

DISSERTATION

The Journeys of Latinas Successfully Earning their Doctoral Degrees

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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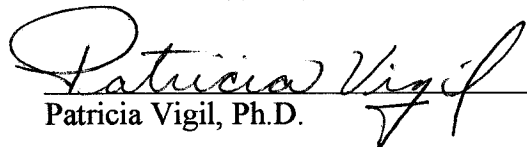
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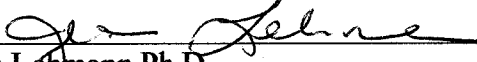
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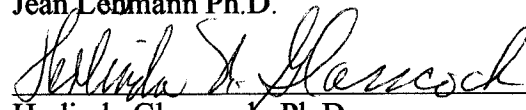
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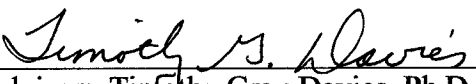
WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY VIOLA S. GRANILLO-CRAWFFORD ENTITLED THE JOURNEYS OF LATINAS SUCCESSFULLY EARNING THEIR DOCTORAL DEGREES BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION
THE JOURNEYS OF LATINAS SUCCESSFULLY EARNING THEIR
DOCTORAL DEGREES

There is a demographic shift taking place in the United States and projections indicate that by the year 2050, the Hispanic population in America will be approximately 88 million people, up from the 1995 number of 27 million. With the changes in the United States' demographic composition, education presents the most important challenge to the Hispanics seeking to become educated and for America in helping them to make it accessible. The increasing population has already impacted school-aged children who in 1998 were the largest group of minority children in the United States. The educational achievement for Hispanics is consistently lower than that of other students, and even though there have been strides made in Hispanic educational attainment, there is still a notable gap between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic groups with more Hispanic than non-Hispanic children being held back one grade or more.

The dropout rate for Hispanics is high especially when it is considered within the context of the nation's overall dropout rate which has fallen steadily since the 1950s. The dropout rate impacts the Hispanic population as a whole because they complete college at a much lower rate than all other groups and the most underrepresented group in higher education. The most dramatic effect however, is on Hispanic girls because they face greater barriers than Hispanic boys, when seeking high-paying jobs and opportunities in post-secondary education.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the personal characteristics and environmental conditions of Hispanics/Latinas/Chicanas who have earned doctoral degrees. There is a great deal of literature about the barriers associated with Latinas' failure to achieve post-secondary degrees but little is written about the experiences of these women who have been successful in earning a doctorate. This qualitative research approach examined the factors contributing to the academic success of Latinas who effectively overcame barriers impeding others from reaching their goals and objectives. Interviews were conducted on six participants in an effort to discover perceptions, personal characteristics, and environmental factors that kept these Latinas on their academic path that directly impacts the number of minority females with doctoral degrees.

The Latinas in this study recounted their successful education journey and clearly credited their own drive and motivation for their success. Despite the challenging difficulties they pursued their goals for higher education by exploiting their own characteristics. In doing so, these Latinas found the negative social support in their lives as a challenge to be met and conquered. Exploring the contributing factors and characteristics that compel some to continue their education is essential because it can provide inspiration to other Hispanics by recognizing the success of Latinas with degrees.

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Lastly, I am deeply indebted to the individuals who participated in this study. They were able to complete an educational program despite the challenges and responsibilities of work, home, and family. These participants willingly shared their thoughts, feelings, and emotions of their educational experience and were a source of true inspiration for me.

DEDICATION

In memory of my mother and father, Alberto and Amalia (Molly) Granillo - you are with me always.

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Thomas (Tomm) for always being there and for believing in me without question. I thank him for keeping me on my path especially during the times I felt I could not continue. He was a source of encouragement and reassurance that kept me focused.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Hispanic population is the fastest growing minority population in the United States; yet it is the most grossly underrepresented population in institutions of higher learning. Historically, Hispanic students complete college at a lower rate than the general student population. Studies indicate that even though Hispanic students are attending and graduating from college in greater numbers, the growth in numbers is directly linked to their population growth. Despite their increased representation among undergraduate and college graduates, Hispanics remain underrepresented in higher education. While all groups benefit from higher education, minority women statistically stand to gain the most from an increase in higher education (Flores, 1994; Huerta, 1996; McGlynn, 2002).

Post-secondary participation and success depend upon adequate educational preparation, and the inadequate delivery of educational services throughout the K-12 period greatly affects the academic preparation of Hispanics, especially for the Latina. However, despite the added barriers, there are Latinas who have been able to promote their academic achievement to include success in post-secondary education to the extent of obtaining a doctoral degree. My personal and professional experiences provided the interest in exploring this population, and the extensive review of literature that followed provided information on Latina educational outcomes. This study explores the perceptions, personal characteristics and environmental conditions that contribute to the

success of Latinas who have found a way to overcome the barriers in their effort to complete their doctoral degree (Abbott 1995; Flores, 1994; Ortiz, 1995).

The Latina student faces numerous obstacles, some of which are real, like racism and prejudice, while others are perceived or self-imposed such as feelings of inadequacy, lack of self-confidence and assurance. The dual minority status encountered by Latinas presents situational and cultural issues deeply rooted in their Hispanic ancestry and suggests they may have greater difficulty in justifying their belief in the necessity of getting an effective education. The high school graduation rate for Latinas is the lowest for girls in any racial or ethnic group. Those who do not see the possibility of doing well in school, pursuing post-secondary education, or a career will oftentimes leave school to start a family. Latinas experience challenges to the educational experience, including a high rate of poverty in their communities, lack of English language proficiency, racism, and sexual harassment. Despite these obstacles, many Latinas achieve and persist in school. Although their number is still much lower than their White counterparts, the number of Latinas in college has been steadily increasing (Bracken, Ginorio, & Huston, 2001; Galindo, 2001; Schwartz, 2001).

The United States has the fastest growing population in the developed world. The nation grew from 76 million people in 1900 to 249 million in 1990. Forty-three percent of that growth consisted of post-1900 immigrants and their descendants. The projections based on the immigration and fertility patterns indicate a population growth to 394 million by 2050 and 492 million by 2100. The United States population growth

demonstrates the country's increasing diversity, and the groups experiencing the most rapid growth are racial and ethnic minorities with Hispanics experiencing the most dramatic growth. Hispanics comprised 37% of the nation's population from 1995 to 2000 and by 2050, the minority population will exceed the non-Hispanic White population and will account for nearly 90% of the total population growth. The 55 years of projections represent an increase of 131 million people, making the Hispanic-origin population a major portion of the total population growth (Bureau of the Census Statistical Brief, 1995; Day, 1996; Grant & Bouvier, 1994; Hodgkinson, 1996; Huerta, 1996; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1996).

This Hispanic population growth will drastically impact the K-12 school system. Hispanic school-age children have become the United States' largest group of minority children. As of 1990, there were more than 5 million Hispanic students enrolled nationally in preprimary school through high school. The increases in the K-12 population have impacted high school completion rates and have had a subsequent impact on the increases in the Hispanic higher education enrollment. However, the gains by Hispanics in higher education enrollment have not secured much ground when compared to gains by non-Hispanics (Bureau of the Census Statistical Brief, 1995; Gray, Rolph, & Melamid, 1996; Hodgkinson, 1996; Hodgkinson & Outtz, 1996).

The Hispanic high school graduation increase from 4 in 10 in 1980 to 5 in 10 in 1994 has contributed to the overall higher education enrollment. These students, however, were Hispanic high school graduates aged 25 and over. There were 13.4% or

13,710,000 students nationwide between 1980 and 1990; the Hispanic higher education enrollments during the same period were 60.7% percent, or 758,000 students. This shows a total Hispanic college enrollment increase from 3% in 1980 to 5.5% in 1990. This Hispanic college enrollment increase suggests that more and more Hispanic high school graduates are choosing to participate in higher education (Chahin, 1993; Garcia & Montgomery, 1991; Hodgkinson & Outtz, 1996). However, according to Hodgkinson and Outtz (1996), Hispanic students comprised 5.5% of the total college enrollment in the United States in 1990 but only 12% of the 18- to 24-year-old cohort. They further point out that, “The percentage of Hispanic high school graduates going on to college dropped from 30.1% in 1975 to 28.2% in 1991. Non-Hispanic White high school graduates increased their college attendance from 31% in 1975 to 41% in 1991” (p. 26). Thus, it is understandable that in 1993, 9% of Hispanic Americans age 25 and over had completed a bachelor’s degree, compared to 22.9% of the non-Hispanic population (Hodgkinson & Outtz 1996; Huerta, 1996).

The higher education Hispanic enrollment increase also increased the number of degrees conferred. Between 1979 and 1990, U.S. colleges and universities degrees conferred increased by 12.5% (1,926,635). During the same period, the number of degrees conferred on Hispanics increased by almost 50.9 percent (65,863). For Hispanics, this is an increase from 2.5% in 1979 to 3.4% of the total degrees awarded in 1990 (Chahin, 1993). Even though Hispanic students are attending and graduating college in greater numbers, much of this growth is linked directly to their population growth. So

despite increased representation among undergraduates and college graduates, Hispanic students complete college at a lower rate than the general student population (Flores, 1994).

The college participation rate is the most important indicator of the status of Hispanics in higher education. Although participation is growing, the Hispanic share of participation (enrollment and degrees) is still far less than the Hispanic share of the general population. The proportion of all Hispanic youth attending college has declined. The total number of Hispanic college-aged youth ages 18 to 24, increased by 35.2 percent between 1980 and 1990, but despite the increase this same cohort shows a decline in higher education to 16.2 percent in 1990 from a high of 20.4 percent in 1975. Compare this to the non-Hispanic Whites in this cohort who saw an increase of 36.8 percent in 1990 from 27.4 percent in 1975. The efforts to increase the high school graduation rates signify that this will not be sufficient to guarantee college participation. Improving the level of educational attainment of Hispanics means support for education that is not limited to college and university faculty and administration. The key issue appears to be the need to improve the quality of students' K-12 experiences and presents a specific challenge given that Latinos as a group tend to be poorer and less educated than non-Hispanic Whites (Chahin, 1993; Grant & Bouvier, 1994; Hodgkinson, 1996; Huerta, 1996).

Minorities are more likely to live in poverty than Whites and while most poor children are White, Hispanic children have a much higher percentage of their total

number as poor. Although there is an increase in the number of degrees being earned by Hispanics and despite their high aspirations, their educational attainment is consistently lower than that of their White counterparts. In terms of school attainment, students in America's lowest 35 % face factors such as poverty, out of wedlock birth, teen births, cocaine-addicted at birth, shortage of food and housing to name a few, and all present since their kindergarten days. All of these factors compromise the achievement of Hispanics. Other factors include the fact that the best schools and students in America are located in the suburbs of the 40 largest metropolitan areas while the worst schools are located in the inner cities of the same metro areas plus some rural areas. Factors that promote a positive relationship between students and achievement include teacher experience, lower enrollment, more library books, and computer resources. Inner-city schools have higher student-teacher ratios 21 students per teacher compared to 17 students per teacher in the suburbs. Furthermore, at the inner-city schools the ratio of student to support staff professionals was 162 students per support staff professional compared to the ratio in the suburbs of 68 students to 1 support staff professional. Inner-city schools are also more likely to have a higher percentage of first-year teachers whose lack of experience can be an indicator of lower teacher quality. In addition, when compared to suburban schools, inner-city schools are generally older at over 50 years compared to the suburban school that is generally less than 40 years old. There are fewer library books per pupil with some inner-city schools having 1,000 library books per 100 students compared to over 2,000 library books per 100 students at the suburban

schools. Likewise, inner-city schools have fewer computer laboratory resources than the suburban schools (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002; Hodgkinson (1992).

The inner-city schools clearly are the ones in most need of assistance from state and federal government but with most voters living in the suburbs it is easier for political leaders to ignore these. Improving the educational attainment among Hispanics requires attention to the K-12 experience. Improvement most fundamentally will require sustained efforts to increase the high school graduation rate, though this increase is not sufficient in itself. The number of Hispanics graduating from high school in 1991 showed an increase of 31.2 % over the 1985 figure. Chahin (1993) reported that by 1995, Hispanics will account for nine percent of all high school graduates. As of 2002, the number was at 17% and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education projects that by 2008, the number will increase to 21%. The participation of Hispanics in higher education should not be left to college and university faculty and administration alone. The major challenge belongs to the K-12 educators as well. While it is essential to increase the rate at which Hispanics graduate from high school, the fundamental issue is to improve the quality of the students' K-12 experiences (The Associated Press, 2004; Chahin, 1993).

Community colleges have become a major part of the diversity of American higher education. They provide not only general education with transfer programs to the four-year institutions but also offer greater opportunities for technical and vocational training. In addition, the community college provides a community service in which

adult education programs are a major focus. These institutions provide access to higher education to many first-generation and minority students. Many state institutions find themselves in a dilemma whereas they are expected to provide open access while maintaining high academic standards. As a result, these state institutions respond by either dismissing students who are not academically meeting the standards or by providing students with a detour into the general college or colleges that specialize in handling these students. The community college often serves in this role and helps students through a reorientation process where they are redirected into a more vocational training program than a four-year degree (Bradburn & Hurst, 2001; Clark, 1980, 1960).

In 1990 Hispanic students were enrolled in two-year programs about twice as often as in four-year degree programs, thereby proportionately limiting the number of Hispanic students in graduate and professional degree programs. The community college transfer rates have declined over the past thirty years. An eight-year study of transfer rates found that the national community college transfer rate hovers around 22 percent. Though a large number of community college students aspire to a baccalaureate degree, only about one-quarter of all students enrolled at a community college will transfer at some point in their educational careers. As previously mentioned, the community college serves as a route towards the baccalaureate degree for many first-generation students. The large wave of immigration has had a significant affect on community college enrollment. Many first-generation Hispanic students entering this post-secondary environment find the transition to a new culture an uncomfortable separation from their culture of origin.

However, earning a baccalaureate degree is a way to advance academically as well as socially. There are a variety of factors that compromise the achievement of Hispanics and these students must often overcome a variety of obstacles in order to reach the destination of the four-year institution (ACE News, 2001; Hodgkinson, 1992; Hodgkinson & Outtz, 1996; Striplin, 1999).

The community college and university environments present new academic and personal challenges for Hispanic students, including alienation from familial support and doubts about their academic and motivational abilities leading them to believe they are not college material. The conventional struggle leading to the baccalaureate degree is compounded for many Hispanics by the prevalence of poor academic preparation and low socioeconomic levels. Colleges place greater academic and social demands on students than high school; as a result, college students must have the ability to adapt to the increased workloads placed on them. First-generation Hispanic students most often are less prepared for college than their counterparts whose parents have attained college degrees. Achievement by Hispanic students is compromised, in part, by poverty. Those students living in low-income households find themselves living in areas where the worst schools are located. As a result, Hispanic students are the product of poor academic preparation that is critical to academic achievement. This lack of preparation comes from the poor quality of elementary and high schools attended, little or poor counseling and advising, and limited English proficiency (Bureau of the Census Statistical Brief, 1995; Huerta, 1996; Striplin, 1999).

The disparities between Hispanic students and other students begin as early as kindergarten and remain through age 17. The poor performance means that by the age of 9, Hispanics will lack proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science when compared to their non-Hispanic peers. Despite the high aspirations of Latino students, their educational attainment is consistently lower than that of other students. Besides attendance at poor quality elementary and high schools, Latinos lack participation in preschool programs. Latinos under age 5 are less likely to be enrolled in early childhood education programs than other groups, with 20% enrolled compared to 44% of African Americans and 42% of Whites. It is important to recognize the far-reaching effects of education on the family. As parental educational attainment increases, so does the enrollment of Latino children in preschool (ERIC Digest, 2001).

There is a notable increase in preschool enrollment when the family income increases. However, the median family income of \$28,000 for Hispanics lags behind the \$39,000 median income of the population at large. This has a significant impact when the head of the family is a single minority female. The National Center for Educational Statistics (1997) also reported that minority women view higher education as a way to improve the lower economic social status that has long been the core of their existence.

At least 80 % of jobs in the United States require cognitive, rather than manual skills and at least 52 % of jobs require at least some post-secondary education. Employers encounter problems because of the shortage of workers with high levels of communication, mathematics, computer, and other technological skills. The Hispanic

population has been deprived of a quality education and the educational attainment has a direct and positive impact on employment, earnings, investments, and savings. Furthermore, only 11 % of Hispanic American workforce is in managerial and professional positions compared to 27 % of the non-Hispanic population and unless the rates of educational attainment increase, Hispanics will be unable to acquire professional positions. There are currently disproportionately-represented Hispanic Americans in occupations such as operators, fabricators, laborers, and service providers. The Hispanic American males age 16 years and older have a U.S. labor force participation rate of 67.0 % while the Hispanic women's rate is 55.8 %. The share of the Hispanic workforce participation anticipates a steady, yet rapid, growth rate through the year 2050 due mainly to the high level of their immigration from 1950 to 2000. The low paying jobs in the service industries does nothing to improve the economic status of these families (Toosi, 2002; Doyle, 1999; Ramirez, 1999; Gray, Rolph, Meleimid, 1996; Pindus, Flynn, & Nightingale, 1995).

Improving the economic status of Latinos through education provides the potential for increased participation in preschool programs by their children. Education promotes self-sufficiency and, as a by-product, raising the educational level of parents raises the educational achievement of children which, in turn, helps to break the cycle of poverty. Educated parents provide for better role models for children and, for the single female heads of household, education provides a way to become financially independent. (Weiler, 1997)

The National Center for Educational Statistics (1997) reports that from 1970 to 1994 there has been a steady increase in the percentage of women and minorities receiving bachelor's and graduate degrees. Although the overall percentage of degrees steadily increases, there is still disproportionately low enrollment of minority students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs.

In 1995 only 3.3% of the 41,610 doctoral degrees were conferred to Hispanics, while 77.1% were conferred to Whites. Of those degrees conferred to Hispanics, 1.05% were awarded to Hispanic women. The consistently low number of Ph.D.s conferred to Chicanas and indeed the total population of Hispanics clearly demonstrates their underrepresentation in institutions of higher education (Aragon, 1998). Benjamin (1979), Gaede (1994), and Grossman (1995) related that minority female students must overcome personal barriers, including role conflict, financial difficulties, and feelings of insecurity in their attempt to successfully attain educational goals. Minority women will also face additional social, psychological, and institutional barriers associated with higher education. While many women may encounter the same obstacles, the obstacles can be especially difficult and burdensome to minority women as they seek advanced degrees. According to Weiler (1997) and Mirande and Enriquez (1979), females of Hispanic descent most often reside in economically depressed areas where they are severely limited in their access to decent schools and employment opportunities. As a result, they may lack academic skills and experience narrower career opportunities.

Women in general usually encounter difficulties in a male dominated field of

study, but women from minority groups will encounter even greater difficulties stemming from their lower socioeconomic status (Chandler, 1996). Mirande and Enriquez (1979) and Sandoval (1994) reported that Hispanic women have been raised to respect and acknowledge the male authority and to see his machismo in a positive light. Hispanic women also realize at a very early age that men are usually allowed more freedom and privileges than women. While the Hispanic female is no longer viewed as a passive and submissive member of the family, there is still a complex division of labor between men and women in the Chicano culture, where each is granted power and authority within their respective spheres. The division of labor within the Chicano culture leads to Chicanas in the civilian workforce taking jobs that are menial and pay poorly, mostly as service and clerical workers. The low prestige of these positions occupied by Chicanas contributes to their earned income that is on average much less than that of either Chicano men or men and women in the population at large. Not only are Chicanas economically oppressed; they are also lacking in educational attainment, which is minimal and has important consequences in American society where education is said to be the key to success and upward social mobility. The low educational attainment of the Hispanic female is even more alarming when many are single heads of household and must provide for dependent children.

American society and the US economy are dominated by Anglo males, and as a result, ethnic minorities and women in American society have become victims of a collective economic oppression (McGlen & Oconnor, 1998; Mirande & Enriquez, 1979).

This oppression is apt to exclude them from the more prestigious, rewarding, and powerful occupations. All this translates into oppression that is three-fold: as an ethnic minority, as a woman, and through the internal oppression within her own culture. The educated Hispanic female is one who is alienated from her culture because of the lack of support for the education of women. Education is defined as a male prerogative and for men is valued as a mechanism for self-improvement. For women, however, education is seen as unnecessary and even wasteful since their role is to marry and have children (Aragon, 1998; Mirande & Enriquez, 1979).

If a Hispanic female is fortunate enough to finish high school and consider higher education, she is faced with universities that have a system geared toward meeting the needs of Anglo students and no sensitivity to her unique set of needs and problems. Since many colleges and universities reflect values that are male oriented and primarily aimed at the White middle class, the Chicana is likely to feel neglected. Chicanas are less actively recruited than their male counterparts, which means that Chicanas' needs are less likely to be met. Many Chicanas feel that only another Chicana would be able to understand her situation and offer much needed advice. The fact that Chicana counselors are few and far between leaves the Chicana student feeling that she has no alternative but to drop out of college. The three-fold oppression faced by women of Hispanic descent contributes to the barriers that can keep them from applying for graduate education and can overshadow their higher education aspirations (Aguirre & Martinez, 1994).

Education attainment increases by Hispanics have been relatively small

suggesting that access to education does not guarantee success. Low income and minority students are less likely to attend college, and those who do enroll in higher education are at greater risk of dropping out. About half of all college students drop out before completing their baccalaureate programs. Students, especially Hispanic and minority students, who feel alienated, unwelcome, and alone will avoid becoming involved in the college experience and are more likely to drop out of college. Signs of discrimination, whether subtle or overt, can create a “chilly” campus climate for minority and nontraditional students and will interfere with their academic persistence and success. Other reasons that distract students from academic work including personal problems, financial hardships, and lack of adequate academic preparation in addition to inappropriate cognitive, cultural, and linguistic teaching methods. The teaching methods however, are not the cause of the students’ problems (Gray, Rolph, & Melamid, 1996).

National demographics forecast the expansion of the Hispanic population to 44% of the nation’s population growth in the next 25 years. The economy of the United States in part, will depend on how well educated and trained this segment of the population will be. Their success in K-16 education will depend, to some extent, on how comfortable they will be in the educational environment and who their teachers and role models will be. Preparing American women of Mexican ancestry to earn the doctoral degree and become a part of the higher education system in teacher preparation and teacher licensure programs could be a turning point to providing Latina role models in America's classrooms at all levels of the public education system (Huerta, 1996).

Purpose of Research

There is a clear need to increase the numbers of Hispanic women graduating classes at all levels of higher education. The literature identifies some of the barriers associated with the failures to achieve post-secondary degrees but there is little literature available on those who have been successful. The purpose of this research is to investigate through individual interviews the personal characteristics and environmental conditions that contributed to the completion of the doctoral degree. It is expected that through the information gained in the interviews conducted that I would discover perceptions, personal characteristics, and environmental factors that kept these Hispanic women on their academic path that directly impacts the number of minority females with doctoral degrees.

Definition of Terms

This study focuses on American women of Mexican ancestry. The ethnic identity does not include women of South American countries. The terms Hispanic, Chicana, and Latina are used interchangeably. For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were established.

Chicana/Chicano. Political term used by American women and men of Mexican ancestry who honor the importance of improving the condition of this population (Aragon, 1998).

Glass Ceiling. The artificial plateau beyond which women and other minorities are denied the opportunity to advance to upper levels of executive management in corporate

America (Davidovich, 2000).

Latina. Woman of Latin ancestry (Aragon, 1998).

Mexican American. American of Mexican ancestry (Aragon, 1998).

Socioeconomic Status (SES). A summary measure of ecological and demographic variables that effect school performance (Anderson & Johnson, 1968).

White. Term used in the literature to depict Americans of Western Europe ancestry. (Aragon, 1998).

Significance of Study

While there is a great deal of literature written about the barriers Hispanic women must face in obtaining advanced degrees, there is a lack of information about the experiences of these women who earned the doctorate. The overall number of Hispanic women enrolling in doctoral graduate programs and completing a degree in higher education is grossly underrepresented (Aragon, 1998). The higher the degree level, the fewer the number of degrees conferred. The significance of this study will explore the experiences of Hispanic women who have earned a doctorate and their experiences along the academic path. While it is important to determine the factors contributing to the accomplishments of these women, it is just as important to explore the issues and challenges facing these women who pursued higher education, issues and challenges that while discouraging some do not prevent others from continuing their education. Understanding the experiences of Latinas may provide information and guidance to other females who want to pursue higher education learning. It is important to explore the

factors and characteristics that compelled some to continue their education while others to bring their education to a close. Successful Latinas who have graduated with degrees can certainly provide inspiration to other Hispanics and people of color.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background

The changes in the United States' population will have implications beyond those of racial and ethnic composition. The far-reaching effects of the population trends will include changes in education, socioeconomic status (SES), the nation's workforce, and the family.

