IDENTITIES OF MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

A Dissertation in
Counselor Education

by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

December 2011
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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was on Mexican American women in Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)-accredited Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) doctoral programs. The purpose of my research was to provide insight about the cultural characteristics of both CES doctoral programs and Mexican American women by using qualitative methods to explore the identities of Mexican American women CES doctoral students. Anzaldua’s Borderlands theory and narrative inquiry influenced my data analysis.

Several findings emerged from the current study. The first three categories revolved around academia and were divided between two groups of participants. The first group discussed positive experiences within their CES doctoral programs and the second group reported more challenging experiences in their doctoral programs. These three categories included: strategies to enhance professional development, developing a professional identity, and strategies to persist. The final category, navigating borderlands, demonstrated the cultural spheres participants navigated. The sub-categories included: integrating family and academia, borders between family and academia, integrating ethnic and academic identities, and borders between ethnic and academic identities.

Findings demonstrate the multiple identities that Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs navigate as they strive to persist and succeed in their doctoral programs. Additionally, due to the division among participants, further research is needed about the factors that foster positive and negative experiences for Mexican American women CES doctoral students as well as exploration into how these women develop professional identities while in their CES doctoral programs.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not be at this point in education without the loving, unconditional support of my family. First, I thank my husband, Sam, who stayed by my side every step of the way and helped me feel less alone throughout the dissertation process. Sam also spent countless hours listening to me talk about classes and research, but he never let me get too caught up in the pressures associated with writing a dissertation. Of course, without my parents, Becky and George, I would have never found the strength to pursue graduate education. Regardless of how many times I fell, they always reminded me to get back up. Thanks, also, to my brother Matthias. I will never forget his persistence in his own educational journey and his unwavering support of me. However, this is just a glimpse into the family who supported me throughout this journey. My grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins all played significant roles in helping me discover myself in academia, without losing who I have always been.

Without my professors, I could not have navigated the unexpected obstacles that emerged throughout my doctoral program. My advisor and chair, Dr. Jolynn Carney, helped me grow as a student, but more importantly as a human being. She believed in my potential to earn a doctorate before I had the courage to believe in myself. To complete the final step of a long journey, my dissertation committee was invaluable. Dr. Peggy Lorah encouraged me to see the world from a broader perspective. Dr. Liz Mellin provided a balance of challenging, yet uplifting support that meant the world to me. Dr. Miller-Day pushed me as a qualitative researcher so that I could conduct a valuable and meaningful study. Moreover, important staff, such as Chris Andrus, Pam Anderson, and Allison Subasic, provided the support that often goes unnoticed behind the scenes of graduate education.

Finally, I must also thank my friends and cohort members, Lindsey Nichols and Elif Balin, who always found the time to discuss my research, my writing, and all the things that come in between. I also greatly appreciate my puppy that I lovingly call Diego the dissertation dog, who slept next to me as I typed away.

Before beginning my doctoral program, a wise Latina professor once told me, pursue the Ph.D! I kept these words close to my heart to keep myself motivated during the tough times. Now, as I coordinate a McNair Scholars program, a program dedicated to help underrepresented students earn doctoral degrees, I work with many Latina/o students who are pursuing the Ph.D. Therefore, I dedicate my dissertation to this group of students in hopes that the stories of my participants, in addition to my own pursuit of the Ph.D., will encourage them to continue reaching for their dreams.

Thanks to all of these individuals who were my pillars along the way.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Mexican Americans are the largest sub-group among all Latino sub-groups, (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004; Contreras & Gándara, 2006; Malott, 2009; Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, Torres, & Talbot, 2000) and when compared to other Latino sub-groups they also have the lowest educational attainment at all levels of education (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004; Rodriguez et al., 2000). The focus of this study was on Mexican American students at the level of education they are least represented: the doctoral level (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2006).

There are differences, however, of graduate rates between Latino men and women doctoral students. Looking at data from the national Survey of Earned Doctorates in U.S. universities, from 1990-2000, Latina women generally earned more doctoral degrees than Latino men (Watford, Rivas, Burciaga, & Solorzano, 2006). These statistics suggest that compared to Latino men, Latina women are doing better in doctoral education, but when compared to all women doctoral recipients within the five major racial/ethnic groups in the U.S., Latina doctorates were the most under-represented. Specifically, between 1990-2000 women of all ethnicities constituted 45.6% of all doctoral recipients while Latina women earned approximately 4.1% of those doctoral degrees. Furthermore, although Mexican American women are the largest sub-group among all the Latina sub-groups, they are also the group that experienced the largest disparity in doctorate production (Watford et al., 2006). While all Latina doctoral students may face similar experiences when earning their doctoral degrees, exploring experiences particular to Mexican American women is essential to better understand this discrepancy. Ultimately, these astonishing demographics incite the questions, who are Mexican American women
doctoral students and what are they experiencing as they persevere through an academic journey few other Mexican American women have made?

Researchers have studied the experiences of Latinas/os, including Mexican American women, in graduate school. Earlier studies indicate the unique factors, such as family and culture of origin, that influence the academic experiences of Latina/o students (Achor & Morales, 1991; Gándara, 1982; Macias Wycoff, 1996; Ramirez Lango, 1995; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). Yet, these studies seem to focus on a single aspect of the graduate education experience: academic development (e.g., family influences on academic decisions, factors contributing to academic success). While academic development is integral to understanding the experiences of Latina/o graduate students, it is just one side of the picture.

In more recent studies, researchers are fostering a more multifaceted understanding of Latina/o graduate students by focusing on how these same variables (e.g., family, ethnic culture, etc.) influence the overall experiences of Latina/o graduate students. By expanding their studies beyond an academic focus, researchers expose a complex experience in which Latina/o students question their identity while navigating between academia and their cultures of origin (K. González et al., 2001; K. González, Marin, Figueroa, Moreno, & Navia, 2002; Torres, 2006). In fact, the theme of identity development has emerged in several qualitative studies of Latina/o doctoral students. Findings suggest that this cultural navigation influences both their academic and personal identities (Bañuelos, 2006; J. González, 2006; K. González et al., 2001; K. González, et al., 2002; Murakami-Ramalho, Piert, & Militello, 2008).
As interesting as these findings are, few researchers have pursued identity as the main purpose of their studies (Vera & de los Santos, 2005; Torres, 2006; Watford et al., 2006). Yet, because Latinas/os are ethnic minorities in the U.S. and must balance expectations from both their culture of origin and U.S. mainstream culture (Watford et al., 2006), their identities are an important research topic. Exploring how they re-negotiate this cultural balance upon entering a doctoral program with a whole new set of expectations can provide rich insight into their overall identities (Pizarro & Vera, 2001; Torres, 2006).

