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Testimonios Of First-Generation, Multilingual, Latina Doctoral Students At The U.S.-México Border

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by

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A cada uno de ustedes les dedico este trabajo con todo mi cariño.

Abstract

This qualitative study is developed with the idea that the socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students are found in the socially constructed institutional culture of a university at the U.S.-México border. Furthermore, Latina doctoral students are considered active agents in their development as scholars and co-creators of culture. Thus, this study looks at Latina doctoral students' ways of knowing as assets used to shape their experiences in a way that benefits and empowers them. Specifically, the study expands on the existing research on socialization experiences at the doctoral level to explore the understudied significance of language and being a first-generation doctoral student. Data were derived from testimonio interviews and pláticas with six Latina doctoral students at different stages in their doctoral programs. Data collection and analysis occurred using testimonios as a methodology within a Chicana feminist epistemology and a Latina Critical framework. Findings are presented as participant testimonios that was co-authored with the participants. The most salient socialization experiences narrated by the participants included mentorship, family support, colleague support, and apprenticeship opportunities.

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1. Chapter I: Introduction

1.1. Statement of the Problem

From 2009 to 2018, the total number of earned doctorates across all fields of study grew from 49,552 to 55,195 in the United States (National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics [NCSES], 2019). During the same time, the number of women earning doctorates increased from 23,187 to 25,368, representing almost 46% of all doctoral degrees awarded. Although the number of women who earned doctorates has remained relatively stable over the last decade, there were more significant changes among women of color[1] who earned doctorates. Specifically, between 2009 and 2018, there was an increase of 26.74% for Latinas, 24.59% for Asian-American women, 11.47% for Black or African American[2], and 77.30% for multiracial women who earned doctoral degrees. Graph 1 shows the number of women who earned doctorates by race between 2009 and 2018 (NCSES, 2019). This is especially important as the U.S. population undergoes rapid racial and ethnic change, led by the growth of the Hispanic/Latino and Asian American people, and as African Americans, Latinos, and American Indians continue to lag behind Whites and Asian Americans across a broad range of social, economic, housing, and health measures (Mather et al., 2019).

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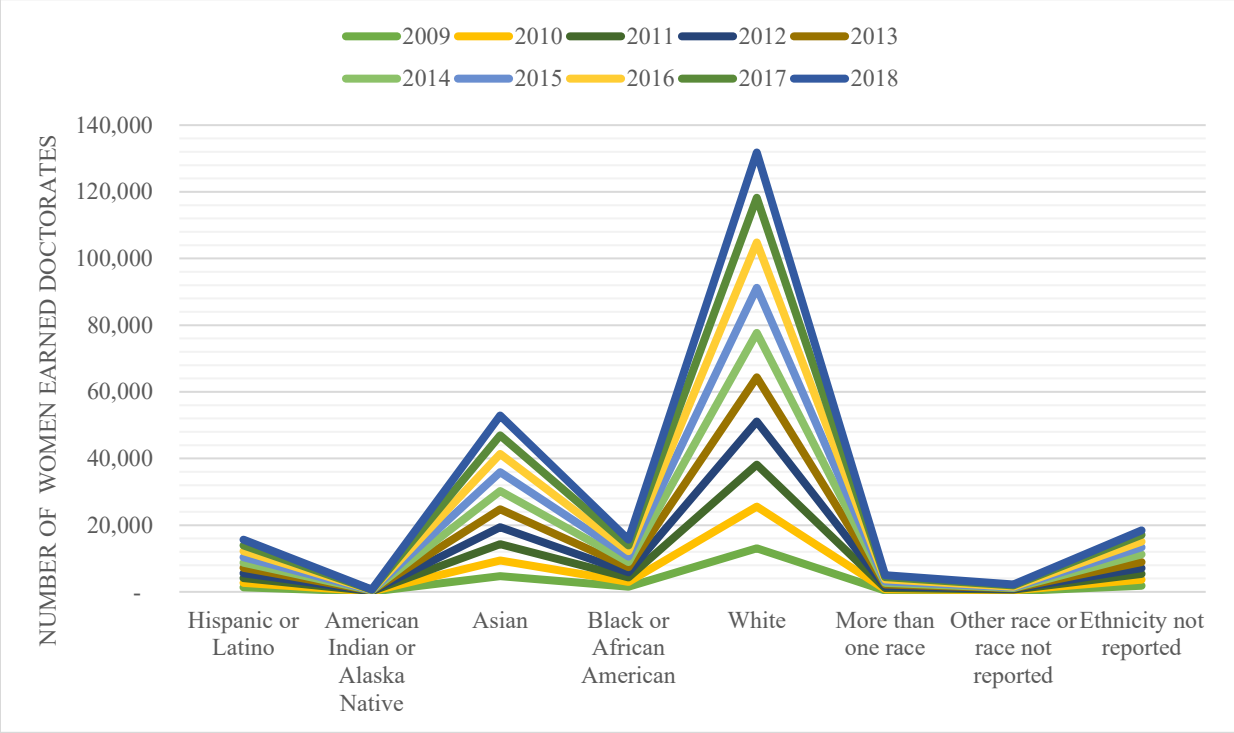
[1] To assist in the reading of this study, I will use the term women of color when talking about Black or African American, Asian, Hispanic or Latina, Native American/ Indian, and international women in the United States as a group. It is important to note that the term "women of color" has been scrutinized because it convolutes different identities and histories and assumes all women of color share the same oppression (Dudley, 2006). Therefore, when talking about the particularities of one racial group, I will use the specific terms I have outlined here.

[2] In this study, I mainly used the label African American over Black as this label connotes a sense of ethnicity and pride instead of otherness (Zilber & Niven, 1995). It is important to note that African American history of migrations as forced and then free have transformed our understandings of the African-American experience and new definitions of blackness (Berlin, 2010). Consequently, the use of African American might convolute the experiences of recent immigrants and people who are the descendants of enslaved people, and those who survived the Middle Passage.

Graph 1

Women-Earned Doctorates by Race: 2009–18 (NCSES, 2019)



Graph 1: Women Earned Doctorates by Race: 2009-18 (NCSES, 2019)

Despite positive trends among women of different races earning doctorates, women of color faculty continue to lag. Women of color held fewer full-time, tenured positions (Bañuelos, 2011; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Walkington, 2017). Additionally, early attrition from doctoral programs continued to be much more common among women of color doctoral students, especially in fields that were dominated by White males, such as in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields (Smith & García, 2018). Consequently, as more and more women of color continue to pursue a doctorate, there is an increased responsibility to support their doctoral journeys through robust and meaningful

socialization experiences that attend to their varying skills and unique learning needs (Starr & DeMartini, 2015).

Historically, the socialization experiences of women of color doctoral students have been discussed through a deficit-thinking approach. Delgado Bernal (2002) has explained that deficit thinking happens when the experiential knowledge of students of color is viewed as deficient or a problem to be solved in formal learning environments. Consequently, academic socialization experiences are prescribed as a series of learning activities aimed at assimilating all students into the prevailing White and male academic culture, marginalizing students whose values do not fit those of the academy (Taylor & Antony, 2000; Tierney, 1997; Turner & Thompson, 1993; Weidman et al., 2001). In response, postmodernists' and critical frameworks have served to reconceptualize socialization for women of color doctoral students by making visible their constant struggles against racism and sexism, revealing the coexistence of multiple identities, and positioning them as holders of knowledge that helps to navigate the contested road of academia (Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Bañuelos, 2011; Felder et al., 2014; González, 2006; Posselt, 2018; Ramírez, 2017; Sallee, 2011; Squire & McCann, 2018; Tierney, 1997; Walkington, 2017).

1.2. Purpose and Significance of the Study

This study aims to understand how socialization experiences, such as supportive institutional culture, mentoring, or peer interactions, are shaped by language and being a first-generation Latina doctoral student at a university at the U.S.-México border. The research purpose seeks to add to the knowledge base and understand the socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students through critical theoretical lenses. The focus on Latinas is crucial because, as a racialized and gendered stratified society, Latinas face "double barriers" (Hernandez-Truyol, 1997, p. 892). One, as women whose stories are not represented in the

conventional White feminist conceptualization of womanhood due to their race and ethnicity. Two, as members of the Latinx community, Latinas' stories are often rendered invisible as more attention is given to supporting the experiences of Latino male students. Most importantly, it seeks to create a personal, social, and institutional impact through the use of testimonios as a methodology. Testimonios as a methodology can facilitate positive change and lead to personal emancipation (Chase, 2011). This is achieved as testimonialistas share their stories of self-transformation that serve to produce healing of body, mind, and spirit (Cervantes-Soon, 2017). Testimonialista is a person who is giving testimonio (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Additionally, participant and researcher use their cultural knowledge to tell their stories which lead to a better and deeper understanding of their communities (Flores Carmona, 2014). This study seeks to recover the untold stories of Latina doctoral students, validate their experiences and knowledges, and assert their place in academia by inviting them to be the co-authors of their stories. The research question guiding this study is: *What are the academic socialization experiences of first-generation, multilingual, Latina doctoral students at the U.S.-México border?*

The present study expands on the extant research to explore the significance of language and being a first-generation Latina doctoral student in their academic socialization experiences at a university at the U.S.-México border. A first-generation student in this study is referred to as a student who is the first in their immediate family to earn a four-year degree. They are students of parents or guardians who have no higher than a high school diploma (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2020). I chose this definition because, according to Whitley et al. (2018), over 73% of 273 institutions that participated in a research study by the Center for First-generation Student Success agreed on the definition of first-generation as indicated in this study. It is important to note that this term lacks a standardized definition. For example, Ullman

et al. (2020) explained that the term is often confused with being a first-generation immigrant to the U.S. and that these two terms can overlap. In the next section, I provide an overview of subsequent chapters.

1.3. Outline of Chapters

In order to situate academic socialization in this research study, Chapter 2 provides a literature review that begins by defining academic socialization from a modernist interpretative framework and a postmodernist interpretative framework. Then, I devote a section to describing the culture in academia, emphasizing the social construction of race and gender in academia. I then present four reoccurring and overlapping socialization experiences found in the literature: a supportive institutional culture, mentoring, support groups, and apprenticeship opportunities. Chapter 2 also introduces the theoretical frameworks: Latina critical race (LatCrit) and Chicana feminist frameworks, including a rationale for why I chose these theories.

Chapter 3 outlines this study's research methodology, design, and data analyses. For the methodology, I chose testimonios as the methodology best suited for this study because it is centered on the critical importance of naming one's own reality (Cervantes-Soon, 2017; Flores Carmona, 2014; Pérez Huber, 2009; Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012). Moreover, there is an alignment between a LatCrit framework and testimonios, plus a Chicana feminist epistemological changes the process of testimonios from method to methodology by allowing for the co-construction of knowledge through collaborative data analysis and guides the research strategies used throughout the research process (Pérez Huber, 2009). Therefore, I collected my data and analyzed using testimonios as a methodology within a Chicana feminist epistemology and a LatCrit framework. I then explain my positionality and subjectivity as it relates to this study. Following, I describe the characteristics of participants, recruitment strategies, and ethical

precautions that I used in the study. I then describe methods for data collection, which included testimonio interviews and pláticas. Finally, explain my approach to data analysis which included coding, developing participant testimonios, member-checking, peer-reviewing, and journal of reflective memos.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study through six participant testimonios. Each participant's testimonio provides a deep and comprehensive look at the doctoral journeys of each participant, which began way before they applied for a doctoral degree. Their testimonios were told following a similar structure. First, I provide insight into the participant's lived experiences prior to their doctoral studies. Then, I explain their decisions to pursue a doctorate and what that journey looked like. After that, I talk about their academic socialization experiences in their doctoral program. I then retell particular socialization experiences that aided them in navigating postgraduate studies. Finally, I conclude by mentioning their dreams, future aspirations, and consejos or words of advice for other doctorate students. Following the participant testimonios, I examine the testimonios collectively to make final interpretations of the socialization experiences of multilingual, first-generation Latina doctoral students, highlighting the culture described at the Hispanic-serving institution and how their multiple social positionalities informed their socialization experiences. I explain the most salient socialization experiences narrated by the participants, which included mentorship, family support, colleague support, and apprenticeship opportunities.

Chapter 5 summarizes and discusses the primary findings derived from this study and recommendations and conclusions. I first present takeaways from participants' testimonios. Then, I make recommendations for higher education institutions that aim to support the

socialization experiences of women of color, particularly Latina doctoral students. To conclude, I address the limitations of this study and present future research pathways.

In total, this study seeks to add to the literature by adopting a critical interpretative framework of socialization and making explicit that socialization in academia can be neither color-blind nor gender-neutral (Felder et al., 2014; Gardner, 2008; Sallee, 2011). By addressing the socialization experiences of Latinas, I seek to dismantle the "double barriers" to which they are continuously subjected due to sexism and racism. Specifically, it aims to add to the literature by emphasizing the experiences of multilingual and first-generation Latina doctoral students at the U.S.-México border.

2. Chapter II: Literature Review

The work toward graduation for doctoral students is fast-paced. In addition to working to meet the academic demands needed to complete the doctoral degree, students often simultaneously work full-time jobs, conduct research, and volunteer in committees, associations, and or professional organizations while also attending to social and family commitments (Bailey, 2020). The multifaceted and competing demands that doctoral students juggle can impede the completion of the doctorate. Notwithstanding, Barnes and Randall (2012) argued that having positive socialization experiences at the doctoral level contribute to lower attrition levels. They explained socialization experiences is a conglomeration of factors that include relationships with advisors, support to find careers outside of academia, information about time to degree or post-graduation placement assistance, access to funding sources, an apprenticeship or training opportunities, such as having opportunities to publish, attend professional conferences, develop professional networks or gain teaching experience.

Unfortunately, research about socialization in doctoral education is primarily understood through modernist frameworks (Gardner, 2010; Ramírez, 2017; Turner & Thompson, 1993). About this, Gardner (2010) states that graduate students' socialization experiences are viewed as a series of several phases or stages alone that do not count for individual differences of doctoral students or disciplinary and institutional contexts. Similarly, Tierney (1997) argues that if we continue to use socialization models that seek to mold students to the static norm, students are forced to accept discontinuities and learn to survive. Consequently, Tierney posits that higher education needs to redefine its culture to allow creativity and differences to rise and to be welcoming to a diverse student population. He further contends that this is an important step in

understanding socialization in higher education because an organization's culture is not experienced similarly by all individuals.

To elaborate, Tierney (1997) proposed two ways of looking at socialization, one through the lens of modernists and another one through the lens of postmodernists. Modernism relates to the English word "enlightenment" and is considered a consequential movement of industrial revolution and capitalism characterized by individualism, materialization, and rationalization, which gives basis to the maintenance of the status quo and bureaucratic processes in education (Kahraman, 2015). In a modernist discourse, Giroux (1991) explains that knowledge is legitimized from a European model of culture and civilization, patriarchal domination, and grand narratives. In this sense, culture from a modernist's standpoint is "symbolic and instrumental" (Tierney, 1997, p. 3). It is constant and can be discovered as well as learned through socialization practices that involve reason. In addition, monolithic influences or a modernist orientation have influenced the formation and maintenance of a rigid American culture. American culture is dominated by ideologies of White supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, classism, ethnocentrism, and rationality (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012). The "Black-White racial epistemology" or "racial binarism" has been for a long time used as the accepted way of knowing and conceptualizing race and racism in the United States, which has resulted in an emphasis on structural inequalities and discrimination while ignoring issues of cultural domination and genocide (Hunter, 2002).

These dominant ideologies have been reproduced historically and institutionally, affecting the culture of academia (Sewpaul, 2013). At the same time, these dominating ideologies continue to be transmitted through socialization experiences. They have given place to the creation of tokenism, epistemic exclusion, invisibility, and institutional betrayals for women

of color doctoral students and faculty members (Buchanan, 2020). As a result, long-held racial and gender stereotypes and ideologies have made the academic and professional socialization experiences of women of color doctoral students more difficult (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012).

In contrast, a postmodernist perspective represents "a discourse of plurality, difference and multinarratives" (Giroux, 1991, p. 17) that refutes "'natural laws' and transcendental claims which by definition attempt to 'escape' from any type of historical and normative grounding" (p.18). In other words, postmodernists seek to challenge the dominant relationship between power and knowledge to adopt an understanding of cultural differences and to foster democratic action (Kahraman, 2015). Similarly, according to Creswell and Poth (2016), a postmodernist perspective articulates that knowledge results from the conditions of the present world in conjunction with multiple views of social class, race, gender, and other identities.

In contrast to a modernist view of culture, a postmodernist view contends that culture is transformed by its members who participate in the "re-creation" of it (Tierney, 1997, p. 6). Geertz (1973) noted that the concept of culture is a semiotic one that requires an interpretative stance in search of meaning. He stated, "culture is public because meaning is" (p. 12). Geertz concluded through the "flow of behavior-or, more precisely, social action-that cultural forms find articulation" (p. 17). Consequently, socialization is a cultural activity that requires an interpretative process for the creation of meaning. It is one in which the unique insights and identities of individuals, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and physical abilities, meet in a place and time with different contexts where interactions develop (Ellis, 2001; Felder et al., 2014; González, 2006; Tierney, 1997).

Accordingly, in this research study, I adopt the view that institutional culture is neither static nor absolute and is rather characterized by the continuous interactions, knowledges,

aspirations, values, and skills of all of its members, helping to construct the institution into what it ought to be. This means that Latina doctoral students contribute to the academic culture in the institutional setting and that socialization experiences can help level the playing field towards more equitable learning and transformative experiences. Later in this literature review, I take a closer look at connections between culture in academia and factors that enable and constrain the socialization of women of color doctoral students. First, however, I further expand my discussion of modernist and postmodernist frameworks by connecting each with doctoral socialization at a more general level. I do this because it is a necessary step to establish the frameworks that I use to later engage with these topics more deeply and precisely.

2.1. Modernist Interpretative Framework

In a modernist stance, socialization is how doctoral students assimilate the cognitive skills, attitudes, and values toward research and scholarship in alignment with the established institutional culture (Beeler, 1991; Turner & Thompson, 1993; Weidman et al., 2001). Assimilation, in this sense, is a crucial construct to understanding the socialization experiences of women of color doctoral students. By assuming that one culture exists out in the world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), women of color doctoral students are expected to mold into or assimilate to the institutional culture to exist and succeed.

Following a modernist interpretative framework and drawing from research on adult socialization, role acquisition, and career development, Weidman et al. (2001) conceptualized socialization at the doctoral level as an interactive set of stages that required doctoral students to accept, internalize and act according to the values, attitudes, interests, skills, and knowledge, in other words, the institutional culture in which doctoral students aspire to enter. Weidman and Stein (2003) further argued that socialization should be transmitted through didactic instruction

and assigned textual material, which, in combination, ultimately prepare students to undertake the role of a scholar. However, this framework has been criticized, pointing out that it fails to address specific student populations and institutional conditions.

Related to the prior point that widely held models of socialization fail to address the experiences of students of color, Ellis (2001) conducted a qualitative study with 67 White and African American doctoral students at a predominantly White institution. The study sought to address the limitations inherent in primary modes of socialization. She chose two modernist models of socialization to analyze her findings: Beeler's theory of graduate student adjustment to academic life and Tinto's model of the stages of doctoral persistence. Beeler (1991) posits that full-time, first-year graduate students go through four distinct stages of adjustment to academic life: 1) unconscious incompetence, 2) conscious incompetence, 3) unconscious competence, and 4) conscious competence. In essence, the full-time, first-year graduate student begins their academic journey feeling underprepared and incompetent and thus, adopts a passive learning role. As time progresses, the full-time, first-year graduate student takes on a more active learning role as their confidence and feelings of competence grow. The theoretical model of persistence by Tinto consists of three stages of passage in student college careers: 1) transition stage, 2) separation stage, and 3) incorporation stage, which ultimately influences the student's decision to depart from the institution (Elkins et al., 2000). In total, these two models hold in common the prescribed idea that socialization occurs as a predetermined set of linear stages that doctoral students must successfully pass through to persist. However, the two models alone fail to address the particularities of students of color versus White students. As a result, Ellis used intersectionality in her study to show how different aspects of student identities impact the experiences of students of color and women. Intersectionality draws on black feminist and

critical legal theory to refer to how race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of discrimination that Black women experience in employment (Crenshaw, 1989). Ellis findings suggest that African American women enter doctoral programs with different expectations from African American men and White men and women; consequently, their reality is perceived differently, forcing them to create new ways to "survive and succeed" (p. 35).

In response to critiques of modernist views of the conceptualization of doctoral students academic socialization, new revised models have emerged to address the particularities of students of color. I present two models that have developed recently as response to these critiques. First, I present the revised conceptualization of African American graduate student socialization by Twale et al. (2016). Then, I present the revised conceptualization of socialization of Latinx students in higher education developed by García et al. (2020).

2.1.1. African American Graduate Student Socialization

In light of such limitations, Twale et al. (2016) revised their model to include particular issues related to the experiences of African American graduate students. The updated framework by Twale et al. attempted to address particular individual characteristics such as race, gender, language, culture, socioeconomic status, as well as institutional features, such as social, cultural, and academic access to all people, resources, and activities as in pertained to the socialization experiences of African American graduate students. A visualization of the updated framework is presented in Figure 1, changes are reflected in bold. In essence, they drew from Bourdieu's notions of cultural capital, social capital, and habitus to define socialization. Bourdieu (1987) considered cultural capital (i.e., education, language), social capital (i.e., social networks, connections), and economic capital (i.e., money and other material possessions) as most appropriate forms of capital for educational attainment. In such way, socialization is defined by

Twale et al. (2016) as the "cultural and social capital acquisition where successful internalization of knowledge, norms, and skills results in the rewards of cultural and social attainment, mobility, and status in academia" (Twale et al., 2016, p. 91).

Figure 1

*Graduate Student Socialization: Re-visiting the Weidman-Twale Stein Model (adapted from Weidman, 2006; Weidman et al., 2001)**

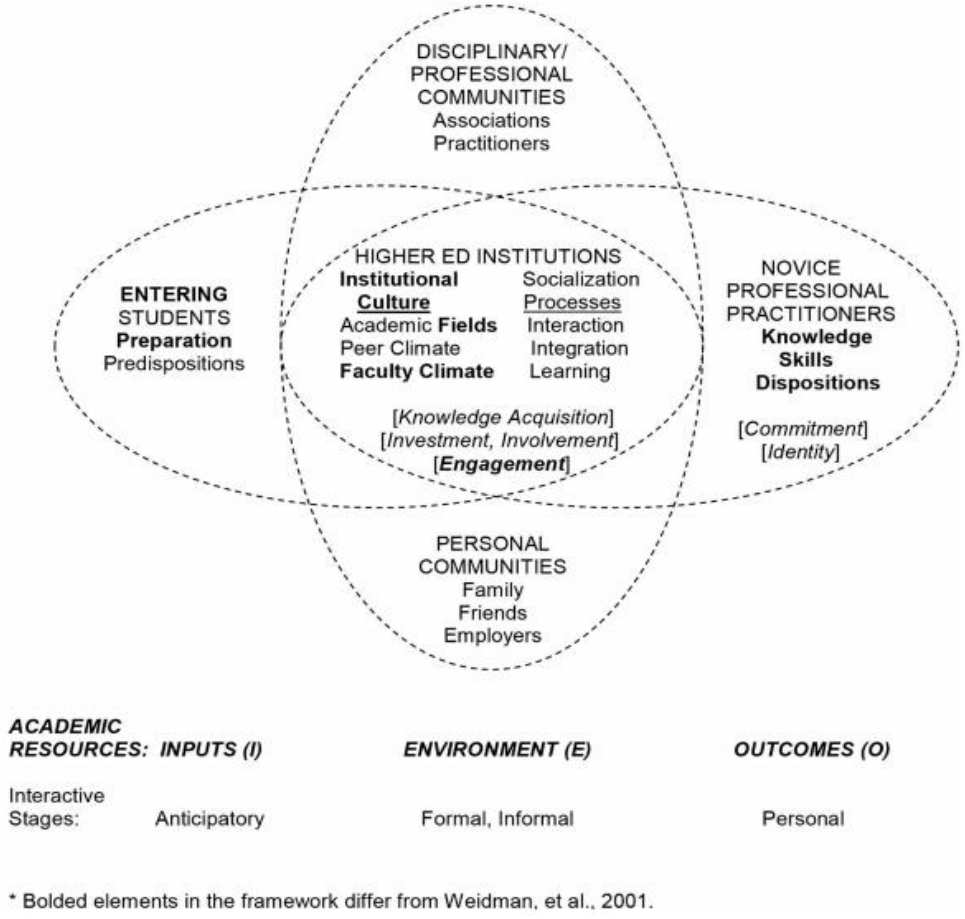


Figure 1: Graduate Student Socialization: Re-visiting the Weidman-Twale Stein Model

Twale et al. (2016) considered the reconceptualized model of socialization for graduate students included three core elements in the academic socialization process: knowledge

acquisition, investment or support for achieving academic goals, and involvement or faculty and peer relationships.

2.1.2. Latinx Graduate Student Socialization

Few years later, a literature review on socialization by García et al. (2020) considered it relevant to address the particularities of Latinx graduate students and how they may become socialized at an Hispanic-serving institution or HSI. Hispanic-serving institution or HSI is an institution of higher education that has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25% Hispanic students at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of application (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Therefore, they used a Latino critical theory and community cultural wealth theoretical framework in their reconceptualization of socialization of Latinx students. Yosso (2005) offers the model of community cultural wealth. The model is "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77) and includes familial, social, aspirational, linguistic, resistant, and navigational capital. Familial capital refers to the cultural knowledge learned in a support group's niche, such as a family group, giving a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. Social capital is the plurality of networks of people and community resources. Aspirational capital refers to the ability to be hopeful about the future in spite of adversity. Linguistic capital refers to the intellectual and social skills gained by communicating in more than one language and or style. Resistant capital refers to the accumulated knowledge that comes from opposing marginalization. Finally, navigational capital is the ability to navigate foreign or unknown social institutions (Yosso, 2005).

The results were presented as a revised socialization model of Latinx students in higher education adapted from previous socialization models by Weidman, 2006, 2015; Weidman et al., 2001; and Twale et al., 2016. Figure 2 below shows in red the revisions made by García et al. (2020), including White supremacy, the cultural wealth of Latinx students, and the active role of institutions to enhance racial and ethnic ways of being and knowing.

Figure 2.

Conceptualizing Socialization of Latinx Students in Higher Education. (Adapted from Weidman, 2006, 2015; Weidman, et al., 2001; Twale et al., 2016)

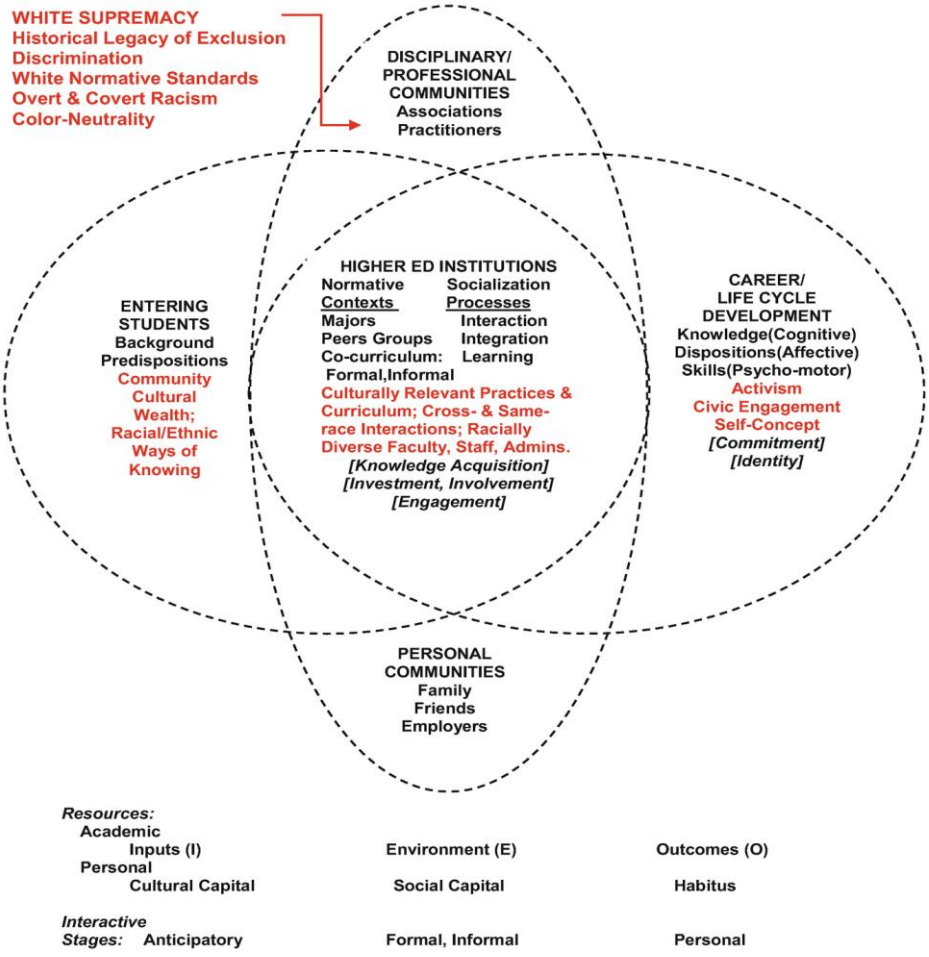


Figure 2: Conceptualizing Socialization of Latinx Students in Higher Education

García et al. (2020) explained the new model addressed the particularities of socialization for Latinx students by taking consideration White supremacy and the effects it has over Latinx students. Additionally, it shows that Latinx students possess cultural wealth and offers practicable steps that the university can take to enhance the socialization experiences of Latinx students. In particular, García et al. urged institutions to stir away from socialization models that seek to detach Latinx students from their families, community, and culture in order to be successful. Instead, they argued institutions must embrace them as significant sources of capital for Latinx students.

As it can be evidenced here, historically the socialization of graduate students has been based on a prevailing White and male culture that seeks to assimilate students into the dominant ideology (Turner & Thompson, 1993). Consequently, socialization within a modernist framework serves only those individuals who fit the status quo, failing women, transgender, and gender diverse (TGD) people, people of color, and other underrepresented minorities whose identities and values do not conform to those of the hegemonic academic culture. This may account in part for the continuous underrepresentation and low degree completion rates of women of color doctoral students in academia (Curtin et al., 2016; Posselt, 2018). Fortunately, new revised models of socialization have emerged to address the particularities of students of color (García et al., 2020; Twale et al., 2016). These models have taken a postmodernist view of socialization.

2.2. Postmodernist Interpretative Framework

In response to the modernist approach to socialization, postmodernists have suggested that socialization practices need to include and involve the racial, gender, and other identities or social categories inhabited by doctoral students. Central to a postmodernist view of socialization

is Tierney's (1997) idea that an organization's culture is not coherent to all individuals. There is not a "one size fits all" (p. 6) approach to assist individuals in the achievement of the goals set by the organization, meaning that culture is not static, and it cannot be passed on to individuals as a "sequence of learning activities where recruits learn one fact and then another" (p. 7). Instead, advancing through a doctoral program is much more than an oversimplified mastery of technical skills. It is a process of *becoming* academic that is not linear, it is not solitary, and it is not passive (Ullman et al., 2020).

In this way, learning and socialization experiences are embedded in social and cultural contexts in which women of color doctoral students, with their intentions and feelings, engage deliberately, interpret and construct the norms, expectations, and culture around them (Hopwood, 2010; Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003). Moreover, these processes are shaped by the different individual backgrounds, which are mediated by objects or ideas, such as language, artifacts, and social and cultural history. In sum, academic socialization at the doctoral level is a cultural activity that requires an interpretative process for the creation of meaning. Below, I present two additional research studies to further acknowledge the role of intersectional identities in the socialization of doctoral students and the effect that academic discipline and department culture have on shaping these experiences.

Acknowledging the role of intersectionality in the socialization process, Felder et al. (2014) conducted a case study with African American doctoral degree completers to better understand how their racial experience supported or hindered their doctoral student socialization. In the study, African American students experienced endemic racial and stereotypical practices by the academic department. Specifically, African Americans found it difficult to maintain a relationship with faculty members in White serving institutions; students explained faculty

members had no background for understanding students' work or no interest in students' research ideas if they related to African American concerns. Additionally, African Americans felt faculty members showed a condescending demeanor or acted patently surprised at the academic success of African American students. However, their socialization experiences were improved when doctoral students encountered faculty members who were accessible and willing to discuss the role of race in the students' experience, reinforced scholarship and research, offered career development post-degree completion, and most importantly, supported the racial identity of African American doctoral students. Felder et al. (2014) explained that for underrepresented students who are marginalized during the doctoral process, "racialized socialization" becomes the learning of "resolution skills" (p. 26) which assists doctoral students of color in managing conflict and building relationships with academic communities that support the educational advancement of students through the development and acquisition of research skills required for success and degree completion. In this sense, socialization becomes racialized and seeks to develop in the individual a set of skills to navigate institutional environments where there exists a culture that has historically excluded racial minorities.

Another important qualitative study that addressed issues of intersectionality and institutional culture was conducted by González (2006). His study focused on the lived experiences of Latina doctoral students. The racial, gendered, and even language identities of the participants in this study disrupt binary views of Black and White students. By adopting a binary racial view, the dominant culture forces non-Black students to identify with either being Black or White (Luna, 2008). Such a view is conflicting because it disregards the different struggles of underrepresented groups such as Latinx and Asian communities. In this study, academic socialization derived from Freire's (2005) concept of prescription, which was defined as "the

imposition of one individual's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness" (p. 34). This conceptualization of academic socialization represented a rather modernist interpretative framework, in which doctoral students needed to assimilate to the ways of doing and being as prescribed by the majority culture to advance or succeed in the organization's culture. Such acts deprived Latina doctoral students of their consciousness, identity, and freedom. About this González states that this type of academic socialization "hindered Latina agency through a systematic and covert acculturation process" (p. 348). His findings suggest that Latina doctoral students are successful when they work with similar-minded scholars who support and encourage their resistance, when they reject a subordinate status, when they assert their value among their peers, when they use Spanish to express themselves, and when they reject the imposition of White privilege to assert their Latina identity. Consequently, González concludes that there is a problem with one-way academic socialization models that signal knowledge flow from oppressor to oppressed or expert to novice. Furthermore, he posits that if policymakers want to improve the retention of Latina doctoral students, they need to address institutional climate concerns and include all Latinas in all areas of scholarship.

These two studies represent an important, albeit limited overview of the growing research that seeks to acknowledge the role of intersectional identities in the socialization of doctoral students. In sum, I conclude that one of the main differences between modernist versus postmodernist frameworks for thinking about doctoral socialization is the role that doctoral students are expected to play in their socialization. As previously shown, according to a modernist view of socialization, women of color doctoral students are socialized to assimilate to hegemonic ideas of institutional culture, whereas a postmodernist framework emphasizes the

interpretive co-creation of socialization through everyday occurrences. Additionally, postmodernists' views of socialization acknowledge the power of intersectional identities of doctoral students like language, race, or gender, as well as extrinsic factors such as institutional culture, the field of study, enrollment status, or academic life. Building on this idea, my study explores Latina doctoral students' racialized and gendered socialization experiences during their doctoral programs. The socialization of doctoral students in this study is rooted in the idea that Latina doctoral students are holders and creators of values, attitudes, interests, skills, and knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002), which helps them navigate the day-to-day occurrences of doctoral studies and which helps them re-create the culture around them to become a scholar (Hopwood, 2010).

To further situate my research topic in the literature, I turn to discuss how culture in academia has been socially constructed through long-held stereotypes of race and gender that: (a) damage the academic and professional experiences of women of color doctoral students; (b) continuously undervalue women of color; and (c) continue to contribute to the persistent underrepresentation of women of color in academia. In the following section, I present how different daily occurrences, in particular, mentorship, peer relationships, positive departmental and classroom climates, and apprenticeship opportunities, have helped women of color doctoral students overcome oppressive cultures in academia by productively shaping their socialization experiences in doctoral programs by granting them space and voice in their doctoral experiences. I then highlight the existing gaps and limitations in the literature on socialization and women of color doctoral students that informed the motivation and rationale for my research study on this topic. In the last section, I present why using testimonios through Latina/o critical race and Chicana feminist frameworks is important to conduct this research study.

2.3. Culture in Academia

Despite the increasing number of women of color doctoral students, the process of socialization has been primarily understood from a modernist framework, and opportunities and experiences associated with socialization have typically benefitted a predominantly young, White, single, male population (Turner & Thompson, 1993; Taylor & Antony, 2000). This phenomenon largely accounts for the significant number of underrepresented doctoral students who exit doctoral studies before completion or whose membership in academia is hindered from the beginning (Gardner, 2008). In particular, Latinas continue to be less likely than Asian, Black, and White women counterparts to successfully navigate academia (Espino, 2016). Consequently, to help Latinas along their doctoral journeys, it is necessary to create equitable and supportive environments that address the borders of family dynamics, community traditions, and academia which they constantly navigate.

In this first section, I explore how Whiteness and male dominance are social constructs, which are learned from a very young age and then legitimized and reproduced through practices that attribute different statuses and values to doctoral students based on race, gender, and other social factors (Fisher et al., 2019). In the second section, I highlight some of the most common racialized and gendered stereotypes of people of color and women. Next, I present the damaging effects stereotypes have on women of color doctoral students and faculty members, causing them to experience tokenism, invisibility, silence, labeling, sexual harassment, and a glass ceiling for professional advancement in academia. Finally, in the last section, I provide a closer look at the impacts that a racialized and gendered stratified society has on women of color in academia. It is important to note that this conversation extends beyond just race and gender to things like age, ability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

2.3.1. Race and Gender in Academia

To begin the discussion on how culture in academia has been socially constructed and perpetuated, it is vital to point out that the concepts of gender and race are socially constructed (Lorber, 2004; Omi & Winant, 2004). Hitherto, they were treated as biologically determined traits according to which White males have justified their status quo in society, i.e., preserving superior educational opportunities and facilities at the expense of people of color and other minority groups (Bell, 1995). Mills (1959) states that the sociological imagination "enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society" (p. 1). Therefore, understanding where many racialized and gendered stereotypes about people of color faculty and women come from requires a historical approach. The following sections explore the concepts of race and gender. By doing so, I hope to better understand how stereotypes about women of color doctoral students and faculty damage the perceived competence and place of women of color in academia (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012).

2.3.1.1. Race

Ladson-Billings (1998), a proponent of the use of critical race theory in education, explains that "despite the scientific refutation of race as a legitimate biological concept…race continues to be a powerful social construct and signifier" (p.8). In essence, the idea of race is an ideology that foments structural inequality based on differences in the taxonomy of bodies (Hunter, 2002). This ideology continues to be widely accepted. Consequently, many people continue to believe in ideologies of meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, unbiased and fair processes, and equal opportunity that only serve to perpetuate the power, control, and privilege of dominant groups (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Yosso et al., 2009). The main critique against color-blindness is that it "results in 'raceless' explanations for all sort of race-related

affairs" (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1364), making race a thing of the past and no longer an important signifier of social inequality. In other words, race and racism are "central, endemic, permanent, and a fundamental part" of U.S. society (Yosso, 2005, p. 74).