Population

The population growth in the United States not only provides a multiracial and multiethnic society but also contributes to the social and economic well being of America. Two primary reasons for the increase in the overall population are immigration and higher birthrates among Hispanic women. About two million Hispanic immigrants entered the United States between 1990 and 1994. Immigrants coming to the United States seek better opportunities and higher wages. Those migrating are coming from high-fertility societies and tend to have considerably higher fertility rates than those of the resident population which accounts for the higher birth rates among Hispanics than non-Hispanics (Toossi, 2002; Hodgkinson & Outtz, 1996; Huerta, 1996).

According to Surfrider Foundation USA (2002), the Hispanic population increased by 25% from 1989 to 1995. The number of infants born to this group went from 532,249 to 679,768, accounting for 18% of the total births in the nation in 1995.

The demographic shift taking place means that by the middle of the 21st century, only half the US population will be non-Hispanic Whites. By 2050 the country will experience an overall slowdown in population growth, bringing the number of non-Hispanic Whites to 53% of the total population, down from 74%. In contrast, the Hispanic people will make up 24.5% of the population, up from the current 10.2% (Doyle, 1999; Huerta, 1996).

To put these projections in perspective Huerta (1996) noted the following (page citations are author's):

- The projected Hispanic population in America in the year 2050 will be approximately 88 million people, up from the 1995 number of 27 million. (25:14)
- By the year 2025, it is estimated that the Hispanic population will increase more than 100% over the 1995 population. This will be concurrent with only a 28.5% increase in the general population. (25:9,14)
- The Census Bureau has broken down Hispanics into the following ethnic groups as defined from places of origin: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Other Hispanic. Other Hispanic includes all others of Hispanic heritage not previously listed, i.e. from Spain, the Philippines, etc. The March 1994 numbers show that 64.1% of Hispanics are Mexican, 10.4% Puerto Ricans, 4.2% Cubans, 14.0% Central and South Americans, and 7.3% Other Hispanic. (30:1-2)
- The percent of population of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Other Hispanics has declined during the last decade. This is attributed to their lower birth rate. On the other hand Hispanics from Mexican origins have had a steady increase in percentage of population over the decade. (30:1-2)

The continuation of the trends of the previous 20 years resulted in the rapid growth of the Hispanic population in the early 1990s. While there is remarkable diversity within the Hispanic population, the majority of the Hispanic population in the United States is from Mexico. In 1993, 64% of all Hispanics in the U.S. (14.6 million) were from

Mexico. What, if any, will the ramifications be from a population that projects 1 of 4 Americans to be Hispanic by the year 2050? The diversity within the Hispanic population will be seen in terms of demographic characteristics such as growth rates, educational attainment, income and labor force status (Hodgkinson & Outtz, 1996).

Education

What do these data mean? What will be the impact and how will it affect the future of Hispanics in America? With the changes in the United States' demographic composition, education presents the most important challenge to the Hispanics who wish to attain it and for America in helping to make it accessible.

The population increase had a significant impact on the number of school-aged children. In 1998, Hispanic school-aged children were the largest group of minority children in the United States. The educational achievement for Hispanics is consistently lower than that of other students, and even though there have been strides made in Hispanic educational attainment, there still remains a notable gap between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic groups (ERIC Digest, 2001). According to Hodgkinson and Outtz (1996), more Hispanic than non-Hispanic children are held back one grade or more. Dropout rates indicate that if children are held back a year, the possibility of dropping out of school greatly increases.

The dropout rate for Hispanics is alarmingly high when it is considered within the context of the nation's overall dropout rate, a rate that since the 1950s has fallen steadily. Nearly one in three or 30% of the nation's Hispanic students between the ages of 16 and

24 left school without either a high school diploma or an equivalency credential such as a G.E.D. (General Educational Development). In 2001, 7% of the United States' 16- to 24-year-old White students and 11% of its Black non-Hispanic students dropped out of school compared to 27% of Hispanic students. Furthermore, the dropout rate for Hispanics has not changed substantially in three decades (U.S. Department of Education, 2005; Lockwood & Secada, 1999).

While the dropout rate impacts the Hispanic population as a whole, it has the most dramatic effect on Hispanic girls because they face greater barriers than Hispanic boys when seeking high-paying jobs and opportunities in post-secondary education. In 1995, African Americans and non-Hispanic Whites had a high school completion rate of 87% compared to 57% for Latinas (Romo, 1998).

The Hispanic dropout crisis presents even more of a challenge, given that the total population of Hispanics in the United States continues to increase rapidly. In addition, Hispanics complete college at much lower rates than all other groups and are the most underrepresented group in higher education (Huerta, 1996; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Surfrider Foundation USA, 2002).

Huerta (1996) noted the following (page citations are author's):

- Hispanics in the age group 22-24 have only a 64 percent high school completion rate as compared to 84 percent blacks and 91percent whites (20:1)
- According to some studies, only 4.9 percent of all college enrollments are Hispanic. (13:96)
- Hispanics receive only 2.9 percent of all bachelor's degrees and 1.8 percent of all doctoral degrees. The concentration of these degrees are in education, with almost none in math, science, or engineering. (13:96)

- About 2.2 percent of full-time college faculty and 2 percent of college or university presidents are Hispanic. (13:16)
- Only 1.9 percent of law school teachers are Hispanic. (8:16)
- Hispanics will make up 20 percent of all school age population within the next decade. (23:403)

In addition, the earning of degrees can be translated into earning potential. In the Rand Study (as cited in Huerta, 1996):

The premium for a bachelor's degree over a high school diploma is about \$500,000 for Hispanic men and \$400,000 for Hispanic women. More striking, the premium for an [sic] Hispanic with a professional degree is about \$1.7 million, over 200 percent more in lifetime earnings. (20:3)

While it is important to increase the Hispanic college participation rate to that of Whites, it is equally as important to increase the number of degrees conferred. A college degree means higher earnings, which in turn translate into an increase in tax revenue of about \$10 billion annually (Day, 1996; Hodgkinson & Outtz, 1996; Huerta, 1996).

Socioeconomic Status

Data on poverty offer an important way to evaluate the nation's economic well being. There are two slightly different U.S. federal poverty measures: poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines. Thresholds were developed in 1963-1964 using a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food plan that was designed for temporary or emergency use when food funds are low. Families of three or more persons spend about one third of their after-tax income on food. The USDA economy food plan is used to arrive at the minimal yearly income a family would need for food. In 1965, the thresholds were adopted as the working definition of poverty. Each year, the U.S. Census

Bureau updates the poverty threshold to account for inflation.

The poverty guidelines, also referred to as the “federal poverty level” (FPL), are a simplification of the poverty thresholds. These guidelines or percentage multiples of the guidelines for instance, 125 percent or 185 percent of the guidelines, are used in determining eligibility for a number of programs such as Head Start, The National School Lunch Program, the Food Stamp Program, and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. The FPL ranges from extreme poverty, or income below 50%, to the near poverty level, with income at 200 percent of the FPL (Li & Bennett, 1998; National Center for Children in Poverty, 2001; Willis, 2000).

The poverty definition and the families that are affected by poverty is explained further by the Population Reference Bureau’s (2002a) U.S. families in poverty: Racial and ethnic *differences*:

The federal government defines poverty at the family level, and a family’s monetary needs depend on its size and composition. For example, two adults and a child have different requirements for food and housing than one adult and three children. In 1998 the Census Bureau defined the poverty thresholds as \$16,660 for a family of four and \$13,003 for a family of three. . . .

Poverty is a problem that cuts across racial and ethnic boundaries. Almost half of all families in poverty are white, a little more than a quarter are black, slightly less than a quarter are Hispanic, and the remainder are Asian or from other groups. But when poverty rates are examined by race/ethnicity, whites are less likely than other groups to be poor. In fact, black and Hispanic families are about three times more likely to live in poverty than white families. (p. 1)

The U.S. Census Bureau (1997) offered the following explanation, using household income and family members to determine poverty levels:

Household income is the sum of money received in the previous calendar year by

all household members 15 years old and over, including household members not related to the householder, people living alone, and others in nonfamily household. . . . Families and persons are classified as below poverty level if their total family income or unrelated individual income was less than the poverty threshold specified for the applicable family size, age of householder, and number of related children under 18 present. Poverty status is determined for all families (and, by implication, all family members). For persons not in families, poverty status is determined by their income in relation to the appropriate poverty threshold. Thus, two unrelated individuals living together may not have the same poverty status. The poverty thresholds are updated every year to reflect the Consumer Price Index. (p.1)

Li and Bennett (1998) explained that in 1996, 43% of all children under age 6 were living in families at poverty or near poverty levels with income below 185% of the poverty line. In addition, 1 in 10 young children, or 11%, were extremely poor with family income below 50% of the federal poverty line. These poverty rates vary among racial and ethnic groups, but Black and Hispanic children are more likely to be poor than are White children. The poverty rate of 54% for young Hispanic children demonstrated the fastest increase between 1979 and 1996, compared to the 30% increase among Whites and 15% increase among Blacks. Li and Bennett (1998) explained:

In 1996, children under the age of six living with unmarried mothers were about five times as likely to be poor (55 percent) as were those living with married parents (11 percent). The poverty rate of children born to teenage mothers was 47 percent in 1996. In contrast, the poverty rate of children born to adult mothers was less than half that rate (21 percent). (p. 6)

Several factors contribute to children living in poverty and can have an economically devastating effect. The primary causes include single parenthood, low educational attainment, part-time employment, no employment, and low wages.

Children in the United States are more likely to live in poverty than Americans in

any other age group. Without a high school diploma, the earning potential for Hispanics is extremely limited, thus creating the need to complete some form of education.

Individuals with higher levels of education generally have more job opportunities, higher wages, and greater job security than those with lower levels of education; the former also have increased chances for meeting the future with success (Day, 1996; Huerta, 1996; Li & Bennett, 1998).

Workforce

Between 1998 and 2008, about 42 million people are expected to enter the labor force-and give it a new look. Compared with the group of 112 million workers who will remain in the labor force during this period (40 percent white male and 25 percent minority), the group of new workers is more diverse (just 30 percent white male but 41 percent minority). About one-fourth of the entrants are expected to be Hispanic or Asian-two groups that make up one-seventh of today's labor force. Women are expected to be 50 percent of the entrants compared with 47 percent of the "stayers." These projected developments largely reflect the growth in racial and ethnic diversity in the total U.S. population, as well as the younger age structure of minority populations.

Assuming that these trends continue into 2025, the American labor force will become slightly more female (48 percent vs 46 percent in 1998) and noticeably more minority (36 percent vs 26 percent in 1998). (Population Reference Bureau, 2002b, p. 1)

In 1990, Hispanic women age 16 years and over in the United States numbered about 7 million. By the end of 1999, the number grew to 11 million, demonstrating that women of Hispanic origin comprise one of the fastest growing population groups in the nation. The women of Mexican origin were the largest female Hispanic origin subgroup, at 6.6 million, or 51.7% of the overall population. Compared to 7% for White women and 16.9% for Black women, this demonstrates the dramatic increase in the population of

women of Hispanic origin from 1990 to 1999 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000a).

In 1999, 9% or 6.1 million of the 64.9 million women in the civilian labor force were of Hispanic origin. Representation by women of Hispanic origin is predicted to be 12% of the female labor force, a growth of 5.7 million in 1998 to about 8.5 million in 2008 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000a).

Family

Statistics on the family indicate an increasing rate of single parents. In 1993 half of the single mothers had never been married, whereas in the past, divorced women comprised the vast majority of single mothers. The change in family structure has created the economic necessity for women to enter the workforce. There is a 99% chance that women will work in the paid labor force at some time in their lives. As unskilled and untrained workers, the only opportunities available are minimum wage jobs (Council of Economic Advisors, 1998; Hodgkinson, 1992, 1996; The President's Interagency Council on Women, 2002).

According to U. S. Department of Labor (2000a), the largest proportion of Hispanic origin females worked in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations. Hispanic origin females are less likely than non-Hispanic origin females to be employed in higher paying management or professional specialty jobs. The U.S. Department of Labor (1994) reported:

In 1993, the 10 leading occupations of Hispanic origin women in descending order were: retail and personal sales workers, secretaries; cashiers; private household cleaners and servants; nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants; janitors

and cleaners; textile sewing machine operators; maids; cooks; and bookkeepers, accounting and auditing clerks. These jobs require little training and offer low wages. (pp. 2-3)

More recently, Hispanic origin women continued to work primarily in the service industry (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000a). Between 1990 and 1999, Hispanic women did manage to double their employment in the high-paying, highly-skilled management and professional positions; however, the service occupations still accounted for nearly two-thirds of total employment for Hispanic women. There are 14 million members of the working poor, that is, people who work but whose income does not exceed the upper limit of 185% of the poverty line. Children in families of the working poor are eligible for various benefits, including but not limited to Medicaid; the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and the School Breakfast and Lunch programs. Of the 14 million, about two-thirds are women, and the majority of these women have children under age 18 (Council of Economic Advisors, 1998; U. S. Department of Labor, 2000a; Hodgkinson, 1992, 1996; The President's Interagency Council on Women, 2002).

The indications are that more and more households will be headed by single parents. An unskilled workforce, a high percentage of high school dropouts, and underrepresentation in college plagues Hispanics. This is especially true for Hispanic women and women of color and can only serve to substantiate continued poverty levels.

Barriers

Throughout the years obvious factors have contributed to the barriers that women

must face throughout their lives. The feminist movement, which was dominated by middle-class White women, was a decisive force in bringing about the awareness of discrimination against women in America. As a result, White middle-class women have made strides toward liberation from male domination; yet, feminism has not provided the same remedy for Hispanic women or women of color. It is necessary to examine the obstacles women face and to better understand how these historical, social/psychological, educational, employment, financial, and professional barriers affect their lives. It is equally important to understand the affect these barriers have on Hispanic women because for some it means no measure of economic success. They are left feeling entrenched in situations that seem inescapable.

Historical

Inequality and discrimination are two historical barriers that have plagued society as a whole. Changes in the form of Amendments to the United States Constitution provided for equal rights for women and at least a legal end to discrimination.

Inequality. The U.S. constitution was written for the sole purpose of providing equal rights to all men. The National Organization for Women (NOW), (1998) noted that, “the exclusion of women from the U.S. Constitution was not accidental. Equality has been deliberately denied. For more than two centuries since this country was founded, men have refused constitution recognition of women’s legal and civil rights” (p. 1). In addition, Women’s Rights (2000) asked:

Would you want to live in a country where you could not vote or hold a political

office, but had to follow the laws passed by others? A country that denied you the opportunity to go to college because you were a woman? For a women in the 1840's this was a reality. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), and Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) were "The Ladies of Seneca Falls." They fought for equal rights, and woman's suffrage. They fought for all the rights that the men were currently enjoying, social, political, and civil. (p. 1)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were the main hosts at the Seneca Falls convention. The 300 attendees listened as their hosts tried to convince the American citizens, men and women, of the inequality of women's current position in American society. Stanton and Anthony attempted to prove that the inequality was unjust or the freedoms fought for in the Revolutionary War were in vain. Stanton and Anthony used the Declaration of Independence to prove that women were also created equal. The Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions that resulted from this convention was the spark that started the women's rights movement (Women's Rights, 2000).

Discrimination. According to the National Women's Law Center (2000), discrimination against women is deeply rooted in our society. For the first 150 years of the Republic, American women lacked the most fundamental right of citizenship: the right to vote. Throughout most of American history, laws that barred women from engaging in certain occupations, from the practice of law to bartending, were upheld. Many of the nation's premier colleges and universities once were closed completely to women. Not long ago, the employment advertisements listed openings for women and for men separately, and some employers told women (but not men) with young children they need not apply at all. Sex discrimination in employment has been prohibited by federal

law only since enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and in education only since the Education Amendments of 1972.

The Eagle Trust Forum (1986) reported:

Since women were denied some of the inalienable rights in the Constitution, amendments were established. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), first introduced to Congress in 1923, affirmed the equal application of the constitution to all citizens. In order for the amendment to become law, a two-thirds vote in both houses of the United States Congress and ratification by 38 states was needed. Instead, for nearly 50 years, ERA remained buried in Committee because it lacked political party support. It wasn't until 1972 that the proposed amendment won a majority vote in Congress. Section 1 of the ERA states that the "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." (p. 5)

So how great is the need for the Equal Rights Amendment? Francis (2000) found that:

The Equal Rights Amendment is needed to affirm constitutionally that the bedrock principles of our democracy – "all men are created equal," "liberty and justice for all," "equal justice under the law," "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" – apply equally to women. . . .

It was not until as recently as 1971 that the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause was first applied to sex discrimination. Even today, a major distinction between the sexes is present from the moment of birth – the different legal standing of males and females with respect to how their constitutional rights are obtained. (p. 1)

The National Women's Law Center (2000) noted that in the late 1960s, Affirmative Action programs originated as a means of preventing discrimination that denied equal opportunity to women and people of color and specifically for those who had been excluded unfairly. Women have benefited from Affirmative Action programs of recruitment, outreach, and training in the workplace, in learning institutions, and other

areas of society. However, equal opportunity is still a long way off. At the 1999 conference on Civil Rights, the National Women's Law Center (2000) further noted:

Affirmative Action programs have played a critical role in opening up opportunities for women and minorities to begin to take their rightful place in our society. But equal opportunity for women is still a long way off. Eliminating or curtaining affirmative action would not only halt the forward progress that women, as well as minorities, have been able to achieve; it would mark a giant leap backward in this nation's journey toward equal opportunity for all.

Despite the Affirmative Action programs, women and people of color are still unable to compete on equal footing with White men. Despite the increase of women in the workforce, women remain disproportionately clustered in traditionally female jobs with lower pay and fewer benefits (Eagle Trust Forum, 1986).

Social

Lack of education. Many Hispanic Americans have done remarkably well and have made significant contributions to the United States. Many others, however, are hopelessly submerged in inescapable poverty. Despite this harsh reality, the belief system in this country suggests education as a means to socioeconomic mobility and independence. While this, in fact, may be true for some, it fails to recognize that for many minority students, especially Hispanic females, education may be inaccessible.

Education is the primary and shared source of hope, opportunity, and success. As a nation, it is necessary to ensure that the Hispanic community has every opportunity to achieve a quality education and the success that can accompany it. The K-12 educational experience is critical for all students but especially significant for the

Hispanic female because of the cultural implications associated with gender. Hispanic children as a whole, find little in the achievement level that encourages attendance and decreases the drop-out rates. There is a lack of challenging classes such as the Advanced Placement courses provided that would increase the chances of Hispanics going to college. There is no pathway for student achievement that begins with the K-12 system to help ensure that Latino children, including Latinas, are among the pool of eligible minority applicants to colleges and universities.

The rising cost of post-secondary education, the concentration of Hispanic students in poorly funded elementary and secondary schools, inadequate preparation and elevated dropout rates are just a few reasons for the underrepresentation by Hispanics in higher education. In addition, women of color find society's attitude toward racial and ethnic minorities in higher education just one more obstacle to continuing their education. Hispanic woman and women of color may find that whatever the situation is at the time they are considering post-secondary education the factors are working against them once enrolled. Improved education for Hispanics from kindergarten through graduate school is a rising expectation. And it is one that will contribute to the optimistic development among Hispanic Americans to achieve success (Benjamin, 1979; Chahin, 1993; Hodgkinson & Outz, 1996; Lopez, 1995).

Cultural Socialization. Gonzalez, Huerta-Macias, and Tinajero (1998), Grossman, (1995), Johnson and Hernandez (1970), and Moriarty (1978) noted the existence of data indicating different behavior of Hispanic parents toward their male and female children.

The cultural sex-socialization process that begins at birth teaches children at an early age about sex roles in their lives. The sexual stereotypes learned by children are reinforced in school through teachers' attitudes and textbooks. Women learn that their two primary roles are marriage and motherhood. Once ready to enter graduate school in pursuit of a career, they find their development lacking due to traditional roles that are promoted and attitudes that are fueled by faculty and administrators. Male graduate faculty in particular characterize women as not being serious about their futures as professionals and lacking the dedication that males have to complete their graduate studies (Gonzalez, Huerta-Macias, & Tinajero, 1998; Grossman, 1995).

According to Lopez (1995), the process of socialization means that children acquire many of the hopes and expectations of their parents within their social class; they also acquire verbal and auditory skills that have an effect on their ability to adjust to the academic and social demands of college.

In *Latino Language and Education: Communication and the Dream Deferred*, Lopez (1995) wrote:

Poverty causes stress, particularly in the family structure which has been cited to be the most important facet of life for Chicanos. Poor people are also the victims of discrimination in schools and other environments. Thus poverty and discrimination may combine to limit the development of predispositions, habits, knowledge, and experiences that promote academic achievement for Mexican American students.

Academic preparation for Chicanos is a related issue that should be explored. Mexican American students in general, and women in particular, are often "tracked" into taking non-college preparatory courses. The National Academy of Sciences made visits to 29 engineering campuses with active programs to increase minority student enrollment and found insufficient

preparation in mathematics and the physical sciences as one of several reasons for attrition among minority engineering students. Basic study skills are often lacking in minority students who otherwise have the academic potential to succeed in higher education. (p. 330)

Cook (1998) and Moriarty (1978) also reported that women not only do not receive encouragement but actually are discouraged from pursuing career plans. Women are led to believe that they are inferior to men, leading to the conclusion that women's minds are not as good as men's minds. In addition, women are continually reminded of the difficulties of combining their domestic role as wife and mother with the demands of a professional career.

Women who perceive encouragement from family and friends are more likely to remain in school (Lopez, 1995). Benjamin (1979), Edwards (1993), and McGinty (1999) found that marital tension is created when there is a lack of support. Students in school gain self-esteem, self-confidence, and independence, which may not always be viewed as favorable by the female student's husband or children. Without the husband's acceptance and encouragement, a woman is unable to make the necessary adjustments in her life. The resulting tension becomes a barrier.

Chandler (1996), Moriarty (1978), and Sandoval (1994) noted that many women experience conflict between their personal and professional life stemming from their traditional female role expectations of marriage and family. These expectations are at odds with the role of student, and conflict arises when a choice must be made between the two roles.

Henriksen (1995), Sloat (1993), and Wolfe (1991) further noted that while some females receive encouragement regarding post-secondary education, many more do not. In many instances, women are reminded of their marriage and childbearing roles and the difficulty of merging family with higher education. Women are discouraged by parents and teachers alike, and many times these same women are asked why they would want to work hard to get an education since they are only going to get married and have children anyway. Women are also reminded that they should not have more education than the man they marry (Sloat, 1993).

Feelings of guilt and anxiety often accompany women to college. They feel guilt at having to take time away from their families. These feelings are compounded by family and friends who pressure these women to stay at home through implications that the husband and children are being neglected (Benjamin, 1979).

According to Charboneau (1985) and Hayes and Flannery (1997), there is a resistance to change that is especially noted in women who have been convinced that their worth is minimal. Women who were raised believing they are inferior to men, are not as smart as men, and do not have the stamina to withstand the rigors of higher education, in particular graduate study, are less likely to accept change. They are reluctant to leave the safety of their home environment for the unknown and often remain in a detrimental environment because it is still somewhat predictable and familiar. The move from dependence to independence is not only difficult but can be one of the most disruptive factors in a woman's life.

Poverty. While it seems that the academic performance of some students is adversely affected by factors associated with low SES (e.g., stereotypic societal messages, lack of resources, inadequate preparation, different academic values and attitudes, patterns of behavior), other students prevail despite these negative associations. Perhaps the ambition to better oneself mediates the usual disadvantaged situation of the Chicano student from the low SES family. How that ambition is acquired despite negative environmental limitations remains a question, particularly for Chicanas. Yet many more Chicanos who have potential to succeed are adversely affected. It may be important to focus energies on alleviating the poverty cycle in which so many Mexican American families find themselves. The negative effect on academic performance is just one of the deleterious consequences of the stresses of poverty (Lopez, 1995; Li & Bennett, 1998; U.S. Census Bureau, 1997, 1999).

Educational

Education is often a prerequisite for entering higher-paying occupations. However, for the Hispanic woman, getting an education can prove to be an arduous task because of the need to contend with a variety of factors relating to the institution, support, and previous education (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000b).

Institution. Klein (1992) and Thibault (1987) indicated that from the middle to late 19th century, the historical educational path of women has been painted as a linear process; yet the effects of higher education on women presents a study in contradiction. It seems that there is a clear path to what is considered equality in education for women in

the late 20th century. However, there is no understanding of the constraints and controls on women that existed as they pursued higher education in a context that was marked by male dominance of the governing structure. Women were subjected to differential treatment and expectations and exposed to distinct differences in curricular material and curricular choice.

