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Resiliency in Academically Successful Latina Doctoral Students:

Implications for Advocacy

by

Katherine M. Fuerth

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Psychological and Social Foundations
College of Education
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my Abuelito, Carlos Lopez (1919-2007),

who worked so hard for us to have a better life, may he rest in peace.

Also, to future Latina doctoral students…don't quit!

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Resiliency in Academically Successful Latina Doctoral Students:

Implications for Advocacy

Katherine M. Fuerth

ABSTRACT

Research indicates that the Latina/o population is growing in the United States, and more Latina/os are attending college, many do not continue their education beyond the undergraduate level, much less beyond the Master's level. Latinas in particular continue to be underrepresented in professional roles due to the small number of Latinas who obtain doctoral degrees. Although many Latinas do not continue their education or drop-out throughout their graduate schooling, some Latinas do thrive forward and are academically successful. This study aimed at identifying elements that fostered resiliency in academically successful Latina doctoral students, as well as identifying challenges or barriers that some Latinas experience. Findings indicate some support for Bernard's resiliency theory, while also providing implications for advocacy for Latina doctoral students.

Preface

First and foremost I want to thank God for holding my hand and guiding me through all of the challenges I have faced in the last ten years of my schooling and for opening new doors of opportunity for me each time one closed. I would also like to thank my parents and grandparents, for being such positive role-models and believing in me, while reminding me of how proud they were of my accomplishments each step of the way. Their unconditional love, endless support, and encouragement have helped me in my success. I want to thank my younger siblings and cousins for inspiring in me the desire to be a positive role-model and setting new standards in our family.

I would not have made it through the last three years if it hadn't been for my friends, my soul sisters. Amy Menna, your dedication to our field is contagious. Thank you for always answering my late night phone calls when I questioned my abilities to finish and for helping me hone my skills as a professional. You have been a true friend. Lee Teufel, your empathy, consistent reassurance, and encouragement helped me regain my stability whenever I'd lose my balance. Thank you for being the big sister I never had. I'd also like to thank my friends, Natasha Merino, CristinaVila, Paola Rojas, and Amy Tiseo for always being there for me, serving as my "distractions," and letting me vent while helping me cope during this process. Also, I would like to extend thanks to both my friends, Charles (Chad) Anthony, II and Spencer Cordell. Spencer, your continuous encouragement is very much appreciated. Chad, I want to thank you for

always supporting me and challenging me to grow through this process.

I would like to thank the many teachers, professors, mentors, and role-models who inspired me to go into academia and into the field of counseling, especially Mrs. Busher, Mr. Campaign, Dr. Rath, Dr. Campbell, Dr. Richard, and Dr. Kubiak. Also, thank you to Rod Hale at USF for his continuous support and advocacy on my behalf. I would not have gone past my Master's if it hadn't been for your assistance. I would also like to thank my Committee Members. Dr. Herbert Exum, thank you for creating a welcoming environment for me to call home these last three years. Your wisdom and stability are admirable. You always made me feel as if I had nothing to worry about. Thank you for always encouraging me to "keep going" and for finding resources to help me succeed. Dr. Wilma Henry, for being a powerful female role-model in my life. I aspire to be as strong as you are. Thank you for always being flexible and understanding. Thank you for being interested in me and excited about my ideas along the way.
Dr. Carlos Zalaquett, from our first orientation in the program I remember thinking "Oh, he's Latino…I have to meet him!" Thank you for being a positive mentor in my life and helping me network with others and find meaning in what I was doing. Thank you for all of the incredible opportunities you have given me to help me succeed. Dr. Barbara Shircliffe, you always challenged me to think critically and I thank you for that. Thank you for instilling in me the self-confidence that I needed to help me get more involved socially on campus and for the opportunities to advocate for others. Dr. Rosemary Closson, for your kind words of encouragement and feedback with my dissertation, thank you. Dr. Barbara Cruz, I do not believe that your presence at my proposal defense was a coincidence. That presence alone encouraged me to push forward through the dissertation

process. Thank you for being a successful Latina role-model in my life.

To all of my clients and students who have inspired me to continue my research and advocacy efforts…thank you! I would also like to thank Enny Torres for sharing her story with me and reminding me of what I'm most passionate about-I wish you success. Lastly, I would like to thank the six Latinas who volunteered to participate in this study. I have shed many tears of joy as I read and re-read your stories. Meeting you and hearing your stories was cathartic for me. You inspired me to "just do it" and to "not stop no matter what" without "forgetting where I come from" so that I may someday "lead the way and show that other Latinas can also do it." Thank you!

Chapter One

Introduction

Background of the Problem

As of 2003, statistics illustrate a growing number of Latina/os attending college; however, the numbers are considerably lower compared to their African American and Anglo-American counterparts. It is known that 10% of Latina/os obtain a college degree in the United States as opposed to 18% of African Americans and 34% of Anglo-Americans (McWhirter, Torres, Salgado, & Valdez, 2007). Moreover, compared to non-Latina/o Anglos, Latina/os are less likely to attend college, have less representation in higher education, and have higher drop out rates (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Vasquez, 2002).

When compared to Anglo-Caucasian females, many Latinas in particular have been identified as "at–risk" by the educational system (Hassinger & Plourde, 2005; Sy, 2006). Due to familial obligations and expectations, some Latinas have a possibility of developing mental health problems and experiencing negative school outcomes as they steer through the educational system (Sy, 2006). Some of these women are also at risk of dropping out of college due to the conflict between their cultural beliefs and values and that of their surrounding environment (Sy). Accordingly, this conflict can result in academic non-persistence (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000).

Researchers have studied many of the variables that influence a Latina's decision

to pursue a college degree as well as those variables that impact her decision not to go to college or complete her college education (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005). Among the variables affecting drop-out decisions are: poor student adjustment to the university environment, prejudice, financial-related stress, poor academic preparation, minority status, acculturation pressures, gender/cultural expectations, discrimination, and culture shock (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005).

In a report provided by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), investigators indicate that 90% of the fastest growing jobs require a post-secondary education (GAO, 2007). This government report also indicates that individuals who further their education beyond high school and obtain a Bachelor's degree receive one million dollars more over their lifetime than those individuals who only hold a high school diploma (GAO). This is important information because, historically, Latina/os have had low college graduation rates and few obtain a graduate education. Between 2006 and 2007, enrollment of Latina/os in 2-year colleges increased by 4%, however, their enrollment in 4-year colleges decreased by 2% (GAO). This decrease of enrollment in 4-year colleges may be due to greater costs endured at 4-year colleges versus 2-year colleges. Regardless, this decrease in enrollment of 4-year programs should elicit a societal concern because research indicates that individuals lacking an education who live in poverty face greater healthcare problems and mental health problems (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales 2005; GAO, 2007). In addition, Latina/os have historically faced cultural challenges such as oppression in society; hence, it is important for educational systems to empower Latinas by helping them foster resiliency skills that will help them succeed in their educational endeavors. Moreover, there is a need for greater

representation of Latinas in professional roles. For example, Latinas only account for .05 percent of faculty in colleges and universities across the U.S. This underrepresentation further reflects a need for advocacy.

Statement of the Problem

Although there is a growing population of Latina/os in the U.S., the numbers of Latina/os attending college and obtaining graduate degrees are considerably lower when compared to their counterparts. It appears that Latina/o college students might be faced with additional educational barriers than their Anglo counterparts and may have common external factors or characteristics that impact their academic achievement. In the United States, Latinas in particular are underrepresented in professional roles. This is perhaps indicative of an educational problem and suggests a need for greater advocacy efforts for this population.

Although a large majority of Latinas choose not to attend college, and many do drop-out, there are some Latinas who thrive in higher education and are academically successful. Success factors for Latina students who complete a college education and obtain a college degree include: familial support, influence of peers who exhibit college survival skills, cultural congruity with their college environment, and faculty and staff mentors; particularly Latina/o faculty and staff who have successfully achieved their academic goals (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; Gonzalez, 2005). It is important that we learn more about these variables and others that help Latinas succeed.

Significance of the Study

It is important for educators, educational institutions, and counselors to become aware of the factors that foster resiliency in Latina doctoral students in order to advocate

and help create programs that will enable these students' success. Given the dismal achievement data on Latinas in particular, it is important to gain a further understanding of the variables contributing to their success in graduate school. Previous researchers (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005) recommend gender-focused studies in this area to further identify the Latina cultural expectations and socialization patterns. Much of the past research has focused on the barriers that Latinas face throughout their collegiate education. Rather than focusing on the barriers to academic success, new research is needed to explore the reasons that some Latinas do succeed academically and go so far as obtaining doctoral degrees. Accordingly, this study will address both risk factors as well as factors that aid in the success of Latina college students. Findings may help institutions develop programs that target Latina college students for both recruitment and retention. It will also provide implications for advocacy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to conduct a qualitative investigation regarding variables or characteristics that build resiliency in Latinas who persist academically during their doctoral studies. This study will review the current literature on resiliency among Latinas in education and examine the factors that foster resiliency in Latina doctoral students. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the current literature by providing educational systems with new insights on the factors influencing the academic success of Latinas in education, particularly those who obtain doctoral degrees. I choose to study Latinas in doctoral programs because of the underrepresentation of this population in higher education.

The results from this study will help to inform educational systems about factors contributing to this underrepresentation as well as the types of programs or efforts needed to attract and retain Latina doctoral students.

Questions Guiding the Inquiry

Several fundamental questions guide this inquiry: (a) What were the educational experiences of Latina doctoral students during their undergraduate and graduate studies (b) What personality traits or characteristics do these successful Latinas possess? (c) What common elements are present in the individual's support system that increases a Latina's her academic success? (d) What are the motivations of Latinas who seek entrance into doctoral programs? (e) What experiences did these Latinas have upon entering their doctoral programs?

Additionally, specific questions will be asked of participants to highlight their personal experiences and gain a greater understanding of their schooling experiences, support system, and resiliency skills (See Appendices F & G).

Conceptual Assumptions

There are several assumptions underlying the purpose of this study. First, many Latinas will not attain higher educational goals such as completing a doctoral degree. Therefore, a limited number of Latinas are represented in professional positions and roles in communities across the U.S. Also, due to additional cultural issues faced by Latinas in our society, it is possible that the road to doctoral graduate success may be experienced with greater challenges than that of their Anglo counterparts. Hence, the assumption is that Latina doctoral students are a unique subgroup in the U.S. that may have different resiliency skills than other cultural groups.

However, it could be that the resiliency skills exhibited by some Latina doctoral students may be the same as those from other cultural backgrounds.

It is probable that Latinas who have been successful in graduate studies and worked their way to a doctoral program may have had greater educational opportunities and fewer negative factors influencing their decision to finish high school, go to college, and then obtain a graduate degree. Research indicates that financial stress and lack of family support are two factors that are related to college drop-out rates (Sy, 2006). Therefore, it may be that the students with less financial stress and more family support have more positive academic results. Latinas with family support and financial support may be more likely to succeed in their graduate studies.

The findings in the literature are consistent in describing family support, financial support, and faculty/mentor support as being helpful in fostering resiliency skills in these Latina college students (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Ceballo, 2004; Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; McHatton, Zalaquett, & Cranston-Gingras 2006; Gonzalez, 2006; Gonzalez, 2007; Gonzalez, 2001; Zalaquett, 2005). Therefore, it is highly possible that this study will have similar findings. However it is also hoped that this study will expand on the current literature on elements that foster resiliency, while also describing challenges faced by Latina doctoral students in their schooling experiences.

Conceptual Framework

Resiliency Theory

Research indicates that some Latinas face a number of roadblocks throughout the course of their doctoral education (Gonzalez, 2001). Furthermore, some Latinas are identified as "at-risk" for dropping-out early in their education due to the many barriers

they face and the factors that influence their decisions to terminate their education (Gonzalez; Hassinger & Plourde, 2005; Sy, 2006). Despite many of the obstacles that several Latinas face throughout their education, some Latinas succeed academically through high school, college, and graduate school. Resiliency theory focuses on the strengths of "at-risk" individuals who adapt to their environments and succeed in the face of adversity (Bernard, 2004).

Resiliency has been defined by some as "the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances" (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990, p. 426). Others emphasize that resiliency is a function of connectedness and multiple interactions of varied factors (Bernard, 1999). Some authors have referred to resiliency as an individual's negotiation process between protective factors in their lives and risk factors they face (Johnson, 1999; Werner & Johnson, 1999). A number of studies describe students who exhibit resiliency skills as being able to adapt to and manipulate their environment to successfully overcome educational challenges (Alva, 1995; Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000).

Upon review of the literature on resiliency and education, it appears that there are several resiliency theories and models that have been empirically tested (Bernard, 2004; Chavkin, 1999; Howell, 2003; Krovetz, 1999; McMillan & Reed, 1994; Werner & Smith, 1992). However, for this study, I have chosen Bernard's (2004) resiliency theory because it seems to encompass many of the same protective factors presented by other resiliency theorists (Howell, 2003; Krovetz, 1999; McMillan & Reed, 1994; Werner and Smith, 1992). One concept presented by other theorists that is not explicitly described by

Bernard (2004) is *community factors*, such as involvement in organizations and programs (Krovetz, 1999). It should be noted that in Bernard's (1995) original study, she included *opportunities for meaningful participation* as one of the elements fostering resiliency in students. It may be that this element was incorporated into the domain of *social competence* (Bernard, 2004).

Table 1 below includes a summary of previous resiliency theoretical concepts to illustrate the overlapping of concepts when compared to Bernard's (2004) resiliency theory, while also depicting additional resiliency concepts presented by other theorists.

Table 1

Comparison of Resiliency Theoretical Concepts to that of Bernard's Resiliency Theory

Authors	Bernard's (2004) Resiliency Concepts				Additional Resiliency Concepts
Bernard, B. (2004)	Social Competence	Problem Solving	Autonomy	Sense of Purpose	
Bernard, B. (1995)	Caring Relationships			Positive & High Expectations	Opportunities for Meaningful Participation
Krovetz, M. (1999)	Family			High Expectations Purposeful	Community School Value Participation
McMillan, J. & Reed, D. (1994)	Family	Individual Attributes Positive Use of Time	Individual Attributes	Individual Attributes	
Werner, E. (1992)	Role Models				

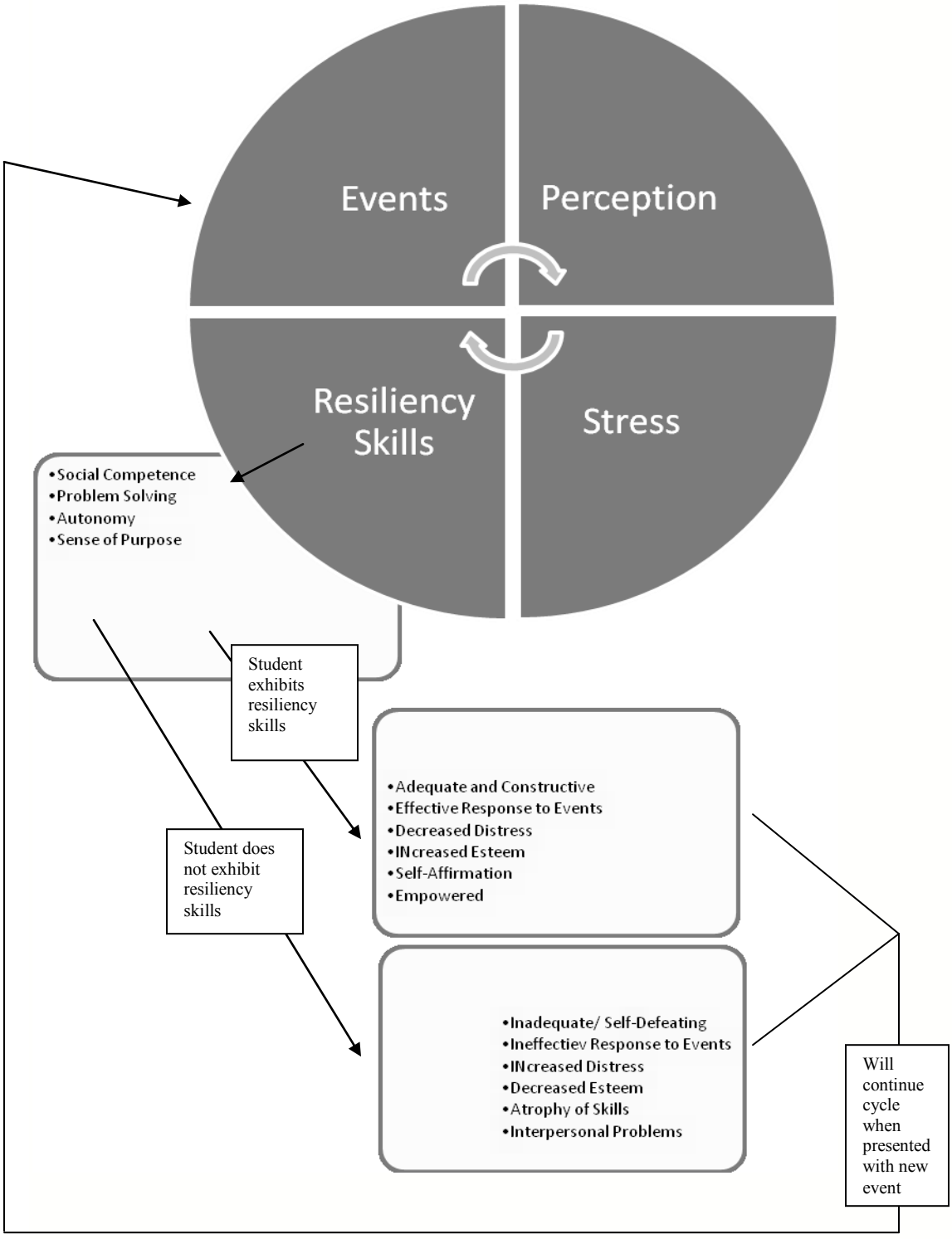
Note. Table 1 depicts a comparison of resiliency concepts presented by different authors to that of Bernard's (2004). It also includes additional resiliency concepts not accounted for by Bernard's model.

There are four components to Bernard's (2004) current resiliency theory that are applicable to this study: (a) social competence, (b) problem-solving, (c) autonomy, and (d) sense of purpose. Social competence refers to an individual's ability to communicate

(Bernard, 2004; Gonzalez, 2007). This theoretical concept refers to the capability of expressing compassion and empathy, expressing concern and being caring, and being able to forgive others. This concept also refers to the positive impact that mentors, professors, friends, and colleagues have on the individual's ability to be resilient in the face of oppression (Bernard; Gonzalez). Problem solving indicates an individual's ability to be resilient as found in the ways in which they think critically and plan (Bernard; Gonzalez; Masten & Coatsworth,1998). Also, problem solving refers to flexibility and resourcefulness when faced with adversity. Autonomy refers an individual's ability to be independent and assertive. One's ability to have confidence in one-self and have a feeling of control over one's life and environment (Bernard; Howell, 2003). Sense of purpose refers to the ability to find meaning in what one is doing when faced with challenges (Bernard). Another characteristic is having a sense of purpose. For instance, when faced with challenges having the ability to find meaning in what one is doing (Bernard, 2004).

When examining the experiences of Latina doctoral students, resiliency theory is important because it will assist in framing what these women have lived through while also giving context to their experiences. Figure 1 represents the conceptual framework of resiliency as it relates to academically successful Latina doctoral students.

Figure 1. Cyclical Resiliency Framework.



This graphic illustrates the cyclical process through which an individual is exposed to an event that is perceived as being stressful. The individual who exhibits effective resiliency skills is more likely to feel adequate and constructive while responding to the event in an effective manner. Her distress is decreased, and her self-esteem and self-affirmations are increased. The individual is more likely to then feel empowered and continue this process when confronted with another event. However, the figure also illustrates that an individual who does not exhibit effective resiliency skills will most likely have the opposite experience. This individual will feel inadequate and will have self-defeating thoughts. She will have an ineffective response to the event, which will in turn increase distress and decrease self-esteem. Atrophy of skills will occur while the individual experiences interpersonal problems. Again, this process continues as the individual is confronted with new events.

I have chosen to use Bernard's (2004) resiliency theory as a conceptual framework. However it is possible that this study may also uncover additional elements contributing to Latinas' resiliency; possibly yielding additional categories. This research may examine challenges that these women face during their schooling experiences, which are not mentioned by Bernard. Therefore, this study may expand the literature on resiliency theory particularly as related to academically successful Latinas doctoral students.

Resiliency Research Recommendations

There is debate as to the measureable constructs of resiliency. Given this issue, several authors (Brunelle-Joiner, 1999; Glantz & Sloboda, 1999; Luther & Cushing, 1999; Masten, 1994; Masten, 1999; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994) have provided

recommendations for research on resiliency. These authors suggest that the researcher take into account the context of the individual and offer their own reflections and interpretations of the individual. Additionally, some of these authors also recommend qualitative research to explore the sequence of events leading to the development of resiliency skills in students (Masten, 1994; Masten 1999).

Definition of Major Terms

Several researchers have produced different definitions for the term *Latina.* However, for the purpose of this study, the term *Latina* will be defined by the investigator as a woman who considers herself to be Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Central American, South American, from the Caribbean or from descent of any of these Spanish-speaking countries. Furthermore, I will use Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) description of *generational status* to further collect demographic data from participants. Generational status will refer to the birthplace of participants as well as the age when they immigrated to the United States if born elsewhere. Also, this term refers to the birthplace of the participant's parents. In addition, the term *Doctoral student* will refer to any graduate student currently enrolled in a doctoral program in the U.S.