In effect, Stratton (2016) posits that geography, history, and civics curricula are created to sustain a racist system in which, time and time again, people from Cuba, Philippines, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and México, and native-born descendants of African American and Native Indians have been scapegoated and demonized. For example, Stratton (2016) explains that geography texts and curricula use science to defend the idea that people raised in tropical regions in the global south are "lazy and immoral" (p. 22). Similarly, Schubert (2018) explains that in light of conflicts at the U.S.-México border, many Mexicans and Mexican descendants have been associated with drug cartels, preserving the common "Bandido" image of numerous western films during the last century. Most recently, the stereotypical character of the Latinx community has been further developed in the cinema narrative through six basic stereotypes: el Bandido, the harlot, the male buffoon, the female clown, the Latin lover, and the dark lady (Ramírez Berg, 2021). The institutional racism that supports cultural representations against people of color functions to maintain deficit common-sense understandings of communities of color, in this case, Chicanx/Latinx that represent stereotypical discourses (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015, p. 231). Classroom discussions also perpetuate harmful representations of Latinx, linking them with drug addiction, crime, mental illness, and poverty (Haynes et al., 2016). In the context of higher education, studies have demonstrated that doctoral students of color experience tokenism, marginalization, and labeling in various settings, including campus

life, classroom, faculty interactions, and curricular content as a consequence of wider stereotypical representations (Buchanan, 2020; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Taylor & Antony, 2000).

To illustrate the effects of pervasive stereotypes, Masta (2021) explored what constitutes a classroom counterspace, and how instructors can create classroom counterspaces. Using Anzaldúa's borderlands theory (2012), Masta (2021) collected data via student conversations, observations, reflections, and field notes in a class on critical and Indigenous methodologies. Anzaldúa's borderlands theory posits that living within the borderlands or contradictory social systems is an opportunity to develop the ability to navigate and challenge oppressive conceptions of lived reality. Most students participating in the study were Black or Brown doctoral students. In the study, Masta mentions that pervasive stereotypes such as the "angry Brown/Black person" limit Black and Brown doctoral students' ability to be honest, vulnerable, and angry. Black and Brown students were often chastised for voicing their anger against oppressive practices in academia. Brown or Black women who dared to speak up were promptly classified with this stereotype, labeling them as loud. She explained that in response to pervasive stereotypes, Brown and Black people can create safe spaces or classroom counterspaces in which they are allowed to be vulnerable and encouraged to take an active stance fighting against oppressive systems as opposed to staying neutral, or distancing or isolating themselves.

In sum, White privilege is a system of oppression resulting from the validity given to racism (Yosso, 2006). Consequently, living in a racialized society means that community members inadvertently follow a "racial etiquette" where we act toward certain racialized and ethnic groups by demeaning or ennobling ways (Omi & Winant, 2004). This has resulted in many students of color falling victims to microaggressions based solely on the color of their skin

(Yosso et al., 2009). Pierce (1995) explains that microaggressions are "subtle, innocuous, preconscious, or unconscious degradations, and putdowns, often kinetic but capable of being verbal and/or kinetic" (p. 281). Although the term was initially used to describe the experiences of people of color, research is increasingly using the term to also signal verbal and non-verbal aggressions against gender, ethnicity, ability status, sexual orientation, social class, or other minority identities (Li, 2016). Not surprisingly, women of color in higher education continue to be a major target of microaggressions. The topic of microaggressions is later revisited in this literature review.

In sum, race is a make-believe concept that perpetuates erroneous views and even disgraceful and violent acts against people of color in different aspects of society. Consequently, the socialization of doctoral students needs to be viewed and understood through a racial lens to understand how race shapes the socialization and success of women of color, particularly Latinas in academia. However, before exploring how race has influenced the academic life of women of color, I define the social construct of gender.

2.3.1.2. Gender

Like race, the predominant view of gender in society and higher education is that it is biological and, thus, immutable and static (Lorber, 2004). However, there is a multitude of research in different fields that debunk the myth of gender difference, pointing out that (1) gender is socially constructed and (2) anatomy between a man and a woman is the only difference (Harenski et al., 2008). Regardless, when gender is a major component of structured inequality, the devalued gender has less power, prestige, and economic rewards than the valued gender (Lorber, 2004). In U.S. society, women are the devalued gender, and men are the valued gender.

Lorber (2004) further posits that at a very young age, children are socialized through teaching, learning, emulation, and enforcement to believe that there are natural masculine and feminine ways of being. This phenomenon is further legitimatized and reproduced through religion, education, law, and science (Lorber, 2004; Sewpaul, 2013). For example, Clance and Imes (1978) first used the term "imposter phenomenon" (p. 241) to define the lack of internal sense of success that accomplished White women experience. Instead of women owning their success as a quality inherent in themselves, they project it to external factors, such as luck, or a temporary internal quality, such as effort. Clance and Imes suggest that this might result from the societal stereotype that women are less able intellectually than men; a false belief which is reinforced through family dynamics and in turn, leads women to develop self-doubts at a young age. Not surprisingly, research demonstrates that women of color experience impostorism at the doctoral level (Gardner, 2013; Posselt, 2018).

In sum, understanding gender and race as socially constructed concepts are critical to understanding how women of color are confronted with prejudices and stereotypes that hinder their academic and professional development in academia. Nonetheless, Sewpaul (2013) cautions that we rarely recognize our collusion in reproducing prejudices and stereotypes.

2.3.1.3. Stereotype Threat Theory

I begin this section by presenting the theory of stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995), which helps explain why women and students of color conform to certain stereotypes. Steele and Aronson (1995) explained that the stereotype threat means "that anything one does or any of one's features that conform to it make the stereotype more plausible as a self-characterization in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one's own eyes" (p. 797).

For example, the negative stereotype that men do better than women in math affect women's performance in a mathematical problem. As a result, they experience a feeling of "vulnerability" (p. 797) which occurs as they fear judgment from others in terms of the negative stereotype that their actions, in this case, performance in a mathematical problem, could either confirm or reject such prejudicial view.

The qualitative study by Taylor and Antony (2000) sought to examine the experiences of 12 African American doctoral students in education within the conceptual framework of stereotype threat theory and wise schooling. Participants experience stereotyping in various forms including tokenism, marginalization, and labeling. African American doctoral students' socialization experiences were hunted by stereotypes that impacted research interests, social interaction on campus, relationships, in their departments, and faculty attitudes. They carried with them deeply internalized beliefs in regard to their likelihood to contribute to academic research, teaching and service goals. Consequently, they felt pressure to respond to stereotype threats of not being able to meet standards of academic achievement and felt the need to prove themselves. Furthermore, the need to prove themselves often put them at risk of responding to false standards that do not encourage their intellectual development.

In other words, stereotype threat helps explain why women and ethnic minorities' behavior changes as a consequence of negative social stereotypes even though they consciously seek to reject them.

2.3.1.5. Objectification and Hypersexualization of Women's Bodies

Traditional gendered and racialized expectations that stem from long-standing stereotypes provide essential insights into how women of color experience a culture of oppression in academia; one that diminishes their existence in institutional settings to servants of

Whites and males who are expected to accommodate institutional rules rooted in gender-stratified norms and a "racial etiquette" (Omi & Winant, 2004). Adding to the problem, given that racist and sexist ideologies, including racial and gender role stereotypes, are reflected in and reinforced by activities in the home and school, cultural norms and practices, religion, politics, law, and the media, it is not surprising that women of color are at the bottom of the class hierarchy, are targets of constant microaggressions, and face objectification and hypersexualization of their bodies. (Buchanan, 2020; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Lorber, 2004; Omi & Winant, 2004; Sewpaul, 2013; Taylor & Antony, 2000; Yosso, 2009). This section covers the effects of the objectification and hypersexualization of women's bodies.

Grounded in the history of slavery and perpetuated through the media, society, and academia, the problem of objectification, hypersexualization, and stereotyping of women's bodies has extended to different racial groups, including White women (Kupenda, 2012; Lugo-Lugo, 2012; Morales, 2014). Haynes et al. (2016) argue that African American womanhood is a coveted accessory to be bought, worn, or sold at the pleasure of White men, White women, and African American men alike. This leads to constant microaggressions, objectification, and stereotyping against African American women's bodies. The personal attacks are not only initiated by White males or people of different color but also by other African American women who internalize racialized bias and an understanding of beauty based on a White ideology (Harris, 2017). Giroux (1991) explained that modernist views have twisted aesthetics and art through notions of beauty that are solely associated with White, male, and European aesthetics. For example, Kupenda (2012) remembers an African American women student suggesting that she change her hair to appeal more to White students in the class.

Additionally, religion and custom have justified and perpetuated men's oppression of women and controlled women's sexuality. In the Chicano culture, Chicanas are reduced to the images of Guadalupe, La Chingada (Malinche), and La Llorona, which reinforce a "Virgen/puta dichotomy" (Anzaldúa, 1993, p. 38) that stems from Latino values of familism, machismo, marianismo, religion, and traditional gender roles (Knight et al., 2010). Lugo-Lugo (2012) explain that the sexual commodification of Latinas' bodies in the media and society has meant that Latina women are frequently disregarded as scholars and, worse, human beings. Consequently, Latina faculty members are often expected to act as maids, nannies, or secretaries (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012).

The problem of hypersexualization for women of color extends to other racialized women (Harris, 2017) and even to White women who, for example, have confessed that when approaching evaluation for tenure, they tend to wear more makeup and more feminine clothes in the hope to appear more appealing to evaluators (Kupenda, 2012). In addition, constant sexual harassment behavior, objectification, and stereotyping of women's bodies serves to reinforce a culture of subjugation of women in academia, in which attacks often go untold and which women accept and or even work towards maintaining an image that may contradict their identity.

In brief, hypersexualization of women, gendered and racialized roles, and stereotypes reveal the culture that women of color encounter and navigate in their daily occurrences of being a professor, student, administrator, or staff member (Tierney, 1997). Sallee (2011) provides another poignant example of this in an ethnographic study, which found that popular gendered stereotypes maintain the idea that some disciplines and fields of study are better suited for one gender than the other. Her findings corroborate the notion that engineers are expected to be analytical and competitive, traits that are associated with masculinity. Her findings further

demonstrate that engineering male doctoral students are socialized to adopt masculine values, including those that privilege competition, hierarchy, and even the objectification of women to succeed in the discipline. Moreover, the skewed numbers of women of color in engineering have created an environment where male faculty are more likely to develop more collegial relationships with their male students than with the women students; such differing relationships ultimately perpetuate a system of inequality for women.

Conclusively, stereotypes derived from race and gender play a significant role in the socialization experiences of doctoral students of color (Twale et al., 2016). In the following and last section on the culture in academia, I explain the effects of educational practices and policies that undervalue women of color in academia.

2.3.2. Deceiving Educational Practices

Despite important advancements for women of color in academia, women of color faculty continue to lag behind their White counterparts, holding more part-time, untenured positions, which are often underpaid and undervalued (Bañuelos, 2011; Walkington, 2017). This reality is consistent with other studies that have shown that women and other racially and ethnically underrepresented doctoral students continue to have more significant rates of attrition than any other group, especially in the STEM fields (Smith & García, 2018). This section discusses how affirmative action policies and other equality programs have suffered attacks by majority groups and the effects of Eurocentric curricula and cultural deficit thinking in minority students.

2.3.2.1. Affirmative Action

Race-based affirmative action practices are meant to provide an equal educational opportunity in higher education admissions, retention, financial aid, and faculty hiring programs

for people of color (Yosso et al., 2004). However, Ellis (2001) argues that while legally, colleges and universities can no longer discriminate against students of color, they can continue to maintain environments that prevent students of color from accessing and succeeding in higher education. This section explains the many different legal cases that have impacted affirmative action in court. I begin by explaining the origins of affirmative action.

Race-based affirmative action has its origins in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, when the Supreme Court ruled that separate educational facilities were inherently unequal and unconstitutional and ordered school districts to desegregate their schools (Yosso et al., 2004). Unfortunately, such a ruling failed to see that desegregation did not mean equal education for African American students. Consequently in 1961, the African American lawyer, Hobart Taylor Jr. introduced the idea of affirmative action. The original goal of affirmative action was to attain a "critical mass" of underrepresented groups in an institution, even if that meant favoring underrepresented applicants over similarly or better-qualified Whites (Menand, 2020). In 1968, Title VI of the 1968 Civil Rights Act was passed, granting colleges and universities the authority to take affirmative action in setting goals and timetables to remedy the racial discrimination found in U.S. society (Yosso et al., 2004). Since then, affirmative action policies in education have aimed to diversify college campuses (Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2004).

However, affirmative action policies have been the target of significant criticism resulting in numerous court cases that began in 1978 with the court case of Bakke v. Regents of the University of California, where the Supreme Court argued in favor of race-consciousness admission policy. However, even after the passage of various race-based affirmative action court cases, the Supreme Court has ruled that state-level bans are lawful resulting in nine states having banned the practice (Carter & Lippard, 2020). Consequently, favorable ruling by the Supreme

Court for affirmative action policies prove promising, but at the same time, the fight against racial affirmative action practices only seemed to strengthen over time (Harris, 2019).

As demonstrated by these court cases, many students of color in academia continue to be questioned and belittled by faculty and students who accuse them of benefitting from affirmative action policies, which according to them, grant minority students a space in the classroom at the cost of other students who may be better prepared for the academic demands of doctoral studies (Taylor & Antony, 2000; Walkington, 2017). For example, Felder et al. (2014) conducted a case study with African American doctoral degree completers who experienced the effects of an endemic departmental insensitivity and racial stereotyping when their entrance into the program was confronted by faculty members who accused the department of lowering its standards. This idea, however, has been rebutted by research that has shown that White women have been the largest benefactors of affirmation action and programs of equality (Smith & García, 2018).

As evidenced here, attacks on affirmative action policies highlight the reality that students of color, women, and other minority groups are not welcome in academia and continue to be stigmatized as unintelligent. In the next section, I show that the undervaluing of women of color also happens in the classroom by adopting Eurocentric and hidden curricula.

2.3.2.2. Eurocentric and Hidden Curricula

Women of color in academia are also undervalued through the adoption of Eurocentric curricula (Bañuelos, 2011) and hidden curricula (Anyon, 1980). This section explores the effect of Eurocentric and hidden curricula on the socialization experiences of women of color doctoral students. To begin with, I identify some of the problems that arise as a result of a Eurocentric curriculum.

An article in The Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness by Ugwuegbula (2020) explained the problems with a Eurocentric curriculum in the following way:

> Schools continue to position Western education as the center of legitimate knowledge, and any other knowledge as additional and insignificant. Eurocentric curriculums teach Black and Indigenous students that their lives and the lives of their ancestors are not worth learning about, while simultaneously teaching White students that they are highly valued in spaces of knowledge and power. The invisibility of Black and Indigenous knowledge from the curriculum has lasting effects on a student's sense of community, belonging, and identity (n.p).

Consequently, Eurocentric curricula dismiss contributions by students of color and perpetuate a narrative in which Whites hold power and knowledge, and communities of color do not. In addition to White domination and subjugation of people of color, Eurocentrism has cultivated a politics of knowledge in education through false "notions of unity, commonality, and to some extent even solidarity" (De Lissovoy, 2010, p. 283).

Calderón (2014) explains that educational reform movements endorsed by the federal government, such as No Child Left Behind implemented in 2001, Race to the Top implemented in 2009, and the Common Core implemented in 2009, have perpetuated a standardized, color-blind Eurocentric curriculum in which certain beliefs and practices by people of color are negatively portrayed beginning in K-12 education. As such, current educational policies continue to rely on positivistic methods and color-blind discourses, adopting political neutrality by overlooking how gender, race, class, and sexuality are used to perpetuate and even rationalize a racial order (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Pillow, 2003).

The effects of racialized educational policies continue at the doctoral level by the imposition of standardized testing as an admission requirement or the expectation that doctoral students publish in 'first-tier" journals that rarely publish ethnic or race-specific research (Yosso, 2006). Similarly, the tendency to erase and or delegitimize the history and work of people of color influences faculty to undervalue, or even disparage, women of color doctoral students' research (Buchanan, 2020). For example, Pells (2018) argues that male authors tend to cite more men over women in their scholarly work. What is more, same-gendered citation patterns are found in work by women authors or co-authored papers by men and women.

Additionally, Eurocentric curricula have legitimized English-only instruction, creating stereotypical views of English language use and the dominant discourse of language standardization in society, affecting how, for example, international teaching assistants conduct teaching while practicing in an American university (Wang, 2020). Relatedly, international doctoral students whose native language is not the same as the language of instruction perceive that their "limited English-speaking abilities" (Morita, 2009, p. 449) impede them from participating in class discussions, feeling marginalized, or having difficulties socializing with peers.

Different studies have also confirmed that Eurocentric curricula continuously delegitimize and disparage women of color, negatively influence their socialization experiences, and ultimately, influence their lack of success in academia. For example, Haynes et al. (2016), three established African American women researchers, conducted a collaborative auto-ethnography study using the invisibility syndrome paradigm to deconstruct the experiences of African American women doctoral students. Drawing from Franklin (1999), the authors explained that the invisibility syndrome paradigm results from the racialized sexism that African

American women experience on a daily basis and which, results in the feeling that one's talents, abilities, personality, and worth are not valued or even recognized. In their recollection of stories, they spoke of oppressive classroom culture wherein faculty members were complicit in perpetuating a defamatory narrative by reinforcing or not addressing negative stereotypes portrayed by students in the classroom. By not addressing issues of marginalization and stereotypes against African American communities, faculty members colluded in creating a hidden curriculum that hindered African American doctoral students' ability to define their scholarly identity to become independent researchers, further perpetuating feelings of invisibility.

Additionally, women of color are also affected by the imposition of hidden curricula in the classroom. Anyon (1980) explained the hidden curriculum prepares students through different curricular, pedagogical, and student evaluation practices to reproduced systems of social inequality. As an example of how the hidden curriculum impacts the socialization experiences of women of color doctoral students, I present the qualitative study conducted by Margolis and Romero.

Margolis and Romero (1998) examine the effect of the hidden curriculum through interviews with 26 women of color doctoral students in sociology. They identified two forms of the hidden curriculum at work: the weak form, which refers to the professionalization process needed to become a sociologist, and the strong form, which reproduces stratified and unequal social relations. The hidden curriculum became evident in everyday practice from hiring and promotion practices, graduate student recruitment, allocation of financial resources, and assigned readings. In addition, the hidden curriculum caused stigmatization, blaming the victim, lower expectations, stereotyping, tokenization, isolation, exclusion, and tracking.

In sum, Eurocentric curricula serve to normalize White privilege and to erase or pathologize the experiences of people of color in academia. At the same time, the hidden curricula help to perpetuate social inequality. Consequently, people of color and women whose values do not conform to those of White, affluent males find themselves fighting against deficit representations. The following section explains the damaging effects of deficit thinking on women and students of color.

2.3.2.3. Culture Deficit Model

Delgado Bernal (2002) explains that a Eurocentric epistemological framework views limited English proficiency, Chicano and or Mexican cultural practices, and non-university related responsibilities through a deficit lens, which has served to delegitimize people of color's ways of knowing, labeling them as problems that need to be fixed in order to successfully transition through academic experiences. As a result, bilingualism is framed as "un-American" (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p.112) and considered a deficit and a learning problem. Not surprisingly, women of color doctoral students have continuously been exposed to deficit thinking and adopted this perception about themselves as learners and scholars (Bañuelos, 2011; Haynes et al., 2016; Ek et al., 2010).

Commenting on deficit thinking, Yosso (2005) criticizes the assumptions made by Bourdieu (1987), who positioned cultural capital, social capital, and economic capital as the most appropriate forms of capital for educational attainment. She argues that these forms of capital conform to American values and are usually exhibited in affluent, White middle-class American families. As a result, many educators accept or are forced to use assimilative strategies to bring students of color to the "same" level as their White counterparts. This explains why for such a long time, socialization models for doctoral students followed an assimilation strategy that aimed

at shaping the skills, values, and knowledges of all students, regardless of race or gender, to fit the endemic White, male academic culture (Weidman et al., 2001).

In sum, the constant attack on programs such as affirmative action policies and the continuous enforcement of Eurocentric epistemological perspectives on curriculum have perpetuated an academic culture that continuously delegitimizes and disparages women of colors' contributions to scholarly work and advancement of research. A mismatch between doctoral programs, including departmental and classroom levels, and the needs, interests, and preferences of doctoral students directly impacts the academic socialization experiences of women of color doctoral students (Ellis, 2001). In response, research on the role that institutional culture plays in the socialization of women of color doctoral students highlights the need for: a) institutional practices that support racial identities and minorities' research agendas (Felder et al., 2014), b) an orientation toward inclusive scholarship (Posselt, 2018; Starr & DeMartini, 2015), and c) the encouragement for counternarratives of persistence to disrupt master narratives that render women of color invisible (Haynes et al., 2016). These aspects are explored in greater detail in subsequent sections. First, in the next section, I explain the benefits of critical race pedagogies that fight against deficit thinking claims and result in transformative resistance.

2.3.3. Pedagogy of Transformative Resistance

In response to the draining effects of Eurocentric and hidden curricula, Anyon (2011) suggests the need for a critical race pedagogy that offers a culturally relevant curriculum, challenges the status quo, and encourages social activism. Similarly, Sewpaul (2013) argues that since ideology is socially, culturally, and politically constructed, it follows that "if people are provided with alternative learning experiences, whether formal or informal, they have the ability to disrupt dominant thinking" (p. 119). She suggests that "sometimes a single word, phrase, or

observation can constitute an epiphany that makes us question and alter the ideas and values that we have grown up with" (p. 119). This section provides a first look at practices that disrupt the oppressive patterns of academia.

Villenas (1996) posits that as more and more members of marginalized groups move up the hierarchical ladder of academia, it is necessary to assume the responsibility to understand and explore the oppressive discourses against communities of color to create official knowledge. Relatedly, Yosso (2005) explains that specific knowledges had perpetuated deficit thinking views against communities of color. As such, she advocates for using knowledges that act as counternarratives to deficit thinking views and positions communities of color as holders of knowledge. She states:

> If some knowledges have been used to silence, marginalize and render People of Color invisible, then 'Outsider' knowledges (Hill Collins, 1986), mestiza knowledges (Anzaldúa, 1987) and transgressive knowledges (hooks, 1994) can value the presence and voices of People of Color, and can reenvision the margins as places empowered by transformative resistance (p. 70).

Toward this end, Yosso (2005) offers the model of community cultural wealth. The model posits familial, social, aspirational, linguistic, resistant, and navigational capital as attributes possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression

In addition, theoretical frameworks such as critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies recognize people of color as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002). As a result, the cultural values of Latinx communities such as familismo, respeto, dignidad, vergüenza, amabilidad, lealtad, obediencia, ser trabajador, honestidad, and humildad are viewed as assets that can aid doctoral students to persist in their

doctoral studies (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017; Ramos & Torres-Fernandez, 2020). In practice, critical raced-gendered epistemologies can take multiple forms, such as employing "third spaces" or counterspaces in the classroom, promoting single-population schools, and sharing counternarratives that disrupt deficit thinking views.

Third spaces and classroom counterspaces address marginalization against communities of color. Third spaces are a middle ground that combines both curriculum and the students' world to promote meaning-making and allow meaningful learning (Wilhelm, 2010). Third spaces enable students to challenge dominant views, break static teaching models, and welcome out-of-school influences or funds of knowledge. Similarly, classroom counterspaces seek to center Brown and Black student experiences (Masta, 2021). It does so through two main actionable steps. First, in developing the course syllabus, students are invited to co-create it. Second, classroom counterspaces center around dialogue where students can share their experiences freely without fearing judgment from Eurocentric views. In other words, symbolic inclusion in the syllabus is just as important as the pedagogical commitment to challenge Whiteness in the classroom.

Similarly, single-population schools like Afrocentric or Chicano-centric curricula have gained popularity, and while many have criticized them (Rupar, 2020), Villenas (1996) suggests they do not promote separatism. Instead, she argues, because communities of color have been stripped of their cultures, they have the right to come together and reclaim their cultures, histories, and languages through educational programs. Then as well, De Lissovoy (2010) recommends that "third World, Black, and Brown, and indigenous struggles and perspectives collectively are given a strategic priority in curricula, within an understanding of the fundamentally hybrid character of culture" (p. 286).

Likewise, Haynes et al. (2016) posit that socialization experiences and critical-inclusive pedagogy can dismantle widely accepted educational norms that simultaneously promote meritocracy and present women and all racial minorities with deficit views of themselves. A critical pedagogy promotes reinhabitation, which is defined as learning to live well in their place even after it has been disrupted or injured in the past, and decolonization, which is the act of recognizing such disruptions and harms to the place and acting to resolve such issues (Gruenewald, 2003).

In the following section, I build on these ideas by examining the literature that shows how a supportive climate can provide a strong foundation for subsequent academic and or research careers (González, 2006; Twale et al., 2016). Finally, I present how different daily occurrences, particularly mentorship, peer relationships, positive departmental and classroom climates, and apprenticeship opportunities have helped women of color overcome oppressive cultures in academia, shaping their socialization experiences in doctoral programs.

2.4. Socialization Experiences

As I have shown, one key aspect impacting the socialization experiences of women of color is the culture found in the institution, academic discipline, and or department (Ellis, 2001; Felder et al., 2014; González, 2006). Doctoral students in universities become socialized through everyday occurrences (Tierney, 1997), which can contribute to lower attrition levels (Barnes & Randall, 2012). Everyday occurrences include relationships with advisors, support to find careers outside of academia, information about time to degree or post-graduation placement assistance, access to funding sources, an apprenticeship or training opportunities, such as having opportunities to publish, attend professional conferences, develop professional networks, or gain teaching experience (Barnes & Randall, 2012).

In what follows, I present research studies that clearly illustrate how student relationships with faculty and peers, coupled with positive departmental and classroom environments and meaningful apprenticeship opportunities, result in a positive socialization experience for women of color. One important thing to note was that these socialization experiences frequently overlapped even though I presented the key findings as separate subheadings. For example, all the studies presented in this literature review highlighted the significance of encountering supportive academic environments to improve the socialization of women of color doctoral students in one way or another. Consequently, for each study presented, I describe the culture found in the institution, and how doctoral students' social identities aided their socialization as scholars. I begin with mentorship.

2.4.1. Mentorship

Mentorship refers to collaborative and reciprocal relationships between doctoral students and faculty members that involve the development of familial bonds through dialogue, caring, authenticity, emotion, passion, and identity and which, promote transformative learning experiences for all parties involved (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-García, 2018; Starr & DeMartini, 2015). Mentorship relationships do not follow a linear path from expert to novice in which the expert aims to transform the doctoral student into a perfect subject that reflects the culture found in academia. Instead, mentorship relationships are dynamic and empowering because the students' assets are used as tools to transform the culture around them, validate their struggles and offer alternative paths to a successful doctoral journey. The following illustrative research studies by Acevedo-Gil and Madrigal-García (2018), Posselt (2018), and Squire and McCann (2018) show the importance of formal and informal interactions with faculty members, peers, and other institutional members to combat the daily struggles experienced by women and

students of color doctoral studies. Further, it is evidenced that mentoring relationships present an opportunity to individualize support for scholarship among students of color to meet their specific needs (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-García, 2018; Posselt, 2018; Squire & McCann, 2018).

Acevedo-Gil and Madrigal-García (2018) interviewed 19 previous National Latino Program (NLP) scholars and analyzed different documents to understand how the program had influenced Latino/a graduate scholars when navigating challenges in their studies. The NLP is designed to address issues relevant to Latina/os in higher education. Mainly, they looked at how mentoring relationships contributed to positive socialization experiences that foster persistence among doctoral students. They defined mentoring as "intimate relationships among students, peers, and faculty that consciously contributed to the scholarly socialization of students" (p. 317). Furthermore, using Anzaldúa's theory of spiritual activism, mentoring was conceptualized as a "collaborative and reciprocal process that aimed to support Latina/o doctoral students" (p. 318). Acevedo-Gil and Madrigal-García concluded that NLP scholars develop familial bonds or trusting relationships as their commitment to Latina/o communities aligns with their scholar ideologies, backgrounds, and visions. The family bonds developed among NLP scholars were reflected in the cultural value of familismo in Latina/o communities. What is more, through familismo and reciprocity, the authors explained, Latino/a develop a "network of 'academic family members'" (p. 337) that can be accessed at any point for academic and personal support. Additionally, validation as emerging scholars and their belonging to academia reinforces the establishment of familial bonds between NLP scholars. Fostering academic validation includes receiving feedback in written and oral form that affords students with opportunities to reflect upon their self-doubts and allow for inner healing. Finally, the authors point out that peer and

step-ahead mentoring for Latina/o doctoral students validates their identities and provides culturally relevant experiences.

Another significant aspect of mentorship is evidenced in the phenomenological qualitative study by Posselt (2018). She conducted the study to understand how 29 current or former Ph.D. students from underrepresented backgrounds experienced faculty support in four high-diversity STEM Ph.D. programs at two research universities in two different regions of the United States. Of particular interest in this study, programs were selected because they had higher graduation rates of underrepresented students. Yet, Posselt found that many women and African American, Latino, and Native American doctoral students experienced impostor syndrome or self-doubts regarding their belonging and competence in the doctoral programs as they dealt with sexism and racism, isolation, and social comparison with peers. Posselt also found that these negative experiences could be overcome with the assistance of faculty members who provided academic, psychosocial, and sociocultural support. The students preferred to approach same-gender or same-race, or same-ethnicity faculty to discuss different issues about gender or race discrimination. The role of faculty members served to reframe situational and social identity-related struggles through validation of self, misconstruing experiences of impostorism and isolation, establishing long-term goals, and posing alternative interpretations about the rigorousness of graduate school. Additionally, Posselt found that doctoral students benefitted when they encountered a mentoring relationship with faculty members who engage on common ground through visibility, responsiveness, downplaying status, and cultivating trust. Posselt also explained that when students did not find support inside the institution, they sought opportunities outside that better aligned with their views and epistemologies, which reflected their fight against assimilation to academic, colonial, cultural, or epistemological beliefs.

In a similar case, Squire and McCann (2018) conducted a qualitative study to understand how 14 women of color doctoral students in education succeeded in their doctoral programs. Participants' narratives noted experiencing tokenization, inability to find support inside their programs, and dealing with oppressive patriarchal relationships with advisors. In response, women of color doctoral students developed relationships with same-identity and cross-identity faculty, peers, and outside academic communities, who became drivers of their resistance, self-efficacy, and self-advocacy during their doctoral journey. Women of color doctoral students described the support they had received from same-identity faculty members as inspirational, comfortable, and encouraging. Faculty helped create safe spaces for research and challenged racial and gendered oppression. Peer interactions served to build community cultural wealth as they provided understanding about the academic demands, personal support for the execution of projects, and resilience against patriarchal organizations.

It became evident through these studies that demographic factors of faculty and students play a significant role in how mentorship relationships develop. Additionally, it was noted that mentoring relationships are also found among peers, faculty, and outside community members who represent the values of women of color doctoral students. Mentorship relationships help provide a space for resistance against hegemonic culture and help develop the communal cultural wealth needed to navigate the demands of doctoral studies. The following sections highlight the socialization experiences that arise from involvement in formal support groups and constructive peer interactions.

2.4.2. Support Groups

Socialization is also shaped by the relationships that women of color doctoral students encounter in the institutions through formal or informal interactions with faculty, students,

administrators, and the outside community. In the following, I present the studies by Aryan and Guzman (2010) and Ramírez (2017) to show the benefits of formal and informal support groups and constructive peer interactions for women of color doctoral students.

Aryan and Guzman (2010) conducted a qualitative study to explore how attending formal support programs geared towards women of color doctoral students shaped their graduate experiences. Women of color doctoral students reported that they were treated differently than White students, leading them to feel like outsiders in academia and within their families as educated women of color, thus, experiencing feelings of isolation and loneliness. However, Aryan and Guzman also found that by attending formal support programs, women of color doctoral students discovered the support that they needed in their graduate life to feel personally and emotionally supported. Formal support groups provided a space for women of color to develop nurturing mentorship relationships, find guidance, feel welcome, experience a positive environment, and have added networking opportunities. The authors explained that by participating in formal support groups, women of color doctoral students developed navigational capital, had access to tools and resources that contributed to their professional development, and could better cope with daily microaggressions.

A broader perspective was adopted by Ramírez (2017), who conducted a qualitative research study to understand how disciplinary affiliation mediated the professional socialization experiences of 12 men and 12 women Chicano/Latino(a) doctoral students from social science, humanities, education, and science disciplines in a research-I institution. Overall, Ramírez posited that Chicano/Latino(a) doctoral students encountered systemic inequities in their doctoral programs. She found that faculty members held lower expectations for Chicano/Latino(a) doctoral students and exercised favoritism toward certain graduate students—mainly White,

middle-class, and or male students. Consequently, Chicano/Latino(a) students considered their doctoral programs highly racialized and unfair. Students also reported race- and class-based inequalities in graduate student funding. In addition, Ramírez 's findings showed that depending on the field of study of doctoral students, socialization experiences differed. For example, students in science socialized in the field by conducting laboratory work in groups, co-authoring articles with faculty members, and participating more often in research assistantships opportunities. In contrast, the socialization experience in the humanities and education is based largely on independent scholarship. As a result, they engaged more often in "network shuffling," which refers to looking for faculty outside their home institution to obtain information and mentoring. Overall, Chicano/Latino(a) students felt they were adequately prepared for the demands of an academic career if they had sufficient opportunities for professional development, which developed due to faculty mentorship and support by different entities, including other graduate students and mentors outside the institution.

Together, these studies indicate that support groups aid women of color in finding the resources and tools needed to develop professionally, learn about their field of study, and prepare for future academic careers. In addition, support groups did not only involve friendship relationships with other graduate students but also the relationships that develop due to participating in professional opportunities, lab work, teacher assistantships, collaborative fieldwork, or even creating ties with community members. Therefore, the following section focuses on the socialization experiences as it refers to engaging in various apprenticeship opportunities.

2.4.3. Apprenticeship

Socialization is also shaped by the apprenticeship opportunities women of color encounter in their doctoral programs. In the following studies by Caldas and Heiman (2021), Ullman et al. (2020), and Hopwood (2010), the importance of socialization into the academic profession by actually doing the job is evident. Participants in the three studies had an opportunity to develop technical skills. Still, most importantly, they were able to see themselves as researchers engaged in a community of practice (Ullman et al., 2020) and to develop relational agency to navigate the challenges encountered as part of conducting academic work (Hopwood, 2010).

Caldas, a Latina/Indigenous immigrant educator and researcher, and Heiman, a White U.S. male educator and researcher, examined their professional trajectories in a bilingual teacher preparation program at a university in the southwest of the U.S. (2021). The program sought to develop the Spanish skills of future bilingual teachers. However, the program was initially clouded by subtractive discourses about using Spanish in the classroom or what bilingual education should look like, and a lack of communication between leadership, faculty, and students. Fortunately, after some restructuring, faculty members and doctoral students came together in conversation. They proposed a critical horizontal model of apprenticeship. Faculty and doctoral students collaborated as peers, acted as sources of knowledge, learned from each other's linguistic practices, and listened dialogically. They explained that a horizontal relationship approach between master and apprentice created spaces in which "vulnerability, discomfort, and mutual learning" (p. 8) could emerge. Those with expertise and power were responsible for modeling liberatory practices and decision-making. The result was an increase in

doctoral students' autonomy and a development of critical perspectives about their praxis and research agendas that impacted their communities.

This view was supported in Ullman et al.'s (2020) study. They conducted ethnographic research to understand how doctoral students from different minoritized backgrounds became scholars through apprenticeship experiences in a two-semester course on doing ethnographic case study research at a Hispanic-serving institution. The authors explained that academic socialization through writing is oversimplified through a straightforward how-to approach to writing, focusing on fixing problems and delineating writing skills in ways that overlook students' sociocultural and socioeconomic lives. In response, the authors used the course to create a community of practice in which doctoral students could find the support and feedback needed to become scholars. For example, for one participant, an African American woman doctoral student in the class, becoming a scholar was constructed individually and collectively. Specifically, for this student, becoming a scholar happened through reflecting on assigned lectures, engaging in-class discussion, taking double-entry field notes, conducting observations, and presenting original research at two conferences. In total, this student's narrative demonstrates the value of engaging in apprenticeship opportunities to learn, transform, and claim her place in a community of practice of qualitative researchers. Furthermore, by having had a chance to engage in ethnographic work, the students were able to challenge the ideology that ethnography is a "White thing" (Ullman et al., 2020, p. 14), unavailable to people from minoritized backgrounds who lack the financial means and time.

Adding to the significance of apprenticeship opportunities for women of color, Hopwood (2010) conducted a qualitative study to understand doctoral students' academic formation through their deliberate involvement in three activities: teaching, journal editing and career

mentoring. Twenty-one women and 12 men were recruited for this study. Approximately 80% were international doctoral students. All participants elected to participate in these activities to build academic career capital. Hopwood states that students attributed their learning to the ways in which the activities allowed them to engage in discussion and social interaction. Moreover, by engaging in these activities, students were "relationally agentic" (p. 838), which refers to the understanding that other people may constitute a valuable source of information and that by negotiating social interactions, they could meet their needs. In other words, doctoral students in a "purposeful human activity" (p. 840) sought out other people to increase their knowledge, engaged in social interactions or used artifacts such as books, journals, or other literature to exercise their agency and achieve their ambitions and needs. As a result, doctoral students learned to overcome the challenges presented in these activities. The study highlighted the importance of emergent and unstructured experiences in doctoral programs.

The above examples highlight the benefits of apprenticeship opportunities for doctoral women and students of color who intentionally and purposefully engage in the activities needed to become a scholar. Their reflections, discussions, use of written material, and deliberate social interactions allowed them to learn about the work of an academic. Also, they were able to overcome fears and find the motivation to navigate the demands of an academic profession. Most importantly, the opportunities for apprenticeships showed the agentic role of doctoral students in their development and learning.

Furthermore, these studies exemplified the oppressive culture found in academia, and challenged modernist views that state socialization processes are mechanical and sequential (Hopwood, 2010; Tierney, 1997). Rather, these studies: a) advance the idea that the socialization experiences of women of color doctoral students are located in the socially constructed

institutional culture, b) position women of color doctoral students as co-creators of culture, c) highlight that women of color doctoral students enact their agency when they find resources through the support and mentorship of faculty, peers, and mentors outside the institution to deal with opposing values, and d) show that women of color doctoral students use their ways of knowing to shape their experiences to benefit and empower themselves.

In total, the research presented thus far provides evidence that women of color doctoral students seek out mentorship relationships and peer support to validate their racial identity and research agendas (Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Felder et al., 2014; Squire & McCann, 2018; Ramírez, 2017). They find inspiration in the voices or counter-stories of women of color doctoral students who persisted in academia (González, 2006; Haynes et al., 2016) and feel empowered through the faculty's academic, psychosocial, and sociocultural support (Curtin et al., 2016; Posselt, 2018). They engage in critical reflexivity, dialogue, and collaborative learning between student and faculty relationships (Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Caldas & Heiman, 2021; Ramírez, 2017; Starr & DeMartini, 2015; Squire & McCann, 2018). In other words, they develop and acquire communal capital (Squire & McCann, 2018), navigational capital (Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Yosso, 2006), relational agency (Hopwood, 2010), and resolution skills (Felder et al., 2014) that allow them to survive and thrive in a gendered and racialized stratified learning environment. In view of all that has been mentioned so far, this study seeks to add to the literature available by looking at Latina doctoral students as holders of ways of knowing that help them re-create and co-construct their socialization experiences and culture around them. It expands by addressing the gaps of being a multilingual and a first-generation student completing doctoral studies. These gaps are developed in the following section.