Support. The female student who is a mother with young children must seek alternate care for her children while in school. The lack of college-supported day-care facilities can present problems for this sort of women. This barrier has women scrambling to find in- or out-of-the-home care for their children. In some instances, relatives and friends are the answer; to the low-income student who feels the additional financial burden that day-care centers provide, such support may be the only answer. Some colleges offer day-care services and can attract women looking for convenient child-care for their pre-school children. Women from households that have a higher socioeconomic status find it easier to arrange for in-home care in the form of baby sitters or hired domestic help. (Benjamin, 1979; Kates, 1991; Rodriguez, 1996)

Low-income women with children are generally not provided adequate housing while pursuing higher education. In addition, older single women are not given dormitory space. While in an educational environment, women are in need of additional support ranging from transportation to tutorial help and from flexible class schedules to access to community resources.

High School. Anderson (1993), Breene (1993), and Lips (1993) all found that

without proper preparation in high school, women entering higher education find themselves unprepared and unable to catch up. Lopez (1995) noted that even though male and female Chicanos are at an educational disadvantage, Chicanas fare less well. Young women are steered away from mathematics, science, and engineering classes in high school; girls are not encouraged to understand the relevance of these courses to their lives. Boys are more likely than girls to take all three core science courses: biology, chemistry, and physics (Gender Gaps Fact Sheets, 2000).

In addition to lacking the science and engineering courses necessary for higher education, women find that most computer labs are dominated by men, which is a source of increased anxiety in women. Females make up only a small percentage of students in the computer science classes. Gender bias and stereotypical gender roles are further reinforced through school software programs. The female student finds software designers sex stereotype their products, which proves discouraging for female students. Female students consistently rate themselves significantly lower on computer ability than males do and consequently use computers less, exhibit lower self-confidence, and as a result, have less experience with computers and other technology than males (Gender Gaps Fact Sheets, 2000; Lopez, 1995).

Hispanic women graduating from high school who are perhaps considering higher education may find they are not as prepared as their non-Hispanic White counterparts for the hardships they encounter. Even though women were eventually given what appeared to be equal access to undergraduate and graduate education, there is still a long way to go

to achieve equal success. Historically, women have been channeled into disciplines that were considered proper extensions of femininity such as education, nursing, social work, and the humanities. They have avoided fields where men excel such as engineering, science, mathematics, chemistry, and technical fields. As more and more women desire to enter what is sometimes considered a masculine field, they find their academic preparedness was a critical barrier. Many of the pre-requisite courses require a working knowledge of mathematics and science. Academic difficulties arise when women are under-prepared for these classes (Anderson, 1993; Benjamin, 1979; Breene, 1993; Moriarty, 1978; Ray, 1995; Weiler, 1997).

Minority women are much more likely to be academically deficient in what are traditionally known as the masculine fields of study. Low expectations by teachers leads to low self-esteem of students and helps to explain the failure of female high school students to perform as well as male students on math and science tests. Teacher expectations and attitudes are critical factors for women and contribute to feelings of inadequacy and alienation (Betts, 1992; Hayes & Flannery, 1997).

Aragon (1998), Benjamin (1979), Ford (1998), and Lopez (1995) found that some university professors come from cultures that hold women in low esteem and consequently can create problems for women, particularly women graduate students. The professors' attitudes can inflict emotional harm by making it necessary for women to constantly prove their competency. These attitudes extend further as prejudices toward minority students, especially females. These students become the recipients of hostile

attitudes and preconceptions of ability based on gender and ethnicity; such attitudes are especially apparent to those entering the male dominated fields of science and engineering. Women have proven their ability to excel in every area of learning and must have every right to seek the intellectual goal that is suitable for them. The traditions of sex discrimination with regard to education can be especially devastating to women of color. The professors' attitudes have long lasting effects on women and minorities and may eventually interfere with the recruitment and retention of women and minorities (Betts, 1992; Hayes & Flannery, 1997).

Aguirre and Martinez (1994) examined the representation of Chicanos in higher education:

Chicano faculty are often viewed as having embarked on "extraordinary careers" in the U.S. educational system, as having surpassed the expectations U.S. society ascribes to them. But does higher education recognize their extraordinary careers?

Chicano faculty for the most part, are peripheral members of academe. On the one hand, post-secondary institutions use them to address minority concerns. On the other hand, white faculty do not regard them as legitimate participants in academe. In most cases, they are regarded as impositions brought about by litigation and social legislation. If Chicano faculty have traveled this far to be reminded of their subordinate status in U.S. society, how can they encourage Chicano students to embark on their own extraordinary careers? (p. 2)

Edwards (1993), Ford (1998), Hansen (1981), Pitts (1993), and Stokes (1984) all found that to aid in recruitment and retention of minority women, female students who are applying to colleges should be provided information about the application process, the availability of child care, and financial aid; these women should be able to find answers to any questions they may have. Failure to get this information can seriously

hinder women seeking higher education.

Women, especially minority women, can be overwhelmed with the admissions process, especially if they have not had prior college experience. Much of the admissions terminology, along with the processes of registration, orientation, and curriculum planning, can be of particular concern for undergraduate students and non-traditional graduate students (Darder, Torres, & Gutierrez, 1997).

Community College. Many students begin their educational journey at a community college with the goal of earning a baccalaureate degree. Community colleges can accommodate diverse student interests and goals, preparing students for transfer to a four-year college. The student's preparation is key to the community college's role in higher education because it broadens access for those who have been historically excluded. Also, transfer is a component of most community college students' educational aspirations (Andrews & Fonseca, 1998; Bradburn & Hurst, 2001).

The community college offers general education with transfer programs to four-year institutions along with greater opportunities for technical and vocational training than what exists at most four-year institutions. In addition, the community college offers remedial and developmental educational opportunities to individuals many of whom have not yet earned a high school diploma. The combination of an open door admissions policy, low tuition, and easy geographic access makes these institutions particularly attractive to minority students who might not otherwise contemplate college (Andrews & Fonseca, 1998; Hayes & Flannery, 1997; Striplin, 1999; Trueba & Bartholome, 1997). As

a result, the percentage of minority students of total enrollment in community colleges is considerably higher than in a public four-year institutions. According to Andrews and Fonseca (1998), 55% of minority students in public higher education attend community colleges. There was a notable increase in the minority community college enrollment from 1984 to 1994, with Hispanics showing a 102% percent increase compared to the White increase of only 10%.

While the community college may be the solution for students to begin their educational journey, it may not always be the best means to advance. The community colleges have promoted the transfer of students as one of their fundamental purposes; yet transfer rates have declined over the last 30 years. While a large number of community college students aspire to baccalaureate degrees, only about one fourth of all students enrolled at a community college will transfer to a four-year program at some point in their educational careers (Andrews & Fonseca, 1998; Striplin, 1999).

Hispanics, particularly Hispanic women who are channeled into two-year colleges, become victims of low transfer rates to four-year institutions, resulting in high attrition rates. Consequently, four-year institutions see fewer and fewer Hispanic students, and the numbers become even lower at prestigious institutions of higher education (Aguirre & Martinez, 1994).

Undergraduate/Graduate. Barriers to the participation of minorities in higher education include the use of traditional admissions criteria such as test scores and high school grades. The use of these criteria works disproportionately against the minority

groups. The accuracy of college grade point average prediction by the combined use of high school grade point average and SAT scores was considerably weaker for Black and Chicano students than for White or Asian students. The use of the traditional criteria prevents many Chicana students and other minorities who have college potential from even entering the school. Other institutional regulations that can pose barriers to women include requirements that impose time limitations on previously earned credits. For those who find relocation part of their adult life, additional study is necessary to meet the residency requirement; such study can cost more time and money. The requirements can also deter women who have been out of school for a number of years. They find it difficult to supply the necessary documentation, including transcripts, entrance examination scores, and letters of recommendation (Benjamin, 1979; Fisher-Thompson, 1980).

Financial

Financial aid is available to low-income students but is seldom adequate to meet the needs of these students. Scholarships, grants, and work-study positions are sources of support that may enhance student persistence, but loans often decrease the students' chances of finishing college. The stresses that students may experience at the thought of continuing education while acquiring debts may prevent them from graduating from college. Given the above, the financial burden for the female student with children will extend far beyond child-care services. The fact that minority students rely on financial aid to finance their undergraduate education, they find financial matters a major area of

concern (Lopez, 1995). Aguirre and Martinez (1994) further noted:

Hispanic community college students who receive higher levels of non-campus- and campus-based financial aid awards in the form of grants (versus loans and workstudy) were enrolled in more semesters, earned more semester hours, and received some form of credential. Non-campus and campus-based financial aid awards were found to be more positively related to Hispanic students' retention than the student's high-school grades or their cumulative grade point average. Many Hispanic students may be denied financial aid because they overestimate actual income on financial aid forms. Hispanic students' low attainment rate is associated with the need to support themselves or their families. (p. 3)

In general, Chicanos anticipate much lower parental contribution toward the cost of college than do White students. A student's ability to complete college is greatly enhanced through support from parents.

Employment

The possibilities for attainment of undergraduate and graduate faculty positions by Chicanas and other minority women seem inaccessible and bleak. Hensel (1991) found:

Colleges and universities must recruit an estimated 335,000 new faculty to meet needs in the next decade, and yet declining enrollments at the nation's graduate institutions suggest that those with doctorates will be in short supply. Qualified minorities will be even scarcer, since non-Whites remain underrepresented in both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. There exists however, one underutilized minority group, which offers a potential solution to both problems. Women constitute 50 percent of undergraduate enrollments yet remain broadly underrepresented in tenured faculty positions. (p.1)

American higher education is under pressure to diversify its faculties, but they are unable to find qualified teachers to fill the vacancies. The lack of skilled educators means colleges are facing severe shortages. This deficiency means less representation by

women in faculty positions and even less representation by Hispanic women, as noted by Valverde and Castenell (1998):

Judging from current sentiment in academia, one cannot assure that in the near future there will be serious change toward a fair representation of Latino and African American faculty in higher education, nor even a continuation of the efforts that followed the rhetoric of diversification the last two decades. Most strategies adopted in the name of affirmative action, equity, curriculum, reform, competitiveness in the college market for minority students, or for political expediency (to retain state or federal dollars), have failed to produce sustained gains in the numbers of tenured Latino or African American faculty. (p. 76)

Obtaining a faculty position can be a daunting experience especially for women of color. For them the possibility is that they end up working twice as hard to get half as far. Group dynamics change when someone different enters and the forces at work must be understood to be reasonable successful as noted by Natera (1995):

Whether due to age, gender, religion, size, profession, or color, being different is not always comfortable. Ask any minority woman entering a university as a full time faculty member. Her response may be that she initially received much attention, but after a while her achievements were taken for granted by others while her mistakes got magnified, and since many minority women are expected to put others first and remain docile she simply had more chances to fail. When contrast is introduced, so is discomfort. Understanding personal and group dynamics at a given university and its regions is important for “the only” or “the first” to succeed. Higher education leaders and faculty must ascertain that two sets of performance standards are not established – one for all employees and one for minority women. (p. 1)

Professional/Career

Francis (2000) asked, “On the verge of the millennium, after more than a generation of significant advances for women, do we still need the Equal Rights Amendment?” She went on to respond, “The answer is an unqualified yes! Legal sex

discrimination is not yet a thing of the past, and the progress of the past 30 years is not irreversible” (p. 1). Francis (2000) concluded, “The Equal Rights Amendment is needed in order to prevent a rollback of women’s rights by conservative/reactionary political majority votes, and to promote laws and court decisions that fairly take into account women’s as well as men’s experiences” (p. 2).

Despite the barriers to entry and advancement for women and people of color in the workplace and learning institutions, notable strides have been made. According to Independent Women’s Forum (2000)

The higher educational attainment of women is related to increased participation in the U.S. labor market, since increased labor market opportunities also encourage women to pursue further education. Working in the market economy rather than in the home has shifted from being the exception to being the norm for American women. (p. 3)

The U.S. Department of Labor (2006) said that the number of women entering the work force has steadily increased:

A major development in the American workforce has been the increased participation of women. In 1970, only about 43 percent of women age 16 and older were in the labor force; by 1999, that figure had risen to 60 percent. From 1999 to 2004, women’s labor force participation rate receded slightly to 59.2 percent, still well above the rates that prevailed throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and much of the 1990s. (p. 1)

Pay Inequity

There still seem to be substantial race-correlated disparities in income and wealth despite the rise of employment opportunities in both public and private sectors in the past 20 years. Differences in educational attainment do not account for these discrepancies. In

general, Blacks with a professional degree earn only 62 cents for every dollar earned by Whites; the earnings of Hispanics are even less, at only 42 cents (Friends Committee on National Legislation, 1998).

As more women continue to move into the labor force, the inequity in earnings becomes their number one concern. Tyson (1998) stated the following:

“Equal pay for equal work” is the top workplace issue for the vast majority of employed women (94 percent), according to a nationwide survey of 50,000 working women by the AFL-CIO last year. It is cited more often than child-care (33 percent), sexual harassment (78 percent), or downsizing (72 percent).

Today, as a result of discrimination and other factors, women still earn only about 75 cents for every \$1 that men make, according to the US Labor Department’s median weekly wage figures for 1997. If current wage patterns continue, the average 25-year-old woman who works full time year round for 40 years will earn \$400,000 to \$500,000 less than her male peer, according to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) in Washington. (p. 7)

Inequity in earnings is common across the United States. According to Crawford and Unger (1996), 1993 women’s earnings were 71.5% of what men earned. The earning gap hits especially hard the 2 of every 5 working women who are the sole breadwinners in their homes. The toll is heaviest on minority women and is expanding to older women who are hurt by lower lifetime earnings.

Although the number of women in executive positions is steadily increasing, their numbers are still significantly lower than their male counterparts. Redwood (1996) reported the following:

Surveys show that between 1982 and 1992, the proportion of women holding the title of executive vice president rose from 4 to 9 percent. Those at the senior vice president level rose from 13 to 23 percent. And a recent study by Catalyst shows a growth of women on the boards of directors of the Fortune 500. Eighty-one

percent or 404 companies – now have one or more female directors. But there are still only two women CEOs. Yet despite the steady increases, women still hold only 1 in 10 board seats.

This progress does not necessarily mean that the earnings gap between female and male executives is disappearing. Surveys show women executives in 1992 earning an average of \$187,000 and men earning an average of \$289,000 – a difference of \$102,000 in average annual compensation. US Census data reported the ratio of female to male earnings in management jobs ranged from a low of 50 percent in the banking industry to a high of 85 percent for human services managers.

Equal educational attainment does not guarantee fair compensation. Regardless of credentials and preparedness, the return on investment or income, continues unequal. All women have considerably lower mean incomes compared to their male counterparts, and most minority men earn less than non-Hispanic white men with the same education at the same occupational level. It is this wage discrimination or pay inequity that is an indicator of the existence of glass ceilings. (pp.8-11)

The disparity does not mean that women and minorities are unprepared. Men still progress faster than women despite identical education attainment, ambition, and commitment to career (Redwood, 1996).

As of March 31, 1999, women represented 11.9% of corporate officers in America's 500 largest companies, showing a 37% increase since 1995. Furthermore, the number of companies with two or more women officers showed an increase of 28%, from 220 to 282. Studies also indicate that although the median income level for men and women in executive positions both rose 20% in 1998, men earned nearly \$17,000 more. Men still hold 93% of high-profile jobs with profit-and-loss responsibility that often lead to the top spots. Women who are able to achieve executive or management level are placed in staff positions such as human resources or public relations (Armas, 2000).

Glass Ceiling

According to Davidovich (2000), the victims of artificial barriers in employment that prevent them from receiving promotions and salary entitlement are said to have hit the “glass ceiling.” Others hitting the ceiling are women who are allowed to advance only so far in a company despite proven abilities. Davidovich (2000) noted:

It has become a routine practice to deny thousands of qualified women the top-level jobs, merited by their performance. Department of Labor studies have found that women hold only a small percentage of senior management positions in Fortune 500 companies. The “glass ceiling” barriers toward women are nothing but an insidious form of sex discrimination, in violation of law. (p. 4)

In regard to the glass ceiling, Redwood (1996) stated, “The glass ceilings are the manifestation of the perpetual struggle for equal access and equal opportunity. Glass ceilings are the artificial barriers that deny women and minorities the opportunity to advance within their careers” (p. 2). Redwood (1996) further noted that there is an underlying reason for the existence of the glass ceiling. She reported how research suggests that it is the perception of many White males that as a group they are losing their competitive advantage, losing control, and losing opportunity as a direct consequence of inclusion of women and minorities in the work force.

The U.S. Department of Labor (2000b) report on the glass ceiling initiative states the following:

The glass ceiling, where it exists, hinders not only individuals but society as a whole. It effectively cuts our pool of potential corporate leaders by eliminating over one-half of our population. It deprives our economy of new leaders, new sources of creativity. . . . If our end game is to compete successfully in today’s global market, then we have to unleash the full potential of the American work

force. The time has come to tear down, to dismantle – the “Glass Ceiling.” (p. 2)

This means that women and minorities will have better opportunities for upward mobility. Breaking the glass ceiling is an economic imperative because the talent and input of women and minority men is necessary to address the changing consumer markets (Redwood, 1996).

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome verbal or physical conduct based on sex or of a sexual nature that can make a person feel uncomfortable, helpless, or afraid. Although men face harassment, women are the most likely victims. There are two types of sexual harassment that are prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. One is *quid pro quo* harassment that is based upon engaging in sexual activity as a condition of employment. That is, a person in authority like a supervisor, demands sexual favors of a subordinate as a condition of getting or keeping a job benefit. In *quid pro quo* cases, the offense is directly linked to an individual’s terms of employment or forms the basis for employment decisions affecting the individual (Davidovich, 2000; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2002).

Sexual harassment does not always take the form of sexual advances. The second form of sexual harassment is a hostile environment that creates an abusive work environment. Many sexual harassment victims are never threatened with termination or lack of advancement. Rather they suffer repeated abuse in what is known as a hostile work environment which arises when a co-worker or supervisor, engaging in an

unwelcome and inappropriate sexually based behavior, rendering the workplace atmosphere intimidating, antagonistic, or offensive. Individuals who are subjected to differential treatment and derogatory comments and who are exposed to conspicuous displays of sexually oriented objects and find these activities unwelcome and objectionable are victims of sexual harassment. Many times individuals who are being sexually harassed mistakenly believe that it will stop if they just ignore it. Others mistakenly think that it is somehow their fault or that they are making a big deal out of nothing. Sexual harassment causes extreme harm including humiliation, loss of dignity, injury by psychological and sometimes physical means, and damage to professional reputation and career. Inevitably, the victims face a choice between their work and their self-esteem. Sometimes, they face a choice between their jobs and their own safety (Davidovich, 2000; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2002; Microsoft® Encarta®, 2003).

White Privilege/Racism

In the United States, being White has its advantages. According to Jensen (1998), “White privilege, like any social phenomenon, is complex. In a White supremacist culture, all White people have privilege, whether or not they are overtly racist themselves.” (p. 1) What does White privilege mean? Jensen (1998) elaborated:

When I seek admission to a university, apply for a job, or hunt for an apartment, I don't look threatening. Almost all of the people evaluating me for those things look like me – they are white. They see in me a reflection of themselves, and in a racist world that is an advantage. . . . I am white. I am not dangerous. . . . After all I am white. (pp. 2-3)

White persons are sometimes taught that racism puts others at a disadvantage. On the other side though, White persons are carefully taught not to recognize White privilege and the fact that it provides an advantage to them. White privilege is an invisible means of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks. Because of White privilege, one's life is not what one makes it, and while many doors open for certain people, it can happen through no virtues of their own. Being White protects them from hostility, distress, and violence. It is highly unlikely that a level playing field could exist where there would be no unearned advantages for anyone. The reality is that being White in a White society is in fact an unearned privilege that eliminates the possibility of a level playing field for any person of color (Clark, 2001; Jensen, 1998).

Welker (1998) noted that men have an unearned privilege over women. This is very much the same as White privilege. Males are taught not to recognize male privilege. This privilege is carried into racial issues. Welker (1998) further noted, "There's such a thing as being born into a system that lets you think the turf belongs to you, whether or not you've earned the turf." (p. 1) Welker (1998) explained that it is a case of White privilege and "the Whites cannot be blamed for being born into it. When recognized, though, it must be remedied." (p. 1)

Facilitators

Despite the many situational, social, psychological, and institutional obstacles that

women face, they still look to higher education as a means of improving their socioeconomic status. These obstacles can present insurmountable odds for the completion of post-secondary education. However, despite these barriers, many Hispanic women are able to achieve different levels of education. It is essential, therefore, to note the factors that contributed to the success of minority females who graduated with bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees along with the student who has passed the qualifying examinations and advanced to doctoral candidacy but not yet completed the doctoral dissertation requirements (ABD student).

Ford (1998) identified three categories of barriers to participation in higher education:

- (1) Personal – mental and physical handicaps, fear of the unfamiliar, emotional insecurity, feelings of social inadequacy, negative attitudes to learning, and the uncertainty of future rewards;
- (2) Domestic – opposition of family members, difficulty in getting away from home, and impossible conditions of study;
- (3) External – shift work, fatigue after work, and lack of transportation. (p. 19)

Cook (1998, 1999) noted that despite the fact that women, particularly Hispanic women, experience many of the personal, domestic, and external barriers to education, it is possible to establish mechanisms to effectively confront and eventually overcome the barriers. Cook (1998, 1999) identified the key factors that help minority women to succeed: family support, student support programs, role models, instructors, and diversified curricula.

Family Support

Family support plays an important role in the education of the Hispanic female

because of its positive impact on the emotional and psychological stability of the individual. A strong belief in education allows parents to encourage and support educational attainment. Supportive parents instill in their children a strong sense of self-worth and the will to succeed. Their continued support is evident in the students' high levels of aspirations and motivation (Aragon, 1998).

Student Support Programs

Student support programs should be established to provide mentoring, academic and career counseling, and academic advisement programs. Institutions must be able to ensure that the special needs of minority students are being met while on campus. A positive campus climate can enhance the quality of life for the minority student and can contribute to the successful recruitment and retention efforts of the institution (Aragon, 1998).

Mentoring

Mentoring is one of the most positive coping mechanisms offered to minority women in college. The mentor provides information every step of the way for students on their educational journey and also provides a sounding board for students to discuss problems they encounter and to vent their frustration (Scanlon, 1997). According to Ford (1998), mentors guide, listen, and provide students with allies who encourage and support them through the rigors of college life. In many instances mentors can provide spiritual support as well as academic support. This support is critical especially in the case of

Hispanic females because they are genuinely in need of help with their growth and development.

Role Models

Role models are a necessity, especially in graduate school. According to Moriarty (1978), the role of the relationship of faculty and student was related to the satisfaction level of the students. (1978) reported that “the collegiality of faculty-student relationships is by far the best predictor of both academic and non-academic satisfaction that is experienced by graduate students” (p. 17).

Instructors

According to McGinty (1999), instructors support the education of the Hispanic female by having a positive attitude toward them and creating different pathways to success. There are factors in the lives of many Hispanic women that necessitate them taking different routes to achieve success. Teachers who know the circumstances of their students’ lives are more apt to adjust course requirements. McGinty (1999) further explained how teachers walk a fine line between adjusting course requirements and lowering standards. Like any other students, minority women want to achieve success while simultaneously maintaining the integrity of high standards.

Curriculum

It is a challenge for institutions to diversify the curriculum without lowering standards. It is, however, a necessity because of the increasing number of students from nonWhite backgrounds. Students should be exposed to upgraded literature programs that

address current issues as they relate to the minority populations of Hispanics, African Americans, and Native Americans (McGinty, 1999). Weiler (1997) found that institutions should provide faculty that can integrate cultural diversity in their course requirements.

Summary

The United States population is experiencing dramatic changes in its racial and ethnic composition. The segment of population most affected by the considerable growth is that of the Hispanics. While impacting Hispanics as a whole, the changes will have the greatest impact on Hispanic women. Historically, women have been subjected to discrimination in all aspects of society; though much has changed in recent years, women are still second-class citizens in many ways. This is especially true for Hispanic women, who often find themselves in situations of considerable change. Not only do they face the same issues as all women; Hispanic women also find themselves facing issues related to their ethnicity and culture. Many face a life of poverty and find it acceptable to maintain their low socioeconomic status. Others believe that education is the key to economic mobility, so it is important to consider the increasing number of school aged children and the challenge presented by their high dropout rate. Retention is essential to improving educational outcomes and substantially increasing the number of Hispanic college graduates, especially the number of Hispanics proportionate to the population increase. They in turn will be able to provide guidance as administrators, teachers, mentors, and role models to students in elementary school, high school, and college.

Colleges and universities must pursue new strategies to help ensure greater

opportunity for success of all women and minority students. Strategies should include strengthening academic support programs and improving the quality of campus life.