Scope and Delimitation of Study

The narrowed focus is specific to self-identified Latinas who have successfully gained entrance into doctoral programs and are completing their doctoral program in the United States. Males will be excluded from participation in this study. Females were chosen for participation due to the lower number of Latinas graduating from doctoral and professional programs when compared to Latinos and other non-Latina females.

Overview of Dissertation Chapters

In the remaining sections of this dissertation, I will introduce the history of research on resiliency and specifically as it pertains to Latinas in education. Furthermore, I will describe the methodology used to gather data from a population of Latina doctoral students. Also, I will explain the proposed data analysis procedures for this study as well as the results and conclusions.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

In this section, I will review the literature on Latinas in education, narrowing the focus of the review to Latinas in doctoral education. I will then provide a critical evaluation on the current literature related to resiliency and Latinas in education. Next, I will provide assumptions underlying resiliency in Latinas who achieve entrance and successfully navigate through doctoral programs.

In the United States, holding a doctoral degree signifies expertise in one's field. Moreover, attainment of such a degree provides one with opportunities to hold vital influencing positions in our society. With the numbers of Latina/os in the United States growing, it is disappointing to discover that Latina/os are underrepresented in the professional fields when compared to African Americans and Anglo Americans. Contributing factors to this phenomenon include the facts that Latina/os have higher high school drop-out rates and lower college enrollment and completion rates (Arellano & Padilla, 1996). More important, most Latina/os who complete an undergraduate degree do not continue on to obtain a graduate education, resulting in Latina/os having lower income and job opportunities than other groups. For example, according to a 2005 U.S. Census Bureau report, the median income for Latina/os in 2004 was $34, 241 compared to a median income of $48, 977 for Anglo Americans (U.S. Department of Commerce,

2005). This poses a problem in the United States and presents an issue that calls for further advocacy efforts for this population.

As of 2006, 14.7% of the U.S. population was Latina/o (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007a), and Latina/os are now the largest minority group in the United States (Gonzalez, 2006). Furthermore, the U.S. Bureau of Census projects that Latina/os will be close to one quarter of the United States population (24.4%) by 2050. Unfortunately, these high numbers are not expected to parallel Latina/os seeking higher education (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2006). In 2006 only 1.2% of Latina/os had earned professional and doctoral degrees (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007b). Interestingly, Latinas had higher graduation rates in Master's level studies; however, they were outnumbered by Latinos obtaining professional and doctoral degrees.

Many Latinas in particular have been labeled "at-risk" in the educational systems (Hassinger & Plourde, 2005). This labeling is due to the higher drop-out rates in this population (Hassinger & Plourde, 2005). Several researchers have studied resiliency among youth in the PK-12 educational system, especially among at-risk youth (i.e. students of color and Latino/as) (Hassinger & Plourde, 2005; McMillan & Reed, 1994; Werner & Smith, 1992). Resiliency research has focused primarily on issues including wellness, positive psychology, health promotion, asset-building, emotional intelligence, social capital and its subcategories, youth development, health realization, strength-based social work, multiple intelligences, and value-centered or spiritual intelligence (Bernard, 2004).

In the last two decades a vast amount of literature has surfaced on the issue of resiliency of African-American college students indicating that academic, social,

emotional, financial, and familial support are all factors contributing to the academic success of these minority students (Allen, 1987; Allen, 1992; Carroll, 1998; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Flint, 1992; Herndon & Hirt, 2004; O'Leary, Boatwright, & Sauer, 1996; Tinto, 1993). Research on resiliency among African-American doctoral students suggest that their academic success was based on personal qualities and aspirations, but also influenced by the support received through financial aid, family, and faculty (King, 1994, a; Herndon & Hirt, 2004). Additional factors leading to their enrollment decisions and persistence included a positive campus environment and the presence of other African-American mentors (Fields, 1998; King, 1994). Among African-American female doctoral students, researchers found that personal qualities such as being political savvy, having faith and determination contributed to students' academic persistence (King, 1994, b). Despite the available research on resiliency among African American and Latina/o minorities in educational settings, including resiliency among African-American graduate students, little research has studied the educational experiences and resiliency among Latina/o graduate students.

One study examining the doctoral experiences of Latinas was conducted by Gonzalez (2005). He examined the schooling experiences of thirteen Latina doctoral students enrolled at public research institutions throughout the U.S. including the challenges that these women faced as well as their academic socialization. Only those women self-identifying as Latinas, who had completed at least three years of doctoral schooling were included in the study. During a thorough analysis on the interview data he gathered, he discovered that some Latinas' positive experiences throughout their doctoral education included: being exposed to a new region, positive peer influences, positive

views on the curriculum, supportive departments, professorial support, development through their assistantship, financial opportunities, and a welcoming and diverse campus environment. In contrast, Gonzalez also found that some Latinas faced challenges as they navigated their doctoral education. These included: being far from home, the discriminatory environment, challenges navigating institutional politics, generalized perceptions about the institution, financial challenges, professorial challenges, lack of other Latinas in their programs, perceived and dual expectations, curriculum challenges, the campus environment, assistantship challenges, challenges from peers, and publishing challenges.

In this study, some Latinas defined academic success as obtaining their doctoral degree, while others assessed academic success by publishing their work and presenting at conferences. Some defined academic success by impacting the lives of their students and encouraging them to see their academic potential, while others discussed proving their abilities and potential to a discriminating world. The results from this study provide an illustration of the various educational challenges that some Latinas have encountered, while also depicting the factors that assisted them in their persistence.

Another example of a Latina's doctoral experience is found in Guerra's (2006) *Being Latina: All But Dissertation (ABD).* This author reports her experiences leading up to her academic success. She explains that recruitment programs for Latinas informed her and encouraged her to continue her graduate education. She also explains her involvement with different campus organizations for students of color and the support she received. Guerra explains how her family and friends provided a lot of support as she worked on her dissertation. Her recommendations for other Latina/os who are *ABD*

include: receive guidance from one's dissertation chair, choose a topic that you are passionate about, make and maintain connections with friends and family and avoid isolating yourself, and stay true to your values and beliefs regardless of your differences from other individuals. It appears that Guerra also expressed the importance of family and friends as cited by Gonzalez (2005).

Latina/os' Experiences in Undergraduate Studies

The following literature examines studies that address Latina/o student resiliency in undergraduate college settings (see summary in Appendix L), followed by studies dealing with Latina/o doctoral student resiliency (see summary in Appendix M).

A vast number of studies have explored the challenges faced by Latinas during their undergraduate college experiences. In this review, qualitative studies will be evaluated for *trustworthiness* while quantitative studies will be evaluated for internal and external validity. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness will be used to establish whether studies meet criterion for *credibility, transferability, dependability,* and *confirmability.* In order to establish validity of quantitative studies, Cook and Campbell's (1979) taxonomy will be used to evaluate *statistical inclusion validity, internal validity, construct validity,* and *external validity.*

Ceballo (2004) investigated the academic success of Latina/o students from impoverished families as well as the role of parents by conducting 10 semi-structured interviews with first-generation, U.S.-born Latino students enrolled at Yale University. Prior to the interview, students completed a demographic questionnaire. Ceballo found that four common themes emerged. The themes that influenced students' academic success included: (a) strong parental commitment to education, (b) facilitation of

student's autonomy, (c) non-verbal parental expression of support, and (d) supportive faculty mentors and role models. These findings appear to support Bernard's (2004) resiliency theory. Given that the emergent themes support the resiliency theory concepts of social competence and autonomy.

In evaluating this study, I used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria to critique this study. Upon examining the study for credibility, I discovered that the study did not appear to meet criteria for *prolonged engagement*. Researchers did not interview participants several times over a long period of time. However, researchers thoroughly reviewed the taped interviews and transcriptions for recurrent themes and support for different theories, and identified relevant from irrelevant observations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, in press-b).

Additionally, *triangulation* was appropriate as the participants were reliable sources and the methods used by the investigators were appropriate based on the research questions guiding their inquiry (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, in press a). Also, the investigator's background and knowledge of resiliency theory was adequate for the nature of this study, whereby meeting *investigator triangulation* (Onwuegbuzie & Leech). *Data triangulation* was met since the researcher used data from multiple sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, *theory triangulation* and *methodological triangulation* were also met in this study because the researcher used various theories to interpret the results, and she used multiple methods of gathering her data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech). However, peer debriefing was not discussed in this study. Although most of the criteria for credibility are met, Ceballo does not mention completion of *member checking* of the transcribed data (Lincoln & Guba). However, because she maintained

transcribed data, the study meets criteria for *referential adequacy* (Onwuegbuzie & Leech).

This study did meet the criterion for transferability because it presented *thick descriptions,* or detailed descriptions of the interviewees' responses and the similar themes present (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, in press). In addition, this study also met criteria for *dependability* because it can easily be replicated and the methods of inquiry were appropriate. Also, the author maintained extensive documentation of data gathered, leaving an audit trail, thereby meeting criteria for *confirmability*. Using Halpern's (1983) classes of raw records, raw data such an audio tapes, data reduction and analysis products such as written notes, and data reconstruction and synthesis products such as interpretations of findings, I found that the criteria for confirmability was met. Overall, this study appears to meet most of the criteria for trustworthiness. Therefore, it may provide support for Bernard's (2004) resiliency theory.

In another study, Arellano and Padilla (1996) examined the concepts of "at-risk" and academic invulnerability. Participants included 30 undergraduate Mexican students who completed a demographic questionnaire as well as an educational resiliency scale. The authors then interviewed participants regarding their experiences throughout their undergraduate studies and reviewed factors contributing to their success. These researchers subjected the transcribed data to extensive review for emergent themes. Arellano and Padilla discovered that most respondents contributed the following factors to their academic success: (a) parental support and encouragement, (b) personal optimistic outlook and belief in their ability to succeed, (c) persistence and drive to succeed, (d) ethnicity as a source of strength, pride, and support, and (e) positive role

models and mentors. These findings seem to indicate that all of Bernard's (2004) resiliency theoretical concepts are supported.

Upon examining this study for trustworthiness, it was discovered that the authors maintained transcribed data from the interviews as well as field notes and studied the interview data for common themes, therefore, the study met criterion for persistent observation, triangulation, and referential adequacy. Despite these findings, the authors do not mention member checking, peer debriefing, or prolonged engagement, therefore, all criteria for credibility do not appear to be met. The authors did provide thick descriptions of the interview data, whereby meeting criteria for transferability. They also provided an inquiry audit and an audit trail for replication of the study. Therefore, the study meets criteria for both dependability and confirmability. Overall however, this study has not established credibility; therefore, I its trustworthiness may be questionable, hence, it may not provide strong support for Bernard's (2004) resiliency theory.

In addition to Arellano and Padilla's (1996) work, Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, and Rosales (2005) assessed predicting factors of academic non-persistence decisions for Latina/o undergraduate students. In this study, 99 out of 108 students who submitted completed surveys met study criteria. Authors provided each participant with a demographic questionnaire as well as 11 standardized instruments including the *University Environment Scale, Cultural Congruity Scale, Perception of Barriers Scale, College Environmental Stress Index-Modified, Perceived Social Support Inventory-Family and Friends, Parental Encouragement Scale, Mentoring Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, College Self-Efficacy Inventory, Educational Degree Behaviors Self-Efficacy Scale,* and the *Persistence/Voluntary Dropout Decision Scale.* These researchers

analyzed the data using canonical correlations. Results from this study indicate that the constructs of university comfort, self-belief, and social support are significantly correlated with nonpersistence decisions for Latina/o undergraduate students.

The limitations of this study are worth noting. First, this study was cross-sectional, therefore, it is unknown whether the student participants dropped out of school or persisted. Also, the sample consisted of more Latinas than Latinos. This may be due to the higher enrollment rates of Latinas when compared to Latinos. Upon reviewing the study for validity, I discovered that the authors used appropriate instrumentations and data analysis procedures to conclude that a relationship exists between the variables presented and the students' decision to remain in college, therefore, criterion for statistical conclusion validity was met. Furthermore, the authors of this study conducted a series of hierarchical regressions to determine a causal relationship between variables, therefore, criterion for internal validity was also met. In addition, this study met criteria for construct validity of putative causes and effects because the measured variables capture the essence of the hypothetical constructs. Lastly, the quantitative study results can be generalized, but only to Latina/o students, therefore, the degree to which those particular results can be generalized to the larger population are limited. Researchers distributed surveys to undergraduate students through student organizations, academic research programs that were geared towards Latina/os. Eleven percent of this institution's population was comprised of Latina/os, three quarters of whom were of Mexican descent. Researchers obtained ninety-nine completed surveys from undergraduates, including twenty-nine males and seventy females. Additionally, the overall quality of the scales used was good because most had been used and validated in other studies on Latina

undergraduates (Constantine, et al., 2002; Gloria, 1997; Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005). Therefore, the external validity criterion was met. Overall, this study met criteria for Cook and Campbell's (1979) taxonomy. Hence, the results from this quantitative study provide support for the following two resiliency theoretical concepts as presented by Bernard (2004): social competence and autonomy, whereby providing additional empirical support and support of the theory's operationality.

Zalaquett (2005) also examined both the challenges faced by Latina/o students that had an effect on their access to a college education as well as supporting factors. In his study, Zalaquett gathered narratives from 12 Latina/o undergraduate students. These stories were then submitted to two randomly selected professionals for evaluation, of which one was Latina/o and the other was from a different ethnic background. This study concludes that undergraduate students perceived barriers included: (a) misinformation about the college application process as well as opportunities, such as financial aid, (b) poorly informed choices, and (c) minimal adult supervision and guidance. On the contrary to these findings, Zalaquett also discovered common supporting factors to academic success. These include: (a) support from family, (b) influence of friendships, (c) financial aid, (d) support from the student's community, (e) perceived value of education, (f) perceived responsibility towards their parents and sibling, (g) sense of accomplishment, and (h) supportive school personnel.

As with previous qualitative studies, I also tested this study for trustworthiness. Upon review of the study results and analysis, it appears that the study meets criteria for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability because the researcher gathered rich written narratives from the participants and later used word analysis and

categorization to organize the data and identify themes and patterns. Also the author used peer debriefing. Moreover, the narratives were self-reported and written, therefore criterion for referential adequacy and member checking are met. There was not mention of prolonged engagement, although, it appears that students attended an interview in addition to writing their stories. The surfacing themes from this study seem to provide support for Bernard's resiliency theory because results provide support for the following resiliency theoretical constructs: social competence, problem-solving, and sense of purpose.

In 2006, McHatton, Zalaquett, and Cranston-Gingras examined the perceptions of undergraduate farm worker students who were successful at gaining entrance into a four-year university. Authors provided participants with a 98-item survey instrument. A total of 57 students completed and returned the survey. Results from this study illustrate that undergraduate students from migrant farm worker families expressed 3 common factors contributing to their academic success. These included: (a) positive perception of the self, (b) supportive family, and (c) determination despite negative school experiences. Students reportedly felt conflict between finding a balance in each category. The degree to which findings from this study can be generalized is limited because the participants only represent migrant farm worker families and academically successful students.

Upon reviewing the study for validity, I found that the study met criteria for statistical conclusion validity because the researchers provided adequate conclusions regarding the relationship between variables. Also, the study met criterion for internal validity because it appears that there is a causal relationship between familial support, student self-reliance, and determination and their decision to obtain a college education.

Moreover, this study met criterion for construct validity of putative causes and effects, because the constructs presented provide an adequate representation of the hypothetical construct. Additionally, criterion for external validity was met because the findings from this study can be generalized to other students, although limited to Latina/os. Hence, this study met criteria for Cook and Campbell's (1979) taxonomy. Furthermore, results from this study also provide empirical support for Bernard's resiliency theory since findings indicate that successful students express autonomy and social competence. Table 2 provides a summary of both the challenges and factors related to Latina/o college student success, as mentioned earlier in this literature review.

Table 2

Summary of Latina/os Experiences in Undergraduate Studies

Authors	Challenges	Factors Related to Success
Arellano, A.R. & Padilla, A.M. (1996)		Parental support & encouragement
		Personal optimistic outlook
		Drive to succeed
		Ethnicity as a source of strength, pride, & support
Ceballo, R. (2004)	Parents' language barriers	Parental unconditional commitment to education
	Parents' limited schooling	Autonomy
	Large responsibility for caring for siblings	Non-verbal support for educational endeavors
	Generational & cultural differences between student and parent	Non-verbal support for educational endeavors
	Latina traditional gender roles	Faculty role models & Mentors

(table continues)

Table 2 (continued)

Authors	Challenges	Factors Related to Success
Gloria, A.M., Castellanos, J., Lopez, A.G., & Rosales, R. (2005)		Increased sense of cultural congruity Positive perception of university environment Decreased perception of barriers Perceived social support from friends and family Increased sense of self-efficacy
McHatton, P.A., Zalaquett, C.P., & Cranson-Gingras, A. (2006)		Students' positive perception of self Strong familial bond School experiences and awareness of college requirements
Zalaquett, C. (2005)	Misinformation about post-secondary application process & opportunity Poorly informed choices Minimal adult supervision	Family support Friendship Scholarships Community support

(table continues)

Table 2 (continued)

Authors	Challenges	Factors Related to Success
		Perceived value of education
		Responsibility towards others
		Sense of accomplishment
		Support from school personnel

Latinas' Experiences in Doctoral Programs

In addition to studies focusing on the experiences of undergraduate Latina/o students in college settings, more recently, a few studies have focused on the experiences of Latina/os during their doctoral studies and their resiliency. Gonzalez (2007) examined the experiences of Latinas during their doctoral education. Researchers interviewed 12 Latina faculty from different fields (specified fields are not reported in manuscript) using semi-structured interviews. Participants were gathered through snowball and quota sampling. Interviews were recorded and transcribed before being subjected to code-based analysis using N6 qualitative data analysis software. Results from this study were categorized into 4 resiliency theory concepts, including: (a) social competence, (b) problem solving, (c) autonomy, and (d) sense of purpose.

Gonzalez (2007) found that all participants were able to form positive relationships with other doctoral students, particularly those of color and other Latinas;

however, they had a more difficult time forming the same bonds with white faculty and doctoral students. Gonzalez defines resiliency as "a form of theoretical understanding and problem-solving that focuses on the assets of people and systems, rather than on the deficits" (p. 292). Furthermore, he explains that "resiliency theory focuses on the positive nature of individuals to resist experienced and perceived institutional oppression in the process of success' (p.294). He suggests that these women were resilient in that they resisted the "Anglo" academic socialization during this time period and used their knowledge of resistance later in their careers as faculty. Many of these women reframed their negative experience into positive learning experiences and forgave those individuals who were racist and sexist. This forgiveness is noted in the resiliency literature as signifying social competence.

In addition to this finding, Gonzalez (2007) discovered that all 12 interviewees expressed feeling independent as being related to a positive ethnic identity. In the resiliency literature (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), this sense of autonomy is related to high self-esteem, a sense of purpose, and high academic achievement. Additionally, results indicate that many of the Latinas interviewed expressed having a purpose for their family but also to their community. These women emphasized that their strong sense of purpose was what helped them maintain resiliency.

After reviewing this study for trustworthiness, I discovered that the authors used appropriate methods to ensure credibility. Although they did not meet all criteria for credibility, they did meet referential adequacy, persistent observation, and triangulation however, there was no mention of member checking, prolonged engagement, or peer debriefing. Furthermore, this study did provide rich and thick descriptions of the data

collected and provided an audit trail since they transcribed the data and the study is easy to replicate, therefore, the study meets criteria for transferability, dependability, and confirmability, whereby meeting criterion for trustworthiness. The results from this study also provide support for all of Bernard's (2004) resiliency theoretical constructs.

In another study, Gonzalez (2001) used autoethnography to illustrate the doctoral experiences of Latina/os. Six Latina/os provided narratives of the doctoral experience and participated in a lengthy focus group. Half of the participants were female and the other half were male. Results from this study indicate that Latina/os shared a feeling of vulnerability upon entering their doctoral programs. They also felt unfamiliar with the culture of doctoral programs and the process of socialization. Moreover, participants described a lack of Latina/o representation in their programs and feeling as if they were outsiders. Another important theme that surfaced in this study was that of identity development and change through the course of doctoral studies. In addition to this theme, another element that arose was lack of validation. Participants shared that they did not receive messages from faculty that validated their work. Lastly, Latina/os expressed a shared element of struggle and conflict between their communities and their academic environment.

When examining this study for trustworthiness, I found that the author was successful at meeting all criteria for credibility. It was evident throughout the article that the author provided thick descriptions and was able to capture the voices of the participants in his study. This study met criteria for transferability, dependability, and confirmability; therefore, it met all criteria for trustworthiness. Additionally, the findings from this study offer some support for Bernard's resiliency theory. Although, the author

chose not to rely on any a priori theory when conducting his study, the findings indicate that Latina students obtaining their doctoral degrees exhibit resiliency in the form of problem solving.

Another study (Gonzalez, 2006) examined the experiences of Latina doctoral students related to academic socialization. Here, the researcher used qualitative methods and conducted 13 semi structured interviews with Latinas who were at least in their third year of doctoral studies. Findings suggest that Latinas share many of the same challenges and support systems as that of other non-Latino/a doctoral students; however some of the findings were specific to the experiences of Latinas. Specific to Latina doctoral students, Gonzalez (2006) discovered that Latinas who succeeded in the face of adversity had positive experiences in their K-12 education as well as positive experiences in the collegiate years leading up to their doctoral studies. Furthermore, these women had financial support in the form of fellowships and scholarships from their institution. Participants further discussed the role that institutional diversity played in their success. Moreover, inclusion in department-wide support systems assisted them during challenging times.

