be due to the fact that some are required courses. Therefore, people will only see it as such and will not go beyond that one LLS class. Like Jenny stated "Latina/o courses are what you make of them. You can't go in and expect everything to come to you. You really have to take an interest in them. I know I would hate to sit in a class that was required. I think students who feel forced to be there may take away from what I want to learn about my people and my culture." In my interview with Jenny, she identified herself as a Latina and more specifically, Puerto Rican. She has a minor in Latina/o Studies and has taken various Latina/o Studies courses. Therefore, this particular class was a requirement but a choice among many. Jenny enrolled in the course because she thought "it would be interesting because I would like to understand more how Latinos are portrayed in the media and the motivation behind it." Furthermore, Jenny's interview disproves some of my initial assumptions. I originally believed that the Latina student will have learned and taken more from the Latina/o course than the white students. However, when asked what she learned in this Latina/o class about Latinos that she did not know before, Jenny responded, "I don't know. I'm a senior in LLS and it's kind of a repeat. I guess like when she talked about the stereotypical Latinos in the media are white, which is kind of different from what everyone else sees us as." Furthermore, she expressed dissatisfaction with Latina/o classes often being cross-listed with other courses: "I hate when LLS classes are cross-listed because it tends to turn into that type of class. I think they [LLS classes] should start standing on their own." After interviewing all my Latina interviewees I was very excited to start interviewing white students to get their take on the class. However, this task proved more challenging than I believed. When asking people for interviews, it was fairly easy to get Latina classmates to participate. However, when it came to finding white classmates willing to participate it became a hassle. I contacted two women through email. Only one responded stating that she was very busy and would not be able to do it this week. I then asked her if it was possible to reschedule for sometime next week and she agreed. I then asked the other woman who did not respond to my email, in person after class ended if she had received my email. She told me she did and she apologized for not responding. I believe their hesitation to willingly participate in my interviews was due to the fact that I may have told them too much in my email. I initially told them that I was studying our class to see what the differences between Anglo and Latino students in Latina/o classes were. However, when both of the white students asked me again to clarify what I was interviewing them for, I told them that I wanted to compare the different experiences in this Latina/o class among students. I told them I wanted to interview a diverse group and that I really needed an Anglo point of view at the moment. After telling them this they were less hesitant and happily agreed to be interviewed. I approached another white classmate after class. She agreed to be interviewed but after scheduling an appointment she never showed up. She did not return my calls or emails. Therefore, I was ultimately only able to interview two white students. I believe that the two white students who were hesitant at first to being interviewed may have been caused due to my email. Many people do not like talking about race and they may have felt very uncomfortable about talking to me about it. I am not sure if they thought I was going to attack them or purposely make them feel uncomfortable. Furthermore, I also strongly believe that they agreed to be interviewed by me because these two women were part of my class group and had gotten to know me a little better. Had it been a complete stranger I am not sure they would have agreed to be interviewed. For example, the third white student I approached was a complete stranger and I did not know her at all. This was probably why she did not want to be interviewed. On the other hand, the Latina students I approached were very happy to be interviewed. Two of the Latina students I knew fairly well. I had various Latina/o classes with Jenny in the past and I approached her to be interviewed because I knew she was very outspoken and would not be hesitant to voice her opinions. Ashley has been one of my very close friends since my freshman year and was previously my roommate. Therefore, I knew she would not hold anything from me. However, my third Latina interviewee, Wendy, I did not know at all. Even though I did not know her (like the third white student) she was not hesitant at all to being interviewed. Like the professor stated in her interview, she perceives the Latino students