Gordon (1990) stated:

Colleges and universities resemble other social institutions in their resistance to change and replication of conservative attitudes. And yet as educational institutions, committed to research, teaching, and the development of an intellectual community, colleges and universities possess unique resources to address issues of discrimination, gender distinctiveness, and human behavior. A historical perspective on women's higher education teaches us about the need for activist policies. Today's universities need to use the curriculum to promote egalitarianism, possibly through women's studies programs; to hire women faculty and administrations interested in supporting female students; to appoint male faculty and administrators who can deal intelligently with gender issues; and to examine carefully the nature of undergraduate life. Until coeducational institutions adopt these and other measures, they will be replicating a culture of gender oppression and passing it on, intact, to the next generation. (p. 193)

As institutions prepare to do their part to help Hispanic and other minority women succeed in school, it is important to recognize that minority women who are successful possess innate qualities that allow them to achieve their goals.

McGinty (1999) cited resilience as a key characteristic of success. She explained how resiliency is a combination of strengths, both past and present, and the women's hopes for themselves in the future. Many academically successful minority women have a lot of stress in their lives yet manage to succeed. McGinty (1999) found that in order to meet their family responsibilities, it was necessary to develop a toughness that, in turn was transferred to the school setting as she pointed out when she said, "The strengths, skills, and qualities they developed as a result of these responsibilities were part of the self they brought with them to the school context" (p. 139).

Moriarty (1978) and Sloat (1993) found that all women are in greater need of parental support and encouragement and are also in greater need of faculty support. Minority women are particularly affected by faculty attitudes and behavior toward them because negative faculty attitudes contributes to these women's self doubt and emotional stress.

It is necessary to recognize, understand, and promote diversity in order for Hispanic and other minority women to succeed. Weiler (1997) explained that it is essential to help low-income minority women overcome perceived barriers, particularly women who experience negation of their own beliefs in their career abilities, interests, and goals. They are in need of skill building to help identify racism, sexism, and discrimination. There is further need to develop coping strategies to deal with social barriers and discrimination. Hispanic and minority women must have a way to overcome the barriers that limit their career choices, educational development, and participation in higher education.

As the 21st century begins, we are reminded of the following by Aguirre and Martinez (1994):

Chicanos must use educational attainment as a vehicle for social change, in particular as the means for entering sectors of U.S. society that bestow influence on participants. Through such a process, Chicanos can transform their position in U.S. society from one of relative disadvantage to one of relative influence.

Perhaps the most serious challenge facing Chicanos in the 21st century is their exclusion from policy-making arenas. Numbers alone will not push Chicanos into those arenas; they must preface their entry into policy-making arenas by altering their socioeconomic status in U.S. society. One prerequisite for altering one's opportunity for advancement is by enhanced educational outcomes.

Thus, Chicanos must use educational attainment as a net for gathering forces in the shaping of policy agendas. (pp. 3-4)

Women and minorities are entering the labor market in greater numbers and will be looking to enter college as a means of improving their socioeconomic status and their possibilities for promotion. Learning institutions must be ready to provide the environment necessary for student success.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study of Hispanic women who have earned a doctoral degree. The chapter includes the rationale for selecting the qualitative paradigm, the phenomenological approach to answer the research questions, the participants and settings, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and the researcher's perspective.

Qualitative Paradigm

There are four reasons the qualitative paradigm is appropriate for this study. First, it allows me to conduct research in a natural setting. These Hispanic women participants were interviewed in their professional and domestic environments. Creswell (1998) supports this viewpoint when he states,

Writers agree that one undertakes qualitative research in a natural setting where the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively, focuses on the meaning of participants, and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language. (p. 14)

Second, the qualitative paradigm allows the process of emergence to evolve. In an emergent study, questions can be developed and re-developed or revised once the researcher has interviewed several Hispanic women who had earned a doctoral degree. Through this process new questions can be established to support those that have been revised. Emergence offers the opportunity for expression and allows the researcher

freedom to exercise her creativity and uniqueness in her writing. Creswell (1998) points out that “the language of qualitative studies becomes personal, literary, and based on definitions that evolve during a study rather than being defined by the researcher at the beginning of the study” (p. 77). Third, a qualitative approach is appropriate relative to gender, culture, and marginalized populations. Since I am currently pursuing a doctoral degree, I have a vested interest in researching related issues. Today the hallmark of qualitative research is the deep involvement in issues of gender, culture, and marginalized groups (Creswell, 1998).

Finally, the qualitative paradigm is an appropriate research paradigm for addressing the “how” or “what” of a human issue: How do Hispanic women make sense of their journeys to earn their doctoral degrees? How do they define and describe the barriers they might have faced? What experiences would an Hispanic woman characterize as significant in obtaining her doctorate?

The definition of qualitative research by Creswell (1998) supports my rationale for using a qualitative paradigm. He defines qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (p. 15). This definition provides a foundation for the applicability of a qualitative paradigm that will be used to guide this study.

Phenomenological Approach

To further focus and give structure to the study, the phenomenological approach will be used. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology focuses on the appearance

of things. He goes on to explain that phenomenology is concerned with wholeness that examines the essences of an experience from many sides, angles, and perspectives until a unified vision of the essences of the phenomenon is achieved. Through phenomenology, the meanings from the appearances are sought through intuition and reflection on conscious acts of the experience that lead to ideas, concepts, judgments, and understandings. Phenomenology does not explain or analyze; rather, it is committed to descriptions of the experiences which are as close to the original texture of those experiences as they can be while retaining their phenomenal qualities and material properties. Phenomenology is firmly established in questions that provide direction and focus to meaning, and in themes that are able to sustain an inquiry. Furthermore, the phenomenological approach can awaken interest and concern that can account for the passionate involvement with the phenomenon being experienced. The researcher has a personal interest in whatever he or she seeks to know so in the phenomenological investigation, the researcher is intimately connected with the phenomenon.

The use of the phenomenological approach allows me to explore and examine the essence of the lived experiences of a group or population who have been influenced by a phenomenon. This study will examine the essence of the role, experiences, challenges and barriers (phenomena) of Hispanic women with doctoral degrees (a group or population) and make certain that the actual voices of the women surface and that the meaning of these experiences are explored.

Participants and Settings

The study included 6 Hispanic women who earned doctoral degrees. These women are from community colleges, public four-year institutions, technical colleges, and private four-year institutions located within the Rocky Mountain region. A purposeful sampling strategy was used to select the participants. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the purposeful sampling strategy represents a key decision point in a qualitative study. Purposeful sampling is valuable for identifying or initially exploring potential issues or characteristics of interest. Criterion sampling is one of 16 different types of purposeful sampling. For a study using the phenomenological approach, participants must all have encountered the event or phenomenon under study. Miles and Huberman (1994) posit that criterion sampling is a useful strategy for phenomenological studies when the persons being studied represent those who have experienced the phenomenon. Because the Hispanic women participating in this study have earned a doctoral degree and work in higher education, they have met the criteria for this research study. Higher education as an employment vocation was selected for two reasons: first, Latina mentors and role models in higher education are in a position to help pave the way for young women. They are better able to provide assistance through counseling by taking cultural issues into consideration. Second, it is critical to promote education among Latino children in particular and what better way to do so than to show how many Latinas are succeeding than through education.

A list of prospective participants was developed from college catalog listings

within the Rocky Mountain region. Letters were sent to all women with Hispanic surnames and doctoral degrees in colleges and universities in the Rocky Mountain region explaining the purpose of the study and asked them to participate, The letter requested that the participant contact me either by e-mail or telephone using the information provided. A flyer with the same information was sent to the academic dean and to the human resource director at each college and asked that the flyer be posted near faculty mailboxes.

Once participant contact was established, a brief description of the purpose, approach, and significance of the study was given to each participant. The interview procedures were discussed and the participant informed that the interview would be tape recorded and transcribed. Each participant was advised of the confidentiality of her identity in this study. The participants were provided a pseudonym to conceal their identity. Other information concerning where the participants were born, grew up, and are currently working also have been disguised in the transcript. During the phone conversation each participant was asked for a convenient time and place to conduct the interview. Conducting the interviews in the participant's natural environment was the goal; however, if this was not convenient for all the participants and a mutually agreeable location was selected. At the time of the interview the consent form was discussed and signed by the two of us. The participant was informed that she could discontinue participation in the study at any time including during the interview; however, this did not happen with any of the participants.

Data Collection

Through the format of examining and exploring certain phenomena, the data collection method was established. This qualitative study addressed human issues of gender, culture, and a marginalized population and data collection was best served through open-ended interviews. The intent of studies that address these human issues is to listen to the participants so as to shape questions after exploring and refraining from the role of the expert researcher with the “best” questions. In this process, prejudgments are set aside for a reliance on intuition and imagination that create a picture of the experience (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). Data for this phenomenological study was collected from four different sources, in-depth interviews, field notes, researcher’s journal, and artifacts participants volunteered during our meeting.

For a phenomenological study, the process of collecting information involved primarily in-depth interviews (McCracken, 1989). The important point is to describe the meaning of a small number of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Using in-depth interviews 6 subjects represented a reasonable size (Polkinghorne, 1989). Therefore, the primary source of data collection was in-depth interviews of 6 Hispanic women with doctoral degrees currently working in an institution of higher education in the Rocky Mountain region. Conducting the interview in the professional setting of the well-known surroundings provided by the office presented a unique opportunity for me to observe the participant in a comfortable environment. I felt that this added real meaning to field notes being recorded. The open-ended interviews were conducted face-to-face,

audio taped, and they lasted between 1 ½ to 2 hours each. The participants framed and structured their responses according to their own perspectives. This approach allowed them the opportunity to share more information based on their own perceptions of their journey in earning their doctorate and their successes and disappointments along the way without any limitations.

In this qualitative study, the following three questions were used for the purpose of opening the discussion with the participants.

1. What was the road like on the way to obtaining a doctoral degree?
2. Did you ever feel you wouldn't complete the degree?
3. What were the significant factors in your completing the degree?

Separate field notes were made before and after the interviews. The participants were advised that their personal identities would not be attached to the findings, and they were encouraged to be frank, honest, and open. The field notes represented an attempt on my part to record everything that I could remember about the session. These data recorded complete, accurate, and detailed field notes that were kept during the process of gaining access to a setting. The most comprehensive field notes possible meant that I employed a level of concentration sufficient to enable me to commit to memory everything that I saw, heard, thought, and so on. I concentrated on the words and actions in order to later recall them. After I left the field, the memories were transcribed onto tapes and later typed directly onto paper. Included in the notes were descriptions of subjects including their appearance, gestures, and expressions, as well as

events and conversations (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Creswell, 1998).

My journal contains reflexive notes that recorded my personal thoughts, feelings, impressions, ideas, speculations, hunches, problems, and prejudices (Creswell, 1994, 1998). The phenomenal and experiential components of the whole process of reducing toward what is texturally meaningful and essential depended upon a competent and clear reflectiveness to attend, recognize, and describe with clarity the reflective notes.

Returning to self and the employment of the self-reflective process enabled me to know myself within the experience being investigated. My researcher's journal was used to identify any preconceived biases and judgments by setting aside voices, sounds, and silences. By using the qualities and properties from the specific contexts or perspectives of the reflexive process, the events or experiences took on vivid and essential meanings and presented a clear portrait of the experience (Mountakas, 1994). Throughout the interview process the artifacts which included articles, books, stories, poems and other publications works, artwork, pictures and so forth, disclosed by the participants provided corroborating evidence in my developing the core themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data Analysis

The data analysis process was constant comparison analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As a method often used in phenomenological studies, it enhanced the emergence process by allowing me to modify the meanings of themes, notes about the interview process, and themes that emerged from the meanings of themes. Emergence signifies a

change and in comparing data, concepts emerged based on discrete situations, happenings, and occurrences which then became the basic building blocks to describe the structure of the phenomenon (Aragon, 1998). The data were retrieved to analyze and interpret the themes, meanings, and important statements that emerged from the transcribed interviews. These data from the field notes, researcher's journal, and artifacts I read carefully in order to analyze and be able to recognize the themes. The analysis of these data from each followed the same analysis process as these data from the interviews. This analysis and interpretation represented the analysis of data.

Trustworthiness

In a qualitative paradigm, trustworthiness is used to address the authenticity of a study. *Authenticity* refers to the ways and means in which a study is real. In this phenomenological study, the authenticity is also referred to as verification and is recommended by some qualitative experts as a broader and more encompassing term that does not restrict the work of qualitative studies. Important to this study in approaching verification is the recommendation to employ the general terms of trustworthiness and authenticity in establishing the credibility of a study (Creswell, 1998).

My committee chair acted as my peer review and provided an external check of the research process (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Allen, 1991; Eraldson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). In this process, he asked questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, I used member checking as a tool to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions

from the interview process. Each participant was given the opportunity to review her transcript for accuracy (Creswell, 1994). Lastly, the I provided an audit trail for reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This included audiotapes, verbatim transcripts, my researcher journals, field notes, and my coding records and procedures.

Researcher's Perspective

To improve the trustworthiness of this study, it was important to clarify my biases, my positions, and my assumptions that might affect the study (Creswell, 1998). It is also important for the reader to understand my position.

As a 56- year-old Hispanic female who has encountered numerous growth experiences as a student, I am aware of the art and value of “looking beyond” the encounters and establishing my personal truth. As such, I attempted to lay aside or at least acknowledge my thoughts, preconceived notions, and experiences so that I approached this study with an open mind, an eager spirit, a willingness to listen attentively, and a desire to record and analyze the lessons each participant chose to share through her interview. This viewpoint embraces the concept of *epoche*. Moustakas (1994) explains that:

The researcher following a transcendental phenomenological approach engages in a disciplined and systematic effort to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated (known as the Epoch process) in order to launch the study as far as possible free of preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and professional studies—to be completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated (p. 22).

I was also concerned with the lack of visibility that existed among Hispanic

women with doctoral degrees. According to Aragon (1998),

Of 41,610 doctorate degrees awarded in 1995, only 3.3 percent were awarded to Hispanics, compared to 77.1 percent conferred to whites. The gender breakdown was males, 60.7 percent and females, 39.3 percent. If this is representative of the Latino doctoral degrees conferred, Hispanic women received 1.3 percent of all the doctorates. (p. 2)

These statistics validated my strong belief that the future of Hispanic women with doctoral degrees is contingent upon attention being given to the lack of presence that exists in higher education institutions to acknowledge the “lack of visibility” and advocate for the change that will lead to an increase in Hispanic women earning doctoral degrees.

My research focus and attention to Hispanic women with doctoral degrees has been an evolving process that began as a result of my personal and academic training. I grew up in a home environment that instilled strong spiritual, moral, cultural, and social values in me and my five siblings. Despite the fact that my parents had a limited education, I was exposed at a young age to the importance of education. I witnessed the long hours worked by my parents in order to afford private education for their children, four of whom were females. I also witnessed the struggle as they tried to maintain a balance between providing a good education as a way to improve the socioeconomic status and a culture that offered little support for the education of its females. As the first generation student in higher education, I survived challenges and barriers that began an evolutionary process in me. This evolution drew forth a need to know if other Hispanic women encountered dynamics similar to those I had experienced—feelings of aloneness,

time constraints of family, underrepresentation of Hispanic women in higher education, and gender conflicts. I began to question what this higher education path entailed. As I began the journey in higher education, I became more and more engrossed in the need to know why Hispanic women faced with so many difficult challenges could still maintain their ambition for such an outstanding accomplishment as earning a doctoral degree. I felt a personal need to know how other Hispanic women managed the gender differences, family priorities, institutional conflicts, and other related barriers and challenges. This inquiry process led me to a strategic decision to pursue this research study of Hispanic women with doctoral degrees with attention to the role, experiences, perceptions, barriers, and challenges.

In the present study, I acknowledge (to the research participants) my current status in higher education and the alliance to the group being studied and my ideas and notions relative to academia. In acknowledging this, I will assume ownership and give myself the permission to release these notions so that a clear conscience and mind was presented to the participants. This process of release is epoche, an important element in a qualitative study that utilizes a phenomenological approach.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND THEMES

Overview

The women in this study are six Latinas who successfully completed a doctorate program by overcoming external environmental factors and internal cultural conflict that for some would have remained barriers to success. Their fortitude and personal characteristics allowed them to recognize these barriers and from them they acquired the power and strength to remain on their educational path to success.

I begin where Latinas find themselves in a cultural struggle. Latinas are raised with the traditional gender role expectations but instead find that as they adopt the American cultural values the result is conflict between themselves and family members. When Latinas dare to dream of a different role other than that of a wife and mother, or develop their own expectations that are outside the intergenerational influences, the result is cultural chaos. I will present their stories beginning with the cultural chaos stemming from these expectations of Latinas raised in a Mexican-American household. Latinas who challenged their predetermined destination and pursued a different path went against their cultural roots. This introduces the second core theme of breaking the rules of expectations which means that the Latina must leave the destiny that already was planned for her. Though the Latina remains connected to her past she finds that she now has choices available to her and must find a balance between the American way and her culture's way. The third core theme to emerge is stereotypical prejudices that come as

Latinas begin making choices and mapping out their own lives. They will meet people who will prejudge them based on their appearance, speech, or cultural background. As Latinas continue living with American cultural values, they become familiar with the games people play. The concept of games is the fourth core theme that emerged. Games are common in higher education and Latinas witnessed firsthand the game playing and the power struggles evident as individuals exerted their power over graduate students. As children and throughout their educational journey into higher education, these Latinas found ways to endure the injustices and difficulties encountered. The participants conveyed their experiences of stereotypical behavior or pre-judgments by others because of their cultural background or ethnicity. Gloria was categorized as a child with a learning disability when she was in elementary school when, in fact, she should have been diagnosed with dyslexia, a reading disability. It is simply easier to attribute the learning disabilities, or intellectual “slowness” to Hispanic children who already are marginalized in the American educational system because of their minority status. The friends of another participant, Ofelia, did not believe that she intellectually was capable of earning a degree in physics. Ofelia’s friends were, in fact, selling her short. Ofelia’s dad reminded her constantly during her childhood that there was no difference between her, or any of his children for that matter, and any other human being. If it was humanly possible then any of his children could achieve success despite any pre-judgments made because of their ethnicity. Another participant, Sonya experienced labor firsthand when she had to work in the fields in the summer. It was then that Sonya made the decision to

receive an education as the alternative to a life that included long hours of manual labor. She did well in school but despite the fact that she was committed to an education she experienced misgivings once she entered college. Sonya's self-doubt was the result of entering a program that was male dominated and highly competitive. Victoria found that her writing skills were not as good as they should be but knew that all she needed to do was to prove to others that she could do it. Juanita experienced some of the coldness of the atmosphere of college. There was little diversity and while she did not find the atmosphere hostile, it was not welcoming either.

These participants had occasions where they found it necessary to find a means to carry on despite what they experienced. This leads to the fifth core theme called coping. There were different strategies used to cope that came from family and friends or from the Latina's own inner resolve, and regardless of the source of the coping mechanisms used, it allowed these Latinas to regain their strength and concentrate their efforts on their journey. Throughout this educational journey, the sixth and final core theme of success emerged. Despite the challenges and barriers encountered, there were many motivational factors which enabled these Latinas to earn their doctoral degree. Motivational factors included their desire to be the first to contribute to a relatively new field, the need for more role models, and the need to finish what she started. Other motivational factors included studying areas of interest, doing research while helping others, and having people recognize and believe in their ability to succeed.

Cultural Chaos

Within each core theme, support themes also surfaced. Contained within the first theme of cultural chaos is the “macho” mentality characterized by the term *machismo* which means protecting and taking care of the family. Unfortunately, it also symbolizes exaggerated masculinity and male chauvinism. The second support theme of cultural chaos is the stereotypical male versus female role that is part of being raised in the Latino household.

These Latina women found themselves in a deep struggle with themselves and with society. The traditional female role in the Mexican-American culture is that of caregiver, housewife, and provider for the husband. With the migration across the border, the Latina experiences choices she never had in Mexico. Being raised in a household where she was a subordinate to the “macho” male, the Latina was expected to be an obedient wife, a loyal daughter, and a caring mother. As part of this Hispanic culture, children are raised with the *machismo* ideals where the woman always “knows her place.” Latinas were expected to follow these cultural norms and societal ways. For the Latina, crossing the border meant she was no longer bullied by the “macho” mentality nor the society that cultivated that way of life. It would seem that in America, the Latina had the freedom to do as she pleased, yet there remains a struggle with family members who continued to live in the past and contribute to the cultural chaos that affects Latinas today. This major theme of cultural chaos is supported by the sub themes of the “macho” mentality and male versus female roles. The “macho” mentality involves the thoughts

and actions that are a result of the exaggerated masculinity of the Latino male. While the *machismo* term emphasizes the Latino men's role as head of household, there is also a negative connotation that specifies physical prowess and male chauvinism. The role of the male and female within the Mexican-American culture contribute to the cultural chaos that Latinas experience. There is a definite distinction between the sexes where males enjoy rights and privileges that are denied to females. This Latino culture specifies the role of females as caregivers who oftentimes assume adult roles in their home where they are expected to do housework and take care of their elders and siblings. The role of the Latina prepares her for marriage and motherhood and, consequently, leaves no room for cultural support for academic and career advancement.

Macho mentality

In the Mexican-American household, parents place a high value on education. In Gloria's family that was indeed the case especially since her father was an educated man who had been one of two Hispanics in the engineering programs in the 50s and the first in his family to receive a degree. Gloria was the oldest in her family, so it was always assumed that she would attend college. However, despite the importance of education, many parents do not know how to guide their children in the process since many parents have only received partial school education in their own country of origin. For Gloria it was a different situation given that her father had already been through the process of higher education. Gloria was greatly benefited because her father was in a position to

help her navigate the system. Gloria went from a private preparatory school to a public school and explains this incident in high school:

In public school, my guidance counselor told me I wasn't college material...I went home, told my dad, and my dad said, "Well you're never going to that counselor again. I'll take care of it for you."

Oftentimes the "macho" mentality worked in favor of these Latinas. The males within the Latino household find their "superior" role one of protecting their own family. In Gloria's case, her father assumed this "paternalistic" role when the guidance counselor told her she was not college material. Gloria's father came to her rescue because of the high value that the family put on education and his own *machismo* provoked him to step in to protect his daughter. He was not going to allow this guidance counselor to deny his daughter a college education.

After high school, Gloria attended college in New Mexico and lived with her grandmother. In Gloria's words:

I lived with my grandmother because I wasn't allowed to live in the dorms and do everything that kids do in college. I got homesick and transferred back to New Hampshire....

Gloria's parents exercised control over her even as she went away to college by not allowing her the freedom to live like other college students. While *machismo* encourages independence in males, it is not a characteristic that is befitting the Latina. So Gloria had to adhere to the "macho" mentality and, in this instance, adhere to the cultural boundaries that deprived her of the opportunity to be independent.

When Gloria returned home, she attended the university and started out as a theatre major with a double major in English. This is what Gloria had to say:

My intent was to go all the way to a doctorate from that very early point to getting a Ph.D. to become a professor. I wanted to teach theater at the college level. I had no ambition to be an actor, but I always wanted to do something along those academic lines. I dropped out in the middle of my sophomore year because my father didn't want to pay for a "nothing" degree which he thought theater was.

Gloria's father exercised his paternalistic role to protect and help his daughter while she was in high school making sure she was not denied a college education. Yet later as she pursued a degree of which her father did not approve, he again exercised his authority only this time using his power as head of household and withdrawing Gloria's financial support. Gloria's father determined the appropriate course of study for his daughter and the theatre and the life of an actor was not acceptable. What Gloria's father failed to see was that Gloria's plan was to use her degree in academia as a professor and teach theatre whereas all her father saw was the major course of study and associated that with acting.

Gloria was able to count on her father's support in high school and also as she began working towards her bachelor's degree until she chose her field of study. At that point her father withdrew his financial support and exercised his power to dictate not only her course of study but her life as well. Gloria was unable to afford tuition and was left with no choice but to drop out.

Although many Hispanic families place a high value on education, it is sometimes difficult to extend that value of education when the Latina daughter decides to pursue higher education. What is communicated to Latinos is not always the same message that

is communicated to the Latinas. Gloria had aspirations of being in a non-traditional career such as a heart or neuro-surgeon or a race car driver. Her hopes for anything along those lines were met with resistance and no encouragement to excel. Initially her father supported her going to college, so much so that he was willing to challenge her guidance counselor and remove her from his influence.

Gloria married and her spouse joined the Air Force for the educational benefits. Gloria did not immediately return to college because as part of the military they moved from place to place and spent time overseas. Gloria finally returned to college at the age of twenty-four and earned a bachelor's degree in psychology.

After obtaining her bachelor's degree, Gloria worked in the education office as an advisor for students who were in the military. She found that she really enjoyed the work, but realized that she would benefit from having a master's degree. Gloria was forced to wait to get her degree while her spouse finished his bachelor's, but once he graduated she returned to work on her master's degree. Being in the military also meant having her spouse actively involved in Desert Storm. Gloria and her family ended up in Germany and her opportunity to get a doctorate came twenty years later when they would be in a place long enough for her to return to school and earn a degree. She researched colleges and universities for a year and chose to go to a university in Massachusetts because they offered a program with a cohort model. Gloria explains:

They claimed to be an adult learning model and they expected you to be employed. It wasn't a program where you were supposed to give up your life to go and get a doctoral degree, which is something I couldn't afford to do.