In addition to the helpful agents of success, this study also reflects the barriers that challenged Latinas during their doctoral studies. These challenges include: poor academic preparation, racism, cultural assimilation, and a number of challenges at the institutional level. Specific to the experience of Latinas, participants reported lack of mentorship and tokenization by peers. Latinas were expected to speak for all Latinas during classroom activities. This study, too, had limitations. The scope of generalizable results was limited, especially because all participants were selected from the social

sciences.

After a thorough review of this study, I found that the author did not mention methods used to ensure credibility. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the credibility of the study. The study accounted for persistent observations, referential adequacy, and thick descriptions, and met criteria for inquiry audit and audit trail, therefore the study meets criteria for transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Therefore, I think that this study also meets criteria for trustworthiness. Moreover, it provides additional support for Bernard's (2004) resiliency theoretical concept of social competence. Table 3 summarizes both the challenges and factors related to Latina doctoral success, as described previously.

Table 3

Summary of Latinas' Experiences in Doctoral Programs

Authors	Challenges	Factors Related to Success
Gonzalez, J.C. (2006)	Poor PK-12 preparation	Positive K-12 & college experiences
	Undesired cultural assimilation	
	Overt & covert racism in undergraduate studies	Financial Assistance
	Lack of financial support	Institution-wide diversity
	Discrimination based on race, gender, & class	Department-wide support systems
	Stigmatization & Tokenism	
	Hostile college environments	

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

Authors	Challenges	Factors Related to Success
	Navigating institutional politics	
	Cultural dissonance and isolation	
Gonzalez, J.C. (2007)	Resistance to doctoral socialization	Positive attachment to other Latina students
	Isolation & segregation	Forgiving those who oppressed them
	Racism, sexism, and White privilege	Thinking critically about racism, sexism, & classism
	Lack of Latina faculty mentors	Practice of autonomy
		Strong sense of purpose to family, community, & society
Gonzalez, K.P. (2001)	Lack of familyunderstanding	Problem solving
	Entering a new & unfamiliar world Lack of an adequate Latina/o presence in their programs	
	Experiencing an "outsider-within" status	
	Enduring identity changes	
	Yearning for validation	
	Enduring conflicts between two different worlds	

Summary

This section has examined the literature on resiliency among Latinas in college environments, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Overall, this sub group is at greater risk of dropping out of college and not furthering their education beyond a Master's degree when compared to Latinos (Hassinger & Plourde, 2005; Sy, 2006). There are many elements that influence students' decisions to pursue higher education or to drop out.. It is possible that the results from this study will parallel findings from previous research on the schooling experiences of Latina doctoral students and resiliency. However, it is also possible that findings from this study will expand information on the existing resiliency skills and elements fostering such skills. In addition to providing information regarding some of the unique challenges faced by Latina doctoral students. In the next section I will introduce the design and methodology of the present study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

In this section, I will present the logic, structure, and design of the study, as well as any threats to the trustworthiness of the design. Furthermore, I will describe my sample, instrumentation, and data collection procedures. Also, I will explain the data analysis procedures used and any methodological assumptions regarding my sample or instruments.

Questions Guiding the Inquiry

As mentioned earlier, these are the fundamental questions that guide this inquiry: (a) What were the educational experiences of Latina doctoral students during their undergraduate and graduate studies, (b) What personal traits or characteristics do these successful Latinas possess? (c) What common elements are present in the individual's support system that increases a Latina's academic success? (d) What are the motivations of Latinas who seek entrance into doctoral programs? (e) What experiences did these Latinas have upon entering their doctoral programs?

Additionally, specific questions were asked of participants to highlight their personal experiences and gain a greater understanding of their schooling experiences, support system, and resiliency skills (see Appendices F & G).

Design of Study

This study is qualitative, a method most appropriate when examining human behavior in its social context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Six semi-structured interviews were conducted, since Creswell (1998) recommends a number of three to five participants for case studies and I wanted to account for any no-shows. The sample was homogenous and was comprised of only Latina doctoral students. Participants were Latina doctoral students attending college at a metropolitan university in the state of Florida. Although the state of Florida is comprised of 27% Latino/as, this institution is not recognized as a Latina/o serving institute. It is known that during the fall 2007 semester, 3 out of 44 accepted and enrolled graduate students were Latino/a. In addition, the selected participants had completed at least 1 year of their doctoral studies. This criterion was chosen to include students who have demonstrated academic persistence in doctoral programs. Participants were asked open-ended questions regarding their schooling experiences leading to doctoral program admittance as well as their schooling experiences as doctoral students. This style of interviewing allows general questions to create greater conversational dialogue yielding richer answers (Merriam, 1998). Interviewees also completed a demographic questionnaire that asks about their educational degrees, fields of study, and how they self-identify in terms of race and ethnicity (Gonzalez, 2006).

Major Assumptions

I believe that Latina doctoral students who are academically successful have achieved higher educational success due to their resiliency skills consistent with the literature including: social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and sense of purpose

(Gonzalez, 2007). I further believe that additional elements, such as family support and mentorship foster their resiliency skills and help them overcome the challenges faced throughout their schooling history while achieving their current academic and educational goals.

Description of Sample

Participants were first recruited by sending an e-mail message via the University's graduate professional organization server list as well as the graduate diversity scholarship server list at a large Florida metropolitan University. I also contacted known Latinas who are obtaining their doctoral degrees at this large university. Additionally, I contacted Latina/o professors and asked that they forward a flyer announcement to Latina doctoral students. Furthermore, I also posted flyers at the metropolitan university campus to recruit potential participants. The message explained that a study was being conducted on academically persistent Latina doctoral students and asked for volunteers willing to share information about their educational backgrounds and experiences. The selection criteria specified that students must be (a) Latina or of Latina/o descent, (b) enrolled as doctoral students, who have completed a minimum of 1 year of their doctoral studies, (c) have attended U.S. educational settings prior to their doctoral college schooling, and are (d) first through third generation immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Snowball sampling was used to identify potential interview participants. This type of sampling allowed me to consult with individuals who knew about other individuals who could provide rich information (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). As such, I asked Latina doctoral students to identify other Latina doctoral students. Of the eighteen Latina doctoral students who either contacted me or were contacted by me, seven women met all criteria for

participation in the study and agreed to meet with me for an interview. Five of the remaining individuals responded stating that they would be unable to meet for an interview due to busy schedules and one woman stated that she considered herself Caucasian instead of Latina. Additionally, five of the individuals that I attempted to contact did not respond. Of the seven volunteers, one did not show for her on-campus interview and did not respond to my attempts to contact her to reschedule the interview. This left me with a total of six participants for the study.

Instruments

Two instruments were used to gather data on respondents' background and experience: (a) demographic questionnaire (see Appendix J) and (b) a semi structured interview protocol (see Appendix F). The demographic questionnaire asked questions about the age, ethnic/cultural background, grade point average, entrance exam scores, PK-12 schooling background, parents' and grandparents' place of birth and level of education, and siblings' level of education. Respondents were then interviewed using the semi-structured protocol developed specifically for this study (see Appendix F). All of the questions for the protocol were derived from existing literature related to schooling experiences that have impacted the academic achievement of Latino students (Galindo & Escamilla, 1995; Vasquez, 1982) (for samples of central interview questions and sub-questions please see Appendices F and G).

Interviews lasted between 15 and 45 minutes and were tape-recorded and transcribed for accuracy. The range of time for interviews varied because some participants were prepared with written responses to interview questions while others were not. I was the interviewer for this study. I conducted all the semi-structured

interviews, audiotape the interviews, and submitted the audio files of the interviews to a professional transcription agency for transcriptions. Transcriptions of the interviews ranged in page length between four and nine pages typed, single-spaced. I also collected e-mail messages from participants. In preparation for the interview process, it was important to note ethical considerations as this method of inquiry can be harmful to interviewees if not handled with proper care (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Therefore, I attempted to play a neutral role, without interjecting my values or opinions to respondents' answers, as this can have negatively impacted rapport building with the participants.

Prior to the interviews, interested students contact me or I contacted participants (snowball sampling) and screened them for eligibility to participate in the research study (see Appendix B). If the individual met eligibility criteria, then I asked them to complete an informed consent form (see Appendix E) indicating that they agreed to the terms and conditions of this study and were voluntarily choosing to participate. I made every attempt to choose a convenient time and place for students, around their course schedules. I chose to hold interviews on and off campus in a conference room or private office in an attempt to decrease environmental noise and distractions. It is possible that interviews held on-campus caused participants to be less forthcoming as they might have been reluctant to openly share information about any negative doctoral schooling experiences within that environment. Also, participants provided me with contact information if they were interested in participation in the study, so that I could e-mail or mail the informed consent along with the demographic questionnaire and interview questions to them.

Data Collection Procedures

The interview was a formal semi-structured face-to-face interview in which I asked a series of predetermined basic descriptive and open-ended questions to each participant and also used sub-questions to further understand the participants' experiences (see Appendices F & G) (Creswell, 1998; Janesick, 2004). I audiotaped the conversation and recorded information on the interview protocol (see Appendix F) in the case that the recording did not function correctly. Throughout the interview, I also used nonverbal techniques recommended by Fontana and Frey (2005). For example, I used chronemic communication, that is, I paced my speech to match the participants' (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Furthermore, I used paralinguistic techniques such as a friendly and caring voice quality, while being attentive to my voice volume and pitch (Fontana & Frey, 2005). These are all techniques that I am well-trained in due to my background in psychotherapy.

As anticipated, each participant was interviewed only once during the course of the study. Then, I contacted participants a second time for *member checking*, that is, clarification of responses to interview questions to increase interpretive validity (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, in press-b). This second contact was through a brief e-mail, however, the participant time spent reviewing the e-mailed transcriptions was estimated to last approximately two hours because the participant was asked to verify their answers to questions and make appropriate changes or add information. I received two responses within one day and the other 4 responses within one week. Only two participants responded with clarifications of their transcribed interviews, one of which added additional information to her responses.

Prior to conducting this study, I submitted a study proposal to the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once approved by the IRB, I began the recruitment process by contacting the graduate office coordinator and president of the graduate student professional organization and requested that they e-mail doctoral students on their list serves a study flyer with my contact information.

Upon being contacted by interested individuals, I called or in the case of one participant e-mailed the individual to screen them for eligibility criteria. Then I e-mailed a copy of the study letter (see Appendix D), informed consent form (See Appendix E), and demographic questionnaire (see Appendix J) if the interested individual meets criteria for the study. Those interested in participating in the study were required to return a completed informed consent form along with the completed demographic questionnaire to me prior to the interview. To minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence being imposed on the participants, I verbally explained the study to participants upon initial contact (Christians, 2005). All participants had the choice at any time not to complete the demographic questionnaire, and not to complete the interviews. They could also choose to discontinue further participation in the study at any time. It is believed that this study was of minimal risk to participants because individuals volunteered to participate and this study did not involve deception (Christians, 2005). To protect participants' privacy, all data collected was maintained by the investigator in a locked filing cabinet for which I will have sole access to and will be kept for three years. Also, participants requested that the full interview transcriptions be kept private, although they agreed to let me use quotes from the transcriptions for the purpose of the study and publications. I made every effort to conceal participants' identity by leaving any

demographic information that could easily identify the participant out of the study write-up. Collection of qualitative data for this study began and ended in May 2008.

A collective case study was conducted to examine the schooling experiences and family influences of Latina doctoral students, through one-on-one face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted by the investigator. A collective case study is used when the research is studying more than one case (Stake, 1995). This type of instrumental case study appears most appropriate because in examining each particular case, I hoped to discover new insights of this population's struggles through the educational system and the variables influencing their decision to strive forward through higher education. Across-case analysis allowed for a thematic analysis across cases (Cresswell, 1998).

In order to verify respondents' answers to interview questions and increase descriptive validity, I e-mailed each participant a copy of the transcribed interview with participants' responses to interview questions to account for errors made by the researcher during documentation. Through member checking, each participant was asked to read through the interview to assure that all data collected were accurate (Merriam, 1998). This was completed to increase interpretive validity (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, in press). Respondents were further asked to make clarification, corrections, or additions to the information provided prior to analysis of data to assure that rich data were collected. Member checking was not audio-taped since each participant completed this process independently and contacted me through e-mail if changes or corrections needed to be made to the transcribed data.

As mentioned previously, data collected included audio tapes and completed interview protocols. All data were gathered in the same manner, using the same semi-structured interview protocols.

The Researcher

I am a twenty eight year-old, second-generation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), Cuban-American Latina, doctoral candidate and psychotherapist. These descriptors provide a lens through which I view the world and perceive my experiences. In this section, I will examine these defining characteristics.

Cuban-American Latina

I identify myself as a Cuban-American Latina. In my view, Latina encompasses many different Hispanic subcultures including my own. I mention this descriptor because I was born and raised in the United States, however, I was raised by a Cuban mother and step-father speaking primarily Spanish and surrounded by Cuban family members, neighbors, friends, food, music, and celebrating Cuban holidays. These cultural elements contributed to my multicultural experience. I use the term multicultural because I consider myself American as well. During my life, I have also been exposed to American culture. My biological father and his side of my family is Anglo-American, therefore, American holidays and other cultural elements were also a part of my life. Furthermore, I attended schools in the United States from PK through graduate school.

I present this personal explanation of the term Cuban American Latina in an effort to clarify that my experience as a Latina may be different from other women who use similar or different descriptors to identify their cultural background. I am aware that the Latina population encompasses various Hispanic subcultures, which are different than mine.

Second Generation

I use the term second generation to also identify myself (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). This term refers to being the first Latina in my family born in the U.S. My mother was born and raised in Cuba and immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 15, therefore, her schooling experiences differ from my own, and she is 1.25 generation Latina (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). This is important because it is possible that other Latinas may identify as being born in another country, or being first generation, second generation, third generation, etc. My awareness of the possible differences is important due to issues surrounding acculturation that may influence the perspectives of each participant in this study.

Doctoral Candidate

I mention this descriptor because I am currently a third year student obtaining my doctoral degree at a large metropolitan university and have successfully achieved doctoral candidacy. This is important because I have faced educational challenges that have been perceived through a Latina lens and this may not be the case for other Latinas. Other participants may have faced challenges that they do not attribute to their cultural background. Also, my experiences may be different from Latinas who obtained their previous degrees at small universities, because I completed both my B.A. and my M.A. at

the same institution where I am completing my doctoral degree. My awareness of this difference will be important during my interpretation of the data collected.

Twenty-Eight Year Old

I provide my age as a descriptor because I am a traditional college student. This means that I have attended college full-time since graduating high school and have completed each degree without any breaks. My experiences may be different from other Latinas who took time off from school during degrees or completed their education on a part-time basis. All of my college education has taken place in the last ten years, during a time when there is greater representation of Latinas in college. Furthermore, universities have begun creating programs to advocate for Latina/os' academic success.

Psychotherapist

This description is mentioned to illustrate my educational background and career field, which may be different than that of other Latina students; therefore, it is possible that their schooling experiences will be very different than mine.

I mention these descriptors of myself to illustrate the background that has contributed to my perceptions of the educational process. Also, to present my awareness of possible differences that may exist from me and participants of the study.

Research Verification

I also introduced the descriptors to indicate that I have the appropriate qualifications to complete this investigation. I am in a Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral program at a large metropolitan University and have obtained a Master's degree in the field of counseling. My specialization is in the area of multicultural diversity. I have completed a course in Qualitative Research: Design and

Data Collection at the doctoral level along with both Quantitative Statistics I and II at the doctoral level.

In order to ensure the integrity and accuracy of my findings, I used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria to the naturalistic paradigm to establish trustworthiness. These criteria tests qualitative studies for trustworthiness based on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Triangulation. Additionally, to meet criteria for *triangulation,* I assured that the participants were reliable sources and met criteria for inclusion in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, my educational background is adequate for the nature of this study, whereby meeting *investigator triangulation* (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, in press b). Also, I used a colleague of mine in my department as an external auditor to review the gathered data for common themes. Furthermore, I attempted to meet *data triangulation* criteria by using data from multiple sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, I used data from written notes and observations as well as transcriptions. Also, to achieve *methodological triangulation* I used multiple methods of gathering data, such as audio-taped interviews, protocol notes, and transcriptions. I also reviewed participants' grade point average and entrance exam scores.

Peer debriefing. I underwent *peer debriefing* to assure that I was carrying out my study according to my methodology without letting my a priori assumptions interfere with my data collection procedures or interpretation of the data. This is important in that it allowed for an external evaluation of the research methodology and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) (see Appendix I).

In addition, *peer debriefing* helped me receive guidance and support during the research process.

Referential adequacy. To account for *referential adequacy*, I recorded the participants' interviews and transcribed them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, as per an agreement with participants, transcriptions will not be available to other researchers. During the first interview I conducted, the participant requested that her full transcriptions not be shared with members of my dissertation committee because she feared that she would be easily identified due to the small pool of Latina doctoral students in her college. For every subsequent interview, I asked participants if they preferred to have their full transcriptions kept private, to which all reported this was their preference. However, participants agreed to have quotations from their transcribed interviews used for the purpose of this study and publications.

Member checking. It was important that I verify my interpretations with each respondent through *member checking* (Merriam, 1998). To do this, I e-mailed the transcribed data from each interview to the corresponding interviewee and requested that she review the data and provide me with corrections if necessary or additional information that was not provided during the interview session.

Transferability

Thick descriptions. I attempted to meet the criterion for *transferability* by presenting *thick descriptions* or detailed descriptions of the interviewees' responses and the similar themes present (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, in press). This criterion might have been better met if the duration of the interviews had been longer, allowing for greater amounts of data. Also, if the participants could have interviewed in the language of their choice (i.e. Spanish or English) this may have resulted in thick descriptions. However, due to time limitations and lack of available bilingual transcription services, the interviews were conducted in the English language.

Dependability

Inquiry audit. In addition, this study met criteria for *dependability* because it is easy to replicate, and the methods of inquiry are appropriate. It is possible that other researchers might have difficulties gathering participants on other campuses in the United States, in which Latina doctoral students are underrepresented.

Confirmability

Audit trail. Also, I maintained extensive documentation of the data gathered*, leaving an audit trail*, thereby meeting criteria for confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used an interview protocol to record participants' responses. Also, I had the interviews transcribed and went through each interview multiple times for coding of themes.

Data Analysis

The study's goal is to answer general questions about the data collected; and one appropriate method of analysis for this study is a constant comparison analysis (Leech &

Onwuegbuzie, in press a). I reviewed the transcripts and gathered meaningful sections from the transcriptions and assigned a *code* to the section. Afterwards, each coded section was grouped to identify a specific theme. I also used content analysis by implementing word count because I believed it would be helpful in finding meaning in the information shared by participants and would allow me to leave an audit trail (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, in press b). To do this, I transcribed the data and then counted the times that certain words emerged. This approach was only helpful in identifying participant specific themes.

In analyzing the data, it is suggested that researchers are accountable for the development of categories (Constas, 1992). Constas describes three different elements, all of which are associated to questions guiding the study. For example, *origination* is the first element. This refers to the originator of the categories which emerged during the research analysis. In this study I coded the data and asked an external auditor to also do so in order to increase trustworthiness. Furthermore, categories may emerge from the researcher's *intellectual constructions*, in which case these categories are taken from an investigative perspective (Constas, 1992). Also, an empirical approach was used for verification of categories by reviewing the current literature for similar themes. This approach allowed the researcher to examine the coverage implied by categories. According to Constas, the last component of developing categories is *nomination*. I assigned names to the categories to portray the schooling experiences of Latinas in doctoral programs. Categories were created *a posteriori* after coding the data (Constas, 1992). Case-oriented analysis and exploratory techniques were used.

Summary

For the purpose of this study, I used a qualitative research methodology. Conducting a collective case study through semi-structured interviews, I was able to audio-tape and transcribe data gathered and search for common themes that surfaced throughout the data analysis. Additionally, the steps I have taken to account for threats to external and internal credibility were also discussed. The next chapter, Chapter four, will present the results of the study. Furthermore, it will describe the domains and categories of themes that arose during data analysis.

Chapter Four

Results

Chapter three introduced the methodological procedures used in this study. In this chapter, I will present the results from the study. Chapter four will describe the domains and categories in which these data were organized as well as the themes that surfaced in each category after word count and coding of the data. Using qualitative inquiry, the data were collected through the use of qualitative interviews with six participants. Questions guiding this inquiry included: (a) What were the educational experiences of Latina doctoral students during their undergraduate and graduate studies?; (b) What personality traits or characteristics do these successful Latinas possess?; (c) What common elements are present in the individual's support system that increases a Latina's academic success?; (d) What are the motivations of Latinas who seek entrance into doctoral programs?; and (e) What experiences did these Latinas have upon entering their doctoral programs? The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were audio-taped and later transcribed. These data were sorted throughout the manuscript into different groupings including the sources of support and the challenges that participants experienced throughout their schooling. Quotes from each participant will be introduced and reduced into themes for each category. I will use first-person so that the voice of the participant is not lost in translation, and the reader can gain a better understanding of the participants' experiences. The presented categories of data surfaced from the standard 14

interview questions. The categories include: (a) General impressions; (b) Perceived barriers or struggles; (c) Personal characteristics; (d) Concept of social competence; (e) Concept of problem solving; (f) Concept of autonomy; (g) Concept of sense of purpose; (h) Greatest supports; (i) Motivating factors; (j) Suggested changes for educators, high schools, colleges and/or universities; and (k) Advice to students. These categories were then grouped into four main domains including: (a) Overall Educational Experiences; (b) Components of Bernard's Resiliency Model; (c) Impact on Academic Persistence, and (d) Recommendations. Table 4 provides an illustration of these domains and categories.

