THE EXPERIENCES OF LATINA GRADUATE STUDENTS IN PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMS

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Education
May 2012

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To the Faculty of Washington State University

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of PATRICIA E. CELAYA find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I write about the experiences of Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology I cannot help but think about my own journey. I am happy to be ending my long journey towards the doctoral degree. I have been challenged and learned so much, both personally and professionally. I did not do this alone. I have been fortunate to have the support of many individuals who have helped me throughout this process.

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Brian McNeill, and the rest of my committee members, Dr. Tim Church and Dr. Laurie McCubbin. Your support and feedback were very much appreciated in helping me see this research project to completion.

To the women who participated in my dissertation, please know that it was an honor to listen to your experiences and that you all motivated me as I worked on my dissertation. Your openness and insights will help many Latinas who will follow in your footsteps.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my dear friend Berta Herrera-Trejo who provided me with emotional sustenance and mentorship as I worked on my dissertation. Thank you for your support and your insurmountable patience and guidance. I want to thank my dear friend Cristina Gaeta for always being so caring and positive, but especially throughout this the dissertation process. I also want to thank Ms. Barbara Little for her insight and for making dissertation writing less of a lonely process for me. I am also grateful to Drs. Sally Stabb and Ramon Herrera for helping and supporting me during the earlier stages of this dissertation process. Drs. Laura Guillén and Yolanda Gamboa, thanks for your support during the interview process. Monique Champagne, Carolyn Foster, thank you for your assistance.

My gratitude also extends to all the staff at Washington State University’s (WSU) Counseling and Testing Services especially Drs. Cassandra Nichols, Dianne Phillips-Miller,
Scott Case, and Ms. Ginny Hauser. I am also very thankful to have been part of a great team at Texas Woman’s University. Drs. Carmen Cruz, Denise Lucero-Miller, Linda Louden, Peter Thomas, and Erin Hammond, thank you for helping me grow and for the wonderful work that you all do. Thank you to the best internship cohort ever: Bethy and Cheronda.

Dr. Steve Burkett, thank you for your encouragement. I would like to thank Veronica Bejar and Dr. Bob Pozos who work so hard to encourage students like me to reach their potential. I am very grateful to Dr. Audrey Hokoda, thank you for being a great mentor and giving me the opportunity to learn about research. Dr. Roberto Velasquez, you were the first Latino psychologist I EVER met and that opened up the door of possibility for me. Thank you for all of your support and mentorship throughout these years and for fortuitously re-appearing when I needed more guidance.

I could not have done this without the support of my WSU friends. I have great memories thanks to friends like Fil, Lilia, Sarah, Quaneecia, Amy, Vanessa, Thu, Karla and Jennifer. Francisco Tamayo, mil gracias por guiarme, por todo tu apoyo y paciencia. I also have wonderful supportive friends who have cheered for me throughout the years: Alex, Diana, Irene, Maria, Monica, Jennifer, Andrea, Eduardo, and Felipe. Miguel S., Hilda, and Michael, thanks for your support as well. To the multicultural community, especially the Chicana/o Latina/o community at WSU, thank you.

I am also so fortunate to have a great family and I thank each and every one of my family members for their support. Mamá, Magui, Patty, Tia Maria, Isabel, Daniella, Janette, Francisco, Javier, y Josh, muchas gracias por su cariño. Lastly, I would also like to express my gratitude to family members who have shared this journey with me in spirit, especially Juan Diego Celaya.
THE EXPERIENCES OF LATINA GRADUATE STUDENTS IN PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMS

Abstract:

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May 2012

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This study explored the experience of Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology using a qualitative phenomenological methodology. Eleven women who self-identified as Latina and were in the process of working towards a doctoral degree in psychology participated in in-person interviews that were audio-recorded. Participants described experiences that illustrate their experience as Latina doctoral students in psychology, discussed how their Latina identity played a role in their graduate education experience and elaborated on what they would say to a Latina interested in pursuing the same academic path. A general meaning structure of the experiences of Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology was generated based on the collective themes that emerged from transcript analysis. Identification of characteristic components of the Latina experience in doctoral psychology programs within the general meaning structure elucidated the following themes: (a) ethnic identity saliency, (b) encountering challenges, (c) rewards of the academic culture, (d) navigating via coping strategies, (e) social support systems, (f) undergoing cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy, and (g) encouraging the next generation. Conclusions were derived in regards to the persistence of Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology and examined in relation to the Psychosociocultural (PSC) model (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007).
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother, Elena Guillén Mora, who showed me what unconditional love is.
CHAPTER I

Introduction

General Background

Latina/os are now the largest minority group in the United States and account for 15.4% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Latina/o representation in this country’s population is expected to continue to increase (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). Over the past 20 to 30 years, Latina/os have made considerable gains in educational attainment. However, the reality remains that this growth is happening at a slow pace and Latina/os continue to be underrepresented at various levels of the educational system (Castellanos, Gloria, & Kamimura, 2006b).

Disparities are evident at the high school level with 57% of adult Latina/os completing a high school degree in comparison to 89% of White adults (Pew Hispanic Center, 2002). At the college level, Latina/o attendance grew from three to eleven percent between 1976 and 2005 (Snyder & Hoffman, 2008). While increased enrollment of Latina/os in institutions of higher education indicates a step in the right direction, only 12.3% of Hispanics ages 25 and over have a bachelor’s degree in comparison to 28.7% of Whites (Pew Hispanic Center, 2006). However, as the overall number of Latina/os entering four-year institutions increased, the number of Latino men in such institutions shifted from 57.4% in 1975 to 39.2% in 2006 (Hurtado, Saenz, Santos, & Cabrera, 2008). Despite the fact that nearly 50% of Latina/os begin higher education at community colleges, many never transfer to a university and many who begin higher education at a university do not graduate (Fry, 2002; Santiago & Brown, 2004).
Latina/o suboptimal educational attainment at the high school and undergraduate levels has consequences for Latina/o representation in the post-baccalaureate arena. While Latina/o enrollment in graduate school increased from 5% in 1996 to 8% in 2006 (Redd, 2008), only 3.4% of the 30,251 doctoral degrees conferred in 2006-2007 by degree-granting institutions were attained by Hispanics (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008). Recent reports indicate that the proportion of Hispanic women, as compared to Hispanic men, who attained a Ph.D. increased from 49% in 1997 to 56% in 2007 (Survey of Earned Doctorates [SED], 2007). In fact, Hispanic women have attained more Ph.D.’s than Hispanic men since 1999 (SED, 2007), and since the mid 1970’s, most of the educational advances for Latina/os as a group can be attributed to women (Contreras & Gandara, 2006).

However, across women of color with doctoral degrees, Latinas are the most underrepresented. In addition, compared to White women who obtained 61.9% of doctoral degrees conferred by degree-granting institutions in 2006-2007, Hispanic women attained 3.8% (NCES, 2008). Hence, within the Latino population the panorama for Latina doctoral degree attainment at least suggests movement in the right direction. However, when compared to other ethnic groups, the lack of parity for Latinas becomes very obvious.

Statement of the Problem

There is a paucity of research documenting the experiences of Latinas in pursuit of doctoral degrees. However, the extant literature suggests that the Latina pathway to the Ph.D. is an intricate process. Positive experiences encountered by Latinas engaged in these educational endeavors include validation and encouragement through positive mentoring relationships, financial support which is viewed as key for graduate school attendance, and the support of family, friends, and fellow students (Achor & Morales, 1990; Reyes & Rios, 2005).
Unfortunately, for many Latinas, the path towards doctoral education is also fraught with challenges including tensions over aspects of identity, the pressure to assimilate, and having a worldview that is at variance from that of academia. During this academic venture, Latinas have also experienced overt and covert gender and racial discrimination from peers and faculty, as well as feelings of marginalization, alienation and isolation (Gonzalez, 2007; Rendon, 1992). Studies regarding socialization experiences of Latinas in graduate education suggest that these women undergo internal conflict, which results from perceiving that the covert message within their academic programs is that they must be socialized into the prototypical graduate student, a White male (Gonzalez, 2006).

Consequently, many Latinas have engaged in “resistance with accommodation” as a way to cope with negative socialization pressures and exposure to negative incidents while in their doctoral programs including racism and marginalization (Achor & Morales, 1990, p. 281). In essence, this resistance involves accommodating to institutional requirements as necessary for educational attainment without compromising their culture. For Latinas to successfully navigate doctoral education and exercise resistance, daily management of the stressors they face is likely to require vast amounts of intellectual, emotional, and psychological energy. This makes the Latina experience widely dissimilar from that of mainstream students (Renaud & Renaud-Suarez, 2008; Segura-Herrera, 2006).

Gloria and Rodriguez (2000) devised the psychosociocultural (PSC) model to help clinicians at university counseling centers assist Latina/o undergraduates experiencing academic and social difficulties. The PSC model addresses the psychological (i.e., attitudes and beliefs), social (i.e., role models, mentors) and cultural (i.e., values, meaningfulness) dimensions within the context of the institution of higher education (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). Each of these
factors, psychological, “P,” social, “S”, and cultural “C”, are dynamic and interdependent student dimensions that interact within a person-environment context, in this case, the university. The premise is that attending to these dimensions results in the enhancement of wellbeing and thus, possibilities for educational success (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Gloria, Castellanos, & Kamimura, 2006; Gloria & Castellanos, 2006).

The extant literature documenting the experiences of Latinas (and Latinos) in doctoral education clearly denotes the presence of PSC factors in the process of doctoral attainment. However, not much research has been conducted in this area. In fact, the small literature base that currently addresses Latina/o Ph.D. degree attainment based on the PSC model consists primarily of narrative and/or anecdotal accounts of such experiences, as opposed to empirically based investigation. Given this void, the proposed study seeks to investigate the experiences of Latinas working towards doctoral degree completion in psychology, and ascertaining the psychosociocultural factors present within those experiences.

**Purpose and Implications**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Latinas in the process of doctoral attainment in psychology. In order to discover how Latinas described their lived experience during this process, this study employed a qualitative phenomenological research methodology. By utilizing in-depth interviews, participants provided rich descriptions and insight about the essence of their doctoral experiences. An in-depth understanding of what constitutes the experience of Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology is necessary to fully comprehend the relevant and crucial aspects of the process of doctoral attainment for this group. An additional objective of this study was to take the findings derived from phenomenological inquiry and compare them to the PSC model.
The insight gathered from these findings can be utilized to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation efforts for other Latinas engaged in doctoral studies in psychology or other disciplines. This knowledge can also be used by graduate schools, specific departments, and individual advisors in order to develop recruitment, retention, and graduation strategies better suited for Latinas. This data can also inform and better prepare Latinas who are considering embarking on future doctoral study, as well as individuals who are involved with peer graduate student groups as participants or advisors.
CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Latina/os have been part of the fabric of American society for centuries, yet at different points in history, Latina/os have had unequal access to education and, unfortunately, continue to receive suboptimal academic preparation. This makes for a much more challenging journey through the educational system (Castellanos et al., 2006b). Latina/os are now the largest minority group in the U.S. and, though there have been some gains in issues pertaining to education, the gaps in the academic performance and attainment of Latina/os as a group have been widely documented (Castellanos et al., 2006b; NCES, 2003, U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Nonetheless, over the past 20 to 30 years there has been a significant increase in the number of Latinas who, despite the challenges, have not only graduated from community colleges and four year institutions, but have continued their education by attending graduate school in diverse disciplines, from medicine, to education, to psychology (Castellanos et al., 2006b; Grijalva & Coombs, 1997; Rendon, 1992).

The purpose of this section is to review the literature pertaining to various aspects of the process of doctoral degree attainment for Latina/os in general, and Latinas specifically. Topics discussed include a general overview of the characteristics of Latinas in graduate education, socialization experiences of Latinas in graduate education, and the experiences of Latina/os in doctoral programs.

Latinas in Graduate Education

As a group, Latina/os have the fastest growing college enrollment rate. However, nearly fifty percent of Latina/os begin higher education at community colleges but never transfer to a university (Santiago & Brown, 2004). In addition, many who begin higher education at a
university do not graduate (Fry, 2002). Only 1.9% of Latina/os between the ages of 25-34 who are high school graduates were enrolled in graduate school (Fry, 2002). As reported by Santiago and Brown (2004) during the year 2000, Latina/o enrollment in graduate school was at 5%, an increase from 3% in 1990. Furthermore, in 2000 the number of Latinas enrolled in graduate school surpassed that of Latinos (Santiago & Brown, 2004).

Hence, it is not surprising that of the 30,251 doctoral degrees conferred in 2006-2007 by degree-granting institutions, only 3.4% were attained by Hispanics. Comparisons by gender and race/ethnicity indicated that Hispanic men earned 2.9% of doctoral degrees, while White males earned 50.5%. Among women, White females obtained 61.9% of such degrees while Hispanic women earned 3.8% (NCES, 2008).

Improvement at all levels of the educational ladder would positively impact the economic conditions, general wellbeing, and civic engagement of Latina/os. However, it is clear that much progress has yet to be made as slow gains in one area of the educational pipeline inevitably affects improvements in the rest. The lack of representation of Latina/os in programs leading to doctoral degrees is directly connected to suboptimal attainment at the baccalaureate level. In turn, unsatisfactory baccalaureate attainment is a symptom of multiple factors such as inadequacies within the K-12 system (Fry, 2002; Fuentes, 2005; Quijada & Alvarez, 2006; Santiago & Brown, 2004).

Cuadraz (2005) reviewed literature and events from 1970s-1990s to chronicle the field of Chicanas and higher education. She reported that the earlier literature in the field consisted of writings denouncing the lack of inclusion of Chicanas in higher education in attempts to raise awareness and pose questions. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the emergence of a small, but strong Chicana professoriate that began to refute the cultural deficit model which permeated the
literature at the time. The cultural deficit model is based on the premise of sociocultural
determinism which posits that cultural or societal rules determine behavior. Thus, a cultural
deficit model blames cultural values, norms, and attitudes for the problems that individuals of
that specific culture encounter. For example, a cultural deficit model blames the low academic
attainment of Chicana/os on the culture itself, while ignoring systemic issues (Cuadraz, 2005;
Hergenhahn, 2001).

Vasquez’s (1982) review of the literature was one of the early contributions to the field of
Chicanas and higher education. This review intended to provide evidence against the
stereotypical myths propagated by the cultural deficit model, clarify barriers confronted by
Chicanas in higher education, and to identify practical ways to minimize Chicana college
attrition rates. According to Vasquez (1982), Chicanas may face sex-role conflicts as the high
value placed on the family and the traditional role of wife and mother conflicts with that of a
college student. Many Chicanas were the first in their family to attend college, and being a triple
minority (i.e., female, Chicana, low income) in predominantly white university environments left
them vulnerable to having a relatively low self-concept, and to the experience of alienation and
cultural shock. The author posited that “identification with one’s ethnic group is a necessary
ingredient of academic success and psychological adjustment” (p. 160). Hence, support and
encouragement via effective cultural programming, organizations, and student services were
deemed crucial in helping Chicanas confront the aforementioned barriers.

Vazquez (1982) also mentioned that financial barriers affected Chicanas’ attrition. She
suggested that economic hardship due to the family’s inability to provide financial help and the
reliance on loans may be ameliorated by making scholarships and grants available. Institutional
reliance on traditional admissions criteria such as standardized testing, despite knowledge that
these did not predict college success, was another barrier emphasized. Vasquez (1982) also highlighted that college persistence was determined by motivation in the way of commitment to an academic or educational goal. Finally, she asserted that the responsibility of making education equally accessible to all Americans fell into the hands of all individuals in positions to offer support and impact the environments in which barriers predominate.

Gandara’s (1982) study on Mexican American women who completed M.D., J.D., or Ph.D. degrees also refuted notions proliferated by the cultural deficit model. Unlike other studies, which solely focused on Chicana/o underachievement, the purpose of this study was to identify features that could be tied to high educational attainment. The backgrounds and critical life events of 17 low-income Mexican American women were studied using a semi-structured interview based on 117 questions.

Results indicated that participants’ mothers played a key role in fostering their educational drive. Sixty-five percent of respondents’ mothers worked outside the home and about 65% had as much or more decision-making power as compared to fathers. These facts countered the stereotype of the “passive” and “home-bound” (p.170) Mexican mother. Despite viewing their parents as supportive of their educational pursuits, 25% of participants did not know what their parents expected of them educationally. While their parents, due to limited education, were unable to provide academic guidance, participants depended on their family for emotional support, and noted that such support made their success possible. Participants were also part of large traditional families and reportedly felt comfortable in Mexican American and mainstream culture. Nonetheless, they also experienced conflict between familial and academic responsibilities. Gandara (1982) reported that a key characteristic of the women in this study was
that they had not married or had children at an early age. As a result, they did not have additional responsibilities that might have hindered their education.

The Chicanas who participated in this study had historically been good students. They had also put into practice the hard-work ethic learned at home, and attended schools that allowed for interaction with the majority culture and the chance to assess how they compared in terms of ability. Gandara (1982) emphasized the importance of family support for academically motivated Chicanas given that most participants reported a lack of support outside the family. The author concluded that the high achieving Chicana is a “carefully screened individual” (p. 177) with the following characteristics: 1) emotionally supportive parents, 2) considerable integration into Anglo culture and 3) consistently good academic performance.

In 1995 Gandara compared high achieving Chicanas across generations. The sample consisted of 40 women who had attained a J.D., M.D., or Ph.D., and came from low-income families in which parents had minimal education. Half of the sample finished their degrees during the 1970’s and early 1980’s while the rest graduated during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. Semi-structured interviews took place over a number of years with the first sample being interviewed with a 118-question protocol that asked about topics such as parental aspirations, academic experiences, and ethnic identity, among others. For the second sample, a shorter version of the protocol was used and questions about areas that may have been affected by social change over the years (i.e., pre-college experiences, family responsibilities, etc.) were asked. Results for the first sample replicated Gandara’s 1982 findings. Similarities across generations included emotionally supportive families, strong mother figures who contributed to household expenses, and peer contact with majority culture members given their attendance in high schools that were mixed or predominantly attended by white peers. Caucasian peers acted as indirect
mentors and compensated for the lack of mentoring experienced by Chicanas. A discouraging finding was that 20% of the women in both generational groups had to make sure they were placed into the college preparatory track.

Gandara (1995) reported that unlike the women of the first generation, those of the second generation seemed to have “a little more margin for error in their lives” (p. 107). For example, some of these women managed to recover and be successful despite having temporarily strayed academically. Marriage and children prior to degree completion were more likely to be part of the lives of women of the second generation. In addition, half of the women of the second sample had divorced prior to completing their studies, suggesting they may have experienced great pressures revolving around gender-role issues. Interestingly, the most recent cohort benefited less from college recruitment activities and relied more on personal resources. Due to cost increases, financial support was even more crucial for women of the most recent generation. The fact that Gandara (1995) was unable to find a Chicana surgeon or Chicanas with doctoral degrees in engineering, physical science, or mathematics suggests that there are areas in which Chicana representation is yet to be achieved and that educational parity is far from being reached.

The purpose of Lango’s (1995) study was to elucidate characteristics of 48 Mexican American women enrolled in graduate school. Phone interviews were guided by a fixed-alternative questionnaire which inquired about the following topics: social characteristics, parental and familial characteristics, as well as educational experiences. Results indicated that more than 60% of these graduate students were between 24-29 years old and 36% were in the 30-44 age range. Most of the women described their family as middle income and 42% of them were married. These Mexican American graduate students were at least second-generation
Americans, the majority of their parents were born in the U.S., and 42% of their mothers and 35% of fathers had a high school diploma. Participants grew up in traditional families in which the father was the primary decision maker and disciplinarian and 41% of them viewed their mother as their strongest source of support. Participants reported speaking primarily English or equal amounts of English and Spanish while growing up. In addition, these Mexican American graduate students attended high schools in which Caucasians predominated and felt comfortable in their interactions with Caucasians.

Taking all of the previous information into consideration, Lango (1995) concluded that for Mexican American women, a higher level of assimilation into the mainstream culture increases their inclination to attend graduate school and hence, Mexican American women partaking in graduate school are women who have assimilated to the dominant culture. Lango noted that to expect culturally different individuals to do away with their cultural identity as a precursor to education is unfair and called for structural changes in institutions of higher education via policy.

More recent research about Latinas in graduate education indicated that the proportion of Hispanic women who attained a Ph.D. increased from 49% in 1997 to 56% in 2007 (SED, 2007). In general, as of the mid 1970’s, most of the educational advances for Latina/os as a group can be attributed to Latinas (Contreras & Gandara, 2006). This gender difference was also evident in doctoral degree accomplishment as Hispanic women have attained more Ph.D.’s than Hispanic men since 1999 (SED, 2007).

An analysis conducted by Watford, Rivas, Burciaga and Solorzano (2006) to determine if there was evidence of parity across ethnic groups in female doctorate production from 1990-2000 yielded a number of findings. Overall, during that time period, there was a slow increase in
the number of doctoral degrees awarded to African American, Asian American, Latina, and Native American women. While Latina doctorate production increased from 3.5% in 1990 to 5.0% in 2000, among women of color doctoral recipients, Latinas were the most underrepresented. Parity, determined by the amount of Latina Ph.D. production from 1990-2000 in comparison to the number of Latinas in the population, is far from being reached. To reach parity, the number of doctoral recipients would need to increase almost 300%.

Watford et al. (2006) noted that despite minor increases in doctoral accomplishment by the Latina subgroup, each group is underrepresented, with Chicanas having the largest disparity. The subgroups referred to in this study included Chicanas, Puerto Ricans, and Other Latinas, a category describing individuals of Latin American descent who do not identify as Mexican or Puerto Rican. The majority of Chicana/o doctorates clustered in the fields of education and social sciences, with such disciplines accounting for 60.2% of Chicana and 42.6% of Chicano doctorates. The same disciplines accounted for 59.1% of Puerto Rican women’s doctoral production while 54.7% of the doctoral production of Puerto Rican men came from education, life sciences, and social sciences. The majority (69.1%) of doctoral degrees for Other Latinas were obtained from the social sciences, education and humanities. Other Latinos (males) were represented at similar rates across doctoral degrees in the life sciences, social sciences, and humanities and in total, these disciplines account for 54.8% of this group’s doctoral attainment. Disparities between male and female doctoral achievement in the physical sciences and engineering were greatly evident across cultural subgroups.

Differences by Latina/o subgroups were also assessed by Ibarra (1996), who interviewed 77 Latinos, 41 men, and 36 females, who were either faculty, administrators, master’s, doctoral students or non-academic people who left academe or steered away from careers in university
settings. The sample consisted of 41 Mexican Americans, 16 Puerto Ricans, 12 Cuban Americans, and 8 Other Latinos (i.e., origins from other Latin American countries) involved in disciplines such as social sciences, humanities and natural sciences.

Characteristics that demarcate differences in socioeconomic status (SES) were found by subgroup. For example, the majority of the parents of Mexican American and Puerto Rican participants held blue collar jobs while the parents of Other Latinos and Cubans had white collar jobs. The parents of Mexican American participants were least likely to have a college degree, while it was more likely for the parents of participants of Cuban descent to have attended college.

Also noted was that most Latina/os received emotional and financial support from their families, and mentioned that their most common family issue was the family’s impatience (i.e., wanting them to finish school) and parental lack of experience within higher education. Female participants noted a decrease in the practice of favoring of males over females in Latino families given the improvements of Latinas in education. Additional findings suggested that overall, the majority of respondents attended public school with Mexican Americans more frequently attending public school only and Puerto Ricans and Cubans tending to have a combination of public and private school attendance. For undergraduate education, most Latina/os attended universities that were close to home due to financial constraints and desire to be close to the family. Mexican Americans, more often than not, started higher education at the community college. As graduate students, over half of the sample attended a university away from their community or out of state.

The most frequently cited factors that led Latina/os in this sample to graduate school were academic interests, opportunities for career shifts, and ethnicity as a motivator to learn
more about their heritage or facilitate change. In addition, undergraduate faculty encouragement was key in setting Latina/os on the path to graduate school and financial aid was the deciding factor on whether they would attend. Overall, in viewing the diversity within the characteristics of the Latina/os who had achieved success in graduate school, Ibarra (1996) determined that apart from academic merit, the most important aspects for success appear to be personal traits such as persistence, determination, willingness to overcome hurdles in completing their education, and being able to adapt to adversity.

In summary, from the 1960’s through the present there have been notable improvements in the education of Latinas. Although there is definitely a paucity of information regarding the characteristics of Latina women in doctoral education, there are also consistencies in the existing literature. For example, some notable characteristics include the importance of emotional support from the family in general and more specifically from their mother. Another consistency is that many of these Latinas have been defying the odds by being in graduate education, with those who come from socioeconomically disadvantaged families braving even greater odds. At the present time, within the Latino community, Latinas as compared to Latinos are at an advantage when it comes to doctoral educational attainment. More current research is needed to determine if contemporary cohorts of Latina high achievers display characteristics that are similar to those of their predecessors.

Socialization of Latina/os into Graduate Education

Learning the “attitudes, beliefs, values and skills needed to participate effectively in organized social life” defines the process of socialization (Dunn, Rouse, & Seff, 1994, p. 375). A dearth of research exists that focuses on the process of socialization into academia solely as it occurs for Latinas. Hence, this section also presents information about the socialization process
of Latinas as part of samples of doctoral women of color. Nonetheless, in discussing socialization of Latina/os into academia, K. P. Gonzalez, Marin, Figueroa, Moreno, and Navia (2002) proposed that rather than being fully socialized into the culture of the academy, Latina/o ethnic and cultural identity should be incorporated into doctoral training experiences.

The purpose of J. C. Gonzalez’s (2006) article was to assess how academic socialization, namely opportunities and challenges encountered by Latinas in doctoral programs, contribute to their success or failure. Latinas’ views about the opportunities and challenges that arise when academic and Latina culture mix, as well as their thoughts regarding the lack of Latina representation at the Ph.D. level, were the focus of this study. The research question that guided this phenomenological study was the following: “What are the educational experiences of Latina doctoral students at predominantly White institutions, and how have they responded to academic socialization?” (p. 349). Overall findings indicated support structures and challenges with similarities to the general population of Ph.D. students, but also some specific to the Latina/o community.

For example, results indicated that positive experiences and support systems included constructive socialization experiences from K-12, which helped Latinas develop academic confidence. In addition, better experiences in higher education (associate’s degree through master’s) resulted in more positive experiences during the Ph.D. degree. Diversity at the institutional and departmental levels, exemplified by campuses that were nurturing or supportive of Latina cultural identity, had diverse faculty and students, and exposed students to diverse curricula, had an affirmative effect on the doctoral experiences of these Latinas.

Opportunities to attend conferences and assist in research were also viewed as positively affecting their experience. And, at the institutional level, support in the form of scholarships and
fellowships contributed to positive experiences. Latinas who were able to build communities with peers and faculty within their department, the campus, or the community at large experienced less conflict between the institution and their cultural identity. Hence, they also had more encouraging experiences.

Negative socialization experiences and challenges included poor K-12 preparation, undesired cultural assimilation, and covert and overt racism. Some participants reported negative experiences while in their program that included tokenism and isolation. Also noted was that feelings of isolation were exacerbated due to being away from their family. At the departmental level, challenges included, among others, lack of financial support, racial, gender, and class discrimination, a lack of mentorship and collegial support, and exploitation within research assistantships. Those participants who mostly remembered the negative experiences also discussed difficulties in combining their education with family responsibilities.

J. C. Gonzalez (2006) identified two types of resistance to the socialization process. Successful resistance resulted in the gain of intellectual and social confidence as a consequence of finding a voice and networks of resistance, finding allies with similar views, using the Spanish language to express themselves, educating others by addressing assumptions about who they were, and going as far as inviting themselves to social events despite not being asked to attend. Unsuccessful resistance was characterized by isolation and marginalization. Some women reported disengaging from classes due to hostile professors, and for some, struggling against deculturalization resulted in health complications and eventual disdain towards the academic enterprise.

J. C. Gonzalez (2006) reported that students who had stronger ethnic identities were more resistant to academic socialization. He noted that the women in his study were not resisting
socialization into academia per se, but disliked that, by virtue of the culture in academia, they were expected to acquire characteristics of White males. That is, Latinas were resisting becoming part of the status quo.

Another example of a doctoral socialization study conducted with individuals who did not fit the status quo was that of Margolis and Romero (1998). Women of color enrolled in doctoral programs in sociology were interviewed in efforts to uncover frequently hidden elements of the curriculum and of the socialization process. Margolis and Romero (1998) differentiated between weak and strong aspects of the socialization process. They noted that the former are vital to “becoming a sociologist” while the latter are elements of the “socialization processes that function to reproduce stratified social relationships” (p. 3).

Findings indicated weak forms of the hidden curriculum were present. For example, socialization or professionalization took place via department culture, extracurricular interaction with others in the department through cliques, group interactions in meetings or seminars, mentoring or apprenticeship relationships, and formal or informal allocation of assistantships. Additional themes that emerged were hiring and promotion practices, graduate student recruitment, course offerings, required readings, and the expectation that they would adopt behaviors and attitudes that were antithetical to those espoused by their cultures (i.e., being competitive and isolated).

A number of elements of the strong form of the hidden curriculum that emerged from the interviews served to preserve social privilege even at the expense of less privileged groups. They included stigmatization, blaming the victim, cooling out, stereotyping, absence, silence, exclusion, and tracking. Stigmatization consisted of being qualified as “affirmative action students” (p. 12) by peers, faculty, and department staff, and being questioned about their
qualifications. Blaming the victim referred to students being socialized into viewing themselves as the problem. Cooling out pertained to lowering expectations to the point that situations that would incite them to protest would now be seen as normal. In conjunction, the aforementioned two processes encourage the development of, and identification with the profession, and distance from one’s cultural group. The dangers of internalizing stereotypes, the absence of other women of color in their respective programs, which resulted in having to speak on behalf of their community, and lack of curriculum addressing issues of gender and/or race not only perpetuated social privilege, but resulted in feelings of exclusion for participants.

Margolis and Romero (1995) noted that the lack of inclusion in the curriculum conveys to all that race, gender, and ethnicity are not valuable enough. Voicing concerns about these exclusions was not well received by faculty and other students, many times resulting in silencing of students or other repercussions. The authors suggested that the strong form of the hidden curriculum is like a “tracking” system, given how students received differential treatment in access to opportunities (i.e., publishing, postdoctoral fellowships) within graduate school.

Nevertheless, these sociology doctoral student women of color engaged in efforts to resist socialization. Some tried to maintain connections within their communities of origin and work on issues of social action. Others used theory to analyze their situations within academia as well as in their communities, and to support their opinions about their discipline. Some women went outside their department to take classes, and tried to invite guest speakers to address issues of diversity. Informal peer mentoring networks also evolved from this resistance.

Margolis and Romero (1995) concluded that the hidden curriculum in graduate school, regardless of discipline, serves to reproduce whatever views and practices are traditional or mainstream. The authors noted that while white men represent the ideal in academia, for women
of color, fitting the ideal is unattainable and thus a source of conflict. Furthermore, the authors viewed the knowledge gathered via this research as an act of resistance as it unveiled what many women of color still experience in graduate education.

Turner and Thompson (1993) investigated whether female minority doctoral students received socialization opportunities, and if these were comparable to those of majority female students. Four themes derived from student perceptions were identified in interviews. Specifically, these included the university recruitment process, departmental opportunities for apprenticeship and mentoring experiences, a cooperative or competitive environment in the department, and racial and gender discrimination in the department.

Overall, minority women had fewer opportunities for professional socialization experiences. More majority women had apprenticeships and mentoring experiences, and reported having support networks within their departments. Reports of racism were minimal and both groups of women reported gender discrimination. Turner and Thompson (1993) noted that the fact that minority women had less professional socialization opportunities may suggest racism did play a role in their experience though there was not an awareness about this.

Most of the women, regardless of ethnic group, reported they were not recruited by the university or the department. Research or teaching assistantships were held by 49% of minority students and by 60% of majority students. More than half of the majority students (52%) in the sample were coauthors while only 27% of minority students had such experience. The difference was similar when determining whether students had presented with faculty at a professional conference.

The authors defined a mentor as “someone who takes a personal interest in providing apprenticeship opportunities for a given student” (p. 361) and noted that while minority students
reported positive relationships with faculty, most did not have a mentor. While majority students viewed their departments as cooperative, minority students viewed them as competitive. The groups felt different about their sense of belonging with minority students feeling detached from the academic community and majority students feeling part of it. Minority students noted that they had friendly relationships with faculty and peers but denied having close friendships, and “achieved a sense of balance” via their ethnic community (p. 363). Not surprisingly, minority students were eager for opportunities to meet other graduate students who shared their background.

Majority and minority students reported passive gender discrimination. Instances of such discrimination included being interrupted or passed over in favor of male students. Findings also indicated that race and gender issues were absent from the curricula. The authors noted that while there is evidence that mentoring and socialization experiences are important these opportunities are not part of many minority women’s doctoral experiences. While all respondents reported doing well academically, minority women were provided less of the opportunities that helped them succeed. Turner and Thompson (1993) concluded that not giving the same opportunities for socialization is a way of subtle discrimination and that this lack of parity needs to change if we are to say that academia is inclusive.

Overall, the studies on female doctoral socialization denote that gender issues, irrespective of ethnicity, continue to affect the socialization experiences of female doctoral students. Nonetheless, the research indicated that in becoming socialized to doctoral education, majority culture women are better able to connect with faculty and the department’s culture, as well as with opportunities that facilitate their success. On the other end, women of minority backgrounds, including Latinas, are not as easily able to establish true mentoring relationships
with faculty, feel disconnected from the department culture itself, and do, in fact, have less opportunities for socialization.

In summary, a theme in the studies that address socialization issues of minority women, including Latinas, is the idea that to be fully accepted into academia they must allow themselves to be socialized to resemble the prototypical graduate student, a white male. The constant expectation to strive for something that is unattainable results in internal conflict that for many, also catalyzes resistance. Parity in the socialization process of Latinas and other individuals who partake in doctoral education is not existent given the overt and covert instances of discrimination they experience in the process. Continued research should serve to elucidate the changes to be put in place for parity in the socialization process towards doctoral degree attainment to take place.

Experiences of Latina/os in Graduate Education

*Experiences of Latinas in Graduate Education*

While there is not a large body of literature pertaining to Latinas in doctoral education, reviewing the extant literature about their experiences provides a sense of the cultural, internal, and social pressures, both familial and personal, that permeate the experiences of Latinas in pursuit of a doctoral degree. Competing tensions over aspects of one’s identity in combination with “illuminating insights” (Cuadraz, 2005, p. 227) were identified as elements of Chicana educational narrative and autobiography. For example, Rendon’s (1992) essay, in which she reflected on her journey through higher education and “the pain that comes from cultural separation” (p. 55), was prompted by the parallels she drew between the experiences outlined in Rodriguez’s (1975) work and her own life. Rodriguez’s (1975) personal essay narrates how he
lost his connection to his culture while striving for academic success and the pain of having realized what he missed in the process.

Rendon (1992) also appeared to confront the pain of cultural separation as she reminisced about feeling that she was becoming a stranger to her mother, and about the loneliness she encountered as a student. Rendon (1992) acknowledged that on her path towards higher education she felt pressured to assimilate. She also noted that “the academy is set up so that students most likely to succeed are those that can successfully disconnect from the past and turn over their loyalty to…the academy…” (p. 60), but that total cultural disconnection is not a requirement for academic success.

Castellanos’ (1996) ethnographic study of “Carmen,” a Chicana/Latina graduate from a lower-middle class background in a predominantly white institution (PWI), sought to understand conflicts experienced between the Chicanas/Latinas and higher education. As a graduate student in a PWI, Carmen held several roles including student, practicum counselor, career placement instructor, and counselor for a high school equivalency program. Some of the challenges that became apparent in the participant’s daily experiences included self-doubt due to thinking her superiors questioned her ability to do well, being asked to speak on behalf of all Latina/os in class, and being exposed to individuals who overtly discussed stereotypes held about ethnic minorities. Castellanos (1996) concluded that Carmen was an example of a Chicana/Latina whose world view differed from that of academia and thus, struggled to maintain connectedness to her culture and family. At the same time, she tried her best to reject the negative messages she overtly or covertly received from peers and superiors. In addition, she actively sought balance between her professional roles which required her to be both distant and greatly dedicated, and those roles that were compatible with her values (i.e., daughter, sister, etc.) and that connected
her to her community. Castellanos (1996) also noted that for women like Carmen, the journey in higher education may be harder due to lack of role models.

Achor and Morales (1990), noted that inquiring into why minorities succeed in education is often an area that is overlooked. With this idea in mind, the authors conducted a study that aimed to analyze successful doctoral educational attainment by 100 Chicanas who had completed terminal degrees in American universities. Data was collected using a questionnaire that assessed demographic information, and included open-ended questions about critical events that led to the pursuit of a Ph.D., educational challenges encountered and overcome, and information about their support systems. Participants were encouraged to provide more information about their experiences by writing narratives. Data was analyzed to provide descriptive statistics, and qualitative analysis of the narratives consisted of coding and extracting themes, patterns and categories.

One finding was that 31% of the women did not report barriers while in pursuit of their Ph.D. Nonetheless, 12 of the 31 women who did not report barriers reported instances of discrimination. However, according to the authors, they may have not perceived such discrimination as barriers. Participants reported that having funding was the critical event that led them to actually pursue a doctorate and noted that the availability of mentors and role models were important and positive aspects of their degree attainment.

Discriminatory admissions criteria and issues with program structure were additional challenges encountered as racial or gender discrimination was encountered by 65% of participants during graduate school. In addition, 34% of the sample perceived sexism, racism and other institutional factors as barriers, while 43% reported encountering prejudicial attitudes of faculty and students. While the majority of participants were married and described their
husbands as very supportive, 13.1% reported their husbands were generally not supportive and 52% reported they had to temporarily leave school due to economic or family issues. Achor and Morales (1990) noted that health problems due to high levels of stress were explicitly and implicitly obvious by participants’ responses.

The negative aspects encountered at some point in their educational journey pushed these women to exert their persistence and determination in order to prove those people wrong or get past the obstacles. Their will to succeed, which was fueled by the desire to make a difference for others via their own educational achievement, allowed them to navigate the system applying “…strong resistance and challenge rather than by intimidation” (Achor & Morales, 1990, p. 280). The women in this study engaged in “resistance with accommodation” (p. 281), which meant participants went against existing power relationships but also accepted “…institutionally approved means of attaining educational advancement” (p. 281). In other words, these women complied with the requirements to get a doctoral degree, but not at the expense of their culture.

In dialoguing about their experiences in graduate school, Reyes and Rios (2005) stated that Latina/os experience pressure just by the fact of being in graduate school, given that many Latina/os do not finish high school or graduate from college. Three overall themes were highlighted to summarize graduate school experience: low expectations, nurturing of codependence and over-reliance on mentors who were mostly the overextended Latino faculty, and isolation from mainstream students. The isolation from mainstream graduate students was reportedly due to curricular designs that unintentionally separated students. Another factor that contributed to this separation was the resentment felt by mainstream students and even faculty due to distribution of funding (i.e., minorities being recipients of funding). Additional experiences included being excluded from publications despite having contributed, gaining
awareness about the pressures Latina/o faculty encountered, feeling hurt when realizing others had low expectations about them, and feeling validated and encouraged when the expectations were positive.

Literature on Latinas’ experiences in graduate school are laden with examples of their resiliency even though they might not be labeled as such. Resiliency theory, defined by J. C. Gonzalez (2007) as “a form of theoretical understanding and problem-solving that focuses on assets of people and systems, rather than on the deficits” (p. 292) was applied to inquire into how Latina faculty “…survive[d] and thrive[d] in the face of institutional challenges” (p. 292) as they worked towards accomplishing their Ph.D. Twelve Latinas, most of whom had been faculty for two or three years were interviewed for this study.

Findings were themed according to resiliency theory concepts, which resulted in a broader picture of the support networks and challenges encountered by Latinas. The first theme discussed was social competence. While being able to form positive relationships with students of color, Latinas had difficulties forming similar relationships with white professors and peers. Seen through a resiliency theory lens, this finding was explained as a form of resistance to the socialization process taking place in their doctoral programs. Resistance is viewed as an asset, especially when exercised while facing oppressive systems. Participants learned to cope and succeeded in attaining their Ph.D., despite encountering isolation, segregation, racism, sexism, and White privilege. These women found ways to survive, found the positives within their negative experiences, and were able to forgive their oppressors, an important aspect in the development of social competence.

Latinas exercised resilience in problem solving as they managed to finish their dissertations despite encountering professors who were hostile and did not support their research.
endeavors. Some participants viewed the dissertation as a requisite towards a rite of passage, others viewed it as “isolating and dehumanizing” (p. 296). Latinas also developed critical thinking about issues such as identity, culture, racism, sexism, classism, and the process of socialization into the Ph.D. They also demonstrated resiliency via autonomy. More specifically, their autonomy consisted of the ability to develop a sense of self and identity, and asserting their ethnicity and biculturalism, regardless of the unwelcoming atmosphere present in their programs or institutions.

J. C. Gonzalez (2007) noted that these Latinas applied what Mehan, Hubbard, and Villanueva (1994) call “accommodation without assimilation” as they “resisted negativity directed toward them because of their race and gender but continued to excel academically” (p. 296). Lastly, participants were resilient in that they had a sense of purpose that was tied to their family, community, and society at large. At times, given the previously mentioned challenges, being the only Latina in their program made it difficult to maintain a sense of purpose. Regardless, the Latinas in this sample learned to navigate an oppressive system without assimilating to it, learned how to challenge it, and persevered to reach degree completion.

Although successful degree completion attests to the resiliency of Latinas who go through the process of doctoral education, the reality is that a harrowing theme of marginalization emerges from the literature exploring their experiences. The experience of marginality, “a complex and contentious status of subordination” (Watford et al., 2006, p.125), arises as Latinas encounter various “intersecting and ever-shifting power dynamics” (p. 125) including issues of class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, language, citizenship or immigration among others. The unavailability of national attrition rates of doctoral students results in a gap of knowledge. Without this data there is no possibility of insight into the experiences of covert or
overt marginality that drove Latinas to renounce doctoral education (Watford et al., 2006). The resistance exercised by Latinas in pursuit of doctoral education is viewed as adaptive. However, the challenges they encounter are not easily surpassed, and managing these stressors likely requires a great deal of emotional, intellectual, and psychological energy. This energy would otherwise be channeled into academic endeavors. This makes the Latina experience very different from that of mainstream students (Renaud & Renaud-Suarez, 2008; Segura Herrera, 2006).

In summary, all of the information presented in the literature pertaining to Latinas’ experiences in graduate education clearly illustrates that their encounter with graduate education is quite intricate. Many Latinas constantly struggle to make sense of their experience due to playing multiple roles, and struggling to fit into the academic world. At the same time, they hold on to their cultural practices and beliefs, and attempt to remain connected. It appears that for many Latinas, the process of doctoral education continues to be quite abrasive as they encounter racism, sexism, and the daily battle against assimilation. These difficulties require the application of multiple ways of coping to increase their odds of survival.

*Experiences of Latina/os in Graduate Education*

Research that focuses exclusively on the Latina experience is scarce, and there are many parallels between the experiences of Latinas and Latinos. Therefore, this section draws from studies that discuss the experiences of both Latinas and Latinos in pursuit of doctoral attainment.

Motivated by the lack of research conducted on the Latina/o educational experience, particularly at the doctoral level, K. P. Gonzalez, Marin, Perez, Figueroa, Moreno, and Navia (2001) conducted a study to provide a holistic depiction of such process. The authors sought to document the experience of Latina/os in doctoral education as well as the context in which these
Autoethnographies that focused on significant aspects and discernments about their doctoral education were used as sources of data. The sample was composed of six Ph.D. students from different Research I institutions who, at the time, were in the process of attaining their degree within the field of education. Half of the sample were female and most participants were at the end of their coursework.

Findings indicated fragility and vulnerability in the experiences of these Latina/o doctoral students. For some, the feeling of vulnerability was palpable from the moment they were accepted into the program and throughout their involvement in their specific program. When analyzing the context, several elements were found to contribute to their sense of vulnerability including lack of family understanding, viewing the organizational culture of graduate school as unfamiliar, and confronting feelings of isolation and tokenization due to the scarcity of Latina/o representation in their programs.

Additional findings included “experiencing an outsider within status” (p.568) and desiring validation. This spoke to their feeling that they could not identify with anyone within their departments, and felt that neither validation for their academic selves, nor for the sacrifices made in their personal life was provided. Lastly, the pain of alienation from family and the realization that they had evolved into different people was categorized as “conflict between two different worlds” (p. 568). K. P. Gonzalez et al. (2001) concluded that these Latina/os endured their doctoral experiences feeding their sense of motivation “from their own sense of hope, obligation and determination” (p. 575).

Through group dialogue, K. P. Gonzalez and colleagues (2002) obtained a collective interpretation of the commonalities in the experiences of six Latina/o doctoral students. To reach this objective, the authors used dialogical research methods rooted in ideas of Freire (1970).
Freire suggested that group discussion was the primary tool to reveal overt and covert aspects of problematic experiences in daily life. Critical consciousness is reached when awareness about the social, political, and economic barriers encompassed in daily experiences leads to action against oppression. Participants achieved critical consciousness regarding various aspects of the academy via dialogue. The nature of the academy was perceived as “conservative, restrictive and racist” (p. 545) as individuals had to claim allegiance to a specific research camp and were pressured to pursue only research topics deemed acceptable, which usually excluded ethnic-related concerns. Due to the aforementioned reasons, the academy was experienced as restrictive and not open to racial and ethnic differences.

In addition, the nature of the academy was viewed as perpetuated via the market culture, elitism, faculty rewards, and the tenure system. Participants noted receiving messages from authority figures that conveyed that they should conduct research that, unlike Latino-centered research, made them marketable and able to publish. Moreover, participants asserted that people who sit on editorial boards also serve to perpetuate the nature of the academy as they decide what is to be published. Participants agreed that elitism manifests itself in academia as an unspoken rule which implies that prestige, status, and a good reputation are things to strive for.

Faculty rewards and the tenure system also emerged as factors perpetuating the nature of the academy. Participants reportedly received the message that once they achieved tenure they would be able to focus on their desired topics, and disagreed with the notion of having to hold off the pursuit of interests that were satisfying to them. Not surprisingly, these messages resulted in questioning whether they really wanted to work in the academy. Also unattractive was that they did not perceive any real incentives for changing practices, and that those activities that diverged from the faculty reward structure were open to criticism. Alternative social
arrangements also emerged from their discussion as they concluded that a new form of doctoral education and academic life would integrate who they were ethnically, politically and intellectually. The authors posed that the interconnectedness of these identities manifested itself in a sense of obligation to improve the social conditions of Latino communities. This included the responsibility to become independent scholars to create scholarship that would effect positive social change in their communities.

Viewed from the lens of a critical theorist, the themes that are central within education are the centrality of race and racism and how these intersect with other forms of subordination (i.e., gender and class issues), challenging dominant ideology, the commitment to social justice, and the centrality of experiential knowledge and the transdisciplinary perspective (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). The purpose of Solorzano and Yosso’s (2001) article was to explain Critical Race Theory (CRT) and to understand “how the structures, processes, and discourses of graduate education and the professoriate reinforce racial, gender, and class inequality,” and how Chicana/os, both faculty and graduate students respond to this inequality.

Counter-story telling was used as a method. It presents the story that is not frequently told, the story as it pertains to the experience of marginalized people. Counter-story telling thus challenges the story as told by the majority or those in positions of power. The authors draw on CRT, interviews and focus groups with Chicano graduate and undergraduate students, postdoctoral fellows and professors, literature documenting the experiences of Chicana/os in graduate education, and their own personal and professional experience as students and faculty. The information gathered from these sources was analyzed and composite characters were created. These characters, a graduate student and a professor who are both Chicanas, discussed the concepts found via the analysis within the context of their own experiences. Esperanza
Gonzalez is a third-year graduate student in the education department and Leticia Garcia is a junior sociology professor.

The dialogue between Esperanza and Professor Garcia took place when the former discussed doubts about how she could recommend graduate school to a fellow Chicana given her own experiences. Through their critical conversation, the characters address concepts such as “self-doubt,” “survivor guilt,” “impostor syndrome,” and “invisibility.” Esperanza mentioned she frequently felt her concerns were discounted, and that many things were viewed through a Black-White binary, thus neglecting the realities of other groups. Garcia and her student converse about the importance of CRT and the work of researchers that bring issues of race, gender and class into the forefront. In their discussion, the women mentioned Espin’s (1993) work in which silence was viewed as a tool for survival and self preservation. Equally important, was the notion that sometimes silence was not an option, and that when comments were accompanied by great emotionality, it resulted in their being labeled as angry or sensitive.

The dialogue between this student and professor exemplified the type of conversations that would ideally be experienced by all Latina/os in mentoring relationships. Throughout this conversation both women validated each other as they discussed literature or theory that spoke to the issues encountered by Esperanza. After this conversation, Esperanza appeared to have renewed energy. The possibility of reaching the next generation of scholars of color made the challenges she encountered seem more tolerable.

Encountering microaggressions in academic settings may render a Latina/o’s stay in such a setting less tolerable. Solorzano’s (1998) research intended to recognize, document, and analyze racial and gender microaggressions, and determine their cumulative effect on Chicana/o scholars’ educational experiences. Microaggressions, are “stunning, automatic acts of disregard
that stem from unconscious attitudes of white superiority and constitute a verification of black inferiority” (Davis, 1989 p. 1576, cf. Solorzano, 1998). Pre and post-doctoral Ford Foundation Fellows working in California during the 1992-93 academic year were part of the initial analysis which included 66 participants, including 22 Chicanas and 44 Chicanos. Responses to a survey which inquired about background characteristics and open-ended questions about racial and gender discrimination were analyzed.

Solorzano (1998) reported he decided to conduct interviews with six Chicanas and six Chicanos as a way to capture the experiences of these scholars in a way that positivist methods cannot. Using CRT as a framework, data was analyzed for instances of race and gender microaggressions. Upon analyzing the qualitative data, several patterns emerged including feeling out of place or being made to feel out of place in the academy because of their race/gender, feeling professors expected less of them, and actual experiences of subtle and overt racism and sexism. Solorzano (1998) concluded that there is a need to further investigate and document subtle instances of racism and sexism and how they affect individuals within the educational system. In addition, looking into how and by whom microaggressions are initiated and how individuals respond are areas for further research.

In summary, the commonalities in the experiences of Latina/os included a sense of vulnerability from the moment they became part of the graduate education enterprise that had not completely subsided with the passage of time. In addition, they experienced feelings of alienation due to being away from family and being unable to fully share what they experienced. Latina/os experienced feeling censored and restricted not only in their choice of research projects, but also in that they felt they were not entirely accepted into the world of academia. Some confronted microaggressions, and constantly confronting racism or other aggressions,
whether overt or covert, can result in loss of confidence and increased feelings of isolation and marginalization. Mentoring relationships that are mutually affirming and validating seem to have been highlights in some student’s experience. In addition, there seems to be a yearning for the acceptance of their cultural self into academia and a desire to integrate their academic and Latino culture.

_experiences of latina/os in graduate education: subcultural differences_

Although there is very limited information available on Latina/o subcultural groups in graduate education, the information available is crucial in highlighting common and different issues for all of this population. Ibarra’s (1996) investigation was unique in that it included Latina/o participants of various ethnicities and provided disaggregated data. He interviewed 77 individuals, 23 Latina/o faculty, 12 administrators, 31 master’s and doctoral students, and 11 non-academics—people who left academe or steered away from careers in university settings. The sample consisted of 41 Mexican Americans, 16 Puerto Ricans, 12 Cuban Americans and 8 Other Latinos (i.e., origins from other Latin American countries) involved in disciplines such as social sciences, humanities and natural sciences. The sample included 41 men and 36 women.

A finding that brought forth issues of diversity within the Latina/o community was the discussion of an “undercurrent of intra-ethnic tension” (p. 15) that exists between Latina/os of higher versus lower socioeconomic class. Also noted was the “internal ranking system” (p.15) which, in addition to looking at socioeconomic variables, categorizes Latina/os based on things like skin color, appearance, language and ethnicity. Not a single person identified simply as American and while Cubans did not view themselves as minorities, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans tended to use more than one term to describe their ethnicity (i.e., mainland vs. island Puerto Rican and Mexican vs. Chicana/o).
Parental occupational differences were found by ethnic background with the majority of the parents of Mexican American and Puerto Rican participants holding blue collar jobs while the parents of Other Latinos and Cubans held white collar jobs. The parents of Mexican American participants were least likely to have a college degree, while it was more likely for the parents of Cuban descent participants to have attended college. Some of the female participants noted that favoring of males over females in Latino families is decreasing given the improvements of Latinas in education. Also noted was that most Latina/os received emotional and financial support from their families. The most common problem encountered with their family was impatience and parental lack of experience in higher education.

Overall, the majority of respondents attended public school. Breakdown by groups suggested that before higher education, Mexican Americans more frequently attended public school only, while more Puerto Ricans and Cubans tended to have a combination of public and private school. For undergraduate education, most Latina/os attended universities that were close to home due to financial constraints and wanting to be close to the family. Mexican Americans, more often than not, started their career in higher education at the community college. As graduate students, over half of the sample attended a university away from their community or out of state. The most frequently mentioned factors that led Latina/os in this sample to graduate school were academics interests, opportunities for career shifts, and ethnicity as a motivation to learn more about their heritage or facilitate change. Undergraduate faculty encouragement was key in setting Latina/os on the path to graduate school and financial aid was the deciding factor on whether they would attend.

Ibarra (1996) categorized Latina/o adjustment to graduate school into three themes. The first was academic culture shock, which included problems “between their ethnicity and
academe” (p. 36) such as (a) being perceived as intelligent only when giving in to competitiveness, (b) realizing others wished to remain more distant despite Latina/o’s attempts to connect at a more personal level, and (c) facing criticism due to allowing time for their family versus focusing solely on academics. The second theme referred to was ethnic renewal or recognition, which for Puerto Ricans from the island, Cubans, and Other Latinos consisted of feeling like a minority for the first time. Others experienced a struggle to maintain their ethnic identity in light of the influences of the academy, and yet others experienced the blending of ethnic and academic culture. Some participants noted that graduate school was instrumental in defining or redefining their identity. A final survival theme consisted of attitudes and behaviors used to deal with “the stigma of perceived cultural or academic deficiencies” (p. 41) and were sometimes extreme. Reactions and attitudes ranged from aggression and overreaction to withdrawal and self-doubt.

According to Ibarra (1996), entry level students undergo at least some degree of conflict as they become master’s students or doctoral candidates. For these Latina/os, important transformations came from their interactions with faculty, as well as problems and ethnic tensions beyond what all graduates students may experience at some point. More than 50% of the Latina/os in this sample encountered difficulties, but did not view them as obstacles preventing degree attainment. More than half denied encountering barriers that would result in setbacks in the doctoral process. Difficulties included life traumas and common academic problems. Latina/os who reported barriers to degree completion mainly reported conflicts with faculty that mostly centered on ethnicity-related issues.

Examples included faculty who overtly made sarcastic and humiliating comments, others who very noticeably changed their behavior towards a student and their work after finding out
their ethnicity, or after the student refused to take part in a project for understandable reasons. Covert attitudes included subtle biases of faculty and departments that were “conscious or unconscious, real or imagined” (p. 46). Examples included not supporting research endeavors that focused on ethnic issues, or being seemingly supportive of the student, and then abandoning them without a coherent explanation. A few Latina/os in the sample mentioned problems with faculty of Latina/o background. Ibarra (1996) noted inter-ethnic tensions and class issues may be to blame for such dynamics. Nonetheless, having conflict with a Latina/o professor was met with great disappointment and anger. Some Latina/o participants noted that being the target of these kinds of behaviors by faculty in their program, irrespective of faculty ethnicity, resulted in their decision to refuse to work in academia. In addition, problems with faculty affected degree accomplishment as academic progress was slowed, interrupted, or halted.

Time to degree was also affected by academic discipline, stopping out, family problems, life traumas and financial concerns. Women took an average of 7.8 years to complete the Ph.D. while men took about 6 years. Women also had done Ph.D.’s in areas that take longer to complete. For this sample of Latina/os the average overall time to degree was 9.3 years. A little over 60% of all Latina/o doctorates took eight or more years to finish their degree. Only some of the Other Latinos and Cubans took more than eight years to attain the Ph.D., while many Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans fell into this time frame. At some point, over 25% of the sample attended school part time. This trend was less common among Other Latinos and Cubans, and more common with Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans.

Ibarra (1996) concluded that participants experienced increased interest in ethnicity towards the end of their graduate school career, which for many was manifested in their research topics and community involvement. Students who were first-generation faced the most
challenges, and participants also reported experiencing challenges at the all but dissertation stage. Participants noted that the areas that need more improvement in graduate education were the faculty and academic culture. Also identified were critical factors for degree completion. These included mentorship by faculty, consistent financial support, and student support groups.

Herrera (2003) described the reliance on groups of fellow graduate students for support as a crucial and rewarding retention mechanism that was especially powerful when departmental support was lacking. The other side of the coin, over-involvement, was also discussed as part of the experiences of some Latina/os. It was suggested that this involvement was a way to manage the cultural disconnect between graduate school and Latino culture (Herrera, 2003; Renaud & Renaud-Suarez, 2008).

Mentoring is a key factor in helping graduate students succeed (Jaschik, 2009). However, for some Latina/os, recognizing that they needed help was itself an accomplishment. Sometimes asking for help was made especially difficult due to encountering faculty mentors who used a linear approach to learning and related to students in a top-down manner (Quijada, 2006). Furthermore, the research conveys that Latinos, irrespective of gender, have encountered less than optimal experiences with faculty. As a result, it is not surprising that recommendations to current or future graduate students include the advice to reach out when it feels safe to do so and to carefully consider who you ask for guidance (Kamimura, 2006; Segura Herrera, 2006).

In summary, while there is a tendency to think about Latina/os as a homogenous group, there are clear differences between the various Latino subgroups. It appears that regardless of group, common elements between Latino subcultures include family values and the sense of commitment to their families, and to the greater community. It also appears that Latina/o subgroups diverge in experience due to socioeconomic variables like parental education,
finances, and immigration status. In graduate education, most Latina/os irrespective of subgroup, tend to experience a new or renewed interest on issues surrounding culture and ethnicity. This renewed interest is thought to emerge as a result of challenges experienced in graduate school including feeling disconnected from the culture and also experiencing negativity from peers and faculty members. Considering ethnic differences seems to provide worthwhile information that could serve to better help individuals who are navigating graduate school.

The Psychosociocultural Model

Castellanos and Gloria (2007) asserted that the current status of Latina/o education should be viewed through a different vantage point in order to be better understood and to enhance possibilities for educational success. In particular, the authors proposed looking at the process of Latina/o educational attainment via a psychosociocultural (PSC) model rather than relying solely on statistical data or outcome variables (i.e., graduation rates) as reference points for success. As implied by its name, the PSC model attends to the psychological (i.e., attitudes and beliefs), social (i.e., role models, mentors) and cultural (values, meaningfulness) dimensions within the context of the institution of higher education (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). Each of these factors, psychological, “P,” social, “S”, and cultural “C”, are considered dynamic and interdependent student dimensions and interact within a person-environment context (Gloria et al., 2006; Gloria & Castellanos, 2006).

The PSC model was conceived by Gloria and Rodriguez (2000) as a tool to help professionals at university counseling centers better understand and help Latina/o students with academic and social difficulties. The authors provided an overview of the dimensions of the PSC model and vignettes illustrating some of the concerns Latina/o university students encounter such as “not belonging” or experiencing racism. In addition, Gloria and Rodriguez (2000) provided
sample strategies to intervene in ways that attend to the psychosociocultural context as well as “minimal multicultural counseling competencies” (p. 152). More specifically, the authors suggested that clinicians attend to psychosociocultural concerns like the university environment, ethnic identity, acculturation, and social support, as well as to clients’ and their own attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills about such topics.

Psychosociocultural factors that relate to academic persistence have been investigated among Latina/os. For example, Gloria and Robinson Kurpius (1996) developed the University Environment Scale (UES) and the Cultural Congruity Scale (CCS) and validated them with Chicana/o university students. The authors also assessed whether cultural congruity and the university environment accounted for the academic persistence decisions of Chicana/o students. Cultural congruity refers to the fit between an individual’s values and those of the university. Findings indicated that both measures had strong internal consistency reliability. The CCS had an alpha coefficient of .81 and the UES had an alpha coefficient of .84. In addition, regression analyses indicated that cultural congruity accounted for 11% of the variance in academic persistence and that the university environment accounted for 25% of the variance in academic persistence. Furthermore, when both the UES and CCS were used together in the regression equation, 26% of the variance in academic persistence was accounted for. UES accounted for 24% of the variance and though CCS added 2%, it was significant \[F (2, 418) = 72.44, p < .0001\].

Clearly, the previous findings suggest that both the university environment and cultural congruity are factors involved in the likelihood that Latina/os stay in college. For individuals, such as those of ethnic minority background, endorsing a set of beliefs, values, and behaviors that are antithetical to those espoused within the academic setting results in incongruence, and
affects retention and graduation rates due to experiencing the university environment as inhospitable (Gloria & Pope Davis, 1997; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996).

Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, and Rosales (2005) studied psychosociocultural variables to understand nonpersistence decisions of undergraduate Latinas. The aim of this study was to determine if there were relationships between university comfort, self-beliefs, and social support and whether these variables predicted whether these women would persist in college. Significant relationships were found between all constructs and all predicted academic nonpersistence decisions. University comfort and social support emerged as the strongest predictors of academic nonpersistence. The individual variables that had the strongest predictive value were perceptions of social support from friends, mentors, and the university’s environment.