When Gloria returned to school she once again encountered resistance from her parents in trying to reach her full potential. Gloria's decision to pursue a master's degree and a Ph.D. once again brought about conflict. She gives this account:

The side that was very negative was that my parents were not supportive of my education. They did not see the need. When I got my master's they weren't happy, and when I went to get the Ph.D. they were just totally baffled. Even though my father is an educated man, they really didn't understand what was happening and why I was doing this....

Even though at this time Gloria was married and using the military benefits provided by her spouse, her parents were still not supportive of her education. Instead, she was encouraged to give up her job because it was all "a bunch of garbage" and she did not need a Ph.D. They seemed unwilling or unable to accept her need to further her own education. The message is mixed in that her father is an educated man, but her attempt to achieve the status of an educated female, albeit a higher educated female, was one that appeared to be of little value as far as her parents were concerned. The family dynamics play a distinctive role as they portray the male as the "macho" head of household so, of course, Gloria should never surpass her father in education. This is another example of the "macho" mentality that exists within the Mexican-American culture. Gloria's goals and her decision to pursue higher education that surpassed her father's education were not what he had in mind for her and seemed to pose a threat to his own exaggerated masculinity of the *machismo* male. What's more, Gloria's mother as part of this Hispanic household, accepts her spouse's position leaving Gloria with no support from either

parent. As is customary, Gloria's mother supports her own spouse but her loyalty and faithfulness to him results in chaos for Gloria.

Gloria quite naturally began to question herself as any Latina would when pitted against cultural expectations and her own inner struggle to escape the limited opportunities imposed on the subordinate Latina. It was then that Gloria realized that school can be characterized as a waste of time for Latinas especially if it is not according to the established cultural boundaries. Adding to the experiences of cultural chaos is the support that Gloria received from her spouse's extended family. While Gloria's parents seemed unwilling or unable to accept her need to further her own education, her spouse's family was more than willing to support Gloria in doing whatever she needed to do for herself both professionally and educationally. Gloria's spouse is not Hispanic but of Irish and Scottish descent. His mother and grandmother were both educated women, and they had expectations of females that far exceeded the Hispanic cultural expectations.

Male versus female roles

Another support theme that emerged is the gender role conflict of children raised in the Mexican American household. The females have many roles that they are expected to occupy at the same time: wife, mother, homemaker, and caregiver. At times, they are often forced to choose between pursuing or furthering a career and devoting more time to home and family.

Sonya was born in Mexico as were her parents, but the family moved to the United States not long after Sonya was born. Her parents had only a third grade

education, and they labored in the fields harvesting crops. Sonya remembers working along side them from four in the morning until eight in the evening. By the time she reached junior high school she decided that she would take a different path. Sonya was determined to get an education and also was determined to do well in school, but it was not without its difficulties as she explained:

Since high school, I was very determined to do well in school. I was valedictorian. I did well but there was constant struggle with my mom because she felt like, as a woman, my job was to stay at home and wait for a man to knock at the door, and then I would find a boyfriend that way and she thought I was going to go off to school, get pregnant, do drugs, you know the standard thing that parents fear I guess. And so she was not very much in favor of me getting an education and that's why I said it was a fight. It was that constant struggle to convince her that it was an important thing.

Sonya's mother was not able to provide the support she needed to continue her education so despite the fact that Sonya did well in school, it did nothing to dispel her mother's fears that education would be a waste of time for Sonya. The Hispanic male may choose to be educated without question, but as a female, Sonya was not given the same choices.

Ramona came from a family of ten children and her sister who was twelve years older had finished high school and gone to college. Ramona said that she learned early on the work it would take to be successful in school. This is her account:

I was always a good student. That was clear to me from the time I was little....A couple of things inspired me. One was I had to go to college and I was told if you worked really hard and got straight A's, money would be available.

Even though Ramona believed in the hard work necessary to be successful, she dropped out of college and did not return until the age of twenty eight. During that time she went

to Australia where she married and had a child. Upon her return, she attended college in New Mexico as a freshman before heading to the west coast where she enrolled in college for another two years and studied music. When her first marriage ended, she met a man who encouraged her to continue with school. She returned to New Mexico and lived in Albuquerque where she had her second child. When she finished her master's degree she was at a crossroads in her life trying to decide whether she wanted a teaching certificate or to continue with school. Having decided to teach she still had the desire to obtain a doctoral degree and moved to Colorado, where she enrolled at the university. She was able to fulfill her desire for a terminal degree. Ramona found her money was limited, and she would have to find a way to make the extra money to pay for her education. Ramona spent what she referred to as a "chaotic" time trying to organize her life and finances. She was living in Denver at the time while attending school and teaching in Boulder. Ramona found that she would have to ask for family support to help her balance the expectations of her role within the home with her investment outside the home in higher education. She provided this account:

You know, I was living here and going to school and teaching for a time and there were a lot of times I felt I could not do anything well enough. But I had so much invested, time and money, that I just kept on. Then I was able to organize the family and there was not so much turmoil. I was able to give more time and effort and say we are in business. I then felt that my family and I had more invested and I was able to pursue opportunity.

Ramona found that the expectations of her gender role meant being wife, mother, and caregiver for her family while still trying to accomplish her educational goals. Achieving

this balance was more than Ramona could handle. To balance the nurturing side of the female with the independence and determination of a doctoral student Ramona's only recourse was to explain the investment in her education to her family and ask for the much needed support from them. She remembers feeling discouraged and the constant struggle within her life were enough to make her question what was going on. It was a difficult time for Ramona because she was not able to see the end in sight. Despite the fact that she knew she would "make it" that didn't completely stop the feelings of self-doubt nor the fact that she did not have a very high opinion of herself. But once she convinced her family of the need for their support and they agreed to provide it, she was able to continue on her path toward higher education free from the turmoil she had experienced. Ramona realized that in order to survive her chosen path, she needed to assimilate into the mainstream by establishing a balance between the American way and her historical past. This meant a determined effort to defy her expected cultural gender role. It also meant an appeal for support from her family to improve her chance for success.

Ofelia experienced the gender inequity when she was an undergraduate student. She attended a job fair just prior to completing her degree in physics looking for information on potential jobs. When she walked up to one of the organizational displays, the employees managing the booth took one look at her and mocked her because of her appearance as she explained:

...I went to JPL [*Cal Tech's Jet Propulsion Lab*] to see what kinds of jobs they had, and they just mocked me. Okay, you see how I look, I look kind of young and like a little girl...they said "you don't look like a physicist."

Ofelia's appearance was a source of chaos and role conflict for her because she did not "look" like a physicist, instead she looked like a young minority female. Had she been a male, young or not, there would have been no mockery. Despite the fact that Ofelia's parents encouraged and reminded all their children that they could accomplish anything that was humanly possible, Ofelia encountered difficulties and prejudgments because of her appearance and as a minority female, she did not fit the mold of a physicist, a position typically occupied by White males.

Living in the Hispanic household for these Latinas meant they were predestined to experience the chaos that is a part of their cultural heritage. The participants were exposed to the *machismo* mentality where the male is superior and will protect the female only as long as it does not interfere or challenge his masculinity. It also means that her female role is secondary to the male's role within the household. These Latinas found themselves entrenched in the chaos of this cultural struggle as they tried to integrate their own Mexican heritage with American cultural values. On that note, the next section explores the necessity in breaking the rules of expectations and its significance on the lives of these Latinas.

Breaking the rules of expectations

The second core theme that emerged is breaking the rules of expectations whose supporting themes are goal setting and parental influence. The Hispanic culture dictates

that Latinas play a significant domestic role within the family which means that as women they “know their place.” That means that their feminine role within the family is one of a nurturing and supporting nature and whose responsibility it is to transmit the cultural values and beliefs to the next generation. The traditional Latina is expected to be passive and cooperative. She is also expected to be dependent on the male in the household so much so that she is accepting of her subordinate status in employment and in marriage where she finds herself enduring the male’s indiscretions or failures. The extent of the Latina’s wishes and dreams may only include what is culturally sound and, within the context of her life, that includes its limited expectations. The Latina is expected to be emotionally expressive but not in a manner that is competitive or assertive nor angry or violent. These characteristics are viewed as unfeminine, yet there is no better way to break the rules of expectations than to set goals that are contrary to the customary expectations of Latinas. These goals include competitiveness and assertiveness despite the fact that they would not be tolerated as acceptable Latina behavior. The result of this conscious need by some Latinas to oppose the life that is laid out for them results in divided cultural loyalties. This is how goals helped these participants realize a different way of life.

Goal setting

Sonya always had a love for learning so her childhood school years were a good experience for her and she remembers being very determined to do well in school. Sonya also remembers using school as her refuge from her home life which she says was not all

that great. As stated earlier she spent summers laboring in the fields. While other students were taking summer swim lessons or taking trips to attend various camps including cheerleading camp, she was working from four in the morning until eight in the evening. Though she hated working in the fields, she loved school because it left no time for field work. Sonya remembers that there was never a time when she actually laid out a specific plan to follow for her future, but always knew that everything she did was one step closer towards her long term goal of higher education as she explains:

I'm a fighter. I'm a goal setter. I'm ambitious. I set goals, like the goals right now. I have long term goals and I truly believe you have to set goals in your life. You have short term goals, you have long term goals and you always kind of daydream about those but you don't forget that it's a goal. I'm very goals determined, very, very determined, and you've got to have that in order to get a Ph. D. (Sonya)

Sonya set a short term goal of being valedictorian and that was clear, but to her, it was just one step of many towards higher education and ultimately a Ph.D. After high school, Sonya obtained a bachelor's degree and worked as a student teacher in the public school system. She remembers thinking:

This is not where I belong. It wasn't my comfort zone. I didn't want to deal with all the classroom management things that one has to deal with, and so I went on to get my master's, and I knew that's where I belonged.

Sonya entered college in Arizona and admitted that she was really scared because she was in a male dominated environment. But it was also where she met her first Hispanic female role model. According to Sonya:

...it was so exciting for me because this was the first person that had ever pronounced my name correctly in my entire educational career, and so I just loved

her from the get go. She was a very brilliant woman, still is, and she was a great role model for me...I really thought I wanted to be more like her.

Sonya found working on her degree was extremely challenging and at times had days where she thought it was not going to happen for her but having her prescribed goals constantly occupying her thoughts meant she had little time to think otherwise. She explained:

I was always a goal setter and my goal was to have my Ph.D. by the time I was thirty. I let very little get in the way of my goal... When I have a goal, I envision it, I daydream about it all the time. And when I have a goal, I know it is going to happen. So I never thought no. I refuse to think like that.

Sonya finished her master's program but found that she was burned out. About that same time she was hired as the Director of the Learning Center at the college. She remembers being excited about the job and provides this account:

I remember when they asked me, 'Where do you see yourself in five years?' as part of the interview. I said "I can tell you that in two years I'll be gone because I plan on going on to get my Ph.D. and this is just like a little stopping place for me." And so I knew all along what my plans were. They just slowly came. When I finished the masters, I thought, yeah, I'm tired of school right now, but I want to get that Ph.D.

Even though Sonya admitted to having days when she let negative thoughts invade her reserve, they were short-lived. During the interview, Sonya related that besides being a goal setter, she's a fighter and very ambitious, but truly believes that setting short and long term goals is necessary in life. She is a firm believer in daydreaming about those set goals so that a person does not forget that it's a goal. Sonya's path was not without difficulties because even though she had support from her father, and he was behind her

all the way, her mother was not. She still expected Sonya to follow the life of traditional Latinas, free from dreams and the goals to fulfill those dreams. But Sonya always knew she would finish because she had established goals and her determination to obtain her Ph.D. She remembers students asking her what it took to get a doctorate in mathematics and she responded:

Well, I can't say that it doesn't take some brains. It does take some brains, but more than anything, you've got to be willing to work. That's the biggest thing and if you're not willing to do that, forget it. And, you've really got to want it. I mean **YOU HAVE GOT TO WANT IT** [*strong emphasis*] and if you don't want it, it's not going to happen for you.

So despite the fact that Sonya found it would be more work than she had anticipated, she refused to let anything interfere with her goals.

Juanita knew that when there was something she wanted, she was prepared to do whatever it took to obtain it. Higher education was part of her goals and for Juanita it meant earning a master's and doctoral degree by the time she was about thirty. Juanita got her bachelor's and master's degree without what she referred to as "evil bumps." Ramona experienced some of the frustrations of driving to the university every summer for classes and studying but at the same time found it somewhat easier going to school and working thanks to her mentor who was also Juanita's supervisor. As Juanita said, "I loved her to pieces and I knew I wanted to do well for her." Juanita had what she considered an unusual and exceptional advantage of having worked part-time and attended school part-time. When she got to the dissertation phase though, she needed money to continue with her studies and was fortunate enough to get a fellowship that

provided her with the much needed income to be able to take a year off from work and reach her milestone. She explains:

I was extremely determined that I wanted a doctorate and I knew a long time ago I would work toward that. I pretty much know what I like to do and want to do so it would take a lot for me not to do something to be honest. I was twenty four on the master's degree and about thirty was another milestone.

Juanita's family was the strength behind her, and she received encouragement from them.

Neither of Juanita's parents had a degree, but they were extremely supportive of her desire to obtain a doctorate. According to Juanita:

I have always had a lot of encouragement, not necessarily them saying 'go get a doctorate' but whatever I did they always felt like I would go forward. ...they always thought I was very smart and encouraged me to study hard, and I have always had that support...it would have taken a lot to discourage me...like some catastrophic events in my family that would have changed my perspective, but I am goal-oriented

Juanita was a principal when she was finishing her doctorate. Her doctoral professors were leaders in higher education as well and as it turned out she was involved in conversations that helped contribute material she would later use during the dissertation. All of this helped to contribute to Juanita's success but the goals she set included the terminal degree, and this is what Juanita focused on and continued working towards.

Victoria says that a doctorate was not initially in her scheme of things. According to her, it was not the road she would travel, especially when she finished her master's degree. Victoria was working full-time and going to school part-time when she was working on her master's degree, so it took her longer to get through the coursework. However long it would take her, she knew she would graduate. She was not one who left

projects unfinished. While she spoke very little of her undergraduate degree, Victoria was much more expansive in discussing her journey towards the graduate degrees. Upon completion of her master's, Victoria was done with school and was convinced she would never return. One of Victoria's professors recognized her potential and began to "heavily" recruit her especially since he had a Title VII fellowship of which he was hoping she would take advantage. These grants usually target minorities and women interested in obtaining a doctorate degree for purposes of entering the higher education professoriate. Having been told to think about it Victoria said:

I thought, well, what do I want a doctorate for. I'm perfectly happy here in the public schools doing what I'm doing. I was working as a diagnostician for the schools and I really enjoyed that. But he kept trying to convince me so, I'll try.

Victoria's first experience in the doctoral program was a professional seminar for about thirty students and this first class according to Victoria was, "the most demoralizing class I ever took." Her first assignment was a review of literature and when she got her paper back it was just covered with marks all over the paper. Victoria remembers:

I probably turned pretty pale when I got my paper back because it was pretty bloody looking. And then I kind of looked around and I felt that everybody else was as pale as I was. I think that was one of the things the professors really wanted to stress that now you're on the different level of writing and so you need to rise to those standards, and they set really high expectations.

Victoria realized at this time that she needed to greatly improve her writing and acknowledges that it was probably the most difficult thing for her to do. The oral part for her came easily because as she says she "likes to talk." Victoria believes that this first class served as the "weeding out" process for students attending and by the end of

summer the class was half of the initial group. As the only Latina in the group, Victoria felt the lack of support from fellow doctoral students though she was fortunate enough to form a relationship with a group of Latinas working on their master's degree. Victoria found that she questioned herself many times as to why she was subjecting herself to the frustrations of graduate education when she had been perfectly happy and valued in the public schools. The most difficult period for her was during her first year. Victoria sees herself as being a practitioner, and she was having a hard time with the theoretical conversations which she thought didn't have a bearing upon real life. What helped to turn her experience into a positive one was Victoria's Latina mentor and role model who kept reminding Victoria of the need for more Latinas with advanced degrees. While Victoria initially thought her journey would end when she obtained her master's degree and began the doctoral process with uncertainty, she was able to find coursework in which she took a great interest, and it provided her the focus she needed to continue. Once she was on this more constructive path, Victoria planned for the future. She believed that in order to be successful in higher education it was necessary to establish certain objectives. Victoria shared this statement:

I think a lot of it is just your own personal goal setting. When I went to the various degrees at the university, I did it because I was going to finish them.

Initially those goals did not include the doctorate degree, but she believes they are the way to accomplish one's objectives. Victoria acknowledges being in higher education there are so many different responsibilities, and she can easily become sidetracked.

Parental influence

Within the Mexican-American culture gender roles create conflict for the Latinas. While Latinas are encouraged to follow their designated role within the culture and quietly slip into the submissive role of caregiver and nurturer, there exists another source of conflict for the Latina. The Mexican-American family expects these Latinas to achieve success in order to bring economical benefit to the family structure. As the families of these Latinas acculturate, they see the perplexity of the dominant American culture that values independence, assertiveness, and achievement. It is the same achievement that their parents were willing to have their daughters sacrifice in favor of their own culture dictated by their heritage. Now, gone is the willingness of some of the participants' parents to subject their daughters to a life that is void of assertiveness and independence. These parents who support Latinas in the non-traditional role of the female in the Hispanic household are great contributors in helping to break the rules of expectations.

Sonya's mother was not in favor of her daughter getting an education fearing Sonya would go off to school and find herself pregnant or involved with drugs. But education was important to Sonya, and she shares her constant struggle to convince her mother otherwise. Sonya's dad, on the other hand, was her biggest fan and was there to encourage her right from the beginning. She admitted that on many occasions her dad ran interference between her and her mother:

My dad has been a big influence for me right from the beginning; he's been my biggest fan. There was all the trouble with my mom; he was the referee saying, "Yes, this is important, this is good. She's going to do something with her life, something we weren't able to do." It was great having my dad on my side and him always knowing we could do well, that all his kids could do well, not just me.

Sonya received encouragement from teachers throughout high school who suggested that she might want to go on to college to become a math teacher. As an undergraduate, she considered becoming a lawyer, but found she liked math and ultimately entered that field. Her undergraduate advisor was also very encouraging and recognized her potential by advising her to go on to graduate school. Following his advice, she enrolled in college where she met her first Hispanic role model. Sonya remembers always having good teachers throughout all of her education. These relationships were advantageous to Sonya, but she missed her mother's support. When asked when her mother finally became supportive, Sonya answered:

I think when I got my Ph.D. I actually was cited as an outstanding student at the university...I had to do a little speech, and I did it in English and in Spanish. My mom just loved that and I think that day she realized that I did a good thing. And actually the first time she really ever said she was proud of me was not until much later, well after I'd gotten my Ph.D.

Sonya's mother told her she was proud of her when Sonya was cited as the outstanding young alumni but for Sonya, the words were a long time coming. Despite the opposition received from her mother, Sonya always knew her dad was on her side, and she attributes his influence to the reason she was able to complete her degree and go against the norm. Sonya once asked her dad if he knew his children would do as well in life, and he

answered with a firm “I always knew they would.” When it comes to optimism, Sonya believes she is very much like her dad.

These participants found that in looking beyond their predetermined role in the family, they were able to achieve what other Latinas have not. The parents of these participants wanted their daughters to succeed and demonstrated their encouragement and support in a very open and direct manner. The goals that the participants set along with their parental support provided them with purpose and direction towards higher education and the ultimate achievement of a doctoral degree. Having cleared some of the initial cultural barriers, there are still other obstacles with which to contend as in the next theme of stereotyping prejudices.

Stereotyping prejudices

The third core theme is stereotyping prejudices. Beginning with deficit portrayal which is inclusive of issues such as gender and appearance, character traits, and prejudgements from social interactions and educators, stereotyping prejudices also presents sub-themes of reactions to prejudices and positive prejudices.

Stereotyping prejudices is a term used to describe the various ways critical judgments, generalizations, and assumptions are directed toward women and ethnic groups. These unfavorable opinions classify Latinas without the benefit of individuality and prevent them from expressing their identity. These Latinas have faced stereotyping and other obstacles that discourage success in school. As a result of this type of prejudice, it is necessary to develop ways to deal with or adjust to these unrealistic and

exaggerated pre-judgments. The participants' voices are used to explain deficit portrayal with the supporting themes of gender/appearance, character traits, and low expectations, reactions to stereotyping prejudices, and positive prejudice.

Deficit Portrayal

Deficit portrayal is a term I use to describe the shortfall that is sometimes attributed to Hispanic women. This happens during initial contact by making quick judgments based on gender, appearance, or character traits associated with the individual's minority status and the low expectations as a result of these preconceived judgments. It is deficit because they are compared to majority women and described by what is lacking; they are deficient-deficit.

Gender/Appearance There are misperceptions about the cultural backgrounds of minority women. In seeing the low expectations others have of them these Latinas find they must endure offenses revolving around their gender, appearance, character traits, and minority status.

Ofelia always loved learning because she thought it was "bitchin" and it was "cool" and was disgusted to see how teachers always said to learn something in order to get a good job. Ofelia believed there was more to learning just preparing for a good job. Having heard that explanation from teachers, Ofelia wanted to change that perception and that meant changing the educational system. She teased her friends telling them to vote for her when she ran for political office so she would be able to change the education system. That is how she thought it was done. Well, that was not quite how it worked for

Ofelia. She ended up with a “terrible” boyfriend, and she needed time to get away from him. She was thrilled to discover that going to college gave her six to eight hours of freedom. For her, college was wonderful, and she found that she did well. She started as a history major and discovered later that she enjoyed math. Then, after taking some of the science requirements, she found that she enjoyed physics even more. She referred to physics as “math with glitter on top.” Ofelia’s advisors found that she was very talented and encouraged her to apply for a summer undergraduate research fellowship at a college in Southern California which she received and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in physics. Ofelia went to college only because she was trying to get away from a negative ..personal relationship and find something she could do well. She also found school more rewarding than she ever thought possible. With this in mind, Ofelia couldn’t help remembering an incident that happened to her at a job fair just before she graduated. She describes this experience:

There was an incident when I was an undergrad when I was just finishing my degree in physics and there was a job fair. I walked in and went to see what kinds of jobs they had, and they just mocked me. They said, “... You don’t look like a physicist, you look like you should work in a ceramic shop, ha ha ha ha ha.” They literally sat there and mocked me, but I did not cry until I walked out that door.

Gender and appearance should not determine ingenuity. Yet that is exactly what happened to Ofelia who experienced bias against her gender and appearance. Ofelia was mocked openly because her appearance did not match the pre-conceived notion of what a “physicist” should look like. Ofelia candidly described herself as being “young and

looking like a little girl with poofy hair and a lot of makeup.” So when she went to the job fair to see the kinds of jobs available, she was ridiculed by recruiters. Appearance should not be an indicator of one’s ability nor is it an indicator of worth; yet, in Ofelia’s case, it is exactly what happened. Ofelia along with her advisor sent a letter to the company regarding the incident in an effort to insure better treatment for minority women.

Gloria knew her capabilities when it came to education having attended a college prep school where she did fairly well. As a member of a military family, Gloria moved frequently and remembers moving to New Hampshire and into a predominantly White environment where she was only one of a handful of Hispanics. Gloria’s recollection of her bias experience was at the hands of her guidance counselor who took one look at her before telling her that she was not college material. She provides this account:

...I went to a prep school in Texas that was obviously an academic prep to go on to college... In public school my guidance counselor told me I wasn’t college material. The guidance counselor was an older gentleman with gray hair. He didn’t really look at my record, and I remember being just absolutely livid. I remember walking out of there thinking who does he think he is telling me that I’m not college material? Where’s that coming from? I remember questioning, is it because I’m female?

As one of only a handful of Hispanics, it still came as a blow to Gloria because she knew that as a “kid of sixteen” not only did she know she had a good thought process, but she also knew she could succeed academically. Having previously done very well in the private prep school, this man’s prejudice only served to anger and motivate her. Gloria admits that over the years the advisor’s voice still pops into her head.

Character traits. Minority women are subjected to injustices associated with their character traits or their minority status. Ofelia felt a little out of her league when she learned that her communication was culturally different and might not be socially acceptable. Ofelia's character traits include using her hands and talking in a loud manner which is acceptable communication in a Latino household. She explains the cultural differences like this:

In my family we learned to talk with our hands, we learned to talk out loud, we learned how to bobble our heads, that's how you communicate, that is successful communication. Turns out in the academy, the way you communicate is you don't use your hands, you talk very almost monotonically [*sic*], you only use inflections when absolutely necessary and you always keep an even keel and if at all possible, don't make any facial expressions.