**Statement of the Problem**

Statistics indicate that among all of the Latina sub-groups, Mexican American women are experiencing the greatest under representation in doctorate production. To uncover the details underlying this statistical finding, studies are needed that capture the in-depth experiences of this particular group (Watford et al., 2006). Therefore, for my study, I narrowed my focus by studying Mexican American women in doctoral programs. Although identity has been a secondary outcome to the aforementioned studies (J. González, 2006; K. González et al., 2001; K. González et al., 2002; Murakami-Ramalho, Piert, & Militello, 2008), my goal was to address this gap in the research by making the identities of Mexican American women doctoral students the primary topic of my study.

Quantitative studies about the identities of Latinas/os in higher education often use specific identity theories, such as social identity theory to shape their research designs. However, general identity theories often neglect the institutional and cultural contexts that influence Latinas/os’ self-concepts (Delgado Bernal, 1998). An integral aspect of my study was to investigate identity within the cultural realms of academia and
participants' cultures of origins. To meet this goal, I conducted a qualitative study using Anzaldúa's (1999) borderlands theory to focus on participants’ institutional contexts (i.e., academia) and their cultural contexts (i.e., culture of origin) to gain a more comprehensive picture of their identities.

The institutional context for Mexican American women doctoral students was their higher education institution and their cultural contexts included ethnicity and gender identities; both vital aspects to consider when exploring identity. Research suggests that Mexican American women graduate students feel like they are living in two different cultures: their culture of origin and a new academic culture (González et al., 2001; Torres, 2006). Therefore, although the ethnic cultural contexts of Mexican American women (i.e., culture of origin) and the higher education institutional contexts (i.e., academic culture) may seem like two separate structures, they are linked by the women living between these two cultural realms. González et al. (2001) refer to this dual cultural navigation as a "border crossing" phenomenon (p. 578). Vera and de los Santos (2005) also recognize this concept and suggest exploring how Mexican American women “cross boundaries” (p. 107) between their culture of origin and the dominant culture in academia may foster deeper understanding about Mexican American women's identities.

To acknowledge the "border crossing phenomenon" I used a unique research design in which Anzaldúa's (1999) borderlands theory shaped the research focus and the qualitative method employed. The focus of my study included academic culture, Mexican American women's culture of origin, and the space in between (e.g., the borderlands). I also used narrative methodology to enable participants to tell their stories about who they were without me, the researcher, placing boundaries on how they defined their identities.
Anzaldúa (1999) viewed this flexibility as paramount—she stated, "Rigidity means death" (p. 101). I too strayed from an inflexible definition of the identity of the women in my study and preferred to leave space for a whole perspective through the use of narrative methods.

However, due to the lack of research about Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral students (Hughes & Kleist, 2005) and the history of underrepresentation of ethnic minorities as students and faculty in counselor education (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2003), I further narrowed my sample and focused on Mexican American women in Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)-accredited counselor education and supervision (CES) doctoral programs. Studying the identities of Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs filled a gap in research and provided insight about the under representation of ethnic minorities in the counselor education profession.

My research design and selection of borderlands theory also filled a gap in research specific to counselor education. Scholars researching identities of Latina women in higher education use Chicana feminist and social justice frameworks to shape their studies (Delgado Bernal 2006), but these types of theoretical approaches are rarely used within the counseling literature. I filled this gap in the research by using a theory created by a Chicana feminist (i.e., borderlands theory) that enabled me to capture the distinctive experiences of Mexican American women in CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs.

Ultimately, my study presented a specific focus—identity—with a narrow sample: Mexican American women in CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs. I also used a
unique theoretical approach, which in turn cultivated a distinct set of variables that was explored and storied through narratives of Mexican American women doctoral students.

**Research Questions**

Three primary research questions were addressed in this study. In this section I explain how each question addressed distinct aspects of the experiences and cultural contexts of Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs. In the research questions certain terms are used such as identity, culture of origin, and academic culture of CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs. I briefly discuss these terms, but will elaborate on the meaning of these terms in the *Definition of Terms* section of this chapter.

**Research Question 1:** How do CACREP-accredited Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral programs impact the identities of Mexican American women students?

To address this research question, I developed interview questions that elicited narratives about characteristics of, and experiences related to, CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs that did, or did not, influence the identities of Mexican American women doctoral students. I explored if, and how this potential identity change was facilitated and I explored the professional, emotional, personal, and cultural consequences of this change.

This first research question was influenced by previous qualitative studies in which identity emerged as a theme, but was not the focus of research (Bañuelos, 2006; J. González, 2006; K. González et al., 2001; K. González et al., 2002; Murakami-Ramalho, Piert, & Militello, 2008). Particularly, in Gonzalez’ et al. (2001) study, the theme "enduring identity changes" (p. 577) emerged as an emotional topic for participants.
Thus, Gonzalez et al. encouraged future research exploring the specific facets of Latina/o students' identities that may change during doctoral education, the particular characteristics of a doctoral program that may contribute to this change, and the consequences of this change in doctoral education.

**Research Question 2:** How do Mexican American women doctoral students navigate their cultures of origin and the academic cultures of their CACREP-accredited Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral programs?

A primary focus of this research question was to obtain understanding about the cultural experiences of Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs. I also hoped to increase understanding about the potential interactions between participants' cultures of origin and the academic cultures of their CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs.

Previous research suggests that many Latina women in higher education report experiencing dual cultural navigation between their cultures of origin and their academic cultures, or what González et al. (2001) refer to as a "border crossing" phenomenon (p. 578). I did not assume that participants in my study would relate to "border crossing", but my hope was that findings would increase understanding about this phenomenon and about the overall cultural experiences of Mexican American women CES doctoral students.

**Follow-up question to Research Question 2:** How does this cultural navigation impact how students feel and act within their cultures of origin and within their academic CACREP-accredited CES doctoral cultural realms?
With this question I aimed to explore emotions that students experienced when in their cultures of origin (e.g., while visiting their home communities) and emotions they experienced when in their academic CES cultures (e.g., during class, while in advising sessions). I also explored actions they used to address these feelings. The findings from this question enable CES program developers to better understand and support Mexican American women CES doctoral students. Specifically, findings could help CES program developers increase recruitment and retention of Mexican American women as CES doctoral students and as counselor educators.