Gloria, Castellanos, and Orozco (2005) conducted a study to assess if perceptions of educational barriers, cultural fit, and coping responses predicted the psychological well-being of Latina undergraduates. Latinas in this sample applied various ways of coping. The most frequently used was talking to others about their problem, followed by assessing the situation and “taking a positive, planned action” (p. 173). Latinas who reported higher levels of well-being also reported higher levels of cultural congruity. Latinas with higher cultural congruity perceived fewer educational barriers and tended to cope by learning more about the situation and planning a positive strategy. Students who held positive views about the university environment reported increased cultural congruity, perceived less educational barriers, and also tended to use taking planned action as a coping response.

Bordes and Arredondo (2004) reported additional findings pertaining to psychosociocultural dimensions with Latina/o students. In their research with first-year Latina/o undergraduates, they found a positive correlation between the university environment and
cultural congruity. In addition, students who reported having a mentor had more positive perceptions of the environment in the university than those who reportedly did not have a mentor.

The aforementioned research studies suggest that the university environment and perceptions of cultural congruity, as well as social aspects of college life are important pieces of the college experience and of academic persistence. Psychosociocultural factors in relation to academic persistence have been investigated among several undergraduate populations including Native Americans, Asian Americans, and African Americans (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Gloria & Ho, 2003; Gloria, Kurpius, Hamilton & Willson, 1999). While all of the previous investigations contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of ethnic and racial minorities in higher education, there continues to be a pressing need for the systematic study of educational processes and outcomes (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003).

Castellanos and colleagues (2006b) developed *The Latina/o Pathway to the Ph.D.: Abriendo Caminos*. Guided by the PSC model, the book discusses the history, status, and experiences of Latina/os in doctoral education. One of the things to which many Latina/os have to adapt is the change in identity propelled by the process of doctoral education. The level of dissonance experienced by Latina/os’ between the academic environment and the environment they come from influences how they situate themselves in terms of identity (Torres, 2006).

Managing this cultural incongruity, or the lack of fit between both environments, has almost invariably been identified as a challenge by Latina/o doctoral students. Examples of the psychological dimension “P” within the Latina doctoral experience include self-efficacy and self-doubt or the “impostor syndrome.” For the social dimension, “S” examples include mentoring and networking within the academic setting. Finally, the cultural dimension “C”
involves managing familial obligations and adapting to an academic system that moves away from collectivism.

Castellanos and Gloria (2007) suggested that the incorporation of psychosociocultural factors into the daily practices within an institution may improve success rates of Latina/o students. This could lead to positive educational experiences that encourage them to seek advanced degrees. Among the practices noted are creating a sense of community, inviting parents more frequently to campus, and diversifying the curriculum and pursing research in diverse topics among others. The dimensions of the PSC model individually and holistically provide a map to better understand the experiences of Latinas (and Latinos) in graduate education. In essence, having an understanding of how these dimensions manifest in the life of doctoral Latina students may result in greater well-being, thus facilitating their success. Given the importance of these dimensions, the PSC model seems appropriate to understand the intricacies involved in the process of Latina doctoral attainment.

General Summary

The literature reviewed for this study attempted to present a picture of the multifarious factors that are involved in the path towards doctoral attainment for Latinas. While this review presents information regarding the characteristics, socialization process, and experiences of Latinas in graduate education, there is a clear need to add to the literature and further investigate information on the experiences of the mujeres (women) who undertake this endeavor.

When compared to majority women’s doctoral attainment, the number of Latinas who attain a Ph.D. is small. However, Latinas represent the majority of doctoral production within the Latino community, thus making the need to understand their experiences in higher education and, particularly in graduate education more pressing. Thus far, studies conducted on high
achieving Latinas (i.e., Gandara, 1982) suggest that emotional support, especially from the mother, is an important part of the experience of these women. In addition, the mothers of these women emerged as key figures in encouraging the educational pursuits of their daughters. While Gandara’s (1982) sample consisted of women who had not married or had children at an earlier age, the women in Gandara’s (1995) sample and Lango’s (1995) sample presented more variation in regards to civil status, which suggested that the latter followed less strict paths.

Competing arguments emerged in the literature regarding successful navigation into doctoral education. Gandara’s (1982) participants were “integrated” into mainstream culture, while Lango (1995) referred to participants in her study as “assimilated.” Participants in both samples had attended mixed high schools and were comfortable in both their culture and mainstream culture, and most were reportedly part of traditional families. Lango (1995) noted that her participants were second-generation Americans. None of the articles reviewed used formal assessments of acculturation or enculturation leaving the researcher to make a decision on participants’ identity based on other socioeconomic factors (i.e., generational level, parental education).

That Latinas are accomplishing doctoral education is good news. However, this review highlights that the process of their socialization into their respective graduate programs and the experiences they encounter in graduate school indicate the path is far from smooth. Systemic issues such as unequal distribution of funding, lack of openness to diversity in their departments, being pushed to assimilate into mainstream culture, and instances of overt and covert racism, sexism, and classism are the “bumps in the road” experienced by Latinas.

Luckily, there are Latinas who have encountered positive experiences while pursuing the Ph.D. These include peer mentoring relationships, and good faculty mentors, though the latter
occur less frequently. The literature indicated that having a mentor makes a difference, as having a mentor provides apprenticeship opportunities and, in addition, this individual has the potential to provide guidance as Latinas manage cultural stressors. Findings also indicate that Latinas are not willing to compromise their Latina identity. They engage in “resistance” and in on-going negotiation by way of viewing what they learn with a critical eye and looking for networks that value and reaffirm their ethnicity and diversity. In addition, Latinas attempt to remain loyal to their *familia* (family) by keeping in touch and not letting go of their values and practices even though these are not met warmly in academia.

Based on the literature, it is easy to see that psychological, social, and cultural factors are intertwined in all aspects of the experience of Latinas in doctoral programs. Even as the presence of psychosociocultural factors can be inferred from the findings in the extant literature, there is a lack of actual research applying the PSC model to the experiences of Latina/o doctoral students. That all of the articles reviewed thus far utilize qualitative methodologies indicates that the topic of Latinas in doctoral education is a relatively young area of study and therefore, a subject in need of further study. The present study, seeks to fill this void in the literature by providing an understanding of the essence of the experiences of Latinas involved in doctoral programs in psychology and also looking into PSC factors likely present in such experiences.

**Rationale for a Qualitative Investigation**

Qualitative research methods are designed to study the experiential life of people (Polkinghorne, 2005). Various qualitative methodologies have been applied and viewed positively within the field of Chicanas in higher education. Cuadraz (2005) reported that the field of Chicanas in higher education originated with voice, or lived experience, as a way to discuss the issues these women faced in higher education. The application of autobiographical voice as a
tool continues today in the form of testimonio (testimony) and autohistoria (autohistory). It is not surprising that the field of Chicanas in higher education initially, and at present, focused on lived experience given the cultural tradition of story telling (i.e., Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) and the value of personalismo, which refers to a way of interacting that emphasizes pleasing and harmonious personal connections (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). Cuadraz (2005) also noted that cultural ethnography, a more contemporary methodology applied in the field of Chicanas and higher education, navigated far away from the cultural deficit model. Instead, cultural ethnography deconstructs and redefines notions of education, success, and assimilation to include multiple cultural interpretations, thus validating “the culture of the home” (Cuadraz, 2005, p. 226).

The present study made use of qualitative methodology. More specifically, this study was a phenomenological inquiry into the experiences of Latinas in pursuit of doctoral degrees in psychology. The use of the phenomenological approach was suitable for the present study as the purpose behind this approach is to “determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). In other words, phenomenological research seeks to explain the meaning behind the lived experiences several individuals hold about a specific phenomenon and searches for the essence of the experience (Creswell, 1998).

Qualitative phenomenological research has been described as an accepted approach to research within the field of counseling psychology. Designed for the discipline of psychology, in over a century, it has continued to develop philosophically, continues to evolve, has gained sophistication and has well established methods (Wertz, 2005). According to Wertz (2005, p. 176), “the phenomenological movement has expanded the conceptual foundation and practice of
science in order to include the descriptive study of subjectivity and the full human person.” In applying phenomenological inquiry to this study, the essence of the experience of doctoral education as it occurs for Latinas in psychology programs will emerge from the data. While phenomenological inquiry stays true to the essence of the experience of a phenomenon as it occurs for a person or group of persons, it also provides methodological rigor.

Recommendations for research identified via the review of the literature included further exploration of the experiences of Latinas in doctoral education and use of the psychosociocultural model. The stressors, challenges, and problems that Latinas encounter as well as the positive aspects of the graduate experience are of specific interest. Also of interest are possible “existential crises” that Latinas may experience while in graduate school regarding their ethnic identity, their choice of career, dating out of the culture, having or not having children, and whether they are likely to be accepted back home by family and community. However, it is through the use of qualitative phenomenological inquiry and in-depth interviews that the essence of the experiences of Latinas in doctoral education in psychology will emerge, allowing for a more comprehensive, rich, and contextual understanding.
CHAPTER III

Method

Participants

Eleven Latinas who were enrolled in a doctoral program in counseling or clinical psychology at a major university in the U.S. participated in this study. Participants were in at least their third year of doctoral education. It was expected that by their third year, participants had accumulated sufficient experiences and formed general impressions about their programs, their faculty, their institution, their profession, and the process of doctoral education. Further inclusion criteria for the study consisted of willingness to participate in an in-person interview and self-identifying as “Latina,” “Hispanic,” “Chicana,” or other identifiers that indicated roots in Latin America.

A total of seven participants were in Psy.D. programs, four of whom were in counseling psychology, and three in clinical psychology. Four participants were in Ph.D. programs, three of whom were in counseling psychology programs and one who was in a program that combined various areas of psychology. Six participants, one of whom was in an accelerated program, were in their third year of the doctoral program. Two participants were in their fourth year of the program, two were in their fifth year and one was in her sixth year of study. Participant’s ages ranged from 25-64 years and the average age was 35.45. Most participants were in their mid-20’s to late-30’s.

Participants attended doctoral programs in six different states of the country located in the Midwest, the Northwest, the Southeast and the Southwest. The majority of participants (n= 8)
attended school in the Southwestern region of the country. More than half (n= 7) of the participants attended private institutions.

The most commonly used ethnicity identifiers by Latinas in this sample were Latina or Mexican American. Other ethnicity identifiers included Puerto Rican, Hispanic, Latina/Mexicana, Mexican, Mexican American-Guatemalan/Latina. Regarding their relationship or marital status five participants identified as single, three were in a committed relationship, one was married, one separated and one was a widow. Six participants did not have children, four participants had one child and one participant had four children. Seven participants were born in the U. S. and four were born in Latin American countries. Eight participants grew up in the U.S. while two grew up in a Latin American country, and one was raised between the U.S. and Latin America. The respective ages at the time of immigration to the U.S. of the women who were born in Latin America were 26, 14, 16, and seven years.

The parents of eight participants were born in Latin American countries. Participants indicated having roots in Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Puerto Rico. The parents of one participant were born in the U.S. and two participants had one parent who was born in the U.S. and another parent who was born in Latin America. Based on the information reported, participant’s mothers tended to have less educational attainment than participant’s fathers. Five participants’ mothers had less than high school education, three completed high school, one completed some college courses, one had an associate’s degree and one had a college degree. Three of the participant’s fathers had less than high school education, three had completed high school, two completed some college courses, and one had an associate’s degree. The father of one participant completed a college degree and some graduate training while another participants’ father completed a professional degree.
A total of six participants indicated that they were the first in their family to attend college. Five participants indicated that they were not the first in their family to attend college. However, only two participants had parents who had completed college degrees or beyond thus, making nine of the participants in this sample first generation college students. Further, more than half of the participant’s mothers had white collar occupations. The occupations of participants’ fathers seemed to be more equally distributed between white and blue collar jobs.

Six participants indicated that Spanish was their first language. Two participants indicated that English was their first language, while two noted that both English and Spanish were their first language. One participant identified three languages (i.e., English, Spanish and another language) as her first language. Participants were asked what was the language used at home when they were growing up. Seven participants noted Spanish was the language used at home as they were growing up. In one’s participant’s home it was English, and English and Spanish were both used in the homes of three participants.

An equal number of participants (n= 4) noted their currently preferred language of use was English or English and Spanish. Three participants indicated that their preferred language of use was Spanish. All participants spoke two languages though one noted she spoke “some Spanish” suggesting she may not consider herself bilingual.

Most of the participants in this study (n = 8) were the eldest child in their family, one was a single child, and two were the middle children in their respective family. All but one participants had siblings. The number of siblings ranged from 1-6 with most participants having two siblings.
Procedure

Recruitment

Several calls for participants were sent through the list serve of the National Latino Psychological Association (NLPA) as their biannual conference approached (See Appendix A). The objective was to recruit and interview as many participants as possible through this venue as Latina doctoral students from various parts of the country were likely to be in attendance allowing for the opportunity to have a more varied sample. Information sent through the list-serve included a brief overview of the study, the interviewer’s contact information, and proof of Washington State University’s Institutional Review Board certification.

Nine potential participants expressed interest in partaking in the study but were not able to attend the conference and did not live in relative proximity to the interviewer. Contact was made via e-mail and/or telephone closer to the date of the conference and during the conference to make arrangements for the interviews to take place. A total of five participants were recruited via the aforementioned process. Three participants were recruited through the sampling technique known as “snowballing” as they were informed about the study by other participants during the conference. One participant was informed by a faculty member in her program who had learned about the study by word of mouth and was interviewed in her campus. Two additional participants were recruited by this interviewer during the conference.

Participant Interviews

Whenever possible, interviews were conducted in private settings chosen by participants. Participants were provided a consent form (See Appendix B) and a verbal summary of what was stated in the form, including how their confidentiality and identity would be protected. Participants were also informed that they could choose to be interviewed in English or Spanish
and were encouraged to ask any questions. One participant chose to be interviewed in Spanish. In addition, participants were asked to fill in a demographic questionnaire (See Appendix C) after the interview. All interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder and lasted between 31-60 minutes, with the average interview lasting 41 minutes. All interviews proceeded smoothly and were free of significant interruptions.

Participants were thanked for their participation prior to the interview. The interviewer attempted to provide a safe and empathic environment for participants to freely discuss their lived experience as Latina doctoral students in psychology programs. The interviewer made efforts to follow up whenever something was unclear or needed elaboration. The interviewer used reflections, minimal encouragers, and summarizing of content in a way that was not leading the interviewee towards a specific conclusion. Participants were also asked if they wanted to provide more information about the specific question they were addressing prior to moving on to the next question.

All participants seemed to express themselves candidly and genuinely and most seemed to provide a very personal account of their doctoral experience. Two participants seemed to provide an account of their experiences in a more matter of fact manner with one focusing less on personal aspects of her doctoral experience and more on professional and academic aspects of it. Upon completion of the interview, the interviewer conversed with participants about the study in a more casual manner. All participants expressed interest in the study’s results and most expressed appreciation about the fact that this topic itself was being studied.

Confidentiality

To safeguard their confidentiality participants were assigned a pseudonym and a number as way to protect their identity. The interviewer was the only person with access to the list that
matched their names to their pseudonym and number. A copy of each participant's interview was made and kept in a locked filing cabinet and later provided to two individuals who assisted in the process of transcript creation. The interview that took place in Spanish was translated by this interviewer for purposes of data analysis. Any documents and files associated with this investigation were password protected and actual copies of documents were stored in a locked filing cabinet within the interviewer’s residence. As per research protocol, any documents with identifying information will be kept only for seven years.

Participant Follow-up

Participants were contacted via e-mail several months after the interview and invited to review the transcription of their interview for accuracy and provide comments as they view fit. Three participants requested a copy of their transcript which was sent via e-mail in a password protected document. No edits were requested. Participants were also reminded that two gift cards were raffled among them as a token of appreciation for their involvement. At that time, participants who won the gift cards were informed the cards would be mailed upon receiving their address. Participants were offered information about the results of the study upon its completion.

Role of the Interviewer

The interviewer is a doctoral candidate in counseling psychology who is a female first-generation college student who self-identifies as Mexican. She was born and raised in a Mexican border town until she relocated to a larger American city in Southern California where she finished high school and later obtained a degree in psychology and a minor in Mexican American Studies. Her graduate program was located in a predominantly White university within a rural, mainly White, community. As a graduate student she gained academic knowledge
regarding educational issues of Chicana/o Latina/os and other disadvantaged groups. In addition, she amassed considerable experience working in Student Affairs with students including first-generation, low-income, and minority students of various ethnicities. At the time during which these in-depth interviews took place, she had completed several months of training as a psychology intern at a predominantly female university in the Southwest. This university was attended by women of diverse backgrounds, many of whom were non-traditional students.

The interviewing techniques applied in phenomenological inquiry are very similar to those applied to train counseling psychologists (Worthen & McNeill, 1996). The phenomenological approach calls for the researcher to engage in “bracketing of presuppositions and commitment to description” and to enter the situations of participants with an attitude of empathic wonder (Wertz, 2005, p. 175). The interviewer had accrued a substantial amount of experience providing psychotherapy and applied the skills learned through such training during the interviews with participants. Despite having the commonalities of ethnicity, gender, and doctoral education in psychology with participants, the interviewer felt capable of bracketing her own experience to attend to those of the study participants.

*Interview Protocol*

The following research questions were utilized to guide the interviews: “Describe, as clearly and concretely as you can, events or experiences that illustrate your experience as a Latina doctoral student in psychology.” “Describe how your Latina identity plays a role in your graduate education experience.” “What would you say to another Latina who is interested in pursuing a Ph.D. in Psychology?”
Data Analysis

This phenomenological study used a modified version of the data analysis approach outlined and applied by Giorgi and Giorgi (2003), Nepomuceno (2008), Wertz (2005), Worthen (1994) and Worthen and McNeill (1996). First, individual interviews were analyzed, and subsequently a group analysis was conducted. Additionally, psychological, social, and cultural factors in Latinas’ collective experience were discerned and discussed. The entire process is outlined in detail as follows:

Step 1. **Obtaining a sense of the whole.** Prior to initiating the analysis, the interview data was read and heard three or four times to get a sense of the interview in its entirety and within its context.

Step 2. **Identifying meaning units.** Meaning units were identified by listening to, and reading the transcribed interview. Each shift in meaning was identified by a number on the transcript.

Step 3. **Defining relevant and psychologically explicit meaning units.** Meaning units were examined for relevancy to the investigation of the research goal. Meaning units considered irrelevant were discarded, and grammatically rephrased as needed, to more directly express the participant’s meaning.

Step 4. **Integration of meaning units.** It was of importance to understand the temporal sequence of the events described in the interview (Wertz, 1985). In general, interviews do not typically proceed along a linear thought process; thus, it was also important to organize interview data within a logical and contextual relationship. Meaning units were then placed into a first-person narrative retelling of the Latina woman’s experience in a psychology doctoral program.

Step 5. **Articulating the meaning units.** The unanalyzed description of the participants’ experience was translated into psychologically relevant meanings bearing on her experience of
doctoral education. Participants’ responses were then examined with the intent of understanding meanings that were expressed and implied. These meanings were re-phrased and terminology that reflected more direct psychological language was used. The researcher moved back and forth from the data to meanings, and derived meanings were tested against raw interview data to determine if they were supported by the data. Movement from concrete data to abstraction of meaning produced the articulate meanings.

Step 6. The situated meaning structure. “Situated” refers to meaning derived from the context of a specific situation or experience. Using the articulated meaning units arrived at through Step 5, derived meanings were integrated in a third-person narrative retelling of the events as expressed in language that was more psychologically explicit. This process resulted in a meaningful description of that Latina’s experience of doctoral education in psychology.

Step 7. The essence of the experience of Latina doctoral education in psychology. The final phase in the individual analysis of the transcribed interviews was to refine the description into its most distilled and concise form. This step was guided by this question: “What is absolutely essential for Latinas’ experiences in doctoral psychology programs, for which if it were missing, would not represent this individual’s experience in a doctoral psychology program.” The objective of this step was to distance the findings from the context of the specific experience to distill essential components of the experience.

After analyzing data at the individual level, data was analyzed at the group level to determine how the phenomenon, the Latina experience of doctoral education, was experienced by the group as a whole. The group analysis involved four steps:
Step 1. **Individual doctoral experiences.** All individual experiences were examined and an inclusive list of events of each participant’s meaning structure was created. An exhaustive list of events that described their doctoral experience was created.

Step 2. **Common doctoral experiences.** A list of inclusive doctoral experiences shared by two or more participants was identified and compiled. The name of participants was listed next to each element or experience.

Step 3. **Collective doctoral experiences.** Only doctoral experiences that were held collectively by 75% or more participants were retained.

Step 4. **General meaning structure for doctoral experience.** Events that remained after Step 3 were used to generate a full narrative description of the general Latina experience in doctoral education in psychology. A sequence of themes constituting Latina doctoral experience were identified, and such themes were tied together in a temporal order of appearance.

Step 5. **Psychosociocultural factors of Latinas’ doctoral experience.** The general meaning structure for the Latina doctoral experience was analyzed to determine what psychological, social, and cultural factors are present within the experience.
CHAPTER IV

Results

This chapter contains the results of the individual and group analyses. The results of the individual analyses are divided into the following sections: “Situated Meaning Structures and Essences of Latinas’ Experience as a Doctoral Student in Psychology” which includes the Situated Meaning Structure of each participant (Step 6) and includes a subsection focusing on each woman’s considerations for other Latinas contemplating doctoral education in psychology. Also, the Essences of Latinas’ Experience as a Doctoral Student in Psychology (Step 7) are presented. The results of the analyses at the group level include the following sections: “General Meaning Structures of Latinas’ Experience as a Doctoral Student in Psychology” and “Psychosociocultural Factors in Latinas’ Experience as a Doctoral Student in Psychology.” In addition, in order to illustrate the phenomenological analytic procedure for the individual analysis in full, examples of the steps of not presented in this chapter (Step 1-Step 5) were included in the Appendix (See Appendices D-H).

Situated Meaning Structures and Essences of Latinas’ Experience as a Doctoral Student in Psychology

Situated Meaning Structure, Ana, Step 6

*Doctoral Education as Opportunity: A Mix of Pride and Disbelief*

Ana and her family highly valued and respected education. Dating back several generations members of her family attained college degrees, including women (which was uncommon for that time). Ana was not the first person in her extended family to go to graduate school. However she was the first in her family to attend a doctoral program. While this
accomplishment was a positive experience within itself, also rewarding to Ana was that a 
member of her family was pursuing a similar advanced level of education in this country.

For Ana’s father, education was really important and a bachelor’s degree was a great 
achievement. It was his dream that Ana continue her studies. Nevertheless, when Ana first 
considered going into a master’s program, her father noted it was time for her to have a family. 
He asked her if she was continuing her education to just collect titles and diplomas. This 
confused Ana. She did not know exactly why he was concerned other than how much he valued 
family.

Ana started a family, then seven years later she returned to school to start a master’s 
dergree. Her father was very excited about her decision and she, in a way, was showing him she 
could manage her family and school concurrently. During the seven years that she was not in 
school, she wanted to get a master’s degree but kept putting it off, which made her very unhappy. 
With only a bachelor’s degree in psychology, Ana felt limited. She worked as a foreign language 
teacher but she was not trained to teach; she was unsure if she was doing it right. She found 
teaching difficult, and had to become very resourceful to figure out things on the spot. Ana was 
displeased that she was not doing what she loved, and that she was not on the path that she had 
started when she first went to college. When Ana went back to school after a seven year hiatus, 
her life started to change for the better.

Ana never thought she would continue beyond the master’s degree. She knew about the 
doctoral program, however, her goal to provide counseling in this country was attainable with a 
master’s degree. Originally that had been all she wanted. When Ana applied to the doctoral 
program, she did not know if she was going to be accepted, but felt good that she was able to get 
as far as the interview. The experience of sitting with the faculty, receiving a good reception, and
being able to answer their questions in an honest manner was great. She expressed that being accepted into the doctoral program was an indescribable feeling, and she could not believe she was admitted.

Ana now felt she was where she needed to be, and was aware that her doctoral degree was a very important opportunity. Upon her acceptance into the doctoral program, when people congratulated her and her husband, she would think about her father, who died a year before she graduated from the master’s program. She wondered if he ever imagined that she would continue into a doctoral program. Ana thought that, at some level, he was already aware that she had been accepted, and she was sure her father would have been very proud of her achievement.

Ana’s experience in the doctoral program had been rewarding at many levels. Her identity as a Latina permeated all aspects of her work, and she thought about what it meant for her as a Latina to be a doctoral student in this country. Most of Ana’s peers in the doctoral program were not Latinas, and she was amazed to be one of the few. In addition to Ana, there was only one other Latina in her cohort and, the rest were European Americans or women of other ethnicities. Ana recognized that only a small number of Latina/o undergraduate students continued on for master's degrees, and that number reduced drastically at the doctoral level. Being one of the few Latinas with the opportunity to be in doctoral education gave her an additional sense of responsibility and commitment to give back to her community in some way.

*Encountering and Managing Challenges in Doctoral Education*

Being in a doctoral program in this country was a challenge for Ana on many levels. Ana noted that perhaps she had so many challenges because she had come from a different country. Among the challenges she encountered were language, and understanding the academic culture, and her role in it, since the culture differed widely from what she had experienced in her country.
Ana wondered if she would be able to finish and if she had what it took to earn a doctorate. She wondered if she was going to be able to write testing reports. She asked herself if she was going to be up to par. These questions were always in the back of her mind. Ana knew she was going to finish the doctorate, but there were always constant challenges due to different processes within the doctoral program such as difficult courses, and applying for practicum or internship. Ana coped by thinking about how she made it through her master's program, and thus, wondered how she would make it through the doctorate. Although Ana's experience in the doctorate had been rewarding, she continued to have a sense of disbelief and amazement about being in the program.

*Language as a Continuous Struggle in Doctoral Education*

Language was a constant challenge for Ana, and she struggled especially with writing. With spoken language Ana coped more easily, learning slang to communicate with some of her counseling clients. Ana initially noted she had learned to manage her writing anxiety, but later recognized she continued to feel a high degree of anxiety about expressing her ideas in writing. Ana wrote in English and did not translate back and forth between Spanish and English. Most of the time, she asked other students who were ahead of her in the program to edit her writing. Sometimes though, the students were not available. Ana had to write papers much earlier than the due date to have enough time to work with her editors. Sometimes she knowingly turned in papers with mistakes, risking that she would get a lower grade.

Ana thought about how much easier it would be to write in Spanish, feeling sure that her written work was good. Though it was not usually possible to write in Spanish while in the doctoral program, Ana had the opportunity to do so in one class. As an undergraduate in her home country she was used to writing formally in Spanish; being able to revisit that experience during her doctoral career was great since she never had that experience in her master's program.
Feeling confident that she was able to write in both languages empowered her. Editing the work of other students in Spanish had also been a positive experience for her in that class.

Ana was pleased to be given the opportunity to write in Spanish and work towards an article that she hoped would be published in a bilingual journal. She struggled somewhat using professional language in Spanish, but recognized that she had the knowledge even though she had put it aside in order to reach a certain level of mastery in English. Though Ana needed to push the Spanish language aside, she felt that being able to reclaim her ability to write in her native language also made her a better writer in English. Ana did not know how to explain it, but after reconnecting with writing in her native language, she experienced another level of confidence that she had not had before. She obviously noticed the difference between the two languages, because in Spanish she was able to write quickly and edit without second-guessing herself. Conversely, when writing in English, she felt highly anxious because she was unable to produce quickly. Ana saw her peers write in a seemingly effortless manner, and wished she too could write with ease. She second-guessed herself on the content she wrote, and wondered if she should ask someone else to review it. Eventually, Ana recognized that regardless of the language, it was good for someone to review what she had written.

Learning and Adapting to the Academic Culture

Entering her master's program was the first time that Ana attended a university in this country. Ana thought the program’s expectations were quite clear. She started learning American academic culture and what was, and was not, allowed. After being out of school for so many years, several aspects of academic culture were very new to her. The way students interacted with each other, and the kinds of relationships they had with professors were part of what she learned. Ana observed the academic culture even though she didn’t think she was going to
become a doctoral student. While doing her master's, she recalled being impressed with the intelligence of a doctoral student who assisted her professor. At that time, it did not even remotely cross her mind that she would ever even apply to the doctoral program. She thought that the doctoral students were all really smart, though she also viewed them as very self-absorbed, very individualistic, very driven, and very competitive. Ana never thought she would be at their level.

Ana eventually learned what happens to students in the doctoral program. She noted that although her program was very post-modern, egalitarian and non-hierarchical, hierarchies did exist in the academic setting. The hierarchical levels included professors, associate professors, and visiting professors, and Ana observed how doctoral students behaved with a sense of respect toward them. She also noticed there was a hierarchy between master's and doctoral students. When in teams, the former looked up to the latter, and doctoral students were treated differently. To Ana, that hierarchy influenced how a doctoral student was supposed to behave.

Doctoral education was very different with classes demanding a different level of performance. Once Ana became a doctoral student, she knew there were things expected of her regarding readings, writing articles, her performance on projects, and her participation in discussions in class. With just six doctoral students in her cohort, she realized that they all needed to contribute since classes were no longer solely focused on a professor lecturing.

*Ethnic Identity as Influence in Relational Dynamics with Faculty: Support Despite Differences*

In Ana’s view, her identity impacted not only the way that she went about academics, but also the manner in which she interacted with faculty and peers. Ana noted that their Latina/o faculty understood that for Latina/o students, relationships came first. She noted that the interaction with Latina/o faculty was different. At times they switched to speaking in Spanish
and asked each other about their respective families, since asking more personal questions was not considered crossing the line. Ana thought that faculty in her doctoral program were generally pretty understanding, and she described some as absolutely supportive. Ana stated that others in her program also thought of their faculty as supportive. However, even though all faculty were understanding, interaction with non-Latina/o faculty was different.

One professor who provided Ana with the opportunity to write in Spanish was especially supportive. He asked Ana if she would take on the challenge of mentoring two other students to write an article in Spanish. The professor knew it was going to be a challenge for them, and that it was going to be easier for Ana. Ana welcomed the opportunity, and not only mentored them, but was delighted to use her language in a professional manner after many years of not doing so. The professor taught other classes, and invited Ana to turn in reflections about the readings in Spanish. Ana was initially hesitant and wondered if she should continue to write everything in English since that was what was expected of her. Ana wondered why the professor had offered her that special consideration, but then realized that the rest of her peers were writing in English, which was their first language. Since the professor was bilingual, he had simply allowed her to write in her first language. Ana later realized that working on an article for publication had been a significant contribution to her professional development, and understood why the professor provided her those opportunities.

*Encountering and Managing Culturally Incongruent Relational Dynamics with Doctoral Peers*

Eight students were accepted into Ana’s program. Two students were part of the master’s program, and the rest formed her doctoral cohort. Ana and a Mexican American woman who became one of her closest friends were the two Latinas in the cohort. Ana noted that the interaction between the two of them was not great initially, but eventually improved after her
friend understood Ana’s approach to things. At times, Ana’s friend, like the other peers, was very driven when it came to school and seemed very selfish. Although Ana experienced her as different, the women shared many things with each other and became very close. The friend became very helpful to Ana when it came to school.

Previously in the master’s program, Ana was part of a group of Latina/o peers who helped each other. In the doctoral program she was surprised to see how different the environment was, and she was stunned by how competitive it was. Ana experienced the intensity of competition among the cohort members as overwhelming and intimidating. Her peers did not share work and did not help each other at all. Ana thought that perhaps it was so competitive at that educational level because so few students made it that far.

Ana noted that she started working on her doctoral degree late in life and was the oldest of her cohort. Even so, she doubted herself and wondered if she, like the others, should be concerned about the concerns they voiced. Ana’s peers were very driven. In their first semester they were already thinking about internship and other program requirements. However, because of her experience in her master’s program, Ana had learned what it took for successful completion. Ana thought that she needed to really absorb what she was learning and enjoy the journey. Her view was that program success came from all the time that one invested in learning, and not from just checking off a requirement and moving to the next one, or striving solely to receive a piece of paper. She was aware that she needed to complete the program within a certain time frame, and took the steps to do so, but felt she did not need to be worried or feel rushed. Ana recalled at that time she chose to only concentrate on the first semester for the time being.

Ana also disagreed with the competitive behavior of her peers. She stated that when somebody in the program was given an opportunity and the other students thought that the
person was not ready, they questioned why the individual was provided such an opportunity. Ana disagreed with these attacks. She trusted that the faculty had very good reasons to support their actions, and did not think favoritism was involved. She thought that an opportunity was granted to a person because that person was ready. Her view was that there were opportunities for all, and she did not think that providing an opportunity to someone else was taking something away from her. Nonetheless, her peers questioned faculty, asking why they made certain decisions. It was hard for Ana to deal with the fact that her peers viewed such things differently. Ana believed that she had the opportunity to succeed in her own way, and in her own area. She also thought that since there were so few of them in the program they should all help each other out. Ana thought helping each other out was important to succeed and had always seen it that way.

Ana experienced what it was like to be the target of a peer’s disapproval after she was offered the opportunity to supervise a team. A Latina student who was a year ahead in the program complained when it became known that Ana was going to co-supervise a team. Ana had not taken a class that was needed for her to supervise, but had many hours of clinical experience earned while accruing hours towards her license. On the other hand, the complaining student’s experience had been mostly doing testing and not clinical work.

The clinic director told Ana she could explain to that student why she had offered Ana the chance to co-supervise. The director informed Ana that she had evidence to support her decision, but Ana told the director that she did not want any hard feelings or issues with the student. There were so few students in the program that Ana opted to not start conflicts.

Ana’s view was that her time to supervise would come the following year and, although she was grateful for the opportunity, she was not desperate to supervise a team. Ana noted she felt fine with her decision because she knew her opportunity would come. Yet Ana recognized
that she also was disappointed because the student who complained was Latina. Ana wondered why the student, who called herself Latina and seemed to embrace her culture, behaved in a way that Ana perceived as culturally incongruent. The entire situation was difficult for her and threw Ana off. She stated that another opportunity did come for her a year later.

Ana did not know if competition had a negative impact or not in her relationships with her peers. She tried to be careful about certain things that she said to her peers but most of the time she was pretty honest with them and explained her point of view. She thought that she was accepted and respected within the cohort. Ana was the oldest in her cohort and offered support if her peers came to her for advice or answers to questions. Ana tried to be herself and tried to get along with all of her peers, as well as support other classmates regardless of whether they were Latina/o or not.

Ana noted that although her European American peers were women too, her relationships with them were more distant not only because of language preference but also because the interaction itself was different. Regardless, she still got to know most of her peers very well, and interacted with them despite relationships with some were more distant.

According to Ana, her identity as a Latina influenced how she thought she should interact with faculty and peers. Her Latina identity was part of her personality, her worldview, and influenced what was important to her. To Ana, it was more important to not get in trouble with a person, and to be viewed as someone who was fair. Ana was not only interested in work, but also was interested in getting along with others while they worked together. She noted her identity also affected her supervision style in the team that she supervised. Her Latina identity came into play through the emphasis she placed on how she and her supervisees interacted and related to each other. Supervision was important to Ana, and she understood that her primary role as a
supervisor was to ensure the application of theory in the work that her supervisees did with clients. At the same time, checking in with her supervisees, especially the Latina/o supervisees was also important since she had an understanding of cultural differences.

**Significant Accomplishments as Intrinsic Motivators for Persistence**

Starting the master's program was a significant accomplishment for Ana. Her motivation to start the program was to be able to provide counseling in Spanish. In order to do that she had to go through the program in English. When she looked back to when she started the master's program, she especially thought about what she was able to do by the time she completed the degree. For example, in the clinic where she worked, Ana participated in a live supervision team in Spanish but was also part of three additional teams in English. Ana noted that counseling was done by communicating, which initially was really scary for her because she was concerned that her proficiency in English was not high enough. She wondered if she would be able to provide counseling in English, if her accent was too strong, if clients would be able to understand her, and if she would be able to connect with them.

Despite her initial fear, she looked for ways to manage. She sometimes memorized questions or practiced word pronunciation, and she continued to do so until she graduated from the master's program. Ana also had cases that resolved successfully with clients she worked with in English. She was pleased that she was able to be helpful in English, since language was her biggest challenge when she started the master’s program. Presently, her view was that she would go through the doctoral program, would learn what she needed to learn, and when the time came, she would be able to put her knowledge in action.
Serving the Community via Doctoral Education: A Reward, a Responsibility, and a Balancing Act

Working on a doctoral degree was rewarding for Ana on a personal and a professional level, and she had a strong commitment to her community. Sometimes her work went beyond counseling since, at times, she was asked to take phone calls or clients because there was no one else who spoke Spanish. She was always willing to go that extra mile if it meant helping somebody who she knew other clinicians would be unable to help because of language or other factors. If the client was an undocumented immigrant who did not have access to services she referred them to a social worker. If that service was unavailable, she would at least provide phone numbers so the client could access basic needs. Ana felt she had a responsibility to connect the client with such services. Her community commitment caused more work, but she did not necessarily experience that work as pressure or as a burden since she usually helped without even stopping to question. Ana recognized that perhaps she would not do things in quite the same way for someone who was not new to the country, or who at least spoke the language.

One of Ana’s concerns was testing in Spanish. She noted because she had the language ability, she could provide that service to her community since she was confident she could test fairly in Spanish. She also had prior experience doing testing as an undergraduate in her home country. Ana noted she could also provide service to her community via her ability to provide counseling in Spanish. Ana loved to be engaged in things that interested and challenged her. In addition to providing counseling to individuals, families, and couples, or facilitating groups, she attended conferences or additional trainings. She definitely tended to stretch herself thin and acknowledged she did it quite often. Ana said that she usually found a way to manage everything
she was involved in. However, Ana acknowledged that she became very stressed out when she sometimes took on more than she could really afford to manage.

It was really important for her to continue to be a mother and wife while she developed herself professionally. Thus, it was important to organize her life in a way that she could do both. Ana really tried to balance family and professional endeavors, but it was not always possible, and sometimes one had to be put to the side. She recognized that sometimes her program responsibilities needed to come first, but most of the time her family came first. Ana stated that she had been in situations that forced her to choose between her family and professional or academic matters. She sometimes chose to put her family first, but was very conscious that the decision could have a consequence at the academic level, and thus did not do it often. She noted if she decided to put her family first, it was because at that moment her family matter was more important. Ana noted that, at times, making those decisions had been difficult, and that she had a very supportive husband who took over if she needed him to do so.

In the past, Ana thought that in the professional world putting family first was not professional. Ana recognized that it was not something to be done all the time because being responsible and reliable was also really important. Ana viewed what she did professionally as the fuel that she needed to continue being good to her family. She noted that if she did not continue with her education, and did not do what she loved to do, she would be unable to be good to her family, to be a happy mother and a good wife.

During her first semester in the doctoral program, Ana’s grandmother was very sick and passed away. Ana and her family went to her home country for three days to attend her grandmother’s funeral. Ana missed a class and turned in a reflection that was due by submitting it online. Ana emailed the professor who expressed disbelief when Ana informed her that she
had gone to her country and would return in three days. Ana stated that people in the program were really understanding except for that European-American professor for whom Ana’s situation seemed unbelievable. Ana thought their interaction had been awkward, and kept pondering why the professor seemed to question her. Ana felt that the professor did not have the right to question her. Ana’s grandmother passed away, and she wanted to be there for the funeral. She noted that at that point, she really did not care if the professor wanted to believe her or if she was going to lower her grade.

_Reclaiming and Embracing Other Aspects of Identity_

Ana was raised in a strong traditional Catholic family, but one of her grandmothers believed in more indigenous practices. Ana felt somewhat ashamed of those indigenous practices since she viewed them as unscientific and nonsensical. It was later in life that Ana gained an understanding about her grandmother’s beliefs and practices. Ana learned so much from her grandmother, even though her grandmother had hardly an elementary education. Ana could see in herself the things she learned from her grandmother. She was able to embrace that part of herself, allowing things to really come full circle. Ana gained a better understanding of why her grandmother cured certain things with certain herbs, and about the way her grandmother saw life. Ana noted she now had a better understanding of her heritage, and was not ashamed to share such beliefs when she thought it could be helpful to the dialogue in class. She even allowed herself to hold very different views, such as magical thinking, and beliefs about the spiritual world, including the belief that people who leave physically can somehow stay here at a spiritual level.

Ana noted that in the past, she would not comment on a topic like that, but since integrating her grandmother’s beliefs, she was no longer ashamed of them. She said that she
would keep the context in mind when discussing her beliefs, and would probably not discuss them in a professional conference. However, if somebody came forward and shared something related to such beliefs, she would not be afraid of sharing, for example, what her grandmother did to cleanse the house. Ana noted she finds the things her grandmother did helpful, and does them as well. She noted that it could be seen as crazy that she burnt incense and believed that it made the house feel lighter, and that it helped get rid of bad energy. She was aware that it did not seem very professional but it was a part of her that she had been able to embrace.

*Coping with Trepidation and Self-Doubt: Mentorship is Key*

Ana viewed doctoral education as fascinating. She realized that, when complete, depending on where she worked, she could potentially be one of the people with the highest degrees. If she worked at a hospital, she would be around various types of doctors. But if she worked at an agency, the clinical director could be a master’s level clinician, which was the case in the clinic where she worked at the time. Ana realized that once she was done with her degree, she was simply supposed to do her work and jokingly noted that she wondered what she was supposed to do as the psychologist in charge of the place. Nonetheless, she did not want to think about what that meant to her since she found the thought scary. Ana noted that she did not even think that far into the future but she assumed she would know what she was doing and hoped that she would be ok when she reached that point.

Ana noted that the work that would be expected from her to complete a doctoral degree would be at a different level, and wondered if she would be able to do it. Ana wondered if she would be good enough, if she would be able to communicate easily, and speak at the level of her peers and professors, and be respected by other people. Ana wished she sounded as composed as
they did. Though she tried, she always doubted if she said things right and worried if what she said was understandable.

Hearing the experiences of her peers helped Ana mentally prepare for some aspects of the program that she would encounter. She heard friends who were applying to internships express how hard the application process was, and how insecure they felt about whether they would be good enough. Ana realized it was also difficult for people who grew up in this country to go through doctoral education. She noted that other friends who were Latinas or whose primary language was not English expressed the same insecurities. Ana nervously anticipated going through the internship application experience the following year.

As a supervisor, Ana was able to see the writing of students whose first language was English, which helped her debunk the fantasy that she did not write well because English was not her first language. She saw that they encountered challenges that were not related to language, but were related to the difficulty of the process of writing. Though writing continued to pose a challenge for her, Ana noted that some master's students asked her how she handled writing while in the program, including one particular European student who voiced concern about applying to the doctorate due to her own apprehensions about writing. Ana was amazed to realize what she had accomplished thus far, and to realize that students now looked at her as a role model was unbelievable.

Fortunately, Ana had very good and helpful mentors who were Latinas with similar experiences. Ana had one mentor was always very supportive; she described her as being older and having a family, similar to herself. This mentor was the person who encouraged Ana to attend the doctoral program, and would talk to her about things she experienced while in the program. Many of Ana’s mentors were Mexican Americans whose experiences helped her with
her concerns about language, although they had done all of their formal education in this country. These mentors were also role models, and had completed the doctorate, which made Ana feel that she too would be able to do it. Ana’s mentors provided reassurance telling Ana that her writing was not as bad as she thought, and that she had very good ideas, but just needed to work on small things. This feedback gave Ana the confidence to think that she would be able to finish the doctorate. Ana felt accomplished because she was closer to finishing her degree even though sometimes she had a hard time believe it.

Considerations for Latinas Contemplating Doctoral Education in Psychology

To another Latina interested in pursuing a doctoral degree in psychology Ana would say that the process will consist of a lot of challenging and hard work. Ana would inform the student that doctoral education was different, and that the format and structure of classes will be nothing like she has had before. She would be expected to create things, to come up with plans, ideas or projects, and that the focus would not be so much on just writing papers. Ana stated that the most important advice was for prospective Latina students to be true to their values as Latinas.

Further, Ana posed that Latina/o ethnic identity and values, not only those values that were stereotypically viewed as Latina/o, were part of what grounded Latinas/os as individuals. Ana noted that within Latina/o ethnic groups there are different families with different values, despite having the commonality of being Latina/o. She suggested that prospective Latina doctoral students be true to values such as the importance of community and relationships with others, and continue to place helping each other above individual gain and success.

Ana would want a prospective student to know that the faculty appreciate respect, and she added that respecting colleagues was important. She also stated that was important for students to respect their own work as well, and that would take them far in life. Ana thought
establishing priorities according to one’s own values was important, and viewed that as part of success.

Ana would let prospective Latina students know that they would have to make choices, and that sometimes they would choose to, or have to put their family first, versus meeting a deadline. While a doctoral program should be their priority, Ana noted that the reality was that spouses, children, and family were also important. Ana stated that prospective Latina doctoral students should know that they would have the flexibility not have to explain themselves, or discuss a personal issue. She said that prospective students could choose between stating that they had a personal problem, or providing specific information such as saying “my daughter is sick.”

Ana noted that she still struggled with making those decisions and having those conversations. Ana advised putting things into perspective to make choices that were congruent with what was most important for them at the moment. She suggested they consider what would be more important or more meaningful in the long run, and decide if missing either option would be the end of the world. For instance, if they (the doctoral student) were dying would it be more important to miss one day at work or stay with their daughter who had fever?

Ana noted that depending on what program they were in, and where in the country it was located, made it more important for Latinas to understand themselves regarding cultural aspects like education or religion. She thought that the various Latina/os could be misunderstood and clustered together as if they were all alike. In certain programs/places, their varied intercultural differences were frequently overlooked. Ana stated that prospective Latina students should not be ashamed of their unique cultural belief systems, but instead be ready to explain the differences. Ana believed that sometimes embracing the differences was really important. She
encouraged prospective students to embrace differences simply as different ways of thinking or doing things. Ana stated that because cultural or spiritual beliefs may be misunderstood, prospective Latina students needed to understand themselves very well and be ready to explain to others when questioned or misunderstood.

The Essence of Ana’s Experience as a Latina Doctoral Student in Psychology, Step 7

Ana experienced a mix of disbelief and pride about the fact that she was in a doctoral program. She had exceeded her own expectations and experienced those emotions from the time she was interviewed and then accepted into the program. Ana experienced doctoral education as rewarding and was aware her family shared her feelings of pride as she was the first in the family to be in a doctoral program. Furthermore, to be working towards a doctorate in this country was an accomplishment that carried greater weight.

Ana viewed being in a doctoral program as an opportunity, as she was cognizant that the numbers of Latina/os at the highest level of education were scarce. This realization made her doctoral education even more meaningful, and increased her commitment to that process and desire to give back to her community. She was aware she was one of few in the classroom, and as a clinician, she was often asked to take on extra responsibilities that she took without questioning simply because she was in the position to help. She thought it was incredible that Latina/os in general and peers in her program viewed her as a role model.

Ana also experienced doctoral education as a series of constant challenges as she continued to observe and learn the academic culture. She experienced the interaction with Caucasian faculty and peers as more formal or distant. Although she considered all faculty in her program supportive, it was easier for her to relate with Latina/o faculty at a more personal level. Ana’s values differed from those of her doctoral peers, thus, at times, making interactions with
them difficult. She experienced the level of competition among doctoral peers as overwhelming and intimidating. The dynamics she saw initially displayed by her peers made her question herself, and whether she was approaching the doctorate in the right way. Nonetheless, she attempted to have pleasant relationships with all her peers. She seemed aware about being the oldest in her group and being relatively older, in addition to her demeanor, may have influenced why her peers sought the support she provided.

Ana experienced self-doubt and felt anxious when she thought about potentially being the person with the highest level of education in her future workplace. She hoped that by the time she was done with her degree, she would simply be ready to put her knowledge to work. She also faced general feelings of insecurity, anxiety, frustration tied to speaking and writing in English, and disliked having to rely on others to assure she turned in a good paper. Ana’s additional challenges involved stress as she frequently overextended herself, and attempted to balance professional and family matters. She experienced difficulties and guilt in deciding between these highly significant aspects of her life. She viewed all of her roles (i.e., mother, wife, student and professional) as very important, and her identity as a Latina as permeated all of her experiences within doctoral education.

Ana reminded herself of past personal and educational accomplishments as a way to motivate herself. She sought the support of faculty mentors to deal with the academic culture, and mentally prepared herself by listening to what peers ahead of her in the program communicated about future steps on the doctoral path. Her wariness about being provided the chance to complete some writings in Spanish turned to appreciation as she realized such writing opportunities were genuinely offered with her professional development in mind, and not due to language-related considerations. Mentoring students to write in professional Spanish empowered
Ana’s Latina identity and values grounded her throughout her educational journey. Ana declined an opportunity for professional development in efforts to maintain group cohesion and prevent conflict. Unlike her peers, she viewed opportunities as available to all, and trusted her opportunity would come at the right time. Ana’s views shifted as she now relied on her own view of success which involved making decisions, including choices between family and professional endeavors, based on her own values. Ana was conscious that both family and professional endeavors contributed to her happiness. At present, she engaged in self-reflection, valued having a better understanding of herself, and embraced knowledge and beliefs passed on by her family even if they were different. Ana reconnected with aspects of her heritage and moved from shame to pride, and ownership of her beliefs, opinions, and practices.

Situated Meaning Structure for Belen, Step 6

The Good Fortune of Having a Positive Doctoral Experience

Belen considers herself fortunate because her experiences in a doctoral program in psychology have been positive overall. She described her experience in the doctoral program as unique because her school focuses on multiculturalism, and the faculty and student body are diverse. While there was broad representation of diversity on her campus, and she acknowledged that her school may have more Latino representation than other schools, the percentage of Latinos was still small. Belen experienced excitement when she saw another Latina on campus and knew that her reaction came from an overall lack of representation of Latinos on campus. Her awareness regarding Latino underrepresentation significantly shaped her experience of doctoral education, and elicited mixed feelings. She noted that despite being really supported as
an ethnic minority, she sometimes felt that as if she were the only one, or one of few Latinas, in her program. She realized this was a common experience for other Latinos, and it made her feel alone in this process.

Belen felt her identity as a Latina was welcome and nourished within her program although she noted her identity might not always be welcome elsewhere. She noted that her school had a true commitment to diversity. This was evidenced by a diverse faculty, and the fact that diversity issues and multiculturalism were the status quo, and not treated as adjunct topics in the classroom. This helped nourish her identity as a Latina, and buffer instances of isolation and self-doubt.

**Genuine Mentorship as a Vehicle for Recruitment and Retention**

Belen noted that deciding she would attain a doctoral degree was a process and a decision she made after having been exposed to graduate education. She gained access to mentors in her master’s program, receiving support and mentoring from Latinas who had attained doctoral degrees. Belen thinks mentoring differs for each person, and that the mentoring she has received has made a difference for her. Her mentors became role models for the qualities she would like to espouse as a professional. She had mentors who she could access as needed. She also had situational mentors who influenced her graduate education and career choices. She considered a pivotal interaction with a male Latino professor as an instance of situational mentoring though she had interacted with him on various occasions. She also was influenced by some individuals who might have been unaware of their role as mentors and who she did not utilize as an ongoing resource.

Belen appreciated having mentors who were interested in truly knowing how she was doing both academically and overall. She said her mentors made a difference in her experience
because they were people she could access for support about specific concerns or in general to check in about how her process as a doctoral student was unfolding. She had had mostly female mentors and one male mentor; not all have been Latinos.

*Encountering and Facing Challenging Experiences within Doctoral Education*

Belen expressed that although her experiences were mostly positive she has had negative experiences. In her opinion, this was not uncommon for students. Belen described negative experiences with a group supervisor who was culturally incompetent while in her psychology doctoral program. Belen felt it was challenging to tolerate this situation on a weekly basis, but had no choice given that the person was her group supervisor. Belen felt frustrated because she could have gotten more out of the supervision experience, and because a professional was culturally incompetent. She also was frustrated due to the lack of action taken regarding this supervisor’s cultural incompetence despite previous complaints, and the fact that she and her peers felt heard and understood when they raised their concern with the site’s management.

Belen’s world and professional view included the expectation that people should be culturally competent, though she acknowledged not everyone, and not every training program, shares this view.

Belen felt that her sense of identity, her ability to speak up and look for support, and her program’s commitment to diversity prevented her from feeling really alone in this situation. She felt lucky that she had two peers who are also people of color; they supported each other regarding the supervisor’s cultural incompetence on race issues. She also felt fortunate to have a stellar individual supervisor who helped her feel balanced although she and her peers had started to cope by viewing group supervision as a task.
Belen also coped with the situation by looking for positive experiences within the negative. She acknowledged that she learned from this supervision experience despite the supervisor’s cultural incompetency. Among the things she learned was how she would not like to act as a supervisor. She realized her experience of group supervision was not ideal, and that despite having a solid support network she still experienced difficult moments at times.

*Latina Identity Encompassing the Doctoral Experience and Community Involvement*

Belen said her identity as a Latina played a huge role in her experience of doctoral education. Belen was very active on campus and felt blessed that part of her learning style and energy style involved volunteering in the community. Belen noted that her community involvement expressed her multiple identities and has meant different things at different times for her. She was involved as an undergraduate and master’s student, and continued to be involved as a doctoral student. She viewed community involvement as part of her character, as is a way to give back to herself and others. She volunteered out of a sense of responsibility although it felt like a burden at times.

Belen viewed herself as fortunate that her school has a Latino student group, which she chaired. She was excited to connect with peers from her school who were involved in the student group while attending the same conference (NLPA). She wanted to get involved in the Latino student group, and after meeting with the group’s leader, she became the chair of the group since all the other members were leaving. Although the group is now growing, she felt alone in running this group when she joined because its members were getting ready to leave the school.

That year she was practically running the student group by herself since other people’s involvement was inconsistent. Although people attended events, Belen did not have the time to ask others to increase their involvement. She said that though she did not take things personally,
she felt alone and tired. She was also frustrated that other Latinas in her cohort would express interest in getting involved but did not follow up. Belen said she also felt sad that these women were missing out on activities and information that would be of help to them. She viewed the lack of group membership as a combination of others’ lack of involvement, and her not reaching out for help.

Belen wanted people to get involved because she believed one gets benefits from it. While she noted it is difficult to express to others how they would benefit from being involved, she thought about how much Latinas in her program would have benefitted from involvement with, for example NLPA, when she heard them talking about their difficulties. However, with the stress of being a student, and all additional responsibilities she and others have to juggle, she understood their lack of involvement.

Encountering and Navigating Personal and Academic Challenges Posed by Doctoral Education

Belen notes that although not all Latinas will have a significantly different experience than a Caucasian female student, she can comfortably say there are some significant differences between their experiences. Belen viewed Latinas’ doctoral experience as impacted by family issues, including being a parent or in a relationship, and gender expectations. Belen experienced her parents and family as supportive and interested in her education. However, she noted they did not really understand the level of work, busyness, and pressure involved in doctoral education. It was hard when they wondered why they did not hear from her more often.

She coped via her level of community involvement and involvement with friends who shared the experience of graduate school in order to get the support and understanding she could not get from family. She also chose not to discuss school-related things with family, or only discussed them at surface level. Belen felt sad when she thought about her family not
understanding her experiences including how empowering it could be to attend a conference, or what it was like to prepare for a presentation and feel anxious about it. She said her professional identity is a large part of who she is, and her family does not have a full understanding of what it means. Hence, she said it was important to have strong connections with others who know what she experiences, and with whom she can talk and get needed encouragement. In essence, she said it was important to create a support system that was able to provide the broader support and full understanding that her family was unable to provide.

Belen noted that while in the doctoral program she had to make choices that she sometimes experienced guilt about. Although she did not view this struggle as unique to Latinas, she experienced guilt when she could not go to family engagements, or had only quick conversations with her partner due to being exhausted, or having many things to do. Guilt played a huge role in these experiences, and Belen said guilt was something Latinas were well trained in as a result of religious influence.

Belen experienced that it was hard to take care of herself while engaged in the tasks of her program. She was on a tight schedule, and at times it was difficult for her family members to understand. They made remarks about not seeing or talking with her. She noted that there were also academic costs associated with taking on too much, such as being overly exhausted; not being able to focus all of her attention on a school project; or having to read one thing over another. She also mentioned personal and emotional costs, such as relationships that suffer because she cannot spend much time with friends.

Belen described her Latina identity as constantly present in her experience of doctoral education. Her views were filtered through that lens when she spoke, self-identified as Latina, and when she commented on clients. She noted that her Latina identity was always very present,
and influenced how she experienced a client, how she conceptualized clients, what she contributed in class, and the way she spoke about issues. She noted other aspects of an individual’s identity are important. She stated that multiple intersecting layers of various identities such as Latino sub-ethnicity, being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) identified, or having a disability would be really difficult to manage in a doctoral program.

Considerations for Latinas Contemplating Doctoral Education in Psychology

Belen said she would absolutely encourage another Latina to pursue doctoral education in psychology, as currently there are not enough Latina psychologists. Belen recommended choosing graduate schools wisely, and doing research about the make-up of the students and the faculty in the program. She noted that sometimes people have more choices available than others due to different situations, and suggests deciding based on the individual’s specific circumstances. She noted Latinas can face certain circumstances that may influence where they chose to get a doctoral degree. Family issues and connections may make relocating less flexible. She also mentioned it was important to keep specific things about a program in mind. For example, a program offering a lot of money may lack diversity. She also emphasized that a good doctoral experience is possible despite the aforementioned challenges if you shore up your support systems, and reach out to other Latinas. She said she thought that the best scenario for a Latina considering doctoral education in psychology would be to have a mentor who is a psychologist, or to have access to another Latina/o who has experienced doctoral education in any other field. Belen said doctoral education was tough and noted that knowing someone who knows part of your process is needed to make it through and provide mutual support.

Belen noted it was important to set time aside and apply for scholarships. She noted that Latinos have very valuable professional skills, and that they have to believe their worth and act
accordingly. She said Latinos also tend to have experience working with the community, plus a desire to give back to it. She noted that while one may be unable to get a full ride via scholarships, being involved in networking can really open up opportunities. However, she said that getting really involved is a double-edged sword with which she struggles. She also acknowledged that any student who is part of a marginalized cultural group has to work harder because they need to make outstanding contributions to impress scholarship committees. This reality has both benefits and costs to the student that may not be noticed right away.

*Drawing from Influential Experiences to Replenish Motivation*

Belen noted that she experienced difficult moments, such as when she felt alone and struggled with the realization that she was the first person in her family to experience doctoral education. It was also difficult when she realized that she experienced dynamics that the literature says other minorities experience. At these times, she drew, even if not fully aware, from past moments or experiences that empowered her to keep going. For example, she was almost moved to tears when she discovered NLPA, and experienced the conference. Being with so many Latino mental health professionals was very validating and empowering. She was excited to have access to other Latinas including Dr. Melba Vasquez, who is president of the American Psychological Association (APA). Belen stated that the accumulation of these experiences impacts her, and others’ decisions to continue in doctoral education.

The Essence of Belen’s Experience as a Latina Doctoral Student in Psychology, Step 7

Belen experienced her doctoral education as unique, and felt fortunate that she was in a program that genuinely valued diversity. Her program’s focus on multiculturalism, the diversity in the student body and faculty, were factors that contributed to making her feel that her Latina identity was nourished and appreciated. Feeling that her ethnic identity was valued allowed her
to buffer instances of isolation and self-doubt that accompanied the painful awareness of the lack of Latina/o representation in education and on her campus.

Belen valued the support she received through mentorship, and had been also impacted by situational mentors. She viewed her mentors as role models who influenced her graduate education, and career choices, and they represented qualities she would like to espouse as a professional. She appreciated that her mentors were genuinely interested in her personal and academic development, and trusted that she could access them for support about any aspects related to her doctoral educational process.

Belen’s world view included the expectation that others, especially mental health professionals, should be culturally competent. She experienced great frustration when she encountered a supervisor who was culturally incompetent, and felt disappointed as nothing was done in that organization although she and her peers formally expressed their concerns. Belen started to view this specific supervision experience as a task, and also coped via her ability to speak up, reach out for support, and realized that now she at least had a clear picture of the kind of supervisor she did not want to be. Another positive and rewarding supervision relationship, and knowledge that her program is very committed to diversity sustained her through that situation. Belen’s solid support network did not spare her from having difficult moments. She viewed negative experiences such as the aforementioned as not uncommon for other Latino students. Further, it appeared that reminding herself that her experience was better than that of others Latina/os helped her to cope.

Belen’s identity as a Latina played a large role in her doctoral experience. She was very active on campus and felt pride in that she has sought volunteering and community involvement as a way to learn and contribute to the community. The meaning behind her community
involvement evolved through the years and, given her multiple identities, she felt a sense of responsibility to give back, but also did it to nourish herself. Belen viewed her experience working with the community, along with her desire to give back as an asset that made her and other Latina/os valuable. She also experienced costs due to being so involved, and being involved had at times felt like a burden. She seemed to find meaning in sharing the benefits she received from involvement, but had experienced disillusionment as a result of other people’s inconsistent participation. She recognized that she sometimes had not reached out for help, and though she understood her peer’s lack of involvement she also expressed feeling some sadness about it.