to be more interested in the material and more enthusiastic. This enthusiasm was very evident among my first Latina interviewee's response, Ashley, to wanting to take more LLS courses, being enrolled in two more for the following semester and expressed being very excited for the classes. According to her she feels like she learns something new in each class. Therefore, similar to what the professor stated, Latino students may often find that they learn something about themselves they did not know before and thus will bring the students to a new level of consciousness. Like Ashley stated: "Personally they [LLS classes] have been very worthwhile to me. I came to the University not really having a sense of Latinos as a culture, with a history in the United States, so starting with LLS 100 it really taught me a lot and got me interested in the social movements." The professor would be proud since one of the things she wanted her students to take from her classes was that they learn about Latinos' long history in the U.S. In my assumptions I had also stated that the Latina student will have learned and taken more from the Latina/o Studies course than the white student. When I asked both white students what they have learned in this LLS class about Latinos that they did not know before both respondents hesitated in answering the question. They took longer to think of an answer than the Latina students. Katie responded with: "I really didn't know about ad campaigns about Latinos. I've done market research for other classes but never separated by race. I didn't realize there were bigger markets in some cities like others." Lauren responded: "I guess like the different ways that Latinos are portrayed in the media and the negative stereotypes that come from that and how they are not happy about those portrayals." In answering my research question on how much does a Latina/o class contribute to the students' knowledge of Latina/o culture, I would say not that much of an extensive knowledge was gained based on these answers. When I asked the Latina students the same question their answers were more elaborate and in-depth analysis of the class possibly because they came in with a Latino consciousness that the professor believes many Latino students have. For example, Ashley responded: "I learned that there is a lot of strategic planning behind the way Latinos are perceived in the media. I learned more about the history of how Latinos came up in the media or how they came to their current standing in the media." If we can recall what Jenny responded she also provided a more analytical answer: "When she [the professor] talked about the stereotypical Latinos in the media are white which is kind of different from what everyone else sees us as." Moreover, the professor stated that "Latinos mostly always understand the concept of the class more; they say 'wow! That was a great class. I learned A LOT' versus a white student who will say, 'Well I learned SOMETHING.' They [white students] find the class useful but where it's okay. Latino students say they learn a lot. It's hard to generalize but this is from my experience." I experienced first hand prejudice while in class and/or in my group meetings rather than in the interviews, like I had originally predicted. Our group was supposed to come up with a marketing idea targeted at Latinos. Lauren and Katie were in my group and they had proposed an idea that was more or less asking Latinos to assimilate to American culture and thus achieve the "American Dream." Ashley stated how she feels that they had made very prejudiced comments. She cannot remember what in specific she heard them say but remembers thinking "wow, I have to work with them." Ashley and I were in the same group as them and neither one of us agreed with the idea and we suggested we change it to something else. They agreed with no complaint and they seemed to understand where we were coming from. Furthermore, on a different occasion while our group was discussing Spanish language newspapers and English language newspapers, Katie used the word "American" to refer to the English language newspapers and "not American" to refer to the Spanish language newspapers. I politely corrected her and said "you mean the English language newspapers and Spanish language newspapers correct? They are both American because both are published here." Katie quickly agreed. I do not believe that either Lauren or Katie is racist. I just believe that they have some prejudices and stereotypes still deeply instilled in them despite taking the Latina/o studies class. I do not blame them totally for this ignorance. I believe that because they are both from a majority white community, have attended predominantly white high schools, and the majority of their closest friends are white, they have not had any close interaction with any Latinos let alone any minorities. Therefore, they have gone their whole lives without being challenged of their beliefs. There is no one in their lives who can dispel negative stereotypes or prejudices. This is why Latina/o studies courses are very important and necessary for students to build a Latino consciousness. Interestingly, when asked what they found surprising about the class, Jenny and Ashley both expressed similar views. Ashley stated: "I'm surprised at how many non-Latinos there are in the class" and Jenny stated: "It's really mixed, there are a lot of white kids." Jenny credits this to the course not being an identity class but rather it being cross-listed with a communications class. She believes the Latina/o department cross-lists classes to bring more students in and hence explains the number of white students in the class. Similarly, the professor stated that when she taught Latina/o Studies 100 the courses were about 80 percent Latino and 20 percent white. The professor expressed amazement to see the number of Latino students enrolled in the classes. The other Latina/o Studies classes she teaches are within the same proportion. Furthermore, she stated that this class' proportion of white students and Latino students was 50/50. The professor also believes that it could be "because it is cross-listed with xxx or because they [students] are aware that the demographics are changing." In contrast, one of the white interviewees, Lauren, contradicts this belief. When asked the same question about what she found surprising about the class, she stated "maybe that the majority of the class was Latinos in comparison to my other classes. That was interesting." This clear contradiction between the professor, the Latina interviewees, and myself shows the lack of diversity in the classrooms at the University. The main reason why I chose to study this course was because of the high number of white students in the classroom. From my experience as a senior and a Latina/o studies major, I had never been in a class that was a high-level Latina/o studies course and about half the students being white. For Lauren to show amazement at the number of Latinos in the classroom and Latinos not even being the majority of the class is problematic. This is clear proof that although the University recognizes in the Diversity Initiatives Planning Committee Report that there is a need for diversity not much has changed in diversifying the classrooms. IDEALS AND MY RESEARCH PROJECT In an IDEALS project titled LLS: Consciousness-Raising of the Latina/o