Additionally, participants in González et al. (2001) study described feeling like an "outsider within" their doctoral programs. This phenomenon emerged in my study. Therefore, I explored how feeling like an "outsider within" their programs, or even while in their cultures of origin, developed and how participants resolved or coped with this issue.

Significance of the Study

Ethnic minorities are underrepresented as students and faculty in counselor education (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2003), yet there is a lack of research about CES doctoral students (Hughes & Kleist, 2005). In filling this gap, I aimed to provide insight about the cultural characteristics of both CES doctoral programs and Mexican American women. My goal was that this information may facilitate development of strategies that can increase the number of Mexican American women as CES doctoral students and as counselor educators.

Another important goal of my research was to contribute to the academic transformation many Latina/o scholars are promoting (Delgado Bernal, 1998, 2006;
González et al., 2002; Rendón, 1992). For example, Rendón (1992) recognizes that there are typical ways of increasing access to higher education for Latinas/os (e.g., more financial aid packages, more Latina/o role-models), while important, these are not the only concepts to be acknowledged. Rather, she argues that what must be changed are the academic beliefs regarding intellectual development. Specifically, she asks, are the traditional ways in which higher education fosters academic development working for Mexican American women doctoral students and other students of color? My research is beneficial to the counseling education field, because my primary goal was to acknowledge diverse ways of knowing and to promote the academic, professional, and overall identities of Mexican American women doctoral students in CES programs.

**Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of the study included sample representation, researcher bias, and validity issues. My sample was recruited from the mid-west and the southern U.S., which limited diversity regarding geographic location. Thus, it is important to note that the goal of my research was to not be generalizable, but rather transferable (i.e., the degree to which the findings in the research are transferable to other settings) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this case, my findings are only transferable to other Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs in the same geographic locations of my participants.

Additionally, as a Mexican American woman in a CES doctoral program, there was significant room for researcher bias. While the commonalities I shared with participants may have increased the quality of the researcher participant relationships, it may have also skewed my views during the data collection and analysis processes (Patton, 2002). To address this bias, I used various methods to enhance the
trustworthiness and quality of my study, such as journaling to bracket my emotional reactions, member checking, and peer debriefing (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). In chapter three, I will discuss these methods in further detail.

Finally, the dominant quantitative paradigm might dictate that narrative research has validity limitations, but within a qualitative framework validity is addressed from a different perspective. Validity refers to the feasibility of a knowledge claim. From a scientific perspective, the validity of a knowledge claim must be based on the evidence and arguments presented in support of the claim. In quantitative and qualitative research, there are differences in the type of evidence and arguments presented when making a knowledge claim. In quantitative research, instruments are often used to measure specific constructs, and due to the randomized selection of participants and other statistical methods, researchers use their study results to make generalizations to populations comparable to their study participants (Polkinghorne, 2007). Quantitative studies, often founded on a positivist philosophy, seek to explain, predict, and control phenomena. Contrarily, qualitative researchers strive to understand the meaning of social phenomena by exploring lived experiences from the perspective of those who live it daily (Ponterotto, 2005). Qualitative research, often founded on constructivist or interpretivist philosophies, focuses on attaining individuals' unique perspectives through researcher participant interaction and in-depth reflection about the phenomena being explored (Ponterotto, 2005).

The evidence and arguments I present in my study may be viewed as lacking in validity from a quantitative perspective, but are not perceived this way from a qualitative framework. Firstly, I must clarify that I am using narratives to gain insight about how
participants attribute meaning to their lived experiences. I am not attempting to determine the accuracy of the events depicted in their narratives (Polkinghorne, 2007). The knowledge claims that I make in my study are based on evidence and arguments thoroughly presented to readers through rich description, memoing, detailed interview transcriptions and other methods that enhance the trustworthiness, or quality, of my study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Readers can follow the evidence and arguments made to verify the credibility of my findings and/or to make their own interpretations.

Thus, I reiterate, while narrative research may be viewed as having validity issues from a quantitative perspective, as a qualitative researcher, using a constructivist framework, and employing narrative methods, I do not view validity from the same perspective. Rather, I view the transparency in my qualitative study as conducive to increasing the credibility of the claims I made about the evidence I gathered.

**Definition of Terms**

**Identity.** Anzaldúa viewed identity as enacted, or performed. Her Borderlands framework provides a space for individuals to negotiate how they enact these multiple identities (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). I also perceive identity as enacted and I believe there are many identities individuals may enact, based on gender, occupation, ability status, etc. I also believe that due to the multilayered nature of identities, individuals must negotiate with themselves, with others, and with their environments about how and why they enact these identities.

Additionally, as a narrative researcher, I view narratives, or stories, as tools we employ to create a sense of who we are. Through these stories we enact our identities for an audience (e.g., stories we tell at parties, stories we tell while conversing with family).
and we enact our identities for ourselves (e.g., stories we write in journals to process our experiences). There are multiple dimensions to our stories including time. In fact, Anzaldúa (1999) viewed her stories as "acts encapsulated in time" (p. 89). Although I see stories as enactments that become encapsulated in time by those who read or hear them, I also recognize that as narrators, we engage with our own stories constantly—renegotiating the details, stretching the boundaries of who we are, and constructing our identities over and over again (Polkinghorne, 1988).

As a narrative researcher I also view the style of storytelling that individuals use as windows into their identities (Muller, 1999; Polkinghorne, 1988). In fact, when analyzing how a story is told (e.g., starting and ending points, use of body language), I am not concerned with verifying the facts of the stories being told, but rather how the person portrays their stories and how they perceive the experiences they are story-ing (Polkinghorne, 2007; Reissman, 2003). Using Anzaldúa's (1999) Borderlands theory as a guide, I do not have a rigid concept of identity, but rather a fluid, multilayered, multicultural framework of identity.

**Culture of origin.** I derived the concept culture of origin from several empirical and conceptual articles. Two important characteristics of culture of origin is that it (1) represents a culture that Mexican American women feel encompasses the values and traditions they are most accustomed to, and (2) it is different than academic culture.

Culture of origin, or the home culture of Latinas/os seems to carry similar meanings among the literature. In González et al. (2001) study, participants' home cultures encompassed their home communities, their ethnic cultures, family, and friends. Similarly, Rodriguez (1972) referred to his culture of origin as his "family culture" (p.
24) and Rendón (1992) referred to her culture of origin as her values and customs. The participants in my study also described their cultures of origin by describing their home communities, ethnic culture, family, and friends.