Belen found self-care was challenging given all that being in the doctoral program and her involvement entailed. She experienced physical, academic, and emotional costs due to being overextended. She felt exhausted, and was not always able to attend to a school project as she would like. She felt guilty when choosing to place her family or her partner aside due to exhaustion, academic, or professional endeavors. Although her family was supportive, Belen chose to discuss school-related matters at surface level because they did not really understand. She felt sad that those closest to her did not have a grasp of her professional identity. Having a support system to provide the broader support and full understanding that her family was unable to provide was crucial.

Belen believed that layers added due to the intersections of a person’s various identities (i.e., Latino sub-ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability) can be difficult to manage. Her Latina identity permeated her experience of doctoral education and was present in her contributions during class, as well as in how she experienced and conceptualized clients. For Belen, realizing that she experienced negative dynamics that the literature says other minorities undergo while in
doctoral education has been difficult. Belen drew from past empowering experiences as a way to persist in times of difficulty during the doctoral process. She viewed the accumulation of such experiences as influential in her decision to persevere in doctoral education.

Situated Meaning Structure, Carmen, Step 6

*Positive Pre-doctoral Experiences: Finding Others Who Provide Guidance*

Carmen said she believes that most of her experiences in graduate education had been positive. She wondered if this was due to starting graduate education in a southwestern state. This state has a larger population of Latinos and, in her view, was more accepting of Latinas. She described her experiences as a Latina in a graduate program as supportive. She considered herself lucky to have found people who have guided her through the educational pipeline. They provided a lot of guidance, support, sponsorship, and mentoring. She emphasized that the aforementioned description of her experiences in graduate education refers to the time she spent in a Hispanic serving institution (HSI).

*Encountering a Mix of Experiences in Doctoral Education: Mentorship is Key*

Carmen noted that if she were to describe her experiences as a Latina doctoral student in a PWI, she would describe a set of mixed experiences because she encountered biases and stereotyping. In general, she described the faculty as having high expectations though they were not very empathic or flexible. She considered herself lucky to have a very supportive mentor who she could count on and talk to about things. His support ameliorated some of the challenges Carmen encountered in graduate school, and she considered him essential to her success in the program.
Paving the Path for Doctoral Success: Concrete and Intentional Guidance

Carmen noted she received guidance and described the guidance she received as consisting of concrete information (i.e., “this is the information you need to know before you come in so you are prepared”). Carmen was provided information about successful navigation of the educational pipeline before and after coming into the program. Carmen said more than career related guidance is needed, however. She related three types of guidance that she believes are needed at the onset of the program: 1) social guidance and support 2) general guidance on how to navigate the system and overcome challenges and 3) specific guidance about how to stay on top of the task of program completion. She recommended that guidance should start with the academic aspects of doctoral education.

She said that prior to her coming into the program her advisor reviewed her transcript and asked her to look into what classes she could take in her master’s program so that she would not have to take those courses in the Ph.D. Carmen noted that she received the type of guidance she deemed necessary. She said it was the type of guidance that gets a student one step ahead by the time s/he comes into the doctoral program. She planned her courses for the three years, got an idea of how much she could handle per semester, and understood what she needed to take to complete program requirements. She found it useful to plan out each semester ahead of time, since this allowed her to troubleshoot conflicts in her course schedule such as classes not being offered during a particular term. Carmen noted that in addition to scheduling, it was also important to focus on reviewing requirements needed to graduate. She also indicated she benefitted from discussing what was, and was not important. More specifically, she discussed where she should spend her time, and what activities she should not bother considering. She noted that she has had to be selective in what she chose to engage in, since an increasing number
of professional development presentations would not necessarily result in degree completion. Furthermore, Carmen described being mindful about how she engaged in practicum hours. She did not see more clients than necessary to meet the hour requirements. Through guidance she realized it was important to not waste energy, time, or effort on what was not going to move her towards program completion. She learned that she needed to work smarter, not harder.

Carmen said that her advisor was always available to answer her questions via email or in person. She mentioned that in her advisor she found social support, another type of guidance she deems important. Among the topics she discussed with her advisor were preparing for comps, when to begin her publishable paper, and how to select a committee for her paper and dissertation. She stated she received much guidance within the first year and discussed aspects of the program that were not due until the second or third year. She believed that such guidance placed her a step ahead, provided her with an awareness of what she needed to do to successfully complete the program. She described it as having a road map of how to go about her doctoral program.

*Navigating Relational Challenges via Mentorship: Family versus Profession*

Carmen received guidance from her advisor on how to manage personal situations that conflicted with her academic or career goals and handling conflicts in meeting familial and academic demands. Carmen felt conflicted about what to put as a priority, and choosing which situation she would set aside or attend to. She received the same guidance from the HSI and the PWI in relation to family matters, which was to do what is best for her and her family, and then take care of school matters.

Carmen noted that deciding between family and academic matters was absolutely difficult in the beginning. She noted that the recommendations she received regarding
prioritizing between family and academic conflicts made sense as once she attended to the family situation, she was at ease and able to move on to academics rather than spending time pondering about what to do about either situation. She noted she had to come to the realization that if she did not take care of her family situation first, she would not be at peace with herself and thus would not be able to accomplish any academic or additional responsibilities. She believed she had a lot of guidance about how to manage those personal situations. She also noted that she had a lot of academic guidance.

*Managing Problematic Professional Relationships*

Carmen described feeling confused about a situation with a Caucasian professor, and feeling there was some awkwardness in their relationship. No matter what she did, she did not get the professor’s recognition. She noted that other White professors would treat her differently offering positive feedback pertaining to her work, unlike the aforementioned professor. She said this particular professor expected her to meet expectations, but would never compliment her work or effort. However, Carmen noticed that this professor always complimented other students. In her view, the professor seemed to selectively praise other students including other minority students, which made her wonder if the professor’s behavior towards her was due to a personality clash between them, or due to stereotyping. She felt that there was something awkward within their relationship although they did not actually have a working relationship. She felt they had a difficult dynamic, and wondered if this professor behaved this way with certain people.

Carmen sought her advisor’s counsel to deal with the situation involving her professor. She wanted to hear her advisor’s professional advice since she had known and worked with the professor for several years. After hearing her advisor’s recommendations, she pondered still
whether it was worth taking action in this situation. She viewed the suggestions her advisor provided as appropriate at the time, and said they discussed her thoughts about how she would approach the situation. They also discussed how she could approach the professor, as well as what to do if she decided not to take action. Her advisor helped her by giving her professional skills that people sometimes lack in doctoral programs.

She concluded that it was not worth it to spend energy worrying about the relational dynamic with her professor. During that same time, she was receiving positive feedback from other professors which made her realize that she was doing well, and that the situation had nothing to do with her. She figured as long as she was receiving positive feedback from others inside and outside of her program, she was doing something right.

*The only Latina: A Challenging Place to Be*

Carmen noted that being the only Latina in her program illustrates her experience as a Latina in a doctoral program. She said that as the only Latina in her doctoral program, she encountered many challenges. She accepted that she could not do anything to change the fact that she is a Latina, a woman, and a minority. She was aware that in being a Latina woman, she had two disadvantages, but knew that since she cannot change her ethnicity or gender, it was up to her to make the best out of each context. She noted that she could change her context by choosing to dwell on the positives rather than the negatives.

*Encountering Challenges and Managing the Academic and Professional Environment*

Carmen noticed that she encountered stereotypes in the academic environment. She stated that in her experience, as soon as others realize that you are Hispanic, based on your looks or last name, the first thing they wonder is whether you speak or write English well. She also encountered stereotypes outside of the academic setting in her practicum site and from co-
workers who were part of other minority groups. She noted that because she is Latina and an English language learner, the expectation was that she would write English incorrectly, making spelling errors, and things of that nature. She stated that if she made a small error, it became a big issue. However, she noted that when others, such as Caucasians and African Americans who are native English speakers made a mistake in their writing it was more tolerable. Carmen indicated that when an English language learner like her made an error, it was likely to be emphasized in a critical manner rather than viewed as a simple mistake. She also experienced criticism about her writing from students who are a year or two ahead of her in the program.

Carmen was aware of how she coped with her experiences in doctoral education; she believed she coped by learning not to take things personally. She noted that if she took things personally, she would only hurt herself emotionally and increase her level of stress. She learned to view her previous job placement as an investment, a business. She viewed her co-workers as people she had to deal with temporarily on a daily basis and as people she could not count on in any way. She viewed her relationships with co-workers from a business perspective: she needed to pass this step to move on to the next step. She felt anger as she wondered if she truly needed to take into consideration other’s views, perceptions, and stereotypes when she made a simple error. She also wondered if instead she should have focused more on trusting that she could do a good job versus worrying about her peers’ criticism. Thus, she coped by focusing on doing her job well and not letting others’ perceptions disturb her emotional and mental state.

*Ethnic Identity: A Source of Pride and Protection*

Carmen noted she has a very strong Latina identity. She was proud of her Latina identity and looked for opportunities to further highlight her identity and to educate others who are not familiar with the culture. She used her strong ethnic identity as a buffer in certain challenging
situations, and as a way to remember who she was and where she came from. She believed having a strong sense of identity helped her through the doctoral process. Her Latina identity increased her confidence, self-esteem, and self-concept, and also acted as a buffer so that negative experiences did not affect her goals, or cloud her reasons for choosing to pursue doctoral education.

Carmen said having a strong Latina identity gave her a stronger level of confidence to prove she could succeed. She could share her confidence with others by educating peers or professors about what is important to not overlook within the Latino culture. She viewed her strong ethnic identity as a source of knowledge that others may not have. Not only did this make her feel confident, but others also perceived her confidence and knowledge.

Carmen viewed her identity as a Latina as a strength and a protective factor. When she encountered stereotypes, rather than internalize them, she attributed them to other’s lack of education or misperceptions. Her strong ethnic identity prevented her from taking such situations personally and allowed her to not be bothered by it. She stated that it is best to view stereotypes from the perspective that they are due to misinterpretation, lack of knowledge, and being multiculturally illiterate.

Carmen said others may have been intimidated by her strong ethnic identity. In her opinion, when people are not aware and knowledgeable, and they encounter someone with more knowledge, they can feel intimidated. She added that people are likely to feel even more intimidated if they are not open minded or flexible enough to learn more about the subject. She observed that some of the less knowledgeable members of her cohort were intimidated by her strong Latina identity. They did not ask questions and were not open to a discussion with her.
She said not being questioned by her peers had pros and cons, but noted that she would be more likely to have been open to having a dialogue than they would have been.

She wanted to engage in a dialogue about her ethnic identity within that educational setting as a learning experience, as well as dialogue with her doctoral peers about how they perceived her ethnic identity. She was curious about how they perceived her ethnic identity, if her identity was intimidating to them, and if they saw being Latina as positive or not. Despite her willingness to have a dialogue with her peers, they refrained from asking questions to avoid looking like they lacked knowledge.

*A Vast Network of Social Support: An Absolute Need for Retention and Growth*

Carmen observed that her advisor had been her immediate support system while in doctoral education. Her colleagues and peers from the master’s program were also part of her support system. She noted that she called a peer for social support when she did not feel comfortable sharing something very personal with her advisor. In such a scenario, she called a peer who knew her very well, explained the situation, and asked for her peer’s honest thoughts about the matter. She found it helpful to have someone else analyze a situation with her while she listened, so that she could reflect and ask herself if she was accurately viewing the role she may have played in a specific situation, and if she was overlooking areas of professional growth. She asserted that her social support network has allowed her to grow as a professional, and to view her faults as opportunities. This enabled her to seek a balance between her faults and strengths.

Carmen stated that having several strengths was a challenge, and that it was important to keep in mind that she was not perfect and that there were some areas in which she needed to continue to develop. She affirmed that keeping in mind her imperfections, as well as the
strengths she had that were necessary for growth helped her navigate doctoral education. She sought out her peers for feedback regarding her areas of growth since they knew her best and knew what some of those her areas for growth were. Her social support came from certain peers who gave her honest answers, let her know what she could do differently, or tell her if she was taking something too hard or personally.

Carmen noted another very good friend who had known her for a long time also provided personal advice. She noted that this long-time friend was also a professional and hence was able to provide her with support or honest suggestions. She laughed as she noted that her peers provided counseling, advice, and a professional opinion from a different perspective when she needed to vent. She said that several types and levels of support are needed to balance all of the different experiences encountered on the doctoral path.

Carmen related that as a doctoral student one should absolutely have a trusted friend for support, in addition to peers. Family is also an option but she noted that there are only certain details she could share with her family since many in her family lacked the experience and knowledge about situations she encountered. As a first generation college student, she knew that her family could not provide the type of advice she needed for certain issues. She noted that unfortunately some families, including her own, may not be able to provide professional advice unless they have been in that particular occupational field. Therefore, many times she resorted to the support provided by friends with whom she has worked in the past who were at the same developmental and professional level.

Regardless, Carmen considered her family a great support since they wanted to be supportive, and wanted her to be in school. Additionally, in her family she found love and
encouragement to continue with things. She added that when she visited her family, she was able
to forget about graduate school and felt emotionally refreshed.

Considerations for Latinas Contemplating Doctoral Education in Psychology

Her recommendation to her peers and mentees interested in doctoral education were to do
research before getting into any program. She suggested they figure out what field they desired,
and what they really want to do in it. After determining the field of study, she recommended that
prospective students decide what kinds of things they are looking for in a doctoral program. She
said she always encourages people to pursue a doctoral program, and emphasized that not every
program will be like programs students have attended in the past in which they have had good
experiences. She said she informs prospective students that they are likely to encounter
challenges in an effort to help them anticipate how to handle them. She also said she suggests
that students ponder how they will embrace the positive situations they encounter. Carmen
further related that she asks them to think about what support systems they have in place to help
them get through should they encounter negative experiences.

Carmen’s view was that the most important things are to: investigate the doctoral
program; find the right mentor and match; and get your social support network in place because
regardless of whether you are enrolled in a HSI or PWI, you will encounter challenges. She
emphasized that the faster these challenges are dealt with, the faster you will be able to move on
to the next step. She said that ignoring situations can make them more difficult to deal with. She
said that in her experience, it was harder to cope when everything built up so that she was either
very stressed, or just ready to have a breakdown. She recommended dealing with situations in an
appropriate manner instead of ignoring them. She believed that dwelling on difficulties,
however, makes one fall behind, which potentially could make one less successful on the path to
Carmen noted that in addition to the advice she touched on previously, she would underscore the importance of having support systems in place while in the doctoral program. In essence, she said the key to success in the doctoral program is finding the right social support for every experience that you encounter.

The Essence of Carmen’s Experience as a Latina Doctoral Student in Psychology, Step 7

Carmen felt fortunate as she had mostly positive experiences in graduate education. She experienced the environment in her doctoral program at a PWI as markedly different than that of her master’s program at a HSI. Carmen experienced faculty as less flexible and as harsher in how they conveyed student expectations. She considered her adviser imperative for her success as he was supportive and ameliorated some of the challenges she had encountered. Carmen viewed her adviser as a mentor as he had been very involved and provided concrete information in order to help her map out her doctoral experience before she finished her master’s. She experienced her mentor as genuinely interested and invested in her personal and professional success, as he also provided guidance on non-academic aspects involved in navigating doctoral education.

Carmen felt conflicted when having to choose between personal and academic or professional matters. She was relieved to hear that her mentor suggested she did what was best for her family and herself, and then attend to academic matters. Receiving this support allowed Carmen to eventually feel more at ease when making such decisions. She also realized that taking care of a family matter first would then allow her to peacefully attend to her other responsibilities.

Carmen experienced being the only Latina in her doctoral program as challenging, and encountered stereotypes in the academic and professional environment. She was aware that her gender and ethnicity were two disadvantages over which she had no control. She coped by
intentionally approaching situations with a positive attitude. Carmen experienced confusion when she noticed a professor seemed to treat her differently as compared to how other students were treated. She wondered if this dynamic was due to a personality clash between them or due to stereotyping. She sought the counsel of her mentor, and they discussed possible ways to approach the situation. Carmen chose to focus on the positive feedback that she received from the rest of her instructors.

Carmen became aware of the attitudes held by her co-workers and the peers who were ahead of her in the program in regards to her writing abilities. She coped with the hostility in her work/practicum environment by viewing it as a task, and reminding herself that she would only have to deal with her co-workers temporarily. She focused inwardly, concentrating on doing a good job versus letting others’ perceptions result in her own emotional and mental distress. Although she tried to not take things personal, she was irritated and questioned if she truly needed to take their opinions and stereotypes into consideration when she made a simple mistake. She felt that as an English language learner, she was expected to write incorrectly and to make mistakes. She noticed that minor mistakes in her writing were severely criticized while there was more tolerance for similar mistakes when they made by native English speakers.

Carmen’s very strong Latina identity helped her endure academic and professional environments that were unwelcoming. Her strong ethnic identity was a protective factor against the stereotypes she encountered. She was proud of her identity, and this pride allowed her to view others’ stereotypes as a product of their ignorance, rather than a reflection of who she was. Carmen coped by educating others about her culture, and realizing that her culture provided her with a source of knowledge that others did not have made her feel confident. Carmen noted her peers never questioned what she said about her culture, and did not engage in further dialogue.

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about the information she provided. She explained this lack of engagement was her peers’ reaction to being intimated by her strong ethnic identity as, in her view, they did not want to appear as less knowledgeable. Her peers may have simply been apathetic about culture, which may have been too hurtful for Carmen to admit. Regardless, Carmen’s ethnic identity strengthened her self-concept and aided her persistence in doctoral education. It was part of what motivated her to remain focused on her goals and not let negative experiences dissuade her from program completion.

Several types and levels of support helped Carmen balance all of the different experiences she encountered on the doctoral path. She used her support system to help her grow as she discussed situations and feedback she received with trusted former peers and colleagues from her master’s program. Carmen took her professional growth seriously, and reflected about the feedback she was given via her training and by her support system. She reminded herself that she was not perfect, and that she could use her strengths to improve her areas of growth.

Although the support her family could provide regarding academic and professional matters was limited, she viewed them as an important source of emotional sustenance. Her family also contributed to her persistence in doctoral education. Seeing them was emotionally refreshing and allowed her to forget about school momentarily. The love and encouragement they provided motivated her to continue to work towards her objectives.

Situated Meaning Structure, Delia, Step 6

*From Anticipation to Painful Disillusionment*

Delia dreamt about attending graduate school and becoming a renowned psychologist like the psychologists she met at the NLPA. However, she was disappointed about her doctoral experience. It had not met her expectations. She anticipated becoming emotional discussing her
experiences in the doctoral program because she considered them the most challenging experiences in her life.

Delia moved from a predominantly Latino community in the Southwest. She previously attended a university in the Southwest where she was mentored and motivated to pursue graduate studies. In order to pursue her dream of becoming a psychologist, Delia relocated to a rural area and attended a PWI where racism and discrimination existed in the community, though not necessarily in her doctoral program. Yet, some aspects of the institution she attended went against her personal beliefs.

Delia discovered her doctoral program was not exactly what she expected. She encountered some situations that made her think her training had not been stellar. Delia also experienced “impostor syndrome.” Sometimes she felt insecure about what she was doing even though she had the knowledge. At some points, she had also been disappointed about the mentorship she had received. She noted that she had experienced instances of good mentoring, but at the same time she did not think it was the best possible mentoring.

Encountering a Hostile and Culturally Incongruent Relational Environment

Delia noted that she had invested a lot of research choosing a program that would be safe and provide mentorship because she had heard horror stories about other programs. She recalled being very excited about the diverse composition in her cohort and felt happy because she thought they would all get along, but she now viewed her thought as very naïve. Though Delia's cohort consisted of three African Americans, four Latinos, one Indian American, one White female, and one gay White male, she experienced marginalization during her first year in the program and that set the tone for her experience throughout the program. She also experienced substantial marginalization from some people within her own ethnic group.
Initially, Delia was surprised and excited because she felt that the diversity within her cohort was like a dream but noted that the cohort turned out to be quite cliquish and she felt like she was in high school. She described one of the African Americans in her cohort as very negative and controversial. She noted that she couldn’t fathom being in a graduate program where people acted like high school kids, “you’re cool, you’re not, I’ll hang out with you, I won’t hang out with you.” She stated that the cohort behaved the same way when it came to sharing notes and studying. Delia did not conform to their standards, which created a very difficult situation for her, and caused her to question her values, beliefs, and what she stood for.

When Delia started the program, she was very well received by at least one student and they formed a really strong friendship. Delia viewed herself as a different type of Latina and considered herself to be “too Mexican” within that setting, and in comparison to her peers. She listened to music in Spanish, did not listen to the radio or pop culture, and mostly spoke and liked to speak Spanish. She stated that she observed differences between Mexicans from her home state and Mexicans from the state in which she attended graduate school. Delia thought Mexicans from her home state were more socially conscious. She also viewed Mexicans from her state as more politically active, and engaged in activism so she felt she could not relate.

Delia noted she lost some social support because she did not conform and had to reach out to other people. Because she did not conform, she was out of the circle of friends of the one person she had felt very supported by. Delia noted it was very difficult to talk about this experience. She viewed this situation as the most difficult experience she had endured since it contradicted her prior experiences and her own world view. In her experience, which she presumed was the norm, Latinos helped each other out. She noted through that experience she learned that for some people, it was not the same, it was not like that.
Delia thought the hardest part about being in her program was not understanding how Latinos could have behaved as they did. The experience reminded her of the saying that Latinos never advance because they pull each other down. She expressed that this situation added to the difficulty of managing all that there was to do while in the doctoral program. She noted she was able to be resilient because there were two Latinas who shared her values and beliefs, and mentored and supported her. She thought that, unfortunately, the negative experience overpowered the positive.

Delia noted that her first advisor recruited her into the program, and that this program was the first one that accepted her. This advisor informed Delia that she was doing research in the area that Delia was interested in investigating as well. She noted the advisor had her own struggle as she had to get tenure and thus, Delia did not fit on the advisor’s path. Delia noted that she was told that another person was a better fit for her given her research topic, but Delia felt that her advisor got rid of her because Delia's study did not fit the advisor’s agenda. She noted that she experienced inner conflict given how things developed. She felt like she was talking negatively about her this former advisor, but knew that advisor made an effort to recruit her in the first place. Delia noted that she was aware that her former advisor had done positive things for her as well, and thus experienced conflict and dissonance that made her question things. Delia noted she had been able to manage feeling very lost with the dissertation process by finding other people who could help her.

Searching for Ways to Cope to Navigate Doctoral Education

This was not the first time Delia had relocated, so it was not that she could not adjust to a new location, but Delia did not have the coping mechanisms she normally used in her home state. She had moved by herself and did not have anyone for social support. She had to come up
with new coping mechanisms. She tried going to therapy but felt her options were limited because she lived in such a small town. In addition, being a psychology student, she knew the therapists in the area as future colleagues or current supervisors. Delia noted she ran into her therapist at a conference she was attending. She also said it was unsafe to talk about issues related to her doctoral experience because when she tried to mention something, people automatically asked who she worked with in the doctoral program. She noted that when she went to therapy, her own therapist unknowingly suggested that she speak with the person that Delia was having conflict with. Delia had not disclosed the identity of the professor with whom she was having problems. Delia felt this had also been very challenging.

Delia expressed feeling somewhat uncomfortable during the current interview because the interviewer could easily know the program and the people Delia referred to. She wondered what that would do to the interviewer’s perspective on things. She also expressed feeling that her story needed to be told because it was the only way to explore it. She noted she felt glad to be able to tell her story because people mentioned experiences of other-group marginalization and microaggressions, but rarely talked about within-group marginalization, which was her experience. She thought she was prepared to handle other-group marginalization because her past experiences primed her to handle it. She noted that she had not been primed for within-group discrimination and that this was not discussed in the literature. She noted that she was not the only person who had experienced within-group discrimination. She connected with a student at another institution who went through a very similar experience, and said this was part of the reasons she persisted in graduate school.

Delia thought about not even going into academia since she was tired of fighting and it was such a struggle. She noted she had struggled as the first in her family to graduate high
school, attain an undergraduate degree, and attend graduate school. She noted it seemed like the struggle never ended and never got easier. Delia described her graduate school experience as the killing of her dreams. She said that she knew she was not the only person who felt going into academia was a struggle, because she had discussed it with friends who revealed they felt the same way.

Delia initiated a Latino graduate student association as a way to cope. She noted that there was a Latino student group in the university which had been inactive for years, so when she came to the university there were no student groups available for her to reach out to. She took it upon herself to get the student organization going again. She felt proud that the group was in its third year and was now recognized by the university. The group conveyed to Latino students that they were wanted in the institution. Delia noted that the university had a diversity plan but that she felt used as a “poster child” to recruit Latinos and other minorities. She noted she was not in agreement with that.

*Retention at the Doctoral Level: Resistance and Persistence*

Delia engaged in a lot of questioning about staying in her program. However, she did not want to go through starting the process again in another program because she realized that every program had its own challenges. Delia always wondered if her doctoral experience would have been different if she had stayed in her home state. She wondered if her doctoral experience would have been different if she had gone to a bigger city. She still questioned her decision to attend graduate school as well as her decision to stay where she was. Later, she also questioned the decision she made to stay in her program. She noted she did not have the courage to quit because she felt she had worked so hard, so instead of quitting she kept telling herself that she had to persist and resist.
Delia noted that had she quit, she would have felt like a failure and wondered what she would have gone back to. She noted she would have gone back to living with her parents in her hometown. Delia noted that finding a job with an undergraduate degree in psychology would be difficult, and she would have ended up working at a bank or in real estate like many of the people she knew in her city. Delia noted that it was probably a biased opinion but a lot of the people she knew end up in those occupations and she did not want that.

Delia said she did a lot of introspection. She noted she was not very religious, but was now more fatalistic and thought God put her where she was. She was looking for a concrete answer like “tell me what career,” so she engaged in a lot of self-analysis and realized she had an interest in another area in psychology. She looked into that area in psychology and that gave more meaning to her degree and her experience at her current university. She noted that she rationalized her experience to give it purpose. She also coped by thinking that there was a higher meaning to her experience, that she was put in that place to learn a bigger lesson that will help her in the next path she takes. Delia felt her experience in her doctoral program had shifted part of who she was. She noted the experience was almost traumatic as she had changed as a person, and gone from being a person who was sociable and wanted people to get along and help each other, to being a person who was hypersensitive and cautious. This was psychologically distressing since it was not in her nature to be distrustful of others.

Delia noted that her experience in the doctoral program had also reinforced her values and beliefs. She knew what she was willing to fight for, and she also knew that she was not willing to compromise her values and beliefs for higher education. She said that part of her experience was resisting academic acculturation. She noted she was resisting being changed by academia into being someone like the faculty that she encountered. She was resisting being
changed into someone who used students or others by taking their ideas or work. She was resisting becoming someone more individualistic. She was resisting becoming one of those people who, in the quest for a tenured position, fit the saying, “you elbow people to get to the place where you need to go.” She noted she continued to resist, and although she had already compromised her wellbeing, her self-esteem, and her self-efficacy, she knew she continued to have potential.

Delia noted she was also resisting having to live to publish because she wanted to “have a life.” She also noted she was single and that dating was hard in the town where she was working on her degree because it was so small that when things did not work out with someone, you ran into them everywhere. She noted she resisted not having a personal life in order to get ahead in her career. She questioned if it mattered to be a renowned full professor who had many publications if she sacrificed her family or even the potential for a family. She noted that as part of her resistance, she was considering not pursuing a faculty position at a tier one university. However, she realized that she loved teaching, and was exploring other venues to fulfill all her needs.

Delia noted she did a presentation on choosing between your professional and family life. She noted that as she wrote the proposal for her presentation, she realized that she had to make a choice because her grandmother’s 60th wedding anniversary conflicted with the presentation. She questioned if she should choose her profession or her family, but her family came first as she asked herself how she could miss her grandmother’s 60th anniversary. She could present numerous times in her career. She negotiated a solution that enabled her to attend her family’s event, and video-recorded her presentation so she could have it all.
Delia noted a student posed a question during a discussion session at the NLPA conference about whether all roles could be fulfilled and balanced (i.e., professional, mother, wife). Delia’s friend offered a realistic response and said that “you can try to have it all but you have to sacrifice and cannot give 100% to everything.” Her friend added “I’m not an excellent student but I’m a good student. I’m not the best employee but I’m a good employee.” Delia mentioned that she herself was not an excellent student but was a good student, and she was not the best employee, but was a good employee.

Delia noted it was difficult to come to terms with the idea that she could not do it all very well because she likes to give 100% to everything. But, faced with so many demands as a doctoral student in psychology, she could not do it all to that standard. She said that she struggled with that realization and that, at times, she ended up doing a lot of things haphazardly. She tried to balance everything, including her twenty-hour-per-week job which she needed especially now that the fellowship that she felt so lucky to have had ended. She was trying to be a stellar student and had high self-expectations. She wanted to be the best student she could be, and did not want to disappoint the professors who selected her to be in their program. She needed to accept that while she was not the best in her program, she did the best that she could do.

Encountering Agents of Support: The Importance of Good Mentoring

Delia found it was difficult to talk about her experiences in doctoral education, and felt she sounded negative, but acknowledged that she also had some great experiences involving people who had been supportive. She noted that it was nice to receive support from people whom she did not expect it. She encountered other students who were good willed, willing to be helpful, and supportive. Her new advisor was “awesome” and was the type of mentor that she originally expected. He had been there for her, and supported her from day one. She had an issue
with plagiarism that made her feel terrible. It felt terrible because she was working very hard on that project, and said her advisor and another faculty member were there for her, although the latter was not supportive to extent to which her advisor was. She noted she could handle discrepancies with students, and that the faculty support that she had was what had really made the difference for her to continue in the program. Delia stated that her experience in the doctorate had been the most challenging part of her life thus far.

Delia’s new advisor had also been supportive by finding job opportunities and writing letters of recommendation for her. She and her advisor understood each other. She said that if it were not for him, and partly for her former advisor, she would have left the program a long time ago. Delia noted that a professor from whom she requested a letter of recommendation asked her to write the letter, and said he would sign it, which in her view was not supportive and was not what a mentor did. She noted her advisor had written letters for her and showed her what he wrote. Her advisor checked up on her to ask how she was doing and encouraged her to talk to him if she needed anything.

Her advisor had also supported her when she received negative evaluation feedback from other professors due to having had trouble balancing things. When she received such feedback, she became emotional and her advisor was very supportive. He let her know he was there to help her finish the program. He encouraged her to not worry and just get things done. He reminded her repeatedly that her priority was not an external activity, but rather to finish the program. She noted hearing such things from her advisor was very encouraging. She noted that she then reminded herself that her priority was her academic work and not her job.

Delia received funding for her dissertation after she proposed it informally as her advisor and another professor drafted a request for funding. She noted that while it was great to get that
funding, it became a complicated issue and she almost wished it had not happened. Her advisor was very supportive and she really appreciated all he did. She noted that another positive aspect about her program was that she had plenty of training opportunities available. She noted that she had Spanish-speaking clients, and that the community she wanted to work with was available to her but that the supervision was not really there.

*Encountering and Facing the Unknown in Doctoral Education*

Not knowing the unspoken rules has been part of Delia’s experience as a Latina in a Ph.D. program in psychology. She did not know the politics or how to manage the red tape of her program. She also did not know how to approach faculty who essentially took her ideas. Even though she was invited to participate in the project, she knew that they would not know anything about the subject without having talked to her. She also did not know how to address such situations when the person using her ideas was another person of color. She did not know how to stand up for herself when she saw things happening around her.

Delia wished she would have been savvier. She wished she had been aware of all the red tape, about how to reach out, and about the things that one learns by tripping and falling. She realized that each challenge that came her way was not predictable, and that it was not possible for someone to be there to let her know exactly how to handle herself, or to tell her to focus on academics, and not worry if she had someone in the program who was not helping her out.

*Shifting Views about Latina/o Identity*

When asked about her ethnic identity, she self-identified as Latina, and more specifically Mexican American. She also identified with her father’s country of origin, but did not provide detailed information about that part of her identity. Delia felt her identity was solidly formed: she identified as a Mexican American born in the U.S. to parents of Mexican descent and it was easy
for her to describe her ethnic identity. She studied abroad in Mexico and emphasized the Spanish versus the English pronunciation of her first and last names, which denoted ethnic pride.

However, Delia recently found out that her father is from a country in Central America, as well as the reasons he kept that part of his identity to himself. Knowing about her father’s true ethnic identity was very surprising. She realized she had believed something for so long that was now different.

She wondered how she will integrate the new piece of information into her already set identity, since she did not know anything about her father’s country of origin. She noted she could not deny her Central American heritage because it was a part of who she was even though she did not know much about it. She noted it was hard for her to write or talk about her identity because it was complicated. Her identity was more complex than just saying I’m Black, I’m White, or whatever other ethnicity. She compromised by saying she was Latina. Delia noted she first had to further define her Latina identity to describe the role it played in her doctoral education experience.

Delia had a multicultural perspective, so she understood that ethnic identity was complex and not everyone was who they appeared to be. For example, if she saw another Latina she did not assume that the woman was Mexican. Delia thinks exploring clients’ identity is important and noted that this view and the way she sees clients was influenced by her experience. She saw clients through a cultural framework. For example, she had a client who had self-identified as Hispanic who never talked about her family. Delia knew she had to be direct when asking the client about how she identified, about how culture influenced the client’s perception of the world, and about the issue that distressed her at that moment.
Delia was an advocate for Latinos, and viewed being an advocate for people who do not have a voice, such as low income or undocumented populations, as both her professional and life mission. She thought about how everything she learned could apply to Latinos but acknowledged that the training was not always available. Delia noted her program was highly sensitive to multicultural issues, and although the program had lacked training focusing on working with bilingual populations, the program recently addressed it by hiring a faculty member that was bilingual.

Unexpectedly, the new bilingual faculty member turned out not to be the best mentor. Delia again experienced feeling marginalized by someone in her ethnic group when she reached out to the new professor to ask how she had made it in the doctorate but got no adequate response. Delia was disappointed by the professor’s dismissive response which was, “Oh I don’t remember. It was so long ago.” That situation was another hurtful experience Delia endured in the doctorate. She noted that she now questions what is it to be Latino and more specifically, what is it to be a Latina in higher education. She noted that the literature does not address either in-group/out-group or within-group marginalization issues that Latinos experience in higher education. These experiences had really changed her perception of what it was to be a Latino in higher education.

Delia had experienced a sort of culture shock that had made her question a lot of things including her identity, how the world functioned, and her view of the world. She was not in shock due to being in a predominantly White community, but was shocked about being in a predominantly White community where episodes of racism and other situations that she disagreed with took place. The other layer of culture shock was encountering Latinos who were not what she expected. She noted that these individuals had good goals and intentions, and they
meant well, and were supportive, and may have studied relevant things. However, their behaviors did not match what they studied and they actually perpetuated the very thing they were examining.

Being a Latina graduate student in her program made Delia question many things because it was not what she expected. In talking about her experiences in the doctorate, she realized she would benefit from therapy but wondered where she would go. She wondered where it was safe to attend therapy. For example, she pointed out that she worked with the only Spanish speaking psychologist that she knew, and this precluded her from seeing this individual for therapy. She thought many other students felt they could not talk about their experiences in doctoral education. She and other students kept a lot of their doctoral experiences to the selves and while she had been strong enough to continue in the program, there were other students who did not continue. She had experienced much sadness because her doctoral experience had been nothing like she expected. Her dreams had been shattered.

Considerations for Latinas Contemplating Doctoral Education in Psychology

Delia recommended to another Latina considering a Ph.D. in psychology to think about it. She advised another Latina considering a Ph.D. in psychology to be informed. However, she thought that she had informed herself and was misled. Delia was advised that the location of her doctoral program did not matter given that she would be in and out in five years, and would receive funding.

When Delia now thought about five years compared to the amount of years that she hoped to live, it seemed like a small amount of time. However, for Delia, it was not just five years, because it was five painful years that had changed her and shaped her perspective of the world and how she engaged in it. She wondered if she would have found a partner or be married
by now had she lived in a bigger city. She noted at her current stage, she was resisting putting things on hold. So Delia suggested that a Latina who is considering doctoral education should think about five years as an amount of time that could shape her into a completely different person versus solely as five years spent in school.

Delia recommended that a prospective student consider program fit, including location. A prospective student should consider whether, for example, she could live in a rural conservative Christian White town away from many things. Delia's program was far from the airport which made traveling home more challenging. She recalled an instance during which she broke down at the airline ticket counter because a flight was cancelled, and she could not go home. Delia urged the future doctoral student to think about her social support system. She suggested that the student consider whether her social support system was relatively close by, or if it was far away so that travel to reach her support would be expensive. Delia noted that as an undergraduate she could just drive for an hour and a half to get to her support system, but that she now had to drive 24 hours or pay $500.

Delia viewed fit as very important in choosing where to attend a doctoral program. She suggested potential students think about program match, about career goals, and what training opportunities are available through that program. She advised the potential student to ask questions of prospective mentors including, how do you mentor students? What is your perception of what mentorship is? What are concrete examples of how you mentor students?

She noted that it was difficult for her to provide this advice because she felt she followed these exact steps. She felt like she put a lot of effort into choosing a program that would be right for her by doing research, going to conferences, and networking with graduate students to know which programs to stay away from. Yet she still got it wrong.
To a Latina considering doctoral education in psychology, Delia suggested thinking carefully about what she wanted to do. Delia also suggested that a future doctoral student consider working a year or two prior to going to graduate school. This would enable the prospective student to figure out what she truly wants to do, and what she wants to get out of the program. This would help further refine her list of graduate programs. She noted being in graduate school and in a doctoral program was very different than undergraduate school because you had to make sacrifices. She noted that there was a psychological adjustment that you needed to make to being in graduate school.

The way Delia experienced the doctoral program was that while she was going through it, things were moving slowly and it was quite painful, but at the end of the semester it seemed like it was very quick and she would ask herself, “what happened?” It was somewhat unbelievable to think she was currently a fourth year doctoral student and she asked herself, “What happened? What have I done?”

The Essence of Delia’s Experience as a Latina Doctoral Student in Psychology, Step 7

Delia dreamt about becoming a renowned psychologist and, as an undergraduate, had been fostered and motivated to pursue graduate studies. She was very excited about doctoral education prior to relocating to a rural area to attend a PWI. Delia had invested much into choosing a program that would be safe and provide the kind of mentorship she wanted. She was disappointed as despite her preparatory efforts, she had encountered significant difficulties in her program. She came across a series of situations that resulted in quick disillusionment about her program. The fact that she viewed her experiences in the program as the most challenging in her life denoted just how troubling they had been for her. Delia was pleasantly surprised when she realized she would be part of a very diverse cohort. Surprise turned into discontent as her cohort
was quite cliquis, and she was astounded to realize that people in a doctoral program could act so immaturesly. Delia had met Latina/o peers but did not relate to them as she had expected as they had different values. Delia felt uncomfortable alienating others, and chose to not conform to her cohort’s standards or to those of her new circle of friends which resulted in the loss of her support.

Delia never expected to experience marginalization from peers and faculty of her own ethnic group. Her distress and feelings of loss were compounded when her adviser betrayed her in various ways. Delia later reached out to another Latina professor, but she was dismissive. Once again, Delia experienced feeling marginalized and let down by a person of her own ethnic group. Delia described those experiences as traumatic as they clashed with her worldview, along with prior experiences which presumed that Latinos were collaborative with each other. Delia abruptly came to the painful realization that Latina/os were not always supportive of each other and questioned her values and beliefs. She experienced significant psychological distress and noticed that she was no longer trusting or gregarious. She experienced culture shock due to living in a predominantly White community where there where episodes of racism occurred. Another layer of culture shock was to encounter Latina/o professors who were not what she expected and, even though they meant well, their behaviors did not align with what they researched, thus perpetuating those same issues. As a result of her experiences, Delia now wondered what it truly meant to be a Latina/o in higher education. Delia expressed some uneasiness in discussing her experiences, but her conviction was that her story needed to be told and explored as there were limited accounts of within group marginalization in the literature.

Delia’s transition into doctoral education was different from any prior transition. She was away from her usual support system, did not have the coping mechanisms she normally used,
and had to devise new ways to cope. She went to therapy, but felt limited given how small the town and the community of psychologists were. Delia felt discomfort as her therapist suggested she reached out to her adviser, not knowing that this person was the person she had trouble with. Delia did not feel safe enough, and thus tended to keep a lot of her doctoral experiences to herself.

Delia felt very lost with the dissertation process; she also experienced impostor syndrome and her self-esteem and self-efficacy were negatively affected. She questioned her decision to be in graduate school and no longer wanted to be an academician as she resisted compromising who she was. She engaged in much introspection, became more fatalistic even though she was not spiritual, and found a new meaning to her doctoral education by switching her area of study.

Delia struggled with making choices between her professional and family life. She also had high expectations and wanted to be a great student and worker but, given all that she had to manage, it was a very high standard to achieve. She felt pressure and this pressure sometimes resulted in doing things haphazardly, but she was moving towards accepting that doing good work versus great work would suffice. Her new mentor was key to her persistence as he was truly invested in her success and supported her through good and bad situations. Delia noted even her first adviser and the support of other faculty had contributed to her persistence. Delia also received support from peers who shared her values, and also revived an organization for Latina/o graduate students.

Delia was in the process of redefining her ethnic identity as she had recently learned new information about her heritage. This experience reaffirmed her multicultural outlook towards clients, and reminded her of the complexity and importance of exploring ethnic identity and not making assumptions about clients. Delia recognized the positive products of her negative
doctoral experiences including how resilient she was, and how her values were reinforced. Delia regained strength and confidence in her ability to successfully complete her degree, and found motivation in knowing that her life calling was to advocate for those who do not have a voice.

Situated Meaning Structure, Step 6, Elena

*Doctoral Education: The Next Step*

Elena came from a family in which academics was important. Although she was the oldest, she was not the first of her siblings to get a doctoral degree. She has a younger sister who attained a doctoral degree in another field. Elena was encouraged by the fact that her sister got a doctoral degree. After Elena became a widow, she returned to school because she suddenly had free time. It seemed things fell into place for her to return to school. She had time and energy so she decided to go into doctoral education. Elena stated that she felt like she was on an adventure, on a journey, and she was having a great time and enjoying doctoral education in psychology. She described herself as an eternal student. Elena noted that the doctorate in psychology was her third career, something new and challenging. She stated she was having a lot of fun working on her doctoral degree in psychology and that her expertise, experience, and academic training seemed to fit right in.

Elena’s experiences as a Latina psychology student included that she was the only one in her cohort that was bilingual/bicultural. She came into the program with clinical experience and was one of the older students. These factors made a big difference in her relationships with the other students. She thought the other students deferred to her because she had life experience and because of her age. Regarding being Latina, she thought she was just considered different from the rest of the group. She was asked questions regarding how advantageous it was to know both languages. She noted that most people viewed being bilingual positively. Others did not seem to
know how she would use being bilingual. They knew that Elena filled a niche, but it was not one they were interested in, so they were indifferent. Elena said that they were simply curious.

**Trailblazing Opportunities: Encountering and Navigating Challenges**

When it was time for Elena to start a practicum, the school could not offer any practicum experiences that made sense to her. Elena was a licensed clinician with a private practice but the individuals who would be supervising her in the available agencies had less experience than she did. Elena argued with the people in her program to let them know that she thought it was a waste of her money and time to do a practicum at an agency in which she had prior consultative relationships and community involvement. She did not think she would gain or learn much from doing a practicum in those agencies. She noted that the school did not really care about where she did a practicum. As far as they were concerned, she could go to any agency. Eventually, Elena created her own practicum, which she described as a little challenging.

Elena was invited by one of her professors to attend a workshop. The workshop was about an organization that was looking for licensed clinicians in private practice to do pro bono immigration evaluations. At the end of the workshop, she thought that this organization would be a place for her to get experience doing forensic work while providing a service. She had done evaluations for criminal court in the past, but she had never done evaluations for immigration court and she was interested in learning. Elena thought this would be a great experience for her. She was told by individuals in her program that they would be interested in having her pursue this as a practicum opportunity if she could find her own supervisor. Elena noted that initially when she sought the program’s support to get the practicum going, her program was not supportive. Elena noted that they were not involved in helping her get the practicum site started,
and that the unstated message was that it was fine if she got it done. She thought that they did not really care about whether she was able to get the practicum site or not.

Elena talked to individuals in the organization about whether they were interested in having a psychology student work for them. She said that they loved the idea, but could not pay for a supervisor as they were a non-profit agency and did not have money to provide a supervisor. Elena worked with the organization’s legal director, and with her school for two years to make this a viable project for her while she continued to take classes. Elena decided to not take another practicum until she could see whether she would be able to get this practicum started. The practicum finally came to be when Elena recruited two friends: one was a retired forensic psychologist to supervise her, and the other was another student who joined to work at the practicum. Elena created her own practicum site, and started her work there by responding to referrals from immigration lawyers.

She continued to work at this site, which had now been open for several years. She said that creating this practicum opportunity was not only for her benefit. She wanted this practicum opportunity to continue beyond her time there so Elena brought six other students to do internships at that practicum site. Since Elena was also an adjunct faculty for an academic program, she brought master's in social work (MSW) students into the site. She also recruited students from the social policy program as well as counseling students. Elena supervised the master’s level students in her practicum site. She said that the master's level students did very different work than she and other doctoral students did.

Elena noted she bought all the assessment tools that she used at the site, but recently had arranged for the organization to pay for some new assessment tools she had learned about. The organization gave them the space, a small office to work in, and she bought her own computer to
use at the practicum site. She said things had been acquired little by little. Though she had been purchasing the assessment tools they used in the practicum site, Elena recently started to receive some help with expenses for the interpretation of two of the psychometric tests they most commonly used. Elena did not get financial support for the work she did in this organization.

Elena stated the practicum site had become a very nice place to get training. They served clients from 170 different countries, and Elena planned to apply for a grant to see if she could expand their services. Elena was bilingual and 70% of the population they served at the site were Latinas. She noted it made a big difference for an evaluation to be done by a Spanish-speaking clinician versus having it done through an interpreter. However, Elena noted that she had to use interpreters when doing evaluations for people who were from Sudan, Somalia or other parts of the world.

This practicum provided Elena the chance to develop her skills. She planned to publish a paper focusing on the process of establishing a forensic site. Elena also encountered opportunities that she had no idea she wanted to pursue. Through her experience in her practicum, Elena realized she wanted to do her dissertation regarding Latinas who were victims of domestic violence. She was able to do her dissertation research at the practicum site. The practicum site also provided opportunities to other students for research, for program evaluation, and for mentoring Latinas into immigration work.

Elena stated that you are never a prophet in your own country, and noted that getting this practicum started was not really seen by her program as an important thing to do. She noted that now her school was very happy to have this practicum available. For Elena, the challenge was convincing the school that the practicum would do important work, and that it was a worthwhile endeavor. She said that initially the school did not really see this practicum as something
important. However, after Elena created the practicum site within the nonprofit organization, the school’s message was that it was nice that she did it.

She noted that there was no senior Latino faculty member in her program to provide mentorship for her. Elena stated that the message from her program had always been that it was nice that she had created the practicum opportunity, but that did not seem like real support. Elena stated that it was ok because she got recognition from other places. Elena received a scholarship via another organization to attend an important training in recognition for the work that she did. She said that she had been validated in many places. She had received very nice letters of recognition from people and agencies that kept her motivated. Elena enjoyed her work and thought it had been a very positive experience and very fulfilling. Elena was committed to the work that she and others did at the practicum site. Upon finishing her internship, she planned to obtain APA accreditation for the practicum site to be considered an Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) site.

Trying to maintain her private practice had been Elena's biggest challenge as she worked on her doctoral degree. She needed to keep the practice running in order to pay her bills, but doing so had been an interesting experience as she tried to juggle everything. If she did not need money, she would have probably shut down her private practice because Elena really enjoyed doing the work she did not get paid for. So, Elena compartmentalized: she was in private practice on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and she was at the practicum site on Mondays and Wednesdays. Elena dedicated Fridays to the internship application process, or other tasks that came up. She was very organized, and she said compartmentalizing was the only way that she could keep sanity. Elena noted that if something did not fit in a specific time slot, it did not get done.
Advocate by Default

Elena had taken the role of advocate, a role she did not expect to have. In her undergraduate program she did not have to speak up because she went to a university in which there were enough Latinos to talk about Latino issues. She noted that within her field of study as an undergraduate, it was very clear that she and all the students there viewed Latino issues as important. In her first master’s program there were also many Latinos as she attended that program in a city with a large Latino population. When she was doing her second master’s, again there were many Latinos so she never felt the need to speak up as much she did now. She did not feel that she needed to speak up until she came into the field of psychology, and realized that the people she encountered did not have a clue about Latino issues. She did not expect this and was surprised.

In the doctoral program, Elena gained an awareness of how few Latinos there were at that academic level. She was also surprised by the lack of Latino representation in psychology at the doctoral level. Elena knew three other Latinas who had gone through her program. She did not know if these women also took on the role of advocates, but thought most people knew that she did. Elena felt she needed to speak up for her identity and made her perspective clear. She did not feel like she needed to impose her perspective, she just wanted to articulate it. She noted that she did not know if she felt a sense of responsibility as much as simply wanting to voice that there was another point of view. She was willing to voice her perspective for whatever it was worth.

Elena voiced concerns about how others viewed certain issues and said she was always the one challenged to voice different perspectives. She said she probably became obnoxious, but she did not care if she was perceived in that manner. She noted that if she did not speak up, no
one else would discuss such matters. She said that someone had to voice these different opinions and asked why not her? Elena had to keep reminding people that when they made blanket statements about diversity, sometimes they ceased to understand what diversity really meant.

She was always the one who brought up diversity concerns. For example, if she saw a test that could not be used on a Spanish-speaking population, she voiced her concern. She explained that the reasons a specific test could not be used on a Spanish-speaking population would not always be apparent to other people. She would raise the concern about whether there would be a validation or norming of tests. Elena noted it was not so cut and dry when it came to looking at Latino families and the Latino perspective. Elena showed others how she perceived the issue at hand, then let them do whatever they wanted with it.

Elena had a class in History and Systems in which Latin American psychology was totally neglected, so she informed them that they were ignoring the Latino perspective. She noted that she was not stopped from voicing her opinion. She said that it seemed like it was ok for her to voice her view but it also seemed like they were not sure how it applied to them, so she explained she was just pointing it out. Elena noted that she enjoyed sharing a different perspective because she thought others learned from it.

Elena did not seek to get into the doctorate because she thought there was a need for Latina psychologists. She sought to get a doctoral degree because it was time in her life to go back to school and complete her education. She was open to see what would happen. She had no idea that there were so few Latinas in psychology. She was surprised and noted she thought that being Latina was a huge benefit for her, and never saw it as a disadvantage. In the past, being Latina had opened doors for her. She went into a specific area within administration, a field in
which there were very few Latinos, but she did not feel she made a significant difference in that arena. Elena said that as a Latina, she would be able to make a difference in psychology.

*Considerations for Latinas Contemplating Doctoral Education in Psychology*

Elena would tell another Latina interested in getting a doctoral degree in psychology to “get it!” Elena's niece was wondering what to do after getting her undergraduate degree and she encouraged her niece to go into psychology. However, she cautioned her that if she was getting only a master’s degree, the MSW was more advantageous than the master’s in psychology for a student who sought a terminal degree. She also noted that, although others would argue with her, having a MSW would help a student who subsequently sought to attain a doctoral degree in psychology.

Elena thought social work provided some useful training that was not provided in psychology programs. She stated that family systems theory, which was the foundation of social work, advocacy, and social justice, had come lately into psychology, but were not part of psychology in the same way. She noted that now there were social psychologists and different types of psychologists who were moving into those arenas, but social work was present a long time ago. It was Elena's opinion that social work had produced many studies with evidence about how and why these aspects were an important part of their education.

Elena said it was easier to go into psychology having a background in social work. She thought a MSW and a doctoral degree in psychology were a great combination. She noted there was a different educational focus in both fields. However, she said she had seen many people who went into psychology and who were more apprehensive about doing therapy with people. She also observed that people who went from a master's in psychology to the Ph.D. program
were missing some of the really solid interviewing skills that MSW graduates had, and that aided in dealing with the problems of disadvantaged individuals.

Elena would tell a Latina interested in a doctoral degree in psychology that the numbers spoke for themselves. She thought that if you wanted to make a difference, a doctoral degree in psychology was a good choice. She noted that a Latina who was interested in higher education and who wanted to get a doctoral degree would be well served by getting a doctoral degree in psychology. Elena suggested that a doctoral degree had more power than a master’s degree. She thought that because of the lack of Latinas in psychology, there was going to be plenty of room for Latinas for quite some time before they saturated the market. She said that a similar circumstance was not necessarily true in social work because there were a lot more Latinas in that field compared to psychology.

Elena noted that there will be more psychology jobs for doctoral level Latinas, and that it will be easier for them to get jobs. She thought that Latinas had a lot of advantages rather than challenges, and could have many opportunities. She stated that doctoral education in psychology was a wonderful place to be right now. Elena thought the doors were wide open with clinical, research, and academic opportunities. She would certainly encourage a Latina who had the stamina, and wanted a doctoral degree to get it.

The Essence of Elena’s Experience as a Latina Doctoral Student in Psychology, Step 7

Elena decided to start a doctorate in psychology simply because she thought it was the time in her life to do so. She reported she enjoyed being in classes and getting training, though was surprised by the lack of Latina/o students in her classes. She was also amazed as she did not expect people in her program would be so unaware about Latina/o matters. She inadvertently became the diversity spokesperson in her classes, she unintentionally started to serve that
function, and enjoyed sharing her knowledge. Being an older student, and one with prior clinical experience, Elena was respected by her peers and was sought out to answer their questions.

Dissatisfied with the practicum options offered by her program she did not settle, and started a practicum site with minimal support from her program. She was able to put her skills, her experience, and her networks into making this training opportunity a reality. The process took two years, but she noted that she was very pleased with how much she learned via this training opportunity. Elena felt it was very rewarding to realize how much they positively impacted people with all the work that they did at that training site. She also felt satisfied to know that several students got training there. She was committed to make this place an accredited site in order for it to provide more training to students, and to continue to provide services.

Elena coped by compartmentalizing as a way to be able to take care of all her responsibilities. Elena was passionate about her work and felt very happy to be in the field of psychology. She viewed being Latina as an opportunity, and noted that, as a Latina, there were many areas to explore within psychology. She described her doctoral experience as fun since her prior professional and academic experience fit right in. She was happy to be an “eternal student,” and had a strong commitment to continue contributing to her community.

Situated Meaning Structure, Fatima, Step 6

Feeling the Pressure of Latino Underrepresentation at Every Stage

Fatima said that she thought describing her experience as a Latina in a doctoral program in psychology was tough. She was a first-generation college student, and though now some extended family members have master’s degrees, no one in the family has earned a doctoral degree. Some of her cousins received their bachelor’s degrees and are educators. Fatima was the
first person in her family to go off to college and it was scary. She had to figure out everything on her own because she did not know who to ask for guidance. As an undergraduate, Fatima quickly connected with other Latinos involved in student organizations. It was easy to find other Latinos on campus since there were so few of them. Through them Fatima was able to find support.

Fatima always felt she needed to prove herself because she was awarded a four-year diversity scholarship from the university because they wanted minorities to attend, and thus diversify the campus. However, she was excited about the possibility of going to college and did not care about the reason she was awarded the scholarship. She decided she was going to that university. Yet throughout her time as an undergraduate, she was always aware that she had received a scholarship, and felt she needed to prove that she deserved to be in the university.

When Fatima was in her master’s program, she again noticed that her program was primarily composed of Caucasians, even in a city with a large Latino population. She wondered why her people were not in school. Her awareness regarding the lack of Latino representation in higher education settings motivated her to view success as her only option. It made her feel she needed to prove she could be successful and belonged at the university.

**Doctoral Education: Family as Social Support**

When Fatima searched for doctoral programs she decided to go online and look for programs available within her state, and in close proximity to where she lived. Fatima never thought to apply to doctoral programs out of state. Fatima was not married and did not have children, so she was free to go anywhere she would like, but moving seemed like too big a step to take. Fatima limited herself geographically because she felt she did not want to be alone as she lived with her mother, and they divided house payments equally. Later, her sister and nephew
moved in with them. When Fatima returned to school, her mother said that they would be able to make it economically solely on her mother's earnings. Fatima’s mother wanted to support her by letting her know that they still would be able to make things work even if Fatima could not contribute as much economically. Fatima credits much of her ability to return to school to the economic assistance provided by her mother. Her mother’s financial help allowed Fatima to complete her education up to this point. She could not imagine having to support her household while working on her doctoral degree.

Fatima’s experience might be different than that of her doctoral peers because she has always worked. She did not have a spouse or parent fully supporting her financially, and so not working was never an option for her. Sometimes she would be in class all day long, and would then go to work providing counseling services or teaching in the afternoons or on Saturdays. Fatima continued to teach at the junior college as an adjunct professor. She has always taught two to three courses because she enjoyed it and because it helped her financially.

*Encountering a Culturally Affirming Environment in Doctoral Education: Culture as a source of Empowerment and Change*

Fatima did not really know what to expect in terms of classroom requirements in the doctoral program. When she started her program, she opted to do a certification to provide psychological services for Spanish speaking populations even though her ability to speak Spanish was not optimal. Fatima understood and was able to read Spanish, but speaking it was very intimidating for her. Fatima applied to the doctoral program in her current university because the certification program to work with Spanish speaking populations required taking Spanish language courses, and courses about Spanish-speaking cultures. It also required her to conduct presentations, and learn psychology terminology in Spanish. She described the academic
aspect of her program as very positive, and thought that seeking training in Spanish was something that she needed to do.

Fatima described her experience at her current university as very different because it was located in a city with a population that is over 50% Latino. Many of the clients that they served via the university clinic were Latino, which contributed to making her feel supported in her program. One of the things that Fatima found interesting about her program was that the people who initiated the Spanish-speaking certification were Caucasian. She thought the emphasis on training in Spanish would have been originated by some of the Latino faculty in the program, but it was started by one of the training directors who was White. Fatima said she thinks that what contributed to the origination of this training was that the university recognized the need for Spanish-speaking clinicians because the university is located in an area with a population that consists of Latinos of low SES.

Unlike in past experiences, Fatima found support at the doctoral level for being bilingual and was encouraged to use her Spanish-speaking skills. She viewed her experience within her program as different from that of people from other programs that she heard about because her experiences were so collaborative. Fatima and other students in her program, even some who were in cohorts that were two or three years above or below her, became a very close knit group and they frequently discussed how they could help each other as students. They had open discussions about their expectations and experiences. Fatima said the faculty had a very "open-door" policy so students could truly go to them about pretty much anything. Fatima found her experience at her current university was very positive, and felt it was even more so as a Latina. Fatima said she thought her program really supported Latinos because they recognized the need for bilingual clinicians to provide services in the community. In the doctoral program, Fatima no
longer thought she needed to prove herself because she knew that she would be able to succeed academically with her program's support.

*The Constant Search for Balance: Managing Personal, Familial, and Professional Expectations*

The workload in the program and the actual course content was not a problem since it was something she could learn, but balancing school, work, and her personal life was difficult at times. The challenge for Fatima was to balance her professional life against her academic career and her family. She wanted to make time for everything, and wondered how to do that. She found it challenging to set limits. Fatima sought balance as a professional first, and then as an academic, as she was a licensed counselor in the state, and had continued to practice independently since she first came into the program.

The environment in her doctoral program helped Fatima as she sought balance but at times it was difficult because she set high standards for herself. She was the oldest student in her cohort, the one who had more work experience treating clients and being in the real-world. Fatima felt like she was more of a grown-up compared to her peers who were significantly younger. They would look to her for information including asking questions about what to do with administrative things such as insurance.

When Fatima started the doctoral degree she thought, “You’d better not miss class, and you’d better not miss a deadline, and if someone suggests you should volunteer for something, then you better go and do it.” Fatima did not feel like she could say no. She thought it would reflect badly on her as a student and as a professional. She thought it was important to do everything requested of her in the event that she needed future letters of recommendation. Fatima's professional reputation was very important to her; she felt like saying no to anything would not be perceived positively.
Fatima thought that these expectations were very much self-imposed. She noted that when she attended a PWI as an undergraduate, things were always harder, and she always felt like she had to work harder to prove herself. Sometimes Fatima did not have balance. Early on in the program, it was really difficult to have balance and she would feel herself getting burnt out. Fatima had to deliberately take a moment to tell herself that she would not do anything for a day and let herself be, that she would not do school-related things, or things with her family. She decided that her parents and her family would just have to understand how busy she was.

Over the last few years Fatima has had to deal with family members who have medical issues. She learned that she has to put her family first. Her biggest challenge was accepting that while her degree was important she would take whatever consequences that resulted from missing class or missing a team because she had to be at the hospital with a family member. Fatima realized that she needed to make her family a priority, and that school was not everything. If for some reason the doctorate did not work out, her family would be the ones who would be there to support her and help in whatever decisions she made.

Fatima said it was always a balancing act. Part of what made her realize she needed to prioritize family was a night-time visit to her mother in the hospital after attending class during a time when she had various finals week projects due. She had been up most of the night working on homework, and had to be at the clinic for a clinical team meeting the next morning, even though things were chaotic due to an incident that had taken place at the university. When Fatima got to campus her supervisor, who was aware that her mother was hospitalized, asked how her mother was doing and she started to cry. Fatima was surprised because she was not an emotional person, and did not cry easily. She did not take her personal business to school or vice versa. In fact, she said no one ever knew what was going on with her.
Fatima’s supervisor asked why she was there, and why she did not leave since everything was chaotic and they did not have clients. Fatima then realized that she could go see her family and take care of personal things without it being the end of her academic career. Fatima thought that was really the turning point for her and she decided to set some boundaries. Fatima stated “we’re psychologists, if we can’t understand the needs of each other, then how are we expected to do that for the clients we serve?”