Table 4

Domains and Categories of Data Analysis

Overall Educational Experiences	Components of Bernard's (2004) Resiliency Model	Impact on Academic Persistence	Recommendations
General Impressions	Concept of Social Competence	Greatest Supports	Suggested Changes for Educators, High Schools, Colleges, and/or Universities
Perceived Barriers or Struggles	Concept of Problem Solving	Motivating Factors	Advice to Students
Personal Characteristics	Concept of Autonomy		
	Concept of Sense of Purpose		

Prior to the discussion of results, I will discuss potential researcher bias. Field notes from the interview are included in Appendix N. Exact transcripts will not be released per an agreement between the participants and me. I will begin by explaining specific themes that surfaced for each individual participant through a within-case analysis and then provide a cross-case analysis of the domains and categories identified.

Researcher Bias

This dissertation topic emerged from my experience as a Latina doctoral student, after being raised in a Hispanic community in the United States. There I had great exposure to a supportive environment but also experienced some discrimination because of my cultural background as I moved away from home. Also, during my doctoral schooling, I met another Latina at another University who was completing her doctoral degree in a similar field, and our interaction prompted my idea for this dissertation. I have always been passionate about advocating for minorities from different backgrounds, and this topic of resiliency among Latina doctoral students aligned well with my own personal background. Hence,it also served as a meaningful way for me to express my advocacy efforts for my own culture.

Prior to the interview process, I participated in an interview with the external auditor to clarify any potential research bias I might have. Based upon the interview, I was able to identify two different biases that I had. The first bias I had was my belief that all other Latinas could have had the same opportunities and supports and the same obstacles or barriers to overcome as I have had. The second bias was my belief that all Latinas, regardless of their specific Hispanic background, would have similar experiences. The results of this study revealed that neither of my beliefs was accurate.

Within-Case Analysis

Molly – Participant #1

Telephone screening. Molly is a 51-year-old first-generation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) Mexican female, who identifies as Latina and Hispanic. She stated that she heard about the study from a college advisor. Molly requested an e-mail screening as opposed to a telephone screening. Therefore, screening questions were typed and emailed to her and she responded to them via email. Molly met criteria for this study via the email screening. Molly reported that she was a Latina, enrolled as a doctoral student who had completed at least one year of doctoral studies, and was willing to discuss her schooling experience and the elements that contributed to her academic success with me while it is recorded and later transcribed. She also agreed to provide member checking after the interview was transcribed for greater accuracy. A meeting time and date was scheduled via e-mail. Molly chose to have the interview in a conference room near her campus office.

First impressions. Molly was dressed in casual business clothing. She was a few minutes late for the interview and appeared rushed. She greeted me at her office door and was soft-spoken but outgoing and friendly. Prior to the interview, she expressed concerns about who would be reading the transcriptions and appeared slightly nervous about what she stated during the interview. Despite her stated concerns, she agreed to the interview. However, she asked that her transcripts not be included in the dissertation. Yet, she agreed that quotes from the interview could be used. During the interview, she initially appeared to be slightly anxious answering question, but as rapport was built, she seemed more comfortable and was more talkative and expressive about her experiences. After

completing the interview, Molly spoke in Spanish and shared several additional challenging experiences that she did not want to include in the interview. She explained that she did not want to be easily identified. As per her request, some of her responses to the demographic questionnaire have been generalized in this manuscript to protect her privacy. She cried during our meeting and acknowledged that it was comforting for her to meet another Latina doctoral student as she did not feel so "alone."

Educational background. Molly had completed her Competency exam and had been accepted into doctoral candidacy at the time of the interview. She is majoring in Education. Molly reported that her mother had completed elementary school and her father had completed vocational schooling. She has one older and six younger siblings. Molly was the first in her family to attend college and the first to complete a graduate degree. At this time, her older and younger siblings have followed in her footsteps and have completed Bachelor of Science degrees.

Educational experiences. Molly discussed different experiences she had through her college education. She reported different challenges she had during her Master's schooling and doctoral schooling. At the Master's level, she told an advisor "that I wanted to be a teacher… she looked at me like…she told me that you have to take some tests and I don't think you can." She continued, "I remember her tone was like I don't think you can pass that." Molly reports that this experience made her think "they don't feel that you are competent enough." During our post-interview discussion, she explained that she felt this was because of her cultural background.

Molly verbalized feeling "very alone" during her doctoral schooling. She expressed a lack of understanding due to cultural issues such as language barriers and

lack of knowledge about American culture and socialization. For example, she stated "I don't have formal education in learning English." She further reported being a non-traditional student made it difficult at times for her to socialize and create interpersonal relationships at her campus and in her program. She stated "I couldn't relate to my classmates" and "It was very difficult for me to find people with my same background at this level." Here she appears to be referring to her cultural background. She adds, "There is no people like me in the doctoral program…I'm the only one." Molly also reported having difficulties forming her committee because when "[I] approached my professors, they plainly said no." At the time she was unaware of the committee forming process and stated "it's very difficult not to feel the rejection." However, she stated, "now I understand that it was not rejection at all." Molly explains her understanding of professors different research interests and busy schedules.

In contrast to these challenges, Molly also expressed that "[I] found professors that I can relate to." Throughout her discussion she referenced them as being "supportive…helpful…interested in me." During her committee search, she was able to find one professor who "was interested in not only the topic that I'm interested in but also in sharing their experiences with me." Moreover, Molly expressed "I feel more comfortable with me being around my cohort and my professors, and I'm hoping-I don't feel like that yet, but one day, I can feel that I am at home"

Personal characteristics: Taking initiative. Molly exhibited a unique personal characteristic through her persistence to succeed academically. The theme of *taking initiative* arose during data analysis. Molly described having difficulties learning English, then stated that she "started looking for a place where I could learn English." After

obtaining her Master's degree, she had difficulties finding a job. While searching for a job, she commented she "applied for the PhD because I didn't want to stay without doing anything." During her doctoral schooling, Molly encountered a classroom situation in which she did not have knowledge of the terminology the professor was using and could not understand the professor's explanations. She recalled, "as soon as I got back home, I started looking the word up." Another example of taking initiative is noted when Molly attempted to form new relationships with other Latinas by joining the Hispanic Association on her campus.

Star - Participant #2

Telephone screening. Star is a 52-year-old 1.5-generation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) Chilean and female, who identifies as Latina. During the telephone screening, Star seemed motivated to participate in the study and met criteria for participation. She stated that she knew about the study since she knew me and was willing to volunteer. Star identified as a Latina, and was enrolled as a doctoral student who had completed at least one year of doctoral studies. She was willing to discuss her schooling experience and the elements that contributed to her academic success with me while it is recorded and later transcribed. She also agreed to provide member checking after the interview was transcribed for greater accuracy. We scheduled a meeting time and date. Star chose to have the interview in a graduate assistant's office near her campus office.

First impressions. Star arrived half an hour late for the interview because her partner was not feeling well that morning, and she had to run errands. She was dressed in casual clothing and was well-groomed. She was energetic and engaging during the interview. Star knew me from previous educational and interactions, which I believe led

to her appearing more comfortable during the interview process. She stated feeling comfortable providing information about her schooling experiences and was talkative, offering more in-depth information as the interview progressed.

Educational background. Star reported that she was "at the end" of her doctoral studies and is majoring in Education. She stated that her mother had completed a college education, and her father had obtained a law degree. She further reported being the oldest in her family and that she had a younger sister, age 49, who had completed a Bachelors in Nursing and a younger brother, age 45, who had completed a Bachelor's in Psychology. She included that she was the first of her siblings to obtain a college degree and was "the overachiever" in her family.

Educational experiences. Star reported that she had negative encounters with advisors along her educational journey. She recalls an interaction she had with a high school guidance counselor:

> They asked me, well, what is it that you want to do? I said, well, I think I want to be a doctor and they said to me, well, you know, considering you're Spanish, you may want to be a nurse or a teacher or something like that because you might have problems with the language. Of course, I wasn't having problems with the language at that time. I was even in the gifted program.

This experience left Star with a "very, very bad taste of what so-called professionals were giving advice." Later she recalled "I had to fight the system." Star reported that she went into the military following high school, but was injured and decided to go to college instead. The military had offered to pay for her education. She recalled telling an advisor that she wanted to go to medical school, however the response she received was stated with a negative tone, "well, go find a university that will take you and we'll pay for it." It appears that the advisor's negative attitude about her decision, dissuaded her from

applying to medical school. Instead, she applied to a university and obtained two undergraduate degrees in both Clinical Psychology and Industrial Psychology with a minor in languages. She stated that the military paid for "every penny of my undergraduate and my master's." She explained "It was this thing that I really wanted to make them pay for everything because they told me I couldn't do it…Not because of my abilities—it was because I was female and I was Latina."

Star reported that she had previously been in another doctoral program and had gone so far as gaining All-But-Dissertation (ABD) status, but had not completed her degree. She reported that her "first experience was not challenging," but that her second doctoral experience has "been more challenging." She added that her new program has "allowed me to learn at my own style." She further added that the biggest challenge has been balancing her family, job, and schooling.

Personal characteristic: Perseverance. A theme that surfaced during data analysis of Star's interview was that of *perseverance*. It seems as though Star faced several challenging experiences during her schooling and personal life, she continued to "fight" in order to achieve her personal goals. Although different advisors doubted her abilities, she "just totally ignored it" and wanted to "see if I could do it," so she decided "to give myself my own advice." Star seemed to persevere despite negative experiences and was able to find a program in which she stated, "I've been able to create some of my own interests and the people have been able to work with me."

Gypsy – Participant #3

Telephone screening. Gypsy is a 26-year-old second-generation Cuban female who identifies as Hispanic and Latina. Originally, I received an-e-mail from Gypsy

stating that she had received a flyer about the study from a college faculty member through e-mail. At the time, she was living in another city completing her doctoral internship. Originally, the study criteria required that all participants meet on campus for the interview, however, prior to beginning the interview process I decided to change the criteria after realizing that during the summer months I would have a larger population to choose from if I expanded my criteria. Therefore, I contacted Gypsy a second time and agreed to travel to another city to meet her for the interview. Gypsy met criteria for this study during the second telephone screening. She reported that she was a Latina, enrolled as a doctoral student who had completed at least one year of doctoral studies, and was willing to discuss her schooling experience and the elements that contributed to her academic success with me while it is recorded and later transcribed. She also agreed to provide member checking after the interview was transcribed for greater accuracy. When we scheduled a meeting time and date, Gypsy chose to have the interview at her home.

First impressions. Gypsy was soft-spoken and well mannered. She was dressed casually and was warm and inviting. She seemed slightly anxious about the interview and was not very talkative at first. Even though she had reviewed the interview script prior to the interview and written down answers to each question. During the interview she became teary while talking about her feelings. She reported that she had "forgotten the significance of her accomplishments… I was really glad I had the opportunity to participate in the study." After the interview both Gypsy and I exchanged our educational progress and shared additional experiences that we had had with a similar Latino mentor on campus. Towards the end we were both laughing together and crying together.

Educational background. Gypsy reported that she had recently been admitted into doctoral candidacy and is majoring in Psychology. She stated that both her mother and father had completed graduate school and obtained doctoral degrees, however she did not specify whether they had obtained PhD or MD degrees.. She also added that she had an older sister, age 27, who had completed high school and attended some college. Gypsy was the first of her siblings to obtain a college degree.

Educational experiences. Gypsy explained that many times she felt as if her professors "were too busy to reach out and really help students." She also described assignments as being "pointless" at times. She added that she had two professors who she felt she "established a bond with" and they happened to be Hispanic. She also verbalized the importance of the financial support she received throughout her education. She reported that "all my finances were taken care of either through assistantships or fellowships" which decreased a lot of worrying. She described her doctoral experience as being "extremely challenging" but "also a great learning opportunity." Gypsy noted that she was the only Latina in a cohort of twelve.

Personal characteristic: Commitment. A theme that arose during data analysis of Gypsy's interview was *commitment.* Gypsy discussed, "I've also come across a whole bunch of unnecessary obstacles" yet remaining committed to her goals, she explained "getting all my work done required commitment." Although she stated, "there were many days where I felt like packing up my bags and leaving," she continued to make sacrifices and stated, "it's worth it." While discussing her accomplishment, she discussed this commitment by adding "I'm not going to stop no matter what."

For Gypsy, obtaining a doctoral education was a personal expectation and she appears to exhibit this in her commitment to obtain this goal.

Raquel – Participant #4

Telephone screening. Raquel is a 30-year-old second-generation Puerto-Rican and Colombian female born and raised in New York City, who identifies as Latina and Hispanic. Raquel contacted me via telephone at which time I conducted a telephone screening. She stated that she received a flyer from a friend. Raquel reported that she was a Latina, enrolled as a doctoral student who had completed at least one year of doctoral studies, and was willing to discuss her schooling experience and the elements that contributed to her academic success with me while it was recorded and later transcribed. She also agreed to provide member checking after the interview was transcribed for greater accuracy. We scheduled a meeting time and date. However, Raquel contacted me to reschedule a day prior to the interview. Raquel chose to have the interview at a graduate assistant office on campus.

First impression. Raquel was dynamic and talkative. She was dressed casually and was a half hour late because she needed to leave her young daughter with someone prior to the interview. She appeared very comfortable about the interview and was readily able to provide detailed responses to questions. After the interview she asked me additional questions about my doctoral education progress and she shared additional feelings about her experience, which she did not want mentioned in the results of the study.

Educational background. Raquel is completing her doctoral dissertation and is majoring in Nursing. She stated that her mother did not finish high school, but completed

up to the ninth grade. Her father also did not finish high school and completed either the sixth or seventh grade. Raquel is the eldest sister and has a younger sister, age 29; who completed a Bachelor's of Science in Biology and is a high school science teacher.

Educational experiences. Raquel recalled that entering her doctoral program was "overwhelming." She stated that "many times I felt 'over my head' and questioned, 'can I do this?'" She explained that her transition from student to teacher was "kind of hard." She stated that she oftentimes felt as if her students were "going to know that I don't know what I'm doing." She added that she "felt out of place." Raquel describes having difficulties "trying to balance things" since she has a young daughter.

Raquel stated that she was able to obtain funding and reimbursement for her schooling because of her Latina background. She further reported that "there aren't many of us…I think there's less than one percent in nursing that have a Ph.D."

Personal characteristic: Obligation. One theme that surfaced during data analysis of Raquel's interview was the theme of *obligation.* Raquel seemed to express a sense of obligation to complete her doctoral degree. For instance, she reported that she wanted to "influence" others' lives and have an "impact with your life." While discussing how education "opens your mind" and "everything changes," she reported that she feels "kind of a duty – you have to…You cannot not do this." She adds that the reason she is doing this is "to be a good role model for my daughter."

Carolina – Participant #5

Telephone screening. Carolina is a 38-year-old second-generation Nicaraguan-American female who identified as Latina. Carolina contacted me via telephone and left a message on my voicemail at which time I contacted her via telephone for a telephone

screening. She stated that she had seen one of the posted flyers on campus. Carolina reported that she was a Latina, enrolled as a doctoral student who had completed at least one year of doctoral studies, and was willing to discuss her schooling experience and the elements that contributed to her academic success with me while it is recorded and later transcribed. She also agreed to provide member checking after the interview was transcribed for greater accuracy. We scheduled a meeting time and date, but Carolina contacted me to reschedule a few days prior to the interview. Carolina chose to have the interview at a library study room on campus.

First impressions. Carolina was warm and forthcoming. She was dressed casually and was a half an hour late because she was taking care of her daughter. She appeared comfortable and immediately engaged in conversation with me asking about my program of study. After the interview we briefly discussed resources for Latinas on campus.

Educational background. Carolina currently has ABD status and is majoring in Anthropology. She reported that both her father and mother completed high school and that she is the eldest of two sisters and the first to go to college in her family and extended family. Her younger sister, age, 37 received a Bachelor's in Arts degree. She did not specify in what field.

Educational experiences. Carolina reports that she was "unaware of all 'the ins and outs' of getting into college." She recalled a conversation with a high school counselor, during her senior year of high school and stated that "she (the counselor) totally discouraged me from going to early dual enrollment." She reflected on this exchange stating that "it was a very negative experience."

As Carolina reflected on her educational experiences, she recalled that it has taken

her longer to complete her degree than she wanted, and she is "under crunch time to do the dissertation." She added that "many times classes were late in the evening which was not helpful when you're all alone with a child." Balancing "two or three assistantships at a time in a given semester" was difficult for her.

She stated that she has received a lot of support from different advisors, as well as financial support in terms of assistantships. She stated that she has "had the opportunity to mentor and had the opportunity to teach." It appeared as if she felt fortunate for having these experiences, stating "I've had the opportunity to live the experience."

Personal characteristic: Innate desire. During data analysis of Carolina's interview the theme of *innate desire* surfaced. Carolina expressed "wanting to finish the degree that I started." She added that it was "my own desire to see that through the end." She explains that while she was in high school, she was ready to finish and continue to college stating "I wanted to go to college." Again, this desire is evident as she reflected working after receiving her Master's degree and being a recently single mom, as she stated she "still felt like I wanted to pursue…my PhD."

Genesis – Participant #6

Telephone screening. Genesis is a 31-year-old second-generation Puerto Rican female who identifies as Latina. Genesis contacted me via telephone and left a message on my voicemail at which time I contacted her via telephone for a telephone screening. She stated that she had received a flyer from a friend. Genesis reported that she was a Latina, enrolled as a doctoral student who had completed at least one year of doctoral studies, and was willing to discuss her schooling experience and the elements that contributed to her academic success with me while it is recorded and later transcribed.

She also agreed to provide member checking after the interview was transcribed for greater accuracy. A meeting time and date was scheduled, however, Genesis contacted me to reschedule a few days prior to the interview. Genesis chose to have the interview at her off-campus office.

First impression. Genesis was vibrant and lively. She greeted me in the waiting room of her office and led me to her work room. She was dressed in a white lab coat and business professional attire. She seemed comfortable meeting with me and openly answered my questions. She engaged me in brief discussion about my schooling prior to the interview and discussed her research interests with me. After the interview she discussed her progress in her program and talked briefly about her quantitative dissertation.

Educational background. Genesis was completing her dissertation at the time of the interview and was majoring in Nursing. She stated that her mother completed a Bachelor's of Arts degree while Genesis was in the sixth grade, and her father completed high school. She reported that she has a younger sibling who has completed a Bachelor of Arts degree. Genesis is the first to obtain a graduate degree in her family.

Educational experiences. Genesis reported that her educational experience has been "challenging" and explained that she had faced financial challenges along her journey. Another challenge for her was balancing her family, work, and school. She stated that "finding quiet time" was also challenging and many times she just "needed time to think". Genesis explained that she did not get the opportunity to teach or have a graduate assistantship primarily because of family obligations and financial struggles. She added, "I've done this in a very nontraditional kind of way."

Genesis discusses the importance of having "other women, other Latinas, and other minority students who can relate to what I'm going through…" and added that "this has been important to me." She added that her peers "helped her get through this program" and "that's been crucial." She also stated that her educational experience has been "rewarding" for her.

Personal characteristics: Independence. During data analysis of Genesis's interview, the theme of *value* arose. Genesis appears to value education and stated that it is important "to value that college education." She discussed the meaning of having a college education and what "that means in a dollars and cents kind of way." She also referred to the difference in cultural values between American culture and Latina culture and stated "we're very family oriented." She described how women in the Latina culture

> often get sort of tied down thinking that they can depend on a man or there's going to be a man to take care of them, and that may have been the case in their house, but that's not always the case in the future.

She further described what a college education can "mean for their life." It appears that she felt some Latina women depend on their partner to be the family bread winner; however, she valued the significance of an education and the independence that it can yield for women.

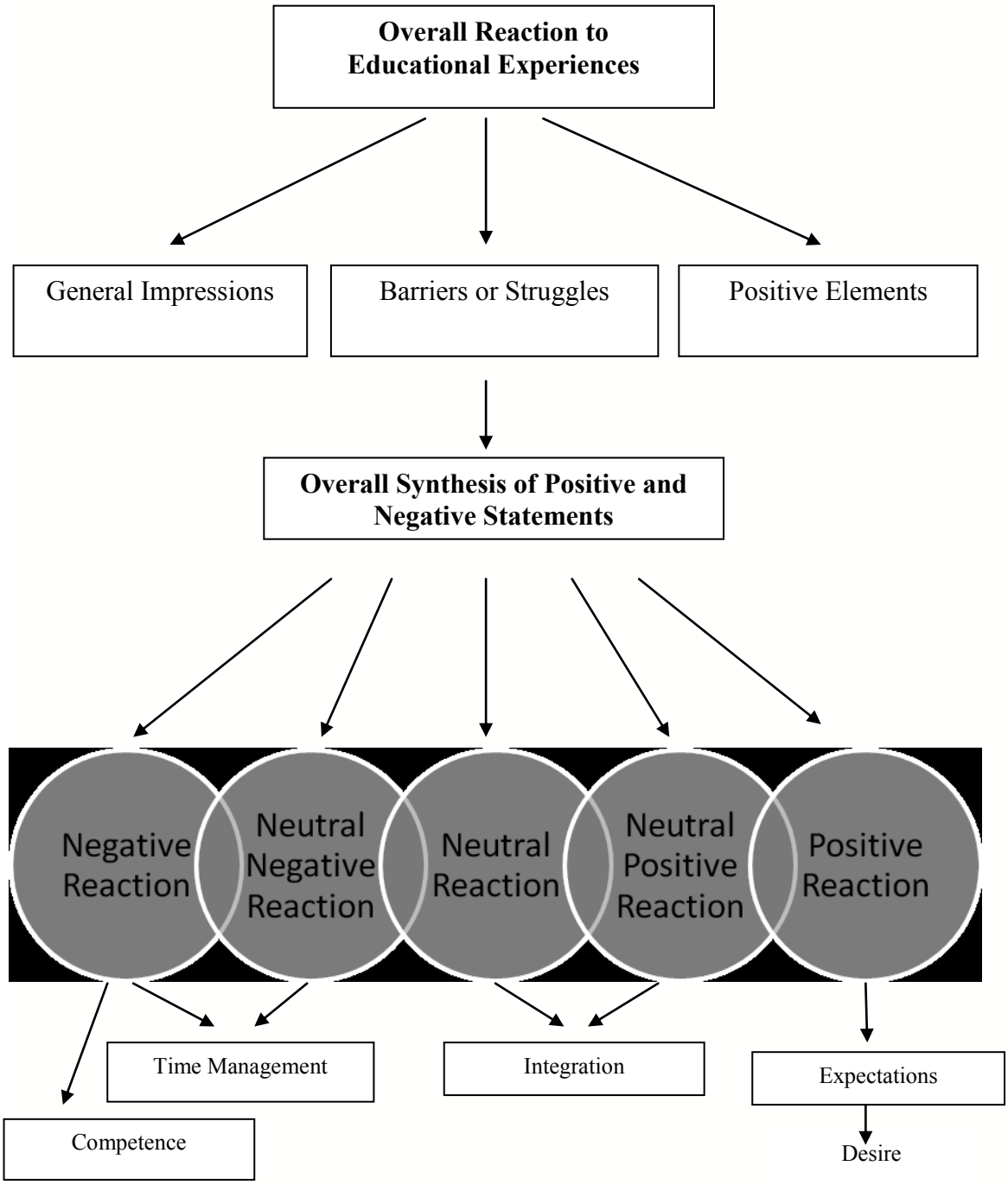
Across-Case Analysis

In the previous section I introduced variations that were classified as participant significant themes or personal characteristics. In this section, I will discuss additional domains and categories that surfaced during my across-case data analysis. I will note themes that arose within each domain and category and I will account for triangulation of participants' responses by including information from the literature.