Moreover, Vera & de los Santos (2005) used this term to question how Chicanas traverse between their cultures of origin and the "dominant culture in academia" (p. 107). This question seems to differentiate between culture of origin and academia. This concept that culture of origin is separate from academic culture is present within other literature about Latinas/os in higher education as well (González et al., 2001; Rendón, 1992; Rodriguez, 1972). This category emerged in my study and will be discussed further in the final chapter.

**Academic cultures of CES doctoral programs.** In previous studies about Latinas/os in higher education, participants have described academic cultures using the following terms: research expectations, faculty, advisors, peers, regional location of university, politics associated with higher education overall and their academic departments in particular, local and university communities (e.g., local churches, campus writing groups), tuition funding, and academic coursework (J. González, 2006; K. González et al., 2001, 2002; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008; Turner & Thompson, 1993). These are all characteristics that I associate with academic cultures.

CES doctoral programs, however, also have their own unique characteristics such as CACREP-accreditation and CACREP requirements (e.g., core classes, licensure), supervision practicum, co-teaching, specialty areas such as mental health counseling or school counseling, a counselor educator professional identity, turf wars between counselor education, counseling psychology, and other related programs (Hughes &
Kleist, Protivnak & Foss, 2009). Again, these are all characteristics I view as part of academic culture specific to CES doctoral programs.

However, as a qualitative researcher I tried not to place my participants within the boundaries of any of the concepts I discussed above. My main goal was to gain in-depth understanding about their lived experiences as Mexican American women in CES doctoral students from their perspectives- not to place them within labels that I created.

**Mexican American and other Ethnic Labels.** Ethnic identities can be extremely personal, political, and tied to marginalization (González, 2006; Malott, 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2000), therefore it is important to clarify my use of ethnic labels. When discussing particular articles or studies, I applied the terminology used by the authors. Examples of this terminology included Mexican American, Chicana, and Latina. Mexican American refers to someone of Mexican descent, but who was born in the United States. Chicana is sometimes used to represent women of Mexican descent, living in the United States, and who have social and political awareness (Achor & Morales, 1991; Gándara, 1982). Latina is commonly used to identify women of subgroups from varying national origins (e.g., Mexico, Puerto Rico, etc.)(Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004). However, some authors clarified their use of ethnic labels or explained how participants in a study were ethnically identified, others did not. I used the information given to clarify ethnic labels and sample demographics when possible.

Most importantly, ethnic labels and terms used in research impact the way Mexican American women's lives are documented, how they are perceived, and how readers relate to and learn about Mexican American women (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Malott, 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2000). As a result, many scholars debate ethnic labeling.
For example, Vera and De los Santos (2005) posited that Chicana is a specific term often referring to Mexican American women who are aware of the social, cultural, and political surroundings that shape their identity. Delgado Bernal (1998) stated that Chicana is a specific, self-selected identity. Contrarily, Rodriguez (2010) prefers to use the term "people of color" as a way of using empowering language that fosters unity. This scholarly debate reflects the value Latina/o scholars place on their selection of ethnic labels when writing and researching about the Latina/o community. Therefore, when writing about participants, I used the ethnic labels they used.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research suggests that Mexican American women in graduate education balance cultural expectations based on gender, ethnicity, and academia (Gándara, 1982; González et al., 2001). Thus, to better grasp the identities of Mexican American women I have reviewed research that creates a clearer understanding of the distinctive experiences that Latinas/os encounter in graduate education. I have also selected a unique theory that honors the pluralistic nature of their identities.

In this literature review I will first evaluate research about Latinas/as in higher education to promote understanding about their experiences and about the theories and methods used to study this unique group of students. Although my aim is to discuss research pertinent to the identities of Mexican American women in doctoral programs, due to the scarcity of research on this specific topic, I will first start broadly and discuss general research that focuses on Latina women in graduate education. I will then narrow in on research that has focused specifically on identity development of Latinas/os in higher education. Yet, due to the lack of research about Mexican American women doctoral students and the identities of Latina/o doctoral students overall (Achor & Morales, 1990; Vera & de los Santos, 2005; Watford et al., 2006), the studies presented in this literature review include Latina students not of Mexican descent, Latino men, students of color (e.g., African American), and students at the high school, undergraduate, master's level, and in law or medical school. Furthermore, I will primarily focus on empirical work, but I will also include two personal essays written by Mexican American scholars (Rendón, 1992; R. Rodriguez, 1974) that help shed light on the unique identities of Mexican American doctoral students.
In the second half of this literature review I will discuss the theory I have selected to guide me in this study: Anzaldúa's (1999) Borderlands theory. My description of Anzaldúa's Borderlands theory will have two components. In the first component I will discuss the Borderlands conceptual framework. Specifically, I will discuss four concepts within Anzaldúa's Borderlands theory and how they relate to my research focus. These concepts include: (a) *nepantla*, (b) *coatlicue*, (c) *coyolxauhqui*, and (d) *la conciencia de la mestiza*. In the second component, I will describe the artistic style of her theory and how particular aspects of her theory influence my research identity and my research design. Lastly, I will discuss research that explores counselor professional identity, counselor education and supervision doctoral students’ experiences, and implications for future counselor education research.

**Mexican American Doctoral Students and their Families**

In 1974 Richard Rodriguez wrote an autobiographical essay, *Going Home Again: The New American Scholarship Boy* to describe the cultural tensions he negotiated as he progressed toward his Ph.D. He related his academic experiences to being a scholarship boy, a student striving for success who must choose between “two worlds” (p. 17). As Rodriguez pursued his doctoral degree, these two worlds contained the strange culture of academia and his familiar, yet increasingly distant, Mexican American family. Rodriguez wrote, “I started to become alien to my family culture the day I became a scholarship boy” (p. 24). Similarly, in a related essay, *From the Barrio to the Academy: Revelations of a Mexican American “Scholarship Girl”* Laura I. Rendón (1992) wrote how she related to Rodriguez’ (1974) experiences. Her message was just as profound.
I sensed that deep in my mother’s soul she felt resentful about how this alien culture of higher education was polluting my values and customs. I, in turn, was afraid that I was becoming a stranger to her, a stranger she did not quite understand, a stranger she might not even like. (Rendón, 1992, p. 59).

Both Rodriguez (1974) and Rendón (1992) are Mexican Americans who earned doctoral degrees in completely different times. Yet, their stories echo similar sentiments that include conflict around academia and their meaningful family commitments; an important theme found in research as well (Achor & Morales, 1991; Gándara, 1982; Ramirez Lango, 1995; Torres, 2006). Thus, it is crucial to understand how family impacts the educational endeavors of Mexican American women pursuing doctoral degrees.