Fatima said she thought the self-imposed requirements were just part of her personality, so they would continue to be an issue she needed to be aware of, and would have to work on. Fatima said she needed to continue engaging in self-analysis, and being self-aware to remind herself that she can take on family endeavors, that people will understand, and that she will continue to be viewed as a professional who continues to deserve to be in the doctoral program.

Even after being in the doctoral program for several years Fatima continued to feel that she was pulled in multiple directions. She chose not to go to a conference banquet because she had a family function to attend. Although her family understood she could not be with them at the moment due to a professional obligation, if attendance was optional, Fatima thought she should opt to do what the family needed. She made the choices that resulted in the least amount of guilt.

Fatima felt guilty many times because as a Latina, the family came first, whether it was your children and your spouse, or your parents and your siblings. She thought that expectation never really changed. She was not married and did not have children, but lived with her mother, her sister and nephew. Fatima made arrangements so that if her sister had something to do, she could be there to care for her nephew. Or, if there was a family engagement, she then arranged her schedule so that she could be there, as not being present made her feel bad. She also knew
that it made her family members feel bad, if for some reason she did not show up because of work or school. Her family understood that her work and academic endeavors were important but thought that it should not be more important than family.

When Fatima missed family obligations, things she felt really guilty as she had to decide which option she could live with better. She would go back and forth, weighing the personal and professional obligation against each other. There were times when the professional or academic obligation won because she had made commitments, and had to meet those obligations. Part of her decision making process was figuring out how to do it all in a day. She often tried compromising so that she could meet the professional obligation but also meet family obligations.

*Reconnecting with Culture: Ethnic Identity as Influence in Professional Endeavors*

Her Latina identity definitely played a role in her experience as a doctoral student in psychology because it steered her to the program that she eventually chose at her current university. Fatima was drawn to her doctoral program due to its Spanish speaking component. Driven by her Latina cultural identity, she took the risk to be embarrassed in a classroom while learning or presenting in Spanish; a language that was neither her first language, nor one in which she felt confident speaking. Fatima said she had felt like she lost touch with who she was, and with her culture for quite some time. She thought that this occurred between high school and the master’s program, because she was working, going to school, and doing, "what White people do.” Some of her family members referred to college and master's degrees as things for White people. Fatima explained that the notion behind that view was that Latinos believed it was important to work to support the family, so the family wanted to know what you were doing in school, and what you were going to do with that degree.
To explain or justify to her family why she was going to school was difficult, but she felt that in her college years she really was not in touch with her culture because she was very focused on school and work. She did what she needed to do to get through. Once Fatima finished her master’s program and was working, she had more time and wanted to learn more about her family, her culture and learn about the things that her grandmother did. She had lost touch with such things because she wasn’t spending a lot of time with family sharing stories about their cultural heritage and their family history. Fatima realized that the classes she took in the doctoral program allowed her to deepen her familial and cultural knowledge.

For instance, she had to do a genogram for one of her classes. Fatima spent time talking with her grandmother about their family and realized that she had not even known basic information about her grandmother’s life. Looking at her culture and roots across generations, she found out that her parents' families had been in the same geographical location and withstood historical changes. She realized that her family never immigrated. She said, “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.” It was very interesting to see in their family genogram when that shift happened, and how family members who fought in a Mexican war were then U.S. soldiers when the borders changed. Fatima thought her desire to learn more about her heritage, culture, and ancestry was driven by the Latino emphasis in the program she chose. She thought it had been very influential.

Fatima’s choice of training or practicum sites was also influenced by her Latino culture. In her practicum experiences, she worked primarily with children and families involved with the government agency that responds to reports of child abuse and neglect. She stated that in the state where she resides, and probably in most of the U.S., a disproportionate number of minorities are represented in that system. In her local area, she saw many Latinos. When Fatima
was providing counseling, she looked at some of the evaluations that she would get, and wondered if they were valid since assessments were done in English with people who had very limited English skills. After examining this situation, Fatima understood these assessments were done by the only people who were available to do them, and that the people responsible did not know what else to do.

The state required the assessments but they did not have bilingual therapists or culturally competent people to do them. They made do with what they had, but Fatima realized it was a real disservice to the Latino population. There were serious consequences from having someone conduct an assessment without taking into consideration the client's cultural norms. That realization greatly influenced Fatima’s focus and motivation to work with the Latino population. Fatima’s desire was also driven by her own experience of being frustrated or feeling misunderstood because as a Latina, she could really empathize with that component of this population’s experience. Fatima continually sought experiences that would enable her to learn more about Latinos, and that would also improve her Spanish language skills.

Considerations for Latinas Contemplating Doctoral Education in Psychology

Fatima said she would definitely encourage a Latina interested in a doctoral degree in psychology to pursue that goal if they were sure that a doctoral degree was what they wanted. She stated that it was crucial to inform prospective psychology students about the positives, and also the drawbacks, of choosing this field because a doctorate was necessary to do anything in the field. When Fatima talked to undergraduate students who said they found psychology interesting and said they wanted to get a doctoral degree, she told them she was glad they were interested, but that they should be aware that career options were limited with a bachelor’s degree in psychology.
Unfortunately when Fatima applied to school, she did not have that guidance. She had switched from pre-med to psychology and later realized she had to decide what to do next because nobody told Fatima that career options were limited with a bachelor’s in psychology. She wished somebody had filled her in, pointed her in the right direction, or dispelled some of the myths that she had about getting a doctorate. Fatima thought the doctoral degree would overwhelm her entire life, that she would be unable to do anything else while in the program, and that the program would be really stressful. She had this idea in her mind that it was all or nothing, and that her family would just need to understand that her doctoral process was going to be a very stressful time for her. However, though doctoral studies took a lot of her time, the program was not her whole life. She still managed to work, to go on vacation, and to do the things that she enjoyed doing. There were stressful times, but it was not all like she had imagined. Fatima felt that knowing some of those details early on would have probably put her at ease.

If students were set on doing a Ph.D., Fatima would definitely encourage and help them. She would help fill out applications and financial aid forms. She would help research the different programs and offer guidance about how to decide which program was the best fit based on career goals. Fatima already had helped individuals with that process. Recently, she was approached by a Latina with whom she interacted at work who was exploring Ph.D. programs. The Latina asked what Fatima recommended. Her suggestions included figuring out where she wanted to work geographically, deciding if she wanted to work locally, and choosing which population she wanted to work with. Fatima further recommended that prospective applicants research what kind of training different programs provided. Also important would be to identify their passion, and focus and decide if they wanted to learn how to do research, or if they wanted
to be clinical service providers. Such decisions would help guide what program emphasis to choose.

In Fatima’s experience, the people who asked her about applying to doctoral programs simply wanted to know where to start. It was important to Fatima to help them go in the right direction in terms of what to look for, to find necessary information, and to clarify what certain terms mean. For instance, people were confused about terms such as Scientific Practitioner or Scholar Practitioner. Fatima said she thought of her role as simply to provide information.

Fatima would recommend any Latina interested in doctoral education in psychology to definitely pursue it because she thought this profession needed more Latinas. In her opinion, if someone had the ability to pursue the doctorate, they should complete it. For Fatima, the ability to pursue the doctorate meant being able to move, or to finance doctoral education, and having family support. For a Latina, family support was important because not having that support would be a big hurdle. Family support especially mattered if the possibility of becoming a one-income family needed to be considered. However, if prospective students had family support, and the opportunity to pursue a doctoral degree, they should definitely take it. She felt very hopeful when a Latina wanted to pursue their Ph.D. in any field, but specifically in psychology.

The Essence of Fatima’s Experience as a Latina Doctoral Student in Psychology, Step 7

Fatima was the first in her family to attend college and had always gone about her educational matters on her own. Fatima felt compelled to prove that she belonged in the academic setting, and realized she was one of few Latina/os in her academic programs. Having that awareness pushed her, even more, to be successful. Fatima felt her doctoral program was a welcoming environment, and no longer felt she had to prove herself. She had the support of
faculty and peers. However, she experienced doctoral education as difficult due to all the responsibilities she had to manage, and sometimes felt overwhelmed.

She decided to stay close to her family while she pursued her doctoral studies, and noted her family’s support actually made it possible for her to be in the doctorate. She valued being of service to Latina/os, and sought opportunities to work with her community. She challenged herself by seeking opportunities to learn more about the language and culture, and by seeking placements where she could work with Latina/os. Fatima felt very pleased as she gained more knowledge about her family history and cultural heritage via her doctoral experience.

Fatima was very dedicated, viewed her professional commitments very seriously, had high self-expectations, and found it was hard to set limits in relation to work and academics. She struggled and felt guilty when having to choose between work, school, and her family. She had experienced stress due to trying to balance all of her commitments. Further, when she was unable to make family functions, she felt bad, especially when her family brought it to her attention.

A family situation allowed her to realize that she needed to be more mindful of the lack of balance in her life. Further, she also realized that it was acceptable and possible for her to take care of family matters without being perceived as less professional. Fatima realized that she would need to continue to work on this matter, but allowed herself to be more flexible and empathic to her own needs.

Situated Meaning Structure, Gloria, Step 6

Taking Hold of Education as Opportunity

Gloria’s parents finished high school, and she was born when they were very young. Her father did not continue his studies in order to be able to provide for the family. Her mother completed a very short career. Later, trying to get ahead, the family came to the U.S. It was a
rough transition for them. Gloria came to this country at the age of 16 and started high school. Gloria and her parents did not know the system, and looked for help and information. Gloria's personal goal was to study, and she believed it was a task that she had to commit to.

A teacher told Gloria about a community college that admitted everyone, and she made up her mind to go there. Gloria did not pass the exam required to get into the community college; she was told she needed to take remedial courses for two years. She refused to take two years of remedial courses, and was determined to pass so she decided to study and take the exam again. Gloria was criticized for wanting to take the exam again, and was told that she was not likely to pass given that she did not even speak English. She felt very angry about what she felt was contemptuous criticism, and she determinedly studied, took the exam, and passed. Gloria acknowledged that the criticism affected her greatly, but it also helped her be even more firm about passing that exam. She believed these types of experiences gave her strength.

Gloria completed a degree in psychology, and then realized she could not do much with a bachelor’s degree in psychology. She took the next step, attained her master's degree, and eventually decided to go for the doctorate. Gloria thought about how she decided to study her master’s degree, and noted that it was during that time that she gained more confidence speaking English. Gloria sometimes found what she was doing incredible because she spoke so little English when she immigrated.

She thought about when she worked as a receptionist in a mental health clinic, and noticed that all the people who spoke Spanish sought her out to talk to her. Gloria told these individuals that she was not a therapist, and they implied that the therapist did not know how to help them, and/or did not understand them. When Gloria saw the need of these Spanish speaking individuals, she recognized she had a desire to help them. She also had a fondness for
psychology, and so she realized that she wanted to enter this field. When she thought about her educational path, she was amazed that she was providing therapy sessions despite her difficulties with the English language.

To succeed, Gloria saw studying as what she needed to do, and she visualized it. When she looked back, she realized that it was difficult, but she was now fulfilling her goal. She viewed herself as either having been very lucky, or having a big angel that guided her to a supportive university that highly valued diversity. She completed her master’s degree in the same university. Upon starting her doctoral degree, Gloria experienced various fears. Her greatest fear was language. She felt afraid because she was accepted into the program despite not having made the required score on an admissions exam. She felt greatly satisfied and very encouraged to continue because the faculty valued her work, and believed she could handle the doctorate.

Encountering and Managing Dissimilar Relational Dynamics in Doctoral Education

Gloria experienced more difficulties with non-Latino peers outside the academic context, rather than academic problems. She and other Latino peers provided support for each other. They had common interests, but needed each other’s support to carry on with their projects and the doctoral degree. They discussed when they felt discrimination from other peers, as well as other difficult situations that arose. She said that perhaps the similarities between them facilitated the ability to establish conversations and talk about projects and ideas with each other.

Gloria did not feel supported by non-Latino peers. She experienced non-Latino peers as generally guarded and also as guarded about their work and their thoughts. She noted that at times they viewed Latinos as competition. She noted that when she asked non-Latino peers about their work or their opinions, it was not competition or wanting to steal their ideas, but rather a desire to know if she understood something well. She asked questions about work as a way to
know if she was on the right track. These conversations were not easy to have with non-Latino peers. Gloria viewed the experiences with non-Latino doctoral peers as different because they did not understand in a way a Latino peer would understand.

She gave the following as an example: Live supervision trainings took place in teams of about six students, and there was a Caucasian student who was part of the supervision team who made comments that inadvertently affected the rest of the team. In one particular incident, the student made an offensive comment about a Mexican client saying that the client was poor because the client wanted to be poor. Gloria understood the client another way. She knew that the client was undocumented, which made it more challenging for him to find a job. Unlike Gloria, her peer did not view the client as a hardworking person who wanted to improve his life and better provide for his family. Gloria thought it was unjust to view the client as someone who was poor by choice, rather than empathizing with the fact that he left his family in another country in an effort to fight for a better life. To avoid conflicts with peers, Gloria chose to keep her opinion to herself when encountering such contrasting opinions. Afterward, she shared her thoughts with peers who viewed things in a similar way.

Managing Familial Responsibilities and Doctoral Education

Gloria found that being in the doctoral program was very difficult not only due to academic concerns, but also because of home-related matters. Although her parents understood that being in school was hard, at times they did not understand that working, going to school, and also trying to educate her child was very difficult. Gloria was pregnant when she started the doctorate, and her child and her boyfriend moved into her parent's house. She said it was difficult to balance all that was involved with the doctoral degree, and fulfill her responsibilities as a daughter, a sister, and a mother. She thought it perhaps was also difficult for her parents to
understand or to know how to support her. Gloria sometimes tried to explain what being in the
doctorate entailed, including why it involved so many extra hours of work outside of school.
However, at times it was still difficult for her parents to understand. Sometimes she would just
let it go and would not explain; at other times Gloria was very intentional about putting
everything out in the open so her family would see when they misunderstood what was going on
for her. Gloria’s parents did understand at times, and helped her when they would suddenly
realize that they had become very demanding of her.

One of the conflicts that Gloria had with her parents was that both she and her boyfriend
worked much of the time, leaving her child in her parent’s care. Gloria noted, however, that her
parents had invited them to move in to help with the child while Gloria was in the doctoral
program. An internal conflict Gloria experienced was feeling that she did not dedicate enough
time to her child as she had to work to pay for daycare and other needs. In addition to working,
Gloria also had school and practicum responsibilities. Gloria sometimes had moments when she
felt she did not provide her child with the needed attention, and she thought that her mother did a
very good job of reminding her of it.

Gloria's mother, at times, would tell Gloria that she did not attend to her child. Gloria said
it was not that she deliberately did not attend to her child, but that she was occupied with school
assignments that were due. She thought her mother mentioned such things so that Gloria would
give her child a little more attention, and perhaps because her mother was tired and needed a
break from helping take care of the child. However, Gloria felt hurt when her mother said that
Gloria preferred to take care of school matters rather than be with her child. This situation caused
her pain. Gloria tried to compensate for moments away by making the time she spent with her
child more meaningful. She reminded herself that this situation would not be everlasting. She
wanted her doctoral degree now so that her child would have a better life later on, in a few more years. Gloria noted that her mother suddenly realized what was truly going on, and, when she did, she gave Gloria a break, and even defended Gloria by telling other people what Gloria was involved in. When her mother gave Gloria less of a hard time, or defended her, she realized that her mother noticed what she was going through.

The aspect of not being a mother 100% affected Gloria a lot. Not being there for her child 100%, sometimes made her feel that she was not there at although she wanted to be. Gloria acknowledged that balancing what her family said to her was why she felt it was so difficult at home.

*Personal Empowerment via Doctoral Education*

Gloria said that the fact that she was a woman working on a doctoral degree made her feel stronger. Her motivation for working on her doctoral degree was her child. Her child gave new meaning to her life and she worked on getting her doctoral degree so that her child would have more opportunities. She said it was no longer as much for her, as it was for her child to be able to have a better life. When Gloria thought about what she was doing, she felt great inner strength, and that she could accomplish many things.

Despite all her successes, at home Gloria continued to be the daughter and sometimes felt as if her accomplishments were only outside of the house. Gloria noted that there were times when she felt grand and then other times not. However, realizing all that she had accomplished outside of the house, and being able to help others gave Gloria great satisfaction even if there was not much economic gain. Gloria helped others in various ways including as a therapist and a supervisor. Being called upon by others to consult gave her much strength. Gloria realized that she was doing things that she never imagined she could do. She never thought she would be
supervising master’s level students in English and Spanish, or that her peers would seek her out to consult. Those accomplishments conveyed to Gloria that she was somebody, that she was accomplishing something. Gloria had recently reached another milestone when she proposed her dissertation and it was approved. She was reminded that she only had two things to complete, internship and dissertation, to become a doctor. She felt very excited to think that she was almost there. Gloria recalled thinking that finishing the doctorate was something that was very far away. It was unbelievable that she was now applying to internships, even if she felt the anxiety associated with such process. Gloria said that she found it all so astonishing given that she came to this country without speaking English, and with a family who did not know how guide her to continue in school. Gloria noted she sometimes needed to reminisce about why and how she started on this path.

One of her other motivations to attain her degree was to not have to depend on anybody. When she was young, Gloria was told by her grandmother that she had to learn to cook, wash, and keep a house to cater to a husband who would provide the money needed to live. Gloria said she does not want to depend on someone else although she does want to share her life with someone.

**Shifting Views about Latina/o Identity**

When Gloria came to the U.S. she felt very embarrassed about her ethnic and cultural background. She felt both embarrassment and shame because others viewed her as inferior. Gloria has gained the strength to own her ethnic and cultural background despite her thick accent. She felt that she was being proactive about changing the image others have of her people and of her background. Gloria noted that she is now proud of her ethnic and cultural heritage and that it does not weigh on her.
At one point, Gloria was embarrassed to speak, fearing that it would show that she did not belong in a professional or academic environment. Sometimes Gloria still had moments during which she encountered those feelings, even after being in this country for twelve years. However, Gloria said she was now in a place where she felt proud to be herself, proud of her family’s ethnic roots, and proud to be teaching only Spanish to her child. She said she no longer felt embarrassed to acknowledge her ethnicity with clients who asked where she was from when they heard her accent. She noted that people always said her accent did not sound like they assumed a person of her ethnic background would sound. These kinds of experiences with clients used to make her feel shame, but now she owns her ethnic background and happily self-identifies it because it gives her much pride.

**Ethnic Identity: Professional Opportunities and Challenges**

The role Gloria’s Latina identity played in her graduate education experience was very important. The reason Gloria began to study psychology was to help Spanish speaking people. She wanted to help Latinos in general, but specifically wanted to help people with whom she identified on the basis of language. When she started at her current university, she did not realize that they offered training to work with Spanish speaking populations, but only became aware of it much later. When she realized her university valued diversity and bilingual skills so much that they trained students to have the ability to provide therapy in Spanish, she thought it was just the right place for her. Gloria viewed her identity as influential in the majority of her work, including her dissertation.

As a supervisor she encountered multiple learning opportunities as well as challenges. Gloria thought that she did more work than her peers and that, in general, Latinos’ work often required more effort. When she started school, part of her education involved supervising a team
in Spanish. Supervising a team in Spanish was more involved than supervising a team in English since Gloria had to help her supervisees practice, in addition to learning words and utilizing a professional vocabulary in Spanish. At the same time, she had to assure that they took Latino culture into account, and were ethical in their dealings with Latino clients. In supervising the English team it was also necessary to see that things were being done ethically, and that the client’s culture was taken into account. Part of what made that task relatively easier was that the theory used was based on their own culture. Supervising the Spanish team was more demanding since it took more work for students to be competent with Latino culture and language, while also assuring that clients were receiving good service and feeling understood and helped.

Gloria thought sometimes supervising a team in Spanish was double the work. When a Spanish team was formed at work, it involved translating many of the programs into Spanish and finding appropriate exercises for the Spanish speakers, since the exercises that were written in English were not always appropriate for the Spanish-speaking population. As a Latina, Gloria thought she had a responsibility to help other Latinos and other peers in general. She also felt she had to model how to provide support for each other. She said that although she did double the work, she felt very satisfied because in the end the purpose was to help. Gloria thought that her sense of responsibility to help was partially tied to collectivism among Latinos, and she noted that in addition to being a therapist, she at times played other roles, including that of a social worker to help people who did not have access to resources.

At times having the extra workload was tiring. For example, in addition to providing two assessments per day at her practicum site, one psychologist asked Gloria to join him in meeting with clients who did not speak much English. This made her feel mentally exhausted because she had to attend to what the psychologist and the client said and then translate. In addition to her
responsibilities in the practicum site, Gloria sat in as an interpreter for many interviews, and it was rough because these interviews were also mentally tiring. While sometimes it was not necessary for Gloria to interpret, she again had to be mentally alert to attend to the therapist and translate as necessary. Gloria also experienced being frequently asked to contact various clients and inquire about their needs, or provide information when no other Spanish speakers were around. Such examples showed why Gloria said that bilingual Latino therapists carry a heavier workload.

Fitting in Self-Care and Support Networks

Gloria’s drive from work at the end of the day was her time to relax and unwind. After a heavy workday, she had up to an hour to unwind in her car during her commute and listen to peaceful, relaxing music. Her commute was the only chance Gloria had to unwind because once she was home, her child was waiting for her. Gloria unwound by doing something that had absolutely nothing to do with school and work. Listening to music and singing were her hobbies for nearly a year because music distracted her for a while, which was very helpful.

At some point in the past, Gloria had stopped visiting with friends due to work and other responsibilities, but decided that it was important for her to allow herself to spend time with friends. Gloria reconsidered the amount of time she spent with friends when she realized she felt bad because they were no longer including her in plans. She also realized that it was an important respite that helped her keep up with everything. There were times when friendships were a lower priority, as when the work load was heavier and stress accumulated most (such as during exams). But the desire to reconnect with friends would suddenly resurface after the stress subsided and there was free time. Having contact with friends was very important because Gloria considered
them her support. If they no longer contacted each other, then that support was no longer available to her.

While in the doctoral program, having external support in addition to that of her parent’s was important. Gloria had several groups of friends. She had friends in the doctoral program with whom she talked about academic and professional matters, and another group of friends with whom such matters were not discussed. Conversations with friends from school included talking about what worried them, or issues that they saw as wrong. With other friends, the interaction was just socializing. Gloria felt supported just by knowing her friends were there for her, and that she could spend a relaxed afternoon without talking about school or work.

Considerations for Latinas Contemplating Doctoral Education in Psychology

When other Latinos expressed a desire to attain education, Gloria felt delighted and enthusiastic since their interest potentially increased the number of people representing Latinos. Gloria said she would tell a Latina interested in attaining a doctorate in psychology that yes, it can be done, and it would be a great satisfaction that would bring a lot of good things to her. Gloria would ask a Latina interested in a doctoral degree in psychology what she needed and how Gloria could help her. She felt very happy when others expressed interest in the study of psychology, and she was greatly enthused when a young woman who had emigrated from Mexico expressed that she was contemplating psychology as a career. Gloria inquired about her interests, encouraged her, and informed her about master’s degrees and the various types of doctoral degrees available. No one provided guidance or explained things such as differences between a Psy.D. and a Ph.D. when Gloria looked into doctoral degrees. As a result, Gloria was willing to provide help even if the young woman was not interested in pursuing psychology.
Gloria said looking into doctoral degrees was challenging because the information was complicated and not easily accessed. Gloria said that it was difficult for her, and the difficulties she faced, motivated her to help another person with the information she now knew. Many opportunities existed though they were difficult to find, since only some people knew of them so one needed to be persistent and dedicate a great amount of effort. Gloria would tell a Latina interested in a doctoral degree in psychology that a doctoral degree in psychology would allow her to make a difference in her life and in the Latino community. She also noted that such degree would help take away the negative image that others have of Latinos, and increase Latino representation in this important field. Gloria would provide all the support that she could.

The Essence of Gloria’s Experience as a Latina Doctoral Student in Psychology, Step 7

Gloria was very proud about all that she had accomplished via doctoral education. She was pleased as she had found a program that was welcoming and valued her as a Latina. She was proud of herself because she provided therapy, supervision, and consulted with peers and professionals, even though she had questioned whether she was meant to be in the academic setting. Gloria had not always been proud of her ethnic heritage, and also felt insecure when she started the program due to her challenges with the English language. The success she experienced in relation to all the responsibilities involved in her doctoral education seemed to have resulted in increased self-efficacy. Feeling good about herself and her accomplishments appeared to have also allowed her to embrace her cultural heritage again, and to be more accepting about where she was, and the progress she made, in relation to language.

Gloria felt supported by the faculty in her program and by her peers, especially her Latina/o peers. She expressed disappointment because some non-Latino peers were not as easy to get along with, and some had made racist remarks. Gloria felt the support provided by her
Latina/o peers was especially important when she had to discuss comments that she felt were insensitive or inappropriate. She believed everyone involved in the doctoral process should be supportive of each other, and tried to behave in accordance to such belief.

Gloria experienced internal conflict due to having to choose between personal, academic, and professional matters. Gloria experienced guilt due to not attending to her family, specifically, to her role of mother, as much as she would like. Gloria compromised by making her time with family meaningful. She endured some level of conflict at home due to a lack of understanding about the reasons she dedicated so much time to her professional and academic matters. Gloria was aware that these sacrifices were temporary and expressed happiness due to being closer to program completion. She felt empowered due to all she had learned, looked forward to helping her community, and having the opportunity to give her family a better life.

Situated Meaning Structure, Hilda, Step 6

*Viewing Education as Opportunity*

While Hilda was growing up, she recalled her mother would attend classes and study for the high school equivalency exam. Her mother grew up in an area of a Latin-American country where she did not have access to education past elementary school. Her mother did not want to forget what she learned and kept going back, repeating the last possible grade year after year.

Hilda was able to attend college because of a scholarship that paid for her undergraduate education. She completed her undergraduate degree, got married, had a child, and life happened along the way. Hilda relocated to the state where her family now lived, and when she was struggling to find a job, her sister asked her to consider going back to school. Hilda was not sure about the idea of going back to school but if she did, she thought she might as well do something that would be of use to her. She decided to apply to a university that offered a certification to
work with Spanish speaking populations. She applied only to this university and was accepted. Hilda completed her master’s degree and decided to see what would happen if she applied for the doctoral degree.

Hilda’s experience in her program has been one of pure amazement. She still could not believe that she was given the opportunity to be in a doctoral program. Hilda’s university was expensive, so she applied for and received scholarships; she was awarded a specific scholarship that was bestowed every year. She noted that had it not been for her first undergraduate scholarship and for the scholarship that currently paid for everything, she would not be in the doctoral program. Hilda stated she was starting to become emotional talking about her path to the doctoral program. She noted there had been so much that she had not talked about. She said that it was phenomenal seeing how far she had come because of opportunities that had become available to her.

A Supportive Academic Environment: Beyond Being a Student

Hilda felt it was very rewarding to know that she was accepted to her current university and felt happy to be attending. She did not think she would have applied to a doctoral program elsewhere. She noted that there was a very deep sense of community at her current university, that the professors were very open. Hilda noted that the professors in her program were really personable and down to earth, unlike what she had heard about professors in other schools who take on the persona of the “mighty professor.” Her professors were really encouraging, and because they knew that she was the first in her family to attend college, they were even more supportive, and asked how they could make things easier. Some of Hilda’s professors, like the director of the clinic where she did her practicum, were helpful simply by having their door open and being available to talk no matter how busy they were.
Hilda thought her professors were also very helpful with guidance writing the dissertation and applying for internships. She noted she did not know if her peers felt the same way about their professors, but she felt that her professors were not so much holding her hand, but going on the walk with her. Hilda noted that if she had difficulties with a group or a client, she could always find someone to consult with. She noted she also felt support when she was in supervision. She also expressed that given the theories they used, the supervisors always wanted to give positive feedback, but she told them she also needed to know what to work on so she could improve.

Hilda’s faculty were interested in how she was doing as a person, how she was doing as a student, and how she was doing as a mom. Hilda thought it was good that they cared about all the aspects of her life rather than only her role as a student. She felt that the faculty helped her take care of herself. The faculty asked Hilda and other students what they did for self-care. Hilda talked with a professor who had participated in an extracurricular event several years in a row, and told him she would like to do something like that one day. He asked if she thought others would want to partake in that activity, and Hilda told him that she thought they would. The professor noticed that people in the program were getting stressed out, and said getting involved in that activity would be great; it would allow students and faculty to interact and have conversations on a different level. She thought it was great to see them outside of the classroom. Hilda thought it was amazing that professors, students, and former students participated in the activity. In that activity, they bonded and many people did positive things. Hilda noted that their involvement in this activity was also fundraising for a cause.
Part of what positively impacted Hilda’s experience in the doctoral program was that the school had a strong multicultural emphasis. Their location was in a city with a large Latino population, and the training program focused on working with Spanish speakers. She noted that professors asked them what areas they needed to consider when conceptualizing Latino families, couples, and individual clients. Hilda noted professors encouraged them to keep culture in the back of their minds, and that culture was always discussed in their classes. They also always discussed culture in any presentations, whether at school, at a conference, or out in the community, so they were able to use their own experiences as Latinas.

Hilda co-facilitated a workshop for employees who were reportedly having difficulties due to stress at their company. She noted that the topic of the workshop was self-care, and that all of the employees identified as Latina/o. Many of the employees were mothers as well as daughters and sisters, and many of them mentioned they were having difficulties because they felt pulled in too many directions. Hilda noted that the facilitators were able to bring culture into the conversation. She was able to discuss aspects of Latina/o culture, including that as a Latina you have so many different roles that do not stop. Hilda noted that as Latinas, she and others found it comforting to be around their family, because it could be nurturing for the spirit, but she recognized that this was not always the case for everyone. She was able to talk about how to notice when they needed to get that nurture from their family and when they needed to do something different.

Hilda used a rope analogy to talk about what she did when she felt pulled in many directions, and said that she reminded herself that she had to pull in all of these ropes tighter towards herself so that when she lets go, they won’t stretch as far. She also engaged in
exploration of self-care, and noted that when she felt overwhelmed it was a reminder that she was overlooking self-care.

As a Latina graduate student, Hilda did not get to see her child as much as she wanted, but coped by making sure that when she was home prior to her child's bedtime they read a story and prayed together. Hilda ensured she set aside time that was solely dedicated to her child. Whenever Hilda did any type of counseling, she changed clothes as soon as she came home, even before talking to anybody. Changing her clothes was a way for Hilda to feel work was not following her home. Hilda noted that she left the therapist outside of the house. Hilda the therapist was only at her practicum sites and at school. At home she was a daughter, mom, and sister. Hilda also said that as a Latina graduate student, she was not often able to have alone time other than being at the library, which is not how she prefers to spend her free time. She noted that being able to do fitness activities allowed her to have enjoyable time alone.

*The Importance of a Trusted Network of Professional Peers*

Hilda spent time with friends with whom she shared the commonality of being in graduate school. They all knew psychology terminology, and they knew that they did not have to discuss professional matters if they did not want to. She stated that they could be themselves and socialize with each other. Hilda expressed that she consulted those same trusted peers when she found herself pondering a particularly difficult case, or when she needed to talk about a situation related to school, classes or her family. She noted it was great that they were sounding boards for each other.

Hilda liked doing trauma recovery work. She wanted to make sure that she got experience while under supervision to assess if she would be able to handle working with families and children who have experienced trauma. She chose her work site to test whether she,
as a mother, would be able to work there and not constantly think about work at home. She noted that there had been one to two cases that she could not leave behind in the office. One situation that involved a baby and mother impacted her and “blew her mind.” Hilda kept thinking about this situation and decided she had to seek out her support network. She realized she needed to process what she was experiencing due to that specific case, and needed her peers to help her get to a place where she was no longer ruminating about it. Hilda noted that her peers also provided support for her when she felt stuck with a client. She noted that when she was frustrated due to being stuck with a client, it was helpful to get their feedback or suggestions about what to try or what to ask. She noted this was another reason why it was great to have peer support.

**Being Latina as Opportunity**

Hilda’s Latina identity opened doors for her. She earned her master’s in the same university as the doctorate so many of her hours transferred, which shaved off a year of coursework. Hilda noted that she accessed all the courses she needed right away, finished her coursework in three years, and had the fourth year free for an internship. She noted that it was great to not have the other alternative, which would have been four years of coursework and a fifth year for internship.

Hilda thought that being Latina and bilingual allowed her access to certain training opportunities. She noted that one of the requirements of the contract at the site where she worked was to have a bilingual therapist. No bilingual students from previous cohorts wanted to work there so Hilda took the opportunity after it was offered to her cohort. Being bilingual allowed her to do her offsite practicum a year earlier, and then apply to internship during her current year. She viewed it as a luxury to have been able to go offsite earlier, and to work at a practicum where she translated for immigration hardship interviews, and for letters related to the Violence
Against Women Act. Hilda noted that the psychologist she worked with was not bilingual. Thus, if Hilda had not been bilingual, she would not have been able to be of service.

Hilda noted that being a bilingual Latina not only gave her access to many great training opportunities as a student, it also facilitated the process of therapy. It enabled Spanish speaking clients to share more with her than with others who were not, or did not appear to be, Latina/o. For example, Hilda’s peer once saw a client weekly for about a month. The sessions were in English because her peer did not speak Spanish, and the client shared only superficial information. The client was transferred to Hilda and noticing that Hilda was Latina, the client asked if she spoke Spanish. Hilda answered affirmatively. Hilda described their sessions together as very rich with the client providing a great deal of information. Hilda thought perhaps since the client had not been able to speak her own language, she may have not been as comfortable discussing as much with the peer as she did with Hilda.

*Discovering and Reflecting on Ethnic Identity via Graduate Education*

Hilda noted that throughout her years in graduate education she reflected on her own identity. In the city where Hilda previously lived, when she was asked about what she was (her ethnicity) she did not understand the question. Hilda was part of a military family that moved every two years, and as a child she did not realize she was Latina. Hilda often visited the Latin-American country her family had ties to, and knew they spoke Spanish, but she thought that everyone did. When she started high school, people did not know what group to place her in. She said that the school she attended in that city was composed of mostly African Americans, followed by a very low percentage of Caucasians. Hilda was asked what ethnicity she and her sister were, if they were mixed, and if either of their parents were Black. She responded that she
did not think either of her parents were Black, and she noted she did not have any idea about matters related to ethnicity.

One day while living in that area of the country, Hilda returned from school and her asked her parents, “what am I?” and they asked her what she meant. She asked if either of them were Black and they said no. Hilda asked them to tell her what she was and her father replied that she was human. She does not know if he was trying to be funny, or if he also did not understand what she was truly asking. Hilda returned to school, still not knowing the answer to the question of who she was. She told her peers that neither one of her parents were Black, and they seemed to be satisfied with that answer.

Hilda noted when her family moved to the state where they currently reside, she experienced a huge culture shock because she had adapted into the culture of the area in which they had resided for two years previously. She even spoke with an accent. Hilda knew that during holidays, they ate typical dishes from a Latin-American country, but she was not really aware that she and her family were different from anyone else’s family. When they relocated to that new area, people continued to question her about her ethnicity and about why she spoke the way she did.

It was not until she became an undergraduate that Hilda started to gain awareness about what her family did differently than other Latino families. Hilda spoke Spanish but was viewed as not Latina enough because she sounded like a White person when she talked. She noted she did not have extended family around while growing up. She did not know common folk stories and other customs. She noted all her family would sit at the table together and that, unlike some other Latino families, hierarchies were not present in her family. Hilda noted that being Latina may be different for everyone. For Hilda, it was very different because until relatively recently,
Hilda identified more with military culture than with Latina culture because she spent so many years of her life as a military dependent. Hilda gained a better understanding of what it meant for her to be Latina when she was in the master’s and doctoral programs.

Hilda enjoyed being able to provide supervision for Latino students and wondered if part of why they disclosed so many things to her was because she was a graduate student and not a professor. Her supervisees told her more about their struggles. For example, she noted that it was a real skill to learn to interrupt a client when for years all you learned was that you must respect someone who was older than you. She thought this behavior was quite engrained. Hilda noted that when working with older clients, she had her supervisees work on interrupting them. She noted that she encouraged her supervisees to work on interrupting clients despite the fear that the client would get mad. Hilda noted that being aware of her own struggles allowed her to help her supervisees with their struggles, and had helped her cement her own identity.

*Considerations for Latinas Contemplating Doctoral Education in Psychology*

To another Latina interested in a doctoral degree in psychology Hilda recommended to definitely attain a doctoral degree. She noted that the statistics show that the number of Latinas with a doctorate is low. Hilda thought she and other Latinas had to get their voices heard. They needed to prove themselves, regardless of the struggles they faced due to their double minority status as women of color. Their struggle was worth it though because it will be easier for the next generation of Latinas.

She thought that some Latinas struggled if they were first generation college students, and may have felt that their family did not quite understand them. Hilda knew that her family did not quite understand why she continued to want to go to school. She noted that some of her peers were asked by their parents why were they still going to school and when were they going to get
married or have children. Hilda noted that she was married and had a child so she did not have that pressure. But she had the guilt that came with always hearing that she was never there for her child, and that she was always at school. She put things into perspective for her mother. She told her mother that at least she is doing something to help herself, her child, and other people who will go through a doctorate in the future. She was not just out in the bars while her mother raises her child; she told her it could be the other way around. She noted that her mother realized that she was right.

Hilda knows she and other Latinas still had to struggle to be heard because they were women in a male-dominated society of psychology, especially in trauma work where a man’s opinion was often valued more than a woman’s. She also noted that a Caucasian man’s opinion was especially not questioned, and taken as fact while she definitely had to be able to provide literature and evidence to support her opinion or perspective. She understood that unfortunately, such struggles were longstanding and that change would continue to occur slowly.

To another Latina interested in a doctoral degree in psychology, Hilda would say that this field of study goes with the culture of wanting to teach, to give back, to nurture, to mentor (especially other Latinas), and to provide hope to others because of your success. She noted that it was also important to let other Latinas know that there was an end result and, ultimately, an end to the doctoral education process. Hilda also thought being a psychologist went in line with the Latino collectivist culture, and knowing that your work was for the greater good, and not for your own prestige or the number of mentees one had. Earning her degree was also about being able to help other people get the doctoral degree. Hilda said she provided information, and let those interested in a doctorate in psychology know that it was an awesome experience that they would really enjoy.
The Essence of Hilda’s Experience as a Latina Doctoral Student in Psychology, Step 7

Hilda was delighted to have the opportunity to be in a doctoral program. She was very pleased with her academic and social experience in her program. Hilda felt she was part of a community and was comfortable, accepted, and valued within her program’s environment. She felt supported by faculty and peers, and reached out to these support systems for assistance as needed. Hilda valued the stance that her program had towards diversity, and also used her cultural knowledge in presentations and when supervising others. Via her doctoral experience, Hilda realized that her Latina identity and bilingual skills provided her with advantages such as access to specific training opportunities. However, she also realized that being Latina and bilingual allowed her to assist others who may have otherwise not been able to access services.

Hilda found the professional area she wanted to focus on, and made sure she attained experience while under supervision. She wanted to be able to separate her work from her personal life. For Hilda, this separation between work and other personal aspects of her life was important. It was especially important for her to fully leave work and school aside when dedicating time to her child. She, at times, felt guilty due to having such limited time to spend with her child, but was intentional about the time they spent together.

For Hilda, her ethnic identity had not been a salient aspect of her overall identity as a person. During graduate school, Hilda was able to explore and learn about her cultural heritage more in depth, and now had a more specific sense of what being Latina meant to her. Hilda felt proud of her heritage and embraced the fact that being Latina was different for everybody. She also integrated her Latina identity with her professional identity and was proud to be working towards becoming a Latina psychologist.
Situated Meaning Structure, Itzel, Step 6

Feeling the Underrepresentation of Latina/os in Higher Education: Yearning for a Sense of Community

The first recollection that came to Itzel’s mind about her experiences in doctoral education was not seeing other Latinos represented, although she noted that lack of Latina/o representation was the pattern throughout her path in higher education. Itzel transferred from a community college after she completed an associate’s degree, and subsequently transferred as a junior to a university lacking in Latino representation. Itzel recalled being aware that she only saw some students that were physically like her going to and from classes, and in some large lecture halls. She recalled just being one of many students, and although she knew other Latinos attended her university, she did not often see them. The only time Itzel recalled truly seeing someone like her was in a class in which a couple of Latinas sat in front of her. Itzel thought she was at a disadvantage for meeting other Latinas because she did not enter the university as a freshman. She missed out on many social things because she started as a junior, and thus needed to focus seriously on her studies.

Itzel did not expect to see many Latina/os in the graduate school student body. She felt sad and disappointed when she noticed that the same pattern that was in her undergraduate experience was indeed replicated in graduate school, and she did not, in fact, see Latinos in graduate school. However, the lack of Latinos was even more evident in graduate school because she was the only Latina in the program after another Latina left during Itzel's first year. She wondered where the woman went and why she disappeared. The woman, who was also a mother, was doing a master’s and not a doctoral degree so she should have been in school the following semesters.
Itzel also wondered if the student left under circumstances that could have been prevented and what, if anything, could have been done to help her continue in the program. Itzel broke down when she heard another woman left the program, and thought that it was not right that another woman like her, another minority woman, was leaving. Itzel felt alone and recalled feeling very validated by a professor, who was unfortunately no longer part of her program now. She remembered this professor not only validated her feelings, but also understood how alone Itzel felt since the minority woman was someone Itzel identified with, and now that support was no longer there. Itzel felt devastated when the minority woman left the program.

During a diversity class, Itzel felt very uncomfortable because it seemed that she was called upon to speak for all Latinas. She was not embarrassed, but remembered being fatigued due to the pressure she felt after discussing a cultural issue related to Latinas. Itzel did not exit the room during the break, but instead put her head down. Her professor, an African American male, went to her and asked her if she was doing well. She told him she was okay, although she was not. Itzel resented him because he facilitated putting her on the spot to speak for all Latinas after someone made a comment that he wanted to verify with an “expert.” She felt it was a little harsh, and a lot of pressure to put on one person; she felt she did not represent all Latina/os. This experience took place when Itzel was a graduate student. She did not recall being called out in class as an undergraduate and remembered that at that time she listened more than she spoke.

In retrospect, Itzel felt somewhat envious that she was not amongst other Latina/o students in her school. She noted that another university also had a doctoral program with a Latina/o track that had she known about, she would have very likely applied there. Itzel regretted not doing enough research to find out about the doctoral program with the Latina/o track. She wondered if she would have experienced more of a sense of community and support in that
program. She struggled with that idea since in her program there was only one professor who was Latino, to whom she could only relate on the commonality of being Latina/o. She would have liked to have had a larger variety of professors. When she went to the APA conference and saw doctoral programs available at large universities, she wondered if such programs would have been more welcoming or would have provided the sense of community she did not have.

*Encountering and Moving Beyond External and Internal Roadblocks to Success*

Itzel had a very bad experience with a professor who chaired the minor she was initially interested in pursuing. She had heard rumors discouraging her from taking a course with that professor, but she thought she would be placing herself at a disadvantage by not taking a class with an expert in the area she was interested in. So, she decided to give the professor the benefit of the doubt. She described her experience with this professor as a very horrible experience that stunted her progression. She took that professor’s seminar, and the experience deterred her from pursing that area.

The professor's evaluation of, and attitude towards Itzel made her feel like she was not good enough. That interaction with the professor hit a very sensitive spot in Itzel that made her feel inferior, like an impostor, and like she was not right for the doctoral degree. After the experience with her professor, Itzel felt stunted and wanted to stop at the master’s level. Now as an advanced doctoral student, she was still trying to reconcile those feelings of inferiority. While she now knew that she was good enough, she felt ashamed because the experience with the professor caused her to fall behind. She thought she should have been on internship, or should have graduated by now. Not being where she would like to be in the program caused more struggles for Itzel.
Unfortunately, Itzel continued to hear horror stories about people who struggled with that professor before and after she did. In settings that provided spaces for students to support each other, Itzel heard that others had experienced situations similar to what she did. The situations for others were not always related to their culture, but Itzel thought that, in her case, her culture was definitely a factor. Itzel was recently at a workshop with other students where a Rogerian group therapy format was used. A female graduate student of Pakistani ethnic origin who was three years her junior in the program mentioned the professor with whom Itzel had a negative experience, and described the professor as anti-students of color.

While in the doctoral program, Itzel tried to build a sense of community through peers. She was fortunate to train with about eight Latina/o students who, like her, were part of a larger group of externs in a therapy practicum. In that practicum, Itzel met a woman who became a very close friend and who now attended conferences with her. She and her friend were very close and they were each other’s support, but Itzel noted her support system consisted only of this friend. Itzel thought it would have been nice to have had a more varied support system of peers.

Itzel had two professors who seemed especially invested in supporting and helping her complete her doctoral degree. She found that having someone who sees that she is equipped and able rather than inferior, or not good enough encouraged and motivated her. Seeking out others perhaps helped her to renounce her negative thinking. Asking for help was really challenging for Itzel. She said she only recently started to seek people out, and let them know that she needed help. She agreed that part of the struggle was not that people were not there for support, but that she was not seeking help. Itzel found it hard to say that she could not do her doctoral degree alone, as she was used to doing things on her own.
Itzel felt frustrated due to not being as assertive as she would like to be. Her lack of assertiveness continued to be a challenge for her. Itzel noted it was hard for her to recognize that she was a student who had never been in a doctoral program before, a student who was growing. She questioned why she thought she should know everything already. She noted that she saw other people who appeared to be going about their doctoral education easily, but that she did not see the other side. Perhaps they also needed support, cried their hearts out to others, or tried different things to be successful. Itzel felt she continued to be stuck in thinking she should know how to go about all of what her doctoral studies involved.

An Agent of Change by Default: Debunking Stereotypes

Itzel could not help but think that her presence in the settings she was a part of provided awareness, and helped debunk stereotypical myths that exist in certain parts of the country. Itzel disclosed personal experiences or shared cultural knowledge such as defining what mal de ojo (evil eye) meant. She also translated phrases from Spanish to English, or explained cultural events such as Day of the Dead\(^1\). Itzel also described constructs, such as marianismo\(^2\), in order for peers to use them clinically.

To know what it was like to be in a group session, students in Itzel’s program were part of a group therapy-like experience with peers and a professor observing. Some people had very negative reactions, and felt they were being evaluated, or felt like they were trying to weed out underperforming students. During a break from one of the processing groups, a male student made a general statement saying that all Latinas were sexually provocative, and danced sexually provocatively. A Caucasian female, who was from the city Itzel lives in, questioned him. The

\(^1\) Based on indigenous tradition, Mexicans and other Latin Americans celebrate and remember their deceased loved ones on November 2\(^{nd}\). (Herz, M., 1999-2012)

\(^2\) Expectation that women are to emulate the characteristics of The Virgin of Guadalupe. (Arredondo, 2004)
woman pointed out that what he said was a generalization, and brought Itzel into the conversation and Itzel agreed with her.

Itzel noticed that some graduate students had heard all the stereotypes. These students were either new to the city, or were not from a big city, or came from mono-cultural backgrounds, including being very religious, or being from a predominantly White area where they may have never seen an African American or a Latina/o person before. The assumption that all Latinas danced, and that they all danced provocatively, was an example of the presence of stereotypes and overgeneralizations. Itzel noted these instances were examples of what she meant by debunking myths. Her presence and sharing helped debunk stereotypes in the classroom, in seminars, and therapy practicums.

**Personal Characteristics, Cultural Influences, and Professional Implications**

Itzel thought she was very motherly, and her close friend described her that way as well, adding that she was very caring and nurturing. Itzel thought these characteristics motivated her to want to be part of the co-facilitation for process groups after she completed her own group therapy-like experience. A person could be nominated to help lead a process group with a professor once they had completed their own process group experience. Itzel thought that being very motherly came from her family experience. Her mother was also described as very motherly, and as someone who wanted everyone to get along, which was what Itzel tended to do in the group therapy setting.

Itzel noted there were some issues with planning the group. Itzel remembered trying to agree to disagree and being very nurturing. Itzel thought that she since she was very motherly, she wanted to take care of people. She remembered doing processing, that extra checking in, asking people if they were okay, or asking them what was going on, and giving one-on-one care.
She noted her stance was that people can have differences, but respect each other, agree to disagree, and figure out ways to resolve the issue at hand. At the end of the group experience Itzel was the only one who wrote a card to every single participant. She noted that it was her way of expressing her appreciation and that the recipients liked it. Itzel thought her cultural learning had to do with her tendency towards “we-ness.” She said that appreciating and wanting to be in the “we” versus leaning towards individuality, or having an individual leader in a group dynamic was culturally influenced.

*Personal and Professional Considerations for Latinas Contemplating Doctoral Education in Psychology*

Itzel thought that she did not really know what she wanted when she first came in to the doctoral program. She was mesmerized thinking how lucky she was that she had been accepted, but she now knew that there was more to it than just being accepted. Itzel did not know anything about how the system in psychology worked. She thought that a Ph.D. meant doing research for the rest of her life, but now knew that was not necessarily true. Itzel knew the Psy.D. was a degree that did not limit one to solely a clinical focus. Students could do clinical work, but they could also write a book or to create a model (which would involve research development). Itzel realized it was important to find your fit from the beginning and really figure out who you are.

To another Latina interested in pursuing a doctoral degree in psychology, Itzel suggested that she do her homework. Very specifically Itzel would ask her to consider what she wanted from her educational experience and her career. Itzel also suggested that a Latina know her worth. Itzel expressed it was important to gather information and interview your prospective doctoral programs. She noted that in a symposium she attended on interviewing for internships, it was suggested that students not just be interviewed, but that students also interview the sites
because it was a year-long commitment; the same held true for the doctoral program. Itzel noted there were so many factors to consider when choosing a doctoral program, and that managing the funding was part of the decision-making process. For example, a Ph.D. program may have more funding available compared to a clinical Psy.D. program.

Another piece of advice Itzel heard in a session dedicated to the dissertation process was to consider if you were the type of person who needed to see people like yourself. She noted that a student who was now a doctor discussed needing to have the face of a Latina/o in her committee for her own sake and, for the sake of feeling like someone would be affirming. Itzel suggested that the future student consider whether she needed the physical presence of another Latina/o.

Itzel said she would ask the prospective Latina student if she was sure she wanted to get a doctoral degree. She would discuss commitment with the prospective Latina student because with a doctoral degree you are committed to lifelong growth and learning. Itzel would ask the student to consider if she was willing to sacrifice or delay certain aspects of her life. For example, Itzel noted that doctoral education definitely involved sacrificing the family. She also noted that a very educated Latina woman may not find an equally educated partner within their culture, since Latinas tended to acquire higher levels of education than Latinos.

Itzel thought that not finding a partner who was your educational equal was very tough for someone who entered a doctoral program single. She did not know if she was making assumptions about Latino men having an issue with a Latina’s level of education. However, she recognized she had an issue with that educational disparity. In Itzel’s family, her father had more education than her mother, which influenced Itzel’s assumptions, including that the male must be the breadwinner, the one who earned the most money, and that the female should be one step
behind. Itzel recognized that her assumptions did not align with how things are in this world, and she struggled with that incongruity.

Itzel was in her early 30’s and thought that at this point she should have been married, established in her career, and had at least three or four kids by now. Her dreams were to do that by age 26. Itzel struggled with the "should-haves." She should have had a house, a place of her own, and feel more independent. These “shoulds” may not necessarily apply to that Latina who asked about graduate school, but they were Itzel's own struggles and she thought that these expectations were definitely influenced by her culture. For Itzel, part of the struggle came from thinking about why she had not had babies, or from the perceptions of others who wondered if she would get married or end up alone. Itzel thought all women felt this pressure to some extent. She said she could relate to stereotypes of the very zealous executive woman.

Itzel's mother thought the worst thing that could happen to her to was that she would end up alone for the rest of her life. Her mother did not understand that while Itzel wanted a partner and family, she could not make it happen. Itzel now thought she would be alright if she did not marry. If she did not marry, maybe it was just not meant to happen, and she would be fulfilled in other ways with her work. However, she thought that even for her, it was difficult to understand, not accept, the possibility that she would always be single. Itzel coped by leaving certain aspects of her life up to fate. She was not saying that finding a partner was entirely in God’s hands, but that what will be, will be. She said she was working on not focusing on the many things that she should have already done, or had yet to do as a young adult woman. Itzel was moving towards thinking she did not need to have a partner and her own family to be happy. She thought that life was about being happy with what she had done and not undervaluing that being where she was
currently was wonderful. Being amongst professionals and knowing that other people struggled with such concerns all the time helped Itzel feel like she was not the only one struggling.

Itzel felt that in discussing all of the aspects she struggled with, she was putting a lot of pressure on the prospective Latina student. Itzel definitely felt the pressure as she continued on her doctoral path. She said graduate school had not been in her life-goal plan of achievements, but ended up that way because with a bachelor’s in psychology, she was not able to do the work that she wanted to do and she was not getting paid the amount of money that she wanted to make. The reality was that the path to doctoral education was tough, and would be even more so if you did not know yourself, and were not comfortable with yourself.

Itzel would have loved to have heard about other people’s experiences of their programs, and suggested that the prospective Latina student not be afraid to ask questions, because if no one else in her family had reached this point on the educational ladder, she would not otherwise have that information. In deciding to attain a doctoral degree, there were definitely choices that one had to make. Itzel and others went into the program to help others, not realizing that in the process they would end up learning a lot about themselves. Picturing her future, Itzel said she saw a lot of books and a lot of trainings. This commitment to further her knowledge would be true for the rest of her life, though she did not have that awareness coming into doctoral education. Itzel said that she knew that she would not stop growing and learning because she will have a responsibility to those she will serve. Itzel wanted to be part of this study because she wanted to contribute to a study that would figure out how to help other Latinas in this process.

The Essence of Itzel’s Experience as a Latina Doctoral Student in Psychology, Step 7

Itzel was elated when she was accepted to her doctoral program, and did not think about all the challenging factors that doctoral education entailed. She was in a program with very few
Latina/os and yearned to have a feeling of community. She was saddened after two women of color dropped the program as she felt completely alone in the program. Itzel later connected to a woman of her ethnic background who became her only source of peer support.

She experienced challenges with faculty including being pressured to address Latina/o issues in class. Further, Itzel experienced a race-related critical incident with a professor which resulted in feelings of pain and inadequacy, in addition to academic costs. Due to being very demoralized, Itzel questioned whether or not to continue in the program. She eventually regained self-efficacy and decided to continue her studies, though at times she felt angry due to not following her original timeline to degree. Itzel experienced frustration as she realized that she was not as assertive as she wanted to be, and recognized it was very hard for her to ask for help. She recently started to experience what it was like to have professors who were interested in her progress and felt validated, encouraged, and hopeful.

Itzel seemed to feel empowered because she shared cultural knowledge and helped debunk stereotypes in the classroom and therapy settings. She viewed her kind and nurturing nature as characteristics that had been influenced by her culture, and as assets that she used in her work as a student-therapist. Itzel worried about personal aspects of her life that were yet to be fulfilled, but slowly moved towards being more accepting of her current reality. Itzel was now aware of how much of a commitment doctoral education entailed, and was willing to commit herself to a lifelong process of learning.

Situated Meaning Structure, Julieta Step 6

*Encountering and Enduring a Hostile Academic Environment: Isolating the “Other”*

Julieta’s experience in doctoral education was one of isolation from the start; Julieta was immediately excluded by her peers. She felt naïve because she had positive expectations about
the people she would encounter in graduate school. She thought they would be more open-minded because they wanted to be psychologists and help people. Julieta found that the people she encountered in her doctoral program were the opposite of what she expected. She was shocked when she realized how the peers in her own cohort behaved.

Julieta noticed her peer’s behavior towards her within the first week of school. She saw the members of her cohort frequently, and would greet them in classes. She hoped to get to know them because they would be on the doctoral journey together. She noticed people would make plans in front of her. Their seating arrangement at a round table made it inevitable for Julieta to hear her peer’s conversations regarding their future plans with each other. Initially, Julieta thought perhaps her peers knew each other from another place, or that they had made plans prior to having seen each other in class. It was clear that her peers were doing their own separate things. Julieta tried to not take it personally because she figured that she was an adult who should not be bothered by such matters. But Julieta felt very clearly excluded from her peer’s activities, and subsequently from the process of unifying as a group.

Julieta described her experience in graduate school as isolating because peers and other people did not understand her experiences or where she came from. Julieta described her doctoral experience as quite alienating. In her classes she almost felt invisible. Julieta quickly noticed that other minority students in her program felt the same way, but did nothing about the situation and kept their experience to themselves; they just were ready to get out of there as soon as they could. She was saddened by the experiences of other minority students in her program, and did not want to have the same experience as they had. Julieta started to stand up for what she thought was wrong, including the microaggressions that took place around her but that did not
make a difference in terms of her relationships with her peers. Her peers continued to behave the same way to this day.

Julieta came across faculty who placed her in the expert role as if she was expected to know certain things because she was a Latina from an urban location. For example, faculty would ask her what she knew about a specific Latina/o-related topic and if a situation was experienced a certain way by all Latina/os. Julieta always had to clarify that she was speaking based on her experience, and that she was not speaking for all Latina/os. Some faculty members engaged in treatment towards Julieta that was negative and different than treatment of other students. She had, however, received support from faculty members who did research on multicultural topics.

Julieta had a professor who was supposed to provide critical feedback about a one paragraph description of the students’ research interests. The professor did not know the students yet, and asked each one to describe their research interest and then she would provide critical feedback or suggestions. Julieta was the last person questioned, and the only one doing research on Latina/os. When she stated the title for her research, she was cut off by the professor and was asked if English was her first language. Julieta was embarrassed and humiliated because the professor basically told her that her writing was bad. The professor also said she wondered why English was not Julieta’s first language if she was born in the U.S.. The professor only voiced criticism about Julieta’s writing and language abilities, but never actually provided feedback about her research.

Julieta eventually talked to the professor who she felt had humiliated her. They met for over two hours and Julieta explained why the experience had been very embarrassing, and she pointed out that the professor had not provided feedback in the same manner to other students.
Julieta told the professor that if she was really concerned about Julieta’s writing and language abilities, she could have discretely talked to her, or sent her an email requesting that they meet. Julieta also told the professor that she never even discussed her research. The professor insisted that she had talked about Julieta’s research. Julieta reiterated that she never provided feedback about her research, and that she only mentioned her language and writing skills. The professor talked for some time but Julieta blocked her out towards the end because the conversation was going nowhere. She felt as though she was talking to a wall. After the conversation with the professor, a peer who is an international student asked Julieta how she was doing, and she stated she pretended to be doing well. Her peers noted the professor continued saying the same things kinds of things to Julieta. One peer told Julieta that he thought the professor had been a little too harsh, and he did not understand why the professor focused so much on her language and writing.

Julieta knew writing was not her strength and thought that she was a bad writer. She felt that the experience with that professor confirmed that she shouldn’t be in the doctoral program, and she wondered why she had come if she really did not belong there. Julieta internalized what the professor said, and doubted herself. However, hearing what her peer said made her realize that maybe she was not that bad. After hearing from another person that the professor was harsh, Julieta felt that she was not alone in her reaction to the professor. Julieta also consulted with other faculty members who she felt were safe to talk to. Julieta was not completely sure about who she could talk to because it was her first year in the program, but just hearing them say that what the other professor had done was not acceptable allowed her to move forward.

Given how terrible her first semester in the doctoral program had been, Julieta thought her second semester had to be better. She decided to try to ignore people’s stupidity and
ignorance, which was how she viewed their behavior. Julieta was so humiliated after the experience with that professor that she decided to speak up whenever she deemed it necessary. But speaking up put Julieta in a vulnerable position, and she realized that it was risky. She was aware of the power differential between her and the professors, and she did not know if they would retaliate or if she would fail a class if she spoke up. Julieta felt strongly about standing up against something she thought was wrong, but when she did, it became a big ordeal.

*The Exhausting Battle of Resistance: Warrior by Default*

Julieta had other similar negative experiences in her doctoral program, but made an active effort to address them. Having conversations to address the microaggressions she perceived was somewhat scary and knowing what words to use to start such conversations was difficult. Julieta considered that she was lucky to have some supportive people who helped her discern whether her perceptions regarding situations that took place were accurate. Discussing such situations with someone who provided support helped Julieta bring up her concerns, but she noted that it was almost an ongoing issue in her program because an event she considered offensive happened every semester. The situations that Julieta deemed inappropriate or unfair were usually not little microaggressions from her peers, but other, more severe microaggressions. It all became so tiring.

During her first semester Julieta experienced many microaggressions from her peers who rolled their eyes, or engaged in side conversations as soon as she started to talk about culture. Her peer’s behavior was very obvious and Julieta felt very disrespected. Her peers appeared as if they were tired of hearing about culture, yet she was not a dominant student who took up a lot of discussion time during class. Julieta was always careful and thoughtful about how she stated things. She understood people could react defensively, so she always tried to express herself in a
gentle manner, and talked about her experience with Latina/os in general terms versus directing her comments to someone in particular. While Julieta may have not always cared about the topics her peers discussed, she did not roll her eyes when they spoke. Julieta was in graduate school to learn. Thus, she was there to contribute and listen during class.