Domain One: Overall Reaction to Educational Experiences

General impressions. During the interview participants were asked the following question: Can you tell me what the doctoral education experience has been like for you? I coded their responses based on whether or not the participant had a positive, negative, or neutral reaction. I clustered the responses along a negative-to-positive continuum and then reviewed each category for themes. Figure 2 (p. 72) depicts the breakdown of categories into themes regarding the overall reactions to participants' educational experiences. These themes arose from recurring words or phrases in the data collected from the participants' responses about their overall doctoral schooling experience.

Figure 2. Categories and Themes in Domain One



Note. Figure 2 depicts the data reduction process of Domain One. The top of the figure illustrates the data that was grouped into the categories and clustered into Domains. The synthesis looked at the positive and negative statements regarding the participants' general impression, barriers or challenges, and positive characteristics and participants' range of reactions were assigned from which five themes arose.

When asked about her doctoral schooling experience, Molly indicated that it "has been very lonely" and "hasn't been easy." She reported that this may have been due to her "lack of understanding of the culture" and added that "nothing of that was familiar to me," which "made it difficult for me." When discussing her classmates, she verbalized that she was a non-traditional student and she "didn't know any of them" and "there is no people like me in the doctoral program." She continued, "I'm the only one." These statements as well as those that followed appeared to be predominantly negative and were coded as negative. Raquel expressed "a lot of fear initially." She often questioned "Can I do this?" Again, her statements were coded as negative.

Star's comments appear to contrast with Molly's and Raquel's. She stated: "I've been able to create some of my own interests and the people have been able to work with me. They've allowed me to learn at my own style." This statement as well as those that followed appeared to be predominantly positive.

As opposed to her negative responses, Molly indicated a positive response by reporting; "now it's much better, because, for example, I'm going to stay in a class tonight where there are many from my department. It will make things easier to ask for assignments or to integrate with them." Gypsy appeared to have a neutral stance, stating that she felt that she "learned a great deal, but feel that I've also come across a whole bunch of unnecessary obstacles." These statements appear to balance each other, leading me to code it neutrally. For instance, if the participant's responses were fairly balanced then my overall general impression was coded as neutral. However, if the statements were balanced but seemed to lean more towards positive or negative, then I coded them as neutral-negative or neutral-positive. Like Gypsy, Carolina also seemed to express both

positive and negative experiences. She reports that while "classes were easy," she had a difficult time "trying to make it in terms of her personal circumstances with regard to having a child and having to work more assistantships than the average student would have to or seek additional funding wherever possible."

One recurring theme in these statements reflected the feelings the participants expressed about *integration*. When analyzing the theme of integration, it seems that participants' view of integration was based on their interactions with other classmates and professors in their programs or lack thereof. For example, from the quotes above, Molly stated that she felt "very lonely…in this department, I'm the only one." She goes on to say that

> you don't find people with my same background (Latina) at this level…I don't know any. That makes it difficult for me to relate to others. I can tell you there were some classes where the whole semester, I didn't talk to anyone and no one talked to me, either.

She also stated that she would be in a class this semester with other students from her department and thought that this would make it "easier to ask for assignments or to integrate with them." It appeared that while Molly viewed herself as not being integrated, she was hopeful that she would have the opportunity this semester. Molly's statements parallel Gonzalez's (2001) study results, which found that Latina doctoral students felt like outsiders in their programs and felt there was a lack of Latina representation in their programs.

While Star expressed "the people have been able to work with me," Gypsy indicated that she was the "only Latina amongst a cohort of twelve" and added "sometimes, we clashed, so we also learned many lessons from one another." Whereas

Star appears to feel fully integrated in her program, Gypsy seemed to have a more neutral-negative reaction. Genesis stated that it was

> important for me to have other-particularly minority students-other women, Latinas and other minority students who can relate to what I'm going through, and so not to be in a program where I am the only one has been important to me…that's been crucial.

Here, Genesis's statement appears to indicate that she was fully integrated in her program similar to Star.

Another theme that surfaced during the data analysis of participants' responses to their overall doctoral educational experiences was the theme of *competence*. It appears that participants either perceived themselves as being knowledgeable and competent in their courses as well as their roles as Teaching Assistants or perceived themselves as being unknowledgeable and inadequate. For example, as mentioned earlier, Molly recalled an academic situation in which she did not understand the language the professor used in class due to a cultural barrier. She stated that "nothing of that was familiar to me." It seemed that Molly struggled to understand new language presented at the doctoral level, making her feel inadequate at times. In addition to Molly's statements, Raquel verbalized feeling "in over my head" and questioning "can I do this?" During her role as a teaching assistant, she would say to herself "they're going to know that I don't know what I'm doing." She "felt out of place." It appears Raquel had a sense of inadequacy about her knowledge and abilities, leaving her feeling incompetent at times.

Barriers and struggles. As part of the interview, participants were asked the following question: Have you encountered any barriers or struggles as you've navigated through your doctoral education? In response to this question Star replied "Yeah, of

course, but not…I don't think because of the University or academics. I guess more personal type things. My family." It appears that her reaction to any possible barriers during her doctoral education were not related to her schooling, therefore, she had a positive reaction.

In addition to Star, Genesis stated that "I haven't taught. I didn't do any graduate assistantships." She worries how this will affect her job marketability after graduation. She also references her dual role as a mom and student and states "there are certain expectations of doctoral students that I don't always necessarily feel like I've accomplished." These statements appeared to be negative and were coded as negative reactions.

Raquel reflected on the issue of time and stated that "It's taken me a little bit longer that I would have liked to, but I think I'm okay with that." She adds that "the biggest thing is trying to balance things." Molly also reflected on the issue of time, stating that "Sometimes, if what interests you is not what hey are interested in – sometimes, you don't have the time to get to know what the other people are interested in." She also reported having difficulties assembling her committee. She stated "It came to the point – I know that it's the way I feel, but I sometimes approach some professors and they plainly said no." She added that she was finally able to find someone that was interested in "not only the topic that I am interested in but also in sharing their experiences with me." In addition to this Molly stated that one of the difficult parts is "to find someone who is interested not only in your topic but also in you as a person." Gypsy reflected on her interactions with professors as well, stating "I feel like my professors were that sometimes, professors were too busy to reach out and really help students as

much as would be desired." Her statements were coded as negative because she had a negative reaction.

Carolina also addressed the issue of time and reports that:

> in the history of academia in this country, post graduate studies were usually undertaken by people that are…that go into it are typically people that were of the leisure-class or had the ability to do that in terms of time and economics. I think it was difficult. I think people were very supportive of me and sympathetic to my situation, but the way that classes are structured or whatever – that's just the way it is.

It appears that she struggled with time factors, she added "it's taken me longer that I would have liked. It's possibly taken me twice as long to finish." Carolina's statements were coded as mostly negative, however they were not completely negative; therefore, she had a neutral-negative reaction.

One theme that arose from participants' response regarding the barriers and struggles they experienced was the theme of *time management*. If participants viewed themselves as being able to manage their time effectively and balance their, family, work, and home life, they felt less distressed. However, those struggling to find this balance appeared to express more distress and difficulties. For example, Carolina indicated that "the more difficult aspect of the whole thing was just trying to make it in terms of my personal circumstances with regard to having a child and having to work more assistantships than the average student would have to." This seems to suggest that Carolina experienced greater distress because she had to balance multiple factors in order to be successful. Her reaction appeared to be negative. Molly also expressed her inability to socialize often and to connect with others. She reported that "I'm not a traditional student. I have other obligations. I don't have a lot of time to socialize either." It seems

that Molly had a negative reaction to time management issues.

Like Molly, Genesis also related by stating "I guess there are certain expectations of doctoral students that I don't always necessarily feel like I've accomplished being a working mom/student. There's always other things they expect from you." She added,

> You need a lot of time just to think when you're in a doctoral program. When you have a family, you don't have a lot of time to sit there and process everything that you're absorbing. Finding quiet time to be a doctoral student and just to think- I think that's been the most challenging part.

Genesis appeared to have a negative reaction to balancing academia with family and jobs. Star seemed to have a negative reaction to issues of *time management* as well. While discussing barriers and struggles, she stated "My family. I have a private practice, so I have to still be involved in that. I have an eleven-year-old daughter."

In addition to Star, Raquel stated that "it's been hard with my daughter and balancing. I think the biggest thing is trying to balance things." However, Raquel stated that she succeeded by telling herself "take it one day at a time. I won't go insane." It appears that her ability to find funding also helped her find greater balance. She stated "that would be a big barrier if I didn't." It appears that Raquel had a neutral reaction to the stress produced from *time management* issues.

Positive characteristics. During the interview, participants were asked, "What factors influenced your decision to seek a college education? As well as: What factors influenced you decision to seek a doctoral education? These questions were aimed at identifying personality traits or characteristics that persistent Latina doctoral students possess.

During data analysis of participants' responses, a theme that surfaced was the theme of *family expectation* as four out of six participants agreed that they felt that going to college was expected of them by their parents or was an expectation that they set for themselves. With regards to pursuing a college education, Carolina recalls, "I was always very bright. By the time I got to high school, I was kind of done with high school. I wanted to get out of there." She stated that she "wanted to go to college." Raquel echoes Carolina in stating that "I'd done okay in school, and I enjoyed it. To me college was the next step." It appears that Raquel viewed a college education as an expectation. She also added that she watched "how hard my parents worked. I know that the more education you have, the more power you have. Not necessarily monetary power, but also knowledge." Like Raquel, Genesis admitted that "there was always an understanding that I would go to college…It was just expected."

Star explained that she had family members that had completed graduate programs, and she expressed similar feelings, "I wanted to be a part of that." Similar to Star, Gypsy also explained that her parents had graduate educations, "so just growing up, I knew it was pretty much the next step for me." It seems that she, too, felt it was an expectation that she attend college. Molly described that her mother "always had in her mind that we would go to college."

During data analysis of participants' responses, the sub-theme of *personal desire* arose. Whether it was immediately following their Bachelor's education or after working in the field with a Master's education, three of the six participants expressed a personal desire to complete a PhD. With regards to pursuing a doctoral education, Gypsy identified that she "always wanted a graduate education." Star also expressed a desire to

get a PhD, stating "I just felt that I just wanted to go through the challenge of getting the PhD to see if I could do it." Molly identified having difficulties finding a job after completing her Master's degree and stated that "I applied for the PhD because I didn't want to stay without doing anything." Like Molly, Carolina did not feel that her Master's degree was very marketable. Although she worked for a while, she stated that is when she "realized that I would rather go on and pursue my PhD." In addition to Genesis, Raquel expressed that she wanted to be a professor. She responded by stating that "the same thing that brought me back to school or that kept me in school…more knowledge is power."

Domain Two: Components of Bernard's (2004) Resiliency Model

In addition to the themes that arose during data analysis of participant's responses, I also looked for themes that aligned with Bernard's (2004) resiliency concepts of *social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and sense of purpose.* Below I provide an explanation of my findings.

Concept of social competence. Bernard's (2004) concept of *social competence* refers to an individual's ability to forgive others and to communicate. It also refers to the positive impact that others have on the individual's ability to be resilient. Molly appeared to exhibit social competence while speaking of the committee search process. She remembered feeling rejected by professors who refused to serve as her advisors. Following the interview Molly disclosed that she has felt rejected by others throughout her life because of her skin color or her hair. She recalls perceiving her experiences with professors as a rejection because of these cultural factors. During the interview she stated, "Now I understand that it was not rejection at all." Here it seems that she was able to

forgive this professor who "plainly said no." This concept is also present in Molly's explanation of the positive impact that professors had on her. For example, she recalled, "But finally, I found a person – the people who were interested in not only the topic that I am interested in but also in sharing their experiences with me."

In addition to Molly, this concept surfaced in Gypsy's story, as she described "There were many days where I felt like packing up my bags and leaving." She added that she had a "professor once tell me to never give up after what I accomplished so far. She promised me that the benefits of holding a PhD would be worth the sacrifice." She also expressed the importance of "having someone that you can talk to that will dissuade you each time you feel like quitting."

Star also appeared to be resilient in continuing her education after having left another doctoral program in which her "experience was not very good." She stated that her new program had people that "have been able to work with me. They've allowed me to learn at my own style." She is towards the end of her doctoral studies at this time. Star also remembered a situation in high school when a guidance counselor dissuaded her from becoming a doctor considering she was Spanish. She stated:

> I decided to give myself my own advice. I looked at people around and people that I looked up to, and I thought they had great jobs. I really liked who they were as they developed as women especially, and I said that's what I want to do. If they did it, how hard can it be? Let me try. And I just totally ignored it.

Here, it appears that Star was able to be resilient in the face of oppression due to the influence that other positive female role-models had on her.

The theme of *social competence* also arose during Carolina's interview as she spoke of how the "system itself can set up barriers with regard to what he average student

would do or is or how the average student is as opposed to the circumstance of students that come from certain backgrounds." She explained that "people were very supportive…people helped me in the sense that I probably shouldn't have had that many assistantships in terms of the rules." It seems she was able to form relationships with individuals that could assist her in overcoming financial obstacles that she faced because of her background.

Raquel also appears to have had a positive teacher who influenced her ability to be resilient. She recalled feeling like an "impersonator" when first starting her doctoral program and thinking, "I can't do this." She reported that a teacher explained that this feeling was normal, making "it seem like yes, you can do this." She added "that really affected me." Later she attributed her self-perception of being an "impersonator" to cultural factors.

In addition to Raquel, Genesis discussed gaining "a lot of support from my peers" and having "other minority students who can relate to what I'm going through, and so to not be the in a program where I'm the only one." Here is seems that her minority friends had a positive impact on her ability to be resilient during times when she might have felt alone.

Concept of problem solving. Another concept presented by Bernard (2004) was the theme of *problem solving*. Bernard (2004) explains that this refers to the individual's ability to plan and think critically as well as the ability to be resourceful. This theme surfaced during Genesis's interview. As she spoke of the doctoral program, she stated "It's been challenging for sure." The theme of *problem solving* also arose during data analysis of Carolina's interview. She explains being "divorced with a baby" after

finishing her Master's degree. In reference to her doctoral program, she adds that "I chose the program because it's an applied program. It would give me the flexibility and option." Here she appears to have planned ahead taking into consideration her personal circumstances. She also appeared to be resourceful as she described that she worked "more assistantships than the average student would have to or seek additional funding whenever possible."

Raquel appears to exhibit the concept of problem solving as she speaks of her ability to balance things and find resources. She stated "I think the biggest thing is trying to balance things. I take it one day at a time. I won't go insane. Every day I say that. I found funds, so that's been a good thing." It seems that Raquel is also able to be flexible in her thinking as she refers to her dual role as a mother and a student. She stated:

> I'm providing my daughter with the experience of this is higher education. This is why it's good for you. This is why you want to do this as opposed to I'm away from my daughter and not being a full time mother and guilt. There is some of that, but I'm trying to focus on the positive.

Concept of autonomy. Bernard (2004) proposed the concept of *autonomy* as the ability of an individual to be independent and assertive, while also having self-confidence and feeling in control of their lives. This theme surfaced during data analysis of Star's interview as she spoke of her negative experiences. She stated "I think a lot of the negative situations that I had early on when I first came to the United States really molded me to go forward and do what I wanted to do and kind of fight the system. I have that in me." Here she appears to exhibit assertion skills as she navigated through her schooling. Her ability to be independent is further observed as she claims that "having a sense of wanting to be my own person," helped her succeed.

As mentioned earlier, Star was able to reject negative advice from a guidance counselor and instead "give myself my own advice."

The concept of *autonomy* also arose during data analysis of Molly's interview responses. For example, Molly explains that "Many times I have heard that one of the problems immigrants have is because they do not assimilate or they do not integrate to the mainstream culture. Molly goes on to explain that "in my experience, sometimes, it's not that you don't want to do that. They don't let you. Sometimes I feel like people tolerate you." Molly exhibits this resiliency skill as she stated that "I know that I have to adjust myself and the place I am. It shouldn't mean that you forget your cultural background. It shouldn't mean that in order for you to fit here, I should forget my own identity." She went on to state that:

> I need to understand that when they look at me and understand that some of my – the things I do are also part of my culture. I know that I have to respect their part, but I would like them to also know part of mine. I really don't think that in order to fit, I have to forget all that.

It seems that Molly is able to assert her feelings and thoughts about being from a different cultural background.

Concept of sense of purpose. In Bernard's (2004) resiliency model, she introduces the concept of *sense of purpose*. This concept refers to the ability of an individual to find meaning in what they're doing and make it purposeful. This theme arose during data analysis of Raquel's interview. Raquel explained that a college education "opens your mind. The way you think about life – everything changes." She added, "I'm doing this to be a good role model for my daughter." She also discussed the importance of knowledge. She stated "more knowledge is power. The more knowledge you have to influence, really

it's just to influence." It appears that one of the purposes for her to further her education is to have a positive influence in the lives of others.

While discussing her experience of being a Latina doctoral student, Gypsy stated "I'm only a dissertation away from finishing, and I'm not going to stop no matter what. More of us need to lead the way and show that other Latinas can also do it." Like Raquel, the theme of *sense of purpose* surfaced during Gypsy's interview because it appears that Gypsy has been able to find meaning in what she is doing in her desire to be a role-model in the lives of other Latinas. Participants' statement were similar to results from Gonzalez's (2001) study in which he found that many of the Latinas interviewed expressed having a purpose for their family, but also to their community.

For Star, is seems that she found personal meaning in pursuing a doctoral education as she challenged her own abilities to get a PhD. She stated, "I just felt that I just wanted to go through the challenge of getting the PhD to see if I could do it." It appears that part of her motivations came from her desire to prove to herself and others that she could do it because her advisors "told me that I couldn't do it…because I was a female and I was Latina."

Table 5

Resiliency Concepts by Participant

Participant	Resiliency Concepts			
	Social Competence	Problem Solving	Autonomy	Sense of Purpose
Molly	X		X	
Star	X		X	X
Raquel	X	X		X
Gypsy	X			X
Carolina	X			
Genesis	X	X		

Table 5 illustrates that each participant exhibited at least one of these resiliency skills. The theme of *social competence* arose during data analysis of all participants' interviews. It is possible that these Latina doctoral students are resilient primarily due to supportive people in their lives, such as family, mentors, and professors. The concept of *problem solving* is evident in the responses provided by both Raquel and Genesis, while the concept of *autonomy* was reflected in the stories shared by Molly and Star. It seems that these two resiliency skills, while present, are not key in the academic persistence and success of Latina doctoral students. Finally, the concept of *sense of purpose* surfaced for Gypsy, Star, and Raquel. It appears that these Latina doctoral students were resilient because they were able to find meaning in what they were doing. Furthermore, it is

apparent that all of Bernard's (2004) resiliency concepts are not applicable to all Latina doctoral students. From this analysis, it is evident that the resiliency skill of social competence is an important element in the success of Latina doctoral students, followed by a sense of purpose. However, problem solving and autonomy do not appear to foster resiliency in these Latina doctoral students.

Domain Three: Impact on Academic Persistence

Participants were asked the following question during the interview process: What factors helped you succeed/or get this far? This question was created to elicit elements present in the individual's support system that contributed to participants' academic persistence. This question was also geared at inquiring about participants' motivations.

Greatest supports. Four of the six participants described having supportive *family members*. For example, Raquel explained that her "parents always made sure that I did my homework – not corrected it or went through it with me, but making sure that I was doing my homework and doing okay in school." Similar to Raquel, Genesis expressed that she had support from her family. She responded, "my parents helping me take care of my children and giving me more time to study when I would normally be taking care of them." Carolina echoed both Raquel and Genesis stating, "I have a supportive family in general. I don't think they're clear on what I do in regard to anthropology and what the PhD and all of that really entails, but they're always very proud." Gypsy adds, "the constant support of my parents." These finding are consistent with other studies on Latina college students and doctoral students (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; Gonzalez, 2005).