2.5. RESEARCH GAPS

The research study seeks to fill gaps in the research on the socialization experiences of women doctoral students of color by incorporating two main aspects: (1) language, and (2) first-generation. First, with prejudicial views against bilingualism in education (Delgado Bernal, 1998), the academic socialization experiences of bilingual or multilingual Latina students needs to be revised to include how language use plays a role in their persistence and survival in their doctoral programs (González, 2006). Second, there is an urgency to study the particular socialization experiences of first-generation doctoral students as approximately 50% of African Americans, Latinx, and American Indian who earned a doctoral degree indicated that they were first-generation. This group has been understudied at the doctoral level (Holley & Gardner, 2012). These two aspects have been overlooked and present significant research gaps in the literature. Additionally, for a significant time, the socialization of students in doctoral programs has been studied through modernist frameworks (Gardner, 2010; Tierney, 1997; Weidman & Stein, 2003; Weidman et al., 2001). Therefore, one major gap in the literature is the theoretical lens through which socialization experiences have been studied. In response, this study uses Latina critical race and Chicana feminist frameworks. In the following sections, I address how language and being a first-generation doctoral student impact the socialization experiences of women of color doctoral students, and thus, hold merit as particular assets that need to be reflected in the literature on the socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students.

2.5.1. Language

According to the socialization model by Twale et al. (2016), language plays an integral part in the socialization of doctoral students. Unfortunately, Delgado Bernal (1998) notes that being bilingual is framed as un-American and is perceived as a deficit and obstacle to learning.

Consequently, it is not uncommon to find language ideologies in doctoral programs that dictate how doctoral students interact (Ullman et al., 2020). For example, the unwritten rule that bilingual students follow makes it permissible to use Spanish in one-on-one discussions or small groups but never to address the professor or the whole class. With such prejudicial views against multilingualism in education, socialization experiences of women of color needed to be revised to include how language use plays a role in their persistence and survival in their doctoral programs (González, 2006).

The academic socialization process of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds has received much attention as the number of international students who pursue a doctoral degree in the United States rises (Seloni, 2012). During the academic year 2020-2021, the number of international doctoral students enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States was 132,703, representing a 2.9% decrease from the previous year (Institute of International Education, 2020). According to Li (2016), international students are a marginalized group in higher education in the United States. However, their marginalization and discrimination experiences are different from women and underrepresented minorities (URM) students. Their marginalization is tied to their international identity and non-native English-speaking identity (Li, 2016). Similarly, Thompson et al. (2016) suggest that international doctoral students, for whom English is an additional language (EAL), must defend their authority as English writers while at the same time ensuring their work is representative of discipline-specific rhetorical knowledge. Therefore, understanding international doctoral students' challenges and socialization experiences regarding language use is beneficial to understanding the experiences of women of color whose native language is different from English, the language of instruction in almost all doctoral programs in the United States, including the university at the

center of this study. In the following paragraphs, I present various studies that have looked at the socialization experiences of international students and, more specifically, how language impacts socialization experiences.

The first study presents that international students' socialization experiences are shaped by language. Lee (2011) conducted a qualitative research study with eight diverse international students, of which seven students spoke English as a second language, who were enrolled in social science and humanities doctoral degree programs at a research-I institution in the southeastern United States. Lee found that doctoral degree completion among international students is influenced by different factors such as financial support, a student's satisfaction and fit with the department and program, advising, faculty mentoring, peer mentoring, and socialization experiences. In addition, Lee reported that participants' socialization experiences were primarily impacted by their relationships with faculty advisors, which were shaped and informed by language. For example, one participant noted that he preferred to develop relationships with a specific woman advisor who, according to him, understood his cultural diversity because she spoke his language, knew about the history of his home country, and had even traveled to his homeland to conduct research.

Seloni (2012) provides another example highlighting the agency of international students to navigate doctoral studies. Seloni conducted an ethnographic study of the academic literacy socialization processes of six multilingual students in education as they progressed through their first year of their doctoral program. She identified various socialization spaces from which multilingual doctoral students learned the dynamics of how to 'do schooling,' writing, reading, and speaking practices of their fields. Seloni noticed students relied on the guidance of their professors, texts, spoken and written interactions within academic courses and the writing center,

peer scaffolding, support groups, and even side conversations with peers. Seloni concluded that socializing into academic discourse practices is a complex and multilayered dialogic process that ensues among various actors across time and space.

Similarly, Kim (2018) conducted a qualitative case study with four doctoral students whose first language was not English to understand how feedback is a social practice. In the socialization process at the mid-Atlantic university where the study took place, she found that doctoral students encountered feedback-rich environments from various sources such as faculty, senior peers, casual conversations, and writing centers. As soon as multilingual students realized the relevance of feedback in the pre-dissertation stage of their doctoral programs, they actively integrated the insights from various sources, made revisions, and ultimately developed a foundation for academic writing.

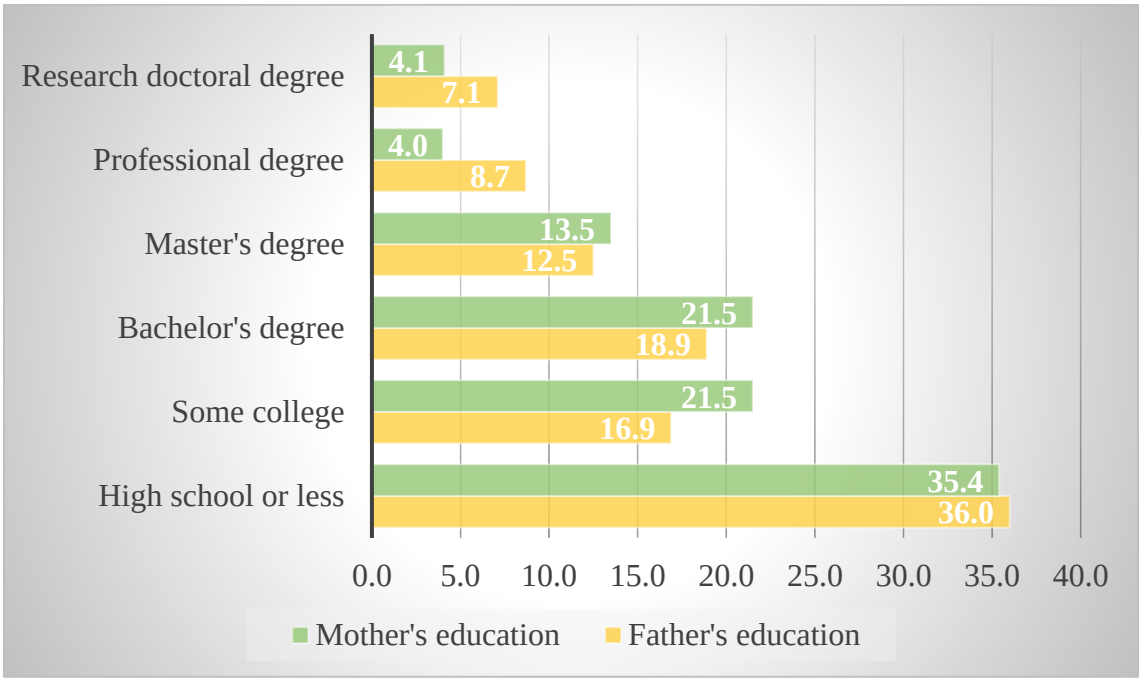
The studies above suggest that students' language influences their academic identities, including how women of color students see themselves fitting into the academic community (Morita, 2009; Seloni, 2012) and the ways in which, bilingual and multilingual students possess agency to negotiate their roles and identities through discourse practices (González, 2006; Hopwood, 2010; Morita, 2009). Consequently, understanding how multilingualism affects the socialization experiences of women of color doctoral students is key to realizing how they become successful scholars and exercise agency to co-construct knowledge. In like manner, this study also seeks to address the understudied first-generation doctoral student population who demonstrate resilience and willingness to work harder to be successful in their doctoral studies (Holley & Gardner, 2012; Roksa et al., 2018). The following section introduces the need to study first-generation students at the doctoral level.

2.5.2. First-Generation Students

According to the NCSES (2019) Survey of Earned Doctorates, almost 30% of earned doctoral degrees were first-generation. First-generation doctorate holder is considered as a student for whom neither parent has earned a baccalaureate degree. Approximately 50% of African American, Hispanic, and American Indian students who earned a doctoral degree indicated first-generation students (Holley & Gardner, 2012). In 2018, amongst Latinx doctorate recipients, 36% of their fathers and 35.4% of their mothers held a high school diploma or less (NCSES, 2019). Graph 2 shows a visual representation of doctorate recipients' parents' educational attainment by Hispanic or Latino students in 2018. As it can be evidenced in the graph, Hispanic or Latinx doctoral students tend to be first-generation doctoral students.

Graph 2

Educational attainment of doctorate recipients' parents, by Hispanic or Latino students: 2018 (NCSES, 2019)



Graph 2: Educational attainment of doctorate recipients' parents, by Hispanic or Latino students: 2018

However, despite the representation of first-generation doctoral students among communities of color, this student population has been understudied at the doctoral level (Bañuelos & Flores, 2021). While some conclusions may be drawn from the literature available at the undergraduate level, there is a clear need to focus on this student population (Holley & Gardner, 2012; Roksa et al., 2018). In this section, I describe the challenges and attributes shared by first-generation doctoral students that have been noted in the literature.

Research has shown that first-generation doctoral students share similar challenges to undergraduate students (Gardner, 2013; Holley & Gardner, 2012; Roksa et al., 2018; Smith &

García, 2018). There has also been research that points out specific characteristics that first-generation doctoral students have shown as drivers of their success in their studies.

For example, the basic qualitative design by Paxton (2020) with eight first-generation Latina education doctoral students enrolled in universities in South Texas. Given Latinx's unique cultural and family expectations, she found distinctive barriers in their doctoral programs, such as experiencing guilt, stress, and impostorism. However, her findings also showed that supportive peer and faculty relationships were vital to first-generation Latina doctoral students' persistence in their doctoral studies. Additionally, she noted Latinx doctoral students rely on family support, peer friendships, and faculty relationships to navigate the demands of doctoral programs. Finally, they also persisted because they desired a better life.

Likewise, Bañuelos and Flores (2021) interviewed 25 first-generation Latinx doctoral students. They found that many first-generation Latinx doctoral students learned about doctoral programs from their college professors, who also helped them expand their career options and understand financial possibilities and the application processes. They noted that professors positively influenced first-generation Latinx college students in the doctoral program by providing them with institutional resources and social support. Participants reported they received instrumental support and access to professional networks from faculty members of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Most importantly, Latinx co-ethnic professors were also able to provide Latinx students with relevant experiential knowledge that helped them navigate hardships encountered in oppressive academic environments. In conclusion, Bañuelos and Flores explained that when first-generation Latinx doctoral students have access to the mentorship of professors who mirror aspects of their social location, they are more likely to find moral support,

relational networks, and experiential knowledge to navigate doctoral studies from application to graduation and beyond.

Similarly, Holley and Gardner (2012) indicate that first-generation doctoral students feel that being first-generation students is indicative of their willingness to work harder than other colleagues who hold certain privileges, which ultimately contribute to many of their accomplishments. Additionally, first-generation students encounter motivation to pursue a doctorate with the idea of future economic benefits, fulfilling a requirement of the field of practice, and high expectations held by family members and the community.

In the present study, I build on this research to center the voices of first-generation Latina doctoral students to fill the gap in the literature on how being first-generation intersects with socialization experiences.

In sum, language and being a first-generation doctoral student are essential virtues that impact the socialization experiences of doctoral students regardless of race and gender. Therefore, these gaps add significance to the realization of this research study. Additionally, as I have shown, historically, the socialization of doctoral students of color, in particular women of color doctoral students, has taken a deficit thinking approach and prescribed a series of learning activities aimed at assimilating all students into the prevailing White and male academic culture (Taylor & Antony, 2000; Turner & Thompson, 1993; Weidman et al., 2001). Unfortunately, this one size fits all approach to assisting individuals in achieving their academic, personal, and professional goals has proven damaging to students whose values do not fit the academy's (Tierney, 1997). Consequently, I posit a significant gap is the theoretical lens through which socialization experiences have been studied. Therefore, this study seeks to add to the literature

available by using Latina critical race and Chicana feminist frameworks, which are defined in the following section.

2.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Only a few studies on academic socialization have been conducted using intersectionality theory or critical raced-gendered epistemologies (Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Ramírez, 2017). Delgado Bernal (2002) explains that critical raced-gendered epistemologies offer unique ways of knowing and understanding the world and reflect core values rooted in communities of color such as education, self-determination, resistance, family, and freedom as tools that facilitate adjustment to college. These epistemologies examine how oppression is produced in the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and sex identities. The focus on Latina doctoral students of Mexican descent led me to choose a Latina critical race and Chicana feminist to frame my understanding of their socialization experiences. These frameworks are explained in detail in the following paragraphs, but first, I define critical race theory as the precursor to Latina/o critical race and Chicana feminist frameworks. These frameworks are not incompatible or competitive with each other. Instead, they seek to supplement or complement each other (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Hence, it is essential to understand them separately and then together as a lens to study the socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students.

2.6.1. Critical Race Theory

Latina critical race and Chicana feminist frameworks have their roots in critical race theory (CRT). CRT is informed by ethnic studies, U.S. third-world feminisms, Marxism/neo-Marxism, cultural nationalism, and internalized colonialism (Yosso, 2006). CRT studies the historical problems of domination, alienation, and social struggles (Creswell & Poth, 2016). According to Solórzano et al. (2000), there are five tenets of CRT: (1) the intercentricity of race

and racism; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the interdisciplinary perspective.

The first tenet is exemplified in Yosso's reflection on the educational pipeline regarding Chicanas/os doctoral experiences (2006). She posits, "racism leads to self-doubt, survivor's guilt, impostor syndrome, and causes some Chicanas/os to lash out in subtle and overt ways towards other Chicanas/os" (p. 156). Race and experiences with racism are central to the socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students as they shape the relationships developed with faculty, peers, and the community. At the same time, their intellect, demeanor, and complete skillset are measured through a "racial etiquette" (Omi & Winant, 2004, p. 17) imposed by a racialized-stratified society.

The second tenet is best understood through the colonial impact on indigenous people. Wilson and Cavender (2005) explain that the pervasive effects of colonization have resulted in native people internalizing racism and uncritically accepting ideologies imposed by the dominant culture. In response, they propose that recovering traditional knowledge may be the only form of resistance available to reverse the harm caused by the process of colonization. Furthermore, they posit that reaffirming indigenous epistemological and ontological foundations provides a documented record of resistance to the colonial forces denigrating and silencing indigenous people. The second tenet can thus inform socialization experiences to help Latina doctoral students challenge dominant practices in academia, like standardized testing or the disparagement of ethnic or race-focused research as valid research, while validating them as scholars.

The third tenet is the idea that education is political (Freire & Macedo, 2005). According to Glass (2000), the "educational, social, economic, and political power is unfairly distributed

among classes, races, genders, and abilities" (p. 279). Following, Glass argues that public schools are the only institutions where there is an existent fight against unfair distribution of power and for just and democratic communities. For example, Bell (1995) argues that while White people have always known about the antagonist effects of racism, it is not enough to impact legislation. Instead, he argues that the "interest convergence" of White and people of color led to Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. Bell explains that the principle of "interest convergence" provides that "the interest of Blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of Whites" (p. 523).

Similarly, Bolzendahl and Myers (2004) suggest that feminist ideals have gained acceptance when there is a motivation driven by self-interests. In this sense, CRT commits to advancing an agenda of social justice in schools and society (Yosso, 2006). Likewise, Freire (1973) considers education a political project that empowers humans to construct their voices and expose their needs, searching for self and social empowerment. In this sense, socialization experiences that acknowledge the identity of students and institutional culture can serve to increase and retain the number of doctoral students and faculty of color in academia, which can facilitate dialogue around the inclusion of diversity to improve the academic culture.

The fourth tenet serves to remind educators, scholars, and policymakers that the resources of communities of color through their lived experiences and varied socio-cultural backgrounds are assets in constructing a more equitable educational system (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Yosso, 2005, 2006). CRT is empowering and empathetic to the diversity students bring to the classroom. It recognizes that in the differences, one finds uniqueness and richness. In this way, socialization experiences are co-constructed by the various agents in academia (Ullman et al., 2020). All

knowledges, values, interests, and attitudes are integrated into the learning experiences that seek to deconstruct hegemonic views, advance learning, and empower oppressed groups.

The fifth tenet takes a historical and interdisciplinary perspective against different oppressors. According to De Lissovoy (2010), decolonial theories seek to confront, challenge, and undo the historical process of domination imposed by colonialism and Eurocentrism across different disciplines, such as philosophy, literature, sociology, science studies, and ethnic and gender studies. Again, going back to the socialization experiences of women of color in academia, the curriculum is a significant source of knowledge for women of color, consequently empowering curricula that include a variety of communicative practices, genres, fields, and disciplines serve to aid students of all backgrounds (Lea & Street, 1998).

Conclusively, CRT provides a robust framework to understand the structural barriers and limitations of socialization experiences through the eyes of women of color doctoral students (Bañuelos, 2011). However, I also use other supplementary branches of CRT since they recognize lived experiences outside the black and White binary (Yosso, 2006). Thus, they can represent the lived experiences of Latina students of Mexican descent. More specifically, I use Latina critical race and Chicana feminist frameworks because they acknowledge that race is just one of the multiple identities that affect the lived experiences of Latinas, in particular of Mexican descent.

2.6.2. Latina Critical Theory

For this study, I drew from Latina critical theory or LatCrit. Valdes (2005) explains that LatCrit is a scholarly movement that began in the United States in 1995 due to the historical and enduring invisibility of Latinas/os in law, theory, policy, and society. LatCrit recognizes “the coexistence of multiple identities and their constant social interaction in the lives of human

beings" (p. 159). In such regard, Valdes explains that LatCrit views subordination not only through the lens of race but also through various identities such as ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, geography, ability, seniority, and other forms of position that are legally or socially relevant to the maintenance of the status quo in the U.S. society and the world. Yosso (2006) explains that LatCrit presents the different layers of subordination to which Chicanas/os are subjected, such as "immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, phenotype, accent, and surname" (p. 7). Similarly, Delgado Bernal (2002) suggests LatCrit theorizes language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality issues. For example, this framework was used to explore the Chicana/Latina faculty experience at an HSI because it addresses the multiple layers of subordination that give shape to multiple forms of resilience amongst Chicanas in academia (Ek et al., 2010).

The multidimensional analysis encountered in LatCrit was of great resonance to the conception of this study as research has shown that when crossing borders, different identities, such as race, ethnicity, regional, religion, gender, or class, have different weights depending on which side of the border one is standing (Vila, 2005). Moreover, the location of the HSI in which the research took place proposed the need to look at how identities are shaped within a fluid and dynamic socio-economical, cultural, and political region and the effect it takes on Latina doctoral students socialization experiences.

Additionally, this framework posed its value as the multidimensionality of oppressive structures that were present for Latina doctoral students, "encapsulate nuances that give way to a complex Latina consciousness that is simultaneously informed by the hegemonic power structure, history (U.S. and Mexican), and human agency" (González, 2006, p. 353). In other words, LatCrit in this research study seeks to center the voices of Latina doctoral students whose

voice has been silenced, marginalized, or erased from academia. Still, it is necessary to understand how socialization experiences can be co-constructed.

2.6.3. Chicana Feminist Framework

I also used a Chicana feminist framework to inform the conceptualization of my research study. Noddings (2002) states that many people, and even feminists, advocate an "equity model" of education (p. 110). However, she explains, the world has been defined and built by men's ideologies. Instead, what is needed is to analyze the structures and practice from the perspective of women. Feminists of color go beyond the category of gender. Instead, "endarkened feminist epistemologies" (Delgado Bernal, 1998) serve to explore other discourses and structures of oppression, such as capitalism, racism, colonialism, postcolonialism, ability, gender, and sexuality, and invite the researcher to think of these issues collectively and separately to reinvent reality (Davis, 2016; Delgado Bernal, 1998).

The need to account for the multidimensionality of women's lives or the oversight of intersectional issues started with the second wave of feminism between the early 1960s and 1980s (Dudley, 2006), which was fought mainly by suburban White women fighting for reproductive freedom, abortion rights, access to jobs, and equal pay for equal work, to mention a few. However, women of color also engaged in feminist movements, such as Audre Lorde, a Black lesbian feminist poet widely renowned for her influence in this movement and who called for a multi-issued feminist movement (Dudley, 2006).

Drawing from Anzaldúa (1987) and U.S. third world feminists, Delgado Bernal (1998) proposed a Chicana feminist epistemology (CFE) that enlightens the knowledges and experiences of Chicanas as means to "resist epistemological racism and to recover untold stories" (p. 556), and "expose human relationships and experiences that are probably not visible

from a traditional patriarchal position or a liberal feminist standpoint" (p. 560). CFE recognizes some issues are particularly salient to Chicanas, such as immigration, migration, generational status, bilingualism, limited English proficiency, and Catholicism (Delgado Bernal, 1998).

Through a CFE, deficit thinking views of Chicana/o students rooted in a Eurocentric epistemological framework can be re-imagined as cultural assets or resources that Chicana/o students bring to formal educational environments (Delgado Bernal, 2002). What is more, Delgado Bernal (2002) adds, "Chicanas become agents of knowledge who participate in intellectual discourse that links experience, research, community, and social change" (p. 560). For example, Sánchez and Hernández (2022) drew from Anzaldúa and Chicana feminist epistemologies to inform how the intersection of their multiple identities shaped their socialization into the academy. They explained they were able to resist an oppressive academic culture filled with capitalistic, individualistic, and extractive values through the involvement of their families and encouraging other Latinxs/Chicanxs in their educational goals.

CFE is central to bringing attention to the unique socialization experiences of Latinas of Mexican descent in academia. Hinojosa and Carney (2016) note that Mexican American women doctoral students' experiences are the most underrepresented subgroup among all Latinx. Although, for so long, the voices and experiences of Chicanas have been made invisible by lumping together different populations of Latinas into generic terms like Hispanic, it is time to listen and recount their stories of survival, struggle, and resistance (Yosso, 2006). Calderón (2014) believes the strength of Chicana feminist scholarship relies on its ability to be responsive to multiple subjectivities or colonial- or color-blind discourses. Colonial-blind discourses, she explains, prioritize western knowledge organization and assumptions and educational practices that are deeply rooted in colonialism and which operate invisibly.

While there has been a considerable amount of research done on women of color, Moffitt et al. (2012) remind us that there is a need to study how different sociopolitical identities of women "interlock rather than bifurcate" (p. 79). Maybe most in line with my critique of the available research is that this framework "ruptures rigid binary and hierarchical thinking, offers a queered articulation of the body, and provides decolonizing methodologies" (Calderón et al., 2012, p. 515). In sum, the use of Latina/o critical race and Chicana feminist frameworks parallel my understanding of the co-constructed role of women of color, particularly Latina doctoral students, in their socialization experiences. It upholds the relevance that their politicized identities inform their socialization experiences. Moreover, these frameworks serve to center the voices of Latinas, highlight how socialization experiences involve power relations, and perhaps most importantly, humanize the research process. Lastly, these frameworks inform my selection of testimonios to conduct this research study. In the next chapter, I describe the relevance and applicability of testimonios to the development of the study.

2.7. Conclusion

For this research study, I adopt the view that institutional culture is not static and not absolute. Instead, the continuous interactions, knowledges, aspirations, values, and skills of all its members help construct the institution into what it ought to be. This means that Latina doctoral students contribute to the academic culture in the institutional setting and that socialization experiences can reproduce a culture of inequality or disrupt hegemonic practices. At the same time, I debunk the idea that socialization experiences occur as a series of predefined steps. Instead, socialization experiences are born and develop through the daily interactions of doctoral students with institutional culture, faculty, peers, and members of the community (Barnes & Randall, 2012). In the end, transformational socialization experiences are a result of faculty who

recognize the role that identity plays in students' research (Felder et al., 2014), critical-inclusive pedagogy practices (Haynes et al., 2016), validation of self through mentorship (Posselt, 2018), and critical dialogue with faculty, peers and outside the community (Squire & McCann, 2018). Such socialization experiences allow women of color doctoral students to develop capital and use their ways of knowing to co-construct culture and academic experiences (Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Felder et al., 2014; Hopwood, 2010; Squire & McCann, 2018; Ullman et al., 2020; Yosso, 2006). This study builds on this important body of scholarship by using critical raced-gendered epistemologies to explore the racialized and gendered academic socialization experiences of first-generation, multilingual Latina doctoral students at the U.S.-México border.

3. Chapter III: Methodology

Up to this point, I have identified key aspects of my conceptual framework (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Maxwell, 2005) on the topic of academic socialization experiences of women of color doctoral students. Specifically, I situated the socialization of women of color doctoral students as a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon shaped by the intersectionality of women of color doctoral students' multifaceted identities (Ellis, 2001; Felder et al., 2014; Tierney, 1997). I also explained how Latina critical race and Chicana feminist theories (Davis, 2016; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Calderón, 2014; Calderón et al., 2012; Valdes, 2005) inform my understanding of the ways in which race, gender, language, and first-generation status play a significant part in the doctoral journeys of Latina doctoral students. Besides, I established that women of color doctoral students are active agents in their development as scholars, who possess valuable knowledge, and navigational (Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Hopwood, 2010; Ullman et al., 2020; Yosso, 2005, 2006) and communal (Squire & McCann, 2018) capital to negotiate the demands of doctoral studies. The present study expands on the existing research to explore the understudied significance of language and being a first-generation doctoral student in the socialization experiences of Latina women doctoral students at the U.S.-México border. The research question guiding this study was: *What are the academic socialization experiences of first-generation, multilingual Latina women doctoral students at the U.S.-México border?*

The research question guides my research design, data collection, and analysis. My literature review and theoretical lenses inform it. For this research study on the socialization experiences of first-generation, multilingual Latina women doctoral students at a university at the U.S.-México border, I use testimonios as the research methodology. In this chapter, I explain

testimonios as the methodology for the research study. I also address the research context, methods for data collection, data analysis, positionality and subjectivity, and ethical precautions. I begin by describing testimonios as the methodology and explain why this particular methodology is best suited for the focus of this research. I also explain how I used testimonio to guide data collection and analysis.

3.1. Methodology: Testimonios

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that narrative inquiry is a qualitative research design focused on telling stories that participants find relevant to understanding the meaning of human experiences. These stories are told through autobiographies, life history, interviews, journals, letters, or other materials. The end product is a story that is co-authored between participant and researcher. It is co-authored because the researcher and participants co-construct their identities and knowledges by sharing stories in interviews. Testimonios mirror narrative inquiry in that testimonios involve telling life stories, autohistorias, and lived experiences (Flores Carmona, 2014). However, testimonios is different from narrative inquiry because this methodology invites the participant to critically reflect on a particular phenomenon (Delgado Bernal et al., 2017) and frequently includes the telling of lived oppression (Chase, 2011; Flores Carmona, 2014). What is more, I used testimonios as the methodology for this study because it validates the co-construction of knowledge throughout the research process (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, 2017; Pérez Huber, 2009; Ramos & Torres-Fernandez, 2020).

Furthermore, testimonios as a methodology establishes a method of analysis, which seeks collaboration between the researcher and the participant. It focuses on myriad ways of knowing, such as lived and experiential knowledge (Delgado Bernal et al., 2017) by honoring and respecting the experiential knowledge of participants (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Besides,

testimonios as a methodology can facilitate positive change and personal emancipation (Chase, 2011). For these reasons, testimonios is increasingly used as a decolonizing methodological approach in educational research to transform academia (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, 2017). In the following paragraphs, I explain the need to employ decolonizing methodologies to explore the academic socialization experiences of women of color doctoral students.

Testimonios is a decolonizing methodology that draws on Latina critical theory and Chicana feminist theory. By using testimonios, researchers and participants collaborate to tell a respectful and ethical story that is guided by their cultural knowledge (Flores Carmona, 2014) and not color-blind discourses (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). As earlier stated in the literature review, higher education in the United States is built on White privilege and the illusion of meritocracy, objectivity, and individuality, resulting in an "apartheid of knowledge" that delegitimizes specific epistemologies (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002, p. 169). Consequently, positivistic methods and color-blind discourses also referred to as color-evasiveness (Felix & Trinidad, 2019), adopt political neutrality and overlook sociological and cultural influences and the interactions of identities such as gender, race, class, and sexuality (Pillow, 2003). That is, color-blind racism uses "linguistic manners and rhetorical strategies" which serve to perpetuate and even rationalize racial order (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1365). More specifically, positivism assumes that there is one absolute reality separate from the researcher, which can be understood through objective methods, making scientific inquiry the only legitimate mode of conducting research (Johnston, 2006; Prasad, 2017).

However, Hunter (2002) reminds us that the entrenched academic epistemology of positivism is heavily criticized in various schools of thought, including feminist methodologists, postmodernists, and critical anthropologists. Therefore, I chose testimonios as a methodology

since it illuminates the ways of knowing and cultural background found in communities of color as assets (Flores Carmona, 2014).

Consequently, testimonios as a methodology in conjunction with LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemologies represent a decolonizing methodology (Calderón et al., 2012; De Lissovoy, 2010). Calderón et al. (2012) stated that decolonizing methodologies such as testimonios, pláticas, and trenzas y mestizaje "challenge objectivity, call for reciprocity, merge the bodymindspirit, and inject a sense of political urgency to address educational inequities in Chicana/o communities" (p. 525). The goal of testimonios is to contribute sabiduría or wisdom and stories of self-transformation that have been created within women's flesh and bodies (Cervantes-Soon, 2017). In this way, testimonios allow Latina doctoral students to be active agents in their development as scholars (Barnes & Randall, 2012; Tierney, 1997). Accordingly, this methodology allows me to challenge assimilative academic socialization models that posit doctoral students as passive agents who should accommodate to the master narratives. Instead, by using testimonios, I amplify the voices of Latina doctoral students (Chase, 2011). By giving their testimonios, participants validate that they are holders and creators of values, attitudes, interests, skills, and knowledge that can re-create culture (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Participants can tell how they use their personal and social resources, motivations, and tools to advance as scholars at an HSI. Additionally, participants are involved in analyzing and interpreting data, ensuring that their stories of struggle and success are told meaningfully and are portrayed positively, steering away from deficit thinking approaches.

Finally, testimonios focus on naming one's-own-oppression and voicing one's-own-experiences in constructing emancipatory knowledge (Chase, 2011; Flores Carmona, 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012). Testimonios invite the

participants to analyze and criticize their lives with an eye to power dimensions, but at the same time while sharing a message of hope and agency (Cervantes-Soon, 2017). By using testimonios, I designed this research so that Latina doctoral students reflected upon gender, race, class, and other social identities and made meaning of how their intersectional identities have shaped their socialization experiences in academia.

Moreover, I used testimonios as a methodological tool to highlight the urgency to address the socialization inequities of Latinas at the doctoral level (Cervantes-Soon, 2017). Additionally, it provides a new path to learning about the values, attitudes, interests, skills, and knowledge that different Latina doctoral students use to resist marginalization and create better academic opportunities (Cervantes-Soon, 2017; Delgado Bernal et al., 2017). In so doing, I validate participants' experiences, backgrounds, and knowledge. Specifically, by using testimonios as a methodology, I show that: a) culture is co-constructed, b) change is possible, and c) all knowledge, values, attitudes, perspectives, and interests are worthy of exploration. In the following paragraphs, I describe how I collected my data and conducted an analysis using testimonios as methodology located within a Chicana feminist epistemology and a LatCrit framework. But first, I speak about how my positionality and subjectivity impact my understanding in this study.

3.2. Positionality and Subjectivity

My interest in this study came from my personal experience as a Mexican woman doctoral student living at the U.S.-México border and attending a Hispanic-serving institution. But most importantly, it was a result of my interest in equity, racial and social justice, and my commitment to empowerment and advocacy, interests that guided my scholarship and research during my doctoral program. I agree with Delgado Bernal (1998), who explained that Chicana

researchers provide meaning to data through four sources of unique viewpoints that include personal experience, existing literature, professional experience, and analytical research process. Therefore, it was difficult for me to engage in conversation without some predispositions or anticipations of what I may find based on my previous personal experiences and readings, and research. Thus, I am aware that my positionality informed my interest in the topic and could have clouded my judgment. For this reason, I tried to be conscious of my position as an insider and outsider in the research process while maintaining that my voice is a vehicle for activism (Villenas, 1996). Hence, I was open to sharing my own socialization stories with my participants to create a bond of collaboration and empowerment against marginalization and to continuously center the voices of all women of color doctoral students.

All this is to say that I recognize how my role as a researcher was an integral part of that research process and that reflexivity guided me to think about how my background and experiences intersected with and informed the research (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Espino et al., 2012; Flores Carmona, 2014; Starr & DeMartini, 2015). Furthermore, as a Mexican woman doctoral student, I posit that my unique positionality and cultural intuition (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Delgado Bernal, 1998) fueled my understanding of socialization experiences and helped me to engage in truthful co-construction of knowledge and experiences. Cultural intuition is explained by Delgado Bernal (1998) as an expansion of "one's personal experience to include collective experience and community memory" (p. 563). Therefore, my positionality and cultural intuition are strengths and a source of valid knowledge that serves to interpret data.

3.3. PARTICIPANTS

A critical step in the design of my data collection process was to set the criteria for sampling and to design a recruitment plan that supported the identification of participants

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I used purposive sampling to select my participants (Creswell, 2014a; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Unlike quantitative research, which seeks to use many randomly selected participants, I purposefully chose the participants who best helped me answer the research question in this study. Toward this end, I narrowed the criteria of participants to Latina doctoral students who were first-generation and whose native language was different than the language of instruction at a university at the U.S.-México border. Because I am interested in a variation of experiences across different Latina doctoral students, I did not limit my participant criteria to a specific stage of doctoral studies or a particular discipline of study.

Creswell (2014a) explains that there is no perfect number of participants for a qualitative study. Instead, he suggests that the number depends on the qualitative design being used. For example, Creswell (2014a) suggests between one to two participants for narrative studies. However, my interest in learning from various testimonios informed my initial decision to interview a minimum of ten participants. Nonetheless, due to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, this number was not achieved. Stay-at-home orders impacted many Latina doctoral students balancing work, studying, childbearing, caring for family members, and household work. Given the situation, the recruitment of participants was slow, and ultimately, I was only able to interview six participants for this study.

All participants self-identified as a woman and were first-generation students, according to my definition of this term. Below is a chart summarizing race and ethnicity, hometown, languages spoken, the field of study at the doctoral level, and the age of each of my participants. Race and ethnicity were written in the way participants identified themselves, making it evident that race is a social construct.

Table 1

Participants

Table 1: Participants

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Race	Hometown	Languages	Field of Study	Age
Ana	Hispanic	Mexican American	El Paso, TX	Spanish and English	Bilingual Education	68
Ximena	Latina	White	El Paso, TX	Spanish and English, some French and Arabic	Health Psychology	26
Rebecca	Hispanic	Non-White, Brown, or Mexican	Ciudad Juárez	Spanish and English	Education	37
Sofia	Hispanic/ Latina	Mexican American	El Paso, TX	Spanish and English	Social Psychology, and certificate in statistics	26
Camila	Hispanic	Mexican	Ciudad Juárez	Spanish and English	Bilingual Education	48
Valentina	Latina	Mexican	Ciudad Juárez	Spanish and English	Education	28

It is critical to note that the world had been in a pandemic mode for almost one year and a half when the testimonio interviews and pláticas began. Ana, Camila, Valentina, and Rebecca had attended both face-to-face and virtual classes, whereas Sofia and Ximena had only attended virtual courses. Consequently, their stories will show how the pandemic impacted their socialization experiences at the institution in the findings section. In the following section, I describe how I recruited the participants for this study.

3.3.1. Recruitment

Recruitment of participants was "intentional and organic" (Cervantes-Soon, 2017, p. 73), meaning it was systematically planned but flexible. I began recruitment upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. I used three channels to recruit participants. First, I submitted a

request to the Texas Open Records Act through the Vice President of Business Affairs at the university where the study took place to request access to all current doctoral students' emails via email to the Texas Public Information Act. Under the Texas Public Information Act, I was able to get access to all current doctoral students' emails. I received the information as a password-protected excel document. The Vice President of Business Affairs emailed me the information requested at the beginning of summer 2021. Upon receiving access to the mailing list, I sent a mass recruitment email. Potential participants were blind carbon copied, including a brief description of the research study and contact information. Given my focus on gender, race, language, and educational background, I made the criteria for participation explicit in the participant recruitment message sent out to doctoral students and again in the informed consent form. It is important to note that because race and gender are socially constructed concepts (Lorber, 2004; Omi & Winant, 2004), I allowed participants to self-identify according to these criteria. Finally, given that I did not receive a response from enough potential participants after three weeks, I sent several other email reminders. Reminders were sent out almost every two weeks during the fall semester of 2021. I recruited five participants this way.

Second, I also sought to recruit participants through a student organization for doctoral women students at the institution where this research was conducted. When the research study began, I served on the organization's executive board. I asked permission to share a participant recruitment message with attendees and passed out a flyer with contact information and specificities of the research study to attendees during monthly meetings. Unfortunately, I could only do it once, as the organization went inactive during the pandemic, and several members and executive board members sought to accommodate the new demands of staying in lockdown due to a global pandemic. Therefore, I did not recruit any participants this way.

Third, I also encouraged snowball sampling, in which one participant helps recruit another participant (Bertaux, 1981; Seidman, 2006). This allowed participants to feel like active members of the research process, while it also helped me expand my pool of participants by one additional participant.

When a doctoral student showed interest in participating in the study, I provided her with additional information, including an informed consent document and a brief survey. Informed consent forms were emailed to interested individuals when they expressed their interest in participating in the research. The forms included a short description of the study, participation expectations, the benefits, risks, and costs associated with participation, and helpful contact information. The informed consent forms documented voluntary participant consent to participate in the study. I asked potential participants to read and sign the informed consent form before engaging in testimonios or pláticas. I also asked participants to return the form to me before their participation via email. I encouraged participants to ask questions. I made an effort to provide thorough information, including that participants were not likely to benefit by participating in this study and would not be compensated. This allowed participants to make an informed decision about whether to participate in the research or not. I safeguarded the informed consent form to protect the individuals' identities. For participants who preferred to communicate in Spanish, I translated the form, clarified concerns, and responded to questions in Spanish.

3.3.2. Collection of Demographics

The collection of demographics was conducted right after informed consent forms were signed. I also asked these questions again during our meeting. The demographics survey is included in Appendix A. During the recruitment phase, I asked potential participants to fill out a brief survey to gather some basic demographics, such as gender, ethnicity, race, hometown,

languages known, and the highest degree or level of education their parent(s) has/have completed. After contacting a potential participant, I emailed them a brief survey and asked them to respond and email it back to me. I used the university's email account to maintain communication with participants. In the following section, I address what ethical precautions I followed to safeguard the well-being and confidentiality of my participants.

3.3.3. Ethical Precautions

Given the unique geographical location of the HSI, it is almost impossible to hide its identity (Ullman et al., 2020). Therefore, ethical considerations to safeguard the well-being of participants were a major focus for me as a researcher. Protecting the confidentiality of my participants was integral to this research project and me as a colleague, researcher, Latina, woman, and friend. Thus, while the university's identity was not disguised, given its designation as an HSI and its geographical location at the U.S.-México border-- I made every effort to change participants' identifiers. I used pseudonyms for the participants, and influential persons in their lives, omitted or altered important dates such as graduation dates or birthday dates, used general fields of studies to relate to their area of expertise and changed the name of geographical locations. The factors that were changed do not affect the essence of their testimonios.

The confidentiality of participants in the testimonios and pláticas were protected using pseudonyms in all contexts, except in the informed consent forms. Informed consent forms were password-protected and separated from pseudonym-coded data gathered. Informed consent forms and data collected were kept separate to detach participants' names from their pseudonyms.

I alone had access to the audio and video recordings and the transcribed testimonios and pláticas data. All data was stored using pseudonyms for the names of each participant. All digital

audio and video files were kept in a password-protected computer. None of the digital data was ever converted to physical paper. These security measures were employed for the duration of the research study. After transcription, the original audio and video recordings of the testimonios and pláticas were retained to enable later verification of data and additional analysis as needed.