It seemed like every semester something happened that Julieta experienced as offensive or disrespectful. That same semester, a student said in referring to Mexicans, that all the Hispanics that she knew wanted to be White, and that she did not understand why they used the term Hispanic to separate themselves when in reality they wanted to be White. Julieta thought what the student said was outrageous, and having come from an urban setting, she was not used to tolerating such behaviors. Julieta noted that in her city, a person who talked like that student did would get called out by someone, if not multiple people. It was very challenging for Julieta to be in a classroom where these events took place without anyone saying anything.

When Julieta heard what the student said, she was furious and wished someone would say something, but they all just stared at her. Julieta started problem solving in her mind about what and how to say something without exploding on that person, because Julieta’s first instinct was to intimidate her a bit. Julieta was very frustrated because she felt like releasing her anger by hitting somebody. She had to think quickly about what would happen if she smacked or intimidated that student, or what would happen if the student did not back down, and they got into a fight. She had to rapidly sort through scenarios including whether the police would be called, or if she would be expelled from the program. In retrospect, Julieta viewed the situation as stupid, but noted these experiences were draining.

As Julieta thought and talked about her experiences, she realized that graduate school had not only been isolating but that she had to really push herself in so many different ways. The
situations Julieta encountered in graduate school had forced her to really stand up for herself. She decided to keep in mind a phrase that was frequently said by a former mentor, “if you don’t confront then you condone.” Julieta thought that phrase was true because if she did not say anything, the offender would continue to behave in the same way and think it was fine to do so. Julieta felt that every single day was a fight, and although it was tiring, she believed that she would feel worse if she did not say anything, as she would have allowed something that was wrong to continue without even voicing a concern.

Julieta did not have a sense of what she had done to cope with what she had experienced in doctoral education thus far. Julieta grew up in the city where she had different coping skills; if someone said something racist or did something senseless she could swear at them, and then each person would go their own way and never see each other again. Julieta could also talk to her cousins and friends who are Latinas about what made her mad, and they would be angry with her, and complain about the situation and subsequently be done with it. Julieta and her friends shared the same understanding of things, and were thus were more likely to feel and express frustration about the same situations, and after having that release with them, Julieta would feel well.

Graduate school had been challenging because Julieta could not cope like she did at home; what worked at home did not work in the same way at school. Julieta actually felt that her coping skills diminished because her prior skills, whether good or bad, were not present for her in graduate school. She could not call home to discuss what she was experiencing because the suggestion would be to hit the person who had annoyed her. Julieta spoke with a family member who, after hearing what Julieta’s classmate said about Hispanics, asked if she had hit the student.
Julieta told the family member that she had felt like hitting that person, but that things in graduate school were not handled in the same way as they were handled in their city.

Professional growth was discussed in Julieta’s doctoral program. She was cognizant that she was in a different environment, and that she should react differently. However, Julieta found it challenging, given all the situations she had encountered. Julieta had been told by others that people were not directly talking about her when they made certain comments in the classroom, but she noted that she took it personally because she felt they were talking about her. When someone talked about Latina/os or Hispanics, Julieta experienced those comments as if they were about her, her family, and her community, and thus, not taking those comments personally was very difficult. Julieta initially tried telling herself that perhaps she did not need to be so raw about it, but such comments affected her.

**Consistently Grasping on to Motivators to Sustain Persistence in Doctoral Education**

Julieta noted that perhaps initially, and even currently, she had tried to cope with the challenges she encountered by telling herself that she was in the doctoral program, that she had faced these circumstances before, and that she had been able to persist for several years. Julieta felt that she could not quit now because she was closer to the end. She pushed herself because she was not going to let those years of fighting, of feeling so isolated, of being away from her family missing out on important events, go to waste. She felt she had paid a high price to be in a doctoral program, but she felt that if she suddenly quit, then all her tears and all that fighting would be worth nothing. Julieta also thought that if she were to quit, others in her program would think that “her kind shouldn’t be here” in doctoral education.

It was very hard for Julieta to leave home to attend the doctoral program, and she did not know what made her come back after her first semester. Every single week Julieta thought she
was going to quit because she thought the doctoral program was not for her, and that it was too stressful, and not even worth it. Every single week was a milestone. Julieta kept thinking about the reasons she decided to return to school. Her family was one of the reasons Julieta chose to return to school, even though her family emphasized that they did not want her to leave. Julieta was the eldest and she thought of her brothers’ futures. By earning a doctoral degree, Julieta wanted to show her brothers that they too could do it. Although she viewed going home as one of her coping strategies, it was very sad when she had to leave. She tried to explain to her brothers why she had to leave, but it did not make sense to them because they missed her. To motivate herself, Julieta thought of her brothers, and told herself that she had been through much already, and could thus continue.

Thinking about her former clients also motivated Julieta to stay in her doctoral program. Her former clients were mostly Latino adolescents who were considered at high-risk for gang involvement and substance abuse. Julieta loved having many clients, and being known in the community. However, she felt very limited in what she could do with only an undergraduate degree. Julieta was not trained to do therapy, and was not able to provide the counseling services she wanted for clients. Julieta recalled that she was able get her work done despite minimal training, and said that clients kept coming back, and recommended her in the community.

Although she did so many good things and felt proud about them, Julieta also felt she needed more education to have a stronger voice. Julieta also knew that her situation would be the same for as long as she remained in that job. She had worked in the same place for several years, and loved it despite being very overworked and underpaid. Julieta also felt like she was always fighting with her supervisors. She thought that perhaps if she went to graduate school, she could make real and bigger changes. She knew that with more education she would be empowered to
really help her community, and she would learn how to conduct therapy in an appropriate manner. Julieta believed with more education, she could contribute more to the community and, through her doctoral research she could affect changes in laws and funding. She was aware that getting into a doctoral program involved doing research and she felt she was capable of doing it. She was aware that research was not her strength, but she did not view it as her enemy either.

While her path to doctoral education had not been easy, Julieta acknowledged that she had more privilege than others. She had been privileged to make it through high school and to finish college, which was a big struggle for her. Being aware of her privilege, and knowing how hard it was to get into a doctoral program made Julieta think that she was on that path because she was meant to be there. She noted that she was offered admission to the program, but she would not have received an offer if it had not been meant to be. Julieta pushed herself by thinking about all of the things that motivated her to seek a doctoral degree, and by thinking about what getting that degree will mean for her future and for her community. She remained in her doctoral program in spite of her unpleasant first year.

Julieta also tried to push negative things aside as another way to cope, but found it hard because she experienced challenges every day. When Julieta struggled more than usual, she figured out the last possible minute she needed to be in school, and then bought her plane ticket. She wished she could drive to her house, but leaving town was hard given all of her responsibilities. Starting to look for tickets made Julieta feel better, and she usually left the same day or the morning right after the semester was over. Julieta tried to block out graduate school while she was visiting home, and being there provided her with a sense of relief. She did not think pushing things away was a healthy way to cope with her daily stressors but it worked for her because otherwise she would not have been able to reduce her level of stress. Julieta always
felt stressed out in school, and she thought it was a financial hardship to buy a ticket to fly across the country to get home. But even if she ended up having less money to spend on food, Julieta made sure she bought her plane ticket to go home during her breaks, because going home was one of her key coping strategies.

*Ethnic Identity as Source of Pride, Pressure, and Exclusion*

Julieta viewed her Latina identity as playing a role in her doctoral experience including having been put in an expert role. While Julieta may have known more than most people in her program about Latina/o issues, she felt pressured when put in the role of expert. She felt as if she had to be on top of Latina/o related research or issues. Julieta thought that the separation between her and her peers was due to her identity. She could think of various reasons why people would not engage with another person, including personality conflicts or awkwardness in social situations. She noted that it would have been easier for her to understand if her peers excluded her because of personal characteristics.

Julieta noted that her peers started to behave negatively towards her very quickly, that they never got to know her. She believed that they behaved that way because of her Latina identity. Julieta thought of many possible reasons for their behavior towards her. Sometimes she thought they perhaps felt threatened that it was possible for her, a Latina, to make it to a doctoral program, and perhaps they thought she should not be there. Julieta was unsure about the exact reasons her peers treated her negatively but believed it had to do with her ethnic identity.

Professors also had stereotypes in mind regarding Julieta, and Latinas in general.

Julieta was aware of who she was as a Latina, and knew that she viewed things differently. She saw things through a cultural lens all the time. It was simply part of who she was, and she could not turn it off or hide it. Julieta always tried to figure out how what she
learned fit with her (and other Latina/os) identity, and she thought about whether those concepts or interventions actually worked with Latina/os.

Positive experiences Julieta encountered while in doctoral education included being invited to events in the Latino community. It was a positive experience even though she did not feel a part of the community, as it was a very small community mostly comprised of families. People in the community realized she was a Spanish speaking Latina, and asked if she could conduct a workshop for parents, which made her feel connected to the community at least to some extent. She personally felt she could not say she “belonged” to that particular Latina/o community. However, Julieta thought being in contact with the Latina/o community and being asked to do a workshop had helped her because she enjoys such things.

*Considerations for Latinas Contemplating Doctoral Education in Psychology*

Julieta would definitely tell another Latina interested in attaining a doctoral degree in psychology to get a doctoral degree. But she would warn her about how difficult doctoral education is, and tell her she needs to make sure that she finds support right away because she would face barriers that other students did not face. She would tell another Latina interested in doctoral education in psychology to be open to receiving help if someone reached out to help them. Julieta was raised with the idea that she was not to ask anyone for help, and knew that other Latinas shared that belief. It took a lot for her to learn to ask for help or support, and to be at peace with it. She would discuss with the student how to ask for support in a way that did not feel too threatening, or in a way that she did not feel too exposed. Julieta might also inform the future doctoral Latina student that she may experience other people’s ignorance and microaggressions. Providing this information would be a way help the student mentally prepare herself.
Several years ago during her first semester in the doctoral program when she was not doing well, Julieta attended the NLPA conference. Julieta attended a session about Latinos’ experiences coping with higher education, and she hoped would learn how to cope with her own circumstances. There were about ten people in that workshop. All the attendees got in a circle and Julieta expected people would start to bring up some things that she could learn from. She became nervous when she realized that the workshop actually centered on people sharing their experiences. Julieta did not want to talk about her experiences because she was already feeling so vulnerable. Julieta hoped they would not push her to talk since she was sure she would cry. She was the last one to speak and was not pushed but she started crying. Julieta felt very embarrassed because she was the only student present, but at the same time she felt a sense of validation because they had all been through a similar experience to one extent or another.

The individuals who attended that session were professors and professionals, and they were very concerned about Julieta. They wanted to know where she was enrolled, and who worked in her doctoral program. Julieta recalled that she was crying, and that it meant a lot that they reached out to her. Julieta felt that she did not have to go through her doctoral education alone, and it also felt good to have someone want to check in on how she was doing. Even though she did not follow up with them, the knowledge that other Latina/o psychologists had been through what she was going through was helpful. These Latina/o psychologists had been through doctoral education before Julieta, and she could not even imagine their experiences since it was likely much worse for them. Just knowing that these Latina/o psychologists were available to talk to her over the phone or email was positive for her.

Julieta would tell the prospective student that the process of attaining her doctoral degree in psychology might feel like a big fight, but she would also encourage her to continue in that
process. Everybody had their own reasons for going to graduate school. Julieta recommended that the Latina student remained true to herself and to who she was. Julieta thought of what she could do for others who were choosing to seek a doctoral degree, but she did not know if the reasons behind the prospective student’s interest in a doctoral degree would be similar to her own. Based on her own experience and values, Julieta suggested that a student thought of her siblings, if she had any, to motivate herself. However, Julieta recognized that she should not assume that a student would be doing a doctorate because of her siblings. Julieta wanted the student to know that many situations could take place and that she could feel, at times, that things were difficult or doubt her ability to be successful. Despite such doubts, Julieta wanted the student to know that it was important for her to hold onto the reasons she chose to go to graduate school in the first place.

*Considerations for Educators of Psychology Graduate Students*

Academia continues to be very White and Julieta’s view was that the system was sometimes set up for Latina/os to fail. Julieta would tell another Latina to not give up, and to understand that while the system might be set up for failure, it did not mean that she had to fail. Julieta told herself many times that doctoral education was very hard, and that was why Latina/os were underrepresented in doctoral education. More specifically, she said that she thought that attaining a doctoral degree was almost impossible given all that was additionally involved for Latina/os. Julieta was already spread so thin, and not only had the demands of school, research and clinical work, she also had to deal with all the hostility in the environment. Julieta thought that these reasons were real and legitimate in regards to why Latina/os were not in doctoral programs.
Because the field of psychology and our institutions of higher education are still very White, Julieta’s view was that many structural changes must occur, including changes in the training of faculty members to keep Latina/os in doctoral education and to make it a better experience. Julieta asked that faculty in her program receive training, and her request was met with resistance. The underlying attitude was that they must know what they are doing because they have doctoral degrees. Julieta noted that they did not always know what they were doing. She acknowledged that not all the faculty were in need of training, but emphasized that the people who needed it were probably the ones least likely to do it. This upset her and she noted that if she could make things change, she would force everyone to attend trainings. But she also wondered whether that would make some people become more resistant. She had no idea how to improve peoples’ attitudes towards change or trainings.

In Julieta’s view, a positive change would be for the field of psychology to adopt a stance that said as people we are all cultural beings. Her view was that in training graduate students, it would be good to make modifications so students learned not only to conceptualize the way they were currently taught in books, but to relate everything to culture and conceptualize clients in a cultural way. Julieta said that when culture was discussed, people thought about ethnicity and race, but culture encompasses much more and could be so many different things. She believed that looking through a cultural lens and constantly paying attention to matters of culture would help students learning to be future psychologists.

In her opinion, graduate departments should implement many changes including making sure that microaggressions were not taking place, as well as educating others, including professors. Julieta wondered how a graduate department would explain microaggressions, such as students engaging in eye-rolling. She acknowledged it was difficult to intervene with
microaggressions because they were not flat out racist or discriminatory events. Microaggressions were so subtle that people might deny such behavior, or say that they did not mean for their actions to be offensive. In her opinion, part of the issue was that many of the students and faculty in the program were ignorant.

Julieta personally thought that there should be more incentives for doctoral students. She noted that graduate students get paid scantily. She thought that having travel awards would be a good incentive because, based on her experience, going home was a crucial coping strategy and it was so hard on her financially to purchase her tickets. Having a mentorship program, i.e., a set support system, could also be a change established by programs to help students. Julieta noted that if such changes took place, perhaps the experience in doctoral education in psychology could be improved.

The Essence of Julieta’s Experience as a Latina Doctoral Student in Psychology, Step 7

Julieta decided to pursue doctoral education motivated by a desire to make changes in her community, and wanted to receive training to provide counseling services well. She was also motivated by a desire to be a good role model to her younger siblings. Julieta was quickly disappointed as she never imagined that she would be in a hostile academic environment in which peers behaved disrespectfully towards her, and did not expect to also have to deal with microaggressions from professors. Julieta had doubts about staying in her program after an incident with a professor. She was sad, and even questioned whether she should be in the doctoral program. A peer’s supportive comment helped her not internalize the negative messages she had received from her professor.

Julieta noted that after she experienced those microaggressions, she was determined to speak up whenever she saw something wrong taking place. Julieta had experienced much anger,
pain, and isolation throughout her doctoral experience. She felt like she had been enduring a battle but without her usual coping skills. Julieta recognized that she was tired and stressed out as her learning environment had not changed throughout the years. She wished she did not have to spend so much energy dealing with the non-academic aspects of her program, but could not ignore what happened around her.

Julieta was proud of her ethnic identity, although it seemed to be tied to why others in her program were unfriendly towards her. As a way to cope, she thought about how all the things she learned could be applied in the Latina/o community. She also constantly thought about her path to the doctorate and acknowledged the privilege of being in a doctoral program. Julieta was determined to persist in doctoral education as this degree would allow her to better serve her community.

**Situated Meaning Structure Luisa, Step 6**

*Ramifications of Program Politics: A Frustrating Introduction to Doctoral Education*

Luisa described her experience in her doctoral program as frustrating because she felt her program did not provide much assistance for anything that she did. Luisa did not have a person to mentor her in any way in the doctoral program. She noted she was confused about why she had not received much assistance from her program, and she wondered if it was due to politics of the program or perhaps due to discrimination towards her as a Latina. Luisa attempted to separate the possible reasons her program may have not provided her with much support and noted that she thought the program had its own problems and perhaps she simply fell into them.

Some of Luisa’s frustrating experiences in her doctoral program involved her research interests. Before Luisa applied to a doctoral program, she explored a number of programs that did research on topics like multicultural immigration populations, and resiliency and ethnic
identity, which were her research interests as an undergraduate. She had worked in a lab and studied both the formation of prejudice in children and also the efficacy of bilingual treatment. When Luisa applied to her current doctoral program, it was presented to her as one with a focus on diversity, and involved in research on ethnic population differences. When she attended her interview for the program, the doctoral program was again portrayed as one with a focus on diversity.

About six months after her interview, she started the program and realized that the director and two professors had left the program resulting in the program’s shift from a focus on ethnic diversity to a focus on diversity related to LGBT matters. While the program continued to have a multicultural focus, it was not what Luisa had expected. Luisa felt deceived. She was aware that as a doctoral student she was responsible for conducting her own research projects, but the new and remaining faculty members did not have identified interests in any of the areas that were of interest to her. Luisa was at a loss since there were no faculty members with whom she had compatible research interests. She felt very frustrated.

Luisa’s advisor told her she could help her, but when it came to having to conceptualize and create a thesis project, the advisor had no working knowledge of the literature that Luisa was reading. Luisa felt very frustrated trying to verbalize and conceptualize the constructs and information she came across in the literature, and she wanted someone to help her. Luisa viewed herself as a young student who did not know how to do a thesis because she had never done one before, and because she had never been in graduate school before. She needed confirmation that what she was doing was correct. She needed guidance, encouragement, and validation. She needed someone to let her know that she was on the right track.
Luisa looked back and noted that although she could not pinpoint what she needed at that time, she knew something was missing. She knew the working relationship with her thesis advisor was not working and it was not helping her. Luisa ended up having to switch to an advisor who was more supportive and more aware of her needs. Luisa felt glad about the change because it resulted in more assistance and thus more progress.

*Persevering in Doctoral Education Despite Encountering Disconnection*

When Luisa started the program she did not have a faculty member to identify with, and she also did not feel she could identify with any of her classmates. Not having anyone she identified with in the program was hard. Luisa was very sad during her first year in the doctoral program. Her transition into the program had involved moving from a city that was about four hours away from the university. Leaving the life she had had for the previous six years, and then being unable to identify with people or make any friends was very difficult for her. Luisa felt frustrated by not having a sense of community and thought her program had not helped her connect with a potential community.

In her first and second semesters it was very difficult for Luisa to establish relationships with the members of her cohort, and thus it was hard to create a sense of community or support. During her first semester, Luisa did not know anyone in her cohort well. She noted that her doctoral program did not really encourage socializing. She recognized that students were responsible for socializing and connecting with each other, but noted that attempting to make such connections was difficult. Luisa and her cohort were all very different and no one took charge of organizing any activities among them. Luisa had only one friend who was remotely interested in the issues that concerned her.
Luisa had family in the town where the university was located and, since she did not connect or identify with others in the program, she spent all her time with her family. Her family knew her and gave her respite from everything else that was new in her environment: a new city, a new school, and a new program. She needed comfort, so instead of struggling to find new individuals for support she relied on her family. Luisa eventually moved closer to school and being alone forced her to get to know her classmates a bit. Luisa established close friendships with two peers. She thought it was sad that only two out of the five people in her cohort became her friends.

Luisa noted that she had yet to feel a sense of community in school. She developed her own community by becoming more involved outside the school working as a counselor at a refugee center. Feeling disconnected within the university setting was not an important issue for Luisa once she had a sense of community elsewhere. While the problems with her program continued she no longer paid attention to them. She was at peace within herself, and was no longer as affected by problems in her department because she found satisfaction in her life.

Reconsidering and Reinforcing Ethnic Identity

Luisa has had problems self-identifying as a Latina and struggled with accepting her ethnic identity. She thought her difficulties with her ethnic identity stemmed from the struggles she faced growing up. Luisa grew up trying to assimilate in the suburbs. She was one of the few Latinas in a community whose population was about equally divided between Blacks and Whites. Luisa felt like she had to pick between the two groups.

Growing up Luisa spent summers with family in the Latin American country where her grandmother lived. Her grandmother was very meaningful to her and represented her identity. It was hard for Luisa when her grandmother passed away about two years ago and she wanted to
make sure she did not lose her cultural identity. Luisa became more proactive about embracing her identity, she spoke Spanish more, and she became more involved in her culture because the one concrete link that Luisa felt she had to her heritage was gone.

Luisa’s interest in her culture propelled her doctoral research interests. She wanted to continue to have her cultural interest in her research endeavors, but she felt defensive from the start. She tried to find ways to stay connected to her culture in her program, but she could not. Luisa felt defensive because she wanted to make sure that she did not lose anything that was tied to her cultural identity.

*Reevaluating Options for Doctoral Education*

Although Luisa felt she was not getting help or support at the onset of her doctoral experience, she recognized that she did not know if the lack of support stemmed from the politics of being in graduate school, or if it was because she was defensive and protective of herself. Luisa thought that in graduate school others expected her to be independent, and capable of making her own decisions so she wondered why she should need help. She felt frustrated because she had no one to guide her in any way, and she viewed that as a big problem with her doctoral program. Frustration encompassed many of Luisa’s doctoral experiences. Luisa felt she did not deserve to have that type of graduate experience, and decided to apply to different doctoral programs.

Luisa took a semester off from the doctoral program she was currently enrolled in to interview at other programs. Faculty and peers reached out to Luisa when they realized that she wanted to leave. During her semester off, people in her program reached out and told her they missed her, and that they did not want her to leave. They told Luisa that they could not believe that she thought they were not there for her. The faculty members who wrote Luisa’s letters of
recommendation for other doctoral programs called, and sent her email to wish her good luck when she was interviewing for other programs. The fact that people in her program reached out to her, showed Luisa that she did have a community of people that cared about her even though she had not been aware of it.

After going through the admissions process, Luisa was deciding where she wanted to continue her doctorate, and pondered why she was seeking a doctorate. People in her program told her that although they were obviously biased, they wanted to help her and let her know that they were available to talk about her decision. It felt really good to know that she could be open and honest with everyone about her concerns and to hear their rebuttals about those concerns. Luisa noted her experience improved much after people in her program reached out to her. She decided to stay with her current program and felt comfortable about her decision.

*The Unfamiliar Task of Asking for Help*

Luisa recognized her inability to see that other people were available for support, and attributed it to her tendency to think that people should know things without her having to say anything. She realized that people in her program were not to blame for the fact that she never asked them for help. Luisa noted that her inability to ask for help was due to personal issues. Though Luisa had never asked for help, she often expected someone to know when she needed it. In the past, Luisa had been told that others perceived her as someone who was strong minded, had her things in order, and knew what she wanted. Since she did not want to be perceived differently, she did not express when she needed help.

Luisa acknowledged that expecting someone else to know when she needed help or was lonely was her mistake. She acknowledged that it was not appropriate for her to expect or assume others should know when to ask her if she needed help. Luisa understood that she
needed to learn to speak up and ask for help when she needed it because she could not expect others to know what she needed if she did not voice it. Luisa started asking for help after that experience.

Luisa also realized that she had not wanted to admit that her thesis advisor was not working out for her. She did not want to admit that she needed help from someone new. Once Luisa told herself that she needed to stop being afraid to ask for help, she asked and received the assistance she needed. Now, Luisa thought that asking for help was not that difficult.

*Ethnic Identity: A Positive Influential Factor*

Luisa’s ethnic identity definitely influenced her interests, which in turn influenced her experiences. As a result of her interest in diversity, Luisa worked with populations of refugees and torture survivors. As a result of her clinical experiences, she was immersed in global issues and peace policies and gained a lot of knowledge about them. Luisa’s experiences with diverse people prior to graduate school fed into her clinical experiences. She felt this made her very sensitive to the plight of different people in diverse communities. Luisa felt that she could empathize with someone even if they said something that was in direct violation of everything that she believed or assumed. She realized that the way a person grew up influenced the way they thought and acted. Understanding how people thought did not mean that she agreed with their views, but once Luisa made sense of what was behind a client’s reasoning, she understood the person better.

As a result of her identity, Luisa was very open to learning new things via her educational experiences. She described herself as very open to a lot of different ideas, and to acknowledging differences in the population. Luisa viewed her openness as a characteristic that benefitted her in her quest to become a psychologist. The area of psychology that Luisa was involved in included
working with people and understanding them. Successfully working with many different types of clients made Luisa feel very good, and it was a skill she attributed to her ethnic identity. She felt competent about her counseling skills although she did not feel she had support with the research aspect of her doctoral program. Feeling competent in her counseling skills and in her ability to identify with different people helped Luisa feel like she belonged in the program; it provided balance and kept her from doubting herself when she encountered disappointments.

Her work with clients made Luisa feel that she could brush off whatever difficult circumstances she faced in the doctoral program and attribute them to politics. Luisa felt she was very good at counseling people, and was grateful for the previous work she had done with clients since it was what drew her into the program. She would not let department politics or disappointments from lack of attention deter her from her goals and aspirations.

*The Only Latina: The Pressure of Representation*

Luisa thought doctoral education was hard and she definitely felt the burden of being a token. Although she did not want to have to deal with it, she was the token Latina. Luisa simply wanted to be herself, but she felt that just being herself was partially letting go of her representation as a Latina. Luisa felt sad that as a Latina she did not have someone she could identify with in her doctoral program. She thought that if there were more Latinas in doctoral education, there would not be a need for token representation. As an example of a generalization made about Latinas, she noted that people talked among themselves, and said that Latinas in doctoral education came from a social class that made it easy for them to be in a doctoral program. Luisa emphasized that not all Latinas had that experience.

Something negative that Luisa experienced in relation to her identity was that, at times, she became overwhelmed. She was so proud and adamant about wanting to maintain her identity
and wanting to promote diversity, that she thought she may have hindered her work and competency. Luisa was the only one in her cohort who had an interest in ethnic identity and other diversity matters. However, she was so focused on diversity matters that she thought that she may have ignored some other core components. Luisa felt that she needed to push diversity related topics but she sometimes worried that she was not allowing herself to be open to everything because she was so focused on diversity.

Yet she worried that if she let diversity go for the sake of her desire to get immersed in a different subject area, no one would know anything about these matters because no one else would report on them. This singular focus in every class she took, and in every project that she was involved in overwhelmed her at times. Luisa felt responsible and burdened at the same time, but viewed the information she had to offer as very important. It was almost as if there was a weight on her shoulders. She sometimes also felt frustrated because she wanted to learn new things, but feared that doing so would be akin to abandoning diversity. Luisa wondered if she would ever be able to let go of the responsibility and burden she felt she had.

Luisa thought that everything else in her doctoral experience had been a privilege so far and she felt pretty good about it. Although Luisa was aware that she was the only one with interests related to ethnicity and diversity, she felt optimistic because she knew that she was going to do something good with it. She liked to educate others, and felt like she was already doing a good job. She felt grateful for the experiences that she had because she liked to share them with other people.

As an undergraduate, Luisa discussed with her mentor that she perhaps did not want to study heuristic issues, research topics that she could relate to, because she could be questioned due to only studying matters that were tied to her own experiences. For example, in Luisa’s case,
she wanted to study women of a specific ethnicity within the Latina/o culture because she belonged to that particular culture. People who worked in academic and research positions were especially concerned about how others would perceive them if they focused on investigating heuristic issues. She noted some people chose not to study heuristic issues even though they were naturally interested in topics related to their experience, because they were afraid of how others would perceive that. Luisa thought this was not fair, yet she too worried about how she would be perceived if she pursued doing research on heuristic matters, and she wondered how it looked for her to just have interest in her own community. She also wondered if others would doubt her capacity to do other kinds of research, and if they would think that her skillset consisted of only being able to focus on heuristic topics. She discussed her concerns with her mentor. Her mentor told Luisa that if she did not conduct research related to her community with the connections that she had, how could she expect anyone else to do so? That conversation with her mentor kept Luisa focused on her original research interests.

The Constant Search for Balance: Managing Personal and Professional Matters

Some doctoral students were always entirely focused on school and work. Luisa viewed that as problematic. She indicated these students never went out, and never did anything aside from school. She understood that they could be passionate about psychology, and loved being in the doctoral program but she thought that they needed to “get a life.” Luisa thought that students who were exclusively focused on work and academics may have regrets when they finished the program, and they realized that they had not done more to promote who they were as persons versus who they were as psychologists. She wondered what would happen, what they would do with themselves, if they lost their license as psychologists and were unable to practice.
Luisa wondered who these individuals truly were if their identity was solely based on being a psychologist.

Luisa thought that for someone to not have an identity aside from being a psychologist was scary. If they lost their job, would they know what else to do? She recognized that she and others thought that their job security was different due to being in academia. But Luisa knew a lot of people, especially given the current economy, who had been laid off and noted that she viewed such situations as frightening. Luisa’s view was that everyone needed to be working on themselves concurrently as they worked on becoming psychologists.

Thus far, Luisa had struggled to find a balance between work, academics, and other aspects of her life. She noted the quest for balance was something she had to deal with and continued to work on though currently she felt comfortable with her situation. Luisa jokingly noted she just had to look in the mirror and scold herself to motivate herself to start on what she needed to do or to finish a project. She had been able to make things happen thus far, and noted that believing she could do it was important.

She acknowledged that recently she had been “quite selfish.” For example, Luisa had a paper due and had to work. She got out of work at eight at night and had a paper due the next morning. Luisa had to sacrifice by staying up all night to finish her paper. The entire time she thought she should have called in and not gone to work. Luisa then had another assignment due and had to work early in the morning until late in the afternoon, so she stayed up for a second night in a row and got sick. Luisa stated she should have been more aware of her schedule conflicts, but at that time she could not miss work because she needed the money. In her view, she did not have a choice but to stay up all night and then learn from that experience.
The week during which she had those deadlines, her friend had a birthday party and they planned another event as well. Luisa realized that she would not have time to attend to her social commitments in addition to working on her projects, doing homework, and going to work. Her friend pointed out that she had planned to do two personal events in one weekend, and suggested that she only commit to one personal event if she wanted to have more balance. Luisa’s friend warned her that it was not logical for her to do it all, and that it would be best if she dropped one personal commitment so she would have more time for work and for school. While Luisa could have dropped all of the personal commitments and focus just on school, she wanted to attend her friend’s party because her friend only had one birthday a year, and perhaps the following year would bring change. Clearly Luisa did not want to do without one of the social events and wanted to balance everything.

Luisa thought it was possible to get everything done because she had managed to do so. Luisa discussed that she got an A on the paper she worked on the night before it was due but she did not get any sleep and then got sick. Luisa acknowledged that although she got sick, she just did what needed to be done to complete her assignment. Luisa said that believing that she could make things happen and she did what, according to her, needed to be done. She simply continued working until everything was completed.

As a result of everything Luisa had been through, her current life mantra was to do whatever she could to make herself happy. She felt like she was going to make everything work. Luisa thought that having self-confidence helped her. For instance Luisa was not worried that she would not finish the paper she planned to finish that night. She knew that it would not be her best paper, but that it would get done. Luisa no longer had the perfectionistic expectations she had during her first year in the doctoral program.
Luisa placed a lot of pressure on herself and had straight A’s and excellent college entrance exam scores. Growing up and throughout college, she was always the perfect student. When Luisa started graduate school, her perfectionism became a very significant issue for her and she viewed it as awful. During Luisa’s first year, her papers were done as soon as she got the assignment and if she had two weeks to do it, she did it during the first three days. Luisa made sure she did everything; if she was assigned 300 pages she read them all. Luisa focused all her energy on school because she felt isolated and did not have good friends to socialize with. Back then, being a perfectionist did not get her anywhere and she was miserable. Luisa had gotten perfect grades on everything, but wondered what real purpose that had in the greater context of her life. She concluded that being such a perfectionist did not have any real purpose in the greater context of her life.

Luisa sought therapy because she was depressed and struggled with feeling she was constantly pitting one aspect of her life against another. She did not know if she was clinically depressed, or if she had adjustment problems due to moving and everything else she was experiencing. The therapist told Luisa her life lacked balance, and that her unhappiness was understandable because she was not doing anything for herself outside of academic responsibilities. Luisa credited her therapist with helping her find a more balanced approach. She was now a completely different person than she was when she first started the program. Luisa noted that although she had somewhat lower expectations, she was not going to blow off responsibilities and earn a B. Luisa did as much as she felt was sufficient, though she still met her expectations. She continued to read all her assignments, and compared to other people she knew, Luisa continued to do more work. For example, unlike other people, she was willing to sacrifice sleep. Luisa noted that she still pushed herself a little bit because that was just who she
was. Luisa stated that at present, having relatively lower expectations was what she had to do to make herself happy and make sure that she got everything that she wanted.

*Considerations for Latinas Contemplating Doctoral Education in Psychology*

One of Luisa’s personal interests was to see more Latinas in graduate school programs. Luisa was very interested in motivating as many women as possible to want to be successful and Luisa would definitely encourage other Latinas interested in doctoral education in psychology to continue in that pursuit. She would educate prospective doctoral students about what they needed to do to get into graduate school, and inform them that it was going to be a challenge and a struggle. If the prospective students were young as they started on their path to doctoral education, she would definitely provide the same mentorship that was provided to her as a young undergraduate.

Luisa suggested that doctoral and prospective doctoral students attend therapy to work on ethnic identity issues or other concerns. Luisa thought that while some women felt they were constantly balancing one aspect of their lives against another, not all women had problems to address. However, Luisa would want to talk to the prospective Latina doctoral student about finding balance in her life, and let her know that doing so was going to be difficult. She would let a prospective Latina doctoral student know that the doctoral process was going to be very rewarding, but that at times sacrifices would also be necessary. It would be very challenging in terms of interpersonal balance in so many ways that she had not even considered. A lot of women Luisa knew who chose to go to graduate school struggled with balancing family. Luisa knew a lot of women who decided to not enter graduate school in order to have children, or dropped out when they realized it was hard to care for a family while being in school.
Luisa noted that it was also necessary to attend to developing oneself as an individual. Spending time with friends and taking time for other important things rather than focusing 100% on school were activities that she viewed as important to create balance throughout the doctoral education experience. Furthermore, she would also recommend that the student remain strong despite the difficulties, and not allow herself to become isolated. She would also advise that the student learned to acknowledge when she needed help and then reached out to others. In addition, Luisa would encourage the student to establish community connections and connections within the field of psychology. An additional recommendation was to find her research interest and adhere to it.

Luisa noted that even as informed as she was and with as much help as she had received, she thought doctoral education was still hard. Although it was 2010, there continued to be the need to make higher education a better experience for Latinas. She emphasized that even at present, and though it may not have been easy to believe, people still did not realize that all Latinas had different experiences. The realization that each Latina is different and unique was the change that Luisa would like to see in the future. Luisa noted that we just need to figure out how to make sure everyone is attuned to the idea that all Latinas had different experiences. Luisa admitted that she did not know what would make others receptive to that idea. Nonetheless, she definitely thought that as time progressed, younger generations of Latinas would see much more Latina representation in graduate programs.

The Essence of Luisa’s Experience as a Latina Doctoral Student in Psychology, Step 7

Luisa felt that frustration was the emotion that encompassed all of her doctoral experience. Upon starting the program, she quickly realized that she was completely on her own. She felt alone as there were no efforts on the part of the program, or her peers to form any type
of community. She was disappointed as the program had incurred changes that impacted her as a student, yet she had not been informed. She did not have a faculty member she could identify with personally, ethnically, or for purposes of research.

Luisa felt pressure to do well and had perfectionistic standards. She did not have ties to a community, she was isolated, and became depressed. She was dissatisfied with her doctoral experience and decided to apply to other programs. Upon realizing that she wanted to leave, faculty and other students reached out to her and let her know that they were available to her for support. Luisa noted that through the process of almost leaving her program, she realized that part of the problem was her reluctance to ask for help. She eventually decided to return to her program, and started to become more proactive about asking for what she needed.

Luisa recognized that, in the past, she had struggled with accepting her ethnic identity. However, recent family events and experiences in higher education appeared to have shifted her views about her ethnic identity. She wanted to learn more and be more immersed in her culture. She had chosen to learn and to investigate diversity and ethnic identity issues via research. She felt she had a responsibility to educate others, and felt guilty when she thought about the possibility of exploring other topics. It is possible that her identity became even more salient to her during graduate school because she was one of very few Latina/os in her program. She was dissatisfied because there was no one in her program to help her maintain those ties to her cultural identity. In addition, she seemed conflicted because she was seen as the token Latina and not as “Luisa.”

Luisa attended therapy, and discussed the challenges she encountered in doctoral education. Luisa no longer held herself to standards of perfection and found a sense of community by cultivating interests outside of her program. She felt that she had more balance in
her life, and no longer wanted to compromise interpersonal aspects of her life or be solely focused on her studies. Luisa continued to seek ways in which she could do all of what she wanted to do personally and professionally. She recognized her search for balance was still a challenge, but felt satisfied with how she currently went about her life and commitments as she felt happy.

The General Meaning Structure of Latinas’ Experience as a Doctoral Student in Psychology

The collective experiences of Latinas in the process of doctoral educational attainment in psychology emerged from the analysis of their individual experiences. Latinas in pursuit of the terminal degree in psychology had an awareness of, as well as first-hand experience of, Latina/o underrepresentation in education in general, and in psychology in particular. Latinas perceived their ethnic identity as a source of knowledge, and their commitment to their community was substantial. For Latinas, the path that they took to get to the doctoral degree was salient and meaningful.

Latinas encountered challenges on the path to doctoral education including negative aspects of the academic culture, inimical interactions with faculty and peers, and their intrapersonal experiences as they came across such challenges. Latinas also encountered aspects of the academic culture that were rewarding. In navigating their experience, Latinas managed personal, professional-academic matters, and enacted coping strategies. Often, Latinas involved in this educational trajectory received support from their family. Latina doctoral students also faced feelings of guilt when they had to make decisions between personal and professional endeavors, particularly when decisions about family were involved. For these women self-care was important. They developed strategies in efforts to manage their lives or they simply became
more aware that self-care was something difficult to achieve in conjunction with everything else that they managed.

Latinas coped through other social support systems including peers, and actively reached out to professors as they encountered an array of situations. Latinas also provided support to their peers, attempting to create reciprocal relationships with them. Additional coping skills Latinas applied during the doctoral experience included making decisions and engaging in introspection about concerns or situations that they encountered. Many times decision making between family and work, making other decisions, or reaching out for help was not an easy process.

Latinas experienced cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy in professional-academic and personal matters, including aspects tied to their ethnic identity. At times, cognitive and/or behavioral shifts that resulted in growth were brought about by experiences of success and accomplishment. Other times, these shifts were catalyzed by critical incidents, or other personal and familial difficulties. Therefore, some of the cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy were, for the most part, accepted or reconciled as positive, even when they were tough. Latinas generally experienced a renewed commitment to their professional, academic and personal selves, including aspects tied to their ethnic identity. It is likely that this renewal superseded the challenges they experienced. This renewal and their original reasons for embarking on doctoral education contributed to their persistence in their respective programs and to their willingness to encourage other Latinas to attain a doctorate in psychology.

Themes of Latinas’ Experience as Doctoral Students in Psychology

The General Meaning Structure of Latinas’ Experience as a Doctoral Student in Psychology was developed using the themes that were held collectively by 75% ($n = 8$) or more of the participants. The themes that emerged from participants’ individual experiences and
utilized to form the narrative description of the collective Latina experience in doctoral education in psychology are the following: (a) Latina/o underrepresentation, (b) path to doctorate, (c) ethnic identity as source of knowledge, (d) commitment to community, (e) challenges, (f) rewards, (g) decisions and guilt, (h) support by family, (i) self-care, (j) support received from faculty, (k) support received from peers, (l) support provided, (m) reaching out for support, (n) decision-making, (o) self-reflection, (p) cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy, and (q) encouraging Latinas.

Once the general meaning structure was generated, the general meaning structure was analyzed for any patterns or characteristics. The characteristic components of the Latina experience in doctoral psychology programs emerged as the following: (a) ethnic identity saliency, (b) encountering challenges, (c) rewards of the academic culture, (d) navigating via coping strategies, (e) social support systems, (f) undergoing cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy, and (g) encouraging the next generation.

Participants’ own voices, via excerpts from their interviews, will be used to better illustrate the nuances within the collective experience. Furthermore, some significant themes that were common to participants, but were not part of the collective experience will also be presented. Common themes were experienced by less than 75% of the sample ($n = 6$ or $7$).

*Ethnic Identity Saliency*

*Latina/o Underrepresentation in Doctoral Education*

Latinas experienced first-hand the lack of Latina/o representation at the highest level of education. Some, like Elena, viewed it as opportunity,

I didn’t get into the doctorate because I thought there was a need for Latina psychologists. I did it because it was time in my life to go back and get a doctorate
degree. I thought “let’s see what happens.” I had no idea of the numbers, the lack of Latinas in psychology. I was surprised, and I thought it was a huge benefit for me. I saw being Latina as a benefit. I never saw it as a disadvantage.

Other Latinas like Ana were delighted to have the honor to be part of a selective group of individuals, and found it difficult to believe that they had such an opportunity:

I thought, I don’t know if they’re going to accept me but I just feel good that I was able to come this far. When I was accepted in the doc program it was just, I don’t know how to describe it. When I was accepted, I just couldn’t believe it. It was great just to be there, just to be accepted.

Path to the Doctorate

In discussing their experiences, Latinas made mention of their path to the doctoral degree. Looking back to that beginning was of emotional significance for them. They spoke of where their journey started, how far they had come, and what and who propelled them towards their path in the first place. Carmen, for example, noted, “I’ve been lucky enough to find people who have guided me through not only the educational pipeline but have been willing to provide a lot of guidance, support and sponsorship as well as mentoring.” Julieta also spoke of several significant influences that motivated her to seek a doctoral degree:

Part of it was my family… It’s more about the future of my brothers. I want to show them that they can do this…. I also thought about the clients that I used to work with, mostly Latino adolescents that were pretty high risk in things like gangs and substance abuse. When I was there I felt so limited in what I could do. I was so overworked and I loved that I had tons of clients and the community knew me but I felt limited in terms of
being able to really provide counseling services. I didn’t really have training as an undergrad, I had no training of doing therapy and I was just kind of thrown in there.

*Ethnic Identity as Source of Knowledge*

Latinas realized that, at times, they were in situations in which they used information relevant to their culture or ethnicity as a source of knowledge. They recognized such knowledge was valuable and drew on that knowledge to educate or even train others. Carmen spoke about her ethnic identity in the following way:

I think it not only gives me higher and stronger confidence to prove that I can succeed. I also think that confidence transfers from me to others. For example, if I am talking about the Latino culture or if I am educating my peers or professors about how it’s important for us not to overlook certain points within the Latina culture, having that strong identity makes me more knowledgeable than them. It not only gives me the confidence but others perceive my knowledge and confidence. It is a strength and it’s also a protective factor.

Latinas found themselves providing cultural awareness among their faculty and peers, bringing culture into conversations in the classroom, as well as the therapy and supervision room. Cultural knowledge was also operationalized to aid clients. Some expressed surprise to realize how ignorant or indifferent people in their program were about Latina/o matters, but viewed their ability to contribute this information positively. As Itzel noted, these Latinas were also agents of change within the settings they were a part of:

I help kind of debunk a lot by just my presence; my presence in the classroom, speaking in seminars and therapy practicums where I’m a little bit more open and I disclose. I disclose personal experiences or share some cultural things like what is *mal de ojo* (evil eye)? I also translate things, or explain something that happens like Day of the Dead. I
have also described marianismo for a peer to use clinically. I think the mere presence of those examples is debunking myths.

**Commitment to Community**

Another collective element of Latinas’ experience was a commitment to give back to the community. Some women had been involved in the community in some capacity for some time; all were currently actively providing service either via professional activities, volunteer endeavors, or both. Furthermore, their commitment to their community became firmer, as did the intention to continue to be active in the community upon their degree completion. As evident in Belen’s statement, community involvement was an important extension of her learning, a coping strategy, and way to give back but also replenish herself:

My identity as a Latina plays a huge role for me. I’m very active on my campus. My involvement has looked different in different phases for me. I think again I feel really blessed and lucky. It’s part of my learning style and my energy style, to do stuff to be involved, to volunteer, to go to conferences. I just love that experience and I love that sort of learning so it’s something that I’ve always done. I did it in undergrad, did it in my masters, and do it here but I think it’s meant different things for me. That’s part of who I’ve always been, part of my character to be involved and do community stuff but also because of my multiple identities I feel like it’s my responsibility. Sometimes it does feel like a burden but this is my way to give to myself and give back.

Belen also recognized that, at times, being so involved could be “a double-edge sword…and that any student who is part of a marginalized cultural group had to work harder to impress scholarship committees which had both benefits and costs to the student that may not have been noticed right away.”
Elena did not think the practicum options offered by her program were viable for her since she had more clinical experience than the people who would be providing her clinical supervision. She coped by creating her own practicum, and through that venue had various opportunities for personal and professional growth. Not only was she able to identify and develop a dissertation project, but she was also going to publish a paper on the process of how to establish that type of practicum site. Elena gained new knowledge and skills, and was delighted to realize that the practicum she started as a learning opportunity for herself was now impacting a myriad of people as well:

We started by responding to referrals by attorneys at the practicum site. I’ve been there now since 2006 and I’m still there. Yes, I’ve created my own site. It was not only for my benefit, I wanted it to continue. I have brought in six other students to do internships there….I realized that the dissertation I wanted to do had to do with Latina women who were victims of domestic violence so my dissertation research is from there. I am going to be publishing a paper on establishing this type of training site. So, it’s given me the opportunity to develop my own skills and scenarios and I had no idea that I wanted to go in that direction. So, there’s lots of availability for research and for program evaluation, and for mentoring Latinas into the work of immigration because we have people coming in from 170 different countries. I’m bilingual, and 70% of the population we work with is Latina. It makes a big difference to do an evaluation from a Spanish-speaking clinician than it would for someone who has to do it through an interpreter. But I have to use interpreters for people from Sudan or from Somalia or from other parts of the world.
Encountering Challenges

Challenges

Collective challenges Latinas encountered within doctoral education included negative aspects of the academic culture (i.e., lack of guidance, hostile environments), suboptimal interactions with peers and professors, and their own intrapersonal experiences as they came across such challenges. Common internal personal experiences included self-doubt or emotional distress such as sadness, depression, anxiety, and worry because of financial concerns. Examples of these challenges are interspersed throughout the rest of the examples.

Rewards of the Academic Culture

Rewards

Rewards of the academic culture was a collective theme in the doctoral experiences of Latinas. However, the aspects of the academic culture that they viewed as positive differed and thus, no collective themes were generated. Nonetheless, some of the aspects of the academic culture that were deemed positive included the notion that being in a doctoral program was itself rewarding. Additional rewards were to be in a doctoral program in which diversity and their ethnic identity were genuinely valued. Belen commented on what aspects of her program made her feel like her identity as a Latina was being nourished:

The fact that the student population is very diverse, that the faculty, it’s not all White.
The fact that they have a multicultural emphasis…and that they have a multicultural system wide sort of initiative and diversity issues are constantly brought up. It’s great to feel like multiculturalism is the status quo. It just is, versus having one hour of class and a multicultural [section]. For me it hasn’t been like that so I feel very happy about that.
Navigating via Coping Strategies

Decisions and Guilt

Part of the doctoral experience involved frequently having to make decisions. Many times, Latinas found themselves feeling torn and guilty as they made choices among professional, academic, and personal endeavors, especially if decisions involved having to place their family to the side. Some Latinas felt guilty having to be away from their children due to being at school, work, or focusing on an assignment when at home. On occasion, in addition to the distress experienced in having to make such choices, women like Gloria, had to deal with some contemptuous criticism and the pain it caused:

One of the things that is also a personal conflict is that I sometimes feel that I do not dedicate the time that I have to dedicate to my child due to working to pay for daycare and to be able to simply buy those things that are needed. I also have to go to school and practicum and do all that this profession requires. Sometimes I have some moments during which I feel that I do not give my child the attention that is needed and my mother does a very good job of reminding me of it. That hurts a lot.

Fatima and other Latinas who did not have children also experienced pressure, anguish, and ambivalence when having to place their family or partners to the side:

I think even now I always feel that I’m pulled in a bunch of directions. Even this evening, I’m not going to go to the dinner here because I have a family function to go to and though they can understand me not being there for what they have going on right now because I have this professional obligation, if something’s optional, then you should opt to do what the family needs to do and I have to make the choices that result in the least amount of guilt. I feel guilt a lot of times because as a Latina the family comes first and I
don’t think that ever really changes, whether it’s your children and your spouse or your parents and your siblings. I’m not married and I don’t have children, but I do live with family members and… if there’s a family engagement then, I can arrange my schedule so that I can be there because it makes me feel bad if I’m not there and I know that it makes my family members feel bad if for some reason I don’t show up because of work or school. They understand it’s important but it shouldn’t be more important than family.

*Self-care*

Managing self-care was also a salient piece of the collective experience of Latinas in coping while on the path to doctoral education. While some had identified concrete ways to care for themselves, others found it difficult to do given how busy they were. Some Latinas like Gloria had found ways to practice self-care regularly:

> My time to relax and unwind is when I drive. After having such a heavy workday I have CD’s with a specific type of music which is very peaceful so it relaxes me a lot. When I leave work, I know that I will take up to an hour to get home and I try to de-stress in my car. In my car, is my moment to unwind because once I get home, I have a child waiting for me. Basically, that is how I de-stress every day. Also finding something outside of school and work that has nothing to do with anything else. I unwind via music which has been my hobby for about a year now. Music not so much helps me but it distracts me a while.

After losing touch with important friends, Gloria concluded that occasionally prioritizing time with her friends was also an important way to care of herself:

> I also try to go out once in a while with friends because that is also important otherwise, it’s not possible to keep up with everything. There was a point in time when I stopped...
frequenting friends due to so much work and other things but later, I realized I have to give myself that time because it is important. I decided that after I felt bad when they suddenly stopped inviting me. Sometimes the time periods during which there is more work, when stress accumulates the most, is when you have finals, exams, when you have lots of work. Then, when you have those two weeks off is when you say, “I am relaxed and want to do something” and you start realizing, “where are my friends?” Having contact with friends is very important to me because they are my support. If I stop contacting them or if we stop contacting each other then I do not have my support.

Other Latinas were aware about self-care, but had yet to find ways to engage in it. Julieta, who was in a hostile academic environment, had yet to find a way to effectively manage her stress while in that context:

Part of my coping is to sometimes try to push all those negative things away, but it’s hard because I’m living it every day. But at the same time, I always, even if I’m not eating well, make sure I buy my plane ticket to go home on my breaks because to me that’s the way I cope. When I’m really struggling, I start looking up tickets, figure out the last possible minute I have to be in this school and buy my ticket. I start looking for tickets and I’m alright. I’m usually out of there the same day or the next morning. I go back home and feel like this sense of relief and I try to block off grad school. I don’t think that’s a healthy way to cope because you’re dealing with these things every single day but to me it just works because I cannot reduce my stress. I’m always stressed out in school.
Reaching Out for Support

Some women had a support system in place making it easier for them to access that support. Ana found a good support system in Latina mentors with whom she could identify and communicate with ease:

A lot of my mentors were Mexican Americans whose experiences helped not only with the language even if they had done all their formal education here, but the fact that they completed the doctoral degree made me feel I too will do it. That reassurance that I will be able to do it, to hear that your writing is not as bad as you think, that you have very good ideas and it’s just small things here and there, gave me that level of confidence to think that I will I be able to do it. I did it; I’m already an advanced student though sometimes it’s hard to believe it.

For other women, it was disheartening to reach out for support, only to feel like they were dismissed. Delia recounted one such experience:

My program is very good about being sensitive to multicultural issues but one important factor is the training. We don’t have bilingual training although they’ve addressed it now by hiring a faculty that’s bilingual. But even that faculty isn’t the best mentor that you would expect. I guess it goes back to that intergroup marginalization. Again here’s another faculty that’s new and when I was at my lowest I reached out and said, “How did you make it? You’re almost on your way out. How did you make it?” and got no response. She said “Oh I don’t remember it was so long ago.”

To receive this response from a Latina professor made the experience even more poignant for Delia who had already been let down by another Latina professor. Her recent experiences with Latina/o peers and faculty in academia were incongruent with her past
experiences of Latina/os as supportive and collectivistic. Delia’s schema had to be completely reconfigured. She expressed how this affected her:

That has also hurt my experience. I question, what is it to be Latino? What is it to be a Latina in higher education? Because all the studies that we learn and we hear about, they don’t talk about this. [About] the out-group in-group,… within group issues. It’s really changed my perception of what it is to be a Latino in higher education. That even though the goal is there, the behaviors don’t match the intention. That’s made me question a lot of things, my own identity but also how the world, the world that I knew, functions and that is culture shock.

Other Latinas had difficulties accessing support. Itzel also had a negative experience with a professor and, in general, found it hard to ask for help. She felt ambivalent, but remained optimistic because two professors were willing to help her:

I have two professors who especially want to support me and want to figure out a way for me to get this degree done. Having someone see that you are equipped, able, and that you are not inferior or not good enough encourages and motivates me. I think seeking out others helps me too, perhaps to renounce and not think of myself as those things. I’ve just started to do that, to seek people out and say, “I need help.” Asking for help was really challenging. I find it hard to say that I can’t do this alone. I think I’m used to and want to do things on my own and I want to be more assertive, but somehow it doesn’t seem to work out. I’m not assertive, so maybe it’s trying to figure out another way to be assertive.
Decision-making

Decision-making was another way in which Latinas coped with their experience in doctoral education. Some choices were more internal in nature such as Ana who decided to no longer let her peers’ stance toward academics further perturb her:

They were competing, really driven. They were first semester and they were thinking about internship and all this crazy stuff! I started working on this late in life and I’m the oldest of the cohort, but at the beginning, I thought maybe I should start being concerned about this. Maybe I should start worrying about that, but at the same time by going through the masters I learned that that’s not what it takes for you to complete the program and be successful. I think you need to really absorb what you’re learning and really enjoy the journey. At the end you receive a paper. That is what it is and that’s it. It’s all that time that you invest and it’s not just checking off one thing and then, let’s go to the next one. I need to complete the program in a certain time and will take those steps to do it, but I don’t really need to be worried and rush. I thought I’m going to concentrate on this first semester for now.

Other decisions, such as what Luisa discusses below, resulted in taking action on matters in order to move beyond stagnation:

I even had to switch advisors. I had an advisor who was like “okay I think I can help you work with your material” and then when it came to having to conceptualize and create a thesis project she had no working knowledge of the literature that I was involved in. I felt very frustrated with trying to verbalize where my mind was going with the constructs I was coming across in the literature so I wanted someone to help. I mean I don’t know what I’m doing!
Luisa was completely frustrated since the person she was supposed to look to for guidance was neither able to direct her nor invested in helping her. Luisa had never done a thesis before. She was a student for whom this level of research was new and thus, she was naturally frustrated and confused, and she struggled to identify what she needed:

At this point I look back and I don’t know what it was I needed. I just didn’t feel like I was getting whatever it was I needed. This was just not working, basically this was not helping. I ended up having to switch advisors. I switched to someone else who was a little more supportive and more aware and I’m really glad I did that because actually since then I have gotten a lot of assistance with what I’m doing and I feel like I’m progressing.

For Julieta, an example of decision-making involved identifying her stance about how she was going to act within the hostile academic culture in her program. Julieta resisted the idea of silently witnessing the constant micro-aggressions that took place in her academic environment:

Now that I’m thinking and talking about it, I feel like my experience in grad school has not only been isolating but I’ve had to really push myself in so many different ways. I’ve had to really stand up for myself because if I don’t say anything then it’s almost like what my mentor says, “If you don’t confront, then you condone.” That saying stuck with me because that’s so true as if I don’t say anything, they’re just going to continue doing it and they’re going to think it’s okay. I almost feel like I’ve been fighting, estoy en la lucha (I’m in the battle) every single day and it just gets tiring sometimes but, at the same time, I feel like if I don’t say anything I’m still going to feel crappy. I’m going to probably feel even worse because then I allowed that to continue to happen without saying something.
Self-reflection

Another coping strategy that Latinas collectively used to make and evaluate decisions and experiences was self-reflection. Delia engaged in much self-reflection after she encountered numerous experiences of marginalization with Latina/o peers and Latina/o faculty, as well as other disappointments within her doctoral experience. She stated:

I’ve always wondered would it have been different if I would’ve stayed in my home state? Had it been different if I had gone to a bigger city? But every program has its own challenges. I realize that, and not wanting to go through the process again and so there was a lot of questioning. I still question just the decision that I made to go to graduate school. And the decision I made to stay in my program because I didn’t have the guts to quit because I worked so hard that I kept telling myself you just have to persist, you just have to keep resisting. Resistance and persistence.

Clearly, Delia’s introspection influenced her decision to “keep resisting” and her decision to persist not only in her program, but in graduate school in general. Other Latinas also engaged in introspection as a way to assess where they had been, what they had accomplished thus far, and to self-motivate for what was to come. Gloria stated the following:

I suddenly look back and see that I am doing many things that some years ago did not cross my mind that I could be doing. For example, to supervise master’s-level students in English and Spanish and that my peers seek me out to consult. Suddenly, those types of things tell me I am somebody, I am accomplishing something. A few weeks ago, I proposed my dissertation and it was approved. I was approved and they told me that there are only two things left for me to be a doctor, my internship and dissertation. I thought “wow, almost there, almost!” I remember thinking that not too long ago I saw that as a
very far away possibility. I would say “when I go to internship” and I am now in that process of applying and feeling nervous. To think that I came here without speaking English and with my family who did not know how to help guide me to go to school. Sometimes I need to look back and remember why and how I started doing this.

Strategies to cope through trials and tribulations that were common to Latinas included the use of fatalism, spirituality, and beliefs about destiny. Delia noticed that she started to use such coping tools; she not only drew strength from them to prevail and persist, but she also used these beliefs to connect her experience to something that went beyond herself; to something bigger and better:

I did a lot of introspection. I’m [now] more fatalistic as well and say God put me here. I’m not very religious either. I was looking for something [concrete] like “tell me what career” and I realized that I have a[n] interest [in another area of psychology] as well and so again [I engaged in] a lot of self-analysis. I realized well there’s another area [in] psychology, and so that is something that now gives more meaning to my degree and my experience at [name of university]. That’s kind of how I cope and rationalize it to give purpose to this experience. A higher purpose to say I was put in this place to learn a lesson. There was a bigger lesson that I have to learn that will help me in the next path that I take.

Delia drew on such beliefs while actively thinking about her options and how to make her experience a better one. For other women, like Itzel, such beliefs denoted, at times, a more passive stance:

I don’t think graduate school was in my life-goal plan of achievements, but it ended up being that way because with a B.A. in psychology I just was not doing the work that I
wanted to [do,] and I was not getting paid the money that I wanted to [make. ] [I cope by] leaving [certain aspects of my life] up to fate. I’m not saying it’s in God’s hands, but what will be will be, and I’m starting to [work on] not [focusing on] the many things that in my perception I should have already done [and] I haven’t done as a young adult woman.

Believing in fate also helped Itzel to be more accepting of the fact that she had yet to achieve personal goals which included being married and having children. Another theme that was common to Latinas’ experience while coping in doctoral education was the use of humor and or sarcasm. Luisa, for example, discussed how difficult it was to have balance in all areas of her life while in the doctoral program and jokingly “scolded herself” to get back on track:

You don’t want to not pay attention to school but pay attention to developing who you are [as well.] That’s definitely a struggle I’ve had to deal with and I’m working on it, and feel comfortable with where I am right now. I just have to really “scold myself” in the mirror and tell myself, “you gotta get to it, you better get that project done.” Believe that you can do it because so far I’ve been able to make things happen even though I’m juggling [things.]

**Social Support Systems**

**Support by Family**

Receiving support by family was a collective theme for Latinas, although the types of support differed for participants. Support was given by immediate and extended family members including parents, spouses, and cousins. Among the types of support received from family were assistance with childcare, financial support, and a general sense that the family cared about them.
For several women like Fatima, their family’s support made it possible for them to afford being in the doctoral program.

My mom and I made the house payments and shared that equally, but when I went back to school, she and I talked about it, and she said if I was going to go back to school, she could make it. My mother said we can make it if I was not working for some reason or if I can’t contribute as much. A lot of my ability to return to school has to do with the assistance she gave me in that respect. I don’t have to pay rent and that is a huge support because I couldn’t imagine having to support a household, even if it’s just me, that still takes money, so that’s definitely what’s allowed me to complete my education up to this point.

In addition, as detailed by Carmen, family also served as a source of emotional support:

In my family I find their love, their support, their encouragement to continue with things. Every time I go see my family that’s what I find. It takes me to a different place where I forget about graduate school and it just refreshes me emotionally.

Support from Faculty

Another collective theme in Latinas’ experience was that they received faculty support. A common experience reported was that they perceived their faculty as supportive. Hilda noted that the professors in her program contributed to the feeling of community she experienced in her program:

The professors are really open….You know, they’re really personable and down to earth where at most schools you don’t hear that. [At other schools] it’s kind of the persona of “the mighty professor.” They’re really encouraging and because they know that I’m the first one in my family coming to college they’re even more supportive.
Support Received from Peers

Latinas received personal and professional support from peers. Given their shared lived experience as doctoral and as first-generation students, trusted peers provided very specific and important support that may have not been accessible to them within their family or other circles of friends.