**Family Support**

An important aspect of higher education for Mexican American women doctoral students seems to be family support toward their educational decisions. Achor and Morales (1991) conducted a study of 100 Chicanas who obtained their doctoral degrees in the mid-80s. Although most of the participants were from low-income, culturally traditional families (i.e., Spanish speaking, Roman Catholic, and low education level for parents), 41.9% of the sample identified their family as influential to their decision to pursue a PhD. Moreover, many participants reported that their families supported values of education, self-confidence, and non-traditional roles for their daughters (i.e., obtaining a higher education).

Gándara (1982) also found family support as a theme in her study of 28 Mexican American men and 17 Mexican American women who had earned professional or doctoral degrees. Although all participants came from traditional families in which
neither parent had completed high school, most of the participants reported that their family used a non-authoritarian discipline style, fostered independent behavior or, at most reliance on immediate family, and provided emotional support of their educational goals. Gándara also found that although the Mexican American women were better students throughout their pre-college education as compared to the Mexican American men, they received less educational support from outside of their family than the men. Hence, family support may be particularly relevant for Mexican American women doctoral students.

Similarly, Ramirez Lango (1995) explored the influences on Mexican American female students’ decisions to pursue a graduate degree among 240 undergraduate seniors and 151 graduate students. More than 70% of graduate students reported that their education was considered important to their families. Ultimately, Mexican American families appear emotionally supportive of educational goals and values, and while they may maintain cultural traditions (e.g., Catholicism, Spanish) are willing to promote non-traditional roles (i.e., attaining an education) for Mexican American women.

While family support toward education may be important for Mexican American women doctoral students, many of their family members did not attain a higher education (Achor & Morales, 1990; Gándara, 1982; González et al., 2001). Consequently, Mexican American doctoral students seem to find emotional support from their families rather than specific academic and/or career advice (Gándara, 1982; González et al., 2001), which can cultivate confusion and isolation (González, 2006). González (2006) studied academic socialization experiences for Latinas at the doctoral level. The sample in González' (2006) study contained thirteen Latina doctoral students primarily of Mexican descent.
Some participants expressed sadness for moving away from their families to pursue a doctoral degree, which increased their sense of isolation from their family, their culture, and their community (González, 2006). A sense of isolation is also expressed in a qualitative study conducted by González et al. (2001) exploring the underlying nature of three Latina women and three Latino men doctoral student experiences. A theme that emerged was lack of family understanding. Over half of the participants were first-generation college students, and only one participant had a parent who participated in graduate education. The participants reported that their parents' lack of education, and therefore lack of understanding about the doctoral education process, posed a challenge when beginning their doctoral programs. Many wrote about how challenging it was to have those that loved and knew them the most (i.e., their family) unable to offer any advice during one of the most challenging times of their lives. One male student described that without his family's ability to give him educational advice he felt, "vulnerable and alone" (González et al., 2001, p. 568). The participants in these studies (J. González, 2006; K. González et al., 2001) illustrate the cultural conflicts that emerge as Mexican American women and men navigate a family support system that is highly valued by doctoral students, but at times unavailable due to distance or lack of understanding between parents and students.

To further contribute to this cultural conflict, Mexican American families may still expect women to remain committed to familial obligations regardless of academic demands. For Mexican American women family obligations and expectations may include being with family during academic breaks, maintaining weekly contact, caring for family members, pressure to marry, and pressure to have children (Gloria &
Family commitment is evident in González' (2006) study in which almost all of the 13 Latina doctoral student participants reported having to care for partners, children, parents, and/or siblings. Several participants expressed feeling conflicted about meeting academic and family expectations. In fact, five of the participants discussed having to temporarily stop their doctoral programs because of family and work responsibilities. In Gándara's (1982) study, the Mexican American women participants also reported feeling conflicted about meeting familial and academic expectations. However, a distinctive characteristic of the 17 women in Gándara's study was at the age of 20 all participants were single and without children, and of the participants with children, they waited until near the end of their professional or doctoral programs to have children.

On the other hand, a study by Hurtado and Sinha (2006) suggests that both Latino men and women experience the pressure to marry and have children. Of their sample containing 17 Latina and 10 Latino doctoral students, most participants described their families as emphasizing these values. However, having a family seemed internalized by the participants because all but one participant expressed a desire to marry (if not married already) and have children. Overall, these studies (Gándara, 1982; González, 2006; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006) demonstrate the significance of family values and the type of family expectations placed on Mexican American women and men regardless of their academic responsibilities. Yet, there are still many questions left unanswered regarding family and academia expectations of Mexican American women. Although these studies highlight some important trends regarding family and Latinas/os in higher education, more in-depth studies are needed that explore the comprehensive experiences of this
group to understand how their whole identities are influenced as they navigate both family and academia.

**Academic Support from Mothers**

Many studies reveal that the mothers of Mexican American men and women in higher education play significant educational supportive roles (Gándara, 1982; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006; Mycias Wycoff, 1996; Ramirez Lango, 1995). Studies have found that for both Latino women and men mothers are more likely than their fathers to provide encouragement and emotional support of their educational aspirations (Gándara, 1982; Hurtado and Sinha, 2006). For Mexican American women, mothers may also open the door for them to pursue non-traditional roles such as earning a degree and being financially independent (Achor & Morales, 1990; Gándara, 1982; Ramirez Lango, 1995). Furthermore, Macias Wycoff (1996) conducted a study examining family encouragement and specific variables that influence Mexican American women’s academic achievement. The sample contained 50 undergraduate and 50 graduate students. When asked who influenced them the most to earn a college degree, 40% of the undergraduate students and 50% of the graduate students identified their mothers as the one person who influenced them the most to pursue a college education. Of the entire sample, 90% listed their mother as the most emotionally supportive toward their academic achievement. Furthermore, 60% of the entire sample listed their father as least emotionally supportive. This trend was also found in Ramirez Lango’s (1995) study in which not one single participant, out of a sample of 391 undergraduate and graduate Mexican American women students, identified their father as the strongest supporter to continue in higher education.
There may be many reasons for the reported lack of father support (i.e., divorce, fathers may provide a different type of support), but due to the lack of research about the role fathers play for Mexican American women doctoral students, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about Mexican American fathers. While these studies emphasize the importance of the Mexican American mother-daughter relationship, they also highlight the need for research exploring fathers' roles in the experiences of Mexican American women doctoral students. Again, this emphasizes the need for more wide-ranging, in-depth studies that examine multiple aspects of Latinas/os' higher education experiences.