Ofelia found that her different way of communicating was subject to prejudgments of stupidity or lack of intelligence as she went on to explain:

...So it turns out that it lowered my credibility a little bit there and some of the students thought I was stupid and you must look stupid if you talk like you just came out of the ghetto, which I guess that's what it looks like. (Ofelia)

According to Ofelia, this loud, straight forward, and hand gesturing way of communicating looked kind of "weird" and believes that the whole picture she must have presented was one of stupidity. This exaggerated prejudgment as a result of seeing and hearing Ofelia's communication skills didn't allow others to see past the surface to find that she is someone who can easily absorb the concepts of mathematics and physics.

Victoria was able to witness firsthand what can happen to minorities who because of their language differences are categorized as being without intellect and in need of special education. Victoria says:

I saw a lot of students who happened to have been language and culturally different who probably had been misidentified in special ed.

There are instances where children may belong in those classes, but Victoria wanted to be sure that children who were culturally different and were experiencing only language difficulties were placed where they belonged as well. Language and culture are important in helping to shape young lives, but for Latinas that same language and culture contributes to the low expectations toward minority women and provides an opportunity to be treated in a disrespectful manner.

Low expectations. Minorities are underrepresented in higher education with fewer graduates and a relatively low representation in higher education careers. This underrepresentation has an even greater effect on minority women since the expectation level for them is very low. These Latinas realized that with the perception that women are low achievers they, in effect, will not be encouraged to reach their full potential.

Gloria had a difficult time in elementary school mostly, she thinks, as a result of reading disabilities. Reading was especially difficult for her and it resulted in discipline problems. Her parents were constantly at the school visiting teachers. Gloria's aspirations encompassed the non-traditional roles of a surgeon, race car driver, or a pilot. But the one she wanted most was that of a professor. With the discipline problems she

was having, it was hard to imagine that Gloria would ever be able to get into college let alone launch a career as a professor. When Gloria's family moved to California, she was in junior high school and her education turned into a more positive experience. However, she still believes that being Hispanic was a barrier. This is what Gloria shared:

My father was the first in his family to get a high school diploma and a bachelor's degree. He was one of two Hispanics in the engineering programs in the 50s...as a Hispanic female, I think some of my challenges in education have been that sometimes I have felt that I have been held back especially K-12. I think being Hispanic in those environments really hurt.

Gloria remembers being designated as the unique token, and the teachers usually pointed out that she was an Hispanic. Gloria recognized her father's achievement in obtaining his degree in spite of his minority status, yet she felt that being an Hispanic female would hinder her ability to achieve her educational goals. She did not feel that she received the same support or encouragement that is afforded to Hispanic males.

It seems that friends should be able to know or recognize the ability of one of their own yet, in Ofelia's case, that proved to be false when her own friends contributed to stereotyping behavior and making pre-judgments. Because of a cultural background where the Latina is not expected to achieve success, Ophelia's friends did not expect her to succeed. Ofelia's experience at the hands of her friends who held those beliefs despite the fact that they did not verbalize their misgivings in her ability were skeptical when they found that she was pursuing a physics degree. They doubted that she could get a degree let alone one in physics because their perception was that getting a physics degree required extraordinary intellect. They were essentially telling Ofelia that, by

virtue of her cultural upbringing, she would not be able to achieve such a degree.

Ofelia's friends doubted her and could not conceal the low expectations that they had of her potential. Ofelia was not to be deterred, however, by what her friends had to say because she knew her ability and knew what she was capable of doing. Had she listened to them, Ofelia would not have pursued higher education. Ofelia was comfortable with herself and her identity and what she can achieve so she chose not to listen to the disappointing words from her friends and instead told them to get out of her way because she was getting that degree. Ofelia had all that she needed to know which was that she listen to herself and go in and learn what she needs to learn. Here is what she relayed:

...Like for example, with the physics degree, I'm sitting there and my friends tell me oh, you know how few people get a physic's degree? You'll never get a physic's degree.

Ofelia could have chosen to listen to her friends and would not have pursued higher education. Ofelia always had a desire to learn and found it easy so for her it was a very matter-of-fact approach. Since learning was not a problem for Ofelia, she would get disgusted when teachers would tell her what she needed to learn in order to get a good job. Ofelia was one who believed in changing the idea of learning, and she wanted to change the educational system. She knew there was more to learning than just for the sake of getting a job. When Ofelia entered college, she found that she did not easily fit in and even her academic ability was of little comfort to her. For Ofelia, this was one of the barriers of higher education. It affected her so much that she sought professional help as she explains:

...I finally went to the psychiatrist because I didn't know what the hell was wrong, and I knew it wasn't me or my academic ability. I said that I wanted to get out of this business, I don't like this. He [*psychiatrist*] said "Well maybe there's another kind of program you want. I asked if you could just shift programs and go to a different program and he said "Of course you can, everybody does it."

Ofelia did not know how to maneuver through the system, but once she was made aware of the changes she was allowed to make, she found herself once again in charge of her own destiny. That's when Ofelia changed to a different advisor whom she called an expert educator who was appreciative of the variety and diversity of different beings. Ofelia never lost sight of her identity and failed to accept the low expectations that others had of her ability. Her friends, some of whom had never been to college, supported her because they knew how important it was to her. Their support and belief in her had more to do with their friendship and not her academic ability. This attitude is what lends itself to the end result of the low expectations of Latinas. Ofelia, however, did not share their views, and she found that she was able to rely on her own strength and conviction in her academic ability to succeed. Ofelia was not discouraged by the low expectations afforded her even though this contributed to feelings of self doubt. Even though Latinas are not expected to excel, Ofelia believed that others were plagued by the same feelings of inadequacy. This is what she said:

...it's like everybody is in the same boat. Everybody feels that way, and I had a sense that everybody felt that way so I started asking people from graduate students to post-docs to professors. I started asking people "aren't you just wondering when they're going to find you out" cause I knew I couldn't be the only one who was wondering when are they going to find out how stupid I am.

Ofelia was not going to let feelings of ignorance bother her which was why instead of keeping quiet in her physics class she raised her hand to ask questions. She was not one to let a topic go if she did not understand. This is what she said:

As soon as I'd raise my hand 'cause I had the courage to do it, everybody else followed me with their questions. In all situations everybody Black, White, European, everybody's wondering when they're going to find you out, when they're going to find out how stupid you are. (Ofelia)

Ofelia found that with low expectations come feelings of self doubt. Ofelia also found that while these types of feelings are not exclusive to Latinas, stereotyping them only serves to feed into the low expectations mindset that results in feelings of inadequacy for Latinas. Fortunately Ophelia was able to see through it all and gain a better perspective. She was able to acknowledge that the Mexican-American culture contributes to the low expectations of Latinas. Ofelia also found that the feelings of ignorance are nothing more than a perception stemming from one's own ethnicity.

Gloria found herself exposed to biases and pre-judgments directed towards her by faculty. These racial prejudices took the form of singling her out because she was different. Gloria was in a predominantly White environment and according to her she was "a military kid in the school of perseverance." In that environment there were not many Hispanics. She gives the following account:

I was probably just one of the handful of Hispanics. ...one of the things we didn't talk about were the things that come up because of racial issues. Being [*Family surname*] in a predominantly white environment creates some problems and prejudices with faculty and teachers...I was the token, I was unique, and I was always pointed out in the class. "Oh we have an Hispanic." I was supposed to be an expert.

Gloria believes that using her as an example of an individual from a minority class may have been intended as an illustration used to promote some sort of social understanding. But it was not without its problems because it kept Gloria in a separate class, and she was characterized as being “different.” This in itself has the tendency to keep Hispanics from fitting in with the rest of the group and instead continues to promote prejudices not only with faculty and teachers but among fellow students. Yes, Gloria was different and unique, but her qualities and academic ability were never promoted; rather it kept her pigeonholed within a minority group and consequently lowered the expectation level without realizing her potential as an individual.

Ofelia also experienced stereotyping prejudices at the hands of her advisor who made her feel uneasy in class. Growing up in a Hispanic household, she learned a different way of communicating and once in higher education, she found that the difference in communication was far removed from what is socially acceptable. This is what Ofelia had to say:

The potential thing that almost turned me off was a bad advisor....Now the reason why, and I know now why it is, but I didn't know then, I just knew it was uncomfortable. Part of it was just that a lot of people grew up knowing certain ways of communicating that I didn't already know. ... In my family we learned to talk with our hands, we learned how to talk loud, we learned how to bobble our heads. That's how you communicate, that is successful communication.

Ofelia was able to recognize that there were cultural differences that contributed to the pre-judgments. Regrettably for Ofelia, the differences in the way she communicated had a bearing on her contribution to conversations. Ofelia continues:

As it turns out in the academy, the way you communicate is you don't use your hands, you talk almost monotonically. You only use inflections when absolutely necessary and you always keep an even keel and, if at all possible, don't make any facial expressions. And so I didn't know any of this and so it turns out that it lowered my credibility a little bit there...

Ofelia's way of communicating caused her to be perceived as less believable or convincing. She was able to change advisors and found that the new advisor was more open to diversity. In higher education there are others like Ofelia who are different and once under this new advisor, she realized how fortunate to have an advisor who could appreciate the differences in students. This gave her a better chance of fitting in because he understood the difficulties encountered in being different. Once Ofelia experienced this diverse human contact and once in her new advisor's "camp," she knew this was where she belonged. Ofelia found that her association with this group was beneficial because she was more productive in this nurturing environment. Ofelia's first advisor was not able to look past his prejudice of her cultural upbringing and mannerisms as was her new advisor. The change in environment meant that Ofelia would not miss the encouragement and opportunities provided by someone who believes and embraces the differences in individuals. Ofelia goes on to say that for Hispanics, education has not always been a way of life and when encountering someone who has "education back as far as you can see," it really brings about the reality and the differences in cultures.

Ofelia goes on to explain:

I'm having dinner at somebody's house and he's an older physicist and he's talking, he and his wife are talking about oh, when I'm going to wear my

grandfather's doctoral robe. And I'm thinking, oh my god a great grandfather who has a doctoral robe! That's amazing.

Many Latinas are first generation higher education students, so at times it is inconceivable to imagine growing up in a family whose educational history spans decades. As Ofelia listens to the exchange of a colleague and his wife, she comes to realize with a disturbing awareness the differences between Anglo and Hispanic cultures. Ofelia realizes that both cultures may place a high value on education but for the Hispanic population it presents challenges that are not present if you are an Anglo.

These Latinas faced stereotyping prejudices based on their appearance, gender, and character traits that served to allow an unfavorable exploitation of prejudice against them. As if that were not enough, the assumption further portrays these Latinas as low achievers. Prejudices of this nature drastically underrate the ability of Latinas to achieve but based on the next theme, there are reactions to these stereotyping prejudices that create a different and more positive perspective.

Reactions to Stereotyping Prejudices

The fourth core theme is the reactions to stereotyping prejudices whose supporting themes are institutional changes which can serve to stimulate emotions and bring about one's own sense of justice as their emotional response and positive prejudice which can present opportunities in a positive way.

Institutional Changes

Ofelia found that she was not the one who should change but rather the institutions that needed to change. For her it was important to maintain her identity and explains:

I would hope to never lose that...I think the academy needs to change not me. They need to make room for more people like me. I mean the lack of fitting in and my advisor was the same way, he didn't know how to communicate the same way I did, so there was all kinds of missing paths that almost could have happened.

Ofelia believes that she did not fit in because of the way she talked and communicated nonverbally. She also believes that this is part of her culture and this is the identity she wants to maintain. Ofelia continues:

...when Coburn talks border crossing, I never bought any of that until recently when I realized that the crossing for them [*Anglos*] is minimal because it's just the same old kind of talking, it's the same old boring way and they must freak...and I know they do. Some of them have told me that I come on strong, well, it's because that's the way I know. Of course, all my family and friends in New Mexico think I am just normal. Even just a little bit subdued.

Ofelia realized that the institution did not embrace diversity. Her encounter with faculty members confirmed their lack of sensitivity for her cultural identity and values. She felt very strongly the need for institutions to change to accommodate others like herself.

Positive prejudice

Ofelia found that what is customary in one culture may not be customary in another. These differences lead to the concept of diversity which should be embraced by institutions. While it would be best if prejudices did not exist, the reality is that they do exist. When institutions change to accommodate minorities, they provide for positive prejudice. Ofelia explains the diversity of her advisor's class:

I ended up with an advisor who was an expert educator. Tolerant isn't the right word; appreciative of the variety and diversity of different beings is what he was. So I fit right in, I fit right on into that group. I could produce, I could think, I could make new things. Had I not made the shift, I might have failed. But changing to an advisor who was, whose whole camp was, I know tolerant is the wrong word, but open to diverse ways of human contact, is what made it, oh this is where I belong [*emphasis added*].

Ofelia believes that institutions need to change and to make room for more people who are culturally different like her. Gloria also believes that schools need to encourage minorities and provide a platform for diversity. She says:

When I was at the university...and transferred up there, I was unique and I was always pointed out in class...I was supposed to be an expert. Well, I wasn't the expert, but it's kind of an interesting place to be and I think programs like the one I was in at [*university*] really tries to bring in people that didn't normally do well.

Gloria knew what it was like being singled out as different and how it can prevent individuals from fitting in. But Gloria also recognized the benefits of institutions that provide opportunities to encourage those populations to attend. These Latinas have shown that they are able to do well in higher education despite the fact that their culture is less than encouraging.

It is important to note that prejudice can be used in a positive way and can sometimes become an opportunity to affect change. Culturally appropriate approaches to the ever increasing diverse populations can spell success for both the students and the institutions. This leads to the fifth core theme of the games people play that is ever-present in their daily lives.

Concept of Games

The fifth core theme is the concept of games and supporting themes home and school. For whatever reasons, people play games. Higher education is no different and games, whether political or psychological, can result in frustration for students. People who are involved in game playing usually have concealed motivations. Individuals are not always aware that they are playing games during their social interactions. Whether it is a professor who feels the need to exercise power over students or to obstruct the path of students, games are played much to the aggravation of students.

Home

Learning to deal with people helped Ofelia play the game. Working in her father's grocery store since she was twelve years old as a regular employee gave her the fundamental building blocks in reading people and carrying out the social interactions.

My dad owns a grocery store and working in the grocery store all my life taught us how to deal with people, it taught us how to politic, it taught us how to think creatively and how to have ingenuity, all of that stuff that played out in and continues to play out in my work.

Ofelia recognized that dealing with people meant playing the game whatever the situation. Games are not always aimed at the individual but rather the situation. Ofelia kept it in perspective and recognized it for what it is, just a game.

School

Gloria remembers passing her dissertation defense but she had a committee member who didn't even read her final draft of the dissertation until afterward. With

three weeks to make the revisions to submit to the school of education, this committee member wanted major revisions throughout the entire document. And as it happened, everyone agreed with the demands of the committee member making it necessary for Gloria to work literally night and day in order to meet the deadline. Gloria found herself affected physically which contributed to her unpleasantness at home. Gloria found it necessary to learn the rules of the game as she recounts:

I was ready to furlough instead of holding it all...I think if I had not had a spouse who could calm me down and help me step back and take a look at it and get through the politics, I probably would have dropped. It was just that piece of effort; just play the game and get it done. Don't take it personally. Don't take it seriously. Walk up the path up and do it and just get the thing out of there because it is just a process and if you want to do what you want to do with your career, this is what you gotta do...Just do it, and get it over with.

As Gloria's children were growing up she and her spouse told them that education was a game, so when her youngest son saw her frustration he reminded her that she would need to play the game. As Gloria said:

I think part of the reason why you know I finally got the energy to just go back and do it was something that my youngest son would say...You just have to learn how to play it and he could see that mom was quite frustrated at this point. He said, "Mommy, it's just a game, just play it, you're good at playing it, it's good." And that was sort of the last piece at this time. I could play this stupid woman's game.

Sometimes the barriers that are erected seem to be nothing more than a game that needs to be played. For Gloria, even after stepping back and trying to gain perspective, she found that her son provided the last piece of support she needed to regain her energy. It

was the simplicity of reminding her what she had taught her son which is that education was just a game and she needed to play it.

Socializing with prominent individuals at the state level is where Juanita's experience with game playing took place. She was able to observe, discuss, hear, and interact firsthand with higher level leaders. Juanita gave this account:

As it turned out my doctoral professors were involved as higher ed leaders. My professor let me become a student involved in this effort and in fact, ended up writing my thesis. You know I have always been interested in leadership, what makes success, what is the process. The fascinating thing was that I was involved in high level conversations.

Knowing people in high places helped to smooth the way for Juanita. She was acquainted with all the professors in the School of Education and they supported her since she had previously participated in the social interactions with them.

The political or psychological games that affect the lives of the participants became apparent as the level of frustration increases. These games are informal and hidden but are part of the academic culture. It is enough to say that these socializing forces of the academic political system marginalize Latinas are disturbing to them while promoting discontentment. Gloria's committee member played both the political and psychological game at Gloria's expense when she exercised her power during the dissertation process and forced Gloria to conform to the constructs of the game or risk jeopardizing her degree. For Juanita, the political game playing took place during her encounters while working with high level administrators who had the power to facilitate her initial entry into the program as well as the course of her studies. Whether games are

played at home or in school, it is important to know the rules of the game. However, just knowing how to play the game does not guarantee the absence of frustration, so it is also necessary to know what to do to counteract those frustrations. The next theme of coping, helps to explain ways that the participants found to regain their poise and self-control.

Coping

The sixth core theme that emerged is coping. The participants found themselves under stress when trying to overcome the obstacles presented by their home life and in school. The means of coping was either self-imposed or through the help of family and friends. Some of the tactics used by the research participants in coping with various situations included walking away, being the non-traditional student, sharing experiences, and learning the rules of the game.

Walking Away

Gloria remembers that there was much coursework involved in the doctorate program, and she found it challenging. The coursework was set up such that the work done by her relayed back to her work environment so she even found it enjoyable. Gloria was employed in the education office as an advisor to military members and found her psychology degree helpful. Later, she realized that an advanced degree would be more beneficial to her, and when she entered the field of education, she became aware of the close relationship between working and studying in the field of education. When Gloria got to the dissertation phase, she found it more difficult. Gloria got to a point where she wanted to quit because she was tired and found that the writing and rewriting of the

dissertation was consuming her life. Despite the strain of writing, Gloria got the final draft to her committee and was able to successfully pass her defense. Later she found out that her committee chair had not even read the final draft. Gloria was given three weeks to get the revisions done and submitted to the School of Education Graduate School. Gloria's chair wanted major revisions done throughout the entire document, and since all members have to agree on the revisions, Gloria began the painstaking task of revising her dissertation. This is what Gloria had to say:

I was literally working twenty four hours a day for three weeks to get that thing revised to meet the standard. After that second week I thought this isn't worth it 'cause I was physically sick, I actually got sick. I was sitting so much my legs swelled, I was having constant headaches....

Gloria also said that, according to her family, she was not a "nice person" at home either. This is the point where Gloria wanted to quit and walk away. She said that even at this late date she was so angry and frustrated that quitting was what she wanted to do. Gloria walked away but she did not quit. Gloria explains what happened to keep her from quitting:

I walked away from it for two days and said I'm not going to touch this thing. I'm not going to look at this thing. I'm not even going to think about this thing. And I think I actually set it down and went to spend the day with my friend ...and we spent the day shopping so it was good therapy...

Gloria found walking away was her coping mechanism. Gloria was able to dissociate herself from her anger and frustration as she was making the revisions necessary to meet the expected standard. Gloria's spouse and her friend helped her to cope with her situation by helping her to step away and refusing to let her talk about anything

associated with school or the dissertation. They would tell her it was not on the agenda, so they were not allowed to talk about it. All this served to put Gloria in a better frame of mind and allowed her to continue the process.

The Non-Traditional Student

The adult non-traditional students seem better equipped to cope with distressing situations that arise. Their maturity and life experience provided the advantage to be able to handle the challenges that graduate school offers. Gloria remembers going back to college at the age of twenty four. She recalls what it took to travel 100 miles a night and on weekends to attend classes and seminars while working two jobs and caring for a new baby. She remembers collapsing as a result of exhaustion, but she also knew she wanted the degree and gives this account of her return to college as an adult:

I wanted to get this degree. And once I started, it seemed so much easier as an adult to go back to college. It's not an unusual event for adults going back to college to have heard that [*it's easier*] at some time in their history. Of course, it's amazing to me that my experience was not unique that somebody who was not successful in school then comes back to college as an adult.

Gloria's maturity as an adult coupled with her desire to succeed provided the mechanism that allowed her to cope with the challenges of getting her degree. One of Gloria's jobs while a military wife was working with military members in an advising capacity and these contacts seemed to support the opinion on the successful achievements of adult students.

Ramona attended college after high school but then dropped out. After dropping out Ramona traveled around going as far as Australia where she spent two years, met and married her first husband, and had a son. Ramona said:

I went to college for a short while and then dropped out for three years. I didn't go back full time until I was 28...

Ramona dropped out and then returned, but by the time she returned she was older and had experienced life outside of college. When Ramona was going to school and teaching, she remembers times when she felt that she could not do anything well enough. Ramona worked through the difficulties and challenges that came from balancing her home life with school work. She had a low opinion of herself, periods of extreme self-doubt, and financial issues to overcome. However, the problems that Ramona experienced only served to make her a stronger adult able to cope and determined to succeed.

Shared Experiences

Sharing experiences with others is another way of coping with the demands of higher education. When Latinas, who were working on advanced degrees, formed a group they all understood the specific challenges and difficulties each woman encountered during her educational journey. Victoria found that her association with a group of Latinas who were working on their master's degree could each share her experience and knew that they all have something in common and can discuss their feelings openly and without hesitation. Victoria was fortunate to be working in an area that had activities associated with grant programs and, as a result, was able to form

relationships with women who were recipients of these grants. Victoria explains it this way:

....we got to kind of bond on a real personal level. There were five of us who ... helped each other when we got depressed or really not quite sure why we were doing it and why we were there. ...you really start to see other people that have gone through the same experiences you have. And it's ...interesting to ...talk to each other and see how our differences and similarities kind of coincide.

Victoria found the support of this group reassuring because its members helped each other whenever they got depressed or would begin to question themselves as to why they were back in school. Victoria credits her peer group with the staying power because they could talk to each other and keep each other going. Victoria's group found they all shared some of the same experiences despite the fact that all but Victoria were working on their master's while Victoria was working on her Ph.D. Later on after the first year, Victoria met some other women working on advanced degrees. This group of women was working on special education and understood the doctoral process. The bond they shared was instrumental in helping Victoria through the program.

Sonya believed that being a Latina was difficult enough especially because of the expectations to stay home and be the caregiver. But Sonya also saw the difficulties in being a female and a mathematician so she recognized the importance of having the support of her peers. She gives this account:

I can honestly say that the thing that keeps you going when you are in graduate school are your peers. You have to have that little peer group that you study with, that you cry with, that you scream with. You know we just had a team that we studied together, we did everything together. You eat, breath, sleep and you think all about mathematics together. I couldn't have done it without them.

Sonya had a good relationship with and really believed in her peer group because she could be herself and could display whatever emotions were necessary and knew she would still be accepted. Both Victoria and Sonya knew that in their peer group they could share whatever feelings they were experiencing. At the same time, they discovered that within their peer group there were differences and similarities in their situations. This not only provided comfort for them in that they were not alone, but they also found that it provided the support for coping with their situations.

Sometimes coping means shared experiences with family or friends. It is easy to forget that there are people around who also shared in the overall experiences of the participants. Gloria's educational experience included a committee member who was less than supportive. Gloria admits that she had a good chairperson on her committee but that did not prevent the other committee member from angering Gloria enough to want to quit. This particular committee member was not a helpful individual and instead proved to be a hindrance by expecting major revisions on the dissertation after Gloria's defense. Gloria credits her husband with her strength to continue as she relates:

I was ready to walk away, at that late date I was so angry and so frustrated and I really got to say that the support I got was really from my husband not from my chair...I think I probably would have quit if it hadn't been for my husband. I think if I had not had a spouse who could calm me down and help me to step back and get through the politics.

Gloria was angry and needed the support from her chair, but it was not forthcoming. She did, however, find it in her husband. He always supported Gloria with whatever she

needed to do or get done for herself both professionally and educationally. However, in order to fulfill this journey that she had begun, Gloria found it necessary to rely on her spouse to assist in the balance between home and school. When Gloria began her dissertation, her spouse committed to assisting her with the children, paying bills, and doing the housework leaving her free to focus on her schoolwork. Sonya's husband was also a big part of her support system and gave this account:

...definitely my husband who was very encouraging and just willing to let me do this. One of the things I promised myself is I wasn't going to get married until I finished all my school but then I met him. You change your mind when you fall in love and he was just great. It was very very challenging but my husband was very supportive, he helps me out a lot. I have a lot to thank him for that.

Gloria and Sonya both found that coping mechanisms were provided by their respective spouses gave them the much needed support to prevent quitting and the resolve to continue with school.