Hilda enjoyed having friendships with her doctoral peers and doing things with them informally, but she also liked being able to count on them for their support as colleagues. She stated she liked: Having dinner with friends with whom I have a common bond of being in graduate school and, knowing psychology terminology…and all of that but we don’t have to discuss those things. We can be our social selves. [Also.] [r]elying on those same people to consult when, say we can’t leave something at our practicum site or when we have something going on with school or classes or, families. Having that sounding board is great.

Hilda noted she asked her peers for support when faced with a particular case that she needed to process due to how it impacted her emotionally. She also asked for support regarding other, more general, clinical concerns:

I need to get this off my chest, and I need you guys to bring me back to not ruminating about it and they were good at doing that. And then support in other situations that may not tug at your heart strings like that, but it could be like a case that you’re really stuck on. It’s frustrating so kind of getting their feedback, “have you tried this? Have you asked this? Have you thought of this?” It is great having them.

Carmen recognized there were areas that she needed to develop further, but she was also confident about her strengths, and was committed to improving her areas of growth and made
use of her support system. She consulted with trusted peers and got their feedback about what she could do different in certain situations:

I absolutely think having several strengths is a challenge but I also think the most important thing is realizing that we are not perfect. I’m not perfect. There are some areas that I need to work on and I need to continue to develop. Just being aware of that has helped me to navigate situations. This is my strength but how do I bring a little bit of that strength into my areas of growth to level it? That’s when I go to my peers who know me best and know some of those areas. And they might be able to give me an honest answer and say “maybe you can do a little bit more of this” or “maybe you are taking it too hard” or “maybe you’re just taking it too personal.” And that’s when those social supports have come in place.

Support Provided

Ana noted that she had different relationships with European American peers in that those relationships were distant as compared to her relationships with Latina/o peers. Ana did not allow those relational dynamics, or the fact that she and many of her peers were of a different ethnicity, deter her from being a source of support to them:

My relationships with them are different not only because of the language but they’re just different ways of interaction. I still got to know pretty much most of them very well and we interact, it’s just is more distant. I try to be myself and support the other classmates even though they are not Latinos. I try to get along with all of them. I offer support if they come to me for advice or ask questions ‘cause I’m the oldest one.
In addition to supporting peers within their program, Latinas also provided support to their peers via their leadership efforts outside of the classroom. Delia, for example, spearheaded a Latina/o graduate student organization:

I initiated a Latino grad student association because there was none. There was one at the institution but it died for several years so when I came in it’s not like I could reach out to other Latino groups. I took it upon myself to get this going again. I’m proud to say that it’s in its third year and it’s starting to be something that says “we want you,” as we are now recognized by the university.

Undergoing Cognitive and/or Behavioral Shifts in Self Efficacy

Latinas experience cognitive and/or behavioral shifts of greater or lesser intensity that result in increased self efficacy within the professional-academic or personal realms including their ethnic identity. While these cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy often resulted from positive experiences, they were also brought about from challenging experiences including critical incidents or family problems. Thus, depending on the experience, some women were emotionally distressed and became stagnant prior to feeling they could actually grow from the experience.

Delia’s experience in the doctoral program involved, among other challenges, undergoing instances of marginalization with Latina/o peers and faculty, and having her ideas misappropriated by a professor she trusted. These experiences impacted her profoundly:

I feel that this program, this experience has shifted part of who I am. This experience is almost traumatic because I’ve changed as a person. I’m more hyper-sensitive. I’m very cautious around people because I’m the type of person that is very friendly and says “oh
meet so and so and let’s all be friends and let’s all help each other” but not everybody thinks and acts like that and so I’ve become more vigilant of that. That distresses me psychologically because that’s not who I am.

The shift Delia endured was intense, emotionally draining, and mentally taxing, but resulted in growth and allowed her to be cognizant of her own resiliency:

At the same time it’s also reinforced my values, my beliefs, what I’m willing to fight for and to say “well I’m not willing to change my values and my beliefs for higher education.” Part of the experience too is resisting academic acculturation; that I am resisting academia changing me into someone like that, into someone like the faculty that I’ve encountered. Someone who is taking ideas of others, using students, or some of their ideas or work; someone more individualistic. Like the saying “das codazos a la gente para llegar a donde tienes que llegar” (you elbow people to get to the place where you need to go) just so that you can get to that tenure position. I’m resisting compromising my wellbeing. I’ve already compromised my wellbeing, my self-esteem and my self-efficacy however, in terms of potential, I know I still have it.

Delia became part of an academic environment that was incongruent with her expectations, beliefs and values. She resisted acculturating into such a system, and in the process suffered emotional and professional-academic costs. She never imaged she would endure marginalization from individuals within her own ethnic group. Despite how much this experience affected her, Delia’s resiliency allowed her to garner and identify her strengths and continue working towards her goals.

Julieta also experienced a critical incident with a professor. She was humiliated in front of her classmates by a professor who made comments pertaining to her writing and language.
Though Julieta’s confidence was shaken, she felt validated after a peer let her know he did not think she was overreacting:

My peer said he felt like she was a little too harsh and didn’t understand why she focused so much on my language and writing. I knew writing was not my strength and I thought, “Yeah, I do suck and this experience is confirming that I shouldn’t be here. Why did I come if I really don’t belong here?” At first I internalized it and thought, “I do suck” but hearing that peer made me realize maybe I’m not that bad. Hearing from another person that the professor was somewhat harsh at least made me think that maybe it wasn’t just me reacting to and internalizing what the professor said.

Julieta’s doctoral program was one in which microaggressions by faculty and peers were a common occurrence. Though she experienced self-doubt after the events described above, she quickly grew in her resolve to resist that culture. She frequently took action even though it became personally taxing:

I consulted with other people like faculty members that I felt were safer. I still wasn’t too sure about who to talk to because it was my first year but even just hearing them say, “no that’s not okay,” and moving forward from that was helpful. Things like that have happened, but I have made an active effort to make sure that I address them. I think sometimes you don’t even know the language to bring those things up and it’s kind of scary to do it. I have been lucky enough to have some support to be able to check in if something happened to at least make sure it was okay or if it was just me personally thinking something else. That has helped me to bring up some concerns but it’s almost an ongoing thing because every single semester there’s something. It’s not something small
like just a little microaggression from my peers. It’s something huge, and it just gets tiring.

Unlike Julieta who was able to move on promptly after the critical incident she experienced with her professor, Itzel was deeply impacted by an incident with a professor in her program. Her progress in the program was stunted after this incident, and she continued to experience some level of distress connected to that original experience. However, Itzel was no longer stagnant. She regained her self-efficacy and later recognized that she needed to learn to be more assertive:

That experience I had with her and her evaluation and attitude made me feel like I was not good enough. I felt like I wasn’t right in doing this degree and it just hit a very sensitive spot in me that made me feel inferior and like an imposter. I’m an advanced student and I’m still trying to reconcile those feelings of inferiority and still wondering, am I good enough? Now I know that yes, I am good enough but feel ashamed of being so behind and think I should have been on internship or I should have graduated, and thinking that’s where I should be and not where I’m at right now. I think I stunted, I stopped and I wanted to stop at the master’s level and that is something that I dealt with all of last year. For the last year I was hoping that I would be on the application process for internship right now as opposed to having to apply next year because of my proposal’s delay. That’s another piece I struggle with.

Luisa struggled with depression during her first year as a doctoral student. Her program was in a state of internal turmoil which affected her transition. In addition, she tended towards perfectionism, which became more salient upon entering the program. Luisa no longer held
herself to a standard of perfection and noted she was able to achieve this with the help of her therapist:

I was actually in therapy for a year. I went because I was so depressed. I don’t know if it was clinical depression or if I was just adjustment problems due to moving and everything. The therapist told me, “you have no balance in your life, how can you even be happy when you’re not finding anything for yourself?”

Luisa felt more comfortable and happier with the shift she made especially after having been “miserable” during a time when she focused solely on work. Nonetheless, she seemed to be resisting the idea of giving up aspects of her personal life in an effort to get all she wanted academically and professionally. She expressed satisfaction with what she perceived as better balance in her life but realized that it could potentially result in costs to her academic progress and wellbeing if not handled strategically:

I now feel comfortable with a little bit lower expectations. I’m completely a different person than I was back then. I was awful. Now, don’t get me wrong I’m not going to make a B. I’m not going to just blow off things. I do as much as I feel is good enough and sufficient and still to my expectations. I still read and I still do more things than other people I know. That’s just me and I still push myself a little bit. I am willing to sacrifice sleep and some people aren’t. But that’s just the name of my game. Right now that’s what I have to do to make myself happy and make sure I get everything that I want.

Fatima also had high self-expectations and tried her best to manage all her professional and academic commitments. Many times she felt her family had to be placed second to her other commitments, although she also made efforts to comply with family activities. A family event made her reconsider her views:
When my mother got sick and was in the hospital I had gone to visit the night before, after class and it was finals week and I had all these projects due. I’d been up most of the night working on homework, and the next morning, I had to be at the clinic…and that was the same time that things were kind of chaotic at school anyway because of a specific incident that happened. I get there and my supervisor knew that I had been at the hospital the day before with my mother, asked me how she was doing and I just bursted [sic] out crying. I’m not an emotional person, I don’t cry. I don’t take my personal stuff to school or vice versa. You would never know what was going on with me. My supervisor asked why I was there and why I did not leave as things were chaotic and we did not have clients.

Becoming emotional in a professional setting, and her mother’s situation made Fatima realize that she needed to be more flexible and empathic with herself, and that there was room in her professional life for her personal life. In doing so, she moved towards more integration of her personal and professional selves and attempted to improve her self-care:

That made me realize that I can go see my family, I can take care of personal stuff and it’s not going to be the end of my academic career. I think that was really the turning point for me. That really is when I decided to set some boundaries. I mean, we’re psychologists, if we can’t understand the needs of each other then, how are we expected to do that for the clients we serve?

While doing her graduate work at her current university, Hilda achieved considerable growth regarding her ethnic identity in that she became more aware of the significance it had in her life. This increased knowledge about her ethnic identity also enabled her to develop greater
personal awareness. For years, Hilda lacked awareness and ownership of her ethnic identity, and thus it had not constituted a salient part of her identity:

I think being in this program, especially during the masters, has opened my concept of what being Latina is for me. It may be different of everyone and it probably is. For me it’s very different because for a long time when people would ask what culture I identify with I would answer “Military.” I identified with military culture so much quicker than as a Latina, until now because I spent so many years of my life as a military dependent. Not until I did the master’s program and the doc program did I gain a better understanding of what being Latina was for me.

Ana, like Hilda, experienced an intrapersonal shift in her identity, which she perceived as an area of growth. Ana now embraced her indigenous beliefs and practices as part of the diversity within her own cultural heritage. She moved towards acceptance and owning of an important part of her identity that had elicited feelings of shame in the past:

I integrated that and I’m no longer ashamed of that. I’m not going to say it in a professional conference but if somebody comes forward and shares something like that, I wouldn’t be too afraid of sharing that this is what my grandma did to cleanse the house. Now I find it helpful and I do it too. It could be called crazy that I burn incense and that to me makes the house feel lighter or you get rid of bad energy or something. I know it doesn’t sound very professional but it’s part of that part of me that I’ve been able to embrace. But these things might be misunderstood so just be ready to understand yourself very well to be able to explain to others when it’s questioned or when it’s not understood. Just embrace it as a different way of thinking, a different way of doing things. It’s not less civilized or anything like that; it’s just a different way of seeing life and doing things.
The situations that resulted in cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy for Latinas did not always take place during a specific time period during the doctoral process. Certainly, because of the continuous challenges of doctoral education in psychology, potential opportunities for cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy were abundant and recurring. Further, while Latinas’ resiliency was undoubtedly a factor that allowed them to persist in doctoral education, those who faced constant challenges within doctoral education also sustained a negative emotional toll. Facing constant challenges, and the subsequent emotional toll resulted in either longer recuperations that affected progress towards degree completion, or contributed to attrition.

In dealing with the hardest situations, what seemed crucial was the ability to actively and promptly advocate for oneself, to have quick access to quality support, and to be able to modify behaviors. On the bright side, the byproduct of such experiences was generally a renewed commitment, a reward of sorts, related to the aforementioned realms (i.e., personal, professional) that served to reinforce their commitment. Thus, ultimately they viewed doctoral education as a valuable endeavor for themselves and prospective Latina students.

Encouraging the Next Generation

Encouraging Latinas

Collectively, despite the vicissitudes that Latinas experience on their path to doctoral education, the rewards they received in that process were sufficient for them to maintain their commitment and prevail on such a path. They viewed inviting and/or encouraging more individuals like them to embark on such venture as important and valuable. Belen stated, “I’d say absolutely do it, absolutely do it. We need more.” Elena added:
I think that if you want to make a difference [a doctorate in psychology is a good choice]. If you’re interested in higher education and you really want to get a doctoral degree I think a Latina would be best served by getting a doctoral degree in psychology. A doctorate has a lot more power. And, because of the lack of numbers in psychology for Latinas there is going to be room for us to grow for quite a while before we saturate the market.

*Psychosociocultural Factors in Latinas’ Experience in Doctoral Programs in Psychology*

As expected, PSC factors were present and relevant in the lived experience of Latinas in doctoral education in psychology. The characteristic components of the Latina experience in doctoral psychology programs included: (a) ethnic identity saliency, (b) encountering challenges, (c) rewards of the academic culture, (d) navigating via coping strategies, (e) social support systems, (f) undergoing cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy, and (g) encouraging the next generation. Table 1 lists the characteristic components of the Latina experience in doctoral psychology programs according to PSC domains.
Table 1.

*Psychosociocultural Factors of Latinas’ Doctoral Experience*

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<th>Psychological “P”</th>
<th>Social “S”</th>
<th>Cultural “C”</th>
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<tr>
<td>Navigating via coping strategies</td>
<td>Challenging relational dynamics with faculty and peers (including critical incidents)</td>
<td>Ethnic identity saliency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reactions to challenges of academic culture and incongruent relational dynamics</td>
<td>Social support systems (family, faculty, peers)</td>
<td>Challenges of academic culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergoing cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy</td>
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<td>Rewards of academic culture</td>
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<td>Encouraging the next generation</td>
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Purpose of the Study

Understanding Latinas’ experiences in doctoral education is of relevance because Latinas are part of the largest minority group in the country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Additionally, since the mid 1970’s, most of the educational advances for Latina/os as a group can be attributed to Latinas (Contreras & Gandara, 2006). Furthermore, while research indicates that the process of doctoral education for Latinas is intricate, there continues to be a paucity of research documenting their experiences. The PSC model has been applied in attempts to have a more holistic understanding of Latina/os experiences in higher education settings (Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996). Psychological, social, and cultural factors have been researched and found to be significant relative to Latina/o undergraduates’ well-being while in the academic environment and in academic persistence decisions (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez et al., 2005). In addition, while the presence of PSC factors in the academic experiences of Latina/os doctoral students have been reported, these have not been widely researched. Taking all of the aforementioned into account, it was deemed important to conduct a study to help elucidate the experiences of Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology that would also examine the PSC factors possibly related to their experiences.

This investigation is an analysis of the experience of Latinas in doctoral education in psychology using a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological approach was applied to discover, via their own voices, the essence of Latinas’ lived experience as they endeavored towards doctoral degree attainment. This study aimed to provide a better, more in-depth understanding of what constitutes the doctoral experience for Latinas in psychology and the PSC
factors that came into play. Having a more concrete and holistic understanding of the experiences of Latinas in doctoral education in psychology has implications for recruitment, retention, graduation, and for the improvement of their experience as a whole.

**Process of Analyses**

The process of investigation undertaken for this phenomenological study was arduous and required that the researcher was immersed in the data and gave heed to the emotional tone of the interview while alternating between the data and meanings. Eleven Latinas participated in in-depth interviews. Most of the participants were first-generation college students and were in their third year or beyond in the process of earning a doctoral degree in psychology. They answered the following questions: describe, as clearly and concretely as you can, events or experiences that illustrate your experience as a Latina doctoral student in psychology; describe how your Latina identity plays a role in your graduate education experience; what would you say to another Latina who is interested in pursuing a Ph.D. degree in psychology?

In answering the aforementioned questions, participants shared very rich and genuine information about what was salient to them in their experiences in doctoral education. Some women were surprised by their responses since they had not realized they had so much to say about their experience. Other women were surprised that they became emotional while recounting their path to the doctorate, and others accurately predicted they would become emotional since discussing their experiences elicited much pain. A sense of camaraderie was present between participants and myself as the interviewer; the participants not only seemed invested in the research topic but also in helping me. This camaraderie was perhaps because they deemed exploration of this topic important and also because they knew they were contributing to
the progress of someone they identified with. I expressed empathy as they related their experiences and also shared in their laughter when they discussed something humorous.

Summary of Findings

Data was analyzed at the individual level and the meaning structure and essence of each participant’s experiences in doctoral education in psychology emerged. These results are candid and powerful accounts of their triumphs and tribulations, of their lived experience as they navigated doctoral education. Also significant were the advice and considerations offered by participants to the next generation of Latinas interested in following in their footsteps. The information provided was varied and often reflected what the individual participant had struggled with as well as general suggestions regarding program choice, fit, and the importance of a support system. One participant went further and discussed issues that she viewed as problematic in academic programs in psychology and suggested possible ways to improve the academic environment.

A group analysis was undertaken to arrive at the essence of the experience of Latinas in doctoral education. Latinas’ individual meaning structures were analyzed for themes. Collective themes that were part of the experience of 75% \((n = 8)\) of the participants were used to produce the general meaning structure of Latinas’ experience in doctoral education in psychology. The salient themes in the experience of Latinas were the following: (a) Latina/o underrepresentation, (b) path to doctorate, (c) ethnic identity as source of knowledge, (d) commitment to community, (e) challenges, (f) rewards, (g) decisions and guilt, (h) support by family, (i) self-care, (j) support received from faculty, (k) support received from peers, (l) support provided, (m) reaching out for support, (n) decision-making, (o) self-reflection, (p) cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self-efficacy, and (q) encouraging Latinas. Once the general meaning structure was generated, the
narrative was analyzed for any patterns or characteristics. The characteristic structure of Latinas’
experience in doctoral programs in psychology included the following themes: (a) ethnic identity
saliency, (b) encountering challenges, (c) rewards of the academic culture, (d) navigating via
coping strategies, (e) social support systems, (f) undergoing cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in
self efficacy, and (g) encouraging the next generation.

Discussion of Findings

Ethnic Identity Saliency

Findings suggest that Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology experience ethnic
identity saliency due to a heightened awareness and actual first-hand experience of Latina/o
underrepresentation in education. They viewed and used their ethnic identity as a source of
knowledge and had a substantial commitment to their community. Unlike Rodriguez (1975) and
Rendon (1992) who felt disconnected from their culture while they undertook their doctoral
studies, Latinas in this study were not disconnected from the culture, but drew from their cultural
knowledge to educate others. In addition, they used their ethnic identity as a source of strength to
replenish their motivation.

Encountering Challenges

Results indicated Latinas encountered challenges in doctoral education including
aspects of the academic culture itself, inimical interactions with peers and faculty, and their own
internal reactions to such challenges. Similarly, other accounts of Latina/o experiences in
academia discussed Latina/os had experienced challenges (Gonzalez et. al., 2001; Ibarra, 1996).
While not all participants in this study experienced the same kind of challenges within the
academic culture, it was not uncommon to encounter incongruent features in their academic
environments. Some women expressed feeling that their programs were indifferent to their needs and that they lacked guidance as well as a sense of community.

In this study, relational dynamics with professors and peers contributed to making the academic culture and the environment in their programs challenging and incongruous. More specifically, some Latinas encountered professors who provided minimal guidance and were not invested in their development. Previous reports about Latina/o graduate experiences have also described students who had felt demoralized due to faculty apathy and lack of guidance (Ibarra, 1996).

Experiences of racism or discrimination by professors have been also documented in previous studies (i.e., Solorzano, 1998) that discussed Latina experiences. Latinas in this study also came across professors who either overtly or covertly acted in ways that made their biases, stereotypes, and assumptions against Latinas/os painfully evident. For example, more than one participant recounted being the target of derogatory comments or attitudes regarding their writing ability. Also, Achor and Morales (1990) noted that a little less than half of their sample of Chicanas who had completed a doctoral degree reported negative treatment or attitudes by faculty members when they were doctoral students, and 27% mentioned similar difficulties with their academic advisor. Hence, such behavior by faculty is not uncommon, and the fact that it is continually reproduced, is quite discouraging and disturbing. Further, these experiences resulted in drawing Latinas’ focus and energy away from their studies.

For Latinas in the current study who were part of programs in which there was chronic hostility in the academic atmosphere, feelings of invisibility and marginality were not uncommon. The aforementioned findings are substantiated by previous research indicating that Latina/os have endured “feeling out of place” while in environments in which they encounter
racist and sexist attitudes of professors (Gonzalez, 2007; Solorzano, 1998). Similarly, other accounts of Latina/o experiences in academia report that Latina/os have experienced an “outsider-within status,” a sense that they neither belonged, nor were fully accepted in their doctoral programs (Gonzalez et al., 2001, p.571). After experiences of marginality in academia, it was not uncommon for participants to question if they belonged in doctoral education.

The critical incidents that were reported by participants in this study further substantiate the demoralizing effects that a professor’s discriminatory actions or attitudes can have on a student. Like several women in this study, other Latina/os and individuals of color have had to deal with self-doubt, impostor syndrome, and even sadness, depression, or anxiety as a result of navigating environments in which they experienced overt and covert marginalization while concurrently endeavoring to balance the enormous set of responsibilities that come with academic and professional aspects of their training programs (Achor & Morales, 1990; Gonzalez, 2006; Watford et al., 2006).

Although not a pervasive theme in this study, the experience of being marginalized by peers and faculty of the same ethnic background was significantly distressing and completely unexpected for a participant. The student was let down by two Latina professors, one who betrayed her, and another who was unresponsive. Though not commonly reported in the literature, that Latina/o professors have behaved in ways that have made Latina/o students feel marginalized is acknowledged. Ibarra (1996) noted that inter-ethnic tension between Latina/o professors and Latina/o students may be explained by socioeconomic class differences, or the “internal ranking system” (p.15) including skin color, appearance, language and ethnicity, though it is not frequently discussed outside Latina/o circles.
Latinas in this study were also challenged by culturally incongruent relational dynamics with peers who were competitive, unhelpful, or indifferent. In addition, participants also discussed instances of microaggressions, overt and covert racism, and marginality by peers. Unfortunately, such peer experiences have also been repeatedly reported in the literature (Achor & Morales, 1990; Gonzalez, 2006). It is likely that there are various factors in that contribute to within-group issues between Latina/o doctoral students and faculty. The dynamics that surround inter-ethnic marginalization, whether involving Latino/a professors or Latina/o peers, warrants further investigation. It is also likely that not having the support of those who they assumed would be part of their support system evokes much distress, especially when in an incongruent environment.

The tendency of Latina/o students to form personal relationships and incorporate family values into their daily life was identified as an important part of their adjustment to graduate school (Ibarra, 1996). It is possible that the aforementioned challenging relational dynamics could have been enough for some Latinas to be “pushed out” of doctoral education, but the women in this study, found ways to persist. J.C. Gonzalez (2007) reported that Latinas in his study had “resiliency in social competence” (p. 294) as they persisted in doctoral education and found support despite unwelcoming social contexts. Similarly, given that the women in this sample continued to pursue their doctoral degree despite the challenging relational dynamics they encountered in the academic culture, indicated they also developed resiliency in social competence (Gonzalez, 2007).

Another point that was brought up by some participants, though it did not emerge as a collective theme, was a reluctance to ask for help. Participants’ comments suggested that their difficulties asking for help were probably tied to cultural beliefs that you do not burden others by
asking for help outside of the family, and that you can, or should do things on your own. Participants in Ibarra’s (1996) study alluded to hesitancy asking for help as well as mistrust in the environment when they suggested that Latina/o graduate students avoid going about their doctoral experience without support. Difficulties asking for help was not an issue widely present in the current literature on Latina/o graduate students. Further, asking for help was likely to be more difficult if students were confronted with having to ask for help from faculty members who were viewed as relationally distant. Taking into account the relational challenges that students encountered with faculty, it was not surprising that advice from former graduate students included reaching out when it felt safe to do so, as well as carefully considering whom to ask for guidance (Kamimura, 2006; Segura Herrera, 2006). Being ambivalent about reaching out to professors for guidance can be detrimental for timely degree completion or for degree completion at all. Therefore, students and professors share responsibility for ameliorating this matter. Students should be willing to examine their beliefs about asking for help, make efforts to take risks, and exercise change. Likewise, professors should be willing to examine and modify how they relate to students. This is especially significant in relating with students like Latina/os, who deem values like personalismo, a way of interacting that emphasizes pleasing and harmonious personal connections, important (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007).

Navigating via Coping Strategies and Social Support

Being in a system that contrasts your own values can feel like you are going against the current, and thus necessitates finding coping strategies to grab on to, ways to stay afloat. This was precisely what Latinas in this study did. Findings indicated that Latinas navigated their doctoral experiences by using coping strategies and social support. For instance, the rewards of the academic culture was also a collective theme indicating that participants were able to cope by
identifying positive aspects within the academic atmosphere although there was no consistency in what they specifically viewed as rewarding. Among the things some Latinas identified as positive were a focus and commitment to diversity or multiculturalism and a sense that their ethnic identity was welcomed and valued. Further, several women noted they were pleased to be in a doctoral program and had an awareness about the privilege that entailed.

Castellanos (1996) noted that the Latina graduate student who was the focus of her ethnographic study frequently sought balance between her professional roles and the roles that were compatible with her own values such as being a daughter and sister. Similarly, Latinas in this study managed their personal and professional-academic endeavors in order to navigate doctoral education. Latinas in this study also experienced guilt as they chose between personal and professional aspects of their lives, especially when having to choose to be apart from family. It is likely that opting to focus on professional endeavors versus family elicited feelings of guilt due to being experienced as incongruent with their values. Similar findings were documented by K.P. Gonzalez et al., (2001), but participants in the present investigation, versus in the aforementioned study, did not discuss feelings of loss regarding their families suggesting that they maintained “good enough” family connections.

Also contributing to the guilt some participants felt was the reproach from family members when they had to forgo a family event, or in the case of women with children, when they were unable to spend as much time as expected, or desired, with their children. This suggested that at least some Latinas dealt with some level of conflict with family members due to being perceived as not fulfilling gender and cultural role expectations. Nonetheless, in navigating their doctoral experience, Latinas received support from family which included help with
childcare, and similar to earlier studies, emotional and economic support (Achor & Morales, 1990; Ibarra, 1996).

In the search for balance between academia and family it was not uncommon for Latina/o students to often overlook their own needs (Castellanos et al., 2006a). Hence, it was not surprising that self-care was another collective theme in this study. Some Latinas found ways to insert practices to de-stress into their routine. However, others realized that they were not managing their self-care in the best way possible and thought self-care was difficult due to having so much to handle. Castellanos and colleagues (2006a) noted that an additional aspect of being in graduate school was “learning the professional and cultural savvy of protecting yourself” (p. 287) and findings suggested that participants in this study were at different places in that process.

Consistent with previous research, Latinas in this study navigated doctoral education by using social support systems that extended beyond family to cope (Gonzalez, 2006; Nepomuceno, 2008). For example, they reached out for the support of individuals in their programs, namely professors or mentors. They also provided support to and received support from their peers. That study participants had support in addition to their family was an improvement considering that women who had attained doctoral and medical degrees in Gandara’s (1982) study were unlikely to find much additional support. Thus, current findings indicated that Latinas were able to find sources of support despite incongruent aspects of their academic environment and the unwelcoming dynamics that some of these students experienced with some professors and peers.

Support from faculty was a collective theme; the common view among participants was that their faculty were supportive. During their interviews, participants discussed instances of
support provided by faculty though only four Latinas in this study mentioned they had at least one mentor. Not mentioning mentors does not necessarily mean that participants lacked positive relationships with professors. In fact, another collective strategy involved reaching out, which many times entailed asking for support from faculty. However, it was unclear if such instances of support were situational, or standing mentoring relationships. Mentorship did not emerge as a collective theme which implied the following: participants simply did not mention their mentor, they did not have a mentor, or they felt sufficiently supported by the faculty in their program and thus, having identified mentors was not relevant. The women who mentioned mentors, however, clearly identified specific ways their mentors guided them, and they differentiated mentors from other faculty.

A mentor “takes personal interest in providing apprenticeship opportunities for a given student” (Turner & Thompson, 1993, p. 361) and provides suitable advice to aid in the development of academic and personal professionalism (Renaud & Renaud-Suarez, 2008). Mentors impact the doctoral experience and affect program completion (Jaschik, 2009; Torres, 2006). Further, graduate students who reported more frequent interactions with faculty performed better and were more satisfied with their academic programs (Nettles, 1990). Also, Turner and Thompson (1993) noted that graduate minority women in their study reported having positive relationships with faculty, but most did not have a mentor. The authors noted that this suggested that graduate minority women in their study were missing out on mentoring and socialization experiences that were important aspects of the doctoral experience. Thus, that mentorship was not a collective factor among Latinas in this study was alarming.

While the perception exists that mentoring has not been appreciated or adequately rewarded in academia, it is important to emphasize that all faculty, regardless of ethnicity “must

Further, given that Latina/o graduate students who lacked mentoring expressed a yearning for their faculties’ validation demonstrates that mentoring relationships are of value (Gonzalez et al., 2001). A doctoral experience that holistically encompasses Latina/o graduate students would require changes in the faculty rewards system (Gonzales et al., 2002). It would also require that faculty members become “open to the various ways of supporting and nurturing the diverse views and identities of their students” (Gonzales et al., 2002, p. 555).

Consistent with previous studies, peers emerged as part of Latinas’ doctoral support system. Latinas in this study provided support to peers, and also received support from peers. The types of support discussed included everyday questions about clinical clerical procedures and general questions about academics. More personal matters that required greater emotional sustenance, such as dealing with conflict, discussing feedback about their professional development, and processing emotional reactions to intense client issues, were discussed with more trusted peers. Additionally, when individuals who provided personal sustenance were identified, they were fellow Latinas or other people of color. Finding a sense of balance via their ethnic community was a result that has been replicated in prior studies of Latina/o and other ethnic minority graduate students (Gonzalez, 2006; Nepomuceno, 2008; Turner & Thompson, 1993). In this study, there were also several accounts of the support that Latinas provided or received via involvement with the Latina/o community. One example mentioned was support provided to others via leadership efforts in groups for graduate students. Such involvement has been previously identified as an important and rewarding contributor to the retention of graduate students and as a strategy to cope with the cultural incongruity between graduate school and Latino culture (Herrera, 2003; Renaud & Renaud-Suarez, 2008).
Furthermore, though it was not part of a salient theme, several participants noted that having attended the NLPA conference provided them with validation and sustenance to persist during times when they were going through specific hardships. For others, seeing other psychologists and Latina/o clinicianas role models encouraged them and fueled their motivation to become doctoral students. Thus, being able to access professionals and students via the NLPA and other professional organizations was another way some Latinas in this study and other women of color (i.e., Nepomuceno, 2008) found support.

Findings indicated that Latinas also coped by engaging in introspection about concerns or situations they encountered and by decision making. Through self reflection, Latinas evaluated the context of the situations they dealt with, gained insights, and subsequently made decisions. Some decisions focused more on their internal processes, such as realizing that they had to readjust their views to realign with their own values rather than allowing themselves to be guided by others’ values (i.e., peers or academia). Taking action in order to move away from stagnation was another byproduct of introspection and decision making. Among the women in this study, examples included changing advisors or creating an alternative practicum opportunity.

Self-reflection and decision-making were coping tools that seemed to be extensively applied within hostile academic environments. Decisions about reactions to discriminatory events such as microaggressions most definitely involved delving into their personal value system. These coping tools were crucial in dealing with the emotional aftermath of critical incidents. They also helped students make deliberate, thoughtful choices rather than succumbing to impulsive responses informed by pain or anger. Additionally, introspection was used by Latinas to self-assess and self-motivate. In other words, Latinas engaged in critical thinking about the personal and professional situations they encountered, and became actively engaged in
their own doctoral experiences via decision-making. The aforementioned findings resonate with the experiences of other Latinas who exercised resiliency in problem solving during the process of attaining doctoral education (Gonzalez, 2007). Furthermore, similar findings were reported in Nepomuceno’s (2008) study of graduate women of color (GWOC). The GWOC navigated doctoral education in psychology by contextualizing situations such as critical incidents or other experiences of incongruity, which in turn, helped them self-regulate emotions, gain insights, and “make meaning of their struggles to persist” (p.103).

Self-reflection and decision-making were skills used with frequency by Latinas in navigating their doctoral experience and were vital to their persistence in their doctoral programs. Furthermore, while fatalism and humor were not collective themes in participant’s narratives, they were mentioned as ways in which Latinas coped in doctoral education. Fatalism and beliefs about destiny and spirituality helped some women cope in times of duress. A sense of knowing that they were “meant to be” on the path to doctoral education in psychology made their experience meaningful despite their struggles and sacrifices, and connected their experience to something beyond themselves (i.e., their community). Whereas fatalistic beliefs like “what will be, will be” could denote some passivity, the woman who discussed such beliefs seemed to use them as a way to cope with situations that were out of her control, yet somewhat distressing (i.e., not yet having reached personal goals of marriage and children). Additionally, several participants discussed their stories with humor and sarcasm. In some instances, the use of humor seemed to diffuse the tension truly involved in discussing a difficult situation. For example, a participant used humor to discuss how she struggled with time management while another participant laughed as she recalled the advice offered by a family member when she disclosed a difficult incident with a peer.
The analysis of Latinas’ doctoral experiences in psychology elucidated cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self-efficacy that impacted them personally and professionally. These types of shifts were effected by positive events that resulted in increased self-efficacy and self-assurance. Cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy also resulted from negative events such as critical incidents within the academic and professional spheres or struggles within the personal and familial domains. The cognitive and/or behavioral shifts that had been catalyzed by negative experiences also resulted in growth and, in the process, uncovered Latinas’ strength and resiliency. Nonetheless, in the midst of it all, the women had endured significant emotional and psychological distress. Moreover, depending on the situation and on the individual, some women became stagnant prior to being able to move towards growth. The aforementioned findings echoed Ibarra’s (1996) report which stated that though all graduate students struggled at some point, Latina/o graduate students encountered difficulties and ethnic tensions that complicated their struggle. However, Ibarra (1996) also noted that these complications and ethnic tensions significantly transformed Latina/o graduate students.

Research suggested that new graduate students contended with at least some level of conflict or transformation in adjusting to graduate school and later to doctoral candidacy (Ibarra, 1996; Ibarra, 2001). The findings in the current study indicated that these cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy or transformative experiences did not only take place during Latinas’ earlier experiences as doctoral students. This is not surprising given that the nature of doctoral education involves multifarious challenges leading to multiple opportunities for these cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy to take place. Latinas’ resiliency was undoubtedly a factor that allowed them to persist in doctoral education. Nonetheless, despite their resiliency, those who faced constant challenges while on the doctoral path endured an
emotional toll that affected progress towards degree completion or could have resulted in attrition. Further, if the student had inadequate support, such lack of support aggravated the situation. For example, J.C. Gonzalez (2006) reported that Latina doctoral students who unsuccessfully resisted academic socialization lost their academic voice due to feelings of marginalization and isolation, inadequate support and validation, and lack of self-efficacy concerning their success which made their educational process more tenuous and difficult.

Based on the current findings it seemed that in dealing with the most difficult situations in the doctoral process, vital tools for success included engaging in introspection, having the ability to actively and promptly self-advocate, having access to quality support, and being able to modify behaviors. Comparably, J.C. Gonzalez (2006) found that Latinas who engaged in successful resistance against academic socialization and found their academic voice, did so by finding supportive people with similar views, asserting themselves to be perceived as intellectually equal and, speaking up against academic and racial discrimination. Prior researchers discussed “resistance with accommodation” (Achor & Morales, 1990, p.281) when referring to a group of Chicana doctoral students who had accommodated to requirements of the academy without compromising their culture. This type of resistance also seems present in the experiences of current student participants.

As a consequence of their cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy, Latinas experienced growth and renewed commitment towards their professional and personal identities including their ethnic identity. This renewal was experienced as rewarding, and in conjunction with the reasons that originally contributed to their interest in doctoral education, their commitment to persist was revitalized. Further, this renewal was likely a factor into why Latinas viewed completion of their doctoral degree as a valuable endeavor for themselves, and for the
next generation of Latinas despite how arduous the process was. Similarly, other Latina/o
graduate students expressed that they persisted in their efforts to complete their degrees
motivated by their own “sense of hope, obligation, and determination…” (Gonzalez et al., 2001,
p. 578). Latinas in this study emerged from their cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self
efficacy with “resiliency in sense of purpose” (Gonzalez, 2007, p. 297) because in persisting they
had maintained or reconnected to their sense of purpose.

Ethnic renewal and recognition were also evident in the experiences of other Latina/o
graduate students whose interest in ethnocultural matters also resulted in a greater sense of
commitment and obligation to their community and a desire to contribute via research and
service (Gonzalez, 2002; Ibarra 1996). While Ibarra (1996) noted that participants in his study
had increased interest in ethnocultural matters towards the end of their studies, the Latinas in this
study reported interest and pride in ethnocultural matters prior to having started, or early on, in
their doctoral program and consistently thereafter.

In summary, the experiences of Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology emerged as
complex, dynamic, and rewarding. Latinas experienced increased awareness about their ethnic
identity and reinforced their commitment to their community while on the doctoral path. They
encountered multiple challenges within the academic culture as well as challenges that were
personal and professional in nature. Latinas were also able to identify positive aspects of their
academic environments that contributed to their persistence. Latinas navigated the doctoral
process using coping strategies as well as their social support systems. Further, Latinas
experienced cognitive and/or behavioral shifts that resulted in increased personal and
professional, and academic self-efficacy. In addition, such growth resulted in a renewal to their
commitment towards their education and their community, and contributed to their willingness to
encourage the next generation of Latinas to pursue doctoral education in psychology. Overall, Latinas’ persistence in doctoral studies despite their struggles was a testament to their resiliency.

**Psychosociocultural Factors in Latinas’ Doctoral Experiences**

The underlying notion of the PSC model is that there are various factors—psychological, social, and cultural—which impact students’ educational processes and are interdependent, dynamic, and interactive in a person-environment context (Gloria et al., 2006; Gloria & Castellanos, 2006). The PSC model moves away from the notion that only outcome variables such as grades or graduation rates should be assessed in ascertaining the success of Latina/os in higher education (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). The PSC model also removes sole responsibility for success from the student in that it acknowledges that variables outside the student, such as the university climate and other systemic issues share in the responsibility for Latina/o student success.

Issues regarding the status of doctoral educational attainment as it pertains to Latina/os have been discussed using the PSC model as an underpinning (Castellanos et al., 2006b). The psychological dimension “P,” the social dimension “S,” and the cultural dimension “C” are discernible throughout various accounts of the history, status, and experiences of Latina/os in doctoral education. However, there is a lack of research focusing on Latina/o doctoral experiences and this is the first research effort that explores the experiences of Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology while also taking PSC factors into account.

The adjustment, persistence, personal and professional integration, and empathic development of GWOC in counseling psychology doctoral programs were the subject of Nepomuceno’s (2008) phenomenological study. The study, which was the first of its kind, explored the experiences of GWOC in academia applying both a PSC approach to educational
experiences and Self Psychology. There were seven areas identified that were salient in GWOC adjustment to and persistence in their doctoral programs. They included: 1) racial identity development, 2) critical incidents related to race, ethnicity, gender, and class, 3) support systems, 4) managing, 5) navigation, 6) products of navigation, and 7) empathic development. Also, coping pathways and strategies used in managing incongruent environments were identified.

Although the focus of the current study differs from Nepomuceno’s (2008) study, they shared some common findings. For example, women in both studies experienced a strengthened cultural identity. Support systems consisting of faculty and peers were also significant to women in both studies. Coping skills such as reflection and contextualizing were also salient for participants in both samples. Unlike in Nepomuceno’s study, critical incidents in connection to race, ethnicity, gender and class were not a collective theme in the current study. Nonetheless, several Latinas in this study discussed having critical race-related incidents with professors that exemplified academic environments that were hostile and incongruent. In Nepomuceno’s study, the adjustment and persistence of GWOC were byproducts of successful navigation when the GWOC learned to more effectively manage the incongruent environments and critical incidents in their programs.

Further, relationship aspects of Self Psychology and the PSC model served to reveal coping pathways GWOC used to persist in academia. Nepomuceno (2008) explained that in culturally incongruent learning environments, persistence was placed at risk due to the need to preserve the self. This resulted in the GWOC using their internal resources in conjunction with external resources available in the academic environment to develop coping strategies. When a student ran the risk of self-disintegration due to overwhelming critical incidents, minimal support, and a learning environment in which empathy was lacking, two coping pathways were
identified to preserve the self. One coping pathway was to leave the academic environment; this was the self-preservation coping pathway taken by women who were reported to have left the program. An alternative coping pathway was to compartmentalize the self in order to persist in academia. However, when GWOC were in environments that had empathic, “good enough” support, the third coping pathway involved using the vulnerability brought about by critical incidents as an opportunity for personal growth. Such path “led to emotional regulation, navigation and integration of the personal and professional” (p.114). Nepomuceno noted that the divided self and subsequently the integrated self were the pathways taken by the GWOC in her study.

Findings for the current study indicated that Latinas experienced cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy that were catalyzed due to challenges such as critical incidents or other personal or professional difficulties. These types of shifts resulted in self efficacy within the personal, academic, or professional realms. These cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy also served to rejuvenate the students’ zest for graduate studies, commitment towards their community, and original motivators for doctoral studies. Students’ responses varied depending on the gravity of the situations encountered. Each student had to work through her distress although some became stagnant prior to moving towards growth. This was akin to what Nepomuceno (2008) suggested was the experience for a student in the divided-self coping pathway. However, it became evident that some students took longer to recover and, if they faced constant challenges and lacked support, the emotional toll was more likely to have a pervasive effect on them. The emotional toll could potentially affect progress towards degree completion or result in attrition which was analogous to what Nepomuceno suggested took place when a student chose the preservation of self coping pathway.
Some Latinas in this study appeared to be persisting in doctoral education via a divided self coping pathway. Other Latinas appeared to be using an integrated self coping pathway suggesting they had found “good enough” support while in incongruent environments. These students became better able to navigate the vicissitudes of doctoral education while heading towards personal and professional integration. Furthermore, there were other Latinas who were in learning environments that seemed to be more empathic, and while this did not mean these students did not face conflicts or challenges, it was probably easier for them to move towards the navigation that takes place in the integrated self coping pathway. Consistent with Nepomuceno’s (2008) research, some of the findings in this study also suggested that “[a]dversity can be an opportunity for development when there is an empathic learning context that encourages intellectual and emotional growth through critical challenges” (p. 126). Additionally, it should be viewed with optimism that a finding that emerged from this phenomenological analysis of Latina experiences was that there were also cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy elicited by positive doctoral experiences. Thus, findings in this study indicated that growth, both personal and professional, can result from positive experiences Latinas encountered while on the path to doctoral attainment.

Viewing Latina experiences in doctoral education within the context of PSC factors allows for a better understanding of Latinas’ experiences. Further, having a sense of the PSC factors that are present in Latinas’ doctoral experiences allows for Latinas, and others involved in their academic processes, to possess a more culturally congruent way to view and speak of such experiences. Latina students may feel validated in realizing that there are many other interconnected factors beyond academics (e.g., the university environment, cultural incongruity) that affect their experiences as doctoral students. Recognizing the myriad of possible factors that
impact their educational process could help them gain better insight into their own experiences and enable them to identify what aids or hinders them. This knowledge could also help Latinas be more intentional as they navigate their doctoral process. Additionally, viewing Latina doctoral experiences through a PSC lens can help faculty and departments better understand, better relate to, and better serve the Latina doctoral students they work with.

One aspect that is absent from the PSC model is behavior. However, the behavioral component is an important consideration in the experiences of Latina doctoral students. While undergoing a cognitive and/or behavioral shift and subsequent growth involved affective and psychological experiences, there were other times when that also involved a change in behavior (i.e., practicing better self-care). In addition, while decision making was one of the coping tools Latinas put into practice, making a decision would many times, involve taking a course of action (i.e., changing advisers). Hence, it is important to keep in mind that “doing” is also an important domain to consider in terms of persisting in doctoral education and completing a doctoral degree.

There is much to understand and investigate in relation to the doctoral experiences of Latinas and other ethnic minority women. However, it is important to note that in viewing these women’s experiences via phenomenological methodology, and from a PSC vantage point, the voices of Latinas and other GWOC were heard. The nuances of those experiences were elucidated providing plentiful information that can be used to make the process of doctoral education better for the next generations.

Implications

The present study was designed to investigate the experiences of Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology. The information that emerged from this phenomenological study was very rich and significant since it originated from Latinas who were, at that moment, experiencing
firsthand what it was like to be in doctoral education in psychology. Further, the essence of their doctoral experiences was also viewed through a PSC perspective in an effort to more concretely understand their experiences. The findings of this study have multiple implications related to the recruitment, retention, and graduation of Latina doctoral students in psychology.

Students

Latinas currently working on a doctoral degree in psychology or other doctoral programs can refer to these findings in order to validate and normalize their own experiences. They can also assess the ways they cope with their experiences, the support systems that they have in place, and what they need to effect in order to positively affect their doctoral educational process. Latinas interested in pursuing doctoral education in psychology can refer to the findings of this study to gain a sense of what the doctoral experience has been like for women who share their ethnic background. In addition, the advice that each of the participants provided to prospective Latina doctoral students in psychology can be used as a resource.

Based on the findings of this study, Latinas can expect that their doctoral experience will be a challenging process, but one which has the potential to provide many rewards, both personal and professional. Previous Latina/o scholars, (e.g., Rodriguez, 1975) noted that the academic environment precluded their ethnic identity from being part of their academic experience. It is important that the current and future generations of Latina doctoral students realize that compromising your ethnic identity is no longer the rule. However, Latinas’ ethnic identity is likely to undergo modifications while in doctoral education in psychology. In fact, for Latinas in this study, their ethnic identity became more salient and their commitment to their community strengthened. Also, Latinas who seemed more acculturated into mainstream culture also
underwent transformations in their ethnic identity as a result of their experiences in doctoral education.

Knowing that some Latinas encountered challenges in the academic culture, such as departments that were culturally incongruent, as well as professors and students whose relational dynamics were dissimilar to their own (i.e., distant), can serve to mentally prepare prospective Latina students for the process of forming relationships with such faculty and students. Though not a collective theme, several participants in this study expressed having difficulties asking for help. Thus, it is important that Latinas gain insight into their own beliefs about asking for help since it is a skill that will be useful throughout a doctoral career and beyond.

Critical incidents were not a collective theme in this study, but sadly, such events continue to happen to Latinas and other women of color and result in considerable distress (Nepomuceno, 2008). The results of this study also suggested that cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy were not only catalyzed by critical incidents but by other negative experiences, both personal and professional, encountered by the student. However, given the presence of “an empathic learning context that encourages intellectual and emotional growth through critical challenges” (Nepomuceno 2008, p.126) such negative experiences can be turned into opportunities for growth. The aforementioned findings underscore the need to develop a strong support system and to access it promptly. It is also important to create an “academic family” which can include professors and students from other departments to provide support and validation, and to manage challenging situations (Segura-Herrera, 2006). Similarly, it is important for prospective students to pay close attention to the cultural climate of the academic programs to which they apply.
The evidence from this study also suggested that Latinas applied a variety of coping strategies. This finding underlines the importance of actively searching for, and applying coping tools as part of persisting and eventually succeeding in the doctoral attainment process. Interestingly, only two participants mentioned the use of psychotherapy as a coping tool. It is recommended that Latinas use psychotherapy to help them maximize the coping tools they have, and to help them find and apply new ways to cope with their cultural, familial, personal, and professional roles and responsibilities. An adjunct benefit to therapy for Latina doctoral psychology students is that therapy may also help them to develop professionally.

This study also suggested that family members were valuable sources of support for Latinas. At times, a lack of understanding of the doctoral process and a desire for Latinas to spend more time with the family resulted in some conflict. Latinas compromised by finding ways to meaningfully prioritize their family obligations and by explaining their academic responsibilities to their families. Given this information, it is recommended that Latinas communicate with their family about what doctoral education entails and have a plan to help each other cope and to nourish their relationships with each other. Meeting other families of Latina doctoral students can provide support for the students and their families.

**Training Programs and Faculty**

The current study revealed that Latinas viewed multiculturalism as a reward of the academic culture. Hence, improving the experiences of Latinas, and of all students, involves creating an academic environment in which diversity issues and discussions are integrated into the curriculum and are standard in department’s research agendas. Ibarra (2001) noted that effecting cultural change regarding how departments teach and perform research can start by simply assessing how to prepare for the new kinds of students that enter the program every year.
Attending to the findings of this investigation may help programs in general, and faculty in particular, have a more holistic sense of what Latina students experience as they work on their doctoral degree. It is important to note that Latinas in this sample viewed their faculty as supportive, but very few Latinas had mentoring relationships. This finding serves as a reminder that all faculty should share the responsibility of mentoring Latinas (Turner & Thompson, 1993). Further, because mentoring relationships contribute to student success (Jaschik, 2009; Nettles, 1990), all professors also have the responsibility to self-assess the manner in which they interact with their students and learn how to better relate to them. Being aware of PSC factors present in the experiences of Latinas in this study may help faculty better understand what Latina students value, and struggle with, beyond academics. In turn, this may help them better relate to Latina students and improve the opportunity for mentoring relationships to develop.

Further, knowing that peer support is an important coping tool for Latinas in graduate school, it is important to connect students to other Latinas in the program, and to places within the university (i.e., university cultural centers, graduate student organizations) where they could connect with others to start forming their “academic family.” In addition, having departmental social activities which incorporate students and their families can help build a sense of community.

Moreover, Latinas can extend their support system beyond their university by attending and presenting at conferences. These venues provide Latinas with access to doctoral students, new professionals, and established professionals in their field who share their ethnic background. Conferences can also serve as opportunities for Latina doctoral students to develop research projects with their professors and to present their findings at such forums.
Implications for Clinicians

The PSC model was developed to help university counseling center clinicians assist Latina/o undergraduates with academic and social difficulties (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). PSC factors were present in the experiences of Latina doctoral students in psychology. Thus, this study can be used as a tool for clinicians who provide individual therapy for Latina graduate students. The findings of this investigation can be used to create a workshop for Latina graduate students or a group geared to the PSC challenges they experience. In many cases, doctoral psychology students are precluded from receiving therapy at their university’s counseling center because that is where they, many times, are concurrently receiving training. Therefore, providing students with information about mental health resources that are free or low cost is recommended. In addition, it is important to include the names of Latina/o clinicians who are bilingual and/or bicultural as well as clinicians who have experience working with diverse populations as part of that information.

Limitations

The intent behind this phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the essence of Latinas’ lived experience in doctoral psychology programs. All but one of the participants were recruited via the NLPA’s conference. The fact that they were at this conference may indicate a high degree of identification with the culture. It is possible that they chose to participate in the study as an extension of their commitment to their culture, in addition to viewing this topic as an area that needs further attention in the literature. There was no formal evaluation of acculturation, but most women seemed to strongly self-identify as Latina and/or were probably bicultural. However, their ethnic identification was seen as positive since the aim
of this research project was to study how women who self-identify as Latina experienced doctoral education.

The findings of this study are also limited in that they represent what participants recalled during the interview. Further, it is also possible that, despite efforts to remain fully objective, the researcher’s perspectives potentially, and inadvertently, influenced the study through the identification of meaning units and distillation of themes. The findings were also influenced by the fact that four participants were part of the same academic program. Further, the majority of the participants attended private universities.

Future Research

Further research regarding the experiences of Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology is needed. It would be interesting to study possible similarities or differences based on Latina/o sub-ethnicity, type of doctoral program (Ph.D. versus Psy.D.) or university setting (i.e., PWI vs. HSI, private vs. public). Future research should also consider having a follow-up conversation to ask about any insights gained after participating in in-depth interviews. In this investigation, several participants were surprised about both their emotional reaction to their stories and how much they had to say about their experience. Follow up interviews might have revealed additional insights. Further, it is unclear if participants had prior awareness about the cognitive and/or behavioral shifts in self efficacy they experienced that became illuminated via this analysis. A semi-structured interview based on P,S,C, domains can help further ascertain how each of those domains impact the doctoral experience. Inquiring about their behaviors would result in an even more holistic assessment.

Additional areas for research emerged from findings and though these findings were not collective, they were nonetheless important. One area for further research would be to investigate
how Latina doctoral students who are English language learners experience and cope with the writing exigencies of the doctoral program as well as the biases they encounter from peers and professors. Some participants identified having increased workloads as a result of being asked to step in when there was no one else who could communicate with Spanish speaking clients. It would be interesting to assess if other bilingual doctoral students have a similar experience, how they cope with it, and if it impacts their wellbeing. The use of spirituality, fatalism, and humor as ways to cope are additional areas to study. Other interesting possibilities for research include studying the PSC implications for Latina doctoral students who are single and unable to find Latino men who have equivalent levels of formal education. A similar study focusing on the experiences of Latina doctoral students who are partnered or married and/or have children is another area not addressed in the literature. Lastly, investigating the experiences of Latinas who enter doctoral education at an older age, and how their experience may differ from those of younger Latinas, is suggested for future study.

Closing Remarks

Even though there is still more to explore and understand regarding the experiences of Latinas in doctoral education in general, and in psychology in particular, it is important to highlight that despite the challenges encountered, Latinas emerge as resilient individuals. Latinas undergo many trials while on this journey but also reap many satisfactions. They also experience tremendous growth that impacts them psychologically and as social and cultural beings. They walk on the path to doctoral education driven and sustained by a personal motivation to succeed in order to be of service to their community, and in the process, seem to understand that they become cultural agents of change.
As the face of America continues to change, it becomes necessary to transform spaces of learning to be more inclusive of the diversity that truly represents this country’s reality. The lack of doctoral attainment of Latinas, and other culturally diverse individuals, obstructs necessary systemic changes in the academic culture. Without that level of education, Latinas are precluded from being able to impact academic culture from within. Despite the progress, further change must be promoted in order for Latinas to have a more rewarding doctoral educational process and thus, continue to hold the door open for others to come in.
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APPENDIX A

Introduction Letter

Dear NLPA Community,

My name is Patricia Celaya, I am a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology at Washington State University (WSU). The title of my dissertation is “The Experiences of Latina Graduate Students in Psychology Programs” and I am working under the guidance of Dr. Brian McNeill.

I will be attending NLPA’s 2010 conference in November and would like to cordially invite you to participate in this study. To be part of this study, you must identify as Latina/Hispanic/Chicana and be at least a third-year doctoral student in Counseling or Clinical Psychology. In addition, participation in this study involves a one to two hour in-person interview that will be audio recorded and the completion of a demographic questionnaire. Your identifying information will be kept anonymous and confidential and there are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this study.

WSU’s Institutional Review Board determined that this study (IRB #11311) satisfies the criteria for Exempt Research at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). Your contribution to this study will be greatly appreciated and you may also choose to partake in the raffle of a gift card. Please contact me at patricia.celaya@email.wsu.edu if you would like to be part of this study or if you have further questions. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Brian McNeill at mcneill@wsu.edu for further inquiries.

Muchas Gracias,

Patricia Celaya, B.A.

Doctoral Candidate, Washington State University
APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

The Experiences of Latina Graduate Students in Psychology Programs

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines your experience as a Latina in a doctoral program in counseling or clinical psychology. This research is being conducted to fulfill the dissertation requirement for a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology at Washington State University (WSU). The results of this research may be used for professional presentations or publications.

An in-depth understanding of what constitutes the experience of Latinas in doctoral programs in psychology is necessary to fully comprehend the relevant and crucial aspects of the process of doctoral attainment for this group. Findings can then be utilized to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation efforts for other Latinas engaged in doctoral studies in psychology or other disciplines. This knowledge can also be used by graduate schools, specific departments, and individual advisors in order to develop recruitment, retention, and graduation strategies better suited for Latinas. This data can also inform and better prepare Latinas who are considering embarking on future doctoral study, as well as individuals who are involved with peer graduate student groups as participants or advisors.

Your participation involves a one to two hour in person interview that will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will also be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. Each participant's taped interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet within the researcher’s residence and a copy of the interview may be sent to a professional transcriber. No identifying information will be tied to your responses and the data and results will be reported in a way that protects your confidentiality. You may choose view a copy of the transcription of your interview and provide corrections as you view fit. You may also choose to partake in the raffle of a gift card.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may terminate participation at any point during the research. WSU’s Institutional Review Board determined that this study (IRB #11311) satisfies the criteria for Exempt Research at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this study. However, you may experience emotional arousal as you reflect on and share your experiences. The researcher will provide an opportunity for debriefing after the interview as well as information regarding counseling services as needed.

If at any point you have questions about any aspect of this research study you may contact me at patricia_celaya@wsu.edu. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Brian McNeill, Ph.D., at mcneill@wsu.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant you may contact WSU’s Institutional Review Board at irb@wsu.edu or at 509-335-3668.

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Your signature on this document serves as your consent to participate in this study.

Participant Signature

Date

Investigator’s Signature

Date
APPENDIX C

Demographic Information Form

1. What is your field of study? _____________________________

2. What year in the program is this for you? _____________________________

3. How old are you? _____________________________

4. What is your ethnic identification? _____________________________

5. What is your relationship/marital status? _____________________________

6. Do you have children? _____________________________

7. Where were you born? _____________________________

8. Where did you grow up? _____________________________

9. If you immigrated to the United States, how old were you when that took place? _____________________________

10. Where were your parents born? _____________________________

11. What is your mother’s highest level of formal education? _____________________________

12. What is your father’s highest level of formal education? _____________________________

13. What is/was your mother’s occupation? _____________________________

14. What is/was your father’s occupation? _____________________________

15. How many siblings do you have? What is your birth order? _____________________________

16. Are you the first in your family to attend college? If not, who was? _____________________________

17. What is your first language? _____________________________

18. What was the preferred language used at home when you were growing up? _____________________________
19. Do you speak more than one language? If so, what languages do you speak?
_________________________

20. Currently, what is your preferred language of use? _____________________________
APPENDIX D

Obtaining a Sense of the Whole, Step 1

Research Interview with “Luisa”

I: So, the first question is describe as clearly and concretely as you can, events or experiences that illustrate your experience as a Latina doctoral student in psychology. If you need me to repeat that let me know.

L: Describe experiences? Mmm but illustrate…

I: Events or experiences that illustrate your experience as a Latina doctoral student in psychology.

L: I don’t even know where to go with that honestly… [laughing]

I: Mhumm.

L: I mean, my personal experiences, and tell me if I’m getting off on the question… But I’m gonna tell you what my personal experience has been so far. In my program, up in this point, has been frustrating I’ve been frustrated…Umm…I don’t feel like I’ve really had a lot help in terms of anything that I do. I feel some of that it is confusing in terms of politics of the program, and also just feeling as who I am as a person. Feeling discriminated against perhaps, feeling I don’t have a person to mentor me in any way…umm…and so, sometimes I try to make sure to separate those. I don’t want to clump everything together. Like, it’s because it’s me, it’s because I’m [her ethnicity]. No, sometimes I do think the program as a whole has its own problems [laughing] and I just have to fall into that. But umm, so describing events or experiences that illustrate… Okay, so some of that would have to be with my research interests; we would talk about that. I came in umm, we were this…When I applied to graduate school I researched a slew of multicultural immigration and [umm]
populations [umm] resiliency issues like that, ethnic identity were always my interest. That’s what I did when I was an undergrad. And umm, I worked in this lab about prejudice of children, the formation. I did a lab on bilingual treatment, the efficacy of bilingual treatment. So, when I came in this program, I applied that was their model for what they stood for in terms of this diversity. It made it sound they were really involved in umm different, what I perceived as being more ethnic population differences. And, when I came and did my interview that’s what they portrayed themselves to be. When I got here six months later, it turns out that we lost umm our director…

I: Mhumm.

L: …she left. We lost two other faculty members, and so the focus, once I arrived, was shifted away from multicultural diversity in the ethnic sense to more LGBT issues. Which umm, it does still fall into multiculturalism and diversity.

I: Right.

L: ..but that I felt very frustrated. There’s my theme again![ laughing]. I felt like I was tricked you know. So, I’m like ok well, we’re responsible for these research projects. I’m hearing you know, umm as it’s a [doctoral] program. I want to do some research projects. I had no, the faculty that they hired as replacements and the faculty that remained did not, no one had identified interests in anything that I wanted to do.

I: Wow.

L: And then, I just felt at a loss with that. I didn’t have a faculty member to identify with and I also didn’t feel like I had any classmates that I could identify with when I got here. And umm that was hard for me [slows down]. Umm [long pause] it it was I just, I was very sad. I remember for the first year [deep breath] that I had…and of course, that’s also coupled with
me moving. Umm I lived in [city] which is three hours away from, about from, four hours from where my school is. And so, just leaving my life, the life that I had had for the last six years. That was of course difficult; and coming, feeling couldn’t identify or make any friends and as a result…I did have family in town and so, I would just kind of spend all my time with my family because that was only people I had to identify with me.

I: Mhumm.

L: And umm, so I definitely felt frustrated with that aspect too. I didn’t feel a sense of community. I didn’t feel my program did a good job at helping me connect with a potential community.