**Advocating for Family and Community**

The path toward a doctoral degree is tedious, and Mexican American doctoral students report difficulties being away from family during this time. Yet, research suggests that Mexican American women have found ways to validate their familial sacrifices by using their education and professional roles to advocate for the Latina/o community (J. González, 2006; K. González et al., 2001; K. González et al., 2002; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008). Mexican Americans realize that their family members and community members may not have had the opportunities they have had, they also recognize Latina/o academics who have paved the way, and therefore feel obligated to give back to their communities (González et al., 2001). Giving back to their communities includes conducting research that advocates for Latinas/os and creating community programs that help promote social change for marginalized groups overall (González, 2006; González et al., 2001; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008). For example, González et al. (2002) propose an alternative framework toward doctoral education and academic life that promotes integration of ethnic, political, and intellectual identities. For the Latinas/os
in this study, within this alternative framework their scholarly work would serve the Latina/o community. The theme of giving back to family and the overall Latino/a community is so profound it is infused throughout many themes presented in this literature review.

Ultimately, studies have found that Mexican American women earning their doctoral degrees rely on family for emotional support (Achor & Morales, 1990; Gándara's, 1982; González, et al., 2001; Ramírez Lango, 1995), with mothers playing a significant supportive role (Achor & Morales, 1990; Gándara's, 1982; Ramírez Lango, 1995). Yet, family support is sometimes wrought with confusion or isolation since many of their family members did not attain a higher education and do not understand the doctoral process (J. González, 2006; K. González et al., 2001). Since academic demands of a doctoral program often restrict their time with family, many Mexican American women report feeling guilty or conflicted attempting to balance family, gender, and academic expectations (Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; González, 2006; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006). Regardless of the conflict that may surround familial support for Mexican American women doctoral students, they persist in their doctoral programs with the hopes of giving back to their families and communities (K. González et al., 2001; K. González et al., 2002; Murakami-Ramalho, et al., 2008).

**Academic Culture for Mexican American Doctoral Students**

**Doctoral Program Culture and Environment**

As mentioned earlier, González et al. (2002) proposed an alternative framework for doctoral education and academia. This framework was developed from two themes that emerged during a three-hour focus group, with six Latino/a students (including two
of the authors as participants). These two themes were: (a) nature of the academy and (b) forces that perpetuate this nature. These themes seem to capture experiences that have been documented in other studies and provide a rich description of how Mexican American women may be experiencing unwelcoming doctoral program environments. For instance, in their first theme, nature of academy, the Latina/o participants described the academy as, "conservative, restrictive, and racist" (p. 545). This was reinforced with participants' discussing the academy's facade of being open to ideas, but in actuality being conservative. The conservative and racial characteristics of the academy described in their study are also reflected in other studies in which faculty members do not accept, or have negative perspectives of doctoral student research topics that incorporate race and ethnicity (González et al., 2002; Rodriguez, 2006). Additional factors that may contribute to a restrictive or racist environment in the academy include lack of a Latina/o presence in doctoral programs, which inhibits Latina/o doctoral students from sharing their experiences with other Latinas/os who may understand (J. González, 2006; K. González et al., 2001; Turner & Thompson, 1993). Latina/o students have also reported that due to the low Latina/o presence in academia, they have experienced tokenizing situations in which they were expected to speak and act for the whole Latina/o community during class or department activities (J. González, 2006; K. González et al., 2001). Finally, while studies have documented positive experiences of Latina/o doctoral students (e.g., availability of funding, positive faculty relationships, diverse study body) (Achor & Morales, 1990; González, 2006) many other studies report overt and covert racial and gender prejudice throughout the doctoral process for Mexican American women and
other students of color (Achor & Morales, 1990; González, 2006; Turner & Thompson, 1993; Watford et al., 2006).

In the second theme in González' et al. (2002) study, participants identified market culture, elitism, and faculty rewards and tenure system as key features that perpetuate a conservative and racist academic environment (González et al., 2002). Market culture promotes research that seems more marketable. Elitism, or value and prestige of elite institutions, can limit students if their faculty only support research that they consider prestigious. Finally, faculty rewards and the tenure system often reward certain types of research, thus influencing what is acceptable in academia. Consequently, community outreach and development are often not part of the tenure system (González et al., 2002).

While there is a lack of research exploring how a market culture, elitism, or the faculty tenure system impact the experiences of Mexican American women doctoral students, a study by Turner and Thompson (1993) suggests that women students of color are perceiving a competitive academic environment that may be founded on the pressure faculty perceive to be successful. Turner and Thompson recruited doctoral students of color (i.e., 10 Black, 7 Native American, 14 Asian American, and 6 Hispanic) and 25 majority doctoral students enrolled at a single institution to explore the differences between socialization experiences of minority and majority women students. Majority women tended to view their doctoral departments as cooperative and saw themselves as part of an academic community while minority women saw their doctoral departments as individualistic and competitive and viewed themselves as detached from the academic community even though they had some positive relationships on campus. This is not
surprising since the statistics from the study show racial differences. Specifically, (a) 49% minority women had teaching/research assistantships versus 60% majority women, (b) 27% minority women coauthored papers with faculty versus 52% majority women, and (c) 38% minority women co-presented with faculty at conferences versus 48% majority women (Turner & Thompson, 1993). To further substantiate their findings from the women in their study, Turner and Thompson invited feedback from faculty and colleagues. One professor wrote,

    Few faculty, out of the goodness of their hearts are going to choose a woman, minority, or disabled graduate student to work with them on their grants and articles if there is a white male who is perceived as slightly better on these features, because faculty see their own productivity and future at stake (Turner & Thompson, 1993, p. 366).

    This quote is an honest and quite shocking opinion of a professor, which is why I included it in its entirety. However, the last statement also hints at the pressure faculty members may experience regarding tenure and the value placed on research productivity. Overall, these studies (González et al., 2002; Turner & Thompson, 1993) provide evidence that suggest Mexican American women, and students of color in general, are experiencing unwelcoming academic environments.