Communities Diversity written by Katelyn Galloway, Maureen Kattah, Daisy Nívar, and Andy Santillanes the project analyzes Latina/o courses at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It delves into professors' perceptions of what LLS classes' purpose is. The authors also interviewed Latina/o students on why they take these courses and why they believe they are important. Their findings are similar to mine. For example, in surveys they handed out people identified the reason for taking that class as wanting to learn more about "Latin culture and history" and "my heritage." If we can recall, one of my Latina interviewees responded similarly: "to see how my ethnicity is perceived." Furthermore, their study also revealed that when they asked students what made LLS classes different many explained that "it presented another perspective on U.S. history, the part 'left out' of other history classes. Thus, Latina/o studies classes do serve to create consciousness of Latina/o culture." Similarly, Wendy stated that she has "learned a lot of history that I didn't know about Mexico and every other Latin American country. It's just very interesting. You only just learn the history about the U.S." Also, Katie stated that LLS classes are worthwhile because "it helps you think outside the box and it opens your eyes to many things. Not like in high school, this isn't something you would see in textbooks." Furthermore, one of the professors they interviewed stated that she believed the Latina/o studies department's purpose is "to promote the studies of Latino history; history that has been left out." The similarities do not end there. The IDEALS project also interviewed one professor who believes that the purpose of Latina/o studies is to " 'make people aware of the needs, wants, and contributions of the Latino population in the U.S. and back that information with academic research.' She indicates that awareness is extremely important, and without this awareness we will ultimately live in ignorance and the perpetuation of stereotypes about particular groups will only continue." Likewise, when I interviewed the professor she stated that she wanted students to learn "the importance of the media and how it plays an important social role; the history of Latinos in the country; and to understand contemporary issues that Latinos face and in turn help students develop a new conscious about Latinos around them." Furthermore, the project also surveyed a student minoring in LLS who stated that she would have preferred to major in Latina/o studies because "LLS classes have always been my most interesting and favorite classes at U of I. I love learning about my culture." The project also states that this has been a common theme for which students and professors go into Latina/o studies. The authors state, "The University has yet to establish more than just a minor degree. The Latino/a department staff would really like to see the department grow more within the University and ultimately have a Major program for student to pursue." Correspondingly, one of my interviewees also agrees that the LLS department should "definitely expand" and that Latina/o studies should become a major. Another one of my interviewees also stated that Latina/o courses and the department "should start standing on its own."

**CONCLUSION** In summary, the experience for Anglo and Latino students in Latina/o classes are very different. Most of my Latina interviewees expressed genuine interest in learning about their culture while the Anglo students did not express much interest in the courses. One Anglo student was taking it as a requirement and it was their only LLS course ever taken and did not wish to continue taking any more LLS courses. The professor of the class did perceive a difference between Anglo and Latino students' experiences. She believes that from her experience, Anglo students tend to take the class because it is a required course while Latino students take the course due to interest in learning about their culture. Furthermore, the professor has noticed that Anglo students tend to be more anxious and hesitant when approaching the material. My interviews also revealed this notion but at the same time my observations in the class proved that many Anglo students were not that hesitant or anxious about the material. Furthermore, my observations and interviews revealed some hidden prejudices among the Anglo students. However, I do not blame the students but rather their background. Both Anglo students are from a predominantly white background and had never had much interaction with any minorities or any race other than their own. The promising note from this study is that although I may have found some hidden prejudices, the Anglo students I interviewed seemed to have learned at least one thing about Latina/o culture they did not know before. Thus, my hoping that students leave with a better knowledge of Latina/o culture was fulfilled. This project is not representative of all Anglo students and Latino students in Latina/o classes. Thus, conducting this research project in a different classroom (i.e. where the racial demographic of the class is majority Latino rather than half) or various classrooms and then comparing them to each other may reveal different results. Furthermore, conducting more interviews of students and incorporating other ethnicities/races (Asian, African American, etc.) might also reveal different results and would provide a different perspective. My recommendations to the university based on my findings are that there needs to be a greater effort to diversify the classrooms. Having a requirement of a non-western culture class is not enough for students to fully understand other cultures. Furthermore, more resources should be put into the development and growth of the Latina/o Studies department.

**LITERARY REVIEW** Ancis, Julie R., Sedlacek, William E., & Mohr, Jonathan J. "Student Perceptions of Campus Cultural Climate by Race." *Journal of Counseling & Development* 78.2 (2000) : 180-185. Students of color enrolled in predominantly white institutions often experience a lack of support and unwelcoming academic climate. The study found that African American, Asian American, and Latina/o students were significantly more likely than their white counterparts to experience pressure to conform to racial and ethnic stereotypes regarding their academic performance and behavior, as well as to minimize overt racial-ethnic group characteristics in order to be accepted. The study also found that Latinos reported greater comfort with their own cultural background as well as with individuals who are culturally different. These students' acceptance of self and others may buffer the negative effects of discrimination. White students seem relatively immune to from such a hostile climate. This article is helpful to my research project because it may reveal that Latinos experience comfort with their background due to the fact that cultural programming exists here on campus. La Casa and Latina/o Studies department may help in creating this comfort of their cultural background.

