Topic: How first-generation college students experience academic belonging

I. Introduction
    A. Background: First-generation students represent 56% of college enrollment
       but have lower retention rates
    B. Research gap: Quantitative studies capture outcomes, not lived experience
    C. Research question: How do first-generation students describe their sense
       of belonging in the first year of college?

II. Literature Review
    A. Existing research on belonging and academic outcomes (Walton & Cohen, 2011)
    B. Identity threat theory in higher education contexts
    C. Gap: qualitative perspectives from first-generation students specifically

III. Methodology
    A. Research design: interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA)
    B. Participant selection: 12 first-generation freshmen at a mid-sized university
    C. Data collection: semi-structured interviews (45–60 minutes each)
    D. Analysis approach: thematic coding using NVivo

IV. Findings — Thematic Analysis
    A. Theme 1: "Belonging by performance" — students felt accepted only
       when achieving visibly
       1. Representative quotes and participant patterns
    B. Theme 2: Code-switching between home and campus identity
       1. Navigating family expectations vs. academic culture
    C. Theme 3: Faculty relationships as belonging anchors
       1. Mentorship interactions that shifted students' sense of fit

V. Discussion
    A. Findings in context of existing belonging literature
    B. Implications for first-year advising and faculty training
    C. Limitations: single institution, self-selected participants

VI. Conclusion
    A. Restate research question and summary of themes
    B. Practical recommendations for institutional support
    C. Directions for future research