**Academic Socialization**

    In her personal essay, Laura I. Rendón (1992) wrote about "academic shock" (p. 56). She describes it as a feeling of alienation in which doctoral students move from familiar, old cultural values, to a new culture full of academic standards and assumptions that are very different. Rendón argues that the academy distinguishes the academic elite
from the mediocre based on how well doctoral students navigate this academic shock. Richard Rodriguez (1974) also discusses the arduous journey doctoral students must make leaving behind an old culture less influenced by academic tradition, for a more academic culture. He believes that looking back at the old culture, or being confused by the past, will cause students to lose hold of the present. How students move from an old to a new culture within academia, is influenced by what many scholars refer to as academic socialization. Academic socialization has been described as a process in which doctoral students learn the cultural norms and expectations of academia in order to become a functioning member within academia (González et al., 2002; Turner & Thompson, 1993).

Many scholars have researched academic socialization at the doctoral level and how it impacts students of color. Research shows that academic socialization and how students chose to navigate this academic shock, impacts students' self and ethnic identities as well as their research identities in both positive and negative ways (J. González, 2006, K. González et al., 2002; Turner and Thompson, 1993). Research also seems to demonstrate that just as Rendón (1992) and Rodriguez (1974) describe shocking journeys that require letting go of the past to become an "academic elite" (Rendón; 1992, p. 56), Mexican American women doctoral students are still feeling these same pressures.

Academic socialization seems to provoke identity transformation, conflict with Latina/o doctoral students' ethnic identities, and a mentally draining process. For example, González (2006) described academic socialization as a “covert acculturation process” (p. 348) that challenges the cultural identities of Latina doctoral students. A quote from a participant in González' study demonstrates this conflict, "you cannot avoid
being changed by the doctoral process, even if you try to resist the academic socialization to the fullest extent. And I've both been changed for the good and the bad" (p. 359). While this quote hints at a broad identity change spurred by academic socialization, another participant described an identity change specific to ethnicity. She portrayed becoming an academician as "giving up your ethnicity" (González, 2006, p. 361). Overall, this process seemed very overwhelming. Many participants in K. González et al. (2001) study expressed the struggle they faced adapting to academic culture. They realized this acclimation ciphered extensive energy; energy they could have used in overcoming other difficulties such as developing their research skills (K. González et al., 2001). The themes presented in the studies of J. González (2006) and K. González et al. (2001) represent a transitional process marked by numerous, and strenuous, identity transformations.

Nevertheless, doctoral students of color seem to have found ways to use the academic socialization process to gain beneficial research skills while still maintaining their ethnic identities and values. Using personal narratives and collaborative portraits, Murakami-Ramalho et al. (2008) sought to foster insight about the development of a research identity during a doctoral program for students of color. The unique aspect of this study is that the authors were also the participants (two Latinas/os and one African American woman) and their narratives are presented as metaphors that the researchers/participants created collaboratively: the wanderer, the chameleon, and the warrior.

Their stories contained aspects of their ethnicity and gender, and how their early life experiences influenced the development of their research identities. They all entered their doctoral programs with trepidation, but the warrior also entered with resistance
toward the process of being recreated into a scholar. The warrior feared that the academy would try to eradicate her commitment to resolve social issues for African Americans. Although each participant experienced challenges, all three researchers/participants pursued research that incorporated social justice and advocating for marginalized groups. They were able to obtain aspects of academic socialization (i.e., analytical thinking, research skills), but still maintain their ethnic and gender identities (i.e., their past lived experiences and cultural identities). However, this study has a diverse sample. In order to understand how Mexican American women navigate academic socialization and develop their research identities, studies are needed that focus specifically on Mexican American women.

**Resistance in Academia**

In her article, Dalia Rodriguez (2006) discussed coming to voice, or developing resistance toward oppression in a system that devalues students of color. Resistance includes skills that help minority students succeed in higher education. As Rodriguez (2006) displayed through her vivid narrative, finding voice for her was not an easy process. Studies reveal that it may not be an easy process for any students of color (Achor & Morales, 1991; González, 2006; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008).

González (2006) found that when Latinas resisted academic socialization, they either found or lost their academic voices. For example, Latinas who found support through other Latinos/as or through cross-cultural alliances gained self-confidence and expressed resistance toward injustice at their institutions. This motivated them to stay in academia after earning their doctoral degree to make a difference and serve their community. Latinas who lost their academic voices discussed not having a way to
express their concerns. They felt powerless and feared speaking up during classes due to the consequences. Hence, some disengaged by skipping classes, switching academic majors, or deciding to conform to the "White norms" (González, 2006, p. 360). While exhibiting resistance and voice is risky and challenging, studies suggest that resistance may be necessary for Mexican American women and students of color to succeed in their doctoral programs (Achor & Morales, 1991; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008).

Resistance and voice are also demonstrated in the González, et al. (2002) study. As mentioned before, the participants formulated alternative concepts of doctoral education and of academic life, which includes integrating ethnic, political, and intellectual identities. Through this alternative framework, the participants offer a resistance toward socialization in traditional academia. Dalia Rodriguez (2006) seems to encompass what the participants of González et al. (2002) study describe as a scholarly identity that integrates the ethnic, political, and the intellectual. Dalia Rodriguez views her writing about race and gender as a political act. She explains that for someone "who looks like me, acts like me, that was never supposed to even be here" (p. 1086) writing about racism and oppression in higher education makes her writing political and powerful. Ultimately, R. Rodriguez (1974) and Rendón (1992) wrote about academic shock and academic socialization, processes that are still present in academia today (J. González, 2006, K. González et al., 2002; Turner and Thompson, 1993).

However, it seems that scholars of color are using their research to challenge these traditional academic processes (González et al., 2002; Rodriguez, 2006). Their challenges inspire me to conduct a study exploring identity with a narrow sample containing women of Mexican descent in doctoral programs. It is evident that identity
development emerges in the qualitative studies discussed above, but identity development is not the primary focus of these studies. To better understand the identities of Mexican American women in doctoral programs, studies are needed that specifically examine the identities of this particular group while exploring how they navigate traditional aspects of academia.

**Methodological Approaches of Studies about Latinas/os in Higher Education**

Within the body of research about Latinas/os in higher education, earlier studies were focused primarily on the academic and cultural experiences of Latinas/os, but in more current studies, researchers seem to place equal importance on the research topic (i.e., exploring the experiences of Latinas/os in academia) and the research methods employed. Delgado Bernal (1998) suggests that how educational research is conducted drastically impacts what and whose history, community, and knowledge become valid. As a way to validate the experiences of Mexican American women, Vera and de los Santos (2005) acknowledge that newer studies using non-traditional research methods have provided crucial insight about Chicanas. Through the use of these methods, the researchers of Mexican American women doctoral students and other students of color seem to be documenting the nuanced social and cultural contexts of this group, promoting social justice, and challenging the traditional paradigm of academia and research. In this section I will focus on four studies (K. González et al., 2001; K. González et al., 2002; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008; Rodriguez, 2006) that exemplify these characteristics.