The steps taken helped safeguard the confidentiality and respect towards sensitive, confidential information the individuals disclosed during the testimonios.

3.3.3.1. Title IX Reporting

As an employee of the university, when I was conducting the testimonio interviews, I was subjected to a reporting requirement, the Senate Bill 212, which was passed into state law and took effect on January 1st, 2020. This law required:

> All employees of Texas universities to report incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking allegedly committed by or against a student or employee, to a Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. Under this new law, an employee who fails to report or falsely reports such an incident will also be subject to criminal liability (misdemeanor) and termination of employment (UTEP, 2022).

Consequently, when I learned about the sexual assaults narrated to me by two participants, I was asked to report their cases to officials of Title IX in the university. In support, my chair reached out to the doctoral program director for guidance, who then reached out to members of the IRB at the university. Both my chair and I consistently argued that the IRB approved protocol committed to maintaining confidentiality of participants and that participants had signed an informed consent form to ensure that this process was followed. We also highlighted the fact that the incidents had occurred before entering the university. At no point were the participants' names shared with my chair, director, or members of IRB. Because IRB was unsure on how to

proceed, they reached out to Title IX officials at the university. Title IX demanded I provide this information via email and phone call. In the process, I voiced my concern to Title IX officials and reluctance to (re)tell their stories by expressing more than once that I was overriding any measure I had made explicit in my informed consent forms and research plan to protect their confidentiality. However, they insisted, and I was assured that my participants' confidentiality would be safeguarded, and only Title IX officials would have access to this information. Therefore, I spoke with my participants about the reporting requirement, and they stated that they understood and agreed that I report their stories. I reported their stories via a portal, only mentioning general information. I then asked to meet with Title IX officials, and I again voiced my concerns. I told them that I understood they were following the new rule but insisted that this be addressed at a higher level. My chair also held meetings with them, always pointing out that this was an IRB approved research study and that I was conducting it as a doctoral student at the university and not as a staff or faculty member. In response to our concerns, Title IX officials mentioned that they held a meeting with Title IX officials from different universities in the state of Texas, where they came to an understanding that participants' stories were protected under IRB protocol. Unfortunately, by that time, the real names of my participants had already been disclosed to officials in the university.

3.4. Research Context

The wider local context in which the research site is situated is at the U.S.-México border. The geographical location of the university is central to this study. Cervantes-Soon (2017) provides a thorough description of the binational region, which I use to describe the university's geographical location briefly.

Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, is one of the largest industrialized border cities in the world. It has over 1.5 million residents (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2020). The city has been known as one of the most violent cities with hundreds of feminicides and, at one point, the epicenter of cartel wars. Additionally, neoliberal practices have heavily affected maquiladora workers, who receive low wages and endure harsh labor conditions. The rapid growth of population due to maquiladora expansion in the region led to other problems such as inadequate urban infrastructures and a lack of public services like water and electricity. Ciudad Juárez was also the city with the highest dropout rates, and education was perceived as a path to prepare youth for jobs in the maquiladora industry.

On the other hand, El Paso, Texas, is rated as one of the safest cities in the United States. It is also one of the poorest cities, with an average annual wage of $37,600 as of 2018 compared to $53,893 in the nation (City of El Paso, 2020). Additionally, the regional unemployment rate of 4.3% is higher than the national rate of 3.9%. It has over 680 thousand residents (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Approximately 77% of El Paso's population age 25 or older have obtained a high school diploma or higher (City of El Paso, 2020). Additionally, Fort Bliss, the US's most extensive military training base, is in El Paso.

In sum, the university is located in one of the world's largest binational, bilingual, and bicultural metropolitan areas at the U.S.-México border. El Paso and Ciudad Juárez have been historically characterized by unbalanced power relations where there exist unbreakable patterns of inequity in work, education, and health. The geographical location of the university is of relevance to this study. In the next section, I describe the research site where the study took place.

3.4.1. Research Site

This study was conducted at a university located at the U.S.-México border. In the fall of 2020, the university enrolled approximately 24,000 students, 83% were Hispanic, and 51% were first-year generation students (UTEP, n.d.). Consequently, the university is considered a Hispanic-serving institution (Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities, n.d.), which reflects the demographic composition of the binational region. While the designation of the university as an HSI was valuable to the significance of this study, it is important to note that it was not a central part of the study. About 10% of the student population lived in México and crossed the U.S.-México border to attend college. Additionally, about 10% were students from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, many of which served at the military base located in the city (Ullman et al., 2020). It is also important to note that the university is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer (The University of Texas at El Paso [UTEP], 2022). More specifically, the university considered certain academic, socioeconomic, family, geographic, and other factors relating to an applicant's background in making an admissions decision to graduate school.

3.5. METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Data collection and analysis began after the university's IRB approved the research. Specifically, I started in August 2021 by inviting participants to share their testimonios on their doctoral studies through testimonio interviews and pláticas and continued until midway through the fall 2021 semester. At the beginning of November 2021, I ran a group pláticas with three participants. I transcribed, analyzed data, wrote memos, and read more literature since I started collecting data. During spring 2022, I conducted a final round of data analysis with the preparation of the last chapter.

My choice of data collection methods was guided by testimonios as a methodology framed around LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemologies. In addition, this study aimed to advance my understanding of first-generation, multilingual Latina doctoral students' socialization experiences by conducting testimonio interviews, pláticas, and a group pláticas. I decided to use testimonio interviews over structured interviews or questionnaires as they are tools that center the voices of Latina doctoral students, empower the participant to be creators of knowledge, and validate their experiences and backgrounds as sources of valuable knowledge (Ramos and Torres-Fernandez, 2020).

3.5.1. Testimonios and Pláticas

I sought to gather data through narratives in the form of testimonios and pláticas. I scheduled two conversations with each participant. The first was an in-depth life-history or testimonio interview that lasted an average of ninety minutes. The second conversation was more organic and took the form of pláticas which lasted about thirty minutes. Conversations with the participants were conducted via video conferencing through the platform Zoom. A link was created exclusively for each interview and had a password to access it. The levels of confidentiality were set at the highest level to control privacy status, external sharing, and guest access settings. In this section, I explain the process of testimonio interviewing and pláticas, which I followed.

I chose to use testimonios as a method for participants to share their stories of socialization during their doctoral studies because they center on the voices of the Latina doctoral students (Flores Carmona, 2014). Testimonio is a significant Latin American oral tradition practice that interrupts dominant narratives, serves to gather herstories, and listens to the voices of Latinas while attending to the urgency of the participants' life stories. Pérez Huber

(2009) theorized testimonios as "a verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the racial, classed, gendered, and nativist injustices they have suffered as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more humane present and future" (p. 644). Testimonios as a method challenge traditional research paradigms and serve to validate the voices of Latina doctoral students.

It does so as testimonios are guided by anti-racist and anti-hierarchical values that depart from traditional Eurocentric processes. When Brown women give testimonio of their lived experiences to a researcher, they know that their words will resonate with larger audiences, contributing to dismantling oppressive narratives against them (Cervantes-Soon, 2017). Furthermore, testimonial discourse plays a critical role in producing "healing, reflection, wisdom, transformation, and action in individual and collective ways" (p. 17). Therefore, I sought to engage in in-depth testimonio interviews with each of my participants. Testimonio interviews were conducted with the commitment to being "empathic, compassionate, worthy, and sacred" (Cervantes et al., 2021, p. 22). I listened attentively and learned from their lived experiences while at the same time hoping that by providing their testimonio, they could improve their mental health and well-being.

I drafted open-ended questions in preparation for the first round of testimonio interviews. They elicited information about participants' academic socialization experiences during their doctoral journeys while seeking insight into how their intersectionality, values, knowledge, and backgrounds played a role in their development as scholars. At the same time, I sought that my questions provided a space to reflect upon oppressive conditions found in academia (Pérez Huber, 2009). The guiding questions are included in Appendix B. The guided questions were intended to guide me as I sought to gather information about their socialization experiences.

However, as I engaged in dialogue with the participants, I sought to make them collaborators in the research process and encourage them to narrate their own realities as Latinas and their stories of self-transformation that they have generated in their own flesh (Cervantes-Soon, 2017).

The second conversation happened approximately six months after the first testimonio interview. I sought to engage in an organic talk or pláticas with my participants for the second conversation. Pláticas is a two-way conversation between two people or more and in which the researcher uses her cultural intuition to gather and record feelings and meanings (González, 1999). The pláticas were an opportunity to check-in, get to know them better, discuss their testimonios, and contribute to their testimonios in any way they chose. Pláticas are an opportunity to "get at what is missing, passed over, or sometimes avoided" (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 116) in the silencing of voices of underrepresented communities. I did so because understanding pláticas through a Chicana/Latina feminist requires that participants and researchers enter a "relational practice" (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 116) with the intention to honor the participants' many ways of knowing and learning.

Moreover, I viewed pláticas as a way to develop and enact confianza and compassion (Flores Carmona, 2014, p. 116). Confianza is a Latina cultural construct that refers to building mutual trust and respect between researcher and participants (Fitts & McClure, 2015). I was aware that genuine and sincere relationships built on confianza take time. While I wanted to establish a rapport with my participants through untimed pláticas, I was also sensitive to the multiple demands and busy schedules involved in being a doctoral student, family member, and active community member, mainly through the pandemic. Therefore, I limited my encounters with participants to two scheduled conversations. I built the qualities of confianza and

compassion by listening attentively (Delgado Bernal et al., 2017) and asking questions for clarification.

Fitts and McClure (2015) also explain that confianza implies reciprocity. Testimonios as a methodology can "incite personal growth through a reciprocal process of exchange" (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 368). Therefore, I sought to reciprocate my participant's generosity by offering my assistance or guidance to help them navigate better their day-to-day doctoral demands at the university. For example, one participant requested I review her resume and help her apply for a job on-campus. Another asked me to present at an event she was in charge of. Another one asked me to share my literature review and methodology section with her to help her write hers.

Additionally, I strived not to become a colonizer researcher (Villenas, 1996) by respecting their cultural background and encouraging participants to use their native language to express themselves freely (González, 2006). My bilingualism in English and Spanish allowed me to conduct the conversations in both languages. This was not just necessary to allow the stories to be co-authored by participants themselves in their languages but also because testimonios guide researchers' practices in a way that avoids "losing meaning, cutting out their tongues and piecing them together to be read in ingles" (Flores Carmona, 2014, p. 115). Additionally, the concept of language was an important construct to my conceptualization of the socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students. I considered that validating other languages in the research process was highly beneficial to my understanding of how language influenced the socialization process of Latina doctoral students.

As a researcher, I needed to be acutely aware of how different social group identities affect the interview process. I began by presenting my positionality as a Mexican woman

doctoral student living at the U.S.-México border to my participants. I then asked each participant to tell me how they wanted to be identified. I asked participants to address me by my first name to help participants feel they were engaging in non-formal conversations with me (Guthrie, 2020). To check for power imbalance, I also monitored my pre-conceived notions, listened attentively, and asked questions that sought clarification.

In sum, testimonio interviews and pláticas centered the voices of Latina doctoral students and validated their experiences and backgrounds as sources of valuable knowledge. Because I am also interested in understanding how Latina doctoral students co-construct their identities and expertise in structured conversations, I conducted one group pláticas which is explained in detail in the next section.

3.5.2. Group Pláticas

The use of group pláticas to gather data mirrors Delgado Bernal et al.'s (2012) words that "testimonios focus on collective experiences of conditions that have contributed to oppression, as well as the agency of those who suffer under these conditions" (p. 367). This approach parallels my understanding that academic socialization is not an individual but a social and collective process (González, 2006; Pérez Huber, 2009; Tierney, 1997). Therefore, a group pláticas was used to gather data about Latina doctoral students' academic socialization experiences and analyze how their stories, identities, and knowledges were shaped in conversation with others. In this section, I describe the process for conducting the group pláticas.

During the recruitment phase of Latina doctoral students for individual testimonio interviews, I explained that my data collection process included two stages, (1) two scheduled conversations, one as a testimonio interview and a second as a pláticas, and (2) a group pláticas. I encouraged participants of all individual conversations to participate in the group pláticas. I

briefly explained that the goal of the group pláticas was to see how participants' descriptions and tellings of their socialization experiences were co-constructed with each other in the context of a group. Initially, all participants showed interest in participating in the group pláticas. However, at the time of the group pláticas, two mentioned they could not meet with me, and another did not respond.

In the end, I conducted one group pláticas with three out of the six interviewed participants. This number gave me time to listen to everyone's stories and engage in meaningful dialogue. The group pláticas lasted ninety minutes. An audio and video recording of the group pláticas was made to facilitate data analysis. All participants agreed to be audio and video recorded. In addition, all participants signed informed consent forms before participating in the group pláticas.

I began the group pláticas by asking each participant to (re)tell their socialization stories as Latina, first-generation doctoral students. I prepared a protocol to help me facilitate the group pláticas. It is included below in Appendix C. Given the time constraints, I asked participants to focus on three things. First, they needed to describe the most important aspects of their academic socialization experiences. Second, I asked them to describe the institutional and departmental culture. Third, I asked them to explain the connections between the academic culture and their socialization experiences. As participants told their stories, I wrote key ideas down that I used to guide the conversation further.

After each participant had shared their testimonio about their academic socialization experiences, I asked them to engage in pláticas with each other by addressing what they considered were key ideas of everyone's stories. Through the pláticas and testimonios sharing, I observed and sensed how participants and I reflected individually on our academic socialization

experiences and how we co-constructed meaning, knowledge and "theory making" as we recognized how our academic socialization experiences "converged and diverged from each other" (Hernandez, 2018, p. 40). I allowed time for participants to begin the pláticas in an attempt not to colonize their ideas (Villenas, 1996). This allowed me to see how participants' descriptions and tellings of their socialization experiences were co-constructed in the context of a group. When participants were hesitant to engage in pláticas, I used my notes to ask for further details. For example, I asked participants to provide more vivid examples of their academic socialization experiences, to relate to the experiences of others, or to build upon each other's ideas.

I was able to create a safe environment where participants could engage in dialogue or pláticas. As mentioned earlier, I was aware that building confianza in the parameters of one hour and a half was difficult. However, I still aspired to this characteristic, and I asked my participants to commit to listening actively, honor and learn from each other's academic socialization experiences, engage in reflexión, and allow themselves to (re)shape their academic socialization experiences in academe (Espino et al., 2012). I am sure that "our pláticas led us to constant reflexión as we divulged our testimonios (pláticas reflexión testimonios), thus becoming closer as friends, colleagues and as allies" (Hernandez, 2018, p. 35).

Conclusively, the group pláticas paralleled my understanding that academic socialization experiences were socially constructed. By conducting a group pláticas, I was able to see how Latina doctoral students created the meaning of their socialization experiences and identified similar and opposing points of view. It also allowed me to see how intersectional identities were mediated in a formal setting. Lastly, it allowed me to understand how Latina doctoral students co-construct knowledge.

3.6. METHODS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Delgado Bernal et al. (2017) posit, “testimonios in academia disrupt silence, invites connection, and entices collectivity-it is social justice scholarship in education” (p. 8). Consequently, using testimonios as a methodology grounded in LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemologies provided a roadmap to data analysis and validation of the co-constructed role of Latina doctoral students in their socialization experiences. The selection of processes for data analysis in this particular study goes against modernists' views that situate socialization as a process by which Latina doctoral students assimilate the cognitive skills, attitudes, and values toward research and scholarship (Beeler, 1991; Turner & Thompson, 1993; Weidman et al., 2001). Instead, my participants and I were validated as holders and creators of values, attitudes, interests, skills, and knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002) necessary to fight against oppressive cultures in academia. Together, we productively shaped our socialization experiences in doctoral programs, created a space to center our voices, and allowed us to be the tellers of our socialization experiences.

In this study, data collection and analysis a) happened simultaneously, b) were dependent upon each other, and c) was inductive and recursive (Creswell, 2014a; Pérez Huber, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used initial and focused coding to analyze data gathered from testimonio interviews, pláticas, and group pláticas. I also used member checking to corroborate my understanding of the testimonios and pláticas of Latina doctoral students. Finally, I engaged in peer-reviewing in collaboration with my dissertation chair, who helped me design and develop this research study through written and oral feedback. Additionally, I documented my reflections on our pláticas and personal socialization experiences in detailed reflective memos (Pérez Huber, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The variety of approaches to analyzing data ensured the process

was trustworthy, authentic, and credible (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This section describes each of the processes I used to analyze data.

3.6.1. Coding

First, I transcribed each interview using a pedal and Yuja, a video management system. Looking to safeguard the participants' privacy, transcriptions contained only initials for all proper names, and I used pseudonyms in the final report (Seidman, 2006). After I transcribed each testimonio, I felt inspired and challenged to ensure that the testimonios of each of my participants represented their knowledge. Thus, I decided to relate my findings, not as a list of facts that could belong to anyone. Instead, I chose to narrate their testimonios through the development of participant testimonios. A Chicana feminist framework allows scholars to share personal narratives that privilege women of color's ways of knowing and meaning-making (Espino, 2016). To begin making sense of the data and sorting it in a discrete and coordinated manner, I decided to do a round of coding first before drafting their testimonios.

Coding is the process of taking data, segmenting, and organizing it into categories due to a shared characteristic or pattern (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2021). After I transcribed each interview, I first analyzed the data through line-by-line initial coding, also called open coding (Saldaña, 2021). Then, I followed with focused coding for themes or categories. After the first round of line-by-line coding and a round of focused coding, I had a list of codes that included women, language, scholarship, motivational sources, family, mentorship/faculty, peers/friends, research, and past experiences. As themes or categories started to amass, I further analyzed them for broader patterns (Creswell, 2014a; Creswell & Creswell, 2018), which included mentorship, apprenticeships, peer interactions, family support, past experiences, being a

woman, reasons for pursuing a doctoral degree, and past experiences. Finally, I used these broader patterns as a roadmap to develop each participant's testimonios.

3.6.2. Developing Participant Testimonios

After identifying broader patterns, I started developing participant testimonios. I decided to narrate the socialization experiences of my participants through the development of participant testimonios that serve as counter-narratives or counterstories. Counter-narratives help fight a master narrative with long-established norms, distributed power, and assigned status of who or what is valuable (Acuff et al., 2012). In other words, the use of counterstories works against master narratives by challenging power dynamics that privilege some stories over others, acknowledging that Latinas can construct knowledge, and empowering Latinas to be the tellers of their own stories (Knight et al., 2004). Latinas tend to tell their stories through consejos and cuentos or stories from within collective spaces to provide teachings of advocacy, self-reliance, and empowerment that disrupt patriarchal households and the capitalistic world stances. Counterstories illuminate bearings of "submission, subversion, and rebellion" (Knight et al., 2004, p. 102) used by Latina doctoral students to navigate oppressive systems within academia.

More specifically, critical race counterstorytelling recognizes that the stories told by Latinas are valid and valuable sources of knowledge (Yosso, 2006). They offer a critical reflection of the lived experiences of Latina doctoral students. Yosso (2006) explains that when counterstories are framed around CRT, they promote educational equality. I extend Yosso's explanation to argue that for Latina doctoral students, counterstories advance educational equality in the following ways:

1. Build community among Latinas and other underrepresented communities of color and women;

2. Challenge deficit-thinking models that have rendered invisible and unprepared Latina doctoral students;
3. Position Latinas as holders of community cultural wealth, memory, and resistance; and
4. Serve as pedagogical tools and roadmaps to promote educational equality for all doctoral students, particularly Latinas.

Accordingly, counterstories rooted in critical raced-gendered epistemologies such as LatCrit and Chicana feminist framework serve to tell personal narratives that privilege Latinas' ways of knowing and meaning-making (Espino, 2016).

The process of writing each participant's testimonio was not linear. The metaphor "dancing with data" by Hoare et al. (2012) illustrates the process I undertook to develop each testimonio. It refers to the "evocative of stepping back and forth in a series of moves that coalesce into one" (p. 241). The process required me to undergo many revisions, engage in critical reflection, look deeply into their stories, and make their stories my own. It required me to validate my participant's humanity by coming "to sense, feel, and fathom what having this experience is like" (Charmaz, 2008, p. 981). Below I explain the processes I undertook to develop each testimonio. They did not happen linearly; instead, I jumped back and forth while developing each participant's testimonio.

I committed myself to write their testimonios in ways that highlighted their meaning-making process and significance as it relates to the broader topic of socialization experiences. Consequently, I made a point to use Spanish words or phrases in my presentation of findings to highlight the voices of my participants, their ways of knowing, and meaning-making processes. In addition, I asked my participants to member-check their participant testimonios to ensure

correct translations. Mainly because translating testimonios involves "translating culturally-specific knowledge that can shift meaning and reproduce negative connotations associated with gendered or racialized terms of endearment" (Delgado Bernal et al., 2017, p. 3).

To better tell the testimonios of these six participants, I used literature that focused only on the experiences of Latina, Hispanic, Mexican American, Mexican or Chicana students. I did this to continue giving voice to underrepresented communities that have long been forgotten in literature. Drawing from Yosso (2006), who reminds us that "data cannot 'speak' without interpretation" (p. 11), I dove deep into the literature available on Latina, Hispanic, Mexican American, Mexican, or Chicana students so that I could better interpret their testimonios and fight the oppressive narratives used to tell our stories. This also allowed me to use an asset-based lens that sees wealth in Latinas. I used the same process to analyze data gathered from the group pláticas.

Delgado Bernal (1998) reminds us that cultural intuition points to the importance of engaging participants in data analysis. Participants were actively involved in telling their stories and in the co-constructive process of producing knowledge. Through continual pláticas, I understood their lived experiences better and worked towards deconstructing the master narratives. Most importantly, the process allowed me to bring attention to these courageous Latina doctoral students as they resisted different instances of subjugation and rose above oppressive systems to claim their place in academia as actual holders and creators of knowledge.

After I had a draft of their testimonios, I made them available to the participants for member-checking. Member-checking is explained in the following section.

3.6.2. Member-Checking

I sought to continue involving participants in the co-construction of knowledge by conducting member-checking (Pérez Huber, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through the analysis of the testimonio interviews, pláticas, and group pláticas transcripts, while developing codes, categories, and claims, and after I had a draft of their stories, I asked participants to verify my understanding of their testimonios through member-checking. The process I underwent is described below.

I conducted member-checking of preliminary codes, themes, and overall participant testimonio with each participant via phone or e-mail. In addition, I requested permission to member-check with them through cell phone, email, or web conferencing, which provided additional opportunities to learn more about their socialization experiences. I asked for their contact information during the recruitment phase and then again at the end of the testimonio interview and the group pláticas, requesting permission to contact them as questions arose during the data analysis process. I asked participants to provide me with the best times to reach out to them and asked which method, phone call, email, or web conferencing was better for them to member-check.

Following that, I emailed each participant their written testimonio and asked them to review them. Next, I asked each participant to read their stories before sharing them with anyone else. I did this because I wanted to ensure their voices were represented in a way that dignified their journeys and highlighted who they were and are becoming (Bogdan, 1973; Creswell, 2014a; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Toward this end, I asked participants to comment on my understanding of their stories and to suggest additional meaning where relevant. Participants responded in various ways. The majority made notations on the side of the document and sent it

back as an attachment via email. Others sent me voice messages with ideas to improve or clarify their stories. Others reached out to me via phone call and directed me to the pages where corrections or clarifications were needed.

Allowing participants to revise their testimonios also assisted me in making sure my translations reflected the conceptual meaning of the testimonios of the participants and not just a literal translation that reproduces language marginalization (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Flores Carmona (2014) advised researchers using testimonios that once they have a written product, they must consider making it available to the participants even if their words have been translated to another language. My pláticas with Ana, Ximena, and Sofia were done mainly in English, but we translanguaged throughout our pláticas. Translanguaging is "the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, to maximize communicative potential." (García, 2009, p. 140). García (2009) argues that bilinguals' translanguaging practices facilitate communication with others, construct deeper understandings, and make sense of their bilinguals' worlds. My pláticas with Rebecca, Camila, and Valentina were conducted in Spanish. To assist in reading their stories, most of their testimonies were translated into English. However, I purposefully chose not to translate specific conversations that were in Spanish to fight against the Anglocentric research approach (Caldas & Heiman, 2021). At the same time, I decided to maintain some quotes in Spanish, as the power of their voices merits representation in the language they were told.

In sum, member-checking ensured credibility and confirmability because it allowed the participant and me to engage in ongoing dialogue regarding my interpretation of their reality and meanings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This ensures that the findings I present are not clouded by my biased or narcissistic views (Clandinin et al., 2007). Additionally, it is my position that

member-checking allowed me to understand the meaning-making process of participants better while also allowing participants to be active agents in their development as scholars, acknowledging that they are holders of valuable knowledge, navigational (Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Hopwood, 2010; Yosso, 2005, 2006) and communal (Squire & McCann, 2018) capital necessary to navigate the demands of doctoral studies. Additionally, I sought to review my analysis with my dissertation chair. I will describe how I did so in the following section.

3.6.3. Peer-Reviewing

The qualitative researcher's responsibility is to provide a holistic account of the problem at hand (Bogdan, 1973; Creswell, 2014a). This can be achieved by including multiple perspectives from different parties. Therefore, I asked my dissertation chair to continue to offer guidance as I worked toward writing my findings section. Working with my dissertation chair to design and develop this research study was an extremely important aspect of my academic socialization experience as a Latina doctoral student. Our formal conversations about the conceptualization of this research study and even the telling of stories of our personal lives were a source of inspiration and support to advance this study. In addition, her knowledge of qualitative research, her expertise in sociocultural foundations, and her commitment to educational equity are valuable sources of knowledge that I aim to continue learning from. The process of peer-reviewing that I went through in collaboration with my chair is described below.

I provided evidence of my work as an attachment to an email. She then offered me detailed feedback through notes on the actual document, followed by a video conversation. Our pláticas allowed me to reflect upon my meaning-making, assumptions, ideas, concepts, positionality, and cultural intuition. I was able to ask questions and get guidance. I had a place to

voice my concerns, fears, and dreams. I was always accompanied in the process of becoming a scholar and authoring my dissertation.

In particular, I was validated as a scholar. I received constructive feedback, and I learned. Ever since the visionary stages of what this study would look like, my chair has always supported me. I went back and forth trying to figure out what the study should be, whether it was international students, women students, or doctoral students. I was always supported, and every idea I had was validated. She helped me in my thought process time and time again. She read my memos and always provided feedback. It was also a source of motivation when I started to write the testimonios of my participants using Spanish. My chair never asked me to translate their voices or use only English to narrate their lived experiences. She also intervened and offered her guidance when I had to deal with officials from Title IX. She was never a passive member of this research study. She helped me deconstruct feedback from my committee members and offered resources for guidance. Lastly, she allowed my voice to be heard by noting that her feedback was suggestions and that I should take them that way. I was never asked to make changes I did not agree with.

Using LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemologies allowed me to advance my understanding of the topic by engaging in co-construction of knowledge. By continuously monitoring my analysis in dialogue and reflection with my dissertation chair, I am able to provide a more complete and better account of the socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students. I also sought to reflect on my understanding and transformation in reflective memos. I describe the use of a journal of reflective memos in the next section.

3.6.4. Journal of Reflective Memos

Throughout the compilation of my literature review, data collection, and analysis, I kept a journal of reflective memos. Keeping a journal of reflective memos is an opportunity to "bring the unconscious into consciousness and thus open for inspection" (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 703). In fact, testimonios are about raising critical consciousness or what Freire (1973) called conscientização (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, 2017). In other words, by writing in journals, I constantly reflected on the credibility and confirmability of my research design, my thoughts, feelings, concerns, and goals to ensure that I had created a transparent research process.

Moreover, by writing reflective memos, I sought to make a personal interpretation or ask, "what were the lessons learned?" (Creswell, 2014a, p. 200). Engaging in self-reflection offered a path to understand my attitudes and opinions, acknowledge my biases, and engage in transformative meaning-making (Glass, 2000; Starr & DeMartini, 2015).

3.7. Conclusion

My data analysis process mirrored the conceptualization of socialization experiences in this study, the theoretical frameworks, and the methods used. Because I aspired to center the voices of my participants, I engaged in co-constructing meaning-making with participants and in collaboration with my dissertation chair. Additionally, by keeping a journal of reflective memos, I was able to constantly monitor my understanding of the topic and be responsive to the needs of the research design. This ensured that the research study was trustworthy, authentic, and credible (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Most importantly, this active approach served to validate the students' lived experiences and to situate their varied socio-cultural backgrounds as assets in the co-construction of knowledge.

In the end, the credibility, confirmability, and dependability of my findings were backed by triangulation of different data sources, including testimonio interviews, pláticas, and the group pláticas. In addition, participant testimonios were co-created through participants' member-checking, peer debriefings with the chair of the dissertation committee, and self-reflection in written journals.

4. Chapter IV: Findings

In this chapter, I present the written testimonio of each of my participants. Each participant's testimonio provides a deep and comprehensive portrayal of the individual doctoral journeys of my participants, which began way before they applied for a doctoral program. I begin with the story of Ana, a retired bilingual teacher who started her doctoral program with the support of her entire family. Then, I introduce Ximena, a military veteran diagnosed with several mental health issues throughout her life who aspires to transform the lives of young adults with similar stories to her own. I then present Rebecca, a transfronteriza student whose journey reflects many women's dreams, struggles, and achievements. Transfronteriza or border crossing students are students who live in two worlds, the U.S. and México (De la Piedra & Araujo, 2012). Transfronterizos hold “fluid and multiple border identities” (De la Piedra & Araujo, 2012, p. 709) as they cross national borders. Rebecca’s story is followed by Sofia, who aspires to be the first woman to earn a doctorate in her family and open the doors to academia for other family members. Then, the story of Camila, a bilingual leader with an upbringing in a poor rural community, highlights how she develops a sense of resistance and navigational capital as she moves into the doctoral program. Lastly, the story of Valentina mirrors her aspirations to become an educator in higher education, coupled with the support of her colleagues and faculty members to strengthen her and motivate her to navigate her doctoral studies as she confronts a past history of sexual abuse.

Their testimonios are told following a similar structure. First, I provide insight into who the participant is--I talk about their childhood memories, families, and life in general. Then, I explain their decisions to pursue a doctorate and what that journey looked like. After that, I talk about their socialization experiences in their doctoral program, paying attention to the effect their

gender identity, racial background, language, and being a first-generation doctoral student had on how they narrate their testimonios. I then highlight sources of motivation and particular socialization experiences which aided them in navigating their doctoral studies. Finally, I conclude by mentioning their dreams and future aspirations as well as their consejos for other Latina doctoral students.

4.1. ANA

Ana's pseudonym was chosen because her inner strength reminded me of a person with whom I am close in my own personal life. Ana is in her fifth year in her doctoral program, and she is pursuing a Ph.D. in bilingual education. Ana self-identifies as a Mexican American woman. The concept of identity in terms of race and ethnicity was complicated and confusing for Ana. She explained in preparation for the interview, she looked up the two concepts of race and ethnicity. Part of her confusion comes from the fact that she was born in México and then was later naturalized as a U.S. citizen. "I am Mexican American," she said. On no uncertain terms does Ana consider herself to be White. She shared that "nowhere in the census documents is there anything to do with me as a Mexican or Mexican American." The dismissal of people of color's racial and ethnic identities on official documents was troublesome for Ana. She felt her identity as a Brown woman represented her cultural heritage, ancestors' history, family achievements, and motivation to pursue a doctoral degree.

Ana's dad, mom, Ana, and her younger sister, Sandra, migrated from México to the U.S. when she was two years old. Her dad's name was Gerardo, and her mom was Fernanda. They arrived in the city of Dripping Springs, Texas, but due to her dad's job, which was in construction, they often moved from one city to another. When Ana was six years old, her dad opened his own construction business, settling in Dripping Springs. Her parents always

supported Ana's education, constantly pushing her to study hard and get all 100s in her classes. Gerardo and Fernanda accompanied Ana during her high school and undergraduate degree graduation ceremonies and other school events. Despite their support for Ana's education, she did not recall that they ever spoke about her pursuing a doctoral degree. It was not that they thought she was not good enough. On the contrary, it was just beyond reach, unimaginable, unattainable. A doctorate, her parents believed, was for people who wanted a professional job like doctors and lawyers and not for women who stayed at home and took care of their families. However, Ana believes that her parents' example of dedication, perseverance, and hard work has helped her achieve many of her dreams, including pursuing a doctoral degree.

4.1.1. Changing Paths

Ana believed that she was destined to be a full-time mom and wife in her life. Her mom modeled this for her. Fernanda was a stay-at-home mom and wife, and Ana was happy to follow this path. She never questioned it. Ana learned and dreamt of roles that have been attached to women in a patriarchal society since she was a child. Thus, leaving her outside the borders of education. However, her husband, Javier, always encouraged her to continue studying.

Ana married Javier when she was 16 years old. They lived on the same street, and Ana walked past his house every day on her way to school. But they had never crossed paths until she was 14 years old, after which Javier started greeting her on her way to school and establishing short conversations. Soon they fell in love, and Javier asked Ana to marry him. However, Ana's parents did not allow her to date anyone. Therefore, Javier approached them and earned their respect and love little by little. He told Fernanda and Gerardo that he would always take care of Ana. Ana explained, "se ganó el corazón de mis papás." And so, in 1968, they got married.

In preparation for the wedding, Ana remembered having a conversation with Javier. Javier had big plans for their future. Ana explained that Javier's mother, Carmen, worked long hours in a clothing factory in the U.S., earning a low minimum wage. His father, Carlos, had a small car repair business, and they were constantly struggling to make ends meet. He did not want Ana struggling in case he was ever absent. Therefore, he told her that she would go back to high school after getting married, and she would graduate. After they got married, they moved to Lubbock, Texas, where Javier was pursuing a bachelor's in education. Ana enrolled in high school, and two years after her wedding day, she graduated from high school. A few months after graduation, Ana and Javier had their first son. His name is Noah.

Javier decided to pursue a degree in education after seeing his brother and sister-in-law making a living out of this profession. After his graduation, he got a job as a middle school teacher in Arlington, Texas. However, after receiving his first paycheck, he said, "ah no! Esto no es para mí." He worked as a teacher for one year and started looking for other jobs. Finally, he got a job in the public sector, and Ana, Javier, and Noah moved on to Dripping Springs. Javier soon got promoted, and things were looking very good for them. With a bigger salary, Ana and Javier were able to buy their first house.

4.1.2. Becoming a Teacher

When her first son was five years old, Javier encouraged Ana to pursue a degree in education so she could become a teacher. Ana received her associate's degree in an evening program offered by the junior college. She graduated after two years, working full-time at a financial institution during the day and then going to evening classes while taking care of her family. Ana continued her studies, finishing a bachelor's degree in education two years later. She got pregnant with her second son while pursuing her bachelor's. He was named Rodrigo. She

reflected, “I look back, and I don't know how I did it. But I had a lot of support.” For example, Ana’s mother-in-law, Carmen, helped her with her children while obtaining her bachelor's degree. In addition, one of her professors, named Julie, offered to go to her house to pick up her assignments while she was on leave after the birth of her second baby. Dedication to family responsibilities is often seen as conflicting with managing a full-time job and navigating academic life (Smith & García, 2018). In particular, traditional gender roles have played a significant factor in the underrepresentation of women in different fields of study because a Latina’s commitment to family is often seen as conflicting with the time required to complete a degree. Therefore, even to this day, her journey is unimaginable to Ana.

Ana’s first job was as a bilingual kindergarten teacher in Dripping Springs. She worked there for three years. She fell in love with the profession from the very beginning. But, her first year was “difficult and stressful,” she said. She was paired with a much older teacher. Her name was Lauren. Lauren was meant to help Ana with mentorship and professional development as Ana developed herself as a beginning teacher during her first years. Lauren had over ten years of teaching experience, and Ana was excited to be paired with her. However, Ana found herself only following orders. Lauren always took over the classes, developed the syllabus, and told Ana what portion of the course she would lead and how she needed to do it. Ana was never heard, and she felt Lauren did not respect her. Fortunately, during her second year, Ana was paired with another teacher. They were of similar age. Her name was Denisse. They worked very well together, and Ana considers her team teaching benefited her students immensely. Ana said students had lots of fun activities. After two years of team teaching, Ana was given a classroom of her own, and she felt comfortable with her class.

4.1.3. Moving to El Paso

After some time, Javier became close friends with the owner of a famous coffee franchise. His name was Romel. Romel convinced Javier to look into opening his own coffee franchise, and he offered him guidance. Excited with the idea, Javier invested all his savings and efforts into owning his coffee franchise. First, he learned everything about the business. He learned how to clean bathrooms, kitchen equipment, and floors. He also learned how to order inventory and cook. Ana said "empezó desde abajo." Finally, after much effort, he was offered the opportunity to be a franchise owner.

In 1983, Javier acquired a coffee franchise, and he was offered three locations to open his business. Ana and Javier visited all three cities, Seymour, Huntsville, and El Paso. Out of all three, El Paso seemed the most promising. They felt their franchise could thrive in El Paso, plus they liked the friendly atmosphere, the weather, the neighborhood near where his business would be established, and the schools their kids would attend. Javier and Ana decided to move to El Paso from Dripping Springs, where she began working for a school district as a dual-language elementary school teacher. Eventually, Javier acquired several other locations and launched several more franchises. Ana concentrated on her family, house, and job as a dual-language elementary teacher.

After Ana and Javier moved to El Paso, Ana applied for a kindergarten job, but she was not offered it. Instead, she was offered a position as a teacher for the third grade in Sun City Elementary School. She took it, and she held that job for six years. She then took a leave of absence of ten years to have her third baby, Oswaldo, and spend time with her family. Javier encouraged Ana to go back to teaching. Oswaldo was already in third grade, and Ana was eager to go back to the classroom. So she got a job as a dual-language elementary school teacher at

Sunset Heights Elementary School. Ana remembers her professional career as a dual-language elementary teacher with fond memories. She holds many different memories of her years as a teacher. She shared that she taught half the day in English and half the day in Spanish, and she was excited to see her students' progress as they learned to read and write in both languages. Vividly, she recalls the happy expressions on her students' faces and their eyes lighting up when they finally understood a problematic concept and shouted, "¡Ya le entiendo Maestra!" One of her favorite parts of the day was "storytime." Right after lunch, she sat in a chair with her students seated on the carpet, and they read and discussed a story, sometimes in English, other times it was in Spanish. She was excited to see her students learn something new each day by using their bilingualism and biculturalism, talking about different topics, and connecting to their own lives. Ana was voted "Teacher of the Year" by all her colleagues after only five years of teaching after her leave of absence.

Ana is very proud of each of the achievements of her three sons. They have worked alongside their dad. Rodrigo is the owner of a franchise. Currently, Noah and Oswaldo are focused on becoming the owner of one franchise, following the family business. Noah first decided to follow his mother's example as a teacher. He was a teacher at a high school for ten years, and he won an award for being the varsity basketball assistant coach. Something that made Ana very proud.

Ana also has three grandchildren, Sonia, Valeria, and Jaclyn. They call her Ya-Ya. Sonia is the oldest and is enrolled in high school in the 11th grade. Her younger sister, Valeria, attends 8th grade. Jaclyn is a two-year-old baby. Ana loves spending time with all of them, and they have become the most prominent supporters of her education.

Through the years, in conversations with her husband, he recommended that she go back to school to complete a master's degree. She again was puzzled by the idea. She had never thought about going for a bachelor's degree, even less a graduate degree. Finally, in 2001, she graduated with a Master of Education, and right after her graduation, her husband said, "Okay, well, now you can go for your doctorate." In complete disbelief, Ana remembered thinking, "A doctorate? Me?" Ana "just couldn't see it at the moment" that she would eventually be doing a doctorate.