I: Mhumm.

L: Umm, they didn’t really encourage socializing umm [laughing] Yeah…

I: Even within your cohort?

L: Yeah, I mean we were responsible ourselves…

I: Mhumm.

L: …of course but even that can be difficult.

I: Mhumm.

L: We all have our own interests and it’s like okay “who’s gonna take charge of this cohort? Who’s gonna say, “oh let’s to this let’s do that?” when we were all so different.

I: Mhumm.

L: And we all had variety of different interests and so I couldn’t …. Even to this day, I still, well exception of one friend, I have, I don’t know anyone else who is remotely interested in any of the issues that I am.

I: Mhumm.
L: And I had to even switch advisors. I had an advisor who was like “okay I think I can help you work with your material” and then when it came to having to um, to conceptualize and create a thesis project, she had no… no knowledge, working knowledge of the literature that I was involved in. And I felt very frustrated with that trying to umm, you know, verbalize where my mind was going with the constructs I was coming across in the literature; so I wanted help, someone to help. I mean I don’t know what I’m doing!

I: Right.

L: I’m a kid, [laughs] you know, I can’t just… I’m a young student and I don’t know I’ve never been in grad school before. I’ve never done a thesis project. I don’t know! You know? I just I felt the need to… [sigh] I just felt like I needed confirmation of if what I was doing was correct…

I: Right, guidance?

L: I needed guidance, pat on the back, I don’t know. Just tell me I’m doing a good job, I’m on the right track, I don’t know. I don’t know what it is I needed now at this point I look back. I don’t what it was. But, I just didn’t feel like I was getting whatever it was I didn’t even know I needed [laughing]. So, I ended up having to switch advisors. This just is not working umm. Basically this is not helping. So, I switched to someone else who was a little more supportive, and more aware; and I’m really glad I did that because actually, since then, my umm I gotten a lot, I feel, like a lot assistance…

I: Mhumm.

L: …with my, with what I’m doing and I feel like I’m progressing.

I: Mhumm.
L: And umm, what ended up happening in terms of community, I still haven’t felt that in the school since; but I ended up developing my own community outside being more involved. Um I started working as counselor um at a [specific type of] center and um, just kind of was able to create my interests outside of school.

I: Okay…

L: And um, so that’s why I kinda it’s not salient at this point. The problems are still there, but I don’t pay attention to them ‘cause I found ways to pacify that within myself.

I: Mhumm.

L: Find satisfaction with where I’m at this point in my life, I guess.

I: Mhumm.

L: So [sigh] thinking more concretely events … I’m trying to go back to this question [laughing]

I: Mhumm.

L: Let’s see experiences that illustrate. Umm, I feel that’s pretty an overall theme. Is there anything else you feel I need to elaborate on?

I: You said earlier like that there’s a part of you that’s like, “okay is it about me as a person or is it about me as a Latina?,” and kind of not wanting to, that’s how I understood it. Not, kind of, not wanting to say maybe it’s me as a Latina?

L: [sigh] My a lot of my problems with I think that identification at this point is because over the recent years, very recent years, maybe the last five years, I’ve had a huge struggle with accepting my ethnic identity and who I am.

I: Mhumm.

L: And I think that comes from um, I’ve had a lot of struggles growing up.

I: Mhumm.
L: Umm trying to assimilate, and dealing with that, and feeling I grew up in the suburbs so…

I: Mhumm.

L: …Is this background information necessary, I don’t know? [laughing]

I: [inaudible] you can [inaudible]

L: Yeah, it just helps me develop my thought.

I: Mhumm.

L: And I didn’t really have um any, I was pretty much there where, you can either be Black or you could be White basically. There was no minority in terms of just the two, these are two main groups. It was pretty 50/50 between those two.

I: Mhumm.

L: And so, I was like okay I had to pick a side, I felt like. And, growing up, I would always be, we would spend summers in [country in Latin America] umm with my family, with my grandmother. And um, two years ago, she passed away and, what I’m saying is that my whole life she meant so much to me, she represented who my identity was, I think.

I: Mm, mhum.

L: So when she passed away, that was hard for me and I got a little more proactive in terms of making sure I don’t lose that. And, actually embracing that identity more um, developing my Spanish more, speaking it more...

I: Mhumm.

L: …um trying to be more involved in the [specific name of] culture..

I: Mhumm.

L: ..that I had [inaudible] to growing up not really be involved in….and I wanted to make sure I didn’t lose that. ‘Cause she was gone. That one concrete link I had to my heritage was gone.
I: Mhumm.

L: And so, I had to do that, and so that came at a time where I’m going through my research interests in school. So, of course, I kind of used that to kind of propel my interests. I’m like ok well it just helps support that. And then coming to grad school I knew I had to continue that and so, coming here, I kinda felt just very defensive about myself from the get go. I think that’s where we’re getting to.

I: Mhumm.

L: I kind of felt just really making sure I didn’t lose anything that I had…

I: Mhumm.

L: …and so, coming here I wanted, I tried to find ways to stay connected and I couldn’t.

I: Mhumm.

L: And so, when I’m saying like not getting help, not getting support, I don’t know if that was me, or just being defensive and being protective of myself, or it was just the politics of being in grad school. Like we’ve talked about before, people expecting you to be independent and capable of making your own decisions…

I: Mhumm.

L: …so why should I need help with that?

I: Mhumm.

L: I guess, if that makes any sense? [laughing]

I: Mhumm….Um, anything else that you would add?

L: Um, [sigh] [pause] No, I don’t think so. I think just that whole just feeling. I think I encompassed a lot of my frustration, which was, it’s pretty concrete in my experiences [laughing].
I: Mhumm….What about like your relationships within your cohort?

L: I didn’t really… In terms of what?

I: Um, in terms of like, you know, it sounds like it’s been hard to establish a community, or like sense of…

L: Yes!

I: …support.

L: It was very hard for me at first. Umm, I’m thinking back to my first semester, my second semester. First semester I didn’t know any of them really well. I would come to school, go home. Like I said, I had my family and so, I would just go back to my family. It was easy, they knew me. I didn’t have to work at this whole new life that I had. New city, new school, new program. I needed comfort and so, instead of struggling with trying to find someone new, I relied on my family.

I: Mhumm.

L: And then, I moved closer to school and so I was alone, and I pretty much forced to try to get to know my classmates. And I did a little bit. I established a few close friendships; about two of them. It’s sad but two I can think of out the, we had five, five of us. And then um actually, my problems were so big here in the program, and just feeling like I had no one to guide in any way, and it was very frustrating and..

I: Mhumm.

L: …I just didn’t feel I deserved to have that type of graduate experience. So I started applying to different programs…

I: Okay.
...and I interviewed to different programs, and I actually took a semester off in the program I’m in now. And I’m still here, and I interviewed at other places. And then I had to, in that process of me almost being gone, a lot people kind of reached out to me and were like, “we really don’t want you to go, we really miss you here.” And I think at that point me thinking I didn’t have community, they kind of showed me that I did…

Mm, mhum.

...and I didn’t even realize it.

Ok.

And then they kind were like “yeah we’re here I can’t believe you didn’t think that we were here for you.” They were kind of, they reached out to me knowing that it was getting so bad for me that I wanted to leave. And um, at that point, things got a lot better, and at this point I’m pretty close with some of them and I feel more comfortable about me staying here.

Were these people like faculty or like peers?

Faculty and peers.

Ok.

Mhum, I had umm, the faculty members who wrote me recommendations to leave. They um, they called me when I was doing my interviews. They were like, “good luck” writing me emails um after, you know, the whole admittance thing. And I was trying to decide, where do I wanna go? Or, do I wanna stay? What am I doing this for? They were just kind of, “look, you know obviously we’re biased, but we do wanna help you. So talk to us and tell me what, you know, we can help you figure out what decision you wanna make.” And so it felt really good to feel like I can be open and honest with everyone about my problems and then their rebuttals to what my concerns were.
I: Okay, what made you think that, you know, even though they were saying “oh what made you think we weren’t here for you,” that you did not see that initially?

L: Well, that comes back to my one of my problems is that I don’t… um I feel like people should know things without me having to say it. I felt like I also, it’s not their fault. I never asked them for help.

I: Mhumm.

L: And a lot of that’s my own personal issues. Because people always say they look at me and they’re like, “you look like you have your shit together, you’re strong minded, you know what you want, you’re very determined,” and as result… I don’t express when I need help. I’ve never done that and so, but yet, I almost expect someone to know “well you should’ve already known.” You know, and that’s obviously my bad. I don’t, that’s not appropriate for me to ever expect or assume other people should know when to ask me for help. I need to learn to speak up when I need it.

I: Mhumm.

L: And umm, and that’s what was going as I was thinking that they should’ve known that I was lonely.

I: Mhumm.

L: But when I don’t speak up, how can I expect them to know that? You know?

I: Mhumm.

L: And that took me to realize that. Um… and yeah… And then I started asking for help. And I realized over the last year, like with my project, I didn’t want to admit my thesis advisor was not working out for me. I didn’t wanna admit I needed help with someone new. But once I
was like, “Ok. I need to stop being afraid to ask for help,” and once I did it, I’ve been getting the help that I need. So I’m like, okay, you know, this wasn’t so bad. I just have to ask for it.

I: Okay, anything you would add to that question?

L: [sigh] about the community or about the original one?

I: About the original [laughed].

L: No, I think that’s ok.

I: So, the next question is, describe how your Latina identity plays a role in your graduate education experience.

L: Well, um definitely my identity influenced my interests, which my interests, influenced my experiences. As a result of my interest in diversity, I went and worked with refugee populations, torture populations. As result of that I learned a lot about world and global policy, peace policy, and I just got more immersed in that. So, they all kind of fed into each other and those experiences coming into graduate school, um I know a lot about what different, I feel, I feel [laughing]. Ok, maybe I don’t know, but because of my identity and my experiences in this kind of dual role I’ve been very sensitive to the plight of different communities. I can kind of, I feel like, I feel I can look at somebody, or understand where they are coming from when they have something to say, even if it’s in direct violation of everything that I believe in or something that I assume. And I’m like, “okay, well you think that this because you probably grew up like this.” I get that. That makes sense to me. Do I agree with it? No, [laughing] but it makes sense to me and I’m like, “okay I got, I got ya my friend.” You know? And so, as a result of that, which again it’s because of my, I feel, my identity, um my education experience, I’m very open to learning new things. Very open to a lot of different ideas and kind of acknowledging the differences in the population. So that is a
very good benefit for the program I’m in. It’s all about working people, understanding
people. Um, I’ve been able to work with many, many different types of clients and I’ve been
successful with them. And that makes me feel really good, and so I feel competent in that
aspect.
I: Mhumm.
L: Even with not feeling I had support with the research, which was always a negative thing.

Feeling like um, as a Latina, I didn’t have someone I could identify with, and that was sad in
that aspect. But feeling competent in my counseling skills, and ability to identify with
different people, kind of helped balance that out in terms of feeling like I know that I belong
here. I would never doubt it to that extent. Probably because of those two different um
supports I’ve had because of my identity. If that makes sense?
I: So that even though one side wasn’t working out for you, the other kept you sort of hooked
into the program.
L: Exactly [laughing] I was just really good at it. I’ve always been good at it, and I’ve always
um… [deep breath] Just, that’s what always brought me even being here. Just working with
clients, and just them being so grateful for me, the job I’ve done for them, or you know, the
work I’ve done with them um makes me feel like whatever it is I’m going through in this I
just try to “you know it’s just politics” [laughing]. I can’t, you know, I’m not gonna let go of
my goals and my aspirations because of that.
I: Mhumm.
L: Because I don’t feel I’m getting the attention I need.
I: Okay, anything else of how your Latina identity plays into your grad education experience?
L: [big sigh] Um… I mean, another, I guess a negative thing about it would be my identity because I’m so…strong with wanting to maintain that, and wanting to keep that, and being very proud of it sometimes I do get too overwhelmed with that. And, because I’m such a, so adamant about wanting to promote diversity and differences, I can’t, I can’t let that go, I guess. And, maybe that may hinder me in my, you know, in my work and competency. I’m so focused on, you know, all this diversity, but I may be ignoring some pretty core components ‘cause I’m always advocating for the same things. Does that make sense? Sometimes I worry that I’m not allowing myself to open up to everything because I’m focused on one thing.

I: Okay, tell me about overwhelmed with it. Feeling overwhelmed with it, you mentioned that.

L: I just, it’s like every class I do, every project I’m in, everything is always. It’s like I have the same angle for what I’m doing [laughing]. Like I’m just, I need to, I feel like I just need to push that and I don’t [sigh] I guess, because I’m the only one who has an interest in it…

I: Mhumm.

L: …which ‘cause, you know, I think [inaudible] I’m the only one who’s interested in it, that I know of, in my program…and if I let that go for the sake of me wanting to just get immersed in something else, I’m, I feel like, I’m just gonna let it go and no one is going to know anything about it.

I: Mmm

L: You know, I’m the, I feel responsible, and that’s almost like a weight on my shoulders. I feel responsible for always playing that card in every discussion we have, and every presentation we have, and any topic of study that we have because I feel like it’s so important it needs to be known. But, you know, I have to keep playing it and sometimes, I just get frustrated that I
feel that kind of burden. That I am the one that always has to because, I would like to learn new things too.

I: Mhumm.

L: You know, I would like to play a different card in [laughing] in poker. You know, kind of like a stupid metaphor but…You know what I mean? Like, and so that I can feel overwhelmed with that. Just wanting to maybe move on and take interest in something else but feeling of fear that if I do that then, I’m dropping that for, you know, no one else is gonna be aware of it ‘cause no one else will do it.

I: Okay, and so there’s a sense of responsibility and also like, is it almost like am I being disloyal to this topic?

L: Right.

I: Mhum.

L: And that might be because even in undergrad I had a mentor who I was telling her I was like, “you know sometimes I wonder,” and this is funny ‘cause I’ve gotten this from other people too. Like you almost don’t want to study like heuristic issues, things that you can relate to, because it’s like you’re only doing that because you are that. Like me as wanting to study you know [specific ethnicity] women, well I’m only doing that because I’m a [specific ethnicity] woman. That’s not really fair you know. And, for some people they choose not to study that, even though they have natural interest in it, because they’re afraid of what that looks like to someone else.

I: Mhumm.

L: If that makes any sense? Especially in academia and research…

I: Mhumm.
L: ..and I had a mentor that I talked to about that. And I was worried about that from the get go. Like, how does that look for me to just have interest in my own community? Like, it’s like I’m not capable of doing other things? Like, that’s the only skill set I can have? And she’s like well, I made that point, “if you don’t do it, even with your connections, how can you expect anyone else to?” And, so I was like “oh okay.” And, so that kept me on that. But at this point it’s like, you know, the other side of that is that… am I ever gonna be able to let go? When am I gonna be able to let go of that responsibility and burden I feel like have?

I: Mhumm, is there any other aspect that feels like a burden?

L: [Sigh, pause] Um…. I don’t know. I think everything else has been a privilege so far.

I: Mhumm.

L: I feel pretty good, it feels, you know, in that aspect of me feeling that I am the only one it feels good to know that. I know I’m gonna do something good with it, or I know that I’m going to influence whatever way I can and I know that I like to educate other people; and so I feel like, well I know I’m doing a good job with it, and I’m grateful of the experiences that I’ve had because I like to share them with other people.

I: Mhumm.

L: But um, in terms of my experience…Um what is it? [laughing]

I: Describe how your Latina identity plays a role in your graduate education experience.

L: [Pause] Um… I can’t think of anything right now.

I: It’s okay.

L: I’m trying [ laughing]. I feel like it’s gonna be one of those things where later I’m like damn it, I should of said this you know? [laughing].
I: [Laughs] Okay, so then we’ll move on to the third one. What would you say to another Latina who is interested in pursuing a Ph.D. in psychology?

L: [deep sigh] I mean, I definitely would encourage them to continue. I mean I have huge interests in wanting to uh, motivate as many women as possible to want to be successful, whatever way that is. You know, especially I believe in graduate school. I believe in higher education, of course only if it’s necessary for the aspirations that you have. Um what would I tell them?

I: Mhumm.

L: What would I say to them? Depending on if I knew how young they were starting, I would definitely just be, provide the mentorship that I know I had um in undergrad. Educating them to what you need to do to get into grad school, and letting them know that it’s gonna be a struggle as well. I would recommend going to therapy depending [laughing]...

I: Mhumm.

L: …what kind of ethnic identity issues they have. Some women don’t have problems, some of them do. Some of them just feel like they’re constantly balancing one aspect of their lives compared to another. That’s how I felt.

I: Mhumm.

L: So, wanting to talk to them about that, letting them know that it’s gonna be hard. Letting them know, um, you should just keep a strong face and, um, not to feel isolated. Not to let yourself get isolated. Um, to reach out to others. Acknowledge when you need help, you know?… Um, to establish these community connections. Establish connections in the field as a whole. Finding your interest, and being able to stick to that. Letting them know that it’s gonna be very um, rewarding, but it’s also gonna be very challenging in so many ways that
you don’t even think about in terms of like interpersonal balance. Um, a lot of the women I know, who choose to go to grad school, have struggled with balancing family…

I: Mhumm.

L: …and feeling like you need to acknowledge that form the get go. That’s gonna be hard to do.

I: Mhum.

L: I know a lot of women who dropped out after applying to have kids, or realize that it’s hard to do two things at once. You know? I don’t know. Probably a lot of things like that.

I: You mentioned it’s been a struggle for you to find that balance. What kinds of things have you struggled with?

L: In terms of finding a balance with like interpersonal relationships? I don’t remember, what did I say? [laughing]

I: You said interpersonal relationships, and you also mentioned just in general, finding the balance.

L: Oh yeah!, With like work and things like that. Um, I was telling you a story earlier how I had a paper that was due and I had to work. Like, I have to work. I can’t afford to not work. I got out of work at eight at night and I had a paper, and I was like ahhh shoot! You know, and I had to stay up all night and sacrifice. I had to stay up all night to finish my paper for class. But I, and the whole time I was thinking I shouldn’t have gone to work. I should’ve called in. I should’ve been more aware of my schedule, but um, the bottom line is that at that time I needed the money and I couldn’t so. I worked for cash tips so I didn’t have a choice, but to go and do that and just learning to… One of the things that is, I feel is problematic for some students, I see some students who work 24/7, all about school. They don’t ever go out, they don’t ever need anything for themselves aside from school. Um, they’ll be on face book or
they’ll be online and their posts are always about school, or they’re always doing this about school. I’m like, “dude seriously get a life man!” Like, [laughing] I understand you know, you could be a little adamant about psychology and you can love, you know, being in this program, and I get that. But, I feel like, you’re gonna regret, you know turning 30, or turning 28 or 27, 26; however old you are when you’re done, and you realize that you have done nothing to promote who you are as a person versus who you are as a psychologist. Lord be it, what if something happened where you lose your license? I don’t know, some stupid thing and you can’t even practice? What are you gonna do with yourself?

I: Mhumm.

L: Who are you? Your identity, if it’s solely been as a professional psychologist you’re not gonna have an identity anymore. And that’s scary. It’s scary stuff and that happens to people. I’ve known a lot of people, especially now that are getting laid off. I mean we think it’s different ‘cause we’re in academics. But you know … something could happen is what I’m saying; or you lose your job, and you don’t know what else to do with yourself. We need to be working on ourselves concurrently. Um, you know, making sure you spend time with friends, making sure you take time for other important things, and don’t just focus 100% on school. You know, I mean it is that balance, and we talk about that. You don’t want to not, you know, pay attention to school, but just need to pay attention to, you know, developing who you are, I think; and that’s definitely a struggle I’ve had to deal with, and I’m working on it, and I feel comfortable with where I am right now.

I: Mhumm.

L: Just have to really, you know, scold yourself in the mirror and tell yourself [both laughing] [inaudible] you better get it done, you better get that project done. You know… [laughing].
Believe that you can do it ‘cause so far I’ve been able to make things happen. Even though, I’m juggling. Like I was telling you, I kind of got away making an A on that paper. Even though I waited till eight o’clock the night before and it was due at nine in the morning, and maybe I didn’t get any sleep, and maybe I ended up getting sick from it. But, I managed to get everything done [laughing]. So it’s possible [both laughing].

I: So then there’s health consequences to it?

L: Yeah, there is. I got sick. I pulled two all-nighters in a row actually. It was really bad. I actually pulled two ‘cause it wasn’t just that. And then, I had another assignment due and had to go to work the next day from seven in the morning to five o’clock at night. And then, I did end up getting a cold. I got sick. But, I still did everything. It’s just the name of the game!

I: Mhumm….In grad school the name of the game is to just go at it?

L: [both laugh] It is. Just believing that you can make it happen.

I: Mhumm.

L: You know, um it’s making sacrifices and sometimes…I’ve been pretty selfish lately though. Um, like this actual week in question I remember it was, I had a friend who had a birthday party, and then we were supposed to go [name of place] or something like that. I was like, ok I don’t have time to do this, plus work, plus my homework, and my friend’s like, “you listed two personal things in a weekend.” He’s like, “if you’re gonna balance, you need to take out one.” And, but I don’t wanna take out one, you know? [laughing]

I: Mhumm

L: He’s like, “you can’t.” He’s like, “Ok.” and I was like, “I wanna balance everything.” He’s like “Ok, and I get that, but you’re being selfish. You’re putting two in right now and you have, that’s just too much. That’s not logical, you’re gonna have to drop one. One personal
thing. You can do one personal thing, one work, and one school, and that’s your weekend.”
I’m like, “Ok, fine,” you know? So even learning to do that. But I’ve, I’ve could’ve dropped
all personal and just focus on school, or whatever for sake of sleep. But, I wanted to make
sure, I mean it’s my friend’s party they only have one birthday a year you know. Maybe that
friend’s not my friend next year. I don’t know.
I: Mhumm….choices.
L: I guess my mantra right now in my life, as a result of everything I’ve been through, has just
been trying to just do whatever you can do to make you happy and feeling like you’re going
to make it work or make it happen for yourself.
I: Mhumm.
L: Like, I’m not worried I’m not going to finish my paper tonight. I know I’m going to. It may
not be pretty [ laughing], but it’s gonna happen.
I: Ok.
L: Having self-confidence! [laughs]
I: But not necessarily this, like expectation of perfection?
L: I used to have it. I don’t anymore.
I: Ok?
L: Um [sigh] which is kind of funny you brought that up. Um, that was a huge, if you would’ve
talked to me in my first year, I was… awful [laughing]. I had so much pressure on myself.
I: Mhumm.
L: So much pressure on myself to just…Growing up and going through college, I was always the
perfect student. I had straight A’s. I did excellent on my ACT’s. So excellent on my ACT’s I
got a letter from the ACT board saying that they suspected someone cheated on me…
I: Oh wow!

L: …because they took it once and didn’t do well, and then sat next to me for the second time and did significantly well; but not as well as I did, to the extent they were concerned that they cheated on me [that the person copied her].

I: Mhumm.

L: Which, I thought that was so weird. Um, so when I got to grad school, obviously that perfectionistic need, it came out big time. I would get…It’s so funny, ’cause it’s the exact opposite of what I’m talking about right now with what I’m doing now. Back then, my papers were done the minute I got that assignment. You have two weeks! It was done in the first three days. I mean, I made sure everything was perfect. I read everything. You assigned me 300 pages, I read everything. I made sure I did everything. I didn’t go out with anyone, I didn’t do anything. It’s just when I was isolated, again all of this went off together. I was isolated, I didn’t really have good friends and so all I did was school.

I: Mhumm.

L: Which is exactly what I’m coming from now, because I was miserable [word emphasized] and it didn’t get me anywhere. So what? I read all the articles!, So what? I got perfect hundreds on everything, I did. What real purpose does that really have in terms of my life and the greater context?

I: The bigger picture…

L: It didn’t have any [laughing]. And um, that’s what I was saying. If you have issues go to therapy. I was actually in therapy for a year…

I: Mhumm.
L: …and um these were all the issues we talked about ‘cause I was so depressed, which is why I went. I was so depressed. Um, I don’t know if it was clinical or not, if I was just um adjustment problems from moving and everything. And so, these were issues I worked on and she [therapist] told me straight up, “you have no balance in your life.” And, she’s like, “how can you even be happy when you’re not finding anything for yourself?”

I: Mhumm.

L: And so she is pretty much the one who helped teach me to get to where I am right now.

   Which is feeling comfortable with a little bit lower… I’m not… Now, don’t get me wrong, I’m not gonna make a B. I’m not gonna just blow off things.

I: Right.

L: But, I do as much as I feel is good enough, and sufficient, and still to my expectations. ‘Cause I still read and I still do things, more than other people I know.

I: Mhumm.

L: That’s just me, and I still push myself a little bit. Like, I would be, I am willing to sacrifice sleep and some people aren’t.

I: Mhumm.

L: But that’s just the name. Like I said, that’s just the name of my game. Right now that’s what I have to do to make myself happy and make sure I get everything that I want.

I: Okay… understandable.

L: Yeah, so I’m completely a different person [laughing] than I was back then. I was, I was awful [laughing].

I: Ok [laughs]…Anything you would add in general about the topic, grad school?
L: [Sigh] I mean I would… I would like… One of my personal interests is just, I would like to just see more um, Latina women in graduate school. In all types of graduate school. I definitely think as the years progress, the generations go forward, you know people younger than me are gonna see a lot more um…I just think it’s just hard. I think that idea of that burden…I don’t know if other people feel that way, but I know that I definitely feel that. And, it’s just, it’s like a token. I’m just that token.

I: Mhumm.

L: The token [Latina] [laughing] and…

I: Mhum

L: …that’s just the thing, I don’t wanna have to deal with that. I do just wanna be me, you know? And I do, just, but it’s like, it’s hard. I could just be me, but then I feel a part of that is letting go of my representation and so I feel like if there were more of us, if we were more visible…there would be no need for that token representation.

I: Mhumm.

L: We could just be ourselves and everyone would recognize already. Everyone would be attuned to this idea that we all have different experiences. ‘Cause up until this point, as easy as it sounds, other people still don’t realize it. They still talk among themselves that we all come from, you know, a social class that made it easy for us. Not everyone had that experience you know.

I: Mhumm.

L: Or um, you know, just little things like that. I would say and that’s what I would like to see...

I: Mhum.
L: …and I don’t even know what would make that happen. I’m questioning that same question myself, or asking that same question. Um, but at this point, even as aware, and as much help as I’ve gotten, I still think it’s hard, um at this point. It’s 2010 and I still think it’s difficult; so, whatever it is to make it better, I think we definitely need to focus on that. But, I guess we just need to figure out how… I don’t know…[laughing]

I: Okay…

L: That’s that with that question.

I: That was the last question.

L: Oh okay. Is there anything else I need to clarify?

I: Mmmm, nope.

L: You feel comfortable with everything? Ok.

I: Great. Thank you.

L: All right.
APPENDIX E

Unarticulated Meaning Units of Interview with “Luisa,” Step 2

1. I don’t even know where to go with that honestly…

2. I mean my personal experiences and tell me if I’m getting off on the question…

3. but I’m gonna tell you what my personal experience has been so far. In my program up in this point has been frustrating

4. I’ve been frustrated..I don’t feel like I’ve really had a lot help in terms of anything that I do.

5. I feel some of that it is confusing in terms of politics of the program and also just feeling as who I am as a person. Feeling discriminated against perhaps,

6. feeling I don’t have a person to mentor me in any way.

7. And so sometimes I try to make sure to separate those I don’t want to clump everything together. Like it’s because it’s me it’s because I’m [her ethnicity]. No sometimes I do think the program as a whole has its own problems. and I just have to fall into that.

8. But umm so describing events or experiences that illustrate…

9. okay so some of that would have to be with my research interests, we would talk about that.

10. I came in umm we were this when I applied to graduate school I researched a slew of multicultural immigration and umm populations umm resiliency issues like that. Ethnic identity were always my interest that’s what I did when I was an undergrad. And umm I worked in this lab about prejudice of children, the formation. I did a lab on bilingual treatment, the efficacy of bilingual treatment.

11. So when I came in this program I applied that was their model for what they stood for in terms of this diversity. It made it sound they were really involved in umm different, what I perceived as being more ethnic population differences.
12. And when I came and did my interview that’s what they portrayed themselves to be.

13. When I got here 6 months later it turns out that we lost umm our director…

…she left. We lost two other faculty members. And so the focus once I arrived was shifted away from multicultural diversity in the ethnic sense to more LGBT issues. Which umm it does still fall into multiculturalism and diversity…but that


15. There’s my theme again! laughing.

16. I felt like I was tricked you know. So I’m like ok well we’re responsible for these research projects I’m hearing you know umm as it’s a PhD program. I wanna do some research projects. I had no, the faculty that they hired as replacements and the faculty that remained did not, no one had identified interests in anything that I wanted to do.

17. And then I just felt at a loss with that.

18. I didn’t have a faculty member to identify with and I also didn’t feel like I had any classmates that I could identify with when I got here.

19. And umm that was hard for me.

20. Umm it it was I just, I was very sad. I remember for the first year that I had.

21. And of course that’s also coupled with me moving umm I lived in Austin which is three hours away from about from four hours from where my school is.

22. And so just leaving my life, the life that I had had for the last six years that was of course difficult and coming feeling couldn’t identify or make any friends.

23. And as a result..I did have family in town and so I would just kind of spend all my time with my family because that was only people I had to identify with me.

24. And umm so I definitely felt frustrated with that aspect too. I didn’t feel a sense of
community. I didn’t feel my program did a good job at helping me connect with a potential community.

25. Umm they didn’t really encourage socializing umm

26. Yeah, I mean we were responsible ourselves……of course but even that can be difficult.

27. We all have our own interests and it’s like okay “who’s gonna take charge of this cohort? Who’s gonna say oh let’s to this let’s do that?” When we were all so different.

28. And we all had variety of different interests and so I couldn’t…. even to this day I still well exception of one friend I have I don’t know anyone else who is remotely interested in any of the issues that I am.

29. And I had to even switch advisors. I had an advisor who was like “okay I think I can help you work with your material” and then when it came to having to um to conceptualize and create a thesis project she had no… no knowledge working knowledge of the literature that I was involved in.

30. And I felt very frustrated with that trying to umm, you know, verbalize where my mind was going with the constructs I was coming across in the literature so I wanted help, someone to help. I mean I don’t know what I’m doing!

31. I I’m a kid, you know I can’t just…

32. I’m a young student and I don’t know I’ve never been in grad school before. I’ve never done a thesis project. I don’t know! You know.

33. I just I felt the need to…I just felt like I needed confirmation of if what I was doing was correct…

34. I needed guidance, pat on the back, I don’t know. Just tell me I’m doing a good job, I’m on the right track I don’t know.
35. I don’t know what it is I needed now at this point I look back.

36. I don’t what it was. But I just didn’t feel like I was getting whatever it was I dint even know I needed.

37. So I ended up having to switch advisors.

38. This just is not working umm. Basically this is not helping.

39. So I switched to someone else who was a little more supportive and more aware and I’m really glad I did that because actually since then my umm I gotten a lot I feel like a lot assistance…..with my, with what I’m doing and I feel like I’m progressing.

40. And umm what ended up happening in terms of community, I still haven’t felt that in the school since, but I ended up developing my own community outside being more involved

41. um I started working as counselor um at a refugee center and um just kind of was able to create my interests outside of school.

42. And um so that’s why I kinda it’s not salient at this point.

43. The problems are still there but I don’t pay attention to them ‘cause I found ways to pacify that within myself.

44. Find satisfaction with where I’m at this point in my life I guess.

45. So thinking more concretely events

46. … I’m trying to go back to this question

47. Let’s see experiences that illustrate…umm

48. I feel that’s pretty an overall theme.

49. Is there anything else you feel I need to elaborate on?

50. My a lot of my problems with I think that identification at this point is because over the recent years, very recent years, maybe the last five years I’ve had a huge struggle with
accepting my ethnic identity and who I am.

51. And I think that comes from um I’ve had a lot of struggles growing up.

52. Umm trying to assimilate and dealing with that and feeling I grew up in the suburbs so…

53. is this background information necessary,

54. I don’t know?

55. Yeah it just helps me develop my thought.

56. And I didn’t really have um any, I was pretty much there were, you can either be Black or you could be White basically.

57. There was no minority in terms of just the two these are two main groups. It was pretty 50/50 between those two.

58. And so I was like okay I had to pick a side I felt like.

59. And growing up I would always be we would spend summers in Mexico umm with my family, with my grandmother.

60. And um two years ago she passed away and what I’m saying is that my whole life she meant so much to me she represented who my identity was I think.

61. So when she passed away that was hard for me and I got a little more proactive in terms of making sure I don’t lose that.

62. And actually embracing that identity more um, developing my Spanish more, speaking it more, um trying to be more involved in the [specific ethnicity] culture….that I had tended to growing up not really be involved in and I wanted to make sure I didn’t lose that. ‘Cause she was gone.

63. That one concrete link I had to my heritage was gone.

64. And so I had to do that and so that came at a time where I’m going through my research
interests in school.

65. So of course I kind of used that to kind of propel my interests. I’m like ok well it just helps support that.

66. And then coming to grad school I knew I had to continue that. And so coming here I kinda felt just very defensive about myself from the get go.

67. I think that’s where we’re getting to.

68. I kind of felt just really making sure I didn’t lose anything that I had…

69. …and so coming here I wanted, I tried to find ways to stay connected and I couldn’t.

70. …and so when I’m saying like not getting help not getting support I don’t know if that was me or just being defensive and being protective of myself or it was just the politics of being in grad school.

71. Like we’ve talked about before people expecting you to be independent and capable of making your own decisions……so why should I need help with that.

72. I guess if that makes any sense

73. Um. No, I don’t think so.

74. I think just that whole just feeling I think I encompassed a lot of my frustration, which was it’s pretty concrete in my experiences.

75. I didn’t really…

76. In terms of what?

77. Yes!

78. It was very hard for me at first um

79. I’m thinking back to my first semester my second semester.

80. First semester I didn’t know any of them really well.
81. I would come to school go home like I said I had my family. And so I would just go back to my family. It was easy, they knew me. I didn’t have to work at this whole new life that I had.

82. New city, new school, new program.

83. I needed comfort and so instead of struggling with trying to find someone new I relied on my family.

84. And then I moved closer to school and so I was alone and I pretty much forced to try to get to know my classmates.

85. And I did a little bit.

86. I established a few close friendships about two of them.

87. It’s sad but two I can think of out the, we had five, five of us.

88. And then um actually my problems were so big here in the program and just feeling like I had no one to guide in any way and it was very frustrating and.

89. …I just didn’t feel I deserved to have that type of graduate experience.

90. So I started applying to different programs…..and I interviewed to different programs

91. and I actually took a semester off in the program I’m in now.

92. And I’m still here and I interviewed at other places.

93. And then I had to, in that process of me almost being gone a lot people kind of reached out to me and were like “we really don’t want you to go, we really miss you here.”

94. And I think at that point me thinking I didn’t have community they kind of showed me that I did… …and I didn’t even realize it.

95. And then they kind were like “yeah we’re here I can’t believe you didn’t think that we were here for you.”
They were kind of, they reached out to me knowing that it was getting so bad for me that I wanted to leave.

And um at that point things got a lot better and at this point I’m pretty close with some of them and I feel more comfortable about me staying here

Faculty and peers.

Mhum, I had umm the faculty members who wrote me recommendations to leave. They um they called me when I was doing my interviews they were like “good luck” writing me emails.

Um after you know the whole admittance thing. And I was trying to decide, where “do I wanna go?” or “do I wanna stay?” “What am I doing this for?”

They were just kind of look “you know obviously we’re biased but we do wanna help you so talk to us and tell me what you know we can help you figure out what decision you wanna make.”

And so it felt really good to feel like I can be open and honest with everyone about my problems and then their rebuttals to what my concerns were.

Well that comes back to my one of my problems is that I don’t… um I feel like people should know things without me having to say it.

I felt like I also, it’s not their fault. I never asked them for help.

And a lot of that’s my own personal issues.

Because people always say they look at me and they’re like, “you look like you have your shit together, you’re strong minded, you know what you want, you’re very determined” and as result… I don’t express when I need help.

I’ve never done that and so, but yet I almost expect someone to know, “well you
should’ve already known.”

108. You know, and that’s obviously my bad.

109. I don’t that’s not appropriate for me to ever expect or assume other people should know when to ask me for help.

110. I need to learn to speak up when I need it.

111. And umm and that’s what was going as I was thinking that they should’ve known that I was lonely.

112. But when I don’t speak up, how can I expect them to know that? You know?

113. And that took me to realize that.

114. Um… and yeah…

115. And then I started asking for help.

116. And I realized over the last year like with my project I didn’t want to admit my thesis advisor was not working out for me.

117. I didn’t wanna admit I needed help with someone new.

118. But once I was like, “Ok I need to stop being afraid to ask for help” and once I did it I’ve been getting the help that I need.

119. So I’m like, “okay you know this wasn’t so bad I just have to ask for it.”

120. about the community or about the original one?

121. No I think that’s ok.

122. Well, um definitely my identity influenced my interests, which my interests, influenced my experiences.

123. As a result of my interest in diversity, I went and worked with refugee populations, torture populations.
124. As result of that I learned a lot about world and global policy, peace policy, and I just got more immersed in that.

125. So, they all kind of fed into each other

126. and those experiences coming into graduate school um, I know a lot about what different.

127. I feel, I feel ok, maybe I don’t know, but because of my identity and my experiences in this kind of dual role I’ve been very sensitive to the plight of different communities.

128. I can kind of, I feel like I feel I can look at somebody, or understand where they are coming from when they have something to say, even if it’s in direct violation of everything that I believe in or something that I assume.

129. And I’m like, “okay, well you think that this because you probably grew up like this.”

130. I get that. That makes sense to me.

131. Do I agree with it? No.

132. But it makes sense to me and I’m like “Ok I got, I got ya my friend.”

133. You know?

134. And so as a result of that which again it’s because of my, I feel my identity um my education experience, I’m very open to learning new things.

135. Very open to a lot of different ideas and kind of acknowledging the differences in the population.

136. So that is a very good benefit for the program I’m in.

137. It’s all about working people, understanding people.

138. Um I’ve been able to work with many, many different types of clients and I’ve been successful with them and that makes me feel really good, and so I feel competent in that aspect.
139. Even with not feeling I had support with the research, which was always a negative thing.

140. Feeling like um, as a Latina, I didn’t have someone I could identify with, and that was sad in that aspect.

141. But feeling competent in my counseling skills, and ability to identify with different people, kind of helped balance that out in terms of feeling like I know that I belong here.

142. I would never doubt it to that extent.

143. Probably because of those two different um supports I’ve had because of my identity.

144. If that makes sense?

145. Exactly

146. I was just really good at it.

147. I’ve always been good at it, and I’ve always um…Just that’s what always brought me even being here. Just working with clients, and just them being so grateful for me, the job I’ve done for them, or you know the work I’ve done with them.

148. Um makes me feel like whatever it is I’m going through in this I just try to “you know it’s just politics.”

149. I can’t, you know, I’m not gonna let go of my goals and my aspirations because of that.

150. Because I don’t feel I’m getting the attention I need.

151. Um… I mean, another, I guess a negative thing about it would be my identity because I’m so…strong with wanting to maintain that, and wanting to keep that, and being very proud of it sometimes I do get too overwhelmed with that. And, because I’m such a, so adamant about wanting to promote diversity and differences, I can’t, I can’t let that go, I guess. And, maybe that may hinder me in my, you know, in my work and competency.
I’m so focused on, you know, all this diversity, but I may be ignoring some pretty core components ‘cause I’m always advocating for the same things.

Does that make sense? Sometimes I worry that I’m not allowing myself to open up to everything because I’m focused on one thing.

I just it’s like every class I do, every project I’m in, everything is always. It’s like I have the same angle for what I’m doing.

Like I’m just, I need to, I feel like I just need to push that and I don’t I guess, because I’m the only one who has an interest in it…

…which ‘cause you know ethnic identity and all of that

I’m the only one who’s interested in it, that I know of, in my program

…and if I let that go for the sake of me wanting to just get immersed in something else, I’m, I feel like, I’m just gonna let it go, and no one is going to know anything about it.

You know, I’m the I feel responsible and that’s almost like a weight on my shoulders.

I feel responsible for always playing that card in every discussion we have, and every presentation we have, and any topic of study that we have because I feel like it’s so important it needs to be known.

But, you know, I have to keep playing it and sometimes, I just get frustrated that I feel that kind of burden. That I am the one that always has to.

Because, I would like to learn new things too.

You know, I would like to play a different card in, in poker.

You know, kind of like a stupid metaphor but. You know what I mean?

Like, and so that I can feel overwhelmed with that. Just wanting to maybe move on and take interest in something else but feeling of fear that if I do that, then I’m dropping that
for you know, no one else is gonna be aware of it ‘cause no one else will do it.

167. Right.

168. And that might be because even in undergrad I had a mentor who I was telling her I was like, “you know sometimes I wonder,” and this is funny ‘cause I’ve gotten this from other people too. Like, you almost don’t want to study like heuristic issues things that you can relate to because it’s like you’re only doing that because you are that.

169. Like me as wanting to study, you know, [specific ethnicity] women well I’m only doing that because I’m a [specific ethnicity] woman.

170. That’s not really fair you know

171. and for some people they choose not to study that even though, they have natural interest in it because they’re afraid of what that looks like to someone else.

172. If that makes any sense. Especially in academia and research...

173. ..and I had a mentor that I talked to about that.

174. And I was worried about that from the get go.

175. Like, how does that look for me to just have interest in my own community?

176. Like, it’s like I’m not capable of doing other things? Like, that’s the only skill set I can have?

177. And she’s like, well I made that point, “if you don’t do it even with your connections how can you expect anyone else to?”

178. And so I was like, “oh okay.”

179. And so that kept me on that.

180. But at this point it’s like, you know, the other side of that is that “Am I ever gonna be able to let go? When am I gonna be able to let go of that responsibility and burden I feel
like have?"

181. Um…. I don’t know

182. I think everything else has been a privilege so far.

183. I feel pretty good,

184. it feels, you know, in that aspect of me feeling that I am the only one it feels good to know that I know I’m gonna do something good with it.

185. Or I know that I’m going to influence whatever way I can and I know that I like to educate other people; and so I feel like well I know I’m doing a good job with it and I’m grateful of the experiences that I’ve had because I like to share them with other people.

186. But um in terms of my experience…

187. um what is it?

188. Um… I can’t think of anything right now.

189. I’m trying

190. I feel like it’s gonna be one of those things where later I’m like damn it I should of said this you know?

191. I mean, I definitely would encourage them to continue.

192. I mean I have huge interests in wanting to uh motivate as many women as possible to want to be successful, whatever way that is.

193. You know, especially I believe in graduate school. I believe in higher education, of course, only if it’s necessary for the aspirations that you have.

194. Um what would I tell them?

195. What would I say to them?

196. Depending on if I knew how young they were starting, I would definitely just be, provide
the mentorship that I know I had um in undergrad.

197. Educating them to what you need to do to get into grad school and letting them know that it’s gonna be a struggle as well.

198. I would recommend going to therapy depending on…what kind of ethnic identity issues they have.

199. Some women don’t have problems, some of them do.

200. Some of them just feel like they’re constantly balancing one aspect of their lives compared to another.

201. That’s how I felt.

202. So wanting to talk to them about that, letting them know that it’s gonna be hard.

203. Letting them know, um, you should just keep a strong face, and um, not to feel isolated.

204. Not to let yourself get isolated.

205. Um, to reach out to others. Acknowledge when you need help, you know?

206. Um to establish these community connections.

207. Establish connections in the field as a whole.

208. Finding your interest, and being able to stick to that.

209. Letting them know that it’s gonna be very, um, rewarding but it’s also gonna be very challenging in so many ways that you don’t even think about in terms of like interpersonal balance.

210. Um a lot of the women I know, of who choose to go to grad school, have struggled with balancing family…

211. …and feeling like you need to acknowledge that from the get go.

212. That’s gonna be hard to do.
I know a lot of women who dropped out after applying to have kids, or realize that it’s hard to do two things at once.

You know? I don’t know.

Probably a lot of things like that.

In terms of finding a balance with like interpersonal relationships?

I don’t remember, what did I say?

Oh yeah!, With like work and things like that.

Um I was telling you a story earlier how I had a paper that was due and I had to work. Like I have to work. I can’t afford to not work.

I got out of work at eight at night and I had a paper, and I was like ahhh shoot!

You know, and I had to stay up all night and sacrifice. I had to stay up all night up to finish my paper for class.

But I, and the whole time I was thinking I shouldn’t have gone to work. I should’ve called in.

I should’ve been more aware of my schedule, but um, the bottom line is that at that time I needed the money and I couldn’t so I worked for cash tips so I didn’t have a choice, but to go and do that and just learning to…

One of the things that is, I feel is problematic for some students, I see some students who work 24/7, all about school.

They don’t ever go out, they don’t ever need anything for themselves aside from school. Um they’ll be on face book or they’ll be online, and their posts are always about school or their always doing this about school.

I’m like, “dude seriously get a life man!”
Like, I understand, you know, you could be a little adamant about psychology and you can love, you know, being in this program, and I get that.

But, I feel like, you’re gonna regret you know turning 30, or turning 28 or 27, 26; however, old you are when you’re done and you realize that you have done nothing to promote who you are as a person versus who you are as a psychologist.

Lord be it, what if something happened where you lose your license?

I don’t know, some stupid thing and you can’t even practice.

What are you gonna do with yourself?

Who are you?

Your identity, if it’s solely been as a professional psychologist, you’re not gonna have an identity anymore.

And that’s scary.

It’s scary stuff and that happens to people.

I’ve known a lot of people especially now that are getting laid off.

I mean we think it’s different ‘cause we’re in academics.

But you know… something could happen is what I’m saying; or you lose your job, and you don’t know what else to do with yourself.

We need to be working on ourselves concurrently.

Um, you know, making sure you spend time with friends, making sure you take time for other important things and don’t just focus 100% on school.

You know, I mean, it is that balance and we talk about that.

You don’t wanna not, you know, pay attention to school, but just, need to pay attention to
you know developing who you are, I think;

246. and that’s definitely a struggle I’ve had to deal with and I’m working on it and I feel comfortable with where I am right now.

247. Just have to really, you know, scold yourself in the mirror and tell yourself, “you gotta get to it, you better get it done, you better get that project done.” You know….

248. Believe that you can do it ‘cause so far I’ve been able to make things happen. Even though, I’m juggling.

249. Like I was telling you, I kind of got away making an A on that paper. Even though, I waited till 8’o clock the night before and it was due at 9 in the morning, and maybe I didn’t get any sleep and maybe I ended up getting sick from it.

250. But, I managed to get everything done. So it’s possible.

251. Yeah, there is. I got sick. I pulled two all-nighters in a row actually.

252. It was really bad. I actually pulled two ‘cause it wasn’t just that.

253. And then, I had another assignment due and had to go to work the next day from seven in the morning to five o’clock at night.

254. And then, I did end up getting a cold and I got sick. But, I still did everything. It’s just the name of the game!

255. It is. Just believing that you can make it happen.

256. You know, um it’s making sacrifices and sometimes..

257. I’ve been pretty selfish lately though.

258. Um, like this actual week in question I remember it was I had a friend who had a birthday party and then we were supposed to go to [name of place] or something like that.

259. I was like, ok I don’t have time to do this, plus work, plus my homework, and my friend’s
like, “you listed two personal things in a weekend.”

260. He’s like, “if you’re gonna balance, you need to take out one.”

261. And, but I don’t wanna take out one, you know?

262. He’s like “you can’t.” He’s like “ok...”

263. and I was like, “I wanna balance everything.”

264. He’s like, “Ok, and I get that, but you’re being selfish. You’re putting two in right now and you have, that’s just too much.

265. That’s not logical, you’re gonna have to drop one. One personal thing. You can do one personal thing, one work, and one school, and that’s your weekend.”

266. I’m like, “ok fine,” you know.

267. So even learning to do that.

268. But, I’ve, I’ve could’ve dropped all personal and just focus on school or whatever for sake of sleep, but I wanted to make sure, I mean it’s my friend’s party they only have one birthday a year you know. Maybe that friend’s not my friend next year. I don’t know.

269. I guess my mantra right now in my life, as a result of everything I’ve been through, has just been trying to just do whatever you can do to make you happy and feeling like you’re going to make it work or make it happen for yourself.

270. Like, I’m not worried I’m not going to finish my paper tonight.

271. I know I’m going to, it may not be pretty, but it’s gonna happen.

272. Having self-confidence!

273. I used to have it. I don’t anymore.

274. Um which is kind of funny you brought that up.

275. Um that was a huge if you would’ve talked to me in my first year, I was...
awful.

276. I had so much pressure on myself.

277. So much pressure on myself to just. Growing up and going through college, I was always the perfect student.

278. I had straight A’s. I did excellent on my ACT’s. So excellent on my ACT’s I got a letter from the ACT board saying that they suspected someone cheated on me …because they took it once and didn’t do well and then sat next to me for the second time and did significantly well; but not as well as I did to the extent they were concerned that they cheated on me.

279. Which, I thought that was so weird.

280. Um, so when I got to grad school, obviously that perfectionistic need, it came out big time.

281. I would get...It’s so funny, ’cause it’s the exact opposite of what I’m talking about right now with what I’m doing now.

282. Back then, my papers were done the minute I got that assignment. You have two weeks! It was done in the first three days.

283. I mean, I made sure everything was perfect.

284. I read everything. You assigned me 300 pages, I read everything.

285. I made sure I did everything.

286. I didn’t go out with anyone, I didn’t do anything.

287. It’s just when I was isolated, again all of this went off together. I was isolated, I didn’t really have good friends and so all I did was school.

288. Which is exactly what I’m coming from now, because I was miserable and it didn’t get
me anywhere.

289. So what? I read all the articles!


291. What real purpose does that really have in terms of my life and the greater context?

292. It didn’t have any.

293. And um, that’s what I was saying if you have issues go to therapy.

294. I was actually in therapy for a year…

295. …and um these were all the issues we talked about ‘cause I was so depressed, which is why I went. I was so depressed.

296. Um, I don’t know if it was clinical or not, if I was just um adjustment problems, from moving and everything.

297. And so, these were issues I worked on and she told me straight up, “you have no balance in your life.” And she’s like, “how can you even be happy when you’re not finding anything for yourself?”

298. And so she is pretty much the one who helped teach me to get to where I am right now.

299. Which is feeling comfortable with a little bit lower…I’m not…Now, don’t get me wrong, I’m not gonna make a B, I’m not gonna just blow off things.

300. But, I do as much as I feel is good enough, and sufficient, and still to my expectations.

301. ‘Cause I still read and I still do things, more than other people I know.

302. That’s just me, and I still push myself a little bit.

303. Like, I would be, I am willing to sacrifice sleep and some people aren’t.

304. But that’s just the name, like I said, that’s just the name of my game.

305. Right now that’s what I have to do to make myself happy and make sure I get everything
that I want.

306. Yeah, so I’m completely a different person than I was back then. I was, I was awful.

307. I mean I would…

308. I would like…

309. One of my personal interests is just, I would like to just see more um Latina women in graduate school. In all types of graduate school.

310. I definitely think as the years progress, the generations go forward, you know people younger than me are gonna see a lot more um.

311. I just think it’s just hard. I think that idea of that burden. I don’t know if other people feel that way, but I know that I definitely feel that. And it’s just, it’s like a token. I’m just that token.

312. The token [Latina] and……that’s just the thing, I don’t wanna have to deal with that.

313. I do just wanna be me, you know? And I do just, but it’s like, it’s hard.

314. I could just be me, but then I feel a part of that is letting go of my representation and so I feel like if there were more of us, if we were more visible…there would be no need for that token representation.

315. We could just be ourselves and everyone would recognize already.

316. Everyone would be attuned to this idea that we all have different experiences.

317. ‘Cause up until this point as easy as it sounds, other people still don’t realize it.

318. They still talk among themselves that we all come from, you know, a social class that made it easy for us.

319. Not everyone had that experience you know.

320. Or um, you know, just little things like that. I would say and that’s what I would like to
321. … and I don’t even know what would make that happen.

322. I’m questioning that same question myself, or asking that same question.

323. Um, but at this point, even as aware, and as much help as I’ve gotten, I still think it’s hard, um at this point. It’s 2010 and I still think it’s difficult so; whatever it is to make it better, I think we definitely need to focus on that.

324. But, I guess we just need to figure out how… I don’t know…

325. That’s that with that question

326. Oh okay. Is there anything else I need to clarify?

327. You feel comfortable with everything? Ok.

329. All right.
APPENDIX F

Relevant and Psychologically Explicit Unarticulated Meaning Units of Interview with “Luisa,”

Step 3

3. [U]p in[to] this point my personal experience [i]n my program has been frustrating[.]

4. I’ve been frustrated [because] I don’t feel like I’ve really had a lot help in anything that I do.

5. I feel some of that is confusing in terms of politics of the program and also just feeling perhaps discriminated against as [to] who I am as a person.

6. I don’t have a person to mentor me in any way.

7. I try to make sure to separate those [as] I don’t want to clump everything together [and say] it’s because it’s me [,] it’s because I’m [Latina]. No[,] sometimes I do think the program as a whole has its own problems and I just fall into that.

9. [S]ome of [those frustrating experiences] would have to be with my research interests[.]

10. [W]hen I applied to graduate school I researched a slew of [programs that did research on topics like] multicultural immigration populations[,] resiliency [and e]thnic identity [which] were always my interest[s as] that’s what I did when I was an undergrad. I worked in [a] lab about the formation [of] prejudice [in] children [and in] a lab on the efficacy of bilingual treatment.

11. [W]hen I applied [and] came in [to] this program that was their model for what they stood for in terms of diversity. [They] made it sound they were really involved in what I perceived as being more ethnic population differences.

12. [W]hen I came and did my interview that’s what they portrayed themselves to be.

13. When I got here six months later it turns out that we lost our director[,] she left. We lost two other faculty members [a]nd so the focus [of the program] once I arrived was shifted away
from multicultural diversity in the ethnic sense to more LGBT issues. [I]t does still fall into multiculturalism and diversity but that [was not what I expected.]


15. There’s my theme again!

16. I felt like I was tricked. I [thought] well I’m hearing we’re responsible for these research projects as it’s a [doctoral] program [and] I want to do some research projects. [T]he faculty that they hired as replacements and the faculty that remained did not, ha[ve] identified interests in anything that I wanted to do.

17. I just felt at a loss with that.

18. I didn’t have a faculty member to identify with and I also didn’t feel like I had any classmates that I could identify with when I got here.

19. [T]hat was hard for me.

20. I was very sad for the first year [.]

21. [O]f course that’s also coupled with me moving [as] I lived in [a city] which is about four hours from where my school is.

22. And so just leaving the life that I had for the last six years was of course difficult and feeling [I] couldn’t identify or make any friends.

23. I did have family in town [a]nd as a result I would just kind of spend all my time with my family because [they were the] only people I had to identify with me.

24. I definitely felt frustrated with that aspect too. I didn’t feel a sense of community. I didn’t feel my program did a good job at helping me connect with a potential community.

25. [The program] didn’t really encourage socializing[.]

26. I mean we were responsible ourselves of course but even that can be difficult.
27. We all have our own interests and who [was] gonna take charge of this cohort? Who’s gonna say “oh let’s do this [or] that” [w]hen we were all so different.

28. [W]e all had [a] variety of different interests and even to this day I still well [with the] exception of one friend[,] I don’t know anyone else who is remotely interested in any of the issues that I am.

29. I had to even switch advisors. I had an advisor who was like, “okay I think I can help you work with your material” and then when it came to having to conceptualize and create a thesis project, she had no working knowledge of the literature that I was involved in.

30. I felt very frustrated with trying to verbalize where my mind was going with the constructs I was coming across in the literature so I wanted someone to help. I mean, I don’t know what I’m doing!

32. I’m a young student and I don’t know[,] I’ve never been in grad school before. I’ve never done a thesis project. I don’t know!

33. I just felt like I needed confirmation if what I was doing was correct[.]

34. I needed guidance, [a] pat on the back, I don’t know. [Maybe for someone to j]ust tell me I’m doing a good job, I’m on the right track I don’t know.

35. [A]t this point, I look back, [and] I don’t know what it is I needed.

36. I don’t [know] what it was[,] but I just didn’t feel like I was getting whatever it was I di[d]n’t even know I needed.

37. I ended up having to switch advisors.

38. This just [was] not working[, b]asically this [was] not helping.

39. I switched to someone else who was a little more supportive and more aware and I’m really glad I did that because actually, since then, I [have] gotten a lot [of] assistance with what I’m
doing and I feel like I’m progressing.

40. [W]hat ended up happening in terms of community [is that] I still haven’t felt that in the school, but I ended up developing my own community outside being more involved.

41. I started working as counselor at a refugee center and [was] just able to create my interests outside of school.

42. [T]hat’s why it’s not salient at this point.

43. The problems are still there, but I don’t pay attention to them [be]cause I found ways to pacify that within myself.

44. I guess [I] [f]ind satisfaction with where I’m at this point in my life.

50. [A] lot of my problems with [self-]identification [as a Latina] at this point [are] because over the recent years, maybe the last five years I’ve had a huge struggle with accepting my ethnic identity and who I am.

51. I think that comes from [the fact that] I’ve had a lot of struggles growing up.

52. I grew up in the suburbs trying to assimilate and dealing with that [.]

56. I was pretty much [the only Latina] there where you [could] basically either be Black or White.

57. There was no minority[, i]t was pretty 50/50 in terms of just the two main groups.

58. I felt like I had to pick a side.

59. [G]rowing up we would spend summers in [city in Latin America] with my family, with my grandmother.

60. [T]wo years ago she passed away and, my whole life, she meant so much to me, I think she represented who my identity was.

61. [W]hen she passed away that was hard for me and I got a little more proactive in terms of
making sure I don’t lose [my cultural identity.]

62. [I became more proactive about] actually embracing that identity more[,] developing [and] speaking Spanish more, trying to be more involved in the culture [as,] growing up[,] I had tended to not really be involved in [it.] I wanted to make sure I didn’t lose that [cultural identity because she was gone.]

63. That one concrete link I had to my heritage was gone.

64. I had to [become more proactive about keeping my cultural identity] and that came at a time when I [was] going through my research interests in school.

65. [O]f course, I used [my interest in my culture] to kind of propel my [research] interests. I’m like, ok well [my interest in culture] just helps support [my research interests.]

66. [T]hen, coming to grad school, I knew I had to continue that [and] coming here, I felt just very defensive about myself from the get go.

68. I felt [I was] just really making sure I didn’t lose anything that I had.

69. [C]oming here I wanted [and] tried to find ways to stay connected and I couldn’t.

70. [W]hen I’m saying [I was] not getting help [or] support I don’t know if that was me being defensive and being protective of myself, or [if] it was just the politics of being in grad school.

71. [P]eople expecting [me] to be independent and capable of making [my] own decisions so [I thought] why should I need help?

74. I think frustration encompassed a lot of my experiences[.]

78. It was very hard for me at first [to establish a relationship with my cohort and to create a community or a sense of support.]

79. I’m thinking back to my first semester [and] second semester.
80. First semester I didn’t know any of them really well.

81. I would come to school[,] go home [a]nd I would just go back to my family. It was easy, they knew me [and] I didn’t have to work at this whole new life that I had.

82. [I was in a new city, new school, [and a] new program.

83. I needed comfort and so, instead of struggling with trying to find someone new, I relied on my family.

84. I moved closer to school and I was alone and I [was] pretty much forced to try to get to know my classmates.

85. I did [get to know my classmates] a little bit.

86. I established a few close friendships [with] about two of them.

87. It’s sad but I can think of two out the five of us [who became my friends.]

88. [A]ctually, my problems were so big here in the program [because I was] just feeling like I had no one to guide [me] in any way and it was very frustrating[.]

89. I just didn’t feel I deserved to have that type of graduate experience.

90. I started applying to different programs and I interviewed [for] different programs.

91. I actually took a semester off [from] the program I’m in now.

92. I’m still here [after] I interviewed at other places.

93. [I]n that process of me almost being gone, a lot people kind of reached out to me and [said] “we really don’t want you to go, we really miss you here.”

94. I think at that point, [even though I was] thinking I didn’t have community, they kind of showed me that I did, and I didn’t even realize it.

95. [T]hen they [said] “yeah we’re here I can’t believe you didn’t think that we were here for you.”
96. They reached out to me knowing that it was getting so bad for me that I wanted to leave.

97. At that point things got a lot better, and at this point, I’m pretty close with some of them and I feel more comfortable about staying here.

98. Faculty and peers [reached out to me.]

99. The faculty members who wrote recommendations [for] me to leave [to other programs] called me when I was doing my interviews [and also wished] me “good luck” [via] emails.

100. After the whole admittance thing I was trying to decide, where do I wanna go? Do I wanna stay? What am I doing this for?

101. They [told her,] “you know we’re obviously biased, but we do wanna help you so talk to us and we can help you figure out what decision you wanna make.”

102. It felt really good to feel like I can be open and honest with everyone about my problems and then their rebuttals to what my concerns were.

103. Not seeing that people were available for support] comes back [to] one of my problems [which] is that I feel like people should know things without me having to say it.

104. I felt like it’s not their fault I never asked them for help.

105. A] lot of that’s my own personal issues.

106. Because people always say they look at me and they’re like, “you look like you have your [stuff] together, you’re strong minded, you know what you want, you’re very determined” and, as result, I don’t express when I need help.


108. That’s obviously my bad.
I don’t [think it] is appropriate for me to ever expect or assume other people should know when to ask me [if I need] help.