Participants also expressed the supportive role that their *mentors, advisors and faculty members* played in their persistence. For example, Genesis recalled that:

> my major advisor, who recruited me into this program, is very supportive of me taking my time gong through my program and understanding the things that may take a little bit longer because I have a family and I work and go to school.

Similar to Genesis, Molly reported that she "found professors that I can relate to" who have "been very supportive and very interested in what I'm interested in." She adds "that was very helpful for me." Carolina, too, stated that "I've also had key people here at the University that have served as mentors or people that have guided me a little bit." Also, Gypsy added that she had a "professor once tell me to never give up after I had accomplished so far. She promised me that the benefits of holding a PhD would be worth the sacrifice. Today I'm starting to see the benefits of that." Findings from this study reiterate previous research findings indicating that faculty and staff mentors influence the decision of students to complete a college and doctoral education (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; Gonzalez, 2005).

Two of the four participants referenced their *friends* as being supportive. For example, Gypsy mentioned "the constant support and motivation of my…friends." Also Genesis described the importance of having had other "minority students" in her program. She stated "I've gained a lot of support from my peers." Genesis's statement parallels Gonzalez's (2007) research findings, which indicated that all participants were able to form positive relationships with other minority doctoral students.

In addition to *friends*, two of the four participants referenced *significant others* as being supportive throughout their schooling. For example, Genesis reported that her

husband helped her care for their children, "giving me time to study." Raquel spoke of her career and education and also explains that her husband "even though he's not a professional, he wants me to do it." Gypsy also referenced her significant other stating that a factor that has helped her succeed has been "the constant support and motivation of…my fiancé."

In addition to significant people who served as support for participants, four of the six participants also reported that *financial assistance* had helped them get this far in their schooling. For example, Gypsy reports that "I had all my finances taken care of either through assistantships or fellowships and all that. If I didn't have that paid for – if I had to pay for it, I would have never finished." Star also summarized that the military "paid for every penny of my undergraduate and my master's." She added, "these are the things that motivated me." Raquel also explained that she "found funds, so that has been a good thing. That would have been a barrier if I didn't." Genesis was another participant who received financial assistance. She stated "I got some financial assistance with fellowships and that kind of thing, and that has definitely helped." Carolina reported that "I probably shouldn't have had that many assistantships in terms of the rules, but I needed the money, so they were willing to help me bend the rules." As found in Gonzalez's (2006) study, financial assistance in the form of fellowships and scholarships were also found to be supportive factors in the persistence of Latina doctoral students.

The findings of this study are consistent with the literature in describing family support, financial support, and faculty/mentor support as being helpful in fostering resiliency skills in Latina college students (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Ceballo, 2004; Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; McHatton, Zalaquett, & Cranston-Gingras 2006; Gonzalez, 2006; Gonzalez, 2007; Gonzalez, 2001; Zalaquett, 2005).

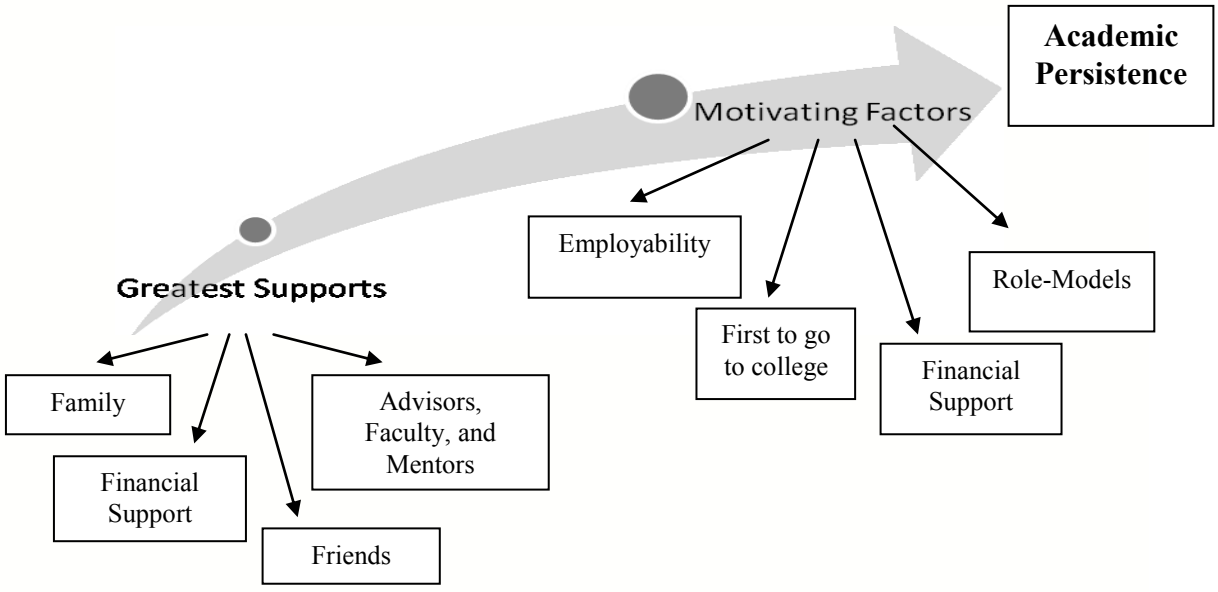
Motivating factors. In addition to family members, participants described having supportive *role-models*. For example, Raquel reported that that she had an aunt who "was a teacher…a good role model…she encouraged me." She also describes another aunt who was a nurse and her friend's mother who was also a nurse who had obtained a Master's degree "so it was a lot of medical professional women around me."

During data analysis of participants' responses, the theme of *employability* arose as a concern for two of the participants. When asked about the factors influencing their decision to seek a doctoral education, some participants referenced their post Master's experience. For example, Carolina remembered that "I was living in Miami, and I had a Master's degree in comparative sociology. At the time that wasn't very marketable." In addition to Carolina, Molly recalls "when I finished my Master's, I had a hard time finding a job." It seems like the distress from not being able to find a fulfilling job after the first graduate degree led these women to continue their education.

As mentioned previously, *financial assistance* appears to have been a source of support for several of the participants; however, it also appears to have been a theme that arose as a motivating factor for some. For instance, Gypsy recalled, "One of the things that kept me going was that you're getting a free ride." Like Gypsy, Star reflected on financial support that she received stating "these are the things that motivated me."

Some additional observations that I made were that four of the six participants reported being the *oldest sibling* in their family and three of the six participants reported being the *first to attend college* in their family. All participants stated that they were the only one of their siblings to obtain a graduate degree. Star exclaimed "I am the overachiever," while Raquel expressed the importance of being a role model and influencing others. These women were the first of their siblings to pursue a college education regardless of birth order and all of them continued post undergraduate studies. Figure 3 illustrates the categories and themes of this domain.

Figure 3. Categories and Themes of Domain Three



Domain Four: Recommendations

Suggested changes. Participants offered a content-rich source of data when asked: What recommendations would you give to educators to help Latina students further their

education? Participants were also asked: What could high schools, colleges and/or universities do to encourage Latinas to further their education? Responses from these questions are provided below and were then clustered into themes regarding suggested changes.

When asked about what educators could do to help Latinas further their education, Genesis replied:

> Culturally, we have certain different expectations of women in our culture. We're very family oriented, and so it's important to keep these things into consideration when you're working with Latinas who may need different things from you because of either their own family being a working mom or their family as in their parents and what they're expecting of them as well. What they're able to do or what they're going to want to do may vary depending on their home situation. Latinas are less likely to go away to school. They're more likely to be close to home or to be living at home, so those are all things that they have to take into consideration.

It appears that she is suggesting that advisors or school counselors consider cultural factors such as family values and expectations when assisting Latina students in their decision making and future career planning.. This is not to say that family members should be involved in career exploration at this level, however, it might benefit Latina doctoral students to explore how their cultural values and expectations impact their decision making. Star cautions against stereotyping. She stated "you have to be very careful not to stereotype people, especially women, and especially Latina women. I think many people have these preconceived stereotypes, and they're really wrong."

Raquel added that one factor that can help Latina students is "flexibility and to recognize that they may have the impersonator type of thing going on. It's not a negative, but it's just something cultural." Here she is referring to students "lacking self-confidence." She further indicated that educators should reach out to Latina students

"when they start into University" and providing them with the knowledge of the "funds available," explaining to them "This is the way the system works." Raquel expanded on her recommendations by stating:

> I've also had some official mentors, and that makes a big difference, just knowing that there are Latina women out there in positions of power, responsibility and that they also have families if they choose to.

Molly expressed that she, too, feels role models are important. She stated "If having a role model is powerful, maybe we need to provide our young girls with role models." She also recommended "talking to them about what is next after high school." Gypsy echoed Raquel and Molly's recommendation of mentorship and suggests funding as well by stating "Continue financial support and mentorships. Really be there for the students, not just say that." She added, "someone that knows how to guide me in the right way." In addition to Gypsy, Carolina further expanded on the role of mentors by suggesting that educators "talk to girls about the importance of getting an education in this country and this economy." She added "I know that's still difficult for a lot of Latinas and Latinos because of the personal circumstances or socioeconomic background or whatever responsibilities that they may have at home."

Participants were also asked what recommendations they would give to high schools, colleges, and/or universities to encourage Latinas to further their education. Gypsy recommended that colleges can provide "the financial support and the mentorship" to Latina students. Carolina explained that one thing high schools and colleges can do for all cultural groups is "how a bit more representation to professionals of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds so that kids know that they can do that and they have other options." Star also discussed the importance of mentorship regardless of

gender and stated "I think mentorship would be wonderful, but that needs to start even before high school. We need to have elementary school Latina females working with a mentor." Genesis added:

> I think it's important to encourage young Latina women to pursue college education and to get them to think about what they can do for themselves, right? To value that college education. They need to teach these women or these young girls about the opportunities that exist out there if they get a college education and what that can mean for their life – how it can be different from what they have at home or not. If they had parents who were college educated, maybe take the next step and going to grad school.

She also discussed the idea that Latinas:

> get sort of tied down to thinking that they can depend on a man or there's going to be a man to take care of them, and that may have been the case in their house, but that's not always the case in the future. I think that's important to stress.

Molly stated "If you don't know that there is something else after you complete one program, it doesn't cross your mind." It appears that she is suggesting that high schools and colleges can "make others aware of the opportunities that might be available." Carolina emphasized the importance of "enrichment programs where they encourage kids to learn a wide variety of things including arts and those types of things that they have a wider exposure to the world." Raquel further explained that it is important "Having open houses, getting the parents in there with the child, because it's usually the child explaining to the parents what's happening."

During data analysis of participants' responses the theme of *mentorship* arose. It appears that some participants recommended that educators serve as mentors and role models to Latina students. There is evidence of this in Raquel's statement: "I've also had some official mentors, and that makes a big difference." Gypsy also mentioned the importance of having a mentor that "knows how to guide me in the right way." She

further explained that it is important "to find someone that you can talk to that will dissuade you each time you feel like quitting…You've got to make sure you can call someone who is going to make you stick it out." Molly added, "having a role model is powerful." Again, this theme surfaced as Carolina stated "show a bit more representation of professionals of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds so that kids know that they can do that and they have other options." Star explained that students should have more:

> than just adult mentors – I think that, for instance, the fourth graders should have sixth, seventh, and eight grade mentors." She adds "Oftentimes, when you're a young female looking at a full grown adult, it looks so far and so untouchable and so unreachable. If you can look at somebody that's maybe two years older than you or two grades above, that is very reachable. It's a stepping stone.

Star seems to suggest that mentorships should begin prior to high school.

Another theme that arose from data analysis was the theme of increased *knowledge of cultural issues*. Participants recommend that educators consider cultural factors when assisting their students in career planning. For example, Genesis explained "We're very family oriented, and so it's important to keep these things into consideration when you're working with Latinas who may need different things from you." She added that "Latinas are less likely to go away to school…They're more likely to be close to home or to be living at home." Raquel added that Latina students may feel like an "impersonator" and lack self-confidence in their skills and abilities. It appears that she is suggesting that educators remind Latina students that "Yes, you can do it." Moreover, it is possible that this knowledge of cultural issues may help educators be more sensitive to students' needs, whereby taking these issues into considerations when providing mentorship or advising their students. This cultural competence may help students feel

more comfortable in seeking a mentor.

In addition to these themes, another theme that surfaced was the theme of *resources*. Participants suggested that educators provide Latina students with increased knowledge about the university system and the resources and opportunities available to them. For example, Molly encouraged educators to help students become "aware of the opportunities that might be available." Carolina further added that educators should "talk to girls about the importance of getting an education in this country and this economy, and by that, I mean graduating from university and possibly thinking about graduate school." Raquel also discussed the importance of *resources* as she described that educators need to explain "the way the system work" and "the funds available" to Latina students.

Advice to students. Participants were also asked to share the advice they would give Latina high school students and undergraduates to help them succeed in college. They're responses were clustered into themes regarding advise to Latina students. During analysis of participants' responses, the theme of *personal preparation* arose. For example, Carolina explained "I would tell them to make sure they do their research with regards to the college application and admissions process and what they want to study even in general and have some sort of plan." She further explained that "My parents really didn't have the knowledge of what's required in terms of the college admissions process, and when I compare that with myself, I'm already helping my daughter prepare for college and she's twelve years old." She added that she "would tell students to find out about scholarships, grades – keep your grades up and have an idea of what you want to do."

Molly encouraged Latina students stating "that the more you prepare yourself will help you be successful." Gypsy suggested that Latinas "be prepared for the sacrifice." She added "It's worth it because you can have an education and a degree that very few have." She went on to state that "the Latino is a very family-oriented person, and they have to separate from their family to pursue the degree, they should be prepared for that." Raquel echoed Gypsy's statement by saying "the more degrees you have, the easier life is going to be for you in the long run."

One sub-theme that arose during the data analysis of participants' responses included: *tracking*. As participants discussed the need to better prepare oneself for college, participants explained that one way of preparing oneself was to remain on a college-bound track throughout their schooling. For example, Molly advised that students "take challenging courses, because that's really going to make a difference between being ready for college or not." She added: "I would encourage them to stay in the college track and take the classes they need to take them to college." Raquel echoes Molly in stating:

> Starting early and making sure- I'm talking elementary. You have to be in a tract. You need to be in honor's classes It's a reality. The regular classes are not preparing kids for college. Getting kids, especially girls, into the honors classes – there are different programs that are available now that gear the child's who's coming from a house in which parents maybe have not had college degrees because it's a know-how.

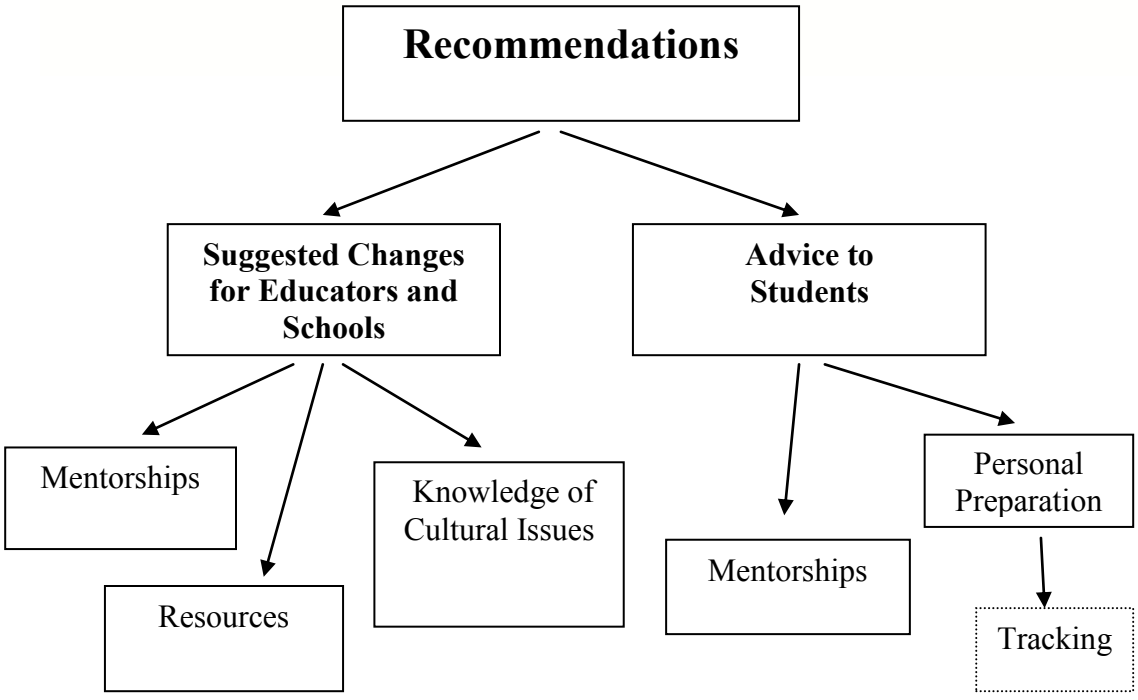
The theme of *mentorship* also surfaced during analysis of the participants' responses. Genesis suggested that Latinas "seek out someone – a mentor of some sort- somebody who has gone through this ahead of you and who can advise you on how to be most successful as you go through."

Carolina added that

> There are a lot of people at universities that can help you. It is important that you seek them out. That also requires some legwork, but once you get hooked up with one of those helpful people, they can show you the ropes and help you get through the process.

She further added that "the most important thing for Latinas who are going through the experience is always seek out mentors that are Latina that can help you with their experiences and show you the ropes and kind of tell you how they did it." Star explained that Latina students "need to find their own dream. They can't depend on anyone to tell them what they should or shouldn't do because of their background." Raquel added "just go and do it and finish" and "there's so much governmental help. There's no excuses." Figure 4 below provides an illustration of the categories and themes that emerged during data analysis of participants' interviews.

Figure 4. Categories and Themes in Domain Four



Summary

The results of this study indicate that participants exhibited several personal resiliency skills including: taking initiative, perseverance, commitment, obligation, innate desire, and independence. Furthermore, results from this study provide empirical support for some of Bernard's resiliency theoretical concepts, however, indicate that all Latina doctoral students do not exhibit all of these skills. In addition to these resiliency skills, the study results show that a number of themes surfaced during across-case analysis of the overall reactions to educational experiences such as integration, competence, time management, family expectations, and desire. These themes will be further discussed in Chapter five in the context of (a) overall reactions to educational experiences; (b) components of Bernard's resiliency model; (c) impact on academic persistence; and (d) recommendations. Implications for advocacy will be presented in the form of recommendations to educators, high schools, colleges, universities, and advisors working with Latina doctoral students. I will also present limitations of this study as well as recommendations for use of the study findings, and recommendations for future research in this area.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter four I introduced the results from this study and the categories that surfaced from data collected. The categories included: (a) General impressions; (b) Perceived barriers or struggles; (c) Personal characteristics; (d) Concept of social competence; (e) Concept of problem solving; (f) Concept of autonomy; (g) Concept of sense of purpose; (h) Greatest Supports; (i) Motivating factors; (j) Suggested changes for educators, high schools, colleges and/or universities; and (k) Advice to students. These categories were then clustered into four domains including: (a) Overall reactions to educational experiences; (b) Components of Bernard's resiliency model; (c) Impact on academic persistence; and (d) Recommendations. During data analysis, different themes and sub-themes emerged within each domain illustrating the experiences of multiple participants.

This chapter also presents a summary including a statement of the problem under investigation, the methodology proposed and followed, as well as the findings for each domain. The emerging themes and sub-themes will be further addressed in this chapter in the context of resiliency skills in academically persistent Latinas doctoral students. I will also present the implications of the limitations of this study as well as the contributions of this study and suggestions for educators, colleges and universities, and advisors. I will also provide recommendations for future research in this area.

Statement of the Problem

This research was guided by the goal of better understanding resiliency as it relates to academically persistent and successful Latina doctoral students. Variables that have had a positive influence on the decision of Latinas to complete a college education and obtain a college degree include: familial support, influence of peers who exhibit college survival skills, cultural congruity with their college environment, faculty and staff mentors, including Latina/o faculty and staff who have successfully achieved their academic goals (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005; Gonzalez, 2005). It is important that we learn more about these variables and others that help Latinas be resilient and persistent in achieving their academic goals.

This study examined the following primary issues: (a) the barriers or challenges that these Latina doctoral students encountered as they navigated their doctoral education; and (b) the resiliency skills that persistent Latina doctoral students exhibit along with the elements that fostered these resiliency skills.

Methodology

This research was a collective case study of the resiliency skills that aid in the success of Latina doctoral students. All data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews and the data from the interviews were then audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The six participants ranged in ages from twenty-six to fifty-two, and they voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Transcripts were read numerous times and coded for themes. The data collected were clustered into eleven categories, which were then reduced into four domains. An auditor evaluated the design of the study as well as the analysis of the data in order to establish trustworthiness of the study.

Findings

Findings in this study are a reflection of the experiences of six Latina doctoral students from a large metropolitan university in an urban southeastern community. Twenty–seven percent of the state of Florida is Latina/o. It is also important to note that the University at which these students are completing their degrees is not known as a Latina/o-serving institute. This information is presented to illustrate that all findings reported from this study are based on the experiences of these six participants and the impact of their interactions and experiences in their current environment. The findings depict the challenges faced by Latina students during their doctoral schooling and the elements fostering their resiliency and academic persistence as conceived by the six participants of this study. The findings also serve as a critique of Bernard's (2004) resiliency theory.

The findings of this study have been analyzed for thematic content and reviewed by an external auditor. The auditor in this study was a fellow doctoral candidate who has completed her dissertation and has experience coding and analyzing qualitative data. The data presented are the product of collaboration between the auditor and myself.