Ana completed 24 years of a rewarding career as a dual-language elementary school teacher. In 2013, she retired, and that tiny seed her husband had planted in 2001 had grown, and she started to contemplate pursuing a doctoral degree, but not before doing some traveling. Ana traveled to different countries in Europe, visiting churches and sightseeing. She went to Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Austria, Ireland, Hungary, Poland, and Czechia. But her favorite place to vacation continues to be the beach in Galveston, where she travels with her sisters, granddaughters, and nieces.

As time passed by, Ana thought seriously about going back to school. Finally, she asked herself, "time is going by. Are you going to do this or not?" Ana considers her husband's motivation as the main reason behind her decision to further her education. Javier believed it would be easier for Ana to move ahead in case he was ever absent. And so, he always posed the question, why not a master? Why not a doctorate? Initially, her husband's urging led Ana to pursue a career as a dual-language teacher and then later to pursue her doctorate.

Additionally, Ana thought of her parents, and she remembered her dad's words, "Si se puede, Mija." So, Ana decided to go for it. After completing the application process to the

doctoral program, Ana embarked upon a “wonderful journey” of self-discovery and growth with the motivation of her husband, her sons, and grandchildren.

4.1.4. A Doctorate Degree Only for the Young, Super-Intelligent

Ana was conflicted to begin a doctoral program at her age. She was 63 years old when she began her doctoral degree. Additionally, as the first one in her family to pursue a doctorate, Ana was filled with questions about the program. So, she started creating ideas about what it may be like. She first thought that successful doctoral students needed to be “genius” or “super-intelligent people.” She also held to the idea that her dad had had that a doctorate was only for those pursuing a job like a doctor or a lawyer.

As a retired teacher, Ana questioned her place in the doctoral program, especially during her first semester. She said, “at that age, I was already retired.” She followed, “I was uncomfortable in my first few classes, walking in and seeing all these young people there in the classes. I was much older than they were. Most of them were like my sons’ ages.” Noah is 50, Rodrigo is 45, and Oswaldo is 32 years old. Ana questioned her belonging to the doctorate program. Her age seemed to distance her from other students in the program. In addition, women of color are often conflicted and devalued in a White patriarchal academic society (Torres, 2021), and Ana’s intersectionality in academia could have rendered her invisible. Her fear and awareness to feel marginalized, “less than,” or “unworthy” (Torres, 2021, p. 628) due to her underrepresented racial background, gender, age, or language had almost stopped her from pursuing a doctoral degree.

However, Ana has been able to fight back her insecurities and self-doubts. She explained that she tries to push herself to be visible to others by sharing her story, asking for help when she needs it, and allowing herself to be seen as a resource in academia. She states, “They (her

colleagues) see me, I think, as a colleague. And they've all, all of them have been very helpful and patient with me."

4.1.5. Spanish Doesn't Help You at School

Ana's mother taught her to read and write in Spanish from an early age. In fact, as Ana grew older, her biggest passions became reading and writing. She enjoys reading books from the best-seller list and authors from El Paso, like Benjamin Saenz and Sergio Troncoso. Ana also likes to write. She has kept a journal about her daily activities since she was 14 years old, writing about what she did, whom she saw, or what she ate. In addition, Ana used to write short letters to her grandmother before she even started elementary school. Thus, when Ana began school, she was happy to know how to read and write in Spanish, but soon she was confronted with negative connotations about her Spanish. In a dominant English-speaking culture, speaking Spanish carries negative connotations such as not being intelligent, being from low-socio-economic backgrounds, and being illiterate (Mendoza et al., 2019). As a result, her teachers told her that learning to read and write in Spanish would not help her in school.

Ana remembered everything was taught in English. Her first teacher was a White teacher who did not speak any Spanish. On her second day of school, she was pulled out and put into a different classroom with a teacher who spoke Spanish. She was a Mexican American teacher who helped Ana immensely during her first year. Her name was Alejandra. Ana used to stay in during recess with Alejandra, who provided support and helped her understand English lessons. She tutored her along with other students who also only spoke Spanish. Instead of dismissing Ana's primary education and her knowledge to read and write in Spanish, her teacher used that to help her develop her reading and writing skills in English. Ana said, "I was very blessed to have her, and she helped me a lot." Ana had experienced, for the first time in her educational

journey, reciprocal mentorship relationships through a teacher who shared her goals, ideologies, ethnic background, and language. Her teacher became a "spiritual-mentor activist" (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-García, 2018, p. 332) whose commitment to Latin and Hispanic communities resulted in "inner healing and external change" (p. 332) for Ana.

Ana's prior personal and professional experiences have served as a source of motivation and have become her research interest in the doctoral program. Culturally relevant mentoring helped Ana succeed in her academic journey and stay close to her cultural heritage (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-García, 2018). Ana seeks to advocate for Spanish and translanguaging practices in the border region. Caldas and Heiman (2021) explain that when students can use Spanish or translanguaging techniques in their academic spaces, they can advance their content and language knowledge. Ana has found this approach to be a needed and valuable one. About this, Ana has been working with her colleagues and one of her professors to develop a new language policy that could benefit bilingual and multilingual students in the university. They have presented it at the college colloquium. She explained that the policy intends to help international students who do not speak English as their first language. Suggestions for faculty members include allowing students to turn in assignments in Spanish, presenting in Spanish, and discussing in class in Spanish. Ana understands the process is long, but she is excited to see advancement in this project. She considers that their work will contest and challenge erroneous language ideologies. Ana is a sociopolitical activist that seeks to build bridges for others to navigate academia (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-García, 2018).

4.1.6. A Wonderful Doctoral Journey

Ana began her Ph.D. in 2018. During her first class, she worked on a research project with a professor who later became her mentor and advisor. Her name is Dr. Larios. Then, in

collaboration with two other professors of the program and a few colleagues, they presented their study in a colloquium. It was the first time Ana had presented her research. The support from her colleagues and professors was more significant than the nerve she had to speak in front of others, forget her lines or "mess up." She said, "I was nervous, and all that, but having my colleagues and professors right there backing me up and everybody working together...well, it wasn't so bad." Ana experienced impostorism in the way of self-doubt. Still, when she was validated as an emerging scholar by her colleagues and professors, she was able to heal previous instances that led her to feel she was going to mess up (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-García, 2018).

Then, in 2019 her research group and her professors attended the Latin American Studies Association conference in Boston, Massachusetts. Ana fondly remembers this experience, saying, "it was a wonderful experience." Not only did they present at the conference, but they also had the opportunity to visit Harvard University and other exciting places in the city. Later that same year, Ana published her first book review in the *Journal of Latinos and Education*. She achieved this through the support of another faculty member, Dr. Margarita, who guided her in every feasible way, from suggestions of journals and templates of letters to reach out to different editors, to providing detailed feedback on her writings.

Ana has found her mentors pivotal to her success and belonging in academia throughout her doctoral journey. Every step of the way, they have offered a word of advice, resources, motivation, and guidance. In addition, they have opened the doors to opportunities outside the classroom that have given shape to Ana's doctoral journey.

4.1.7. Si Se Puede!

Ana's support is also very significant at home. While enrolled in a methodology course, Ana felt she could not deal with the program's demands. In despair, she thought about quitting

the program. However, she shared that her grandchildren always told her, “You can do this, grandma!” As well as her sons who also voiced their support, “You can do it, Ma! You can do it!”

With as little as a fourth-grade education, Ana’s dad has also been instrumental in her decision to push through, along with her mom, who had completed her high school education. Ana’s dad's perseverance, dedication, and hard work served him as he became a successful entrepreneur. He opened a construction business and contracted for military bases, hotels, restaurants, and large buildings. His dicho, “Si se puede, Mija” or “You can do it, my daughter,” stayed with Ana throughout all these years. His dicho is her mantra and fuel in every decision she makes, including beginning the doctoral program. It is also a reminder that she can do whatever she sets her mind on. Consejos, when internalized, have the power to help Latina doctoral students “move across and within the borderlands, while resisting dominant power structures” (Espino, 2016, p. 185). Therefore, when Ana found herself contemplating the idea of leaving the program, her family inspired her to keep going.

Ramos and Torres-Fernandez (2020) found one of the main motivations behind Latina doctoral students was family support. As a first-generation doctoral student, Ana’s family lacked knowledge of academia. However, their support took multiple shapes. They continuously encouraged Ana to strive for more and to believe in herself. Her parents set an example for Ana to deal with challenges in different situations. Her grandchildren taught her how to use other software on the computer. Everyone is an active agent in her pursuit of a doctoral program.

4.1.8. Communicating through a Screen

Navigating the academic demands of a doctoral program was, even more overwhelming for Ana during the pandemic because she struggled to adapt to the virtual format of classes.

However, advances in technology allowed her to stay close to her colleagues and professors during the pandemic. Ana explained that sometimes when she had questions about the doctoral program, she used WhatsApp to communicate via text message with her colleagues. She also shared that she never expected a response right away. Ana was conscious of the additional demands of each of her classmates. Thus, she waited patiently, and when someone responded, she was deeply thankful. Being able to communicate with colleagues was very helpful for Ana's advancement in her doctoral studies through the lockdown.

In like manner, Ana states, "I have found that our faculty members, all are very caring, patient, and understanding." Her interactions with the faculty have all been incredibly positive. Ana was closer to Dr. Larios, her advisor, professor in various classes, and her research and conference colleague. Even during the pandemic, her advisor was available, offering support and guidance. Ana mentioned that her advisor had to leave town during the pandemic due to personal matters. Still, even in another country, she found the time to communicate and mentor her. Their mentorship happened through texts, emails, and even video-phone conferences. This type of mentoring over electronic devices is also known as e-mentoring or online mentoring (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-García, 2018). The online format has been advantageous in terms of convenience and access. Still, it can also hinder establishing strong mentorship relationships for Latina students in a doctoral program (Berg, 2016). However, Ana said, "when I need to talk to them, they're there!" Ana considers the online mentoring format an advantage in her doctoral journey.

The need to transition to online mentoring and find new ways to communicate with her colleagues was important for Ana, who needed support and guidance during the pandemic. She established a strong mentorship relationship with her advisor, who, despite going through some

difficult times of her own, was always present. Her phone calls, texts, and emails were essential and valuable to Ana. As a result, her mentorship relationship did not worsen during the pandemic because Ana felt she could still communicate and receive the emotional and academic guidance that she needed to navigate her doctoral program virtually. Similarly, Ana experienced support from her colleagues, who took the time to respond to her WhatsApp messages. Ana considers the time she receives from her colleagues and mentor as invaluable sources of support.

4.1.9. Un Último Consejo

Ana's belonging to the doctoral program did not happen by luck. She fought for it. Ana questioned herself, educated herself, and eventually allowed herself to be part of the program. Ana has discovered how much there is to learn, and being a "genius" is not a requirement to succeed in the doctoral program. Instead, Ana believes it is committing to learning something new each day. Ana has shared her research project has developed and evolved in her thirst for knowledge. Her research takes on a new path with each further reading and conversation, and Ana questions something else. Ana has created a library of resources that she refers to and continues to add to as she works on her research.

Ana explains that working on her doctoral journey requires long hours of doing research, reading, and maintaining connections with colleagues and professors. Sometimes, that conflicted with the time she wanted to dedicate to her family. However, Ana stated that it helps her think about the bigger picture and evaluate what she is willing to do to accomplish that.

Ana believes balancing her time between her academic responsibilities and family has been necessary to achieve her goals. Ana is very close to her grandchildren, and spending time with her grandchildren is one of her main pastimes. She enjoys going to her granddaughters' sports and school activities and playing with her 2-year-old granddaughter. If Ana is not reading

or writing, she also likes to watch television game shows like Jeopardy, Family Feud, movies, and NFL and NBA games with her family. In addition, she enjoys going to the theater, concerts, shows, and films. Ana tries to spend time with her family and do the things she has always enjoyed while not getting distracted from her doctoral responsibilities.

Additionally, she explains professors and colleagues are very helpful and encouraging. Finally, Ana understands she is not alone in the journey and encourages others to create connections with colleagues, faculty, and family members to navigate the demands of doctoral classes and enjoy a meaningful doctoral journey.

4.2. XIMENA

Ximena's pseudonym was chosen because it means someone who listens intently. Ximena's prior experiences with her family and the military were filled with emotional pain. As a result, Ximena has been diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder throughout her life. Yet, as her story will show, Ximena listened and responded to her calling to help other young adults fight mental health illnesses, leading her to pursue a doctoral degree in psychology. When we first met, Ximena was in the first semester of her doctoral program.

Ximena was born in California. Ximena's father is named Luis, and her mother is Daniela. Both migrated from Tijuana when they were teenagers. Luis migrated from México to the U.S. when he was a freshman in high school. Her mom migrated to the U.S. when she was 17 years old. Her mom did trade school. They met in California, got married, and built a family. Luis has worked as a construction worker all his life. Daniela worked in a factory packaging different things while Ximena was growing up. Luis and Daniela had four daughters together. Ximena is the oldest. Then, her sister, Ornella, is 23 years old. Then Marissa is 20 years, and Petal is 18 years.

Ximena described her childhood as being very difficult. They grew up with many barriers. Her mom, dad, and Ximena lived first in an RV parked at her grandmother's house. She called her grandmother "grandmas." Then, before her sister, Ornella, was born, they moved inside her grandmother's home. It was much bigger than the RV, but still, they were crowded. It had four bedrooms, and the four of them lived there with her grandmother, an aunt, and an uncle. Ximena, her mom, and her dad slept in the same room. Ximena used to sleep at the bottom of their bed.

4.2.1. The Divorce of her Parents

Ximena explained that her relationship with her parents is "rocky." One day, Ximena saw her mom kissing someone else who was not her dad. She was seven years old, going from kindergarten to first grade. She was baffled about it and did not understand what was happening. Therefore, she decided to ask her grandmother, and eventually, her dad found out. Thus, her parents often argued and yelled at each other in their shared room, eventually leading to a difficult divorce. Her mom blamed Ximena for the divorce and often chastised her when her dad was not around. It was also tricky because Ximena slept with her mom, and she remembered hearing her mom crying in the middle of the night. As time passed, making matters worse, both her parents put Ximena in the middle of the situation.

The divorce also impacted Ximena at school. She was very behind in school, and the teachers told her that she would not be able to catch up. However, she started reading the Twilight series. After finishing those books, she never stopped reading, and her grades improved. Seeing her excitement at reading, her father later took her to the store and started buying books for her. As a child and through adolescence, Ximena enjoyed reading fantasy books like Harry

Potter or Twilight. But, throughout the years, the Twilight series continues to be her favorite book because they bring some nostalgia to her.

The troubled divorce put a lot of weight on Ximena's shoulders, as she became responsible for her sisters. Her mom started working longer hours at the factory, and her father was in and out of the house. Ximena was tasked with cooking, cleaning, or helping her sisters with homework. Therefore, they grew up being very close to each other, always supporting each other with personal matters. Ornella always reaches out to Ximena for guidance and help, even as a young adult. For example, when Ornella left an abusive relationship, she moved in with her dad. But her dad was quick to blame her, and his new wife made her feel uncomfortable and unwanted all the time. So, Ornella reached out to Ximena for help, and she moved to El Paso, where she helped take care of Ximena's baby.

After her parents split up, her grandmother decided to rent out the house after some time. So, her dad, Ornella, and Ximena stayed in the garage for a while, and her mom, Marissa, and Petal moved to another city to live with one of Daniela's brothers.

Shortly after, her dad, Ornella, and Ximena moved into her grandmother's new house. It was also a four-bedroom house. Ximena shared a room with her dad, and Ornella shared a room with her grandmother. Her uncle had another room, and her aunt stayed in the other one. Her aunt, Lupe, used to take Ximena, her sisters, and her cousins, Steven and Leo, to different places like the museum, the public library, or hiking. She remembered they used to walk a street called "Camino Real." She remembered joking with her sister, "Yeah, camino real long." The walk was over a mile long, but she remembered that they often stopped for ice cream at Baskin Robbins.

Ximena explained that her dad "was not absent, but not present." Her dad was always busy working at different construction sites and barely established a relationship with her

daughters. Then, one day, the police knocked on their doors and took Ximena and Ornella back with Daniela. Her mom had obtained a restraining order against her dad because he caused her problems wherever she was renting. Daniela also had asked for full custody of her children. Thus, Ximena felt she did not have much time to bond with her father. If they talked, it was about a joke or to praise her for getting good grades.

After moving in with her mother, they often moved from house to house. Ximena remembered that they were living in a pool house of only 100 square feet at one point. It was only big enough for a bed and dresser. Her mom, Daniela, tried hard to spend quality time with her children. Ximena remembered even though her mom had less money, she always wanted to take them out during the weekends and vacations. For example, her mom got them tickets for Universal Studios during the summer on one occasion. “It was a great family time.”

While her parents' separation brought a lot of pain, Ximena held on to the good memories to keep going. Additionally, as Ximena sought to distance herself from her family, she tried hard not to be categorized as a Latina. She remembered her grandmother calling her younger sister, Petal, “Negrita,” as she had the darkest skin color in her family. Ximena did not want to be another victim of racist comments and microaggressions. Ximena has light-colored skin, and as she explains, she does not have “el nopal en la frente.” Thus, it is easier for her to pass as White. When she was fifteen, she started dyeing her hair blond, avoided speaking Spanish and actively sought to distance herself from her culture. Her light-colored skin, she thought, had opened doors for her in the past. Cultural genocide and linguicide are common forms in which Latinx people assimilate the dominant English-speaking culture (Mendoza et al., 2019). Ximena’s need to fit into the dominant culture and distance herself from her family led her to erase who she was, where she had come from, and even criticize her upbringing.

Ximena is very content with her life. She said, “I don’t think I would go back and change anything. Just because I think if I did, I would not be where I am now.” She only wishes to have a better relationship with her dad, which deteriorated even further after he remarried. But she praises the family she has, even though she is constantly juggling different things simultaneously, and so, sometimes things fall through. She also cherishes the support she has from her sister, Ornella, to take care of her daughters and her journey as a doctoral student.

4.2.2. Being a Language Broker

Ximena is the first in her family to go to college, a journey that she never intended to follow. Her dad had finished high school and knew little English. Her mom had finished trade school and only spoke Spanish. As their parents moved them around after the divorce, Ximena and Ornella started using more English. Marissa and Petal spoke only in Spanish because her mom did not know English. Ximena started interpreting and translating everything for her mother, a process referred to as language brokering (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010). Interpreting and translating is not easy for a young person. However, it is “essential for survival in the United States” (Flores Carmona, 2014, p. 113).

Children of immigrant parents learn from an early age to speak Spanish at home and English at school (Buriel et al., 2011). Schooling also introduces aspects of Anglo culture to children from a very young age. Parents who struggle to learn English and integrate into the Anglo culture use their children as language brokers to help them interpret, translate and serve as mediators with Anglo society. Additionally, children are charged with making decisions that impact adults in their families, such as dealing with situations in medical settings, financial institutions, landlords, or schools. In many ways, they are the experts, and their ability to engage successfully with the complex demands of modern life matters for their families’ well-being and

integration into U.S. society. Children's language brokering serves families in multiple ways, such as accessing information and resources, building bridges between home and school, and enhancing opportunities for every family member (Orellana, 2001).

Ximena helped her mother and her mother's ex-boyfriend apply for various jobs. She helped them look for jobs and write their resumes. Ximena's bilingualism in English and Spanish put her in a place where she was often sought out for help. However, Ximena grew tired of being the language broker for her family. She did not want to keep doing that anymore as she felt it took time from other things. The constant calls and the weight of responsibility wore her down and even annoyed her. While language brokering is a process that has been recognized as a valuable contribution to the overall family's well-being, it is also considered a source of stress among adolescent Latinas (Villanueva & Buriel, 2010).

4.2.3. Avoiding College

As the oldest in her family, she felt that the responsibility to care for her three sisters was the priority in her life. Ximena felt that going to college would interfere with her duties as the oldest sister. She also looked up to her parents and thought, "why do I go to college? There's my parents out here doing it. I don't really need to." Ximena had dismissed the idea of going to college because she had to juggle other responsibilities at home. Ximena thought that by finding a job, she would soon become economically independent, and she would be able to support her sisters better. Furthermore, as the first one to go to college, she could not see the cost-benefit of obtaining an undergraduate degree. She was fearful of incurring "unnecessary" debt and did not think there was actual value in pursuing an education. However, her future changed when she accompanied her close friend to a college fair.

One day, one of her closest friends, Paty, who had planned on going to college, invited Ximena to attend the college fair at their high school. Not convinced about the idea of going to college, Ximena accompanied her friend and even put her name down in a scholarship raffle. Surprisingly, Ximena won a partial scholarship to go to a community college. The scholarship incentivized Ximena to go to college. She decided to enroll in the community college, where she graduated with her associate degree. But reluctant to continue her studies, she decided to enlist in the military.

4.2.4. Military is Calling

Uncertain about her future and in opposition to her family's hopes for her, which was that she continue her studies, Ximena decided to join the military right after college. She believed that her time with her male cousins had toughened her up, and she "could be one of the guys." For a while, Ximena felt she was indeed one of the guys. This is a poignant example of how Mexican American women frequently negotiate professional environments through masculine performance to navigate raced-gendered situations (Espino, 2016).

However, soon Ximena realized that she was not one of them. She said, "I was so used to being part of, you know, one of the guys that I didn't recognize red flags. I just did whatever." Consequently, one time, while she had been out with her team in the field for over a month, she experienced sexual assault by one of the sergeants. Ximena shared she was going through some difficult times at home. She was not in her right state of mind, and she disassociated from the people around her. One of the sergeants noticed she had been isolated from her team. He approached her, and she confided in him. She told him about the difficult times in her personal life. Ximena believes her vulnerability during those times made her sergeant think he was welcome to make an advance on her. Ximena tried to stop him by pulling herself away, but she

was incapable of dissent. She was not sure how to do so. He was in a position of power, and she felt she had to follow through. So, the sergeant continued to have sex with her for over one month and a half. Finally, she got the courage to stop him, but the sergeant did not take it well.

Desperate, Ximena talked about her experience with another friend of hers in the military, who also admitted having been a victim of sexual abuse by the same person. They both agreed to report the incidents together. According to the United States Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response [SAPR] (2022), service members have two reporting options to disclose sexual assault while being protected from coercion, retaliation, and reprisal. One in which they report directly to their chain of command or military law enforcement, or another one in which they confidentially disclose the assault to a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), SAPR Victim Advocate (VA), or health care personnel so that you can receive medical treatment, mental health support, and SAPR services.

But instead of reporting the incident, the friend backed out and started spreading rumors of Ximena, stating she had made the story up and was willingly having sex with the sergeant. Sexual assault is the most underreported crime in the military (SAPR, 2022). Although Ximena does not understand what made her friend act in this manner, research on the topic has shown that the most common reasons for not reporting among servicewomen in the military are not knowing how to report it and being too embarrassed (Mengeling et al., 2014). Additionally, victims underreport sexual assault because they are concerned that reporting would negatively affect their career, nothing would be done against their perpetrators, confidentiality would not be kept, and they blame themselves.

Ximena experienced most of these fears. As a victim of sexual abuse, Ximena blamed herself for a long time. She thought she could have led the sergeant to believe he could make

advances on her. She also thought her state of mind as she dealt with difficult situations at home put her in a more vulnerable position, making her an easier target. Adding to Ximena's desperation and betrayal, the leadership team did not take her accusations seriously and disregarded them without making any effort to investigate the matter. Making matters worse, her friend went behind her back and spread rumors about her leading her team to retaliate against her.

Consequently, Ximena was forced to leave the military and change her lifestyle to move on. She moved houses, changed her phone number, and disconnected from social media. As such, she endured most of her struggle and shame alone for a long time. As sexual assault continues to be unreported or hidden, it is harder for victims like Ximena to get their help.

The disregard for women's bodies is a problem that reaches several spaces, including the military. Unfortunately, the burden of being a victim of sexual assault continues to be bigger and weighs heavier than anything else. According to the nonprofit organization Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network [RAINN] (2022a), the effects of sexual violence have a psychological, emotional, and physical impact on a survivor, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, eating and sleeping disorders, dissociation, panic attacks, substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections, self-harm, and even suicide.

4.2.5. No Need for "El Loquero"

Ximena grew up in a Latina household and learned not to talk about her mental problems early. According to Bledsoe (2008), the Latino population encounters different barriers that prevent them from accessing mental health services. Barriers include "age, gender, educational level, knowledge of available resources, socioeconomic status, insurance coverage, acculturation, language, and legal status in the United States" (p. 160). Ximena, her sisters, and her cousin had

mental health problems. Ximena has been diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder throughout her life. However, her mom often dismissed Ximena's concern for mental health services by saying, "you know, back then they used to beat us, you know! And, you don't see us with mental health issues…that's that" or, by dismissing the profession by calling psychologists, counselors, or psychiatrists as "el loquero" or "the crazy man." Ximena's family's disregard for mental health conditions is rooted in gender, cultural and educational influences, and the gendered belief that women ought to endure sacrifices. Likewise, men are emasculated if they talk about their mental health problems or seek help because doing so is a sign of weakness and betrayal to the family and community.

However, her dad's willingness to obtain help from school counselors for Ximena as a child allowed her to seek help as an adult. Ximena remembered her dad was more open about looking for counseling. For instance, when he separated from her mom, he took Ximena to a counselor. Then, Ximena was referred to counseling one more time during middle school as she started experiencing depression due to bullying. Later, her father took her to counseling again when Ximena approached him and said she was not feeling safe at the high school. Ximena decided to ask for help after she left the military, and when she did, this was a turning point for her to continue with her education and look for ways to help others.

As a result of her experiences with accessing mental health, Ximena is determined to help young adults with mental issues and do as much preventive work as possible as a community-based researcher. She explained, "I felt like if I was allowed to talk more about mental health or more about my feelings with my family, that I wouldn't have experienced that trauma. And that trauma was too much for me at the time." Ximena's troublesome childhood due to her parents' divorce, being bullied at school, and then being a victim of sexual assault caused much harm and

pain. Ximena has felt alone in her fight to get better but has also decided to seek professional help. The professional help she has received from various counselors and psychologists has been fundamental to her getting better and healing. As a result, Ximena's academic and professional identity started to develop, leading her to continue her studies as a bachelor's student in psychology. Ximena merged her research interests with her identities, struggles, and motivations as she pursued an education (Hinojosa & Carney, 2016).

4.2.6. Building a Family

While seeking to leave the military, Ximena started reconnecting with her high school boyfriend, Aldo. Aldo is from Puerto Rico. They attended the same high school, and one day during a class break, they started talking. Aldo was also fighting against his Latin culture. So, they spoke English together and did "White" things, like eating burgers. They immediately bonded, and soon after, they started dating. But, when Ximena joined the military, they split up.

Ximena found the support she needed in Aldo, and they started dating again. Eventually, Ximena got pregnant, and they decided to get married. Ximena and Aldo have two children. The oldest one, Marcela, is five years old, and the youngest, Karla, was eight months old at the time of this study.

Her relationship with her daughters is excellent--something strange for Ximena. Ximena initially did not want to have kids. She was tired of the responsibility of caring for her sisters at a very young age. But her husband was excited to have kids. Ximena believed it is easier for men to want children because they do not have to worry about raising the kids or taking care of the house, attesting to entrenched traditional gender roles.

Ximena tries to do random things with her daughters every weekend, like go to Target and stroll around the aisles with her daughter, Marcela, who enjoys looking at different things or

going to the nail salon together. She also enjoys going to oddities shops. Ximena is a collector of specimens, like plants and dead animals like tarantulas. She is proud to have a collection like that, plus she explained, “I do not have to take care of something else alive.”

4.2.7. Back to Study

After her time in the military, Ximena reached out to her community college advisor, a Latino named Paco, and asked for his guidance to enroll in a bachelor’s degree. Paco always supported her in her college journey and often talked to her about pursuing a four-year college degree. When she talked to her advisor about joining the military, Ximena remembered that he tried to persuade her not to do so. Enthusiastically, she recalled whenever she questioned herself, "am I smart enough?” Paco always told her, “you're smart! Just go for it.” Mentorship is crucial for Latinx doctoral students, as Latinx mentors advocate for underrepresented students, help fight impostorism and open a path for others to succeed in higher education (Mendoza et al., 2019). Therefore, she felt confident about reaching out to him and asking for his guidance as she sought to further her education as a bachelor's student. With the support of Paco, Ximena enrolled in the university. She completed a Bachelor’s in Psychology. Later, she continued with a Master's in Counseling at a private university.

While attending graduate school at a private institution on the Pacific Coast, she felt she was not part of the community. As a private institution, most students were White and from higher socioeconomic status, and she struggled to assimilate into the dominant culture. She explained, “I didn't feel like I was part of the school.” During her master's program, Ximena remembered meeting a Latina professor. However, Ximena explained that her professor did not speak Spanish, did not participate in the Latina culture, and was “very White-passing.” Ximena believed that the professor was hired to check a box on diversity by administrators. She was a

token. Mendoza et al. (2019) explain this happens when a Latina is expected to be the spokesperson for all Latinx people. In like manner, the university had opened the doors for a few Latina students, but the departments never supported them. Ximena mentioned that many ended up dropping out of school.

Ximena said, “I was just, I was there taking classes, even though it was meant to be integrative.” Not happy with her experience, Ximena set out to do something to transform her graduate experience. A component of spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002) occurs when the individual seeks to transform previous bad experiences, such as racial microaggressions or other sources of system oppression, into opportunities to better the situation around them (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-García, 2018).

Ximena’s sense of exclusion and feeling like an outsider from the dominant academic culture motivated her to look for ways to fight hegemonic practices. So, as she was pursuing her master's degree, she and her other Latina colleagues began sharing resources and supporting each other in their graduate studies. They built a support group, and Ximena soon experienced a sense of companionship that she had not experienced in any other place.

4.2.8. Applying to a Doctoral Program

In conversations with Paco, Ximena realized that she had developed an interest in conducting research and creating new valuable knowledge, leading her to apply to a doctoral program in psychology. Paco had become a college professor, and he was happy to write Ximena’s recommendation letters for the Ph.D. program. Bañuelos and Flores (2021) found that many first-generation Latinx doctoral students learned about doctoral programs from their college professors, who also helped them with the application processes.

As a first-generation student, Ximena lacked an understanding of the rigorous application process for doctoral programs. Likewise, she was unaware of future career possibilities. Paco was instrumental in this process. He often validated Ximena's knowledge and aptitude for university. Paco helped her navigate the application process for a doctoral program by providing support letters and guidance when needed. He opened the doors for Ximena to see she could have a career as a psychologist where she could help her community.

As Ximena evaluated her options of different universities, Aldo was stationed in the military base of El Paso, and Ximena decided to apply to the university to be closer to her husband. She was happy to apply to the university in El Paso. She considered that the designation given to the university as a Hispanic-serving institution would help her experience a sense of belonging and further her research interests as she sought to help young adults from Latinx backgrounds. Ximena was accepted into the program, and she moved to El Paso. Ximena started her doctoral program at the university located in El Paso two months and a half after giving birth to her youngest daughter, Karla. She explained her checklist was short before entering the doctoral program--she wanted a good education and a decent lab space. However, to her surprise, she has been able to check other boxes that she had not thought about, like having childcare on campus, actual sexual harassment training, and support for people of color.

4.2.9. Guilt and Distant

Ximena's parents motivated her to pursue a college education--when she wanted to join the military, her parents insisted she stay in college. Martinez (2018) noted that Latino families tend to support their children in getting a bachelor's degree, which signifies better prospects for a professional career upon graduation. However, when Latino students decide to go back to graduate school, they sometimes face uncertainty from their parents and feel the need to

"translate the field" (Martinez, 2018, p. 9) to their parents to lessen their worry. As a result, when Ximena decided to pursue a doctoral degree, she felt more distant than ever from her parents. She felt like an outsider at home. As Ximena navigates her first semester of doctoral studies, she feels distanced from her parents, grandmother, and sisters. Nobody in her family had previously taken her journey. Thus, coming to college created a sense of unbridgeable distance between herself and her family and culture.

Additionally, Ximena has felt guilty as she develops herself academically. She felt responsible for educating her family about systems of oppression that have impacted her life as she attended to her mental health. She described her education and pursuit of doctoral goals have made her more aware of how there is systematic oppression of people of color, which angers her. She feels responsible for explaining to her family that the socio-economic and political system is incorrect, especially their denial of mental health access. She mentioned, "you see how they're being oppressed sometimes, and how there's generational trauma, and they don't see it." Assuming her responsibility as the first one to go to college, Ximena said, "you kind of have to educate them and help them navigate that and be like a mediator between two cultures." It is an uphill battle that is wearing her mentally. Moreover, it makes her question her place in the program.

4.2.10. Bilingual is not Smart

Ximena does not believe she is smart enough for the demands of her doctoral program. Ximena was waitlisted initially, and then she was accepted into the doctoral program. Ximena believed that this made it seem like other things, such as her veteran status, helped them welcome her into the doctoral program. Dismissing the place she had earned during the application process, she joked that the admission committee to the doctoral program had made a

judgment error by giving her a place in the program. As a result, Ximena often questions her acceptance into the doctoral program. While she has an excellent academic record, she feels she lacks in other areas. For example, Ximena explained that compared to others in her lab, she had no research experience, had never been in a lab before, and was older than her lab partners.

Additionally, Ximena has not felt intelligent enough for most of her life. Even when she started reading at the 12th grade level in 8th grade or when her professors repeatedly told her parents, "she's so smart." She explains many of her insecurities have been with language. She knows English and Spanish and a little French and Arabic. However, she considers that she speaks English and Spanish only good enough to get by. She stated, "I don't speak Spanish, and I don't speak English." What is more, Ximena considers that her bilingualism excludes her from either culture. She said, "I am neither here nor there in either culture." She feels like she is divided, not fully complete, and her insecurities with language have transferred to her place in the doctoral program. She is still getting to know who she is while uncovering her bilingualism and biculturalism in the process of becoming a scholar.

Ximena has experienced imposter syndrome due to her bilingualism, age, and prior educational experiences. Gardner (2013) noted that, foremost, first-generation students lacked an understanding of the graduate education system and experienced feelings of otherness or not belonging due to race, class, and gender. Gardner explained feelings of otherness could be closely related to the "imposter syndrome," highly prevalent among first-generation women and students of color. Ximena felt her bilingualism excluded her from the Latina and Anglo cultures. In addition, her bilingualism also felt like an impediment or burden as she carried out her doctoral studies. Her age, military background, and prior learning experiences also cause discomfort in Ximena's journey as she constantly compares herself to her doctoral colleagues.

Ximena questioned, “I got in…So, now, I don’t really know exactly where to go from here.” She joked, “But if they took me then, you know, that's, that's on them. They think I'm smart enough; I'm not gonna prove them wrong or anything.” Looking to confront her insecurities, Ximena is determined to keep going. To do this, Ximena has looked for support outside her home. She has reached out to different professors at the university and has begun establishing mentorship relationships.

4.2.11. Mentors

As a woman and a Latina, Ximena feels alone sometimes as she navigates her first semester as a doctoral student. She explained that it has been hard for her to find woman mentors, particularly Latinas, as there are a few. According to the American Psychological Association (2020), the number of women in the academic psychology workforce continues to increase. Specifically, the percentage of women among tenured faculty increased from 29 percent to 49 percent between 1995 and 2015. Despite positive trends in the number of women in faculty roles in psychology, Hispanic women continue to be underrepresented in every field, making up only one percent of full-time professors (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). However, Ximena believed that the lack of Latina representation in her field of study is an opportunity for growth. She considered there is a need for new research to be conducted by women of underrepresented backgrounds and a need to create groups that focus on the development of women of color as scholars. Consequently, Ximena stated, “it just emphasizes that I DO belong here, even though sometimes, it’s very hard as a Latina.”

In other instances, Ximena has felt supported by her mentors and professors even when they do not share her gender, language or ethnic/racial background. For example, her research mentor and supervisor are men. She explained that their mentorship goes beyond lab work. She

has approached them with personal matters as well. For instance, Ximena asked one of her professors, who she knew was a father, how he managed to balance his time with his family and profession. As a mother, Ximena feels his advice is precious and considers that he did not just care about her schoolwork but also her mental health and personal life.

4.2.12. Final Thoughts

Ximena has come a long way. She is still fighting to find her place in academia and attend to her mental health, but she recognizes that her husband's and sister's support, her mentors, and her hopes for her children to have a chance at college when they grow older keep her moving forward. Additionally, she looks forward to a career where she can help her Latinx community battle against misconceptions about mental health and increase accessibility. She realizes her racial identity is an essential piece of who she is and what she wants to be in the future. Ximena mentioned, "I realized that is a huge part of my identity. And it's something I wouldn't trade now. And it's so special to me, just being able to say that I am Latina and that I partake in my culture." The possibility to become a Latina researcher is a great honor and signifies a great responsibility for Ximena. She wants to do better for her family and community. Ximena is committed to getting closer to her biculturalism and relearning Spanish, which was lost in assimilation (Caldas & Heiman, 2021). It was never in her plan to go to university, but she did it.

4.3. REBECCA

Rebecca's pseudonym was chosen because it means captivating. Rebecca said that her racial or ethnic identity is something she never explored while pursuing her education and professional career in México. However, her gender identity as a woman makes her fight harder for what she knows she deserves. Eventually, it led her to pursue a doctorate in the U.S. As a

transfronteriza and international student, Rebecca has to deal with “cositas muy mundanas” when she crosses “al otro lado del río.” Rebecca is convinced that her struggle as a transfronteriza, Mexican, and woman doctoral student is a story of survival and triumph.

Rebecca was born in Ciudad Juárez, but her parents were initially from Zacatecas. Her mom, Catalina, was 45 years old when she had Rebecca, and they spent a lot of time together reading. Catalina finished third grade of elementary school. After that, she decided to dedicate her life to the church as a catechist. She is 84 years old, and she is still a catechist. As a catechist, Catalina has ordained a few priests. Her mom used to buy Rebecca books about “Los Santos” or the saints, and Rebecca enjoyed learning about their lives through cuentos. Their stories told the saints’ miracles, and she spent hours reading her books. Rebecca was introduced to a new book genre at the age of twelve. She got a novel from a Spanish writer and became addicted to reading. She enjoys reading novels, poetry, and about “Los Santos,” as she has grown older even though she no longer practices any religion.

Her dad, Celestino, was taken out of school when he was in his fourth year of elementary school to work. In the little time he went to school, he learned to read. Eventually, Celestino went back to complete his middle school education through an open program in the 90s, called Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos or INEA. Despite his limited educational opportunities, her father was an avid reader. He used to have many books at home, which Rebecca would read repeatedly. Rebecca developed her passion for the written word from her dad. While Celestino does not have an education, Rebecca explained, he is self-taught, always reading, and very informed about world affairs, politics, economy, and culture. As she grew older, they continued to lend each other books and talk about their readings.

Rebecca is the youngest of eight siblings--six men and two women. Three of her other brothers have completed their bachelor's, but she is the only one with a master's degree and pursuing a doctoral degree. The one before her was six years older. Consequently, she grew up distant from her siblings. Rebecca described herself as a little “agresivona” because of the male influences in her life, but always attending to the gender expectations of women, like “wearing dresses or not playing football--all of those things that as a young Mexican girl you are taught to do.” Her mom and Rebecca always served the men. She remembered her mom always being quiet while men were having discussions. Rebecca was taught to follow her mother’s example to stay silent. But she was not like that. She asked questions and pointed out errors. And every time, she was chastised for not listening.