I need to learn to speak up when I need it.

That’s what was going [on] as I was thinking that they should’ve known that I was lonely.

But when I don’t speak up, how can I expect them to know that?

That [experience] took me to realize that.

And then, I started asking for help.

Over the last year I realized [that] I didn’t want to admit my thesis advisor was not working out for me.

I didn’t wanna admit I needed help with someone new.

But once I [told myself] “Ok, I need to stop being afraid to ask for help” I did it and I’ve been getting the help that I need.

[Now] I [think,] “okay, this wasn’t so bad I just have to ask for it.”

My identity definitely influenced my interests [and] my interests influenced my experiences.

As a result of my interest in diversity, I worked with refugee populations [and] torture survivors.

As result of that, I learned a lot about world and global policy, peace policy and I just got more immersed in that.

[My experiences] all kind of fed into each other.

And those experiences, coming into graduate school, [were helpful as] I know a lot about different [people.]
I feel [that] because of my identity, and my experiences in this kind of dual role, I’ve been very sensitive to the plight of different communities.

I feel I can look at somebody or understand where they are coming from when they have something to say even if it’s in direct violation of everything that I believe in or something that I assume.

And I [think,] “okay well you think this [way] because you probably grew up like this.”

I get that. That makes sense to me.

Do I agree with it? No.

But it makes sense to me and I [then understand the person.]

As a result of my identity [in] my education experience I’m very open to learning new things.

That is a very good benefit for the psychology program I’m in.

It’s all about working [with] people, understanding people.

I’ve been able to work with many different types of clients, and I’ve been successful with them, and that makes me feel really good and I feel competent in that aspect.

[I felt competent e]ven with not feeling I had support with the research.

Feeling like, as a Latina, I didn’t have someone I could identify with was sad.

[Feeling competent in my counseling skills, and ability to identify with different people, helped balance that out in terms of feeling like I know that I belong here.

I would never doubt it to that extent.

[I would p]robably [never doubt] because of those two different [aspects] I’ve had
because of my identity [that made me feel confident.]

146. I was just really good at it.

147. I’ve always been good at it and that’s just what brought me [to] even being here, just working with clients and them being so grateful for the work I’ve done with them.

148. [The work that I do with clients] makes me feel like whatever it is I’m going through in [the program] I try to [brush off and say] “you know it’s just politics.”

149. I’m not going to let go of my goals and my aspirations because of [department politics.]

150. [I’m not going to let go of my goals] because I don’t feel I’m getting the attention I need.

151. [A] negative thing about my identity would be that because I’m so [firm about] wanting to maintain [it,] and [I am] very proud of it, sometimes I do get too overwhelmed with that because I’m so adamant about wanting to promote diversity and differences I can’t let that go [a]nd that may hinder my work and competency.

152. I’m so focused on all this diversity, but I may be ignoring some pretty core components ‘cause I’m always advocating for the same things.

153. Sometimes I worry that I’m not allowing myself to open up to everything because I’m focused on one thing.

154. [It can feel overwhelming because] every class I [take and] every project I’m in, [i]t’s like I have the same angle for what I’m doing.

155. I feel I need to push that.[.

156. I guess because I’m the only one who has an interest in [ethnic identity and other diversity topics.]

158. I’m the only one that I know of in my program who’s interested in [such topics.]
159. [I]f I let that go for the sake of me wanting to just get immersed in something else, I feel like no one is going to know anything about it.

160. I feel responsible and that’s almost like a weight on my shoulders.

161. I feel responsible for always playing that card in every discussion we have, and every presentation we have, and any topic of study that we have because I feel like it’s so important it needs to be known.

162. I have to keep playing it and sometimes I just get frustrated that I feel that kind of burden.

163. I would like to learn new things too.

166. I can feel overwhelmed with wanting to maybe move on and take interest in something else, but fear that if I do that then, I’m dropping that [and] no one else is going to be aware of it [be]cause no one else will do it.

168. [I]n undergrad I had a mentor and I [told] her, “you know sometimes I wonder” [if] you almost don’t want to study heuristic issues[,] things that you can relate to because it’s like you’re only doing that because you’re that.

169. Like me wanting to study women [of a specific ethnicity within the Latina/o culture] only doing that because I’m a woman [of that ethnicity.]

170. That’s not really fair[.]

171. [S]ome people choose not to study [heuristic issues] even though they have [a] natural interest in it because they’re afraid of what that looks like to someone else.

172. [People are concerned about that e]specially in academia and research[.]

173. I had a mentor that I talked to about that.

174. I was worried about that from the get go.
[I wondered] how [it] look[ed] for me to just have interest in my own community[.]

[I wondered if others would think] I [was] not capable of doing other things [and if] that [was] the only skill set I can have[.]

I made that point [and my mentor said,] “if you don’t do it even with your connections how can you expect anyone else to [do so]?”

[T]hat kept me [focused] on [my original interests.]

[T]he other side of that is [wondering if] I am ever going to be able to let go of that responsibility and burden I feel [I] have[.]

I think everything else [in my doctoral experience] has been a privilege so far.

I feel pretty good[.]

[Within] th[e] aspect of feeling that I am the only one [with such interests] it feels good to know that I know I’m gonna do something good with it.

I know that I’m going to influence, [in] whatever way I can, and I like to educate other people and feel like I’m doing a good job and I’m grateful [for] the experiences that I’ve had because I like to share them with other people[.]

I definitely would encourage [other Latinas interested in doctoral education in psychology] to continue.

I have huge interests in wanting to motivate as many women as possible to want to be successful whatever way that is.

I believe in higher education [and] in graduate school, of course, only if it’s necessary for the aspirations that you have.

Depending on how young they were starting [this process.] I would definitely just provide the mentorship that I know I had in undergrad.
197. Educating them [about] what [they] need to do to get into grad school and letting them know that it’s going to be a struggle as well.

198. I would recommend going to therapy depending on what kind of ethnic identity issues they have.

199. Some women don’t have problems, some of them do.

200. Some of them just feel like they’re constantly balancing one aspect of their lives compared to another.

201. That’s how I felt.

202. [I would] want to talk to them about [balancing their life], letting them know that it’s going to be hard.

203. Letting them know [they] should just keep a strong face and not to feel isolated.

204. [I would suggest to not let [themselves] get isolated.

205. [I would tell them to acknowledge when [they] need help [and] to reach out to others.

206. [I would encourage them] to establish community connections.

207. [I would encourage them to establish connections in the field as a whole.

208. [I would recommend finding your interest and being able to stick to that.

209. [I would let them know that it’s going to be very rewarding, but it’s also going to be very challenging in so many ways that you don’t even think about in terms of interpersonal balance.

210. [A] lot of the women I know of who choose to go to grad school have struggle[d] with balancing family[.]

211. [I] feel like you need to acknowledge [those challenges] from the get go.

213. I know a lot of women who dropped out after applying to [graduate school to] have kids,
or realize that it’s hard to do two things at once.

218. [I have struggled finding balance w]ith work and things like that.

219. I had a paper that was due and I had to work [and] I can’t afford to not work.

220. I got out of work at eight at night and I had a paper [due the next day] and I was like ahhh shoot!

221. I had to sacrifice and stay up all night to finish my paper for class.

222. [T]he whole time I was thinking I shouldn’t have gone to work[,] I should’ve called in.

223. I should’ve been more aware of my schedule, but the bottom line is that at that time I needed the money and I couldn’t [miss work because] I worked for cash tips[.]

224. I didn’t have a choice, but to [stay up all night] and learn [from the experience.]

225. One of the things that I feel is problematic for some students [is that] I see some students who [are] all about school [and] work 24/7.

226. They don’t ever go out, [and] don’t ever need anything for themselves aside from school.

228. I’m like dude seriously get a life!

229. I understand you could be a little adamant about psychology and you can love being in this program.

230. I feel like you’re going to regret you turning 30, [or h]owever old you are when you’re done and you realize that you have done nothing to promote who you are as a person versus who you are as a psychologist.

231. [W]hat if something happened [and] you lose your license [as a psychologist?]  

233. [What if] you can’t even practice?

234. What are you going to do with yourself?
Who are you?

If your identity has solely been as a professional psychologist you’re not going to have an identity anymore.

She thinks not having an identity aside from being a psychologist is scary.

These situations are scary and happen to people.

I’ve known a lot of people especially now given the economy that are getting laid off.

We think job security is different because we’re in academics.

Something could happen or you can lose your job and you don’t know what else to do with yourself.

We need to be working on ourselves concurrently as we work on becoming psychologists.

Making sure you spend time with friends, making sure you take time for other important things and don’t just focus 100% on school is also important.

It is that balance that we talk about.

You don’t want to not pay attention to school, but pay attention to developing who you are as well.

That’s definitely a struggle I’ve had to deal with and I’m working on it and feel comfortable with where I am right now.

Just have to really scold yourself in the mirror and tell yourself, “you gotta get to it, you better get that project done.”

Believe that you can do it because so far I’ve been able to make things happen even though I’m constantly juggling things.

I kind of got away making an A on that paper even though I waited till eight
o’clock the night before and it was due at nine in the morning [though] I didn’t get any sleep and I ended up getting sick from it.

250. I managed to get everything done [s]o it’s possible.

251. I actually pulled two all-nighters in a row [and] I got sick[.]

253. I had another assignment due and had to go to work the next day from seven in the morning to five o’clock at night.

254. I did end up getting sick [b]ut, I still did everything, [and i]t’s just the name of the game!

255. [B]elieving that you can make it happen [and just going at it is the name of the game.]

256. [I]t’s [also about] making sacrifices sometimes.

257. I’ve been pretty selfish lately though.

258. [T]he actual week in question, I had a friend who had a birthday party and then we were supposed to go [do] something [else.]

259. I [thought] I don’t have time to do this, plus work, plus my homework and my friend [noted I] listed two personal things in a weekend.

260. He [suggested that I] take out one [personal thing] if [I was looking] to balance [things.]

261. I [did] not want to take [a personal event] out[.]

263. I want[ed] to balance everything.

265. [My friend warned me t]hat [it was] not logical [and that I would have] to drop one personal thing. [He noted it would be better to] do one personal thing, one [for] work and one [for] school[.]

267. [E]ven learning to do that [has been challenging.]

268. I’ve could’ve dropped all personal [things] and just focus on school or whatever for [the] sake of sleep, but I wanted to make sure I [attended] my friend’s party [as they] only
have one birthday a year [or m]aybe that friend [is] not my friend next year.

269. [R]ight now, my life mantra as a result of everything I’ve been through has been [to] try to do whatever [I] can do to make [myself] happy and feel like [I’m] going to make it work, or make [things] happen for [myself].

270. I’m not worried I’m not going to finish my paper tonight.

271. I know I’m going to [finish though] it may not be pretty but it’s going to happen.

272. Having self-confidence [helps.]

273. I used to [have perfectionistic expectations but] I don’t anymore.

275. [T]hat was a huge [issue during] my first year [and] if you would’ve talked to me [then you would have seen that] I was awful.

276. I had so much pressure on myself.

277. Growing up and going through college I was always the perfect student.

278. I had straight A’s [and] did excellent on my ACT’s.

280. [W]hen I got to grad school, obviously that perfectionistic need came out big time.

281. It’s so funny, [be]cause it’s the exact opposite of what I’m doing now.

282. Back then, my papers were done the minute I got that assignment. [If I ha[d] two weeks[,] it was done within the first three days.

283. I made sure everything was perfect.

284. I read everything [and if y]ou assigned me 300 pages, I read everything.

285. I made sure I did everything.

286. I didn’t go out with anyone, I didn’t do anything.

287. I was isolated, I didn’t really have good friends and so all I did was school.

288. [That] is exactly [where] I’m coming from now because I was miserable and it didn’t get
me anywhere.

289. I read all the articles! So what?

290. I got perfect hundreds on everything I did. So what?

291. [I wondered w]hat real purpose that really ha[d] in terms of my life and [its] greater context.

292. It didn’t have any [real purpose in terms of my life’s greater context.]

293. I [suggest that] if you have issues go to therapy.

294. I was actually in therapy for a year.

295. [T]hese were all the issues we talked about [in therapy and] I went [be]cause I was so depressed.

296. I don’t know if it was clinical [depression] or if I was just [having] adjustment problems [due to] moving and everything.

297. [The therapist told me] “[y]ou have no balance in your life[,] how can you even be happy when you’re not finding anything for yourself?”

298. [S]he is pretty much the one who helped me to get to where I am right now.

299. [I now] feel comfortable with a little bit lower [expectations.] [N]ow, don’t get me wrong, I’m not going to make a B. I’m not going to just blow off things.

300. I do as much as I feel is good enough, and sufficient, and still to my expectations.

301. I still read, and I still do more things than other people I know.

302. That’s just me and I still push myself a little bit.

303. I am willing to sacrifice sleep and some people aren’t.

304. But that’s just the name of my game.

305. Right now that’s what I have to do to make myself happy and make sure I get everything
that I want.

306. I’m [a] completely a different person than I was back then. I was awful.

309. One of my personal interests is to see more Latina women in graduate school. In all types of graduate school [programs.]

310. I definitely think as the years progress, [and] the generations go forward, people younger than [I] are going to see a lot more [Latina representation.]

311. I just think it’s just hard. I don’t know if other people feel that way but I know that I definitely feel that that burden [of being] a token, I’m just that token.

312. The token [Latina] and I don’t want to have to deal with that.

313. I just want to be me, and I [am] but it’s hard.

314. I could just be me but then, I feel a part of me is letting go of my representation [as a Latina] and so I feel like, if there were more of us[,] if we [were] more visible, [t]here would be no need for that token representation.

315. We could just be ourselves and everyone would recognize [that] already.

316. Everyone would be attuned to this idea that we [Latinas] all have different experiences.

317. [U]p until this point, as easy as it sounds, other people still don’t realize [that we all have different experiences.]

318. [People] still talk among themselves [and say] that we all come from a social class that made it easy for us [to be in a doctoral program.]

319. Not everyone had that experience you know.

320. I would say that [change] is what I would like to see.

321. I don’t even know what would make that happen.

322. I’m asking that same question.
323. At this point, even as [informed,] and [with] as much help as I’ve gotten, I still think
is hard. It’s 2010, so we definitely need to focus on whatever is need[ed] to make it
better[.]

324. We just need to figure out how[.]
APPENDIX G

Integration of Unarticulated Meaning Units of Interview with “Luisa,” Step 4

[U]p in[to] this point my personal experience [i]n my program has been frustrating[.] (3) I’ve been frustrated [because] I don’t feel like I’ve really had a lot help in anything that I do. (4) I don’t have a person to mentor me in any way. (6) I feel some of that is confusing in terms of politics of the program and also just feeling perhaps discriminated against who I am as a person. (5) I try to make sure to separate those [as] I don’t want to clump everything together [and say] it’s because it’s me [,] it’s because I’m [Latina]. No[,] sometimes I do think the program as a whole has its own problems and I just fall into that. (7)

[S]ome of [those frustrating experiences] would have to be with my research interests[.](9) [W]hen I applied to graduate school I researched a slew of [programs that did research on topics like] multicultural immigration populations[,] resiliency [and e]thnic identity [which] were always my interest[s as] that’s what I did when I was an undergrad. I worked in [a] lab about the formation [of] prejudice [in] children [and in] a lab on the efficacy of bilingual treatment. (10) [W]hen I applied [and] came in [to] this program that was their model for what they stood for in terms of diversity. [They] made it sound they were really involved in what I perceived as being more ethnic population differences. (11) [W]hen I came and did my interview that’s what they portrayed themselves to be. (12)

When I got here six months later it turns out that we lost our director[,]she left. We lost two other faculty members [a]nd so the focus [of the program] once I arrived was shifted away from multicultural diversity in the ethnic sense to more LGBT issues. [I]t does still fall into multiculturalism and diversity but that [was not what I expected.] (13) I felt like I was tricked. I [thought] well I’m hearing we’re responsible for these research projects as it’s a [doctoral]
I didn’t have a faculty member to identify with and I also didn’t feel like I had any classmates that I could identify with when I got here. I was very sad for the first year. Of course that’s also coupled with me moving as I lived in a city which is about 4 hours from where my school is. And so just leaving the life that I had for the last 6 years was of course difficult and feeling I couldn’t identify or make any friends. I definitely felt frustrated with that aspect too. I didn’t feel a sense of community. I didn’t feel my program did a good job at helping me connect with a potential community.

I’m thinking back to my first semester and second semester. First semester I didn’t know any of them really well. The program didn’t really encourage socializing. I mean we were responsible ourselves of course but even that can be difficult. We all have our own interests and who was gonna take charge of this cohort? Who’s gonna say “oh let’s do this or that” when we were all so different. We all had a variety of different interests and even to this day I still well with the exception of one friend, I don’t know anyone else who is remotely interested in any of the issues that I am.

I did have family in town and as a result I would just kind of spend all my time with my family because they were the only people I had to identify with me. I would come to school, go home and I would just go back to my family. It was easy, they knew me and I didn’t have to work at this whole new life that I had. [I was in a new city, new school,
I needed comfort and so instead of struggling with trying to find someone new I relied on my family. I moved closer to school and I was alone and I pretty much forced to try to get to know my classmates. I did get to know my classmates a little bit. I established a few close friendships about two of them. It’s sad but I can think of two out the five of us who became my friends.

What ended up happening in terms of community is that I still haven’t felt that in the school, but I ended up developing my own community outside being more involved. I started working as counselor at a refugee center and just able to create my interests outside of school. That’s why it’s not salient at this point. The problems are still there but I don’t pay attention to them because I found ways to pacify that within myself. I guess I find satisfaction with where I’m at this point in my life.

I had to even switch advisors. I had an advisor who was like “okay I think I can help you work with your material” and then when it came to having to conceptualize and create a thesis project she had no working knowledge of the literature that I was involved in. I felt very frustrated with trying to verbalize where my mind was going with the constructs I was coming across in the literature so I wanted someone to help. I mean I don’t know what I’m doing! I’m a young student and I don’t know I’ve never been in grad school before. I’ve never done a thesis project. I don’t know! I just felt like I needed confirmation if what I was doing was correct I needed guidance, a pat on the back, I don’t know. Maybe for someone to just tell me I’m doing a good job, I’m on the right track I don’t know.

At this point I look back and I don’t know what it is I needed. I don’t know what it was but I just didn’t feel like I was getting whatever it was I didn’t even know I needed. This just was not working, basically this was not helping. I ended up
having to switch advisors. (37) I switched to someone else who was a little more supportive and more aware and I’m really glad I did that because actually since then I [have] gotten a lot [of] assistance with what I’m doing and I feel like I’m progressing. (39)

[A] lot of my problems with [self-]identification [as a Latina] at this point [are] because over the recent years, maybe the last five years I’ve had a huge struggle with accepting my ethnic identity and who I am. (50) I think that comes from [the fact that] I’ve had a lot of struggles growing up. (51) I grew up in the suburbs trying to assimilate and dealing with that [.]. (52) I was pretty much [the only Latina] there where you [could] basically either be Black or White. (56) There was no minority[, i]t was pretty 50/50 in terms of just the two main groups. (57) I felt like I had to pick a side. (58)

[G]rowing up I would spend summers in [a Latin American country] with my family, with my grandmother. (59) [T]wo years ago she passed away and my whole life she meant so much to me I think she represented who my identity was. (60) [W]hen she passed away that was hard for me and I got a little more proactive in terms of making sure I don’t lose [my cultural identity.] (61) [I became more proactive about] actually embracing that identity more[,] developing [and] speaking Spanish more, trying to be more involved in the culture [as,] growing up[,] I had tended [to not really be involved in [it.] I wanted to make sure I didn’t lose that [cultural identity bec]ause she was gone. (62) That one concrete link I had to my heritage was gone. (63)

I had to [become more proactive about keeping my cultural identity] and that came at a time whe[n] I [was] going through my research interests in school. (64) [O]f course I used [my interest in my culture] to kind of propel my [research] interests. I’m like ok well [my interest in culture] just helps support [my research interests.] (65) [T]hen coming to grad school I knew I
had to continue that [and] coming here I felt just very defensive about myself from the get go. (66) I felt [I was] just really making sure I didn’t lose anything that I had. (68) [C]oming here I wanted [and] tried to find ways to stay connected and I couldn’t. (69)

When I’m saying [I was] not getting help [or] support I don’t know if that was me being defensive and being protective of myself or [if] it was just the politics of being in grad school. (70) [There were p]eople expecting [me] to be independent and capable of making [my] own decisions so [I thought] why should I need help? (71) I think frustration encompassed a lot of my experiences[.]. (74) [A]ctually my problems were so big here in the program [because I was] just feeling like I had no one to guide [me] in any way and it was very frustrating[.]. (88) I just didn’t feel I deserved to have that type of graduate experience. (89) I started applying to different programs and I interviewed [for] different programs. (90) I actually took a semester off from the program I’m in now. (91) I’m still here [after] I interviewed at other places. (92)

In that process of me almost being gone a lot people kind of reached out to me and [said] “we really don’t want you to go, we really miss you here.” (93) I think at that point [even though I was] thinking I didn’t have community they kind of showed me that I did and I didn’t even realize it. (94) [T]hen they [said] “yeah we’re here I can’t believe you didn’t think that we were here for you.” (95) Faculty and peers [reached out to me.] (98) They reached out to me knowing that it was getting so bad for me that I wanted to leave. (96) [A]t that point things got a lot better and at this point I’m pretty close with some of them and I feel more comfortable about staying here. (97)

[T]he faculty members who wrote recommendations [for] me to leave [to other programs] called me when I was doing my interviews [and also wished] me “good luck” [via] emails. (99) [A]fter the whole admittance thing I was trying to decide, “where do I wanna go?
or do I wanna stay? What am I doing this for?” (100) They [told me] “you know we’re obviously biased but we do wanna help you so talk to us and tell [us] we can help you figure out what decision you wanna make.” (101) [I]t felt really good to feel like I can be open and honest with everyone about my problems and then their rebuttals to what my concerns were. (102)

[Not seeing that people were available for support] comes back [to] one of my problems [which] is that I feel like people should know things without me having to say it. (103) I felt like it’s not their fault I never asked them for help. (104) [A] lot of that’s my own personal issues. (105) Because people always say they look at me and [that] “I look like I have my [stuff] together, I’m strong minded, I know what I want, I’m very determined” and as result I don’t express when I need help. (106) I [had] never done that but yet I almost expect[ed] someone to know[.] (107) [T]hat’s obviously my bad. (108) I don’t [think it] is appropriate for me to ever expect or assume other people should know when to ask me [if I need] help. (109) I need to learn to speak up when I need it. (110) [T]hat’s what was going [on] as I was thinking that they should’ve known that I was lonely. (111) But when I don’t speak up, how can I expect them to know that? (112) [T]hat [experience] took me to realize that. (113) And then I started asking for help. (115)

[O]ver the last year I realized [that] I didn’t want to admit my thesis advisor was not working out for me. (116) I didn’t wanna admit I needed help with someone new. (117) But once I [told myself] “ok I need to stop being afraid to ask for help” I did it and I’ve been getting the help that I need. (118) [Now] I [think] “okay this wasn’t so bad I just have to ask for it.” (119)

[M]y identity definitely influenced my interests [and] my interests influenced my experiences. (122) As a result of my interest in diversity I worked with refugee populations
[and] torture populations. (123) As result of that I learned a lot about world and global policy, peace policy and I just got more immersed in that. (124) [My experiences] all kind of fed into each other. (125) And those experiences coming into graduate school [were helpful as] I know a lot about different [people.] (126) I feel [that] because of my identity and my experiences in this kind of dual role I’ve been very sensitive to the plight of different communities. (127) I feel I can look at somebody or understand where they are coming from when they have something to say even if it’s in direct violation of everything that I believe in or something that I assume. (128) And I [think] “okay well you think this [way] because you probably grew up like this.” (129) I get that. That makes sense to me. (130) Do I agree with it? No. (131) But it makes sense to me and I [then understand the person.] (132)

[A]s a result of my identity [in] my education experience I’m very open to learning new things. (134) [I’m v]ery open to a lot of different ideas and kind of acknowledging the differences in the population. (135) [T]hat is a very good benefit for the psychology program I’m in. (136) It’s all about working [with] people, understanding people. (137) I’ve been able to work with many different types of clients and I’ve been successful with them and that makes me feel really good and I feel competent in that aspect. (138) [I felt competent e]ven with not feeling I had support with the research. (139) Feeling like as a Latina I didn’t have someone I could identify with and that was sad. (140) [F]eeling competent in my counseling skills and ability to identify with different people helped balance that out in terms of feeling like I know that I belong here. (141) I would never doubt it to that extent. (142) [I would p]robably [never doubt] because of those two different [aspects] I’ve had because of my identity [that made me feel confident.] (143)
[The work that I do with clients] makes me feel like whatever it is I’m going through in [the program] I try to [brush off and say] “you know it’s just politics”. (148) I was just really good at it. (146) I’ve always been good at it and that’s just what brought me [to] even being here, just working with clients and them being so grateful for the work I’ve done with them. (147) I’m not going to let go of my goals and my aspirations because of [department politics]. (149) [I’m not going to let go of my goals b]ecause I don’t feel I’m getting the attention I need. (150)

[A] negative thing about my identity would be that because I’m so [firm about] wanting to maintain [it] and [I am] very proud of it sometimes I do get too overwhelmed with that because I’m so adamant about wanting to promote diversity and differences I can’t let that go [a]nd that may hinder my work and competency. (151) I’m so focused on all this diversity but I may be ignoring some pretty core components [be]cause I’m always advocating for the same things. (152) Sometimes I worry that I’m not allowing myself to open up to everything because I’m focused on one thing. (153) [It can feel overwhelming because] every class I [take and] every project I’m in [i]t’s like I have the same angle for what I’m doing. (154) I feel I need to push that[.] (155) I guess because I’m the only one who has an interest in [ethnic identity and other diversity topics.] (156)

I’m the only one, that I know of, in my program who’s interested in [such topics.] (158) [I]f I let that go for the sake of me wanting to just get immersed in something else I feel like no one is going to know anything about it. (159) I feel responsible and that’s almost like a weight on my shoulders. (160) I feel responsible for always playing that card in every discussion we have and every presentation we have and any topic of study that we have because I feel like it’s so important it needs to be known. (161) I have to keep playing it and sometimes I just get
I feel overwhelmed with wanting to maybe move on and take interest in something else but fear that if I do that then I’m dropping that [and] no one else is going to be aware of it [be]cause no one else will do it. (166)

[I]n undergrad I had a mentor and I [told] her “you know sometimes I wonder” [if] I almost don’t want to study heuristic issues[,] things that I can relate to because it’s like I’m only doing that because I’m that. (168) Like me wanting to study women [of a specific ethnicity within the Latina/o culture] only doing that because I’m a woman [of that ethnicity.] (169) [I think t]hat’s not really fair[.] (170) [S]ome people choose not to study [heuristic issues] even though they have [a] natural interest in it because they’re afraid of what that looks like to someone else. (171) [People are concerned about that e]specially in academia and research[.]
(172)

I had a mentor that I talked to about that. (173) I was worried about that from the get go. (174) [I wondered] how [it] look[ed] for me to just have interest in my own community[.](175) [I wondered if others would think] I [was] not capable of doing other things [and if] that [was] the only skill set I can have[.](176) I made that point [and my mentor said,] “if you don’t do it even with your connections how can you expect anyone else to [do so]?” (177) [T]hat kept me [focused] on [my original interests.] (179) [T]he other side of that is [wondering if] I am ever going to be able to let go of that responsibility and burden I feel [I] have[.] (180)

I think everything else [in my doctoral experience] has been a privilege so far. (182) I feel pretty good[,] (183) [Within] th[e] aspect of feeling that I am the only one [with such interests] it feels good to know that I know I’m gonna do something good with it. (184) I know that I’m going to influence [in] whatever way I can and I like to educate other people and feel
like I’m doing a good job and I’m grateful [for] the experiences that I’ve had because I like to share them with other people[.](185)

I definitely would encourage [other Latinas interested in doctoral education in psychology] to continue. (191) I have huge interests in wanting to motivate as many women as possible to want to be successful whatever way that is. (192) I believe in higher education [and] in graduate school of course only if it’s necessary for the aspirations that you have. (193) Depending on how young they were starting [this process] I would definitely just provide the mentorship that I know I had in undergrad. (196) [I would be e]ducating them [about] what [they] need to do to get into grad school and letting them know that it’s going to be a struggle as well. (197)

I would recommend going to therapy depending on what kind of ethnic identity issues they have. (198) [I think s]ome women don’t have problems some of them do. (199) Some of them just feel like they’re constantly balancing one aspect of their lives compared to another. (200) That’s how I felt. (201) [I would] want to talk to them about [balancing their life], letting them know that it’s going to be hard. (202) [I would l]et them know [they] should just keep a strong face and not to feel isolated. (203) [I would suggest to n]ot let [themselves] get isolated. (204) [I would tell them to a]cknowledge when [they] need help [and] to reach out to others. (205) [I would encourage them] to establish community connections. (206) [I also suggest to e]stablish connections in the field as a whole. (207) [I recommend f]inding [their] interest and being able to stick to that. (208)

[I would l]et them know that it’s going to be very rewarding but it’s also going to be very challenging in so many ways that you don’t even think about in terms of interpersonal balance. (209) [A] lot of the women I know of who choose to go to grad school, have struggle[d] with
balancing family [. ] (210) I know a lot of women who dropped out after applying to [graduate school to] have kids or realize that it’s hard to do two things at once. (213) [I] feel like you need to acknowledge [those challenges] from the get go. (211)

[I have struggled finding balance w]ith work and things like that. (218) I had a paper that was due and I had to work [and] I can’t afford to not work. (219) I got out of work at eight at night and I had a paper [due the next day] and I was like ahhh shoot! (220) I had to sacrifice and stay up all night to finish my paper for class. (221) [T]he whole time I was thinking I shouldn’t have gone to work[, ] I should’ve called in. (222) I should’ve been more aware of my schedule, but the bottom line is that at that time I needed the money and I couldn’t [miss work because] I worked for cash tips[. ] (223) I didn’t have a choice, but to [stay up all night] and learn [from the experience.] (224)

One of the things that I feel is problematic for some students [is that] I see some students who [are] all about school [and] work 24/7. (225) They don’t ever go out [and] don’t ever need anything for themselves aside from school. (226) I’m like dude seriously get a life! (228) I understand you could be a little adamant about psychology and you can love being in this program. (229) I feel like you’re going to regret you turning 30 [or h]owever old you are when you’re done and you realize that you have done nothing to promote who you are as a person versus who you are as a psychologist. (230) [W]hat if something happened [and] you lose your license [as a psychologist?] (231) [What if] you can’t even practice. (233) What are you going to do with yourself? (234) Who are you? (235) [I]f [y]our identity [has] solely been as a professional psychologist you’re not going to have an identity anymore. (236)

[I think not having an identity aside from being a psychologist] is scary. (237) [I view these situations as] scary and [they] happen to people. (238) I’ve known a lot of people
especially now [given the economy] that are getting laid off. (239) [W]e think [job security is] different [be]cause we’re in academics. (240) [I think] something could happen or you [can] lose your job and you don’t know what else to do with yourself. (241) [My view is that w]e need to be working on ourselves concurrently [as we work on becoming psychologists.] (242) [M]aking sure you spend time with friends, making sure you take time for other important things and don’t just focus 100% on school [is also important in my view.] (243) [I]t is that balance that [I] talk about[.]. (244)

Not attending to school matters is not an option, but pay attention to developing who you are [as well.] (245) [T]hat’s definitely a struggle I’ve had to deal with and I’m working on it and feel comfortable with where I am right now. (246) [I j]ust have to really scold [my]self in the mirror and tell [my]self, “you gotta get to it, you better get that project done.” (247) Believe that you can do it [be]cause so far I’ve been able to make things happen [e]ven though I’m [constantly] juggling [things.] (248) I kind of got away [with] making an A on that paper [e]ven though I waited till eight o’clock the night before and it was due at nine in the morning [though] I didn’t get any sleep and I ended up getting sick from it. (249) I actually pulled two all-nighters in a row [and] I got sick[.] (251) I had another assignment due and had to go to work the next day from seven in the morning to five o’clock at night. (253) I managed to get everything done [s]o it’s possible. (250) I did end up getting sick [b]ut I still did everything [and i]t’s just the name of the game! (254)

[B]elieving that you can make it happen [and just going at it is the name of the game.] (255) [I]t’s [also about] making sacrifices sometimes. (256) I’ve been pretty selfish lately though. (257) [T]he actual week in question I had a friend who had a birthday party and then we were supposed to go [do] something [else.] (258) I [thought] I don’t have time to do this, plus
work, plus my homework and my friend noted I listed two personal things in a weekend. (259) He suggested that I take out one personal thing if I was looking to balance things. (260) I did not want to take a personal event out. I want to balance everything. (263)

My friend warned me that it was not logical and that I would have to drop one personal thing. He noted it would be better that I do one personal thing, one for work and one school. (265) Even learning to do that has been challenging. I’ve could’ve dropped all personal things and just focus on school or whatever for the sake of sleep, but I wanted to make sure I attended my friend’s party as they only have one birthday a year or maybe that friend is not my friend next year. (268)

Right now my life mantra as a result of everything I’ve been through has been to try to do whatever I can do to make myself happy and feel like I’m going to make it work or make things happen for myself. (269) I’m not worried I’m not going to finish my paper tonight. (270) I know I’m going to finish though it may not be pretty but it’s going to happen. (271) Having self-confidence helps me. I used to have perfectionistic expectations but I don’t anymore. (273) That was a huge issue during my first year and if you would’ve talked to me then you would have seen that I was awful. (275)

I had so much pressure on myself. Growing up and going through college I was always the perfect student. I had straight A’s and did excellent on my ACT’s. (277) When I got to grad school, obviously that perfectionistic need came out big time. (280) It’s so funny, because it’s the exact opposite of what I’m doing now. (281) Back then my papers were done the minute I got that assignment. If I had two weeks, it was done in the first three days. (282) I made sure everything was perfect. (283) I read everything and if you assigned me 300 pages I read everything. (284) I made sure I did everything. (285) I didn’t go out with
anyone, I didn’t do anything. (286) I was isolated, I didn’t really have good friends and so all I did was school. (287) [That] is exactly [where] I’m coming from now because I was miserable and it didn’t get me anywhere. (288) I read all the articles! So what? (289) I got perfect hundreds on everything I did. So what? (290) [I wondered w]hat real purpose that really ha[d] in terms of my life and [its] greater context. (291) It didn’t have any [real purpose in terms of my life’s greater context.] (292)

I [suggest that] if you have issues go to therapy. (293) I was actually in therapy for a year. (294) [T]hese were all the issues we talked about [in therapy and] I went [be]cause I was so depressed. (295) I don’t know if it was clinical [depression] or if I was just [having] adjustment problems [due to] moving and everything. (296) [The therapist told me] “[y]ou have no balance in your life[,] how can you even be happy when you’re not finding anything for yourself?” (297) [S]he is pretty much the one who helped me to get to where I am right now. (298)

[I now] feel comfortable with a little bit lower [expectations.] I’m [a] completely a different person than I was back then. I was awful. (306) [N]ow, don’t get me wrong I’m not going to make a B, I’m not going to just blow off things. (299) I do as much as I feel is good enough and sufficient and still to my expectations. (300) I still read and I still do more things than other people I know. (301) That’s just me and I still push myself a little bit. (302) I am willing to sacrifice sleep and some people aren’t. (303) But that’s just the name of my game. (304) Right now that’s what I have to do to make myself happy and make sure I get everything that I want. (305)

One of my personal interests is to see more Latina women in graduate school in all types of graduate school [programs.] (309) I definitely think as the years progress [and] the
generations go forward people younger than [I] are going to see a lot more [Latina representation.] (310) I just think it’s just hard. I don’t know if other people feel that way but I know that I definitely feel that burden [of being] a token, I’m just that token. (311) [I] am [t]he token [Latina] and I don’t want to have to deal with that. (312) I just want to be me, and I [am] but it’s hard. (313) I could just be me but then I feel a part of that is letting go of my representation [as a Latina] and so I feel like if there were more of us[,] if we [were] more visible [t]here would be no need for that token representation. (314) We could just be ourselves and everyone would recognize [that] already. (315) [People] still talk among themselves [and say] that we all come from a social class that made it easy for us [to be in a doctoral program.] (318) Not everyone had that experience you know. (319)

[At] this point, even as [informed] and [with] as much help as I’ve gotten I still think it is hard and it’s 2010, so we definitely need to focus on whatever is need[ed] to make it better[.]

(323) [U]ntil this point as easy as it sounds other people still don’t realize [that we all have different experiences.] (317) I would say that [change] is what I would like to see. (320) Everyone would be attuned to this idea that we [Latinas] all have different experiences. (316) [W]e just need to figure out how[.]

(324) I don’t even know what would make that happen. (321) I’m asking that same question. (322)
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

Chapter 4: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Healthcare Delivery

4.1 Introduction

The healthcare industry is witnessing a significant transformation with the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. This chapter explores how AI is revolutionizing healthcare delivery, focusing on areas such as patient care, diagnostic tools, and administrative processes. The discussion includes the benefits and challenges associated with AI adoption in healthcare.

4.2 Patient-Centric Care

One of the primary objectives in healthcare is to improve patient outcomes. AI plays a crucial role in this regard by facilitating personalized care. Through machine learning algorithms, AI systems can analyze vast amounts of patient data to predict health outcomes and suggest tailored treatment plans.

4.3 Diagnostic Tools

In the realm of diagnostics, AI has the potential to revolutionize how diseases are detected and managed. For instance, AI-driven image analysis systems can detect early signs of conditions like cancer, offering more accurate diagnoses and leading to earlier interventions.

4.4 Administrative Processes

The administrative aspects of healthcare, which often involve repetitive and time-consuming tasks, are also being transformed by AI. AI can automate scheduling, billing, and other functions, allowing healthcare providers to focus more on patient care.

4.5 Ethical and Regulatory Considerations

As AI becomes more integrated into healthcare, it is essential to address ethical and regulatory considerations. This includes ensuring patient privacy, managing data security, and developing transparent algorithms that can be audited and understood by healthcare professionals.

4.6 Conclusion

The integration of AI in healthcare delivery promises significant improvements in patient outcomes and efficiency. However, it also presents challenges that need to be addressed through careful consideration of ethical and regulatory frameworks. As the technology evolves, continued investment in research and education is crucial to harness its full potential.

References


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When she applied to her current doctoral program the program was presented to her as one with a focus on diversity and involvement in research on ethnic population differences. (11)

When she attended her interview for the program the doctoral program was again portrayed as one with a focus on diversity. (12)

**Paragraph 3**

About six months after her interview she started the program and realized that the director and two professors had left the program resulting in the program’s shift from a focus on ethnic diversity to a focus on diversity related to Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) matters. While the program continued to have a multicultural focus the current focus was not what she had expected. (13)

She felt like she had been deceived and she was aware that as a doctoral student she was responsible for research projects that she actually wanted to conduct but the new and remaining faculty members did not have identified interests in any of the areas that were of interest to her. (16)

She felt she was at a loss as there were no faculty members with whom she had compatible research interests. (17)

She felt very frustrated. (14)

**Paragraph 4**

When she started the program she did not have a faculty member to identify with and she also did not feel she could identify with any of her classmates. (18)
Not having anyone in the program she felt she could identify with was hard. (19)

She was very sad during her first year in the doctoral program. (20)

Her transition into the program had also involved moving from a city that was about four hours away from the university. (21)

Leaving the life she had for the previous six years and being unable to identify with people or make any friends was very difficult. (22)

She felt definitely frustrated due to not having a sense of community and due to thinking her program had not made efforts to help her connect with a potential community. (24)

Paragraph 5

She thought about her first and second semester which was when she felt she lacked connections with any sort of community. (79)

It was initially very difficult for her to establish relationships with the members of her cohort and thus it was hard to create a sense of community or support. (78)

During her first semester, she did not know anyone in her cohort really well. (80)

She noted that her doctoral program did not really encourage socializing. (25)

She recognized that students were responsible for socializing and connecting with each other but noted that even that could be difficult. (26)

She and her cohort were all very different and no one took charge of organizing any activities between them. (27)
All cohort members had a variety of interests and currently she knows only one friend who is remotely interested in the issues that are of concern to her. (28)

**Paragraph 6**

She had family in the town where the university was located and, as a result of not connecting with others in the program, she would spend all her time with her family as they were the only people she felt she could identify with. (23)

She attended school, went home, and went back to her family as it was easy to connect with them because they knew her and she did not have to work at something new unlike everything else in her environment. (81)

She was in a new city, a new school and a new program. (82)

She needed comfort and instead of struggling with trying to find new individuals for support she relied on her family. (83)

She eventually moved closer to school and being alone forced her to try to get to know her classmates. (84)

She got to know her classmates a bit. (85)

She established close friendships with about two peers. (86)

She thinks it was sad that only two out of the five people in her cohort became her friends. (87)
Paragraph 7

She noted that she has yet to feel that she has a sense of community in school but developed her own community outside the school by becoming more involved. (40)

She started to work as a counselor at a refugee center and was able to cultivate her interests outside of school. (41)

Feeling disconnected within the university setting was not as salient to her anymore because she had a sense of community elsewhere. (42)

While the problems with her program continued she no longer paid attention to them because she found ways to pacify that within herself. (43)

She thought she was no longer as affected by problems in her department because she found satisfaction with where she was at this point in her life. (44)

Paragraph 8

Her advisor told her she could help her but when it came to having to conceptualize and create a thesis project the advisor had no working knowledge of the literature that she was reading and thus she had to switch advisors. (29)

She felt very frustrated trying to verbalize and conceptualize the constructs and information she came across in the literature and she wanted someone to help her as she did not know what she was doing. (30)
Paragraph 9

She viewed herself as a young student who had never done a thesis before and did not know how to do one as she had never been in graduate school before. (32)

She needed confirmation that what she was doing was correct. (33)

She needed guidance, encouragement, validation and for someone to let her know that she was on the right track. (34)

Paragraph 10

She looked back and did not know what she needed then. (35)

Although she could not pinpoint what she needed, she knew something was missing. (36)

In essence her working relationship with her thesis advisor was not working and it was not helping her. (38)

She ended up having to switch advisors. (37)

She switched to an advisor who was more supportive and more aware and felt glad about having done so because the modification resulted in more assistance and thus more progress. (39)

Paragraph 11

She has had problems self-identifying as a Latina and struggled with accepting her ethnic identity and who she was for the past five years. (50)

She thought her struggles accepting her ethnic identity stemmed from struggles she faced growing up. (51)
She grew up in the suburbs dealing with trying to assimilate. (52)

She lived in a place where people were basically either Black or White and she was practically the only Latina. (56)

The population was about equally divided between those two main groups. (57)

She felt like she had to pick between both groups. (58)

Paragraph 12

Growing up she would spend summers with family in the Latin American country where her grandmother lived. (59)

Her grandmother who was very meaningful to her and represented her identity passed away about two years ago. (60)

It was hard for her to lose her grandmother and she became a little more proactive in making sure that she did not lose her cultural identity. (61)

After her grandmother passed, she wanted to make sure she did not lose her cultural identity and became more proactive about embracing her identity, developing and speaking Spanish more, and trying to be more involved in the culture as growing up she tended to not be involved in it much. (62)

The one concrete link that she had to her heritage was gone. (63)
Paragraph 13

She became more proactive about cultivating her cultural identity during the same time she was engaged in exploring research interests in school. (64)

She used her interest in her culture to propel her research interests and thought that the former complemented the latter. (65)

In graduate school it was clear to her that she wanted to continue to have her interest in culture present in her research endeavors and she felt defensive from the get go. (66)

She was defensive in making sure that she did not lose anything that was tied to her cultural identity. (68)

In graduate school she wanted to and tried to find ways to stay connected and she could not. (69)

Paragraph 14

Although she felt she was not getting help or support at the onset of her doctoral experience she recognized that she did not know if it was the politics of being in graduate school or if it was that she was being defensive and protective of herself. (70)

She thought that in graduate school others expected her to be independent and capable of making her own decisions so she wondered why she should need help. (71)

Frustration encompassed many of her doctoral experiences. (74)

She felt frustrated as she had no one to guide her in any way and she viewed that as a big problem with her doctoral program. (88)
She did not feel she deserved to have that type of graduate experience. (89)

She applied to different doctoral programs and was interviewed by other programs. (90)

She took a semester off from the doctoral program she is currently enrolled in (91)

She interviewed at other programs but stayed in her doctoral program. (92)

**Paragraph 15**

As she was involved in the process of potentially leaving to another doctoral program people in her program reached out to her and told her that they missed her and that they did not want her to leave. (93)

She realized that even though she thought she did not have a community people in her program showed her that she did even though she was not aware of it. (94)

The people in her program told her that they could not believe that she thought they were not there for her. (95)

Faculty and peers reached out to her. (98)

Faculty and peers reached out to her when they knew that things in the program got so bad that she wanted to leave. (96)

She noted things got a lot better after faculty and peers in her program reached out to her and she currently felt more comfortable about her decision to stay in her program. (97)
Paragraph 16

The faculty members who wrote her letters of recommendation when she applied to other doctoral programs called and sent her email to wish her good luck when she was in the process of interviewing for such programs. (99)

After going through the admissions process she was trying to decide where she wanted to continue her doctorate and pondered about why she was seeking a doctorate. (100)

People in her program told her that although they were obviously biased, they wanted to help her and let her know that they were available to talk and help her figure out her decision. (101)

It felt really good to know that she could be open and honest with everyone about her concerns and to hear their rebuttals about those concerns. (102)

Paragraph 17

She attributed her inability to see that other people were available for support to her tendency to think that people should know things without her having to say anything. (103)

She thought that people in her program were not to blame for the fact that she never asked them for help. (104)

She noted that much of her inability to ask for help was due to her personal issues. (105)

In the past, she had been told that others perceived her as someone who had her things in order, knew what she wanted and was strong minded. She did not want to be perceived differently and as a result, she did not express when she needed help. (106)
She had never asked for help but yet almost expected someone to know when she needed help. (107)

She acknowledged that expecting someone else to know when she needed help was obviously her mistake. (108)

She acknowledged that it was not appropriate for her to ever expect or assume others should know when to ask her if she needed help. (109)

She understood that she needed to learn to speak up and ask for help when she needed it. (110)

She said that what was really going on when she thought that others in her program should have known that she was lonely was that she expected them to know that she needed assistance. (111)

She concluded that she could not expect others to know that she needed help if she did not voice her needs. (112)

It took that experience in her doctoral program for her to realize that. (113)

She started asking for help after that experience. (115)

Paragraph 18

She realized that over the last year she did not want to admit that her thesis advisor was not working out for her. (116)

She did not want to admit that she needed help form someone new. (117)

Once she told herself that she needed to stop being afraid to ask for help, she asked for help and had been receiving the assistance that she needed. (118).
Now, she thought that asking for help was not that difficult but that she just had to ask for it.

(119)

Paragraph 19

Her identity definitely influenced her interests which in turn influenced her experiences. (122)

As a result of her interest in diversity she worked with refugee and torture survivor populations. (123)

As a result of her clinical experiences, she gained a lot of knowledge about global and peace policy and got more immersed in that. (124)

Her experiences fed into each other. (125)

Her prior experiences were helpful when she came into graduate school as she had learned a lot about different people. (126)

She felt that because of her identity and her experiences in kind of a dual role she had been sensitive to the plight of different communities. (127)

She felt that she could empathize with someone even when they had something to say that was in direct violation of everything that she believed or assumed. (128)

She thought about how the way a person grew up influenced the reasons why a person thought a certain way. (129)
In giving thought to that she understands the person and the way a person thinks makes sense to her. (130)

To understand how people think did not mean that she agreed with their views. (131)

Once she made sense of what was behind a client’s reasoning, it made sense to her and she understood the person better. (132)

**Paragraph 20**

As a result of her identity she was very open to learning new things via her educational experiences. (134)

She described herself as very open to a lot of different ideas and to acknowledging the differences in the population. (135)

She viewed being open as a characteristic that benefitted her in her quest to become a psychologist. (136)

The area of psychology that she was in was all about working with people and understanding them. (137)

Having been able to work with many different types of clients in a successful manner made her feel very good and competent. (138)

She felt competent about her counseling skills even though she did not feel she had support with the research aspect of her doctoral program. (139)

She felt sad that as a Latina she did not have someone she could identify with in her doctoral program. (140)
Feeling competent in her counseling skills and in her ability to identify with different people helped her feel like she belonged in the program and provided a balance when she encountered disappointments. (141)

She never doubted herself to the extent that she thought she did not belong in the program. (142)

She probably never doubted whether she belonged in the program because she felt confident about her counseling skills and her ability to connect with different people which she attributed to her ethnic identity. (143)

**Paragraph 21**

Her work with clients made her feel that she could brush off and attribute to politics whatever circumstances she faced in the doctoral program. (148)

She felt she was very good at counseling people. (146)

She had always been good with people and was grateful for the work she had done with clients as working with clients was what drew her to even being in the doctorate. (147)

She was not letting go of her goals and aspirations because of department politics. (149)

She was not going to let go of her goals because she did not feel she was getting the attention that she needed from her doctoral program. (150)

**Paragraph 22**

Something negative that she experienced in relation to her identity was that she at times became overwhelmed due to being so proud of it and adamant about wanting to maintain it and about
wanting to promote diversity that she could not let that go and thought that may have hindered her work and competency. (151)

Although she was so focused on diversity matters she thought she may have ignored some other core components because she always advocated for the same things. (152)

Sometimes she worried she was not allowing herself to open up to everything due to being focused on one thing. (153)

She had the same angle for what she focused on in every class she took and in every project that she was involved in and this overwhelmed her at times. (154)

She felt that she needed to push diversity related topics. (155)

She was the only one who had an interest in ethnic identity and other diversity matters. (156)

**Paragraph 23**

As far as she knew, she was the only person in her program who was interested in diversity related topics. (158)

She worried that if she let her topics of interest go for the sake of her desire to get immersed into a different subject area no one would know anything about these matters. (159)

She felt responsible and almost felt a weight on her shoulders. (160)

She felt responsible for always focusing on diversity matters in every discussion or presentation, and in any topic she studied and thought the information needed to be known because it was so important. (161)
She felt she had to keep discussing her diversity related topics and she sometimes got frustrated and felt burdened by it. (162)

She would like to learn new things too. (163)

At times she felt overwhelmed as she wanted to take on different interests but feared that doing so would be akin to abandoning her original interest areas knowing that others would not gain awareness about such topics because no one else would report on such topics. (166)

Paragraph 24

As an undergraduate she discussed with her mentor that she almost did not want to study heuristic issues, things that she could relate to, because it would be like she was only studying that because it was based on her experience. (168)

For example, wanting to study women of a specific ethnicity within the Latina/o culture because she belonged to that particular culture. (169)

She thought it was not fair. (170)

Some people chose not to study heuristic issues even though they were naturally interested in topics related to their experience because they were afraid of how others would perceive that. (171)

People who worked in academic and research positions were especially concerned about how others would perceive them if they focused on investigating heuristic issues. (172)
Paragraph 25

She had a mentor with whom she discussed such concerns. (173)

From the get go she worried about how she would be perceived if she pursued doing research on heuristic matters. (174)

She wondered how it looked for her to just have interest in her own community. (175)

She wondered if others would doubt her capacity to do other kinds of research and if they would think that her skillset consisted of only being able to focus on heuristic topics. (176)

Her mentor told her that if she did not conduct research related to her community even with the connections that she had how could she expect anyone else to do so? (177)

That conversation with her mentor kept her focused on her original research interests. (179)

She also wondered if she would ever be able to let go of the responsibility and burden she felt that she had. (180)

Paragraph 26

She thinks that everything else in her doctoral experience has been a privilege so far. (182)

She felt pretty good about it. (183)

Although she was aware that she was the only one with interests related to ethnicity and diversity she felt good because she knew that she was going to do something good with it. (184)
She knew that she was going to influence others in whatever way she could as she liked to educate others and felt like she was already doing a good job. She felt grateful for the experiences that she had because she liked to share them with other people. (185)

Paragraph 27

She would definitely encourage other Latinas interested in doctoral education in psychology to continue in that pursuit. (191)

She was highly interested in wanting to motivate as many women as possible to want to be successful whatever way that was. (192)

She believed in higher education and in graduate school only if necessary for the aspirations that a person had. (193)

If the prospective students were young as they started on their path to doctoral education she would definitely provide the same mentorship that was provided to her as a young undergraduate. (196)

She would educate prospective doctoral students about what they need to do to get into graduate school and let them know that it was going to be a struggle. (197)

Paragraph 28

She recommended that other doctoral students went to therapy depending on the kind of ethnic identity issues they had. (198)

She thought some women did not have problems while others did. (199)
Some women felt they were constantly balancing one aspect of their lives as compared to another. (200)

She was one of those women who felt she was constantly balancing one aspect of her life against another. (201)

She would want to talk to the prospective Latina doctoral students about balancing their life and let them know that it was going to be difficult to do so. (202)

She would let them know that they should keep a strong face and to not feel isolated. (203)

She suggested that they did not allow themselves to become isolated. (204)

She advised that they acknowledged when they needed help and that they reached out to others. (205)

She would encourage them to establish community connections (206)

She also suggested that they establish connections within the field of psychology. (207)

She recommended that they find their research interest and adhere to that. (208)

Paragraph 29

She would let prospective Latina doctoral students know that the doctoral process was going to be very rewarding but also very challenging in terms of interpersonal balance in so many ways that they had not even considered. (209)

A lot of women she knew who chose to go to graduate school struggled with balancing family. (210)
She knew a lot of women who had dropped out after applying to graduate school to have children or when they realized it was hard to do two things at once. (213)

She thought that those challenges needed to be acknowledged from the get go. (211)

Paragraph 30

So far, she had struggled finding the balance between work, academics and other aspects of her life. (218)

She had a paper due and had to work as she could not afford not to work. (219)

She got out of work at eight at night and had a paper due the next day. (220)

She had to sacrifice by staying up all night to finish her paper. (221)

The entire time she thought she should have called in and not gone to work. (222)

She should have been more aware of her schedule but at that time she needed the money and could not miss work because she worked for cash tips. (223)

She did not have a choice but to stay up all night and learn from that experience. (224)

Paragraph 31

Some doctoral students were always all about school and work and she viewed that as problematic. (225)

These students never went out and never did anything aside from school. (226)

She thought that these students needed to “get a life”. (228)
She understood that they could be adamant about psychology and love being in the doctoral program. (229)

She thought that students who were exclusively focused on work and academics may regret turning 30 or however old they were when they finished the program when they realized that they had done nothing to promote who they were as a person versus who they were as psychologists. (230)

She wondered what would happen if they lost their license as psychologists. (231)

She wondered what would happen if they were unable to practice. (233)

She wondered what they would do with themselves in the event that they could not practice. (234)

She wondered who these individuals truly were. (235)

She noted that if someone’s identity had solely been as professional psychologists then, they were no longer going to have an identity any more. (236)

**Paragraph 32**

She thought that for someone to not have an identity aside from being a psychologist was scary. (237)

She noted that such situations happened to people and she viewed them as frightening. (238)

She knew a lot of people, especially given the current economy, who got laid off. (239)
She recognized that she and others thought that their job security was different due to being in academia. (240)

Something could happen that could cause someone to lose their job and then that person would not know what else to do with him/herself. (241)

Her view was that everyone needed to be working on themselves concurrently as they worked on becoming psychologists. (242)

Making sure you spent time with friends and took time for other important things and not just focus 100% on school were things that she viewed as important. (243)

She viewed those things as part of having balance throughout the doctoral education experience. (244)

Paragraph 33

She noted that not paying attention to school was not something one wanted to do and that it was also necessary to attend to developing who one was as an individual. (245)

She noted that balance between those aspects was definitely a struggle she had to deal with and she continued to work on it though felt comfortable with where she was currently at. (246)

She noted she just had to look in the mirror and scold herself to motivate herself to start on the things that she needed to do or to finish a project. (247)

She had been able to make things happen thus far even though she was constantly juggling different things and noted that believing she could do it was important. (248)
She got away with getting an A on the paper she worked on the night before it was due but did not get any sleep and got sick because of it. (249)

She stayed up for two nights in a row and got sick. (251)

She had another assignment due and had to work early in the morning until late in the afternoon. (253)

She thought it was possible to get everything done as she had managed to do so. (250)

She acknowledged that although she got sick she just did what needed to be done to get everything done. (254)

Paragraph 34

Believing that she could make things happen and continue working at them until they were completed was what, according to her, needed to be done. (255)

She noted that at times making sacrifices was needed. (256)

She acknowledged that recently she had been quite selfish. (257)

The week during which she had those deadlines her friend had a birthday party and they were supposed to go somewhere else as well. (258)

She thought that she would not have time to comply with her social commitments in addition to working on her projects, doing homework and going to work and noted a friend pointed out that she had planned to do two personal things in one weekend. (259)
Her friend suggested that she only committed to one personal thing if she wanted to have more of a balance. (260)

She did not want to do without one of the social events. (261)

She wanted to balance everything. (263)

**Paragraph 35**

Her friend warned her that it was not logical for her to do it all and that it would be best if she dropped one personal commitment and instead did one personal thing, one for work and another one for school. (265)

She noted that learning to balance things has been challenging for her. (267)

She could have dropped all of the personal commitments and just focus on school for the sake of sleep but she wanted to make sure she attended her friend’s party as her friend only had one birthday a year or perhaps that friend was not her friend the following year. (268)

**Paragraph 36**

As a result of everything she had been through her current life mantra was to try to do whatever she could to make herself happy and feel like she was going to make things work for her. (269)

She was not worried she would not finish a paper she planned to finish that night. (270)

She knew that she would finish the paper and that it would not be her best paper but that it would get done. (271)

She thought that having self-confidence helped her. (272)
She used to have perfectionistic expectations but no longer did. (273)

During her first year in the doctoral program her perfectionism, which she viewed as awful, was a huge issue for her. (275)

**Paragraph 37**

She pressured herself a lot. (276)

As she grew up and in college she was always the perfect student. (277)

She had straight A’s and excellent ACT scores. (278)

When she started graduate school her perfectionism became very salient. (280)

She thought it was funny that she was the exact opposite of what she was currently. (281)

During her first year her papers were done as soon as she got the assignment and if she had two weeks to do it, she did it during the first three days. (282)

She made sure everything was perfect. (283)

She read everything and if she was assigned 300 pages she read everything. (284)

She made sure she did everything. (285)

She did not go out with anyone and did not do anything. (286)

All she focused on was school as she was isolated and did not have good friends. (287)

Those reasons influenced the way she currently thought and she noted that, back then, she was miserable and that being a perfectionist did not get her anywhere. (288)
She thought so what if she read all the articles. (289)

She had gotten perfect grades on everything and thought it did not really matter. (290)

She wondered what real purpose that had in terms of her life and the greater context of her life. (291)

Being so perfectionistic did not have any real purpose tied to the greater context of her life. (292)

**Paragraph 38**

She suggested that doctoral students who had issues to work on attended therapy. (293)

She was in therapy for a year. (294)

She sought therapy because she was so depressed and talked about the previously mentioned issues. (295)

She did not know if she was clinically depressed or if she had adjustment problems due to moving and everything else. (296)

Her therapist told her she lacked balance in her life and that it was understandable that she was unhappy as she was not finding anything to do for herself outside of academic responsibilities. (297)

She credited her therapist with helping her to get to where she currently was. (298)

**Paragraph 39**
She was a completely different person than she was when she first started the program and though she thought she was awful back then, she was now comfortable with having expectations that were a little lower. (306)

She noted that although she had somewhat lower expectations, she was not going to make a B and she was not going to blow off responsibilities. (299)

She did as much as she felt was good enough or sufficient though still met her expectations. (300)

She continued to read and continued to do more things as compared to other people she knew. (301)

She noted that she still pushed herself a little bit because that was just who she was. (302)

Unlike other people, she was willing to sacrifice sleep. (303)

She recognized that that was the way she was going about her doctoral experience. (304)

At present, that was what she had to do to make herself happy and make sure that she got everything that she wanted. (305)

**Paragraph 40**

One of her personal interests was to see more Latinas in all sorts of graduate school programs. (309)

She definitely thought that as time progressed younger generations of Latinas would see much more Latina representation in graduate programs. (310)
She thought doctoral education was hard and though she did not know if others felt the same way, she definitely felt the burden of being a token. (311)

Even if she did not want to have to deal with that, she was the token Latina. (312)

She simply wanted to be herself and she was herself but it was still difficult for her. (313)

She could just be herself but felt that just being herself was partially letting go of her representation as a Latina and thought that if there were more Latinas and if they were more visible there would not be a need for that token representation. (314)

She and other Latinas could just be themselves and everyone would recognize that already. (315)

People talk among themselves and say that Latinas in doctoral education come from a social class that made it easy for them to be in a doctoral program. (318)

Not everyone had that experience. (319)

**Paragraph 41**

She noted that even as informed and with as much help as she had gotten, she thought doctoral education was still hard even though it was 2010 so the need to focus on whatever was needed to make it better for Latinas was definitely present. (323)

Even at present and though it may have not been easy to believe, people still did not realize that all Latinas had different experiences. (317)

That change, the realization that each Latina is different and unique, is what she would like to see in the future. (320)
Everyone would be attuned to the idea that all Latinas had different experiences. (316)

She noted that we just needed to figure out how to make sure everyone was attuned to that idea. (324)

She did not even know what would make others receptive to that idea. (321)

She asked herself the same question. (322)