Domain One: Overall Reactions to Educational Experiences

Data was categorized into eleven groups and then clustered into four domains. Each category was analyzed to depict common themes. Participant-specific themes were presented and discussed during within-case analysis. Themes surfaced during across-case analysis were included in the four domains. Domain One included the categories of data pertaining to the overall reaction of the participants to their educational experiences. The analysis of the data presented four themes and one sub-theme. The synthesis of positive

statements produced commentary on the *family expectations* that motivated participants as indicated in these examples: Genesis expressed that "there was always an understanding that I would go to college." She added, "It was just expected." Molly further described that her mother "always had in her mind that we would go to college." In their explanations of family expectations, participants explained their own *personal desire* to pursue a doctoral education, which produced the sub-theme of *personal desire*. This sub-theme is illustrated in Star's reaction. She stated that "I just felt that I just wanted to go through the challenge of getting the PhD to see if I could do it." Gypsy echoed this by stating, "growing up, I knew it was pretty much the next step for me."

The negative statements provided by participants yielded the two themes of *competence* and *time management*. These themes are illustrated by Raquel's questioning "Can I do this?" and Molly's statement, "I'm not a traditional student. I have other obligations. I don't have a lot of time to socialize either." Statements that were coded as neutral statements yielded the theme of *integration*. Some participants expressed feeling integrated in their doctoral programs while others did not. This is captured in Molly and Genesis's opposing statements. Molly reported "you don't find people with my same background at this level…I don't know any. That makes it difficult for me to relate to others. I can tell you there were some classes where the whole semester, I didn't talk to anyone and no one talked to me, either." Contrary to Molly, Star explained that "the people have been able to work with me."

Table 6

Themes Related to the Educational Experiences of Latinas

General Impressions	Barriers & Challenges	Positive Characteristics
	Lack of confidence in competence	Family Expectations
	Time Management	Personal Desire
	Isolation	Integration

It is not surprising to me that these themes surfaced in my analysis of participants' interviews. As a Latina doctoral student, I too have had moments in which I lacked confidence in my abilities to teach or publish research at the doctoral level. I had moments early on in my teaching experiences, when I too questioned whether or not I was being an effective instructor or competent professional in my field. Unlike most of the study participants, I did not have a family of my own; therefore I do not have to balance as many factors as the participants. While the issue of time management was an unexpected theme that arose, reflecting back on my own experience, I did have to find a way to balance full-time work and full-time school and effective time management was vital to my success. In regards to the issue of integration, I thought that this could be an issue that might be discussed by participants based on previous challenging experiences that I had at the Master's level. Throughout my Master's level schooling I did not feel integrated with my peers. Instead I felt isolated from several of my peers because of my cultural background. However, upon entering the doctoral program, I felt integrated

immediately and the positive relationships I was able to form with my cohort and other doctoral students played a vital role in my academic persistence. In addition to these themes, I can relate to the theme of expectations. Although it was never stated, I always felt an expectation from my parents that I should go to college. I think this was mostly because of the lack of opportunities that they had growing up. I felt an obligation to take advantage of educational opportunities as they arose. Aside from their expectation, from early childhood I also had an innate desire to obtain the highest level of education possible in the field I was most passionate about. Like one of the participants, I too wanted to put myself to the challenge. It was interesting to see these themes surface, because the participants' words resonated with my own experience, although I had not analyzed the variables contributing to my resiliency.

Domain Two: Components of Bernard's Resiliency Model

Bernard's (2004) resiliency skills were explored in Domain Two. All of the participants' experiences supported the resiliency concept of *social competence*. There is evidence of this in Gypsy's story as she had a "professor once tell me to never give up after what I accomplished so far. She promised me that the benefits of holding a PhD would be worth the sacrifice." This professor appeared to have a positive impact on Gypsy's motivation to continue her education when many times she "felt like packing up my bags and leaving."

Another theme explored was *problem solving*. Two of the six participants appeared to exhibit this theme through planning and resourcefulness. This is noted in Carolina's statement, "I chose the program because it's an applied program. It would give me the flexibility and option." In addition to *problem solving*, the concept of *autonomy*

also surfaced in data analysis of two participant's interview responses. Star referred to, "having a sense of wanting to be my own person…giving myself my own advice," while Molly asserted that she knows "that I have to respect their part, but I would like them to also know part of mine. I really don't think that in order to fit, I have to forget all that." Here she is referencing integration with the American educational culture. Star seemed to have confidence in herself, while Molly had the ability to assert her feelings and feeling in control of her life. Personally, I could relate to both participants because I consider myself a very independent person and have tried to maintain autonomy in my decision-making process throughout my doctoral education to make it more meaningful for me.

An additional resiliency theme explored was *sense of purpose.* Three of the six participants seemed to find meaning in their experiences as doctoral students. For example, Raquel related, "I'm doing this to be a good role model for my daughter." Gypsy explained that "More of us need to lead the way and show that other Latinas can also do it." Again, both participants shared a sense of responsibility to others.

After careful analysis of the data it appears that Latina doctoral students all exhibited Bernard's (2004) social competence resiliency skill. It is likely that this skill was fostered due to the positive interactions that participants had with family, friends, mentors, professors, and advisors. This is not a surprising finding because the Hispanic culture is a collectivist culture in which family, extended family, neighbors, and other community mentors can play an active role in the lives of an individual. It has been my experience that this skill alone helped me be most resilient as I navigated my own doctoral studies. Having continued support form professors, financial advisors, family, friends, and other students encouraged me to move forward.

It seems that the resiliency skill of autonomy was not a common skill present among the participants. It is likely that this may be due to Latinas' cultural background and gender. In the Hispanic culture, women are not always expected to be autonomous as in the United States. Rather, many Latinas are expected to stay close to their family and attend a college close to home. Additionally, the theme of problem-solving appeared to be present, however, the manner in which Latinas problem-solved seemed different to the definition provided by Bernard (2004). Latinas are more likely to discuss difficult issues with family and significant others when problem-solving instead of doing so independently.

The resiliency skill of sense of purpose appeared to be present in half of the participants. It is possible that their sense of responsibility to others played a role in their desire to succeed academically as well as their perseverance and commitment. As a few participants discussed wanting to be good role models for their children, but also for other Latinas. I can relate to this resiliency skill, because it has been the driving force that led me to attend college and continue my education, as I wanted to be a good role model for my sisters, cousins, and other Latinas. I think that this might have something to do with negative stereotypes of Latina women that are portrayed in American media and an innate desire to challenge those stereotypes.

Domain Three: Impact on Academic Persistence

This study investigated the factors that fostered resiliency skills in academically successful Latinas. Domain three focused on the *greatest supports* and *motivating factors* that influenced participant's academic persistence. Four of the six participants described having supportive *family members*. For example, Genesis expresses this is her statement,

"my parents helping me take care of my children and giving me more time to study when I would normally be taking care of them." Carolina also verbalized, "I have a supportive family in general…they're always very proud." In addition to family members, participants also shared the supportive role that their *mentors, advisors and faculty members* played in their persistence. For example, Molly reported that she found professors who have "been very supportive and very interested in what I'm interested in." Gypsy also added that she had a "professor once tell me to never give up after I had accomplished so far."

Two of the four participants stated that their *friends* were also supportive. For example, Gypsy mentioned "the constant support and motivation of my…friends." Also Genesis explains "I've gained a lot of support from my peers." In addition to *friends*, Genesis, Raquel, and Gypsy referenced *significant others* as being supportive throughout their schooling. Gypsy also mentioned her significant other stating that "the constant support and motivation of…my fiancée" has helped her succeed.

In addition to significant people who served as support for participants, four of the six participants also reported that *financial support* had helped them get this far in their schooling. Star explained that the military "paid for every penny of my undergraduate and my master's…these are the things that motivated me." Raquel also explained that she "found funds, so that has been a good thing. That would have been a barrier if I didn't."

In addition to these supports participants also referenced additional motivating factors which helped them persist academically. Raquel reported that *role models* were influential in her persistence. For example, she stated that she had an aunt who "was a teacher…a good role model…she encouraged me." Star also referenced positive female

role-models in her life, stating "I looked at people around and people that I looked up to, and I thought they had great jobs. I really liked who they were as they developed as women especially."

Another theme that surfaced during data analysis was *employability.* This is evident in Carolina's statement, "I was living in Miami and I had a Master's degree in comparative sociology. At the time that wasn't very marketable."

As mentioned previously, *financial support* appears to have also been a motivating factor for some participants. Gypsy recalled, "One of the things that kept me going was that you're getting a free ride."

Finally, one observation was that four of the six participants reported being the *oldest sibling* in their family and three of the six participants reported being the *first to attend college* in their family. Star exclaimed "I am the overachiever." All of these women were first generation college graduate among their siblings.

Table 7

Elements that Fostered Resiliency in Latina Doctoral Students

Greatest Supports	Motivating Factors
Family members	Role-models
Faculty, mentors, & advisors	Financial Support
Friends	Perceived Employability

(table continues)

Table 7 (continued)

Greatest Supports	Motivating Factors
Significant Others	Family expectations
Financial Support	Desire to succeed
	Valued education
	Sense of Accomplishment
	Sense of Responsibility to others

While reviewing these findings, it is not surprising that family members, faculty, mentors, and advisors were among Latinas' greatest supports. Ceballo (2004) found that faculty role models and mentors were also related to Latina undergraduate students' academic success. Moreover, Arellano and Padilla (1996) also found that parental support and encouragement were significant factors related to Latina undergraduate students' success. Likewise, McHatton, Zalaquett, and Cranson-Gingras (2006) and Zalaquett(2005) found that successful undergraduate students had a strong familial bond. Similar to my findings, these authors discovered that students had a drive to succeed. Additionally, a sense of accomplishment, a sense of responsibility to others, valued education, and financial assistance appear to resonate with Zalaquett's findings on his research with undergraduate Latina students. Also, Gonzalez (2006) found that financial assistance was related to Latina doctoral student success. Furthermore, Gonzalez (2007) found that a strong sense of purpose to family, community, and society was related to

academic success among Latina doctoral students.

Significant others and friends are not mentioned in the resiliency literature reviewed; therefore, these may be specific to Latina doctoral students. Again, this may be due to their collectivist cultural background. It was surprising to find that Latina's perceived employability was a motivating factor, since there is not mention of this in the literature. Another surprising finding was that family expectations were also a motivating factor for Latina doctoral students. It may be that this finding is due to their cultural background.

Domain Four: Recommendations

This domain examined the *suggestions* and *advice* that participants would give to other Latina students, educators, high school, colleges and universities. Results of this study indicate a theme of *mentorship*. Molly explained that "having a role model is powerful." Carolina also stated "show a bit more representation of professionals of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds so that kids know that they can do that and they have other options." Another present theme included increased *knowledge of cultural issues*. This was noted as Genesis explained "We're very family oriented, and so it's important to keep these things into consideration when you're working with Latinas who may need different things from you." Another theme that arose was the theme of *resources*. For example, Molly encourages educators to help students become "aware of the opportunities that might be available." Raquel emphasized the need to explain "the way the system work" and "the funds available" to Latina students.

In their advice to other Latina students, the theme of personal *preparation* arose. For example, Carolina stated that she "would tell students to find out about scholarships,

grades – keep your grades up and have an idea of what you want to do." One sub-theme that arose was *tracking*. Participants explained that one way of preparing oneself was to remain on a college-bound track throughout their schooling. For example, Molly advises that students "take challenging courses, because that's really going to make a difference between being ready for college or not." The theme of *mentorship* was also discussed by several participants. Genesis suggests that Latinas "seek out someone – a mentor of some sort- somebody who has gone through this ahead of you and who can advise you on how to be most successful as you go through."

Table 8

Recommendations of Latina Doctoral Students

Suggestions to educators, high schools, colleges, and universities	Advice to Students
Mentorship	Personal Preparation
Knowledge of cultural issues	Tracking
Resources	Mentorship

Upon review of these findings, it is not surprising that Latina doctoral student would suggest increased mentorship for Latina students, because positive mentorships appear to foster social competence resiliency skills among successful Latina doctoral students. As an instructor and therapist, I recognize the importance of multicultural diversity and competence, therefore, it is not surprising to find that knowledge of cultural issues may be helpful for educators as they engage in career discussions with Latina students. Taking

cultural factors into consideration may ease the decision making process for Latinas. Also, from my own experience, I can relate to the themes of participation and mentorship, because they played key roles in my success. However, I was surprised about the theme of tracking. It appears that greater resources and availability of education options for students are important as students begin to plan for college.

Participant-Specific Themes

Data from this category have already been discussed in detail throughout the discussion of the data. Participant-specific themes refer to unique themes that surfaced for each participant. Molly's reactions contributed greatly to the experiences of non-traditional first-generation students and led to the suggestion that Latina students "stay on the college track" and learn English when coming to this country. She explained that "Sometimes, because of their English, they are going to be set in lower classes" and "end up without the skills that they will need to be successful in college." Molly also expanded on feeling alone during her doctoral schooling experience and having difficulties integrating with Anglo-American students and professors because of other obligations, such as family. Further research is needed to build an understanding of the schooling experiences of first-generation Latina students in general and more specifically, Latina doctoral students.

Gypsy's contributions have also been discussed throughout the discussion of the data. She greatly contributed to the experiences of traditional, second-generation students. She emphasizes the importance of financial assistance for U.S. born Latina doctoral students as well as mentorships. Having gone directly to graduate school after her Bachelor's, she recalls her experience as a sacrifice that required a great deal of

commitment. Future research should focus on the experiences of traditional Latina doctoral students and the resiliency skills and supports that aid in their persistence during long-term continuous full-time education.

Participant-specific data yielded greater support for the four domains of data and provided greater levels of understanding. The rich data collected for this study provided a better understanding of the educational experiences of Latina doctoral students, including the factors that foster resiliency, as well as challenges that they face. The data gathered for this study generated recommendations for educators and schools, colleges, and universities when working with Latina students. In the next section, I will detail the contributions of this study.

Table 9

Summary of Latinas' Experiences in Doctoral Programs

Challenges	Factors Leading to Success
Lack of confidence in competence	Family Expectations
Isolation	Innate Desire
Difficulties with time-management	Feeling Integrated
Responsibility for caring for children	Feeling Competent
	Social Competence
	Autonomy

(table continues)

Table 9 (continued)

Challenges	Factors Leading to Success
	Sense of Purpose
	Initiative
	Perseverance
	Commitment to education
	Independence
	Sense of Duty
	Financial assistance
	Support from mentors, faculty, & advisors
	Role-models
	Perceived social support from family, friends, & significant others
	Perceived employability

After careful analysis of the data gathered, findings from this study indicate several factors leading to Latina doctoral students' academic success. Many of the themes that surfaced are consistent with the literature on factors contributing to Latina/o undergraduate academic success. Some of the findings parallel the available literature on African American female doctoral students. For example, social, financial, and familial support are all factors contributing to the academic success of these minority students

(Allen, 1987; Allen, 1992; Carroll, 1998; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Flint, 1992; Herndon & Hirt, 2004; O'Leary, Boatwright, & Sauer, 1996; Tinto, 1993). Additionally, personal qualities such as determination surfaced in the literature (King, 1994, b) on African-American female doctoral students also indicating possible support for Bernard's (2004) resiliency model. However, only some factors resonated with the literature on Latina doctoral academic success, such as financial assistance, autonomy, sense of purpose, and social competence. Based on both the literature and my personal experience, I expected these findings, however, I was not expecting some of the themes that surfaced. For example, perceived employability was not referenced in the literature. Additionally, the participant-specific themes were not referenced in the literature on Latina doctoral students. In regards to the challenges that Latina doctoral students endured, these findings provide support for the idea of isolation that Latina doctoral students perceive as referenced in the literature (Gonzalez, 2006; Gonzalez, 2007). However, this study presents new insights not referenced in the literature about the challenges experienced by Latina doctoral students, including: lack of confidence in competence, difficulties with time management, and responsibility for caring for children.

Contributions of this Study

This study provides empirical support for Bernard's (2004) resiliency theory and her theoretical concepts. The study also provides a significant advancement in the area of multicultural issues in education as related to Latinas in higher education. The barriers and challenges were cited as examples of the means by which the educational experience may affect the development of resiliency skills among Latinas. Likewise, the supports and motivating factors were cited to better understand the elements contributing to the

academic success of Latina doctoral students. This is a critical advancement because most of the literature on Latinas and education has focused on the challenges they experience instead of the factors that help them succeed. Furthermore, this study allowed Latina doctoral students to provide suggestions for advocacy efforts of both educators and schools.

This study is unique in that it provides a comprehensive analysis of the elements that fostered resiliency skills in Latina doctoral students. It concludes with recommendations to educators, high school, colleges, and universities as well as suggestion for future research.

Recommendations for Advocacy

The implications for advocacy are detailed throughout this manuscript; however I would like to outline important themes that surfaced. The results of this study are most intended for three groups, including: (a) educators, (b) high schools, (c) colleges and/or universities.

1. It is important that educators, mentors, and advisors increase their knowledge on the cultural background of Latina students in general and the impact that cultural factors play in the lives of Latina doctoral students to better aid them in their decision-making process as they navigate through doctor al studies. Several participants provided this recommendation.
2. The role that mentors and role-models appears to be an influential factor leading to the success of Latina students. Therefore, schools and colleges should have mentorship programs in place to guide new Latina students as they navigate through the educational system. School and colleges should also

have representatives from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds in different professional roles on campus.

3. Schools and colleges should continue to implement programs directed towards minority students to orient them and their families to the educational system and various processes involved in continued education.
4. It is also important that educators at the high school level begin encouraging minority students to start planning for their careers early in their education, including information regarding tracking options.
5. Beginning mentorship programs as early as elementary may be helpful for Latina students, including both adult mentors and peer-mentors.
6. Some Latinas attempt to balance family and work while also obtaining doctoral degrees as non-traditional students. Universities should investigate possible on-campus day care options for students with children.
7. Financial assistance appears to play a crucial role in the motivation of Latinas to persist in their doctoral schooling. High schools, colleges, and universities should offer financial resources geared towards the recruitment of Latinas and provide Latinas and their families with information regarding the application process for these awards.
8. Across disciplines, doctoral programs should consider promoting day-time classes as opposed to evening classes for women with children.

Recommendations for Additional Research

Additional research in the area of Latina students is needed. Future research should focus on successful Latinas with professional degrees to examine the factors that

helped them transition into the career world and obtain job placement. Also, further research should be conducted on the experiences of first generation Latinas as well as traditional Latina full-time students. This study focused on Latinas who were already towards the end of their academic careers. Longitudinal studies may also provide insight as to the factors that influence Latinas' persistence during different times of their doctoral schooling. In addition to Latinas, it is possible that other minority students may face similar challenges as they navigate through their doctoral education. Therefore, future research in this area may elicit new information regarding the factors leading to minority students' resiliency, while also identifying additional or similar challenges that these groups face.

Limitations

There are potential limitations to this study. For this study, participants were selected from programs in which enrollment is primarily female. This understudied the experience of Latinas in non-traditionally female programs. This selection was chosen due to limited time to establish contacts. Also, one participant who responded to a posted flyer was majoring in Engineering, a male dominated field; however she did not come to the interview and did not contact the researcher thereafter.

Another limitation of this study was the short length of time of two of the interviews. This may have been due to the structured format of the interview. A semi-structured interview may have produced greater reflections from participants, especially if additional probing questions were asked. Also, all participants were from the same university, therefore, it is possible that the experiences of Latina doctoral students might have been different based on the institution attended.

In preparing for this study, one of my assumptions was that Latina doctoral participants would feel more comfortable talking to me about their schooling experiences because I too am a Latina doctoral student. While this may have been the case for some participants, I found that some participants were reluctant to discuss any negative schooling experiences while being recorded. This result appears to align with a predictable response described by Bernard (2000) as *deference effect*. Deference effect refers to times during the interview process when participants tell the interviewer what they think the interviewer wants to know, especially regarding questions related to race, gender, and ethnicity. Some of the participants shared positive stories about their schooling while audio-taped yet negative ones dealing with issues of ethnicity and gender off-tape. This led me to believe that they were concerned about faculty having access to published quotations from their transcripts and did not want to be offensive. It is possible that Latina doctoral students would feel more comfortable discussing difficult issues related to their schooling experiences off campus and/or among other Latinas in a focus group.

Conclusions

This study uncovered numerous resiliency skills and elements that foster resiliency skills in Latina doctoral students. The resiliency skills exhibited by participants in this study are consistent with resiliency skills found among Latina undergraduate students as well as African-American students including African-American doctoral students, however, somewhat inconsistent with findings in the literature on Latina doctoral students. Findings provide additional insights as to the factors contributing to Latina doctoral students' academic success as well as challenges faced by these women.

Moreover, this study found empirical support for all of Bernard's (2004) resiliency skills. Through the sharing of their experiences, I found evidence indicating that each of Bernard's resiliency concepts applied to some participants. However, this study indicates that Latinas may exhibit resiliency skills, such as problem-solving, in a different manner than described by Bernard's resiliency theory. It is likely that Bernard's theoretical constructs may need to be redefined to include the different ways that minorities exhibit resiliency skills, or revised taking a multicultural approach. This study further provided recommendation to educators, high schools, colleges, and universities in their continued efforts to advocate for this minority population.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Flyer to Solicit Participants for Study

Attention:

Latina Doctoral Students

We are conducting a research study and we need you!

We are looking for Latina volunteers to be interviewed on their schooling experiences and factors contributing to their academic success throughout their doctoral education.

Please help.

If you are not a Latina doctoral student, but know someone who is, please give this to your friend.

All information will be confidential. You will be screened over the phone.