Rebecca enjoys quiet times. She cherishes having a space where she can read. Rebecca also likes to go to the theater and watch movies--but she is not a fan of big Hollywood movies. She is careful to choose films that leave her with a lesson. While enjoying quiet, she values “la convivencia” with other people, primarily through the pandemic, as she considered it necessary to stay mentally healthy. Rebecca always liked going to school, being in a classroom, and being a student. These were some of the reasons that led her to become a teacher. She wanted to continue being in the school. She enjoys learning from others and the friendship that results from talking to other people who have the same interests. She looks forward to having conversations and reflections that challenge her. Unfortunately, during her undergraduate degree at Ciudad Juárez in literature, she could not make connections with others. She explained, “it was a cruel degree.” Students and faculty had big egos that silenced women's voices repeatedly during debates about literary practices.

After Rebecca completed her bachelor's degree, her parents decided to move back to their hometown in Zacatecas leaving Rebecca alone in Ciudad Juárez. Therefore, from a relatively early age, Rebecca lived on her own. She explained, “me independicé y, como no les tengo que dar cuentas a mis papás, entonces tengo esa libertad de acción y de decisión.” After her parents left, Rebecca experienced a sense of independence and freedom to act and decide in whichever way she pleased. It was empowering. According to Espino (2016), Mexican American women consider education as a form of “independence and liberation” (p. 192). As a result, Rebecca had the tools to advance professionally. She was free to pursue a career and make her own life.

After finishing her bachelor’s degree, Rebecca wanted to experience the “real world,” la “realidad.” She started working as a reporter. Then, she became a style editor at the publishing division of a public university in Ciudad Juárez. Rebecca corrected the grammar of different books bound to be published, some theses, and other written articles. She had strong writing skills in Spanish. This opened the doors to a job in newspaper publishing. The company had been working to become the leading online newspaper of Ciudad Juárez at the time. “It changed how news was delivered in Juárez,” Rebecca mentioned. However, she was never appropriately compensated for her profession in newspaper publishing, and that sense of liberation was soon gone. This led Rebecca to switch career paths to education and later apply to the doctoral program.

4.3.1. Gender Pay Gap

As a multimedia reporter, Rebecca was hired to oversee the area of the state government. She attended different public events, conducted interviews, wrote the news, took pictures, and uploaded them to the digital newspaper. It was a fast-paced working environment because the newspaper had promised “la noticia al momento,” or instant news. However, the fast-paced

environment often caused problems. While they could deliver the information before any other newspaper in the region, many errors were made. Rebecca repeatedly pointed out the errors and omissions that were made. Her bosses realized Rebecca's professionalism and excellent writing skills and promoted her to editor-in-chief. However, she did not receive a pay increase. Her bosses told Rebecca they could not offer her a raise because of a significant economic recession. However, Rebecca felt her position as a single woman with no children made her male bosses think she did not need the salary increase. Rebecca was very disappointed and angry with her leaders' unwillingness to compensate her adequately for the job that she was doing. Thus, Rebecca began searching for a new job and quit her career as editor-in-chief after six months.

After leaving the newspaper, Rebecca became a literature teacher at a college and a high school. With lots of energy, Rebecca worked a lot during her time at the high school. She planned, coordinated, and managed literary events, poetry contests, and even big festivals. But, again, Rebecca was never compensated for the extra hours of her work, and consequently, she felt that her male bosses were taking advantage of her work ethic and commitment. She was sure they thought she could do all those things because she had lots of extra time and did not need the extra cash as a single woman with no familial responsibilities.

While she was teaching at the high school, a new educational reform came into place in México. It required teachers only to teach courses related to their educational background. There was another teacher, Ms. Cristi, teaching the English courses in the school, but she did not comply with the educational background imposed by the educational reform to teach English. Her degree was in communication. Therefore, the academic coordinator approached Rebecca and asked her to take over the English course as a favor to Ms. Cristi. Ms. Cristi could then take some of Rebecca's literature, communication, and reading classes. "Era para tirarle paro a la otra

maestra.” Rebecca explained to him she was not prepared for the task. Rebecca had taught herself English. She listened to music in English and had enrolled in a prominent franchise of English courses in México. However, she did not feel she was sufficiently qualified to teach younger students. Dismissing her concerns, the coordinator insisted. He explained she just needed to take the TOEFL exam, and she would be fine. Rebecca ended up taking the TOEFL exam and passing it. She was then hired as an English teacher for introductory English courses at the high school.

Rebecca taught for almost nine years at the college and high school levels before pursuing a master’s degree in education. The master's program was exciting and rewarding for Rebecca. She learned things related to social sciences, psychology, and philosophy. The program also allowed her to master different pedagogical skills that she wished she had had when she began teaching. She felt that the master’s program freed her from those “mandatos de género” she was forced to follow as a kid. In her master’s program, she learned about feminism, and she learned that even though she was not always quiet, she had been socialized to be quiet. She felt liberated from social pressures to adhere to traditional gender expectations. She learned it was acceptable to be a woman without a man, marriage, and kids. She said “estoy completa.” She also learned that she could look at things critically and with more perspective by reading. The books had given her the vocabulary to recognize and name “los mandatos de género.” Her journey as a master’s student motivated her to look for a doctoral program.

She began considering pursuing a doctoral degree while completing her master's program. Rebecca looked forward to becoming an independent and empowered woman as a doctoral student. She explored different degrees in literature and education. However, with the fear that a doctorate in literature could make her overqualified for future employment

opportunities in México, Rebecca decided to pursue a degree in education. She applied in several universities in México such as Puebla, Ciudad de México, and Zacatecas. Rebecca felt better about her ability to speak and write in English and applied for a doctoral program in the U.S. in Las Cruces and El Paso. However, circumstances beyond her control narrowed her options, and in the end, she decided to enroll in the university located in El Paso. She understands now that this was the best decision.

4.3.2. Using Spanish to Sobrevivir

As a bilingual student, Rebecca found her application to the doctoral program to be very difficult. She needed to write a letter of interest, ask questions, gather different application requirements, apply for a scholarship, and so forth. Before coming to the university, she explained that she pictured an environment where no one would allow themselves to speak in something other than English, but this has not been the case. Many speak Spanish. While worried about her bilingualism, Rebecca feels she is always understood at the Hispanic-serving institution in El Paso. The fact that administrators and faculty members are willing to work with her while still learning English has surprised her. Rebecca said, “no hubiera podido sobrevivir el primer semestre.” Rebecca prefers to use Spanish whenever she has the option. For example, when she visits the library and needs information, advice, or tutoring, she always asks for Spanish services if available. Otherwise, she translanguages.

Rebecca also prefers to communicate with her classmates in the doctoral program in Spanish. The ability to express herself freely in Spanish is valuable for Rebecca. The conversations with her colleagues allow her to explore her identity concerning language, race, ethnicity, and gender in more than one way and explore the dynamics of a border community. Language is a big part of Rebecca’s identity as a Mexican doctoral student in the U.S. Speaking

Spanish is fundamental to her willingness to participate in research opportunities and is what informed her interest in participating in my research study. She knew me from a previous experience and knew I spoke Spanish. She knew she could communicate with me in Spanish, and that was empowering and a source of motivation to participate in an oral interview with me. When we began our discussion, Rebecca asked me to pose the questions in English, and she answered in Spanish. Using her bilingualism was empowering as she was allowed to have others hear her story.

4.3.3. English, the Impediment

Rebecca retreats when she needs to speak English, which inhibits her from engaging and participating in different activities at the university. On one occasion, Rebecca was invited to participate in a research study. Eagerly, she agreed and completed a very long survey in English. Later, the principal investigator emailed her and asked for an oral interview. Rebecca explained that she saw the email and that the principal investigator's name appeared to be from a person who only spoke English. She got very nervous and believed that she could not respond appropriately in English; thus, she decided not to participate in the interview.

Rebecca feels inadequate to speak proper English based on how she learned it. Using Spanish feels safe; using English feels worrisome. However, she also thinks that being able to translanguage offers a safety net as she becomes more secure in her English abilities and learns to navigate the new educational system. Moving across linguistic borders involves using Spanish for certain things and English for other things, which can also include moving across geographical borders.

4.3.4. Crossing the Bridge

Rebecca is a transfronteriza student who crosses the border every time she has a class. This is a big challenge for her. At first, she did not own a car and needed to take the bus to get to school. She used to catch “la ruta” in Juárez to one of the bridges, walk over to the U.S., and get another bus to the university. Fortunately, she was later able to buy a car. She now drives to get to the bridge, but she continues to cross the bridge walking. It takes her at least fifty minutes from her house to the bridge, plus the time she is in line at the border crossing, where border officials check every time she crosses her immigration documents and asks her several questions. Thus, she not only struggles with transportation but also with managing her time. The time she has to spend regularly at the bridge “cruzando al otro lado del río” is when she reflects upon her academic journey up to the present.

Crossing the bridge is an experience on its own. As Rebecca walks onto the Paso del Norte bridge, a large black cross against a pink background that reads “Ni Una Mas” is a reminder that she is coming from a city where hundreds of feminicides have gone unpunished. It is an opportunity to reflect upon her privileges and her disadvantages. Rebecca usually takes one hour to cross the bridge on foot. However, she vividly remembers that it took her three hours to cross the bridge on one chilly winter night. In the border region, the weather is extreme, with sweltering hot summers and brutally cold winters. She saw the immigrants camping along the bridge with their children in arms. Starting in 2018, a caravan of immigrants, the majority from Honduras, began their migration in San Pedro Sula to the U.S., seeking asylum due to violence from Maras in their home country (Semple, 2018). As days passed, the caravan increased to the thousands and managed to arrive at the U.S.-México border where they camped.

Rebecca explained that this situation was an eye-opening experience for her. She said, “era muy desgarrador ver a los niños y ver a las familias con el calorón, luego con el frío, luego cuando llovía.” She continued, “y pues ahí vas tu con tu mochilita a cruzar para recibir la clase. Son cosas que creo me marcaron. Me hicieron más consciente de mis privilegios y también más consciente de los privilegios que tampoco tengo.” Hinojosa and Carney (2016) describe the term “Coatlicue,” one of the four concepts in Anzaldúa's borderlands theory, as a space of contradictions or an area in which Mexican American women recognize the positive and negative aspects of their identities as they enter academia and develop new roles. Rebecca has experienced privilege by having the unique opportunity to study in another country. On the contrary, seeing immigrants camped at the border searching for a better future option for their families has been heartbreaking for Rebecca.

As a woman, Rebecca also feels vulnerable. On one occasion, she parked her car on a not very walkable street in Juárez near the Paso del Norte bridge, which is used to commute to the downtown area of both cities. After her evening classes, she did what she always did. She walked on her own to get to her car. In doing so, she regularly experienced and saw “cosas muy feas,” such as drunk people and drug addicts, and on that occasion, she was followed by a man to her car. Fear filled her body. She felt so vulnerable at that moment, thinking of her clothes and her place as a woman in that city. She took her keys out as she walked fast towards the car, opened the door quickly, and drove away. The vulnerability she experiences as she crosses the Paso del Norte bridge almost daily clashes against a sense of privilege that she shares by having the opportunity to study in the U.S.

Rebecca feels privileged and asserts that her studies have given her the knowledge and opportunities she would not have had otherwise. She shared that being a doctoral student has

afforded her opportunities to do things that she could not have otherwise done. For example, she said “una mujer que trabaja en la maquiladora, nunca podrá sentarse a leer sobre el feminismo.” At the same time, education has distanced her from her family, physically and metaphorically. As a first-generation undergraduate student, Rebecca received the support of her parents through their example to read and learn from the written words. Nonetheless, Rebecca feels farther and farther away from her parents, who little by little have become more of strangers with little in common. Consequently, Rebecca has stopped sharing her journey as a doctoral student in the U.S. with them. Her parents also do not tend to ask her about it. They have limited conversations in which they share small things about their lives or the books they have read, but not much more.

As a first-generation transfronteriza Mexican woman doctoral student, feeling blessed often conflicts with her feelings of vulnerability, outsider, and impostorism. She thinks that she has excellent opportunities ahead of her, but Rebecca also feels like an impostor and outsider as an international student in the U.S. About this, she stated, “I am just a Mexican girl that is allowed to cross to take some classes, and then she goes back to her home.” Rebecca has found herself “living on the margin and between two worlds” (Mendoza et al., 2019). Ramos and Torres-Fernandez (2020) suggest that Latina doctoral students experience discomfort by “‘walking between two worlds and not fully belonging to either” (p. 383) as they transition from their graduate lives to their communities. Additionally, Rebecca feels vulnerable walking alone at night in Ciudad Juárez. Asserting her belonging in the U.S. as a doctoral student has been more accessible through the support of her fellow students, especially women.

4.3.5. Entre Mujeres Nos Apoyamos

Rebecca shared that for each obstacle she has had in her doctoral journey, there has always been a helping hand, and usually, it has been one of the women. Rebecca stated, "he recibido mucho apoyo entre mujeres, eso se me hace muy bonito." In her doctoral degree, most students are women, and they have always been there for her in diverse ways. Some, for example, have lent her books, others have offered to give her a ride to the bridge, others have assisted her in finding the information she needs, and so on and forth. Rebecca considers women to be more sensitive to other women's needs or more likely to know when they struggle with something.

Baker and Moore III (2015) explain that racially and ethnically underrepresented students find the support from their peers necessary to fight feelings of isolation. Peers help each other overcome challenges in their classes, maintain open communication channels, are sources of encouragement, and even protect each other. The support from other women doctoral students is for Rebecca necessary as she navigates the demands of being a doctoral student in the U.S. The challenges of crossing from México to the U.S. to study are often overwhelming. It is encouraging for Rebecca to know that she can rely on other women to overcome the different barriers she encounters. It is even more empowering to know that "entre mujeres nos apoyamos." The vulnerability she feels by being a woman is also a significant source of motivation.

4.3.6. Women Proud

Rebecca has walked a rocky road to get to where she is standing. As a woman in Juárez, she remembered growing up in a community where feminicides were common. During her fifth or sixth grade, police officers talked to the students at her school. They offered an evil advice, "tú niña cuídate, tú niña morena de cabello largo y lacio, tú eres el blanco perfecto." The

consejos received by Rebecca from police officials were embedded in an oppressive structure of raced-gendered ideologies that often protected machismo and patriarchal systems. Thus, the police did not speak about getting the perpetrators out of the street or doing something to make it safer for women. The responsibility to be safe fell on women. Consequently, Rebecca had to learn to fight her own battles. Nevertheless, the consejos she heard from the police helped Rebecca survive and build a sense of self-reliance and resistance that assists her as she progresses through her doctoral studies (Espino, 2016).

Ramos and Torres-Fernandez (2020) found that Latina doctoral students see power and resistance as they continue to pursue their postgraduate degrees, as often their motivations are "fueled" by the political climate in the nation (p. 385). In Juárez, the narrative of gender-based violence is not uncommon. It is the daily reality of many women who live in fear and need to watch every step they take. Violent acts against women continue to be attributed to how women dress up, their living conditions, or simply for attempting to live freely. Violence against women is also reflected as they continue to fight for better job and education opportunities, safer work conditions, elimination of gender pay gaps, stricter laws against their abusers, and much more.

Nevertheless, Rebecca knows her battle is not only benefitting her, but it is also a battle that would impact the lives of other women. She feels proud to be allowed to do so. And she is motivated to make the best of that opportunity.

4.3.7. Sources of Motivation

Taking courses during the pandemic was not fun for Rebecca, who believed no one was motivated to be in class through such times. She said that many just wanted to pass the course, and that was it. Finding motivation was difficult for Rebecca, who explained her parents or

family have never motivated her to complete her doctoral studies. Therefore, her sources of motivation are found outside her family circle.

Rebecca explained she is a scholarship recipient. This is a motivation for her to continue with her doctoral degree. As a recipient of the scholarship, she receives a monthly allowance for her living expenses, which covers her tuition in full. However, the scholarship is only given to a recipient for a maximum of 36 months. Thus, passing all her classes and finishing her degree on time is a big goal for Rebecca. Furthermore, as Rebecca continues to study, she does not have to worry about where her next check will come from, what she is going to eat, or how she will pay rent. Sensing some economic freedom motivated her to keep working on her academic goals even through a pandemic.

Another big motivation in Rebecca's academic journey is the job she obtained as a research assistant for one of the professors at the university. As a result, she has had the opportunity to learn how to conduct research. The experience also motivates her to continue learning and continue reading. While being a student during the pandemic was not easy on anyone, Rebecca believed that because she had opportunities to read something that interested her, was able to study with her friends, or hear from the experiences of different professors; it was easier for her to continue working on her doctoral studies.

Financial stability and the opportunity to grow as a scholar and researcher are motivations in Rebecca's academic journey. Especially as she considers that she does not have the support of her parents, it is not that they are against her pursuing an education; it is just that they do not understand her journey. Her furthering of her education created a bridge, one that already existed physically when they moved back to Zacatecas and one that expanded when she began pursuing graduate school. However, Rebecca feels her education is necessary, and one day

it would be the battle won for a Mexican woman in the U.S. It is a worthwhile experience that would allow her to honor her family and home (Sánchez & Hernández, 2022).

4.3.8. A Survivor and a Triumphant

The fact that she is a woman of Juárez and a scholarship recipient who is pursuing a doctoral degree in the U.S. is a story of survival and triumph. One that makes Rebecca feel privileged, empowered, and proud. Rebecca voiced,

> Sé que detrás de que yo esté en una escuela siendo mujer pues tiene detrás muchísimas batallas ganadas por muchísimas mujeres muy valientes. Esto me hace sentir muy bien, porque el hecho de que yo esté haciendo un doctorado y siendo mujer pues si se siente bien. Además, estar haciendo un doctorado en Estados Unidos también me hace sentir muy bien. Y que está lleno de retos también es cierto, pero me gusta. Se me hace que es una cosa muy importante porque pues es un triunfo, es un triunfo que muchas mujeres no pudieron darse o que no pudieron alcanzar. Me siento privilegiada por tener una beca y permitirme estudiar el doctorado. Me siento muy privilegiada por estar viva, porque soy mujer de Juárez, cumplía con el perfil.
>
> [I know that my place in academia as a woman has behind many battles won by many courageous women. This makes me feel very good because I am doing a doctorate and being a woman; well, it does feel good. Besides, doing a doctorate in the United States also makes me feel very good. And the fact that it is full of challenges is also true, but I like it. It seems to me that it is a significant thing because it is a triumph; it is a triumph that many women could not achieve or that they could not achieve. I feel privileged to have a scholarship and to be able to study for a doctorate. I feel very privileged to be alive because I am a woman from Juárez; I fit the profile.]

4.4. SOFIA

Sofia's pseudonym was chosen because it means wise. Sofia is the first one to go to college in her family. She is also the first one to ever apply to a doctoral program. With many insecurities, she jumped into the journey of navigating graduate studies. She is aware of the challenges she needs to overcome, but she is sure her journey would benefit others, especially her family. She is eager to become the first woman Ph.D. in her family. Sofia has put every effort into making that dream a reality. She has followed every instruction and taken every piece of advice. It has not been easy. It has been sometimes incredibly stressful, but Sofia knows she is on the right path to fulfilling her dreams.

Sofia's dad, Francisco, was born in Juárez. Her mom, Gaby, was born in a small rural town in Chihuahua, but when she was 18 years old, she moved to Juárez. Her parents had a home in Juárez. However, her parents made the decision to give birth to Sofia in El Paso. Growing up, her mom and dad tried very hard to provide opportunities for Sofia and her siblings. They wanted their children to go to school in El Paso as they believed that would open doors for them in the future. Because Sofia's parents did not have a house in the U.S., Sofia and her younger sister, Romelia, lived with her aunt on the weekdays. Every weekend and during vacations, they went back to their home in Ciudad Juárez. They always enjoyed their time there. Dania, her cousin, lived next to their home in Juárez. The three of them used to spend hours playing together. Also, they had some chicken coops and sometimes sold the eggs to people in the community. Sofia and Romelia always looked after the chickens, making sure they were cleaned and cared for.

Sofia and Romelia grew close to each other. They shared clothes and a bedroom, watched similar shows, and enjoyed the same food. Sofia also had a younger brother, Chamito, seven

years younger than her. The significant age difference between them caused them to grow separately. When Romelia moved out of state to pursue a college education, Sofia and Chamito became closer, and Chamito started to seek Sofia's advice on different matters. Sofia considers her role in her family dynamics as an additional parent figure. She supports her family in diverse ways, such as mailing necessary documentation, making important decisions, and being a resource for her siblings, among much more.

Her dad used to take them to the park, taught them to swim, and took them ice skating. Her mom was also very present in their lives. Sofia mentioned, "she was always there." Sofia's fondest memory was helping her mom cook tortillas. Her parents always pushed her to continue studying. They were confident that if she had a good education, she would not have to do the jobs they had to do. Her father had been a maquiladora worker for a big boot company in the U.S. for several years. Unfortunately, after downsizing, his father was let go. He then started working for a shipping company, where he loads shipping containers. Her mom had been a "stay-at-home mom," but then she started working at a school as a lunch lady to have some extra money. She then became a full-time custodian.

When Sofia began going to school, her parents always pushed her to get good grades and get involved. As a result, Sofia was a "very good kid in school." She enjoyed reading, listened attentively to her teachers, and always had good grades. Sofia graduated in the "Top Ten" from high school. In addition, she often participated in extracurricular activities such as tennis, cross-country running, theater, National Honors Society, and community service. She also became an athletic trainer. Sofia always knew she wanted to go to college, and she believed her engagement outside the classroom, along with an excellent academic record, were keys that could open doors for the future. She continued to be disciplined and involved with her academics and

extracurriculars in her undergraduate studies, Master's degree program, and then in her doctoral studies.

4.4.1. Applying to Doctoral Programs

As the first person to pursue a doctoral degree in her family, Sofia needed to navigate the educational system. At first, it was the application process. Sofia was overwhelmed with the application process. Each university asked for something different and something more. She needed to obtain letters of recommendation, write a letter of interest, and take the GRE test. The GRE is a standardized test that is required for specific graduate programs. The test was one of the biggest hassles she felt she had to overcome. She felt discouraged after taking the GRE because she did not score as well as she wanted. She explained the verbal section was challenging. She considered her vocabulary was not as strong as other graduate students. She also needed to show that she had an excellent academic record, but she was not concerned because her grades were always good. Finally, she also worked on putting together a strong curriculum vitae. The conglomeration of steps was overly complicated for Sofia, especially as a first-generation student. Martinez (2018) explains that first-generation Latino students consider the multiple admission requirements to apply for a doctoral degree, preparing for standardized testing such as the GRE, and the rigor expected in graduate school as daunting and overwhelming. Sofia stated, “it is challenging to be a first-gen. I was like, I am supposed to apply to so many schools. You are supposed to do this and that. Where to start? That is the hardest thing.” With no guidance from her family on how to do graduate studies, Sofia resorted to her professors and friends for advice.

Sofia applied to a total of seven universities right before the COVID-19 pandemic began. Sofia repeatedly heard from her colleagues and professors at her master’s program that the

process of being admitted into a doctoral program was highly demanding and competitive. She mentioned, “they (professors and advisors) make you apply to a lot of programs because you are going to be rejected from a lot of programs.” The fear of being rejected made Sofia feel worried and stressed. She wanted to secure at least one spot in a university to pursue her dreams.

In March, she started receiving her acceptance letters. She was disappointed to be accepted to only three out of the seven universities she applied to. One of the universities had a program that she liked, but it did not offer her an assistantship, a determining factor in her decision not to go to that school. She needed to have a source of income if she was to leave her hometown. The second university was also a good option for Sofia. However, she questioned herself, “do I want to go to the other side of the country amid a pandemic?” The answer was easy; she did not. She decided to stay at the university located in El Paso as she was already familiar with the faculty and knew exactly what courses she needed to take. Additionally, the program at El Paso was designed so that some of her master's courses counted towards the doctorate program, thus reducing the length of the doctoral program to three years. As a result, Sofia began pursuing a Ph.D. in Social Psychology. At the same time, she started working on a certificate in statistics.

Pursuing a doctoral program has not been a linear process. Sofia has needed to navigate multiple obstacles. The most significant hardship was navigating the application process. Besides the multiple requirements that she needed to fulfill, the constant fear of rejection, not being considered good enough for the demands of the doctoral program, and losing out on the only way she had to achieve her dream was stressful and caused Sofia much self-doubt. Additionally, Sofia contemplated assistantship opportunities to develop research experience while at the same time giving her financial stability for the length of her program. Finally, she considered

geographical location as the pandemic unraveled. Her distress did not stop after she was admitted to the program; instead, she has found herself following a prescribed series of learning activities to assimilate all students into the prevailing academic culture (Weidman et al., 2001).

4.4.2. The Milestones

When Sofia began her doctoral program, she learned there are certain milestones that every student needs to complete to graduate. For example, students need to work on a research project during the first year. Then, they need to submit a research proposal to the IRB, carry out the study, analyze the data, and present it to the department.

In addition, Sofia needs to complete an annual report and update her resume throughout her program. Sofia worked with her mentor to gather different information for her first annual report. First, she was advised to include her poster presentations, conference papers, and scholarly publications in her report. Then, she also needed to establish some future goals and set some clear milestones. Sofia's most significant milestone was to publish more during her second year. She would like to have at least two publications by her second year. But, Sofia explained her mentor told her she should have at least three. He explained to her that one of his graduate students is currently on the job market for academia and that he only had two publications. Therefore, he had been struggling to get a job. Her mentor told Sofia to keep that in mind. Thus, Sofia mentioned, "I would say having three to five publications is good, but I honestly don't know because with each university, it is different, and there really isn't a set number." Lastly, she evaluated her performance over the last year and wrote about how she will be completing her milestones. The package was submitted to different people in the department, including professors in her area of specialization, who took the time to give her feedback on her progress.

The milestones and annual reports helped pave the road to her journey as a doctoral student. It was like a map that Sofia could follow to orient herself and eventually find her way to a successful career as an academic.

4.4.3. Publish or Perish

Sofia was highly interested in publishing articles. She has repeatedly heard a common saying in her classes, "publish or perish," which is a source of significant stress for her. She is convinced that publishing is the only way to secure a career in academia. Torres (2021) argues that neoliberal practices in academia account for expectations that leave women of color "feeling torn and stretched for time" (p. 627), including the fostering of a sense of competition among scholars to be publishing continuously, being efficient, and showing entrepreneurship abilities by securing grants.

Sofia had barely completed her first year of the doctoral program when we initially met, and she already regretted not having published something earlier. Torres (2021) states that by staying true to the "publish or perish" mantra, Latinas are complicit in perpetuating neoliberal practices and a narrative of sacrificio. Sofia has one clear goal, to publish as often as possible while enrolled in her doctoral program. Sofia is working on publishing two projects. One of these research projects is with a faculty member who has left the institution.

The constant reminder that she needs to publish to survive mediates her academic experience within an overly competitive environment. Sofia has felt intimidated by some of her colleagues as they are much older than her. She shared that it is intimidating given that their experience in the field is much more extensive than hers. Mendoza et al. (2019) argue that Latina scholars might experience the imposter syndrome by being extremely vigilant of their status in academia and often comparing their achievements and failures to others who share their

identities. Sofia has fallen into impostorism due to her younger age, perceived lack of experience, and limited knowledge in the professional field. Her need to prove herself in front of her colleagues has made her feel she is in a competitive environment. One that has led to many fears, stress, and questions about her decision to pursue a doctoral program.

4.4.4. Should I Be Doing a Ph.D.?

Sofia doubted her decision to pursue a Ph.D. program during the pandemic. She questioned herself, "should I be doing a Ph.D., especially during the pandemic?" She expressed that her self-doubt coupled with staying "stuck inside" her home became detrimental to her mental health. However, Sofia is determined to finish her program despite the many obstacles. About this, she shared, "I questioned it, but I was, I am still going to continue. I want to be a doctor. I want to be a doctor for my family." Espino (2014) explains that Mexican Americans' journey to a doctoral degree is full of obstacles. However, their navigational, resistance, and aspirational capital allow them to persevere in their programs. The constant reminder of her parents to get an education and her conviction to earn a Ph.D. empower Sofia to keep going. She knows she can overcome any obstacle that comes her way.

Sofia is aware that her feelings of impostorism have made her question her belonging to the program. However, she reasons, "but you were accepted for a reason. You do you! Eventually, you'll get the hang of it. Because you belong here." She believes her professors are knowledgeable people who saw something in her application package to grant her a spot in the program. Thus, she needs to focus on herself and do her best for herself. She needs to trust her background, instincts, and knowledge. She needs to take care of herself. And most importantly, she needs to give it time for things to fall into place. While she is still developing a sense of belonging in academia, she is sure there is a place for her. Sofia believes that her

underrepresented status deserves a place in academia. Therefore, she is willing to work harder than anyone else to become her family's first Latina woman Ph.D.

4.4.5. A Bilingual Researcher

Sofia speaks Spanish and English, but she does not consider herself to be the best bilingual. When she is at home, she often reaches out to Chamito to ask him questions about saying certain words in Spanish. She explained that she also needs to learn how to write correctly in Spanish. It is challenging for her to translate, often questioning her decisions, “would it mean the same thing in Spanish and English?”

Even though she is not comfortable with her proficiency in the Spanish language, she states that being bilingual is a huge advantage because she can do research using both languages. For example, she was involved in a research study on how identities change when a person crosses the border. One of the data collection methods for this study was to conduct surveys in English and Spanish. Therefore, she felt she had an advantage in becoming one of the research assistants for this project because she could speak and read both languages. This makes her feel proud and empowered and pushes her to be a better bilingual. Sofia wants to be a bilingual researcher who can represent her Latina ethnic background.

4.4.6. A Woman Researcher

Being a bilingual researcher is just as important to Sofia as being a woman researcher in psychology and holding a certificate in statistics. Sofia explained that most of the students in her doctoral program are women. However, when she has traveled for conferences to different cities in the U.S., most participants have been White and male. Being a woman student is empowering to Sofia, who considers, “we need more women in STEM and in doctoral programs.” Sofia is well aware of the lack of students of color and women in STEM fields. Inline, Baker and Moore

III (2015) found that many Latinas are encouraged to pursue a degree in psychology since there is a lack of representation amongst Latinas. Consequently, Sofia is proud to be able to represent her gender and ethnic identity in the field of statistics. She mentioned, “I am a woman and Hispanic. I am going to be a part of that percentage. It is very low.” She followed, “we need more people who are Hispanic and woman, representing and being there.”

In sum, Sofia is happy and proud to be part of that small percentage of Latinas that study for a doctorate in psychology while getting certified in statistics. She wants to be a role model for other Latinas. She feels her journey is opening the doors for others to follow, and she has already seen it in her home, as her younger sister has decided to follow in her steps.

4.4.7. A First-Gen Student

Similarly, it is rewarding for Sofia to be a first-generation student. She feels that being a first-generation student has allowed her to help other first-generation students and her family. For instance, Sofia shared that when her younger sister decided to pursue a doctorate, she was able to assist her with applying to a doctoral program. In addition, she has helped remove barriers for her sister. However, the feeling of empowerment that results from being a source of knowledge and an example for her siblings clashes with the sentiments of an outsider that she also feels in her house.

It is stressful for Sofia to explain what she is doing to her parents and family. Sofia feels that an abyss has been created between her family and her. She wonders, “how do you explain that what you are doing is not just studying? It is your job as well.” Ramos and Torres-Fernandez (2020) found that Latina doctoral students experience feelings of discomfort, guilt, and distress as they negotiate their new identity as doctoral students in the eyes of their family members who do not understand the process of obtaining a doctoral education. It seems to Sofia

that her family does not feel that what she is doing is important. Her parents had supported her journey as a bachelor's student, but the end goal was to get a job after that. Sofia's decision to remain in the university for graduate school did not seem to be a step forward in her parents' eyes. It did not seem to align with their goals of a better, more promising future. Thus, pursuing a doctoral degree falls below a job in the hierarchy of successes that her parents have for Sofia.

Regardless of how her parents feel, Sofia believes that her doctoral program is as important as having a job. She wants her parents and family to think of her journey that way. Nevertheless, Sofia feels that sometimes her doctoral studies are not taken seriously at her home. For example, when she needed to study at home during the pandemic, Chamito continuously barged into her study area and disrupted her. As a result, Sofia has felt distanced from her family and conflicted to see that her family does not respect what she is doing. According to Espino (2016), Mexican American doctoral students have often fought the feeling of being excluded from family dynamics as their educational achievement increases. In response, Sofia has turned to her professors for mentorship and a listening ear.

4.4.8. Mentorship

Sofia considers herself lucky as she has had good relationships with her professors. She explained that they have been helpful to her and have an open-door policy. Her professors are there to see her grow, Sofia shared. Sofia is convinced that having a mentor is beneficial for her success as a doctoral student.

Particularly, Sofia cherishes her mentorship relationship with Dr. Rawlings. Their mentorship began because of Sofia's research. Dr. Rawlings does not specialize in her field, but he showed a deep interest in her research. He is a professor of statistics at the university. Apart from academic support, Dr. Rawlings also pushes her to meet her deadlines and engage her as a

scholar. Dr. Rawlings has become influential in Sofia's journey, ensuring she sticks to her plans by establishing solid deadlines. He also shares grant opportunities with Sofia to become a research assistant. Dr. Rawlings is always very responsive. Sofia explained that he is always available. They meet weekly to discuss projects or classes and biweekly with the whole lab to discuss progress in the study. Even during COVID-19, they continued to meet weekly one-on-one. However, lab meetings with Dr. Rawlings and other students ceased as it was difficult for everyone to be there at specific times, given their other responsibilities at home. During the pandemic, Dr. Rawlings remained very responsive, answering emails within one hour.

Bañuelos and Flores (2021) found that most first-generation Latinx doctoral students received institutional resources and social support from all professors regardless of their social backgrounds. Sofia's professors, especially Dr. Rawlings, is incredibly open and approachable, showing a willingness to help her succeed and empowering her to voice her ideas. They have validated her research, showed interest in her advancement towards graduation, and provided encouragement and support beyond the classroom. In like manner, Sofia feels she has a similar type of support from her colleagues.

4.4.9. Relationship with Students

Sofia's doctoral program is small. There are only ten students in her program. However, she feels everybody in her program is easygoing, and she is likely to have a good relationship with them. In addition, she enjoys the support of other students, who, just like her, are Latina students. She explained that she can simply ask her peers if she has any questions.

However, Sofia's most helpful friendship was not with a Latina doctoral student. Instead, Sofia developed a strong friendship with her lab partner. His name is Diego. He had begun the doctoral program three years earlier and was getting ready to graduate when they met. He

became a role model for Sofia. He told her what she needed to do to stay on track. He also offered opportunities for her to help him with different projects. In addition, he provided personal advice, such as taking time off to rest and not overworking. Sofia explained that Diego always answered her questions and supported her in many ways. As a more experienced doctoral student, Diego offered genuine advice on how to navigate the multiple demands of doctoral education. He opened the doors to apprenticeship opportunities under his tutoring, reminded her to be vigilant of her mental and physical health, and helped answer her questions. It was difficult for Sofia to lose his mentorship and support as he graduated.

Additionally, as the pandemic unraveled, her interactions with colleagues became less and less frequent, and soon she found herself pursuing a doctoral journey on her own. Without the accountability to be in a physical classroom with other people, Sofia felt she was constantly procrastinating, unencouraged, and unsupported. However, she kept reminding herself that her research was essential and that she was doing something right for others. This proved helpful as she dealt with the feeling of loneliness from pandemic, while she continued to navigate her doctoral studies.

4.4.10. An Accomplishment for All Minorities

Sofia acknowledged the challenges in her doctoral journey. Sofia committed herself to following every milestone and direction from faculty and colleagues. However, seven months after our first pláticas, she was feeling tired, stressed, and unsatisfied with the culture around her. She explained, “I am at a spot in my degree in which I don’t like the culture in academia of ‘publish or perish’. I am burnt out and stressed out and don’t want to continue that.” Sofia was no longer looking forward to a career in academia. Still, Sofia continued to feel that her doctoral journey would reward her differently. Therefore, she is not ready to give up. She has opened a

door for her family, other first-generation students, and other Latinas. Sofia considers her journey an accomplishment, especially because she knows she is a minoritized student who is "doing something that makes a change in her community." Sofia believes that if doctoral students are doing something that they enjoy doing, then they are on the right path. Sofia has enjoyed her statistics courses and she can see a career ahead of her as a quantitative research expert.

4.5. CAMILA

The pseudonym of Camila was chosen because it means noble. Camila grew up in a very poor, almost forgotten town in México. Eventually, Camila, her mom, and her sisters moved to the U.S. Feelings of impostorism and outsiderness clouded her educational journey due to her bilingualism, poor upbringing, and constant reminders by past teachers and classmates who labeled her as unqualified for an education. Her fight to be seen as an academic who could contribute to her community has been an uphill battle. Nevertheless, Camila has the support of all her family, the respect and admiration of her professors, and the compañerismo of her classmates to assert her place as a bilingual teacher, future researcher, and Mexican woman doctoral student.

Camila was born in a tiny rural town in Northern México called Rancho Don Gabino. The small community where she grew up lacked water and sanitation infrastructure. Her family had to go to a well to shower and to get drinking water. There was only a small elementary school for the community with two classrooms—nothing else. Thus, students from first to sixth grade were divided into those two classrooms and took classes together. Camila was enrolled in the school at the age of five, and she was always very studious. While she was in third grade, she

went to an academic competition in a different town and won third place. She remembered the experience with much joy and pride.

Camila and her five sisters were raised in a single-parent household while living in México. Her mom's name was Maria. Camila called her "mi mami." Her sisters' names were Christian, Berenice, Raquel, and Eunice. Maria juggled the responsibilities of caring for them, maintaining a job, and providing for her family. Therefore, her great-grandmother, who they called "Abuelita," took care of them most of the time. Despite growing up with many "carencias," they always tried very hard to give them everything they could, and Camila has lovely memories from her childhood. For example, Camila remembered fondly that for their birthday, they gave her a small bouquet. They cut a big green leaf and wildflowers and wrapped them like a burrito, and gave it to her with a Coca-Cola. "No había fiestas, ni pastel. Pero esperabas con ansias tu cumpleaños...era muy esperado porque te regalaban una coca," Camila remembered.

Her Abuelita used to tell them cuentos of her life as a child, stories of Pancho Villa, and scary stories like "El jinete sin cabeza." Camila reckoned that she told those cuentos to show us a lesson. For example, her Abuelita told them not to go out late because "el señor con pata de chivo" could come and take them away. Camila believed that these stories shaped her and her siblings.

As an adult, Camila recognizes that her childhood had a lot of shortcomings. For example, they had to wear shoes that did not fit properly. However, while growing up, she did know that they had a difficult time. "Era una vida normal. No era nada extraordinario." What is more, she said "no nos faltó amor." She continued, "Si tuviera la oportunidad de vivirlo de nuevo no cambiaría nada. Son cosas que te forman, te marcan. Han sido parteaguas en mi vida."

In search of better opportunities for her daughters, Maria decided to move to a small city in Chihuahua so her daughters could continue with their studies. Later, her mom moved to Ciudad Juárez, again in search of a better job. However, before she could take her daughters with her, they had to stay behind for few months.

During this period of time, Camila, who is the oldest of her sisters, was in charge of taking care of her siblings and the household. During the day, she cooked, cleaned, and took care of them. Then, in the evening, she went to middle school. She used to take her sisters to a woman in the town, who helped her take care of her sisters while she went to school. After school, she went back for her sisters, cooked dinner, and put them to sleep in the little room they were living in.

One summer, they visited her mom in Ciudad Juárez. Because they did not want to leave her ever again, they stayed in Ciudad Juárez, where Camila finished her middle school education. Camila's mom eventually married and moved to El Paso. Her mom had two more daughters, Lola and Amalia. Her mom's example to aspire for more and her tendency to sacrifice for her daughters, even if risking her well-being, instilled in Camila a sense of resilience (Torres, 2021), which has accompanied her throughout her life.