In Victoria's case, she found her way of coping through the department chair who was committed to doing what she could to help Victoria finish her program. Victoria describes the department chair as a "strict person who is very rigorous." In looking back, Victoria remembers the department chair as being focused on those whom she felt were going to finish and not very supportive of those who were ABDs.

The department chair who was also female, was real supportive of, for the most part, almost all the doctoral students. She made sure that we always had funding of some kind....She was very supportive of me finishing. She really focused on those that she felt were going to finish.

Victoria's chair recognized Victoria's potential and took her under her wing. For Victoria this was a great opportunity especially since this chair helped Victoria to find committee members who would help her to be successful during the dissertation phase. While seemingly a smooth experience, the help of committee members was one that provided coping mechanisms to keep Victoria from suffering more frustration than was absolutely necessary.

Juanita found that her strength came from her support system and from her faith. This is what helped Juanita to deal with situations in higher education. Juanita remembers some of her friends beginning the doctoral program but never finishing while others finished but much later. She was made aware of the barriers that delay completion while others never finish. This is now she explains her support:

I had support all around. I felt respected in my job and that kind of general support as well as personal friends...they weren't necessarily involved in the doctoral program...They were just kind of part of my life and were a social support. I have a firm network of people I know and like with whom I have interacted professionally. Also, I have been grounded in my faith and that has given me a lot of strength.

Juanita had a network of people with whom she was able to interact and who were able to provide her with the level of support she needed to continue her studies. Juanita's friends along with her faith provided the coping mechanisms necessary for her to complete her journey in higher education.

Gloria was in a position where her frustration was almost more than she could bear. Gloria had problems with one committee member in particular who was late for

her defense. She did not prove to be helpful for Gloria and did not provide any feedback on the dissertation because she had not read it in a timely manner. This left Gloria to finish the committee member's revisions into an unreasonably short period of time. While she had already tried coping by walking away, there was still a little more that she felt needed to be done. For Gloria, it was necessary to just vent as she explains:

I've never been so worked up over something in my life as I was with that woman [*committee member*]. I ranted and raved the frustration was just unbelievable.

Coping for Gloria meant going one step further. She had walked away and it provided her with a different perspective and the knowledge that she could do what needed to be done in order to finish. But in order to get to the point of stepping away, she had to vent all of the pent up anger and frustrations. Without having done so, she may not have been in a position to accept the need to walk away to gain another perspective. For Gloria, this was a coping mechanism leading to a further means of coping as explained earlier when she walked away.

Whether the participants were able to cope by walking away or by finding support in sharing their experiences, they were able to counteract the level of frustration and regain their equilibrium in order to continue their journey. So the results of their persistence brings about the results of coping which is the seventh core theme.

Results of Coping

There are obstacles in higher education that contribute to stress accompanied by high levels of frustration that can potentially delay or stop one's educational journey, but

it by no means stopped these Latinas. Instead, the results of coping, the seventh core theme, served to motivate them to achieve. They utilized individual coping mechanisms that afforded them the means to continue their studies. Some positive aspects that stemmed from the ability to cope were identified in the supporting themes which include focus, self respect, refusal to quit, refusal to be a victim, and empathy towards others.

Focus

Victoria and Juanita used the coping tactics to keep them focused. It was their way of not letting anything interfere with the work they were doing. This is what Victoria had to say:

...I really got hooked on the whole issue of language acquisition. I think back on it now, everything that I was doing as a special ed teacher was really geared toward that and this kind of gave me focus. That's been kind of what has carried me through even through higher ed. It's almost like when you're entering a Ph.D. That's the main focus of your life, and it seems like if you're going to succeed you've got to really make it a priority or one of the top priorities otherwise you don't finish and that's what happened to some of my friends who didn't finish. They got sidetracked with other things.

Victoria had a very good indication of what she would have to endure to get her doctoral degree but to her it was worth it once she realized the importance of bilingual special education and the contribution she could make to that particular field. Juanita, on the other hand, was so focused that she avoided the college social life even though she admits it was very little.

I was very focused and I didn't have evil bumps [*unpleasant incidents*]...I was on a scholarship and kept very focused. I was very focused where a lot of students were out partying and doing the things that college life offers. You have to be

disciplined in studying. I was focused and I have been able to make progress that way.

Juanita had many friends and had fun but she limited her activities and chose to concentrate on her studies rather than to participate in everything that college life offered.

Self respect

While quitting was not a thought that any of the participants wanted to dwell on, it had a way of creeping into their consciousness. But overcoming negative thinking leaves room for self-gratification as told by Ramona:

Once I had the thoughts to quit but I kept very busy and had more respect for myself. I had some contact with others and I think that helped me too. I used the time to make myself do more things.

Ramona found that she would not give in to negative thoughts and resisted the urge to quit by keeping herself busy and the thoughts at bay. She found that she could increase her self-respect by simply taking time for herself and finding a balance with that and her need to keep herself busy. Sonya also found self-gratification as she explains:

It's a big sense of accomplishment. I'm very proud of myself...I'm just very proud of what I've done...

Sonya also found that her self-respect came from the pride in her accomplishments beginning in high school where she was valedictorian. When she obtained her Ph.D., she received an award for outstanding young alum at the university.

Refuse to be a victim

There are different ways to cope and these women found ways to handle their given situations. For Gloria, the results allowed her to gain a new perspective and for her

it was enough to keep her from being a victim of the frustration. This is what Gloria had to say:

I think I just needed to get away from it because I was just overworked and overwhelmed that walking away from it and clearing my mind, getting it off the priority list...it gave me time to sit back and calm down and put it into perspective... I think that it gave me wasn't so much a clean perspective or a new perspective, it was just that perspective of 'Okay, I can do it'. I just needed to take a breather, I needed to walk away from it.

Gloria found that when she stepped away, she was able to get a different perspective and while education and getting the degree is important, she found that it is also important to deal with problems stemming from non-supportive parents and a difficult committee member. These issues were affecting Gloria's health, and she needed to get them under control so that it would not delay her progress. She refused to become a victim of her own frustration.

The results of coping for these Latinas were expressed in different ways but whether it was to remain focused, gain self-respect, or refuse to be a victim, they each found a way to channel their use of coping mechanisms to achieve positive results. These positive results lead into the eighth and final core theme of success strategies stemming from the resilience of these participants.

Success Strategies

Having been subjected to cultural biases and misperceptions based on their appearance and gender, these Latinas found ways that allowed them to overcome obstacles placed in their path. This brings about the eighth core theme of success

strategies with the supporting themes motivational factors and success factors. These participants were successful despite the fact they were forced to endure pre-judgments and unfavorable opinions. What they each found was a way to cope with situations that in the end produced favorable results. These Latinas were not ones to give up so it would seem that there are factors that may have contributed to the nature of their success. Since Latinas find it necessary to prove themselves, their motivation endures through the use of some successful strategies as they continue towards fulfilling their objectives.

Motivational factors

Motivational factors include exploiting characteristics, utilizing activist anger, becoming a role model, finding suitable areas of interest, and educators/committee members' demonstrating sensitivity and support.

Exploiting Characteristics. Victoria's father taught her at an early age not to leave projects half finished. So as she was growing up, she became someone who did not give up. She worked at finishing whatever she started as she explains:

I knew I was going to finish, too. I think it's something that my father was always saying, "don't leave things half finished." He was one that when he gave you a job to do, you didn't stop 'til it was done because that's the way he was. He started something, and he wouldn't stop until he was done and looking back on it, I think all of us have that kind of characteristic in us... I don't like to give up and I like the things to have closure.

When Victoria was assigned a job she knew not to leave it until complete. She continually exploits this characteristic because for her it provides closure.

Gloria struggled with reading and math and had discipline problems in parochial school. She believes she had learning disabilities which would have been diagnosed today as dyslexia. Gloria refers to herself as a stubborn and driven individual. She believes that some of the drive which motivates her is her willingness to listen and keep an open mind.

When I think of the struggles that I've had to overcome for myself a lot of it is just, let's say, stubbornness...I'm not going to let a system or a process beat me because it's external. I'm kind of a driven individual. If I start something I'm going to finish it. I think I motivate myself. I also think that part of that is the willingness to listen to people...I might not like what they have to say but the willingness to be open to some of their ideas and use that as a motivation and a factor.

Consequently, Gloria was self-motivated and confident in her ability to succeed in higher education.

Activist Anger. When Gloria got to high school and her guidance counselor told her she was not college material, this served to anger her. This is her account:

...I remember walking out of there thinking who the hell does he think he is telling me that I'm not college material. Where's that coming from? ...this is an era when women are becoming prominent in their sexuality and their own self-awareness about that point in history where the Chicano movement was really getting going. ...so I think there was the activist in me that said who is this man who doesn't know me from Adam and I remember being very, very angry. This individual who had no clue who I was, no clue about my history, was making a generalization about me.

Gloria knew the guidance counselor was wrong about her because she was prepared academically to go to college. She found that she could use her activist anger in a positive way and refused to let generalizations about her stop her from being proud of her

identity. Gloria's fairly high ego and the anger at the counselor's comments served to add to Gloria's motivation to succeed.

Role Model. These participants have expressed the need to increase the number of positive role models to help guide Latina students. These students face a dual minority status and they are struggling with expectations in a home environment that are in direct conflict with a Latinas' hopes and dreams, thus making it necessary for them to identify with successful Latinas to help them to develop a positive self image and to recognize that they can be just as successful. Here is what Gloria had to say:

One of the things I didn't talk about is that there are so few females to have as role models. I think one of my motivators over the years has been that I want to serve as a role model to people. I want the degree for myself obviously, but I think it can serve dual purposes. I think it can serve the purpose of getting me where I wanted to be...but it also serves that purpose to share some of my ideas.

Gloria realized that serving as a role model was enough to motivate her to succeed. She also recognized that she could help others while helping herself. For Sonya, having had a Hispanic role model served as an incentive for her to want to achieve this same status and to follow her lead as she explains:

When I was at the [college name], I had my first female role model, a Hispanic role model. She was a very brilliant woman...she was a great role model for me. She was a great teacher. I've had really good teachers all my life but she was just outstanding and I really thought I wanted to be more like her.

Being a role model for others was a motivator for both Gloria and Sonya. Both saw the importance of serving other Hispanics by providing a positive successful image. Gloria also had another motivational reason for finishing her degree. She explains:

...the thing that got me going back to college at the age of twenty four was that I remember holding him [*my son*] and thinking if I want him to go to college, I need to finish it myself. I need to go back and get my degree.

Victoria also believed in being a role model. This belief was strengthened by her own Latina mentor as Victoria recalls:

...my Latina mentor, you know, kept saying and kind of reminding me that there aren't too many of us out there and so we really do need to do it. So, as far as the idea of being a role model, that was real important to me.

While the need to be a role model motivated Victoria, she found that having an interest in education and specifically language acquisition also helped to motivate and encourage her despite being immersed in studies. In her own words:

...when I started gathering data for my dissertation, that's when I thoroughly enjoyed it. I thought research is what I really like to do and the fact that I was doing something in a field that I really felt a passion for... I started my Ph.D. program in bilingual special ed. There weren't many people who had terminal degrees in that field, and I saw it as a real needed kind of knowledge base that needed to be shared. The idea of really kind of my being a contributor to a relatively new field. I think was just kind of a real sense of keeping encouraged to do this.

Victoria found motivation in her desire to help others as a role model and through her studies in language acquisition that impacts children's learning across all academic areas. Victoria saw herself as a contributor to a field that was still fairly new and having done that she said it was her "aha" moment. This was what she really wanted to do and having realized that, Victoria said it was easy to deal with the doctoral work "that you have to put up with." That's what she believes has carried her through higher education.

Success Factors

There are factors that helped shape their identity and what they became. These participants shared their experiences of parental teachings early on in their lives that contributed to their characteristics. It also seemed to be of importance to find suitable areas of interest and to have educators' and committee members' sensitivity and support.

Parental teachings. Gloria was born in the mid 1950s and remembers having the desire to be anything but ordinary. She wanted a cause that was far from the traditional female role. As stated earlier, she remembered wanting to be some type of surgeon, a race car driver, or even a pilot. But wanting these careers meant getting an education. Gloria's father was an educated man, and it added the value that was placed on education for other members of the family, including Gloria. As she explains:

I'm the oldest in my family so it was always assumed that I would go to college and when I was a child, I had aspirations of doing things that were non-traditional for females...I knew that for most of the careers that I had always thought about, I knew I had to go to college.

Gloria's family placed a high value on education. Having dreamt of taking on a role that was far from being traditional for females and continuing to foster those ideas, Gloria knew she would need to go to college.

Ofelia never doubted her ability to do whatever she set her mind to do. Her father helped to demystify for his children the idea that they had to be extraordinary human beings to achieve success. According to Ofelia:

My dad taught us when we were kids, if a human being can do it then you can do it cause you're a human being. And so I never at one moment doubted that I could do any of this stuff, I just decided which I wanted to do.

The approach that Ofelia's dad used was direct and compared humans to humans not Hispanics to Anglos. He made sure they understood that if another human being can do it then they can also do it because they are also human beings. Ofelia learned this lesson well and for her there was never any question of whether or not she would receive a doctorate. Ofelia goes on to describe other details of her early upbringing:

...in growing up my dad always told us that we were not average, we were above average. It was in our genes, that's what he said and I always thought it and my grades showed it....So whether it's in your genes or in your upbringing, whatever it is, those factors like working since I was twelve years old as a regular employee at my dad's grocery store was fundamental in building the responsibility, the determination, the drive that would be necessary.

Ofelia's early experience in her dad's grocery store laid the groundwork for her strong work ethic that she would come to understand and appreciate later on in life. He was setting her on a course over which she would have control.

Juanita had the strength of character to do what she wanted to do, and she doesn't need anyone's approval to do so. Her parents always taught the children to be proud of their heritage. They should determine what they want to do and do it. This is what she had to say:

I pretty much know what I like to do and want to do, so it would take a lot for me not to do something. I think a lot of that does come from my family. They were always kind of scolding us that we could do better and I really have always tried. ...they always thought I was very smart and encouraged me to study hard and I have always had that support.

Juanita's parents taught the children not to let someone else make their decisions for them. Juanita believes in this self determination and within this teaching she finds her own encouragement.

Finding suitable areas of interest. Ramona went to school for a short time then dropped out. She "did a lot of interesting things over those years." She traveled to Australia, got married, and had a child. She returned to school three years later and spent her freshman year in New Mexico, left there and studied for a couple of years in California. Ramona found that wanting a better career was her motivation.

...I went to school starting in the fall of 1977 and one of the things that motivated me to go back was that I did not want to be a secretary forever. I thought I couldn't study music because I hadn't studied classical music in my life. Anyway, it worked out that I was able to get into music and I just kept going to school.

Ramona's interest was in her love of music and being able to get into that area of study provided the motivation she needed to keep her going.

Ofelia was set on getting away from an unpleasant personal relationship and discovered that college afforded her the perfect diversion. As it turned out, Ofelia loved every minute of the time she spent studying and thought college was wonderful and determined it was the right course for her. She goes on to explain:

I was a history major and then I started loving mathematics. I ended up taking physics and it turned out to be the study of physical phenomena with calculus and I thought this is the most wonderful thing I've ever seen. Then I got my master's degree and all the time I was studying geophysics I kept studying the math education and science education and I was so interested in it and I had no desire whatsoever to stop going to school and because I liked it, it was the thing to do. It was the easiest possible way to continue.

Ofelia found interest in her initial area of study, but as she continued her education, she found herself exposed to and liking other areas, and they all served to hold her interest.

Sonya is another participant who found her interest as a passion for doing research while serving as a role model and helping students. When Sonya finished her dissertation, she was really glad to turn it in; she remembers thinking that if she never had to write something like that again she would be happy. Instead, she says:

I love the research aspect of my job. I like to do research with students and I like to motivate them and encourage them to go on to graduate school. I am very big into that. I work a lot with students and I think I serve as a good role model for many of them.

Sonya is not only helping students with research but her interest in research has extended further so that it includes the possibility that someday she will write some books about mathematics.

Educators' / committee member's sensitivity and support. These participants found that the support of educators or committee members helped them to overcome obstacles. It was especially helpful that educators were able to recognize the Latinas' potential and offer their encouragement and support. This can make the distinctive difference in the motivational factor for Latinas to continue their education.

When Ofelia received her bachelor's degree she knew she was not yet finished with school. Ofelia was fortunate enough to have her advisors and professors recognize her skill and aptitude. She said:

...I wasn't done with school by any means and I had some advisors who told me 'cause I did so well that I should go on to graduate school. And I'm thinking, what the hell is that? I mean, I had no idea. My family did not even go to college, so nobody knew what that was.

Ofelia's dad had a friend who was the president of a technical college in New Mexico to talk to them about graduate school. So after hearing what he had to say, Ofelia decided to go on to graduate school. At about the same time, one of Ofelia's professors encouraged her to enroll in the summer undergraduate research fellowship at [*college name*]. She applied for it and this is what she said:

...lo and behold I got it and next thing you know I'm in San Diego doing an undergraduate research fellowship right after I graduated with a physics degree and I liked it. I liked [*city*] and they [*school department*] worked out a way for me to stay there financially and I ended up staying there and going to graduate school there.

Ofelia got her master's degree and while pursuing one course of study in geophysics, she continued to study math and science education. She was so interested in it that she had no desire to stop going to school and according to Ofelia, "the next thing you know I walk away with a doctoral degree."

Sonya was valedictorian of her high school but even before graduation, she remembers always having wonderful teachers. Her high school math teacher was extremely encouraging and he thought she was a perfect candidate to become a math teacher herself. Sonya excelled in high school so it was no wonder that her advisor was able to recognize her talent and it was talent that would also be recognized in college.

When Sonya got to college, she thought she would like to become a lawyer.

Later, she found that she enjoyed the math, so that is the course she decided to pursue.

This is what Sonya had to say about her college advisor:

As an undergraduate I had a wonderful advisor....He was very, very encouraging and thought I should go on to graduate school.

Sonya's advisors recognized her talent in high school and in college and encouraged her to go on to graduate school. Sonya enrolled at a university in Arizona and this is what she had to say:

I had my first female role model, a Hispanic role model....it was so exciting for me....She was a great teacher. I've really had good teachers all my life but she was just outstanding....You know, I've had wonderful people help me all along the way...

Sonya's potential to succeed was recognized by educators throughout the various stages of her educational journey. As a result, she greatly benefited from their support and encouragement.

Ramona had some financial difficulties in college and because money was tight she had to find ways to make ends meet. She explains:

My money was limited so I had to do all kinds of things extra to make it. I owe myself to this country. I owe my mentor who was a Native American. She helped me a lot. She was helpful because she gave me some kind of values and the fact that it was a matter of pride. I am thankful. It is really hard to explain why she devoted so much time and effort to me. She really got me through and she was so good.

Ramona found it hard to understand why her mentor devoted the time and effort to help make the journey easier. Apparently, her mentor recognized Ramona's potential. She

was able to provide the added support and encouragement that Ramona needed while also instilling in her a sense of pride.

Victoria found her female department chair very supportive of her and other doctoral students. The chair made sure that there was always some kind of monetary funding available and according to Victoria it was a relief for a lot of them. During the dissertation phase, Victoria's fellowship ran out and her chair was able to find the money for Victoria to pay for the dissertation. The department chair was supportive in other ways as Victoria explains:

I think that the department chair she was just a real dynamo. She was always very supportive of me finishing....so when I talked to her about who was going to be on my dissertation committee, she was willing to mentor and guide me toward people who she said would help me finish and help me be successful during the dissertation phase. ...she was just real instrumental person in helping me finish.

The department chair was able to assess the likelihood of completion for Victoria and the other doctoral students in the program. In working with her committee, Victoria realized that there were others who were also interested in her success. She explains:

The whole committee was just real supportive, I think, and it's kind of like well, you know, we've invested in you, too, and we do want you to succeed and want you to be out of here. That was one of the things that they kept telling me, you know, you're not going to leave here until you finish and they kept reiterating that the whole year I was working my dissertation....

The total support and encouragement that Victoria received was because of her demonstrated ability and the investment that her committee members were making. They recognized the extent of their investment in Victoria and they were determined to see her to the end.

These Latina participants come from a culture that does not always encourage women to attend college which can be a source of confusion. Counselors and advisors can be supportive of women and minorities, but they do not all possess the sensitivity it takes to understand the complexity of the Latina's situation as Victoria explains:

When I look back now that we're having this conversation, most of the people who are really supportive were women. My co-chair and the man who really got me started, I had known him since my undergraduate days and when I worked on my masters. He was a person that I took a lot of courses with. He went there to support a person but he really wasn't as perceptive, I guess as the females were in knowing what you needed even though you didn't know what it was. I think the women were more intuitive for the female doctoral students.

Victoria perceived that women's intuition, in turn, lend itself to the sensitivity that it takes for women to understand other women. Ramona also experienced the sensitive nature of women during her educational journey when she said:

One was that my mentor was great, and she still is great. That made all the difference in the world to have someone who was sensitive to you.

Victoria and Ramona recognized the added value of the sensitivity from the female educators to the complexity of their situation. Women are more intuitive and perceptive to the Latina because of issues like pre-judgments regarding gender or appearance that affect women. It may not be that the situation can be solved through sensitivity, but this type of added support is one that takes into account issues that may be uncomfortable or cause Latinas embarrassment.

These participants have conveyed some of the specifics of their journey and some of the hardships encountered in their quest for a doctoral degree. It begins with the

historical segment and the chaos brought about by their culture's expectations. Thus, they needed to break with the traditional roles and, having done that, they found prejudices leveled against them based on the culture they dared challenge. These prejudices brought about reactions from the participants who asked that institutions appreciate the cultural changes to the campus climate. Once inside the institution, though, some participants found themselves used as pawns in the political or psychological games where they were expected to learn to play the game. Being exposed to high levels of frustration in a game playing environment, it was necessary for the participants to find ways to cope from walking away for a time, to sharing experiences with others in similar situations. The results of their coping mechanisms included increased self respect and heightened focus which they needed to continue their journey. They also refused to be victims. Having traveled this far, the participants found motivation in their self-determination, anger about discrimination, and the need to become role models for others. Their resolve was encouraged by parental teachings, interest in their area of study, and the assistance of educators. The journey was not without difficulties yet these participants displayed resiliency and a strength of character that accompanied them every step of the way.

CHAPTER V

The purpose of this research study was to provide a new level of understanding about the Latina's graduate student success in obtaining a doctoral degree. This was accomplished through interviews with Latina participants who have earned a Ph.D.. These Latinas were asked to describe their educational journey from their earliest recollection through completion of the degree. My goal in this chapter is to examine and analyze the phenomenon of this qualitative study and provide a discussion about their meaning.

Discussion

The six successful Latinas in this study have relayed their educational journey and have recounted the events that impacted them on their successful educational journey. Obviously there are no clear cut answers to the Latina's success in obtaining the doctoral degree. As the researcher and observer, I was puzzled at first when I began the deliberation and thought process regarding each interview because the respondents clearly credited their own drive and motivation for their success. While this is obviously the case, the analysis of the data found that the respondents were engrossed with challenging difficulties as they pursued their goals in higher education. At any rate, some of the results of the study are profound and somewhat complex.

The following eight core themes are offered as a synthesis of what the six respondents perceive as the personal and environmental characteristics that influenced them on their successful journey to complete their doctorate.

1. Cultural Chaos

Latinas are exposed to cultural chaos at a very early age so it is important to look at the implications of that exposure. However, in order to understand the chaos, it is first important to bring about the consciousness of the Chicana and her special oppression in this society. Chicanas have a growing involvement in the struggle for Chicano liberation and emergence of the feminist movement and as a result, they are beginning to challenge social institutions that contribute to their oppression from job inequality to their role in the home. They question the double standard, the “machismo”, and discrimination in education which all contribute to the backward ideology that is designed to keep women subjugated. Chicanas understand that the oppression suffered by them is different from that suffered by most women in this country. Chicanas suffer from what is a triple form of oppression, in that they suffer racism because they are a part of an oppressed nationality, as victims of the exploitation of the working class, and their relegated inferior position because of their sex (Vidal, 1971).

In the Hispanic household, men are superior to women. The traditional cultural conceptions of manhood permeate and delineate the male sex role in Mexican American culture (Falicov, 1998; Gil & Vazquez, 1996). This, in turn, leads to the “macho” mentality that is a key part of the Latino male and effectively dictates the gender roles of

both men and women. Within these roles, women are expected to be the caregiver and always “know their place” and are, in a sense, very inconspicuous and unremarkable. This ideology, however, is not dictated solely by the male’s machismo. The Latinas have, to some extent, perpetuated support for the traditional female role of self-sacrifice, passivity, and dependence (Gil & Vazquez, 1996; Stevens (1973). At any rate, these traditional roles of the Mexican-American culture are a significant cause of the cultural chaos experienced by Latinas.