Solorzano, Daniel G., Villalpando, Octavio, & Oseguera, Leticia. "Educational Inequities and Latina/o Undergraduate Students in the United States: A Critical Race Analysis of Their Educational Progress." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 4.3 (2005) : 272-294. This article

analyzes the educational inequities and racialized barriers faced by Latina/o college students when navigating the educational pipeline leading to a college degree. The impact of racialized structures, policies, and practices is examined in the context of how they influence the educational attainment and academic progress of Latinas/os. Furthermore, the authors argue that the lack of achievement and attainment at each point in the educational pipeline has resulted in both a loss of talent to U.S. society and a loss of important role models for the next generation of Latina/o students who aspire to educational and professional careers. Latina/os represent the largest ethnic/racial group in the United States but have the poorest educational transition rates among all groups. This article will help my research because I believe that Latina/o Studies professors and courses can help alleviate the problem. Like The Professor stated, she wanted to be a role model for Latinos in higher education since she lacked such important role models in her undergrad career. Furthermore, LLS courses can help Latinos transition better into the University by providing a safe space in which they can interact with others share the same cultural background. EUI LINKS LLS: Consciousness-Raising of the Latina/o Communities Diversity Galloway, Katelyn; Kattah, Maureen; Nívar, Daisy; Santillanes, Andy <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/8720> This project analyzes Latina/o courses at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It delves into professors' perceptions of what LLS classes' purpose is. The authors also interviewed Latina/o students on why they take these courses and why they believe they are important. Multicultural Community vs. White Community Reynolds, Felicia <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/8734> This project focuses on the segregation of ethnicities in the dorms at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Reynolds compares the white students to multicultural students choice of living in particular dorms and also addresses the lack of diversity in the dorms. Reynolds finds that white students tend to separate themselves from other cultures due to feeling uncomfortable and fearing for their safety. Racial Climate and Spatial Segregation: The Experience of Minority Students Lemus, Sergio <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/3594> This project focuses on how socialization changes among minority students when they come to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It concentrates on documenting and analyzing whether "racial" differences affect student socialization. It illustrates how coming to the University changes the racial groups with which students interact in meaningful ways. Furthermore, the author argues that choosing one's major is correlated with the individual's socio-economic status and their race. xx

**EUI Links:**

LLS: Consciousness-Raising of the Latina/o Communities Diversity

Galloway, Katelyn; Kattah, Maureen; Nívar, Daisy; Santillanes, Andy

<http://hdl.handle.net/2142/8720>

This project analyzes Latina/o courses at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It delves into professors' perceptions of what LLS classes' purpose is. The authors also interviewed Latina/o students on why they take these courses and why they believe they are important.

Multicultural Community vs. White Community

Reynolds, Felicia

<http://hdl.handle.net/2142/8734>

This project focuses on the segregation of ethnicities in the dorms at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Reynolds compares the white students to multicultural students choice of living in particular dorms and also addresses the lack of diversity in the dorms. Reynolds finds that white students tend to separate themselves from other cultures due to feeling uncomfortable and fearing for their safety.

Racial Climate and Spatial Segregation: The Experience of Minority Students

Lemus, Sergio

<http://hdl.handle.net/2142/3594>

This project focuses on how socialization changes among minority students when they come to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It concentrates on documenting and analyzing whether "racial" differences affect student socialization. It illustrates how coming to the University changes the racial groups with which students interact in meaningful ways. Furthermore, the author argues that choosing one's major is correlated with the individual's socio-economic status and their race.

**Reflect:**

This project is not representative of all Anglo students and Latino students in Latina/o classes. Thus, conducting this research project in a different classroom (i.e. where the racial demographic of the class is majority Latino rather than half) or various classrooms and then comparing them to each other may reveal different results. Furthermore, conducting more interviews of students and incorporating other ethnicities/races (Asian, African American, etc.) might also reveal different results and would provide a different perspective.

**Recommendations:**

My recommendations to the university based on my findings are that there needs to be a greater effort to diversify the classrooms. Having a requirement of a non-western culture class is not enough for students to fully understand other cultures. Furthermore, more resources should be put into the development and growth of the Latina/o Studies department.