Camila met her husband, Alan, at the early age of fourteen. When Camila and her sisters moved to Juárez, her mom lived in a tiny room, so Camila and her sisters stayed with one of her mother's friends. Her house was bigger, and there was enough room for everyone. There was a "puestecito" near the house where they bought sodas and chips. She went to the store on one occasion, and Alan was there. Alan was visiting the business of some relatives near the store. This was the first time they met. After that, Alan continued to drive by the store, and he and Camila would talk. After some time, Alan asked Maria if Camila could eat with him, and she

agreed. They married three years later and moved back to Ciudad Juárez, where her husband's business is.

Camila and Alan had three children. Her oldest daughter, Yolanda, is 30 years old. Then her middle son, Hector, is 26 years old, and the youngest, Raul, is 18 years old. Yolanda has three little boys, Gonzalo, six years old, Josh, two years old, and the baby, Adrian, who is just one year old. Camila feels her relationship with her daughter strengthened when she had her kids. Camila enjoys spending time together as a family. She likes to watch movies with her grandkids, who love the "Coco" movie. Camila does not always like to cook, but she believes food brings her family together. Therefore, she likes to prepare food to celebrate special occasions. For example, Camila cooks a fancy meal and a cake during birthday celebrations. She decorates her home, and everyone is invited to have dinner together.

Camila is very proud of her children. While she is sad to see them go, she has always supported them. She motivates them to take chances, further their education, and build their own lives. For example, when Yolanda moved to a university out of state and studied overseas, Camila could not help but cry. But, Camila believes "this is their time." Likewise, she feels sad that Raul wants to move to another city after finishing high school. Nonetheless, she would never hold them back. Camila feels responsible for creating opportunities for her family to stay together and encourages them to do as many things as possible.

4.5.1. Dropping Out of School to Form a Family

After her mom married, her mom moved in with her husband, who lived in El Paso and took Camila and her sisters with her. Camila's arrival in the U.S. was not easy. She said, "coming from a small town, everything was new to me. I had never seen a freeway. It was very different for me. It was a cultural shock." Camila was also taken aback by the difficulties of

learning a new language and navigating the new educational system, which she started in ninth grade.

The move to El Paso happened when the school semester had already started. Therefore, Camila was enrolled late in school. Thus, during her first class in a new country, a new school, and a new classroom, her teacher told her, "you (Mexican students) do not give importance to education. I will not give you credit." Her teacher generalized all Mexican students as lacking interest in the class. Following through with her promise, the teacher failed Camila. This was her first experience in the American educational system and one that defined her life forever.

After that experience, Camila felt embarrassed and did not want to go to school for a long time. The educational system had failed her as a Latina student. She thought she did not belong at the school. She was an outsider in her school and her host country. Camila dropped out of high school and began to build a family. She got married and had three kids. She was thrilled, but at the same time, as she saw her kids grow older, she felt something was missing. She knew then she needed to do something else for herself. It was time to develop herself professionally. As a Mexican woman, Camila was well-schooled in traditional gendered roles. She dedicated her life to her family. It was not something she regretted. On the contrary, she was happy with her decision. She felt she had a place in her family dynamics, and it was important. However, she also yearned for a sense of independence and liberation. She thought she was capable of more. She knew there was a place for her also outside her home.

As a first-generation student and a high school drop-out, Camila was unsure about how to return to school. Her mom only finished elementary school, and five of her sisters had dropped out of high school. She found the support of her sister, Christian, who motivated her and helped her to go back to school. Christian had also dropped out of school, but she was not shy about

asking for help. Camila explained Christian pushed and helped her see it was possible to go to school. “La semilla ya estaba plantada, pero ella me ayudo a que germinara.” Camila studied and passed the GED test. Then, she went back to the local community college, where she finally felt she had a place, as most of the students also spoke Spanish. Because she had not liked her experience in middle and high school, she was convinced that she needed to become a teacher to help other students like her. Her negative educational experiences from the past had become a source of inspiration and transformation in Camila’s life. Camila graduated with a bachelor’s degree in bilingual education and then pursued a master’s in bilingual pedagogy, where she found herself fighting again for her place in the program.

4.5.2. Las Profesores Me Echaban Flores

Camila said, “certain things in your journey may not be straightforward. But it is important when you have certain people in your path who push you and help you.” This was her case. As a Mexican woman, she shared that she had to fight against stereotypes that labeled her as inadequate for graduate school. She remembered a colleague in her master’s program who acted very surprised when he learned that Camila had a 4.0 GPA (Grade Point Average). It was not the first time Camila was “presumed incompetent” (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012) about her ability to do well in her academics. But, to her surprise, two professors had noticed her dedication and aptitude for her studies. They validated Camila’s place in the program and opened her eyes to doctorate.

When Camila completed her master’s degree in bilingual pedagogy, Dr. Monica and Dr. Maria Eugenia, two professors, approached her and asked her to consider pursuing a doctoral degree. They shared that Camila had the potential to deal with the demands of a doctoral program. Camila decided not to pursue a doctorate after her graduation. However, that thought

stayed with her for a long time. She could not believe that two of her professors, two women she admired deeply, had approached her and told her she should consider furthering her education with a doctoral degree. As a Mexican woman, she fought for validation that she was good enough to study. Therefore, when those two professors validated her place and told Camila to consider a doctoral program, they ignited a flame that could no longer be put out.

Camila's life got busy with work, kids, and family, taking priority over pursuing a doctorate. However, when her younger child started high school, she thought she had to try it. She reached out to Dr. Monica and Dr. Maria Eugenia, who supported her during her application to the program. They sat in her interview and offered advice. Camila got accepted. Still hesitant to pursue a doctorate, Camila thought, "I will try for just one semester...Let's see." Camila began her doctoral degree in the social sciences and humanities with an emphasis in biliteracy two years before our interview took place.

As a first-generation student, Camila was able to navigate the application process to the doctoral program through the mentorship and motivation of her two professors. Their advice, words of encouragement, sus flores, mentorship, and trust in Camila were authentic sources of empowerment and agency to her decision to keep going not just for one semester but for one semester after another.

4.5.3. Proud of her Logros

Camila has experienced a plethora of feelings during her journey in the doctoral program. She feels proud of her journey. She is proud of her bilingualism. She is also proud of her challenges while growing up in a low-socioeconomic community. She is proud of doing something good for others. She said,

> Ese sentimiento de orgullo, porque sientes que estas tu logrando algo y la validez que te da y tener esos logros. Para mí siempre han sido logros, porque venia de una escuela de dos salones y luego de pronto verme en el doctorado, aquí en un idioma que no es el mío. Si hay algo que reconocer.
>
> [That feeling of pride, because you feel that you are achieving something and the validity that it gives you and having those achievements. For me, they have always been achievements because I came from a school with two classrooms and then suddenly saw myself in the doctorate, here with a language that is not mine. So, there is something there to recognize.]

Camila believes that being a bilingual doctoral student is a "motivo de orgullo." Orgullo has a positive connotation. According to Cavazos (2016a), "orgullo is being self-confident of one's culture, language, and identities amid setbacks; Orgullo is standing up for one's cultural and language background despite challenges" (p. 76). Camila shared that she could have conversations in English and Spanish. She can handle speaking about different topics and reading in other languages. She said "es una bendición" because she can share her upbringing, identity, and logros with the world by speaking two languages. Additionally, she considers that her bilingualism has given her access to other cultures. "Es un puente para comunicarse con personas que hablan otros idiomas." She concluded that by embracing her bilingualism, she is a better person.

4.5.4. Conflicto Interno

However, her pride and sense of achievement conflict with her feelings of impostorism. Her life and education in México and even her bilingualism do not align with her academic journey in the U.S. In disbelief, she said she has had "esa conversación interna, ese conflicto

interno," which makes her question her journey. She said, "I sometimes feel this is not my place. I think, 'no, what I am doing here? This is not for me'. Especially when everything accumulates--work, school." But then she assures herself that she is in the right place. She said, "El sí se puede va ganando." Lawrence and Valsiner (2003) explain that the internal use of voices or intra-psychological self-talk with oneself serves to develop a stronger sense of personal meaning. Through this dialogue, people interpret norms, signs, and expectations outside society and make them their own. It creates the desired direction or goal orientation that transforms the person and social world.

Camila considers herself insecure as she comes from a small town in México with limited academic opportunities. It was scary for her when she moved to a bigger community, especially because she did not speak English. This fear has accompanied her throughout the years, even after a prosperous professional career in the U.S. Camila was a bilingual teacher for several years. Then, she was able to get a job as the coordinator of a training program that assists entry-level bilingual teachers in small communities in El Paso. Despite these accomplishments, Camila doubts her English and continuously asks herself if what she is about to say is correct or if she has understood it correctly. She disapproves of her accent and often feels her conversation skills lack grammatical correctness.

As a doctoral student with multiple demands outside the university, she feels overwhelmed with her journey. Her place in academia continues to be questioned, now by Camila herself, feeling inadequate, unprepared, or like an outsider. An outsider who does not resemble her image of what an academic, a professional, and a Mexican woman ought to be like. She clarified, "no me tiro para que me levanten," but she still feels insecure. However, her logros is a source of validation and motivation. Each individual achievement like reading an article,

engaging in meaningful discussions in English and Spanish, learning from professors, or writing a paper, serve as a constant reminder and push for her to keep going in a place that she feels has not been built for her.

4.5.5. Mi Granito de Arena

Camila has remained in the doctoral program longer than the one semester she had originally planned for despite her internal fight, feelings of impostorism and outsider, and fear of being in a place that does not seem to be for her. About this, she said,

> I have a feeling of accomplishment, of pride. To know that I am trying to do something. Mi granito de arena. Basically, changing whatever is possible in education—my little contribution. I hope at least something. That is what I wish for the most.

Camila is convinced that however difficult her doctoral journey is, it is all worth it, and there can be an impact- "at least in myself," she said.

Ramos and Torres-Fernandez (2020) found that Latina doctoral students sought validation by being intentional with their research interests. Latina doctoral students are deliberate with their choices and seek researchers that "echoed" (p. 384) their experiences as doctoral students. Camila had poor experiences with different teachers and students while in K-12 school. Events that led her to drop out of school and focus on her family. However, this same disappointment has led her to find a purpose in her professional career. She wants to contribute in a meaningful way to the life of other students. Her disappointments with the educational system do not have to be repeated by other students who struggle to fit in school due to their socioeconomic backgrounds, race, language, or gender. Her fight is a source of pride and empowerment. She knows her granito de arena can benefit others, and it is already helping her and those around her.

4.5.6. Compañerismo

Camila has also found colleagues who are willing to help her throughout her doctoral journey. Camila shared her relationships with other doctoral students have been one of "compañerismo" and support. She explained that they learn from each other, develop ideas about readings, and grow together. Camila said "estamos juntos en el mismo bote y remamos en la misma dirección." Camila also feels respected by her colleagues when they consider and validate her opinion. She explained that there is a culture in the classroom where every voice is heard, everyone is accepted, and that her voice matters.

The compañerismo she experiences had gone beyond the walls of the classroom. Often, she and her colleagues go out to eat something after class. This is a time to cheer each other on, laugh, vent, and disconnect from the demands of their personal, academic, and professional lives. They have created bonds that have grown into familial bonds, as she has invited her colleagues to the baby shower of her grandson, Adrian, and other activities. Overall, Camila feels a culture of equity and respect, which is why she has stayed in the program.

4.5.7. Silence as a Form of Persistence

Camila has also learned to deal with opposing viewpoints. Camila explained that she encountered contrasting views during class discussions, and most of the time, she is willing to offer her counterpoint. However, she tends to avoid conflict when she feels she is unlikely to change another person's way of thinking, especially when she considers their ideas are insulting to her or others. Hinojosa and Carney (2016) explain that persistence in academia is lived differently among doctoral women. Some use their voices to fight against discrimination and microaggressions, while others use silence to fight their battles.

Camila's silence and preference to distance herself from colleagues with opposing viewpoints are not a sign of weakness or unwillingness to explore opposing viewpoints. On the contrary, she is open to engaging in meaningful discussions, allowing herself to learn from others or change her opinion on a subject. However, she is wise to know when she cannot establish that kind of relationship. Therefore, when she is not allowed to voice her opinion or is shut down or dismissed, she prefers silence. Nevertheless, it is an empowering move. It is part of her well-being and her learning and becoming an academic.

4.5.8. The Struggles of the Pandemic

Camila has developed strong friendships with most of her colleagues. Before the lockdown, they often went out to eat after class, talked about an article, or helped each other understand a complex topic in the university's halls. However, "it was challenging during the pandemic. A lot was lost," Camila lamented. She felt lonely. She thought that she had to row the boat alone since she was doing everything by herself; it was very difficult for her. The situation drained her emotionally and physically. She sat in front of a computer for eight hours for work and then stayed there for three more hours to complete her classes. The sense of compañerismo was gone. She felt on the battlefield, alone, and it was draining and exhausting. However, besides her desire to add to the literature on bilingual education, Camila found encouragement and support in her family, who often inspired her to continue with her studies with a simple "¡síguele!"

4.5.9. Logros Compartidos

Camila shared that she thought about leaving the program on several occasions, especially though the pandemic, as the time demands often conflicted with the time she wanted and needed to devote to her family. Evaluating the situation, Camila weighed the time and

money that she had spent to successfully meet the demands of a doctoral program against the time that she had sacrificed to be with the people she loved. She then questioned her future and wondered if it was worthwhile, if her professional career could change, or if it would all be the same. Unable to answer any of these questions with certainty, she found the response she was looking for when she was offered a position at the university as coordinator and lecturer for entering teachers in small communities of El Paso and her family's words of encouragement and pride. Her love for her three children has been a driver for her doctoral degree. She is motivated to be a role model for her children. Proudly, Camila shared that her oldest daughter has followed in her footsteps and graduated with a bachelor's in education. Then, her second son graduated with a bachelor's in biology. And her younger son is in his senior year of high school and is looking forward to going to college in a different city.

Similarly, Camila continuously receives support from her mami, who proudly shares with the world--Camila is a doctoral student. Her mom feels Camila's achievements as her own. Camila explained that her mom puts her in a "peldaño" and she tells her friends "Mi'ja está estudiando un doctorado." It is a great satisfaction for Camila to know that she supports her. Sánchez and Hernández (2022) state that as Chicana doctoral students, "we are the incarnations of our families' deepest prayers" (p. 27). Camila's mom endured a difficult journey as a single mom. In search of a better life, she took all her belongings and moved to Ciudad Juárez and eventually to El Paso. She raised seven daughters. Camila's journey as a professional and a doctoral student reflects her sacrifices and aspirations for her daughters. And Camila is happy that she can share with her mom each one of her logros.

Camila has found the encouragement to follow through in the words of her family. Their support allows her to stay in the program for one more semester, one at a time. She explained

that she cannot separate her academic life from her personal life, as they "van de la mano." Her family understands the time she needs to devote to her studies, and they support her in numerous ways. Camila continuously seeks to integrate and connect her family and home life to her academic journeys (Hinojosa & Craney, 2016). Camila celebrates her achievements and the academic achievements of her children as un logro compartido.

4.5.10. Doing it Well

Camila is the first one in her family to go to college. The shortcomings that she experienced as a child provided a strong foundation for the person and life she continues to build. Camila wants to be an example to her children and her sister, Christian, who insisted she go back to school. Moreover, Camila feels responsible for doing it well as a bilingual Mexican woman. As a result, Camila has become more confident in herself. She looks forward to a career where she can give back her granito de arena to her community, family, and herself. After all, she has the most important thing to make this a reality--the support of her entire family, friends, and professors, who admire her perseverance and dedication.

4.6. VALENTINA

The pseudonym of Valentina was chosen based on her bravery. She was born in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. She is a transfronteriza and international doctoral student. During our pláticas, it was almost impossible for her not to reference the back and forthness between Juárez and El Paso that characterized her lived experiences. Valentina has a clear vision for her future as a full-time professor at a university. Consequently, she enrolled in a doctoral program in the U.S. As she has learned to navigate her doctoral program, Valentina has also had to endure many personal struggles. Her dedication, audacity, and perseverance are reflected in her testimonio.

Valentina is the first one to go to college in her family. Valentina's mom got pregnant with her when she was only sixteen. She left school during her junior high school to never return. Her father completed a high school equivalency exam. Thus, when Valentina was growing up, her mom always told her about going to school and getting prepared. She did everything within her means to support Valentina. For example, she drove her to school every day, even when she started her bachelor's program, cooked for her, or helped her clean her house during finals. Her dad, on the other hand, was abusive and a sexual perpetrator. Valentina's father sexually abused her when she was a child. Additionally, through all the years as a married couple, Valentina witnessed her father's constant physical abuse of her mother. Therefore, Valentina felt staying quiet about her sexual abuse was what she needed to do to save her mom from more pain. Hence, for over fifteen years, Valentina kept silent about the sexual abuse. At the same time, Valentina was aware of how much staying silent had impacted her life. She explained,

> Me di cuenta cuanto había afectado toda mi vida—mi autoestima, mi seguridad, para hablar, para expresarme, para confiar en otras personas, para hablarle a otras personas. Comía muy mal. No me gusta mi cuerpo, mi cara. Que soy muy controladora. Problemas con mi pareja, ya con mi esposo. En todo, en toda mi vida."
>
> [I realized how much effect it had on all my life—on my self-esteem, my confidence, to talk, to express myself, to trust other people, to talk to other people. I ate really bad. I didn't like my body, my face. I wanted to control everything. Marital problems, everything, everything!]

As a survivor of sexual abuse, Valentina is very insecure. Valentina describes herself as a "rancherona," always being very shy and quiet--often burying herself in her studies and distancing herself from others.

Valentina dreamt of going to college one day, but she was unaware of what that journey could look like. Valentina, oblivious to higher education or future career possibilities, decided to become a teacher after she started accompanying her aunt's wife to her kindergarten classes. Her name was Karina. Karina became a role model in her life. Valentina looked up to her and respected her profession. Karina inspired and guided Valentina as she applied for undergraduate school. As a result, Valentina enrolled in a public university in Ciudad Juárez and completed a bachelor's in education.

Valentina was then motivated by her thesis advisor, Octavio, to pursue a master's degree. Valentina had never thought about going to graduate school, but Octavio talked to her. He told Valentina that she had the research skills and responsibilities needed to be a successful graduate student, and he recommended her for the master's program. Valentina decided to follow his advice and graduated with a master's in education. Valentina learned about college and career paths through mentors outside her nuclear family. They were pivotal in her decision to pursue and further her education. Their advice became her path to a professional career in education and later in research.

Professionally, Valentina had been an educator. She began teaching English to elementary kids. She then received an assistantship opportunity in a small school where she conducted administration duties at a principal's office. She was then hired by one of the most prestigious universities in Ciudad Juárez to teach students pursuing a degree in education, English, psychology, and social work. At the same time, she also worked in a private school teaching English to kids, adolescents, and adults. Her adult students were maquiladora workers who attended her English classes after work. Multinational corporations have been able to do business in Ciudad Juárez through the opening of maquiladoras, mainly in the textile and

electronic industry (Cervantes-Soon, 2017). For many migrants, working in a maquiladora signifies better job opportunities and the possibility of advancing their education. This is how many maquiladora workers found a way to Valentina's English courses. Valentina also gave English classes for PepsiCo workers, as well as at another maquiladora. Teaching adolescents and adults was more fulfilling for Valentina. These experiences motivated her to pursue a master's degree and then a doctorate.

Valentina knew she would like to pursue a professional career as a researcher and college professor. So, she began talking about pursuing a doctorate with her husband. They also talked about their plans to form a family. Valentina explained it was difficult for her to make a decision. She considered that as a woman, she needed to think about her decision as twice as much as men. She said, "el doble esfuerzo que tenemos que hacer las mamás de planificar y que nuestra vida profesional se amolde a nuestra vida familiar." She felt there was a glass ceiling impeding her from developing herself fully in both roles. Thus, she decided to enroll in the doctoral program before they had any kids to not interfere with her duties as a mother. Her husband supported her at the beginning of her doctoral journey. He drove her to El Paso as a sign that he supported her decision to go to the U.S. to study. However, they divorced after three years of marriage during the pandemic. Reflecting upon her decision to pursue a doctoral degree before she had kids after her divorce led Valentina to admit that "I practically had all the responsibilities of taking care of the home, and I imagine that the same would happen to me with the care of the children and their upbringing."

However, she realized that by holding only a master's degree, she could never aspire to a full-time position. Thus, she decided to enroll in a doctoral program. Her goals were clear--become a full-time professor at a university in México. She investigated the minimum

requirements and began working towards them little by little. Finally, she learned that holding a doctorate from a foreign university gave her a bigger chance of landing a full-time job in the future. Hence, she looked for opportunities to study in the U.S., as she would continue to be close to home. She also applied for a prestigious scholarship that covered tuition and living expenses. Valentina explained without a scholarship, she could never have been able to pay for the tuition at a foreign university. After an exhaustive application process, she was admitted into the doctoral program in education at a university in the U.S. and received a scholarship.

4.6.1. There is Nothing Wrong with my Second Language

Valentina shared that one of the hardest things in her journey as a doctoral student is thinking about her bilingualism as a barrier. Her concern about language began before she entered a class. Valentina explained bureaucratic processes are a big hassle. In addition, she is not used to the terminology of specific documentation required to apply to the doctoral program or maintain an active student immigration status. For example, words such as “degree,” “official transcripts,” or “enroll” were unheard of by Valentina as she had never needed to use them in her life.

Valentina started to learn English in her high school years. She felt her courses were designed to develop enough fluency to succeed at a job in Ciudad Juárez. The surge of neoliberalism practices redefined the goals of education to train students to meet job expectations by learning a standardized set of skills that would allow them to test well in a standardized test (Lee, 2009). Thus, Valentina’s English courses felt like mere job training. Later, Valentina enrolled in English courses at the college level. Learning the language at college was different. Valentina explained that she learned academic English. She explained that her classes at the college level were especially useful for her doctoral writing requirements. Additionally, she felt a

sense of relief when writing English because she had taught English grammar to different students in Ciudad Juárez.

Despite her confidence in writing English, Valentina believes that she does not have the proper fluidity to speak English; therefore, it is a barrier to her education. Valentina explained that she developed her conversation skills on her own, as she felt the need to do so while teaching English to different students. She practiced her oral skills by engaging in regular day-to-day conversations with colleagues and professors throughout her professional career. As a doctoral student, Valentina stated that she feels very insecure and embarrassed for what she perceives are poor oral skills. What is more, Valentina feels that she took steps back during the pandemic. She explained she barely had opportunities to practice her English. The lockdown put everybody in their homes, and her conversations with other students and faculty members were almost nonexistent. However, she constantly tries to fight against her insecurities. She said, "I am very insecure. And I tell myself, 'I can do it.' Because I am aware there is nothing wrong with it. Because I am aware of it. It's my second language." However, Valentina prefers to speak Spanish whenever possible because it feels safer. She continues to battle that fear or that "gusanito" holding her back.

Her insecurities with language, especially in speaking English with others, are founded on the idea that English has no accent, is free of mistakes, and is fluid. Valentina is proud of her bilingualism. She knows it is a valuable asset. However, the fear of being ridiculed or mocked for how she speaks English prevents Valentina from engaging in discussions with others whose native language is English. Valentina explained that sometimes she shies away from conversations with colleagues and professors whose first language is English--mainly because she is uncomfortable speaking in English. Valentina prefers to engage in discussions with

bilingual students as she figures that they understand her struggle better and are more likely to relate to her. Similarly, Valentina has chosen an advisor who speaks Spanish. Valentina explained that it is easier to establish a relationship with them because they share the language and are culturally similar. Therefore, it is easier for her to communicate and understand where they are coming from as she can relate.

4.6.2. Questioning English-Only Policies

Valentina pointed out that when professors allow them to use Spanish in class, it is a very enriching experience. She explained regardless of which language she prefers to use to communicate her point across, she is still reading articles in English, understanding them, and developing English vocabulary. She understands the benefit of English in academic settings by recognizing that research is often first published in English and then translated to other languages. Valentina believes she can be more up to date by reading articles in English. Regardless, Valentina keeps wondering, "why is it wrong if I express it in Spanish? I am still learning it in English." Ramos and Torres-Fernandez (2020) found that by questioning Eurocentric practices that prevent Latinas from pursuing doctoral studies, Latina doctoral students learn to navigate the demands of academia better.

Valentina complained about not being able to use Spanish in one of her classes. She explained that the professor and classmates spoke Spanish. However, after she offered her contributions to class on the topic, the professor challenged Valentina and asked her to give her point again in English. She also approached him with questions using Spanish, and he responded in English only. Valentina could not understand the juxtaposition of course content with what was happening inside the classroom. The course Valentina referred to included topics of bilingualism, translanguaging, and assets found in communities of color. There was a separation

of theory and practice (Caldas & Heiman, 2021). While the professor sought to deconstruct language ideologies and legitimize students' bilingualism through course content, his praxis did the contrary. Cognitive dissonance crossed Valentina's mind when she could not express herself in Spanish. Valentina also wondered how this would affect her future career. She considered whether she would be likely to implement those topics of bilingualism and critical pedagogy in her classroom or stray away from them. By sharing her testimonio, Valentina challenged false depictions of inclusivity (Ramos & Torres-Fernandez, 2020) and demonstrated her willingness to transform herself through research.

4.6.3. Receiving Feedback

Valentina remembered her master's studies as a frightful and stressful experience. She explained that she was in a very prestigious master's program, which was overly complicated. Far beyond the complexities of each class and the demands of graduate school, she dealt with constant criticism and "amenazas" from her professors. She explained that she was always being evaluated for being a scholarship recipient. Her participation in different socialization experiences such as colloquia, conferences, or thesis writing workshops was often clouded by negative feedback. She said, "They were mean. They implanted fear. You were always stressed." She was always worried, "If I do not do this, they will take my scholarship away. If I don't do this, I will get a bad note. If I get three bad notes, they will kick me out of the master's program. I always felt like they were scaring us away." Additionally, Valentina remembered whenever she received feedback on her scholarly work, she was constantly criticized. She mentioned, "they deleted my paragraphs, literally with red ink and told me it was all wrong and to delete it."

Her experiences changed when she began the doctoral program. The feedback she received from her professors at the doctoral level has been constructive and empowering for

Valentina. In addition, Valentina receives advice and motivation from her professors. For example, she remembered one of her professors during a summer class, Dr. Nováček. Valentina needed to write eight pages per week for his class. She said, "the professor told me--I like that you took this approach. I like the way you wrote this. Your grammar was very good. The structure was good." Then, after commenting on the good, Dr. Nováček followed with constructive criticism, "I will just recommend that you write about the authors in the introduction and add a quote from the article."

Valentina prefers this form of feedback. She explained that she is allowed to improve without feeling punished for not knowing how to do certain things. Acevedo-Gil and Madrigal-García (2018) said that for Latina scholars, receiving constructive verbal or written feedback is an essential source of academic validation that serves to fight self-doubt and opportunities for self-reflection and persistence in graduate school.

4.6.4. Being a Woman

Valentina posited, "it is not the same to be a woman in El Paso than in Juárez." In the U.S., Valentina feels more comfortable wearing different clothes, such as shorts and tops, for exercising and not feeling judged or observed. In Ciudad Juárez, she never contemplates it because she does not want to deal with the honking and "chiflidos" of men around her. In the U.S., Valentina also said that she does not feel scared to park on the street and walk by herself at night. In Ciudad Juárez, she never walks alone. Saddened by the thought of gender-based violence, Valentina mentioned, "we know what happens in Juárez. So it is scary." She explained being a "Muerta de Juárez" is a fear all women in Juárez have. Although, she clarified, "women still do their lives the best way possible, like ride the bus, work, or school." However, she

followed, “we know not to do that at night. If you are alone, you risk disappearing or something bad happening to you. It is very insecure to live in Juárez, especially if you are a woman.”

4.6.5. Her Abuse

Valentina is not a “Muerta de Juárez,” but like many other women in Ciudad Juárez, she was sexually abused by her father when she was a child. After almost fifteen years of silence, in February of 2020, she decided to speak to her family about it. Victims of sexual assault explained the main reason for reporting to the police included protecting the household or victim from further crimes by the offender (RAINN, 2022b). This was just one month before everyone was sent into lockdown due to a global pandemic. During talks with her psychologist, she realized how much of a burden she had been carrying. Additionally, her thesis works on gender issues during her master’s program, and then her literature review in the doctoral program exposed Valentina to sexual abuse, neglect, oppression of women, and the feminist movement. Valentina noted,

> Con terapia y poco a poco al leer sobre este tema, dije, no, tengo que hablar. Porque es una injusticia. Porque que horrible lo que me paso. Porque es un crimen. Porque no puedo dejar que mi mamá viva con un violador. No puedo dejar que mis hermanos piensen que tienen un buen padre. No puedo permitir que viva con otros niños.
> [With therapy and reading about this topic, I told myself, I need to speak up. Because it is an injustice. Because it was horrible what happened to me. Because it is a crime. Because I cannot allow my mom to live with a sexual predator. Because I cannot allow my siblings to think they have a good father. I cannot allow my father to hang around other kids.]

Valentina shared little by little about her abuse with her then-husband, friends, aunts, uncles, siblings, and of course, her mom. She told her mom last. This was the most challenging thing she had to do. To confess to her mom and expose her father for what he was and what he had done was how Valentina felt she could fix her insecurities and problems. Instead, it was a catalyst for severe depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

4.6.6. Putting a Pause in her Dreams

The telling of her abuse impacted her doctoral program as well. Valentina felt she could not concentrate, memorize things, or pay attention as a doctoral student. She felt disassociated. She explained, "I was very broken...My mental health was hurt." Adding to her mental distress, Valentina also got divorced after three years of marriage, got sick with COVID, and had to move to another apartment. She needed to pause her program and decided to take the summer off to take care of her mental health. Torres (2021) highlights the need for self-care among Latina doctoral students who have been victims of neoliberal practices, racism/sexism/ableism, or any other form of oppression. Fighting to meet the unrealistic expectations of academia, professional, and personal spheres took a toll on Valentina's mental and physical health. However, her preservation, survival instincts, and resilience allowed her to take care of herself. Torres (2021) states that "self-care is more than just exercise, sleep, good nutrition, emotional support, and balance. It is a political act." (p. 630). Taking some time off was necessary for Valentina's doctoral journey. The social encouragement and support she received during the summer allowed her to return to her studies in the fall.

4.6.7. Her Mom

The support of Valentina's mom was instrumental to her educational journey and her well-being. During Valentina's first semester in the doctoral program, she was often stressed and

sick to her stomach over not meeting the demands of the doctoral program, like heavy reading assignments and writing. Her mom became her biggest fan and supporter at home. She used to go on Sunday or Monday and cook for her for the whole week and help her clean. In addition, her mom helped her during finals week when her house was "patas pa'rriba," and all she had time to eat was street food. Ramos and Torres-Fernandez (2020) explain that family is a source of support system for Latina doctoral students by helping them with "tangible needs, such as finances and food" (p. 383). Food provides physical nutrition and nurtures the spirit of Latina doctoral students.

Right after Valentina disclosed her abuse to her mom, she stayed by her side and supported her in any way she could. Her doctoral journey became bearable for Valentina, who felt stronger than ever to continue her studies. However, by the Spring of 2022, her father and mom reconnected to talk about their other children. Her youngest son, Juan, was in high school, and the one in the middle, Alexis, had dropped out of college. In the process, her father convinced her mother that Valentina had enticed him to abuse her as a child. Therefore, at the beginning of the Spring semester, Valentina relapsed. Her psychiatrist prescribed strong medications for her, and Valentina spent several days in bed without leaving her room. She ceased any communication with her mom. She also left her research assistant position at the university and asked for a reduced course load as an international student. Fortunately, she still had support outside her home.

4.6.8. Support beyond the Classroom

Valentina began working with Dr. Tanaka after her first semester in the doctoral program. She considers Dr. Tanaka a significant support in her advancement in the doctoral program. Dr. Tanaka often compliments her work as a student, describing her as a responsible

and hard worker. Before the pandemic started, Valentina met with Dr. Tanaka weekly. In every meeting, Dr. Tanaka told Valentina what she was doing well and motivated her. Her support went beyond academic and professional matters when Dr. Tanaka supported her emotionally through her depression, sickness, and divorce during the pandemic. Valentina recollected Dr. Tanaka's words, "marriage is just a portion of our whole life. In other words, it is not everything." She reminded Valentina that she was also studying, working, and doing numerous things. Dr. Tanaka motivated Valentina to think about her future. Dr. Tanaka's words and encouragement have been invaluable to Valentina, who reminds her that she has the support she needs at school, even when the native language is different. They both use their additional language to communicate. When Dr. Tanaka was unable to continue employing Valentina due to lack of funding, she recommended Valentina for two other research positions. Working alongside some of her professors has given Valentina the validation that she was desperate to find and the conviction that she is doing something good for her.

Bañuelos and Flores (2021) explain that "professors played a role in ameliorating the challenges Latinx students faced due to intersecting systems of oppression" (p. 12). Dr. Tanaka has sought ways to help Valentina deal with her abuse, support her mental health, and allow her to see that there is still a bright future ahead of her. In like manner, Valentina is supported by her colleagues in her doctoral program, especially by one of her best friends.

4.6.9. The Friend

Valentina's friend, Helena, is also from Ciudad Juárez. They both applied to the doctorate program, helping each other. Language seemed to be the barrier that brought them closer, while her gender identity as a woman from Juárez created a friendship bond beyond school camaraderie. Valentina shared, "we used to depend on men." She said, "our only reference were

our partners at that moment." Valentina had never driven to the U.S. or been alone in the U.S. She was always accompanied by her ex-husband, who used to cross the bridge and accompany her. Thus, Helena and Valentina decided to drive together to the U.S. to go to classes. She remembered that they were fined twice in the beginning for their driving in the U.S. Helena and Valentina also supported each other during the application process and later with their studies. In addition, Valentina explained, the fact that they do not speak English well has led them to rely on each other to complete homework, readings, and different paperwork. Helena is also Valentina's confidant and a big supporter as she learns to live with her abuse and difficulties at home.

Espino's research study (2014) indicated that participants often told a story on "individual processes, individual hard work, and individual 'hustle' in navigating educational systems" (p. 568) when accessing graduate school. However, Helena and Valentina's friendship and doctoral journey reflected a story of collective power. Martinez (2018) explained that navigating academia can feel like a solo journey as first-generation doctoral students, but finding peers with whom they can talk about their academic, professional, and personal goals confirms their belonging to academia. The bonds developed between Helena, other doctoral students, and Valentina have served Valentina to navigate the application process to the doctoral program better, discuss research areas, and find encouragement to keep going despite the challenges.

4.6.10. The Solitude in the Pandemic

When the pandemic hit, Valentina stopped communicating with most of her colleagues. She explained that she continued to talk to Helena daily, not just about school but also about their personal lives. However, the pandemic created a disconnect with her other colleagues. Their conversations got reduced to schoolwork and then almost to nothing. She lamented that she could no longer "convivir" with other students at school. She reasoned it was because she was a

"ranchera." The few instances when she reached out to two of her classmates were when she learned from Facebook postings that they had been through some tough times. She took the time to call them and talk to them.

Her interactions with faculty also reduced drastically. She communicated only with her two work supervisors through Zoom to talk about work-related matters. Although often, they also spoke about how Valentina was doing. With the rest of the faculty members, Valentina only communicated through email. Even with her advisor, she explained, she only saw her once during the pandemic to talk about specific paperwork that she needed to complete to meet the expectations of her scholarship and enroll for the next semester. It was different pre-pandemic, Valentina explained. Before, they often talked in her office about Valentina's future goals or her research study. They met before or after class for fifteen minutes and had a random conversation. If Valentina was walking by her office and her advisor saw her, she invited her into her office for a quick chat.

The pandemic was brutal for everyone. Valentina lost all personal connections, and the few she had felt were merely bureaucratic and impersonal. Valentina felt alone and disconnected from her professors and colleagues as a doctoral student. Her shy personality only exacerbated the abysm she felt had been created between them. Valentina needed the individualized touch that she felt was available pre-pandemic. Consequently, Valentina shared that it has become significant for her to engage in random conversations with her advisors, have time to talk to her colleagues, and feel part of the program.

4.6.11. Her Journey Ahead

Valentina has returned as a part-time student to her doctoral program and got a research position at the public university in Ciudad Juárez. Both acts have felt like battles won and part of

her process to become better. She has not yet reported her abuser to the authorities, but talking about her abuse is part of her healing. She concluded, “for learning about feminism, for learning about these topics, and for my mental health and well-being, I decided to talk about it.” Valentina has a clear goal, to teach young adults at the college level. She also wants to study abroad and become a young researcher. Her discipline, conviction, insatiable thirst for bettering herself, and “ñoña” studious persona motivate her to keep going.

4.7. Conclusion

Each testimonio was different and developed in unique ways. Each testimonio had an essence of its own, a truth, a battle, a dream, and an opportunity. Their testimonios found an end in this study, but not in their personal lives. They continued to be written, to be constructed, and de-constructed, and hopefully, other people around them will continue to listen to the voices of these six Latina doctoral students.

Progressing through a doctoral degree is a process of becoming academic that is not linear, is not solitary, and is not passive (Ullman et al., 2020). The six testimonios by Latina doctoral students reflected that their socialization experiences were co-created and interpreted through their everyday occurrence and their intersectional identities. Their intersectional identities included multilingualism, Latina racial background, Mexican descent, gender, and being first-generation college students. Adding to their becoming academic were external factors such as their lives at the U.S.-México border, their past personal experiences, the people in their lives, including family, colleagues, faculty members, and other people who had a positive or negative impact in their lives. In sum, these six participants have shown they are holders and creators of values, attitudes, interests, skills, and knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002), which

helped them navigate the day-to-day occurrences of doctoral studies and which helped them re-create the culture around them to become scholars (Hopwood, 2010).

In this section, I intend to examine their testimonios individually and collectively to make final interpretations of their socialization experiences. First, I describe the culture perceived at the university. Second, I look at the coexistence of their multiple identities. Finally, I explain the socialization experiences in the doctoral program that were shared and meaningful across participants.

4.7.1. Culture at the University

Participants described the academic culture at the university mainly in favorable terms. For example, there is camaraderie among students, supportive faculty, and a perceived sense of belonging to the program. These aspects are further developed in the future paragraphs. But first, I address some harmful elements revealed during their testimonios, including the favor of Eurocentric practices and cultural deficit thinking approaches, lack of same-race and same-gender mentorship opportunities, and neoliberal constructions of education.

4.7.1.1. Eurocentric Practices and Cultural Deficit Views

Participants described a heightened sense of belonging to the institution when they could use their bilingualism and biculturalism to navigate the multiple demands of doctoral studies. For instance, Valentina pointed out that when students were allowed to use their Spanish to contribute to class discussions or make meaning of the material, they found richer learning experiences. Similarly, Sofia got a research study position in which she needed to interview participants using her bilingualism. However, Valentina questioned the Eurocentric pedagogical practices of one of her professors. He legitimized English-only instruction. This made Valentina

feel embarrassed to participate in class for fear of making an error. Camila also encountered some ideas in the classroom that she considered insulting to her or others.

Neither Valentina nor Camila voiced their discomfort with what was happening inside the school. They opted for silence. Camila and Valentina preferred silence to fight against oppressive practices or comments in their doctoral studies. The pervasive stereotype of the "angry Brown person" (Masta, 2021) silenced their voices in the face of disagreement with specific faculty members or colleagues. Unaware that their silence could make them complicit in their oppression by adopting an over-accessible attitude (Kupenda, 2012), Camila and Valentina used their silence as a form of persistence in academia (Hinojosa & Carney, 2016).