Benefits of participation include furthering research in the area of Latinas' academic success in higher education.

Note: This research is being conducted through the University of South Florida and has been approved through the Institutional Review Board #106833

Contact

Katherine Fuerth

Researcher

813-484-6588

Appendix B

Selection Criteria for Study

1. The participant must be a female doctoral student at a U.S. university who has completed at least 1 year of doctoral studies.
2. The participant must describe herself as Latina.
3. The participant must be willing to discuss her schooling experience and the elements that contributed to her academic success with a researcher while it is recorded and later transcribed.
4. The participant must be willing to be contacted at a later date for member checks.

Appendix C

Phone Screening Interview

"Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to participate in this study. How did you learn about the study?

Before we get started, I want to inform you of a few things. This is a study for my doctoral dissertation in Counselor Education at the University of South Florida. I became interested in this type of research because I am a Latina doctoral student myself. I am also a counselor who has worked with the Latina population in the community and believe that there needs to be more research and services for our population in the educational system.

To ensure your confidentiality, I'd ask that you think of a pseudonym to use for the study. Although I will need your signature for a consent form prior to the study, your real name will not be used in the publication of this study.

You would need to travel to the University of South Florida's Tampa campus for this study. This is to ensure that the interview conditions for all participants will be consistent.

I also want to inform you that it is possible that you may experience some discomfort during the study interview because we may be discussing challenges that you have faced throughout your schooling.

I would like to ask you some basic questions about yourself if that is alright with you?

1. Could you tell me your highest level of education completed?
2. How many years of doctoral studies have you completed?
3. What is your ethnicity?

I have a few more questions.

1. Do you feel you would be able to discuss the effects of your schooling experiences on your current academic success as a doctoral student with me for research purposes?

2. Would you be willing to meet with me for about 1-2 hours to discuss the factors that contributed to your academic success as well as any challenges you had during your schooling experiences and then be contacted at a later date to review a transcription of your interview to make sure it is accurate?

3. The interview session will be audio-taped and transcribed for research purposes. Would it be acceptable to you to have your transcripts read by others provided you remained anonymous?

4. What questions do you have about the study at this time?

5. Is there a phone number where I can reach you or a confidential e-mail where I may contact you?

6. May I leave messages there?"

Appendix D

Letter to Participants

Dear Participant,

The purpose of this research is to identify the personal schooling experiences that Latinas have during their doctoral education as well as influencing factors to their academic success. In identifying these factors, this researcher hopes to contribute to the literature by providing implications for policy change and implications for more effective university outreach programs for Latinas.

Please note that all participants have the right to decline participation in this study at any point during the investigation. There are no known risks or benefits to participants who choose to take part in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Katherine Fuerth at (813)484-6588. Your participation in this project is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Katherine Fuerth, M.A

Appendix E

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent to Participate in Research
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study.
We are asking you to take part in a research study that is called:
Resiliency in Academically Successful Latina Doctoral Students

The person who is in charge of this research study is Katherine Fuerth, M.A.

The research will be done at the University of South Florida in the United States.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to identify the contributing factors to Latinas academic success and resiliency through higher education.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to provide contact information to the researchers and then you will be contacted by phone or e-mail to schedule a 1-2 hour (maximum) face-to-face interview. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. The researcher will contact you a second time via e-mail to verify your interview responses. This will not take more than two hours. The total participation time that may be required of you will be 4 hours.

Alternatives

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study. You also have the alternative of completing the questionnaire, however, choosing not to participate in the interview.

Benefits

We do not know if you will get any benefits by taking part in this study.

Risks or Discomfort

There are no known risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

We will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Confidentiality

We must keep your study records confidential. To do this, the principal research investigator will maintain all data collected in a locked filing cabinet in her office for 3 years. Data collected for this research may be used in other research related to Latinas in higher education.

Certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, and all other research staff.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.) These include:
    a. the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the staff that work for the IRB. Other individuals who work for USF that provide other kinds of oversight may also need to look at your records;
    b. Department of Health and Human Services

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study, to please the study investigator or the research staff. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time.

Questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Katherine Fuerth at (813)484-6588.If you have questions about your rights, general questions, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-9343.If you experience an adverse event or unanticipated problem call Katherine Fuerth at (813) 484-6588.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

_____ _____

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study Date

_____

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands:

- What the study is about.
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used.
- What the potential benefits might be.
- What the known risks might be.

I also certify that he or she does not have any problems that could make it hard to understand what it means to take part in this research. This person speaks the language that was used to explain this research.

This person reads well enough to understand this form or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her.

This person does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give informed consent.

This person is not taking drugs that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give informed consent.

_____

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent Date

_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Appendix F

Investigator's Interview Protocol

Project:

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interview Questions

1. What factors influenced your decision to seek a college education?
2. What factors influenced your decision to seek a doctoral education?
3. Can you tell me what the doctoral education experience has been like for you?
4. Have you encountered any barriers or struggles as you've navigated through your doctoral education?
5. What factors helped you succeed/get this far?
6. If you could give other Latinas in high school or undergrad any advice as to what may help them succeed in college, what would that advice be?
7. What recommendations would you give to educators to help Latina students further their education?
8. What could high schools, colleges, and/or universities do to encourage Latinas to further their education?

9. What else would you like to tell me about your experience as a Latina who has pursued a doctoral education?

10. What have I forgotten to ask that you feel is important?

11. How are you feeling right now?

(Thank individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses and potential future interviews).

Appendix G

Interview Script

I want to thank you for participating in this study. I will be recording this session and it will be transcribed afterwards. The final transcription will be read by my committee members and an outside auditor. Any quotes from this interview may be used in the dissertation publication, however, I want to remind you that your true identity will always remain anonymous. I will respect and protect your confidentiality.

If at anytime you feel too uncomfortable during the interview process, please stop and let me know. We can either take a break from the interview or terminate the interview if necessary. I would like to give you a moment to read a consent form that you will need to sign in order for me to continue with the interview (I will hand them the consent form, verbally review it with them, and then have them sign it voluntarily).

1. Do you have any questions about the consent form?
2. Having read the consent form, do you still agree to be a part of the study?
3. I would now like to start tape-recording, is that alright with you?

I would like to start with some basic questions if you are ready to begin

4. What is your ethnic/cultural background?
5. What generation Latina are you?
   (a) 1 generation: Foreign born, arrived in the U.S. after the age of 16.

(b) 1.25 generation: Foreign born, arrived in the U.S. between the ages of 11 and 15.

(c) 1.5 generation: Foreign born, arrived in the U.S. between the ages of 6 and 10.

(d) 1.75 generation: Foreign born, arrived in the U.S. before the age of 5.

(e) 2 generation: Born in the U.S. of Foreign born parents.

(f) 3 generation: Born in the U.S. of U.S. born parents and foreign born grandparents (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

6. What is your major?
7. What factors influenced your decision to seek a college education?
8. What factors influenced your decision to seek a doctoral education?
9. Can you tell me what the doctoral education experience has been like for you?
10. Have you encountered any barriers or struggles as you've navigated through your doctoral education?
11. What factors helped you succeed/get this far?
12. If you could give other Latinas in high school or undergrad any advice as to what may help them succeed in college, what would that advice be?
13. What recommendations would you give to educators to help Latina students further their education?
14. What could high schools, colleges, and/or universities do to encourage Latinas to further their education?

15. What else would you like to tell me about your experience as a Latina who has pursued a doctoral education?

16. What have I forgotten to ask that you feel is important?

17. How are you feeling right now?

Those are all of the questions I have for you at this time. Here is my email address, if within one week you decide that you would like to add anything to the interview, please do not hesitate to email me with additional information [Card with email address will be handed to the participant]

What questions do you have for me?

Where should I submit the transcripts to?

Thank you again for participating in this research study. I really appreciate your time and contribution.

Appendix H

Follow-up Email to Participants

"Dear _____,

Thank you for participating in my research study. I really appreciate the time you took to answer my questions and provide detailed information as to your resilience as it related to your academic success in doctoral studies. This is just a reminder that you may email me within one week if you feel you need to add anything to your interview.

During the next stage of the study, your audio tape will be transcribed and I will review it. I will then email [or send it, or hand deliver it] to you as per our agreement so that you can review it for accuracy. This should be done within one month.

Thank you again for your participation. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Katherine Fuerth

Appendix I

Clarification of Researcher Bias

1. What biases do you think that you have going into this dissertation?

2. Do you think that you have any prejudices or assumptions regarding any of the parties involved in this research?

3. What is your experience with this population?

4. Why did you choose this dissertation topic?

Appendix J

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age?
2. What is your ethnic/cultural background?
3. Are you currently a doctoral student? If so, how far along are you in your doctoral studies?
4. What is your current major?
5. What is your GPA?
6. What was your GRE score?
7. What generation Latina are you?
   (a) 1 generation: Foreign born, arrived in the U.S. after the age of 16.
   (b) 1.25 generation: Foreign born, arrived in the U.S. between the ages of 11 and 15.
   (c) 1.5 generation: Foreign born, arrived in the U.S. between the ages of 6 and 10.
   (d) 1.75 generation: Foreign born, arrived in the U.S. before the age of 5.
   (e) 2 generation: Born in the U.S. of Foreign born parents.
   (f) 3 generation: Born in the U.S. of U.S. born parents and foreign born grandparents (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).
8. What is the highest level of education that your mother completed?
9. What is the highest level of education that your father completed?
10. Do you have siblings?
    a. If so, what are their ages?

b. Have any of them attended college?

    i. If so, what is the highest level of education they completed?

Appendix K

Interview Field Notes

Project: Molly

Time of Interview: 12:00pm

Date: 5/14/2008

Place: Conference Room

Interviewer: Katherine Fuerth

Interview Questions

1. What factors helped you succeed/get this far?
    a. Professors who were supportive/interested
2. What factors influenced your decision to seek a college education?
    a. Mother;
    b. Molly was first to go to college
3. What factors influenced your decision to seek a doctoral education?
    a. Felt like there was no other choice;
    b. Had hard time finding a job
4. Can you tell me what the doctoral education experience has been like for you?
    a. Lack of understanding of culture/language;
    b. No formal English language or writing;
    c. Lonely process & age difference;
    d. Lacking time to socialize

5. Have you encountered any barriers or struggles as you've navigated through your doctoral education?
   a. Finding committee;
   b. Finding people interested in you
6. If you could give other Latinas in high school or undergrad any advice as to what may help them succeed in college, what would that advice be?
   a. Taking challenging courses, not lower courses because of the language
7. What recommendations would you give to educators to help Latina students further their education?
   a. Set examples;
   b. Talk bout the future;
   c. Be role-models
8. What could high schools, colleges, and/or universities do to encourage Latinas to further their education?
   a. Knowledge of additional degrees;
   b. Awareness of opportunities
9. What else would you like to tell me about your experience as a Latina who has pursued a doctoral education?
   a. Wants to keep making progress;
   b. Took qualifying exams;
   c. Concerned about employment;

d. Upset to see others with less skills with higher opportunities

10. What have I forgotten to ask that you feel is important?

a. The problem immigrants have is assimilation, but “they don’t let you;”

b. Discrimination is subtle;

c. Struggle with identity in new place.

11. How are you feeling right now?

a. Happy;

b. Waiting for exam results;

c. Comfortable with co-worker;

d. Wants to feel at-home

Project: Star

Time of Interview: 9:30am

Date: 5/15/2008

Place: Graduate student office

Interviewer: Katherine Fuerth

Interview Questions

1. What factors helped you succeed/get this far?
    a. Perseverance;
    b. Love for education;
    c. Sense of wanting to be own person
2. What factors influenced your decision to seek a college education?
    a. Family had college education (Father was attorney, Uncle was a doctor; Uncle was a Council General)
3. What factors influenced your decision to seek a doctoral education?
    a. Always a goal to get PhD;
    b. A Challenge
4. Can you tell me what the doctoral education experience has been like for you?
    a. First doctoral experience was not challenging, not good; Second doctoral experience was more challenging;
    b. Professors worked with me;
    c. Created my own interests

5. Have you encountered any barriers or struggles as you've navigated through your doctoral education?
    a. Private Practice;
    b. 9 year-old daughter
6. If you could give other Latinas in high school or undergrad any advice as to what may help them succeed in college, what would that advice be?
    a. Need to find own dream;
    b. Don't depend on others;
    c. Discrimination regarding language
7. What recommendations would you give to educators to help Latina students further their education?
    a. Be careful not to stereotype Latina females
8. What could high schools, colleges, and/or universities do to encourage Latinas to further their education?
    a. Mentoring needs to begin before high school, like elementary
9. What else would you like to tell me about your experience as a Latina who has pursued a doctoral education?
    a. Fight system;
    b. Wouldn't let me in gifted;
    c. "Even as a little girl I was fighting, because my parents weren't;"
    d. First non-traditional only female and Latina in all jobs in the military;

e. Received B.A. in Psychology; B.A. in Industrial Psychology with minor in Language; M.A. Counselor Education

10. What have I forgotten to ask that you feel is important?

a. Schools need to have peer mentors

11. How are you feeling right now?

Appendix K (Continued)

Project: Gypsy

Time of Interview: 10:00am

Date: 5/18/2008

Place: Participant's home

Interviewer: Katherine Fuerth

Interview Questions

1. What factors influenced your decision to seek a college education?
    a. Parental models with graduate educations
2. What factors influenced your decision to seek a doctoral education?
    a. Wanted a graduate education;
    b. Family guidance
3. Can you tell me what the doctoral education experience has been like for you?
    a. Unnecessary obstacles
4. Have you encountered any barriers or struggles as you've navigated through your doctoral education?
    a. Professor too busy to reach out;
    b. Assignments were pointless
5. What factors helped you succeed/get this far?
    a. Support

6. If you could give other Latinas in high school or undergrad any advice as to what may help them succeed in college, what would that advice be?
   a. Be prepared;
   b. Know career options
7. What recommendations would you give to educators to help Latina students further their education?
   a. More support;
   b. Financial support;
   c. Mentorship
8. What could high schools, colleges, and/or universities do to encourage Latinas to further their education?
   a. Demonstrate that support will be there
9. What else would you like to tell me about your experience as a Latina who has pursued a doctoral education?
   a. Be prepared to separate from family;
   b. Set up for worst;
   c. Commitment
10. What have I forgotten to ask that you feel is important?
   a. Great learning opportunity;
   b. Challenging;
   c. Come with an open-mind;

11. How are you feeling right now?

Appendix K (Continued)

Project: Raquel

Time of Interview: 10:00am

Date: 5/20/2008

Place: Graduate student office

Interviewer: Katherine Fuerth

Interview Questions

1. What factors helped you succeed/get this far?
    a. PSAT at John Hopkins;
    b. Aunt was teacher and good role model; Aunt was nurse; Professional females around her; Friend's mom was a nurse with a Masters;
    c. Funds;
    d. Husband's support
2. What factors influenced your decision to seek a college education?
    a. Seeing how hard parents worked;
    b. More education more power;
    c. Enjoyed school
3. What factors influenced your decision to seek a doctoral education?
    a. More knowledge is power to influence;
    b. Satisfying

4. Can you tell me what the doctoral education experience has been like for you?
   a. Hard;
   b. Fear initially entering with B.A., working with MD's; Questioned abilities; Felt like an imposter "out of place;" Felt in-over-her-head;
   c. Parents didn't know what PhD was.
5. Have you encountered any barriers or struggles as you've navigated through your doctoral education?
   a. Guilt;
   b. Balancing with daughter;
   c. Time-has taken longer
6. If you could give other Latinas in high school or undergrad any advice as to what may help them succeed in college, what would that advice be?
   a. Opportunities;
   b. Government helps with funds;
   c. Education means a better life (life will be easier);
   d. College opens your mind;
   e. "It's a duty;"
   f. Family-reason to continue to be a role-model
7. What recommendations would you give to educators to help Latina students further their education?

a. Flexibility;

b. Recognize they my have imposter perspective, which may be cultural;

c. Reinforce self-confidence;

d. Funding;

e. Introduction to the system (knowledge);

f. Mentorship (official, unofficial, and other Latinas)

8. What could high schools, colleges, and/or universities do to encourage Latinas to further their education?

a. Start early since elementary;

b. Be in honors classes;

c. Programs to help students "know how;"

d. Get students more involved in education;

e. Open houses with parents and child

9. What else would you like to tell me about your experience as a Latina who has pursued a doctoral education?

a. Feels like "I have to do this for everyone else;"

b. Feel lucky;

c. Feel ready to give back;

d. Has overcome stressors;

e. More comfortable;

f. Ready for dissertation;

g. Still has to explain what she's doing

10. What have I forgotten to ask that you feel is important?

    a. It's not always easy;

    b. Family can be both positive and negative; "I've chosen to perceive it as a positive and be a role-model."

11. How are you feeling right now?

    a. Good;

    b. Tired;

    c. Focused on finishing

Project: Carolina

Time of Interview: 9:00pm

Date: 5/20/2008

Place: Library Study Room

Interviewer: Katherine Fuerth

Interview Questions

1. What factors helped you succeed/get this far?
    a. Own desire to finish;
    b. Mom was supportive;
    c. Was a single mom with a three year old;
    d. Supportive family who were unclear of PhD and always asked "when are you going to be done?" but were always proud;
    e. Mentors at university
2. What factors influenced your decision to seek a college education?
    a. Bright child;
    b. Always wanted to go to college for journalism
3. What factors influenced your decision to seek a doctoral education?
    a. Had Master's;
    b. Recently divorced with a baby;
    c. Not marketable degree;
    d. Academia;
    e. Applied program with mentor

4. Can you tell me what the doctoral education experience has been like for you?
    a. Classes were easy (Maser's just as rigorous);
    b. Trying to make it (balance with kids and childcare);
    c. More work and seek funding;
    d. A lot of jobs (two to three assistantships)
5. Have you encountered any barriers or struggles as you've navigated through your doctoral education?
    a. People supportive and sympathetic, but classes structured and rigid;
    b. Needed money;
    c. Helped with assistantships;
    d. Taken longer (twice as long) to finish;
    e. System set barriers due to late classes
6. If you could give other Latinas in high school or undergrad any advice as to what may help them succeed in college, what would that advice be?
    a. Know resources;
    b. Do research regarding college and process;
    c. Have a plan;
    d. Financial aid information;
    e. Keep grades up;
    f. Counselor discouraged dual enrollment with college;

g. Parents didn't know system

7. What recommendations would you give to educators to help Latina students further their education?

a. Has worked as teacher;

b. Talk to girls about importance of college and economy;

c. Even if part-time, this will help family;

d. There are resources and people to help you;

e. Requires leg work;

f. Maintain grades and do work

8. What could high schools, colleges, and/or universities do to encourage Latinas to further their education?

a. Give more representation to professionals of various cultural backgrounds;

b. Host programs;

c. Facilitate partnerships;

d. Have more enrichment programs (Variety widens exposure);

e. Give all kids opportunity to be college bound;

f. Support

9. What else would you like to tell me about your experience as a Latina who has pursued a doctoral education?

a. Mentored students;

b. Taught undergraduates;

c. Seek out Latina mentors (networks) that can empathize; “Don’t forget were you come from”

10. What have I forgotten to ask that you feel is important?

11. How are you feeling right now?

a. Good

Project: Genesis

Time of Interview: 1:00pm

Date: 5/21/2008

Place: Participant's work office

Interviewer: Katherine Fuerth

Interview Questions

1. What factors helped you succeed/get this far?
    a. Support of family;
    b. Children;
    c. Husband;
    d. Advisor recruited her;
    e. Faculty mentors (understanding, realistic expectations; keeping me focused)
2. What factors influenced your decision to seek a college education?
    a. Expected;
    b. Mother graduated when I was in sixth grade
3. What factors influenced your decision to seek a doctoral education?
    a. In undergraduate participated in McNair program
4. Can you tell me what the doctoral education experience has been like for you?
    a. Challenging;
    b. Rewarding;

c. Enjoy thinking critically;

d. Received financial support;

e. Balance (had home, car, family, and full time job);

f. Hard to find quiet time to think

5. Have you encountered any barriers or struggles as you've navigated through your doctoral education?

a. Felt didn't accomplish same as others;

b. No graduate assistantships or teaching assistantships;

c. Non-traditional

6. If you could give other Latinas in high school or undergrad any advice as to what may help them succeed in college, what would that advice be?

a. Important to seek out mentor who has gone through the same and can advise you;

b. Resource person

7. What recommendations would you give to educators to help Latina students further their education?

a. Cultural expectations different for women and important to consider these factors since needs are different;

b. Demand from family may vary;

c. May be living at home

8. What could high schools, colleges, and/or universities do to encourage Latinas to further their education?

   a. Important to encourage;

   b. Teach women opportunities that exist with a college education (financially)

9. What else would you like to tell me about your experience as a Latina who has pursued a doctoral education?

   a. Important to have other minority student who can relate;

   b. To not be in a program where I am only one;

   c. Peers important (understanding)

10. What have I forgotten to ask that you feel is important?

11. How are you feeling right now?

    Fine

About the Author

Katherine M. Fuerth received a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of South Florida in 2002 and a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling also from the University of South Florida in 2005. She worked in outpatient mental health centers counseling children and adolescents affected by abuse and neglect as well as adult rape and domestic violence survivors. In addition, she has worked in inpatient treatment centers as well as the State Attorney's Office and Sheriff's Office providing victim advocacy for trauma survivors. While in the Ph.D. program at the University of South Florida, Ms. Fuerth was an active graduate student, working as a teaching assistant in the Department of Psychological and Social Foundations as well as a graduate assistant and research assistant in the College Student Affairs program. Ms. Fuerth has presented at international and local conventions and workshops on issues related to minorities in higher education as well as issues of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and counseling.