The dissertation work of Aragon (1998) focused on the effort to discover the contributing factors to the completion of the doctorate by Chicanas. Her study examines the personal and environmental characteristics that contribute to this accomplishment. One of the five major themes of the study is the importance of family. Aragon (1998) found that the participants in her study each experienced love and support from family members in a nuclear family setting. The research participants credited the support received from fathers, mothers, and in one case a sister with contributing in a major way to the completion of their doctorates.

The study by Contreras (1993) examines the success factors for both male and female students of Hispanic descent. In that study he also found a strong connection to family citing the strong family values as a key to success. Contreras (1993) concluded that the tight family unit helps individual family members build their moral fiber and values. While these studies have found that a strong connection to the family is a key to success, it is also this same family unit that contributes to the chaos experienced by

Latinas Males are raised as machismo and, as such, they protect and take care of the family but machismo also symbolizes exaggerated masculinity and male chauvinism. I remind you of Gloria whose father protected her when he thought she would be denied a college education. Yet he withdraws his financial support when Gloria selects a course of study of which he does not approve. The role of Latinas in the family system is one of caregiver and dependence, qualities that are not encouraged in males. Sonya and Ramona were both expected to follow their given role but, for them, this expectation becomes a barrier.

2. Breaking the Rules of Expectations

The research participants have dreams and aspirations of non-traditional roles and are in direct conflict to the expectations of Latinas. They realized early on that in order to achieve success and change their conventional way of life, they would have to have a plan that included setting goals. For these participants, the road to fulfilling objectives meant going against the grain and necessitated the need to break the rules of expectations. This is consistent with the findings of Cuádriz, (1993, 1996), Morales (1988), and Simoniello, (1981) who found that Chicanas broke cultural traditions in order to succeed in school.

Traditionally, Latinas are expected to be passive and cooperative and to “know their place.” This expectation crushes the hopes and dreams of the female members of the Hispanic household. Success of the Chicana, though, meeting the educational and professional goals they have established requires the abandonment of their cultural

traditions. (Cuádras, 1993; 1996; Morales, 1988; Simoniello, 1981). My data agree with those findings because these participants were unwilling to give up their aspirations and, instead, establish their own goals to help them achieve success.

There are numerous studies done on Latinos where participants share the same backgrounds (Aragon, 1998; Blea, 1995; Gándara, 1992; Martinez-Martinez, 2001) and who have moved beyond the poverty level. In order to achieve that success, these participants recognized early on that maintaining their goals would provide economic advancement. Sonya remembers the summers spent laboring in the fields while other students were participating in more exciting activities of summer. Sonya knew that this type of labor would not become part of her adult life. School became her refuge, and she always knew that her goal included being valedictorian, which would bring her closer to her long term goal of higher education, complete with greater employment opportunities and economic freedom. Juanita and Victoria's experiences did not include working the fields but both recognized the economic advantage of higher education.

In addition, parental support gave some of the participants confidence in themselves allowing them to strengthen the resolve that was essential in breaking the rules. In order to continue with their aspirations, it is encouraging to have parental support. As I mentioned before, Latinas are exposed to cultural conflict when they are expected to maintain their passive and submissive gender role within the family who also expects them to be high achievers who will bring economic benefit to the family. There are some parents, however, that while recognizing the traditional role of the Latina, will

sometimes forego their own cultural expectations in favor of their daughter's independence and attempt to secure an even better life by furthering her own education. The participants in Gándara's (1994) study stressed the crucial support of the mother. In my study, both parents were equally supportive with the exception of Sonya and Gloria. The support that the other participants received was not so much aimed at their education. Instead, each participant was encouraged to find fulfillment and success. In Gloria's case, however, neither parent supported her, because they did not see the need nor could they understand her reasons for pursuing higher education. During some of Gloria's most crucial and difficult times, her mother was unsympathetic and would tell her to quit rather than encourage her to proceed. Sonya's mother was not in favor of her education because she failed to see the value of it. Sonya's mother still let culture dictate her way of thinking and that meant that Sonya's job was to stay at home and wait for a man to knock at the door. Sonya described her mother's fears that Sonya would go away to school, find a boyfriend and get pregnant, or get involved in drugs. It wasn't until Sonya obtained the doctoral degree that her mother finally changed her mind and offered Sonya a show of support. Sonya's father, on the other hand, recognized that as parents there were limitations on what they could do for her and that she was perfectly capable of relying on her own resources. Sonya's father, however, was determined to provide as much support as he was able.

3. Stereotyping Prejudices

The participants experienced prejudices because they were women of Hispanic descent were portrayed as lacking ambition and academic intellect. As a result, some of these participants were subjected to expectation levels that they knew were well below what they were, in fact, capable of achieving. Judgments of this nature can be detrimental to some individuals. In Ofelia's case, some of her friends made disparaging remarks regarding her ability to achieve. She experienced the same type of discouragement later by complete strangers when she was judged on her appearance instead of her ability of which they had no knowledge.

Gloria experienced difficulties in elementary school as a result of what she believes to be a learning disability. But by being of Hispanic descent, she was characterized first of all as being different and then as a problem child void of academic ability. Victoria, while not experiencing the problems that plagued Ofelia and Gloria, did have first hand knowledge of minority children who were misidentified and placed in classes where they didn't belong simply because they were culturally different. These women were explicitly aware of the prejudices as deterrents in their lives.

LePage-Lees (1997) tells of women from disadvantaged backgrounds feeling uncomfortable and finding the need to hide unusual or negative aspects of their lives. In doing so, they isolate themselves and begin to question whether their difficulties are a result of being different or because they lack talent. Remember Ofelia who was attending a job fair and ridiculed for her appearance. She chose not to accept this type of treatment

because she knew she was every bit as good as others, and she would be graduating as a physicist. Though Ofelia was hurt and to the point of tears, she fought back with the help of her adviser and together sent a letter of reprimand to the company in an effort to insure better treatment for minority women.

4 . Reactions to Stereotypical Prejudices

When dealing with stereotypical prejudices there is the likelihood that there will be reactions to these situations. Ofelia saw this interview as a forum to express her view on an issue that was of importance to her. She sees no need to change her identity; instead, she sees the need for institutions to make changes to accommodate individuals who are culturally different. It is a way to help others by lessening the institutional barriers to which they are subjected. Likewise, Adams (1993) recommends that universities should be supportive and reactive to the unique needs of the student. Schools should not be expected to assume the total responsibility for the wide range of students' needs and desires but should be interested in their intellectual and emotional fulfillment. It begins with understanding the cultural norms of students and the economic impact as a result of their participation within the institution. Instead of ignoring prejudices the need to accommodate students should be carried into the classrooms where promoting diversity is a means to encourage a more positive support system.

5. Concept of Games

These women have experienced considerable game playing. Consider what Ofelia learned early on as she worked in her father's store. She spoke of the need to deal with

people and how it taught her to “politic.” She knew that games were played then and would continue to play out in her work later on. These findings are consistent with the theory of McCubbin and McCubbin (1991) that learning how to cope with adversity and stress, and adjusting to different environments depends on having done so successfully within other domains. The politics Ofelia learned in her father’s store prepared her for what was to come and reminiscent of Ramirez (1998) who argues that people with working class backgrounds who arrive to graduate school already have instilled in them the survival mechanisms that make them intellectually accommodating.

In Gloria’s instance, her experience of game playing came at the hands of educators who found it necessary to exercise power over students. This episode affected Gloria immensely and for her was physically draining but she found herself reminded by her son that it is only a game and all she has to do is play it. Gonzales (2005), in his dissertation, discusses the doctoral challenges of Latinas and describes the doctoral academic socialization as a “game” that has to be played. Learning the culture of the academy means learning a system of power that maintains the status quo and marginalizes students with different backgrounds. In graduate school, there are faculty members who possess a great deal of power over the outcome of students’ educational and professional careers (Alvarez-Galvan, 2001).

Juanita’s game playing happened during the hours she spent socializing with prominent individuals. She played the game to the extent that it helped smooth the way for her in higher education. This is consistent with the study by Gonzales (2005) that

describes the academy as “the type of institution one tries to survive, so it is critical to build alliances with the people in power.” The networking made the doctoral experience worthwhile.

6. Coping

The women in this study determined it necessary to find ways of coping with difficult situations in order to stay on their educational path. Chicanas with Ph.D.s must deal with the constraints of cultural expectations and, as a result, they developed sophisticated coping mechanisms. They learned to live with the conflict that surrounded their expanded gender roles at the expense of their emotional and psychological repercussions (Martinez-Thorne, 1995). Learning to cope is necessary since the conflict they experience clearly presents itself in higher education. Gloria, you may recall, was at the point of quitting because of the barriers she encountered due to the lack of support from one committee member. She felt an obvious need to walk away and regain her perspective.

Coping with the demands of school and home life can be difficult but sometimes can be easier to return as the non-traditional student. Students drop out for a variety of reasons including financial considerations, competing responsibilities, lack of focus, motivation, and maturity only to return later as older, more motivated and mature students (Aslanian, 1990). My data agree with those findings. Gloria and Ramona both found that they were ready when they returned to school years later and also found that

they seemed better able to take obstacles in stride. They may have been non-traditional students, but their maturity helped them to cope.

Victoria and Sonya found that when they shared their experiences with their cohorts it was their way of finding the support they needed to cope with situations that arose. Seeing and hearing from others who have experienced some of the same problems sometimes presents solutions. These findings are consistent with the dissertation of Vaquera (2005) who reports the successful progress of students through the doctoral program who have reached out to other students to form support groups. This peer support group provided both formal and informal ways of sharing information from cultural history or ethnic identification that was important to their success.

Juanita had a support system as well but for her it was also her religious faith that gave her the strength to cope. The dissertation findings of Servin-Guerrero de Lopez (2002) also found that the participants embraced religion as a guide for them when facing difficult situations. It is also of significant to them because faith is associated with their roots, an important aspect for personal growth and identity.

7. Results of Coping

The stress of school and home life is apparent in these women but their ability to cope with the problems helped them in other ways. These Latinas faced the challenges with renewed strength and hope which was a factor in keeping them focused as Juanita and Victoria found. They were determined not to let anything interfere with their education not even the college social scene. While Patterson (1998) found that sororities

and other social events have positive effects, they prove to be distractions that affect academic performance.

Ramona and Sonya, on the other hand, found nothing but self-respect as a result of their ability to cope. Successful Chicanos also overcame personal limitations (Morales, 1988). Chicano students are plagued with self-doubt, insecurity, lack of self-confidence, lack of credibility, and fear of failure (Gándara, 1995; Morales, 1988). Chicanas have outperformed men yet they received less recognition for their achievements and as a result held lower academic self-concepts (Williamson & Fenske, 1994) and on entering higher education, are consumed with self-doubt (Rendón, 1996). This study is congruent with Vásquez (1982) who reports that even though minority students entered college with academic disadvantages, they prevailed because they had a desire to improve their situation. Ramona overcame negative thoughts as she continued with school and it seemed that the busier she kept herself in school the more self-gratification it provided. Sonya also saw her accomplishments as a source of pride.

The results for Gloria were extremely profound. Despite all of her frustrations with school and home, she refused to be a victim because this was not her way. For her, the ability to cope meant she wasn't going to give in. Cuádriz and Pierce (1994) use the term "endurance labor" which they define as the "relentless drive to persist, in spite of adversity, and many times, because of adversity." Gloria's persistence and ability to cope only served to fuel her desire to complete her Ph.D.

8. Success Strategies

The motivation for success was a result of the ability by the participants to exploit their own characteristics. Two of the participants were able to exploit their own stubbornness while another used her anger in a positive manner to exact success. . Sonya and Victoria found that finishing for the sake of others was important to them. Their success meant that they were able to serve as a positive successful image and role model for others. This is consistent with Martinez-Thorne (1995) who reports that women with doctorates demonstrated a strong desire to help others achieve, especially other Latinos. As well, Gándara (1982, 1995) found that Chicana Ph.D. recipients succeeded because they wanted to set an example for Chicanos.

For other participants, it was the challenge of the course of studies in higher education because they were still able to find areas that held their interest. Some of the participants found success supported by committee members who were sensitive to their efforts. Being self-motivated and having established goals, these women were determined to succeed and this positive relationship with faculty helped them in their sense of accomplishment as well as academically. Gándara (1995) found that success for Chicanas with doctorate degrees (Ph.D., M.D., or J.D.) was the result of drawing strength from their culture and ethnic identity. In the same study Gándara studied Chicanos but the information on this gender is not presented because it is not the population of my study. While this may be true, this study found that there are other factors contributing

to the success of these Chicanas. The study's participants were able to exploit their distinctive characteristics to their advantage.

In looking back at the themes that emerged from this study, it is noticeable that some of them are closely related and some are not. It also seems that some themes appear to be more significant than others. The complexity remains because the answers to the research and interview questions cannot be positively attributed and assigned. Certainly, the women in the study had aspirations and despite the cultural conflicts and expectation levels experienced, their acceptance was not forthcoming. They felt compelled to persevere with their goals for success. Whatever fueled the desire to complete the Ph.D., it is certainly possible that women with strong self-motivation are further motivated by negative social support in their lives and it appears to them as a challenge to be met and conquered. The personal hindrances which might undermine the intentions of some women seem to have strengthened the resolve in the women in this study.

EPILOGUE

The Journey

When I began the doctoral program, I remembered that there was one question utmost on my mind, one that continually plagued me: Why do Latinas stay on their educational path and receive their doctorate? It bothered me because I believed that they were at a racial and gender disadvantage. This is a question that for me was just begging to be answered. I remember reading about the challenges and barriers that minority women face in higher education yet despite this they have maintained a course of study to join this “elite” club. As I worked through the research and began the writing I thought the answer I was searching for would become clear but instead left me feeling more confused than ever. While there are race and ethnicity issues that overshadow the cultural and institutional barriers faced by these participants, there are still no clear cut answers on what makes these students persist through every academic level. Despite encountering major emotional difficulties, they emerge confident and positive in their ability to achieve.

As I look back to the beginning of the dissertation phase, I remember that never once did I give thought to the writing that would be more than I had ever written, nor the considerable amount of research required in order to be able to sound like an “expert.” This was and is the greatest obstacle I have encountered in my life. The researching, writing, and defending the dissertation became one of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences of my life.

This journey for me was an isolating and confusing one because I believed that once the research and writing was done, I would have the answers I was seeking. In fact, I feel more confused than ever. But out of the confusion I gained a new perspective on my identity, especially in relation to my origin. I have grown through this process because I have been taught not to judge, how relationships help to shape a woman's identity, and how the path to self-discovery can be enlightening.

Early Education Experience

I grew up in a working-class family. My mother stayed home until my five siblings and I were of school age. Later when she began to work, she would get up early and get all of us ready to go to school. Then she would catch the bus heading downtown where she was employed as a production worker in a stationery factory. Even though my father only went as far as the eighth grade and my mother the eleventh, they believed in the value of education. Wanting to give us what they believed to be a good academic foundation on which to build, they worked to be able to afford the tuition to send the six of us to the Catholic elementary school where we learned the fundamentals. I remember wanting to continue my education at the Catholic high school, but my mother explained that there was no money available for that.

Unlike some of the participants in my study, our family was not deeply immersed in the cultural chaos to the same extent. My father had a stronger belief than my mother that women's work was inside the house while the men worked outside doing chores, yet he was considerate enough to know the limits on a woman's time. I remember most that

he would take the time to mend his own socks or trousers whether by hand or on the sewing machine rather than to add to my mother's burden. There was no machismo in his attitude and both (*my mother and father*) had an ever present respect for each other. I have thought many times of the values and principles that were instilled in us and how my parent's influence was absent of prejudices and judgments. I always thought that everyone grew up similar to me.

When I began my public education, I discovered that I had already covered much of the material in the previous two years. Despite my ability to excel, no one in the school ever bothered to suggest that perhaps I could skip what I already knew. As a result, I began to put less and less effort into my studies and did mediocre work because I knew I could get away with studying little and doing well.

Higher Education Experience

After graduation, I enrolled in college, but I felt confused and overwhelmed; I left after only a couple of semesters. I returned to college many years later when I was more mature and confident enough to ask the right questions and maneuver the system. While somewhat anxious at returning as a non-traditional student, it was short lived and my resolve to obtain a degree took over. Soon after I began classes, I found that I enjoyed learning and can now relate to one of the participants in my study who felt that learning shouldn't always be mandatory; she believed that it was "bitchin cool." I also loved to learn for the sake of learning. During that time, there was only one incident that helped to strengthen my resolve to finish the education that I had started. I wanted to apply for

one of the academic scholarships available so I approached a professor and asked him if he would write the letters of recommendation needed to submit with my application. He told me that it would not do me any good to apply. He said that all qualified students are listed by their GPA (Grade Point Average) and then draw a line based on the available funding for the scholarship. Those above the line will be granted scholarships while those below will not. He clearly believed that I would fall below the line based on the stringent academic guidelines of the scholarship. I am able to relate to one of the participants in my study who said that she was judged on appearance. She wondered if the prejudice that she experienced was because she was a female, Hispanic, or both. I, too, wondered what it was that made this professor think I was not capable of making the grade. I have never forgotten this incident and this, along with three years of the scholarship, provided the extra bit of motivation to continue with my journey.

The first classes in the doctorate program were quite similar to other classes though a bit more of a challenge. Belonging to a cohort group and having the structure of classes was a benefit and one that I would miss the most. I especially remember the feelings of extreme stress and test anxiety as I doubted my ability to pass the GRE (Graduate Record Exam). While my adviser kept reassuring me that I would pass, I discovered that, just as the Latinas of my study had discovered, that self doubt can consume one's thoughts. These doubts continued as I began the proposal writing.

Dissertation

Challenges

Once the research and writing process began, I encountered the first challenge. The loss of the cohort group left me distracted and feeling isolated. There was no one with whom to share any self-doubts and fears of success. Even though the relationships remained, everyone was busy with their own study and conducting their own research.

The second challenge was full-time employment and only evenings and weekends for study and research. I missed the structure that classes provide where our time was governed by timeframes and deadlines. I learned from this experience that I function better with structure and tight deadlines. I also learned that researching and compiling the information was far from boring, on the contrary, it was interesting and in some cases, eye opening to read the experiences of other Latinas.

The third challenge was dealing with the various problems that are part of life. My spouse and I moved to Denver to be closer to our jobs where he worked as a contracted courier while I worked at one of the larger hospitals providing healthcare enrollment services. At that time, we were driving approximately 150 miles one way for almost a year and the exhaustion became more than we could handle. The job that I had begun was in a newly formed department and required a great deal of effort and concentration because the policies and procedures were being (newly) developed first hand. Other life episodes included working through the health issues that plagued my spouse.

Support Systems

Being a first-generation and a non-traditional college student was exciting yet stressful. It is exactly as Attinasi (1989) and Richardson and Skinner (1992) discuss about the first-generation college students who had no one to guide them through the college experience since no one in their families had gone before them. For example, there was no one to show what paperwork to complete for financial aid. Many people demonstrated their support by offering to help even though they knew they might not be of much assistance. Others simply said to let them know should I need anything at all. The encouragement that was provided to me whether consciously or unconsciously was genuinely heartwarming because it is difficult to know how to offer support since not many people embark on a journey to obtain a Ph.D. It is truly one person's journey and this is one that I own.

Family

I always knew I had my parents' support. It was never overbearing but a combination of subtle influence and pride. If they had misgivings or didn't understand my reasons they maintained their resolve so as not to discourage me. Both parents have since passed and my only regret is that they will not be there to celebrate this ultimate accomplishment for our family. My father died the year before I graduated with my bachelor's degree. My mother was in a car accident on her way to my graduation when I received my master's degree. Even now as I write this I am filled with sadness and tears because I will never see what I believe would have been one of their proudest moments.

My sisters and brothers live in another city but provide their quiet support from a distance. No one in our family has ever walked this path and I'm sure no one was prepared for the length of time it could take to finish. I know at times they wondered if I was really still taking courses or if I would ever finish.

My husband was always confident in my ability and told me I would finish. He lived every moment of the dissertation phase right along side of me and was my inspiration. He sensed when I needed that extra bit of support and encouraged me while I struggled and shed tears over the obstacles of the dissertation. I was almost to the point of quitting. He told me that it would be all right if I did not finish, but also reminded me of the time I had invested. And knowing me as he did, he knew that I would never forgive myself if I did not finish. I would have to live with the decision for the rest of my life. He took over all household duties to keep me free to concentrate on the research and writing because he knew I needed the focus.

My in-laws encouraged me as well. My husband's parents, aunts and uncles, and other relatives and friends kept abreast of my progress. Family gatherings came with questions of interest and undeniable support.

My family provided the encouragement and motivation needed for me to complete my dissertation. From the unconditional support and thoughtful encouragement of my spouse to my parents' and sibling' continued interest, I could not fail.

Friends and Mentors

I have one friend that I met in the master's program and we have both been in school for what seems like forever. Since we have spent time in class together we have become each other's mutual support system. This is a friendship that I value because we both understand the demands of higher education and we are able to discuss, listen, and encourage each other during an emotional meltdown. For me, it is a time when the frustration level is so high due to the demands of balancing a career, school, and home life. It is a time when chaos rules, emotions run high, energy runs low, and quitting seems to be the only answer to restore stability. I know I can count on the support and understanding this friendship provides because my friend has firsthand knowledge of the difficulties encountered when seeking advanced degrees.

I have also received a great deal of support from friends and coworkers. Their words of confidence in finishing my program provided the reinforcement needed especially after spending long periods of time researching and writing. When I am no longer able to concentrate, I appreciate the call from one of my friends who wants me to just get away for a few hours to "restore my perspective" and "reenergize". She has a firm belief in my ability but knows I must regain my focus if I intend to graduate.

I must also mention the support that my adviser gave to me. Being a distance learner was difficult in itself, but he always provided the encouragement needed when I would visit the campus. After class or after meetings where we discussed my progress, I would leave the campus with a renewed commitment to finish. I would be revitalized

and would exploit to the fullest the positive energy that I felt. The rest of my committee were also supportive and have proven to be invaluable. These individuals truly understand what it takes to move in, move through, and move out of the dissertation process.

Identity

I have always wanted to achieve goals that few others could but felt intimidated primarily because a Ph.D. recipient was considered an intellectual. I have wanted this doctorate for as long as I can remember. But I never thought about it in terms of what it could do for me. It was more about a sense of accomplishment and pride that accompanies such a feat.

Self discovery

I discovered many aspects about myself during the dissertation process. The first is how much I enjoy learning. As a result, I found that it provided an escape for me and on many occasions, was my salvation from the more unpleasant aspects of work. I also discovered that this process has deepened my self-respect while at the same time provided me with a humbling experience throughout the preparation of this dissertation. I no longer have to feel inferior and hope instead to be able to inspire others. I have never felt that I was smart but what I have always believed is that given the same opportunity as others I can learn. This, in itself, does not guarantee success. It takes more and I have proven that anything is possible with persistence, drive, determination, and endurance. My self-confidence has taken a gigantic leap. I continue to discover the

personal changes that have taken place, but it has been an enjoyable path to discovery. What is the greatest benefit to me? I explored my own ethnicity and culture, and that exploration helped me in my own development and growth. This research and writing has instilled in me a deeper sense of pride. I am a woman of Mexican-American descent and I admire and value my own Latino culture.

Recommendations

It is important for institutions to meet the expectations of Latinas in higher education if the number is to continue to grow. They must meet their needs but the institutions must first and foremost determine what attracts these students to begin with and what factors help to retain them. It is important that colleges provide a platform that allows women to voice who they are, what they need, and be able to express their opinions in their own words.

The women in this study were evidence of the power of motivation as a source of success in school albeit not as a single factor. As their journey progressed, these Latinas met each challenge head on and it served to strengthen their resolve and perseverance. The strength of these women and their desire to succeed is what every institution would like to attract and subsequently retain. The recruitment strategy should include the thoughts and expressions of Latina students as relevant information to be used to recruit similar students. Once on campus, though, it is important for colleges to determine what they can do to maintain the success of students who have the desire to achieve. Some of the women in this study found strength in their relationships with other students and faculty mentors/role models which they found to be fulfilling. Institutions should look at the role of instructors in the recruitment and retention of Latina students since they may play a key role in preventing attrition.

Recommendations for Additional Study

There are several recommendations for additional research which should be considered:

1. A study to determine the perceived positive/negative outreach activity factors of students as the reasons for enrolling or not enrolling in higher education. This study would provide institutions with insight that would improve presentations for students considering higher education.
2. A qualitative study to determine the impact of outreach activities on the number of Latinas successfully completing a Ph.D. program.

3. The effects of mentoring programs geared specifically to graduate education.
4. The effects of assertive vs non-assertive Latinas in graduate programs. This would be beneficial to ascertain if women who find their voice experience equal or greater success.
5. A study to determine motivation and success in traditional vs non-traditional college students and the level of education achieved.

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