Valentina and Camila made it noticeably clear that it was just one professor or just a few students or that it was not reoccurring. However, by addressing their isolated instances of subjugation, I address the need that women and students of color have for the support of faculty members who serve as mentors in their journeys. Haynes, Stewart, and Allen (2016) remind us that when faculty do not challenge negative stereotypes carried by students in the classroom, they contribute to an oppressive culture. Another aspect that affected the socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students was a lack of representation of women and Latinas among faculty ranks and administration.

4.7.1.2. Lack of Latina Women Mentors

Ximena and Sofia experienced a lack of representation as Latina doctoral students in psychology. They recognized the importance of having same-race and or same-gender mentorship relationships in their doctoral studies. According to Cavazos (2016b), Latina/o mentors are sources of empowerment and can foster a sense of belonging in academia among Latina/o doctoral students. Latina/o mentors instill confidence and show the importance of

embracing their cultural and historical Latina background in their doctoral journeys. Additionally, they help present diverse views on their bilingualism and legitimize Latina/o experiences in academia. Ximena and Sofia noted that this served as a source of motivation as they wished to be part of a minority population as Latina women in psychology.

As they struggled to find positive mentorship relationships among women and or Latina faculty members, they found strong mentorship relationships with other faculty members who validated their research, mirrored other aspects of their positionality, helped them navigate the demands of doctoral studies, and offered personal advice. Mentors can also help Latinas to navigate neoliberal practices in academia that are damaging to underrepresented students.

4.7.1.3. Neoliberal Practices

Sofia and Valentina experienced the effects of neoliberal practices in academia. Sofia's fear of rejection from the doctoral program was implanted in her master's program. In addition, the weight of publishing led her to experience competition among her colleagues. While the stress of publishing was burdensome, Sofia felt she had the support of faculty members and advisors who were willing to help her.

Similarly, Valentina was mentally and physically drained by trying to meet every expectation from her doctoral program, including maintaining a full-time enrollment status to comply with her visa requirements and her scholarship. The Department of Homeland Security limits a medical reduced course load to 12 months per degree level (UTEP, 2022). Consequently, Valentina can only apply for a maximum of 3 semesters of reduced course load throughout the academic program. Valentina explained she needed to graduate within a specific period by receiving the scholarship. Otherwise, the scholarship that she had received would not cover the additional expenses. Additionally, if she left the program, she needed to return all the money or

go into debt collection. Therefore, she failed to attend to her mental health properly. Valentina felt she had been heard and validated when she asked for a reduced course load as an international student, and it was granted. A process that created an extra layer of stress and feeling under scrutiny, as her academic advisor, Graduate School, and an advisor of the Office of International Programs needed to review her request, which included a recent letter from her psychologist/psychiatrist regarding her mental health condition and recommending a release in work or school duties.

Regardless of the negative aspects that the participants talked about during their testimonios as Latina doctoral students, their overall experiences had been genuinely enriching and positive. The academic culture found at the university at the U.S.-México border described by the participants was filled with collegiality, respect, encouragement, and dismantling barriers. Their agency shaped the academic culture in their doctoral studies, which reflected their bilingualism and position as underrepresented students as Latinas in academia.

4.7.2. Coexistence of Multiple Identities

The coexistence of multiple identities that informed and shaped their socialization experiences in doctoral programs was salient to the findings. More specifically, the significance of language and being a first-generation Latina doctoral student shaped their socialization experiences.

4.7.2.1. Bilingualism a Double-edged Sword

For half of the participants, Spanish was their preferred language. Being bilingual was both a burden and an advantage. It also motivated them to contribute to the well-being of other bilinguals in their communities.

Negative experiences with their bilingualism in past educational settings prompted Ana and Camila to pursue a career and a research interest that sought to fight against deficit thinking ideologies that chastise speaking Spanish as an obstacle to learning among bilingual speakers. Reclaiming their identity as bilingual scholars was critical to Ximena and Sofia, especially as they saw Latina as underrepresented in science fields. Rebecca, Camila, and Valentina, transfronteriza students, perceived their natal language to be an advantage in their education and a significant barrier to their participation in classroom discussions and university activities.

Language was a vital component of how they reflected upon their identities. Their bilingualism was a double-edged sword. Their bilingualism could open doors for them in the future and allow them to create closer relationships with faculty, colleagues, and the community. It was also their bilingualism that motivated them to question Eurocentric practices. Their bilingualism also created a sense of responsibility to serve their bilingual communities. However, their bilingualism and other identities, including being first-generation students, made them experience impostorism and self-doubt.

4.7.2.2. Impostorism, Loneliness and Guilt

Participants experienced impostorism, loneliness, and guilt as first-generation Latina doctoral students. However, this positionality also encouraged them to want to open the doors to other members of their families to show resilience and commitment to want to give back to their communities.

A significant similarity that these six first-generation Latina doctoral students had was feeling distant from their families and the need to constantly validate their decision to pursue a degree to their parents. For example, Rebecca thought she did not have the support of her parents, nor did their disapproval. As a result, she felt independent in her journey. Similarly,

Sofia felt her family did not understand how serious her decision to pursue a doctoral degree was.

These first-generation Latina doctoral students also experienced guilt and felt responsible for educating others. Ximena, for instance, thought she needed to help their family understand they were being systemically oppressed due to their race and ethnicity. Likewise, Rebecca experienced guilt whenever she crossed the bridge, understanding that her opportunity was a rare one and a triumph of many battles endured by different women before her.

Additionally, participants believed that their past experiences did not align with their doctoral journeys leading them to feel impostorism. For example, Camila felt her life and education before coming to the U.S. and her bilingualism was inadequate compared to the rigor of her doctoral program. Ana believed doctoral journeys were available for only super-intelligent people.

Despite negative feelings experienced by these first-generation Latina doctoral students, they managed to navigate doctoral demands by using their sources of knowledge and inspiration at home and in the community. Bureaucratic processes and learning about doctoral degrees were often dealt with under the guidance of faculty members and administrators. Such as was the case for Ximena, Camila, and Ana, who relied on the direction of their professors and advisors to apply to a doctoral program, learn about future career paths with a doctorate, and receive emotional support and validation of their journey to and through the doctoral program.

Similarly, first-generation Latina doctoral students felt encouraged and motivated by family members to pursue an education. For instance, Ana's husband inspired her to study, and Camila's most enormous support to go back to school was her sister. Lastly, their commitment to giving back or better things for their families and community motivated them to stay grounded in

their decision to pursue a doctoral program. Ximena, Rebecca, Valentina, and Sofia wanted a career that allowed them to give back to their communities.

As first-generation Latina doctoral students, these six women experienced impostorism, loneliness, and guilt. However, they overcame such insecurities through the encouragement from their families, faculty, and administrators and the commitment to create social change. Their sources of motivation were an indication that they had embarked on the right journey, along with knowing that as Latinas they represented a minoritized group in academia.

4.7.2.3. Being a Latina

Given the racial and ethnic homogeneity of the U.S.-México region, the majority of participants confessed that they had not thought of themselves as racially or ethnically underrepresented. However, regardless of their awareness of their Latina status in the U.S., they understood the importance of their gender, racial and ethnic identity in social affairs. Gender was a salient component in the life of these six women that led them to experience impostorism and mental distress, follow societal norms and gendered expectations, fight stereotypes, deal with sexual abuse, and face a lack of representation in their field.

The six participants narrated through their testimonios instances of familism, machismo, marianismo, religion, and traditional gender roles (Knight et al., 2010) as they made their way into and through the doctoral program. Camila put a hold on her studies until her kids grew older. Valentina decided to enroll in the doctoral program before she had any kids to not interfere with her duties as a mother. Ana never considered an academic life as she was content to follow the path of wife and mother, which her own mother had instilled in her. Valentina and Ximena were victims of sexual abuse before entering their doctoral program. Finally, Rebecca grew up fearing that she would become a “Muerta de Juárez.” The objectification of their bodies in the

past led them to feel vulnerable and inadequate in their doctoral studies. Rebecca and Valentina's vulnerability increased when they needed to cross the bridge to return to their hometowns in México.

Although being a Latina had put them in a place of vulnerability and distanced them from the academic world, this position also empowered them to continue their studies. Their gender, racial and ethnic background, and other positionalities in higher education were mediated through powerful socialization experiences that they co-created for themselves and others in their doctoral studies.

4.7.3. Socialization Experiences

The six participants demonstrated they had an active role in creating meaningful socialization experiences in their doctoral programs. In the following paragraphs, I describe the most salient socialization experiences narrated by these participants. They are mentorship, family support, colleague support, and apprenticeship opportunities.

4.7.3.1. Mentorship

Mentorship relationships were experienced differently by all participants. Some essential aspects included maintaining open channels of communication and receiving constructive feedback. Second, participants sought to establish mentorship relationships with mentors who held certain commonalities concerning gender, race, ethnicity, or other aspects of their positions, such as being parents or possessing common research interests. Third, participants felt validated and respected by their mentors when they encouraged their research interests, opened the doors to opportunities outside the classroom, or invited them to be part of their research. Lastly, mentors also helped them with personal struggles. Below I highlight some of the most critical aspects of their mentorship experiences.

Ana found the inspiration to keep going in her doctoral program by constantly communicating with her mentor. Their mentorship evolved from random face-to-face conversations in the hallway to videoconferencing while in different countries. Her presence and availability were priceless for Ana, who stated they were sources of emotional and academic support.

Ximena considered having access to a Latina mentors was necessary. However, the scarcity of mentors who mirrored her gender and racial identity led her to find mentorship relationships with faculty members who did not share her ethnic/racial and gender identity. For example, Ximena had a white male mentor. Even though physical differences were apparent to Ximena, she connected with him differently, especially as they both were parents. The positionality of her mentors as parents allowed her to receive personal guidance.

Sofia's mentorship relationship was empowering in every sense. As a first-generation student, Sofia felt she lacked the support of her family to deal with the demands of a doctoral program. However, her mentor was able to help her develop navigational skills in the program. He validated her research interest, and even though he did not specialize in her study area, he became her mentor in her research study. He also helped her map out a roadmap to success as a doctoral student.

Camila's mentorship began before she enrolled in the doctoral program. The mentorship she received from her professors validated her place in academia. Their confidence in her, constant push, and support through the application process opened the doors for Camila in academia, a journey she never thought about—especially as she constantly had to fight for her place in education as a Mexican woman. In addition, their mentorship allowed Camila to explore alternative paths in her professional advancement.

Valentina's mentor helped her reframe situational and social identity-related struggles (Posselt, 2018). Mainly as she battled her sexual abuse and divorce, her mentor provided comfort, validation, a sense of purpose, academic guidance, and networking and professional opportunities. Mentorship also took the shape of constructive feedback from her professors. Their constructive criticism was beneficial for Valentina, who sought to become a better writer.

Overall, their mentorship relationships were a crucial aspect of their socialization experience in their doctoral programs. They all involved dialogue, a caring attitude, authenticity, and promoted transformative learning experiences for all parties involved. In like manner, mentors offered psychosocial support, validation, and networking opportunities precious to all participants. Lastly, having access to same-gendered or same-raced, or bilingual mentors or holding a demographic commonality was beneficial to Latina doctoral students. Latina doctoral students also relied heavily on the support of their families to socialize in their doctoral programs.

4.7.3.2. Logros Compartidos with Family

Family support was of great importance for participants. The words of encouragement from their loved ones allowed each participant to stay put on their path towards a doctoral degree, even while going through the COVID pandemic. As first-generation Latina doctoral students, they recognized their family members lacked information about the demands of a doctoral program, but that did not hold them back from supporting their journey.

Ana internalized the words of her father to keep going. Ximena received the support of her dad while dealing with mental health issues. Additionally, she wanted to be a role model for her children to one day go to college. Camila was a source of pride for all her family. She recognized her achievements as the achievements of everybody in the family. She saw their

support as a reason to continue in the program. Sofia's parents motivated her to study to have better job opportunities. Valentina's mom helped her by providing support at home. Although distant from her doctoral journey, Rebecca's parents had instilled in Rebecca a passion for reading.

These six Latina doctoral students could not separate academic demands from their family demands. Their families encouraged and supported them to remain in their doctoral programs. Their families were also sources of inspiration to not give up and do something to better their realities. Along with the support they found in their families, participants also received support from their colleagues in their doctoral programs.

4.7.3.3. Compañerismo

An essential aspect of the socialization experiences of these Latina women was the support and compañerismo experienced in the relationships they established with other students. Like mentorship relationships, friendship or compañerismo was stronger when they had a demographic commonality, such as gender, bilingual, ethnic, or racial backgrounds. As a result, colleagues were able to create a sense of belonging in academia, offered support, and shared resources and insight to navigate the demands of doctoral studies. The following paragraphs exemplify aspects that made friendships with other students a source of motivation in their doctoral studies.

Rebecca did not feel she had the support of her family, but in her doctoral journey, she found support among her colleagues, especially same-gendered colleagues. Rebecca considered that women could easily relate to and understand their fears and needs. Small acts of camaraderie were precious for her as she embarked on an academic journey in the U.S. Similarly, Sofia felt distanced and not understood by her family. Sofia found support from a colleague with seniority

in her program. He offered advice, answered her questions, and included her in his research projects. When Valentina ceased communication with her mom, she held onto the support of her friends as she navigated personal struggles that impacted her academic journey. Remarkably, Valentina believed that speaking Spanish with each other, gender, ethnic, and racial similarities created more robust bonds with other colleagues. Camila considered her journey in the doctoral program had become more bearable and much more enriching as a result of the familial relationships she developed with peers in her doctoral program. Ana felt respected by her colleagues as they validated her place in academia. All shared that communication was an essential aspect of their friendship.

Colleague support helped these Latina doctoral students find encouragement inside the classroom. Sharing time with colleagues was also a source of enacting well-being and attention to their mental health. They relied upon their colleagues to understand an article, navigate doctoral demands, or overcome personal struggles. They helped each other. Unfortunately, most participants felt distant from their colleagues during the pandemic and wished for opportunities to reconnect with them. While informal camaraderie with colleagues was an essential source of motivation, access to apprenticeship opportunities allowed them to experience academia by conducting research.

4.7.3.4. Apprenticeship

Participants commented on the benefit they perceived by participating in apprenticeship opportunities, mainly by conducting research. By doing research and being exposed to distinct aspects of being a scholar, participants developed valuable skills that aided them in their doctoral studies. Additionally, they created stronger network relationships. They were able to validate research interests. They felt empowered and supported by being called peers in the research

process. They overcame insecurities. Finally, they were able to feel they belong to academia by feeling proud of their backgrounds. I highlight the experiences of Ana, Ximena, and Sofia, who noted the influence of apprenticeship opportunities in their doctoral journey.

Ana's mentor welcomed Ana on a journey of research scholarship in the first semester, allowing her to experience authoring a research paper, conducting data collection and analysis, submitting a proposal to a conference, and presenting at a conference. Ana's apprenticeship opportunities allowed her to feel she had a wonderful and valuable doctoral experience.

The university also supported Ximena's and Sofia's professional activities by ensuring research assistantship opportunities at the lab that could help them financially while learning how to conduct research properly. Additionally, they encountered faculty mentors who validated their research interest in the program and were able to network with other doctoral students.

Sofia's research involvement in a study at the U.S.-México border was empowering in her journey as a bilingual doctoral student. The experience made her proud of her bilingualism and motivated her to relearn Spanish and reclaim the cultural background she had lost in assimilation.

Apprenticeship opportunities were significant in the life of these Latina doctoral students, not only for financial reasons but because they allowed them to see that the scholarship they had been part of had an impact on their lives and communities. In addition, these participants were able to see themselves doing the job of an academic, and it was a fruitful experience that empowered them and motivated them to keep going.

Overall, Latina doctoral students showed they were active agents (Barnes & Randall, 2012; Tierney, 1997) in their roles to re-create the culture around them to enjoy a positive doctoral journey. They demonstrated to be holders of valuable values, attitudes, interests, skills,

and knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002). They valued compañerismo, had big aspirations for their futures, and demonstrated social responsibility towards their communities. Their socialization experiences were fluid, responsive to their needs, and empowering. The most salient was establishing positive mentorship relationships with same-gender or same-race faculty members or with faculty members who mirrored different aspects of their lives, such as being parents or having similar research interests. Additionally, Latina doctoral students created familial bonds with colleagues and made their family members at home participants of their doctoral journey. Lastly, they benefitted from apprenticeship opportunities that allowed them to experience research work, integrate their bilingualism and biculturalism into their academic life, learn from other researchers, and validate their place in academia.

The following section aims to contribute to more equitable educational opportunities for Latina doctoral students by offering recommendations. I also explained the limitations of this study and provide suggestions for future research.

5. Chapter V: Interpretations, Recommendations, and Conclusion

In this study, I have situated socialization within the gender and race-based epistemologies of Chicana feminist epistemology and a LatCrit framework, establishing that socialization is a cultural activity that requires an interpretative process to create meaning (Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Delgado Bernal, 2002; García et al., 2020; Ramírez, 2017). In so doing, I contribute to the body of knowledge on the socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students by making explicit that socialization in academia should not be color-blind not gender-neutral (Felder et al., 2014; Gardner, 2008; Sallee, 2011). To do this, I collected and analyzed my data using testimonios as methodology situated within a Chicana feminist epistemology and a LatCrit framework. This critical and humanizing approach to the research process validated Latina doctoral students as holders and creators of knowledge who became co-authors of their testimonios. In this last section, I present takeaways from participants' testimonios, offer recommendations to improve the socialization experiences of Latina in doctorate programs and suggest a pathway to continue advancing the understanding of socialization experiences that are equitable for students with underrepresented backgrounds in academia.

5.1. Co-construction of Knowledge through Testimonios

By using testimonios as a methodology framed around LatCrit and Chicana feminist epistemology, I demonstrated the agency of Latina doctoral students in the re-creation of the culture found in academia. Additionally, I was able to show that Latina doctoral students engage in the transformation of self. As the participants in this study showed, their unique insights and the intersectional aspects of their identities, such as self-identifying as woman, Latina, first-generation college student, and multilingual, helped them develop interactions in their doctoral studies that re-created the culture around them at the university at the U.S.-México border. With

that said, it is also important to acknowledge other forms of identity that emerged and impacted their doctoral journey. Participants thought of themselves in terms of being too young or too old to be in a doctoral program, growing up in a low-socioeconomic background, having been raised by a single parent, experiencing mental health struggles such as being diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and or post-traumatic stress disorder, being a victim of sexual assault, and or being a transfronteriza and or international student. Thus, it is critical to recognize all knowledge, values, attitudes, perspectives, interests and lived experiences of underrepresented women of color, particularly Latinas, as worthy of exploration.

By using LatCrit and Chicana feminist frameworks, I observed subordination not only through the lenses of race but also through the various identities and other forms of position that are legally or socially relevant to the maintenance of the status quo in the U.S. society and the world (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Valdes, 2005). Nonetheless, Latinas, mainly of Mexican descent, were recognized as agents of knowledge who actively created an intellectual discourse that weaves in their experience, research interest, community influences, and social activism to fight against oppression (Delgado Bernal, 2002).

Each participant testimonio was co-authored with the participants through constant communication and a shared willingness to co-construct ourselves in the process. To this point, Ximena offered to be accessible after the interview by stating, “I’m still here if you think of anything else or if you want to ask me later on.” Likewise, Valentina mentioned, “si me acuerdo de algo te mando un mensaje. En lo que te pueda ayudar.” Their willingness to be the narrator of their testimonios was reflected in their interest to be active collaborators and participants in creating knowledge. By sharing their experiences, they were able to bring light to their instances of survival, struggle, and resistance (Yosso, 2006).

Moreover, by using raced-gendered epistemologies, I could "recover untold stories" (Delgado Berna, 1998, p. 556). Through the testimonios of each of the participants, it was clear that they were proud and appreciative to share their stories with others. For example, Ana concluded, "I thank you for this opportunity to express myself. I appreciate it." Camila mentioned, "gracias por el interés, tiempo y esfuerzo que le has dedicado a mi historia."

Similarly, each participant's testimonio told a story of self-transformation and healing (Cervantes-Soon, 2017). Rebecca validated the study by saying, "gracias, gracias, se me hace muy importante tu tema y que bueno que cumplí con los requisitos para ser una de tus participantes créeme que fue terapéutica la entrevista." Testimonios as a practice in therapy serves to validate the stories of the Latinx individuals and ensure that they have access to a holistic treatment that improves their mind, body, and spirit (Cervantes, 2020).

Lastly, their testimonios centered naming oppressive experiences to emancipate them from deficit-cultural models (Flores Carmona, 2014) and to truly understand their co-constructed socialization experiences. For example, Sofia related to my journey as a Latina doctoral student and mentioned, "I understand what you are going through. Thank you for writing my story."

In conclusion, by testifying about their needs, racial and gendered battles, and fears, they empowered themselves and engaged in self-transformation, or what Freire (1973) referred to as a political act. Furthermore, following the phenomenological study conducted by Ramos and Torres-Fernandez (2020), which also used testimonios as a methodology, while "each testimonio was unique to each testimonialista's experience, as a collective, they provide insight into ways academia can better support student of color" (p. 388). As a result, based on the lessons learned, I offer some suggestions for improving the socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students.

5.2. Recommendations and Implications in Higher Education

As stated at the beginning of this research study, from 2009 to 2018, the percentage of women who earned doctorates increased by 26.74% for Latinas (NCSES, 2019). As the number of Latinas in doctorate programs continues to rise, it is vital to establish pedagogical and societal practices that foster more equitable socialization experiences among all students. In the following paragraphs, I introduce some recommendations and implications for higher education based on the findings of this study.

5.2.1. Support Translanguaging Practices

It is necessary to foster awareness of the impact of language on the development of future scholars. I propose embracing education and academia as a space for self-exploration in which bilingual doctoral students are encouraged to embrace their bilingual identities (Caldas & Heiman, 2021) as they work on becoming scholars. Delgado Bernal (2002) states that "bilingualism, biculturalism, and commitment to communities, interrupts the transmission of "official knowledge" and even helps students navigate their way around educational obstacles" (p. 113-114). She suggests that students benefit from bicultural insights and often consciously attempt to reject assimilation and hold onto different aspects of their cultural identity while learning from the culture of others.

The aspirations of the six Latina doctoral students reflect a shared responsibility of helping their Latinx communities. Consequently, language liberation inside the classroom and out in the research field serves to reconcile deficit-thinking views against students' bilingualism and transform them into sources of advocacy. Allowing students to initiate discourse in their preferred language acknowledges that Latina doctoral students' bilingualism is a source of knowledge that can transform the oppressive culture around them.

Additionally, I suggest the development of classroom counterspaces. Classroom counterspaces should disrupt unjust practices that force students to choose which identity they put forward (Masta, 2021). Classroom counterspaces or safe spaces challenge Eurocentric theories and western-based practices. They create bridges that enhance the sense of belonging of women of color doctoral students in academia as they are seen and heard. This leads to the second recommendation to deconstruct colonial discourses and oppressive narratives that damage underrepresented students inside and outside the classroom.

5.2.2. Deconstruct Colonial Discourses and Oppressive Narratives

For too long, women of color have been pushed to the borders of academia. We need to validate their place as scholars, creators and holders of knowledge, and active agents in the re-creation of academic culture. I propose we work towards demystifying oppressive narratives inside the classroom by centering the voices of underrepresented students in the classroom and curriculum. In practice, this can take multiple forms, such as employing “third spaces” or counterspaces in the classroom, promoting single-population schools, and sharing counternarratives that disrupt deficit thinking views.

There needs to be an increase in the diversity of voices during classroom discussions and reflections. Scholarly work from queer, Chicano, young, black/brown, feminist, women, and other underrepresented groups should build the curriculum to teach new concepts. It needs to be participatory by encouraging underrepresented students to share personal experiences and speak up against oppressive practices. Finally, students need to have spaces for vulnerability and reflection. For Latina doctoral students to feel supported, there also need to be representation in the faculty and administrative ranks.

5.2.3. Increase Latina Women Faculty Mentors

As presented at the outset of this research study, despite positive trends among the number of women who earned doctorates of different races, women of color faculty continue to lag, holding fewer full-time, tenured positions (Walkington, 2017). Consequently, the Latina doctoral students in doctoral programs, particularly in the STEM fields, experience a lack of representation in the faculty ranks and struggle to establish mentorship relationships. Proving the need to revamp efforts to have more equitable hiring processes that continue to seek diversity and inclusivity amongst the professorate ranks. Same-gender, same-race, or same-ethnicity faculty could reframe situational and social identity-related struggles, validate their place in academia, and disrupt impostorism. Institutions should branch out to the community as well to identify different support groups, formal or informal, that purposefully seek to target women and students of color doctoral students' development as scholars. Additionally, mentorship relationships need to be developed at all stages of the doctoral program.

5.2.4. Develop Enriching Mentorship Opportunities

I also acknowledge the significance of mentorship relationships at all stages of the doctoral journey. As it was evident, socialization experiences did not follow a linear path. They were fluid, and feelings of impostorism and outsider were experienced by all participants throughout their doctoral programs. Latina doctoral students need to have access to sources of validation and encouragement throughout their doctoral degrees. Collaboration with similar-minded individuals could serve Latina doctoral students to navigate the demands of their studies. Moreover, mentorship relationships need to be builders of assets already found amongst underrepresented minorities. This could be achieved by constantly practicing constructive criticism or giving positive feedback. Latina doctoral students are validated for future research

by acknowledging contributions and work done. This also means working on bettering the mental health of Latina doctoral students.

5.2.5. Provide Validation for Mental Health

The feelings of impostorism, depression, isolation/loneliness, guilt, anxiety, and stress were shared among participants. These feelings, in some instances, were exacerbated during the pandemic. Part of the responsibility of higher education institutions is to attend to the needs of underrepresented students, in this case, Latina doctoral students' mental health. Workshops aimed at improving the mental health of doctoral students should be frequent and centered around cultural influences that affect women and students of color. Also, more work needs to be done to destigmatize accessing mental health services among Latina doctoral students. Additionally, these efforts should reach the community and family members. Also, the bureaucratic process for reducing course load for international students needs to be more straightforward. They need to be reflective of a culture that understands and recognizes the weight of mental distress on international doctoral students. What is more, it needs to indicate a culture that respects women's bodies and stories.

5.2.6. Respect for Women's Bodies

The respect for women's bodies and stories needs to be sacred. I consider the reporting requirement, the Senate Bill 212, as a violation to women's bodies and stories. I was forced to render their identities and stories to third parties out of fear of having a misdemeanor on my record or being terminated from my job. What is more, even after speaking with my participants, the reporting was a betrayal of their confianza. It was not my place to disclose the abuse of two of my participants to Title IX officials. One of my participants had been silent about her abuse for over fifteen years, and I told the university officials. The other one faced retaliation by

military officials and colleagues, and I failed her when I reported her abuse. I consider it necessary to address these policies at the macro level as they continue to label women, subject them to scrutiny, and render them voiceless. We ought to respect the decisions of victims of sexual assault to hold onto their stories and let them be the tellers of their vivid oppression. As academics, we need to be guardians of their papelitos guardados or previous experiences that have been silenced or untold (Latina Feminist Testimonios, 2001). We need to have access to policies that allow us to defend and protect the confidentiality of research participants as well as representing their stories if, when, and how they want them to be presented. Support services need to be widely distributed and available for all women and not targeted at those who have shared their stories. This act should also reach family and community members who are to be integrated into the doctoral journeys of Latina doctoral students.

5.2.7. Integrate and Collaborate with Family Members

Families played a significant role in the decision to pursue a doctoral program and in their persistence in the program of these six Latina doctoral students. Traditional gender roles that continue to prevail in the lives of many Latinas need to be addressed by dismantling patriarchal societal systems and acknowledging that they continue to be the reality for many women. Therefore, I recommend more flexible class schedules and hybrid class formats to mirror the realities of Latina doctoral students. Additionally, opportunities for involving family members ought to be created to offer the chance to be first row witnesses of the doctoral journeys of Latina doctoral students. This can be achieved by purposefully targeting family members to be the audience of orientation sessions, workshops, conferences, and classes in which doctoral students participate. Lastly, acknowledging their role with physical denotations

of recognition during special ceremonies to commit to logros compartidos. In like manner, it is crucial to create safe spaces where friendship can blossom.

5.2.8. Create Spaces for Friendship and Compañerismo

Another critical aspect of the socialization of Latina doctoral students was the support they found in the establishment of friendly relationships with colleagues. I recommend actively encouraging participation in formal and informal support groups, such as student organizations that aim to support the socialization experiences of women and students of color in academia. I propose developing a culture of camaraderie beyond the walls of the classroom and institution, with informal gatherings to relax and distract from the demands of doctoral studies. In class, I suggest helping students establish strong bonds through discussions and actively engage all students in re-creating and co-constructing knowledge. Lastly, I commend formal interactions where doctoral students can develop friendships while engaging in meaningful apprenticeships.

5.2.9. Create Critical Horizontal Apprenticeship Opportunities

This study also highlighted how a lack of understanding of what is involved in doctoral studies is not uncommon, especially among first-generation doctoral students. I recommend purposefully integrating Latina doctoral students in apprenticeship opportunities to learn the job by doing it. By engaging doctoral students in research opportunities, publications, conferences, and colloquiums, work can be done towards eliminating feelings of outsiders and impostorism for lacking previous lab jobs or publication experience. It also helps build confidence in the students, who benefit from learning in the act of doing. It helps them to see themselves doing the job. It is an opportunity to reflect and learn about possible career paths and opportunities ahead of them. I propose a critical horizontal model of apprenticeship (Caldas & Heiman, 2021), which empowers doctoral students from underrepresented backgrounds as they are sought out as co-

learners and co-creators of critical knowledge by embracing their linguistic repertoires and expertise, helping them to challenge hierarchical structures of knowledge creation. Similarly, I advocate for sponsoring research produced by Latina doctoral students.

5.2.10. Value Research Produced by Latina Women

As stated earlier, Eurocentric practices tend to erase and or delegitimize the history and work of people of color, and the doctoral research of women of color doctoral students is often undervalued and disparaged (Buchanan, 2020). Participants agreed that it was essential to conduct research based on personal and community struggles. It was also a significant motivator to apply for doctoral studies. Different participants also expressed that they could reconnect with their bilingualism and biculturalism by integrating themselves into research opportunities relevant to their interests and communities. Consequently, I recommend continuously validating the research conducted by women and students of color. This can be achieved by including the work of underrepresented researchers as part of the curriculum, prompting investigation centered around issues that are relevant to women and students of color, hiring faculty members from underrepresented groups, offering financial support to research community matters, or identifying publishers that seek to diversify research work by promoting principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Validating the research of minoritized groups requires the doors to doctoral studies to be opened for everyone. Hence, application requirements and processes need to take affirmative action principles in setting goals and timetables to remedy racial discrimination in academia (Yosso et al., 2004).

5.2.11. Revise Application Processes and Requirements

Participants in this study revealed fear and frustration with the application process, especially with the GRE test. Standardized testing broadens achievement gaps and reduces

access to higher education among students from underrepresented racial backgrounds (Stewart & Haynes, 2015; Yosso, 2006). I recommend revising application processes and requirements to indicate academia welcomes students from diverse backgrounds. I propose using different sources contrary to color-blind and meritocratic practices to evaluate students' commitment to doctoral studies in the selection process. For example, students applying to postgraduate programs can submit portfolios to creatively show their values, attitudes, interests, skills, and knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002). It is essential to consider that first-generation students often lack research or lab work and do not always have access to faculty members who could serve as references. This should not be counted against them. Lastly, in the research context of this particular study, as a Hispanic-serving institution, I propose that the institution make admission requirements available in English and Spanish and encourage applicants to use whichever language they prefer to fulfill requirements set by the admission administrators.

While this is not an exhaustive list of recommendations, it paves the road for better socialization experiences for underrepresented students who have long been disparaged from the academic culture and forced to assimilate to White male values. Furthermore, my study reflected the lived experiences of six Latina doctoral students in the particularities of the research context of a Hispanic-serving institution located at the U.S.-México border. The designation of the university as an HSI was valuable as it adds to the need to understand better how institutional type affects the socialization experiences of Latinas and contrasts with the vast majority of research available on socialization experiences in PWIs and HBCUs. However, the HSI designation of the university was not a central part of the study. Consequently, I recommend future research with a stronger emphasis on how this type of university can help support Latina doctoral students' socialization experiences in higher education.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

There were two significant limitations to this research study. First, a limited number of participants participated in the research study. However, I concur with Delgado Bernal et al., who state that "in listening to the story of one, we learn about the conditions of many" (2017, p. 6). It is important to note that generalizability was not the goal of the methodology used in this study. Masta (2021) reminds us that "there is no uniform approach to doctoral education, no universal set of standards instructors employ" (p. 366). Socialization experiences at the doctoral level unravel through random encounters inside and outside the classroom. Administrators and faculty members need to apply these findings and recommendations to their contexts. It is important to remember that culture is re-created by its members. "This is how the landscape shifts – actionable change on an individual level" (Masta, 2021, p. 366). The co-authoring of testimonios added to the confirmability or trustworthiness of this study and suggested ways in which we can fight hegemonic practices in academia.

The second limitation to this study was that I only conducted two scheduled conversations—mainly. I did this because I was sensitive to the competing demands that Latinas much juggle as doctoral students who are also family members, active community members, and oftentimes, full-time professionals. Therefore, I chose to limit my interactions with Latina doctoral students to one ninety-minute interview and one thirty-minute interview in which I sought to build confianza and compassion (Fitts & McClure, 2015; Flores Carmona, 2014, p. 116) by foremost listening attentively and asking questions for clarification (Delgado Bernal et al., 2017). Additionally, half of the participants also participated in a group pláticas. Lastly, I conducted countless rounds of member-check with each of them through cell phone or email, which provided additional opportunities to learn more about their socialization experiences.

I suggest future research seek to increase the knowledge of Latinas' socialization experiences in their doctoral studies. Additionally, I posit that using testimonios framed around critical raced-gendered epistemologies is a valid source of knowledge and should be continued to be used. Further, I recommend expanding the number of conversations in the form of testimonio interviews and pláticas to build confianza and allow participants to feel more comfortable telling their stories of lived oppression and reflect upon their stories.

5.4. Reinventing Doctoral Experiences

Understanding the doctoral journey of these six Latina doctoral students could not be possible without acknowledging their past lived experiences and their future aspirations. Their lives were not compartmentalized into past, present, and future. Instead, their past, present, and future were weaved as trenzas (González, 1999). The fears, struggles, commotions, successes, and dreams that each participant held from their past had contributed to how they painted their doctoral journey. Their past experiences, as difficult as they were, had become fuel for their aspirations. Their dreams of a better tomorrow had become the drivers of their battle for social change. Finally, their daily occurrences as doctoral students had become anchors to remain in the doctoral program. They knew their place in the doctoral program had created a before and an after for the people around them. The lives around them would never be the same. They had reinvented graduate school. It was no longer a wild dream but a palpable reality. A reality lived by Latina doctoral students at the U.S.-México border.

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Appendix A: Demographics Survey

DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY- ENGLISH

1. What gender do you identify as?
    a) Male
    b) Woman
    c) Trans-gender
    d) Non-binary
    e) Prefer not to answer
    f) Other____
2. Please specify your ethnicity or what is your ethnicity?
3. Please specify your race or what is your race?
4. Where do you live?
5. What languages do you know?
6. What is the highest degree or level of education your parent(s) has/have completed?

ENCUESTA DEMOGRÁFICA - ESPAÑOL

1. ¿Con qué género te identificas?
    a) Hombre
    b) Mujer
    c) Transgénero
    d) No binario
    e) Prefiero no responder
    f) Otro____
2. Por favor, especifique su origen étnico o cuál es su origen étnico.
3. Por favor, especifique su raza.
4. ¿Dónde vives?
5. ¿Qué idiomas conoces?
6. ¿Cuál es el grado o nivel de educación más alto que han completado sus padres?

Appendix B: Testimonio Guiding Questions

TESTIMONIO GUIDING QUESTIONS- ENGLISH

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself, and how you self-identify in terms of gender and racial or ethnic background
2. Tell me about your doctoral journey. What is it like to be a Latina doctoral student? You may draw a timeline of your doctoral journey and explain what were the most important experiences at each stage, your obstacles and motivations, your regrets, and the lessons learned.
3. How did you picture the doctoral program would be before becoming a student? How was it different or the same from your expectations?
4. Who, if anyone, was or were of vital support to your advancement in the doctoral program? How was/were s/he/they influential?
5. Tell me about your interactions with other doctoral students.
6. Tell me about your interactions with the faculty.
7. How would you describe the institutional and departmental culture? How is this affecting your development as a doctoral student? How has attending a Hispanic-serving institution affect your development as a scholar?
8. Have you ever considered not completing or putting a pause on your doctoral program? Why? Or why not?
9. Is there anything else, you think will be important to my understanding of your socialization experiences in the doctoral program.

PREGUNTAS PARA ENTREVISTA DE TESTIMONIO – ESPAÑOL

1. Cuéntame un poco sobre ti y cómo te identificas en términos de género y origen racial o étnico.
2. Háblame de tu trayectoria doctoral. ¿Cómo es ser una estudiante de doctorado Latina? Puede dibujar una línea de tiempo de su viaje de doctorado y explicar cuáles fueron las experiencias más importantes en cada etapa, sus obstáculos y motivaciones, sus arrepentimientos y las lecciones aprendidas.
3. ¿Cómo imaginaba el programa de doctorado antes de convertirse en estudiante? ¿En qué se diferenciaba o se parecía a sus expectativas?
4. ¿Quién, si alguien, fue o fue un apoyo vital para su avance en el programa de doctorado? ¿Qué influencia tuvo?
5. Háblame de sus interacciones con otros estudiantes de doctorado.
6. Háblame de sus interacciones con la facultad.
7. ¿Cómo describiría la cultura institucional y departamental? ¿Cómo está afectando esto a su desarrollo como estudiante de doctorado? ¿Cómo ha afectado su desarrollo como académico el asistir a una institución que sirve a los hispanos?
8. ¿Ha pensado alguna vez en no completar o poner en pausa su programa de doctorado? ¿Por qué? ¿O por qué no?
9. ¿Hay algo más que crea que será importante para mi comprensión de sus experiencias de socialización en el programa de doctorado?

Appendix C. Group Pláticas Protocol

GROUP PLÁTICAS PROTOCOL- ENGLISH

1. Please tell us a little bit about yourself, and how you self-identify in terms of gender and racial or ethnic background
2. (Re)tell your socialization story as a doctoral student woman of color.
3. Describe what you consider are the most important aspects of your socialization experience.
4. How would you describe the institutional and departmental culture of the institution?
5. Describe what connections you make between the academic culture and your socialization experience.

PROTOCOLO DE PLÁTICAS EN GRUPO–ESPAÑOL

1. Cuéntenos un poco sobre usted y cómo se identifica en términos de género y origen racial o étnico.
2. (Re)cuenta tu historia de socialización como una estudiante de doctorado mujer de color.
3. Describe lo que consideras que son los aspectos más importantes de tu experiencia de socialización.
4. ¿Cómo describiría la cultura institucional y departamental de la institución?
5. Describe qué conexiones haces entre la cultura académica y tu experiencia de socialización.

Vita

Cynthia Carolina Terán López received a B.B.A. in Economics and Secondary Education and an M.B.A. with a concentration in Health Systems from The University of Texas at El Paso. Currently, she is a doctoral candidate in the Sociocultural Foundations strand in the Teaching, Learning, and Culture program. She is driven by issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion which guided her research and professional journey. She is a lecturer in the Entering Student Experience at UTEP. Additionally, she serves on the executive board of two doctoral organizations, Doctoral Women Organization and United Teacher Education Doctoral Students. She also conducts community service seeking to empower marginalized students and parents through education. Prior, she worked for the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Vice President for Student Affairs, and a local financial institution serving the Borderplex region of El Paso, Las Cruces, and Northern México.

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