Many studies have used more common forms of qualitative (Gándara, 1982; González, 2006; Turner & Thompson, 1993), quantitative (Macias Wycoff, 1996; Ramirez Lango, 1995), and mixed methods (Achor & Morales, 1991; Hurtado & Sinha,
2006) approaches when studying Mexican American women doctoral students and other students of color. However, more recent studies seem to rely purely on qualitative methodology and alternative methods that capture the Latina/o cultural context and experience while also raising political and social awareness. For example, González et al. (2001) conducted a two-phase study. In the first phase they used autoethnographic methods to explore the underlying nature of Latina/o doctoral student experiences (two of the authors were also participants). Seeking to understand the experiences from the students' perspectives, no apriori theory was used and they specifically used autoethnographic written narratives to foster participants' ability to connect personal experiences with cultural contexts. The only prompt given for personal narratives was to share "salient events or insights that occurred throughout their doctoral program that marked their experience." (p. 566). They purposefully kept the question broad to enable the participants to have more ownership over how they represented their voices and experiences. Five participants wrote their narratives in expository form, while one participant expressed her experiences in poetic narrative. González et al. used narrative methods to gain insight about the cultural context of participants' experiences while also empowering the participants to have ownership of how their lives were documented.

To follow-up with the experiences reported in the narratives, González et al. (2002) conducted a second phase to this study. This second phase included a three-and-a-half-hour focus group with all six participants using dialogical research methods. Rooted in the ideas of Pablo Freire, they describe dialogical research methods as a problem posing method of inquiry that reveals explicit and implicit problematic aspects of every day life. The hope is that through dialogue, participants can expand their view beyond
their own problems to the problems of society, recognizing social, political, and economic difficulties of daily life. The end goal is to take action against these oppressive barriers. Consequently, the researchers/participants developed an alternative framework for doctoral education and academic life. The alternative qualitative methods used in this two-phase study enabled the research team to obtain rich data, empower participants, and foster social awareness and action.

Murakami-Ramalho et al. (2008) used the qualitative research methods of autoethnographic personal narrative and collaborative portraits to learn about research identity development during a doctoral program for students of color. In this study, all of the authors were also the participants. Using metaphors (i.e., wanderer, chameleon, and warrior) their narratives provided descriptive images and a cultural and social context to their experiences. Moreover, working collaboratively on their portraits (i.e., metaphors), they were "each sharing the paintbrush" (p. 812), challenging each other to reflect numerous aspects of their academic experiences, and making sure to sustain ownership of the representation of their voices and identities. Ultimately, similar to González et al. (2001; 2002) Murakami-Ramalho et al. (2008) used alternative methods to capture the social and cultural nuances that may have been missed by other methods. They also used their own experiences as students of color and as researchers to strengthen their study. Finally, they maintained authority of how their voices were represented.

Using personal narrative, Critical Race Theory, and critical race gendered epistemologies (i.e., Black Feminist thought and Chicana feminist epistemology), Rodriguez (2006) sought to enhance understanding of how women of color resist in academia. She included narratives from herself, a Latina scholar, and her African
American friend earning a doctoral degree and used critical race and gendered epistemologies to better understand their counter-stories (i.e., stories from marginalized groups). Again, similar to González et al. (2001; 2002) and Murakamik-Ramalho et al. (2008), Rodriguez uses narratives to capture the unique cultural contexts of herself and her colleague. Furthermore, Rodriguez argues that counter-stories challenge the status quo and promote students of color as valuable creators of knowledge. She also writes using strong language (e.g., racism, oppression) to reveal covert forms of oppression and challenge the dominant discourse. Her goal is to increase the power and political meaning of her work. Rodriguez' methodological approach demonstrates how she uses writing and research as tools to promote social justice.

In addition to the research methods, how the researchers wrote about the lived experiences of Mexican American women and other doctoral students of color reflect a more descriptive side of academic writing. For example, Rodriguez (2006) considers narrative as a means toward healing. Through the use of the word "healing", which is in her text and also part of the title, Rodriguez challenges a rigid scientific writing, which reports the objective truth (Richardson, 2000) and instead inserts sentiment and interpretation. Along the same lines, Murakamik-Ramalho et al. (2008) challenge their readers to "feel" (p. 812) their stories and lived experiences, which places emotions at the core of their research. Finally, González et al. (2001) described an image that emerged from their participants' narratives. This image portrayed the Latina/o doctoral students as "made out of glass" due to the vulnerability they experienced in their doctoral programs. The language used by Rodriguez, Murakamik-Ramalho et al., and González et al., reflect the descriptive and expressive aspect of qualitative research. In addition to unique
research methods, these scholars of color seem to use writing to express social and cultural contexts and place value on alternative ways of knowing within academia.

**Evaluation of Methodological Approaches in Latina/o Studies**

González et al. (2001, 2002) used unique qualitative methods that empowered participants, but there were some aspects of their research methods that may have impeded the depth of their studies. In the first-phase of their two-phase study, González et al. (2001) collected written narratives. They did not, however follow-up with individual interviews to further explore the narratives, which limited the depth of the data and findings. In the second-phase of their study, González et al. (2002), conducted focus groups with the same sample in phase-one of their study. While focus groups can provide rich insight about individuals who share common experiences, focus groups can also be driven by researchers' interests (i.e., researchers direct the group with topics), which may prevent participants from voicing their own perspectives outside of researchers' directions (Morgan, 1997). This aspect of focus groups is particularly relevant in González et al. (2002) study since two of the participants were also researchers. If González et al. (2001) had conducted individual interviews in the first-phase of their study, they may have increased the depth and credibility (i.e., accuracy of information presented in a qualitative study [Lincoln & Guba, 1985]), of their studies by using data triangulation from three sources: written narratives, individual interviews, and focus groups.

Additionally, the samples from the studies by Murakami-Ramalho et al. (2008) and Rodriguez (2006) contained Latina/os and African American students. Combining students of color in a study can create general insights into their experiences, but prevents in-depth understanding of the distinctiveness of different ethnic groups. Murakami-
Ramalho et al. (2008) sample included two Latinas/os and one African American woman. Rodriguez' (2006) study contained a sample including herself, a Latina woman, and an African American woman. Due to the lack of research about Latinas/os in higher education, studies are needed with unified samples (e.g., all Cuban women, all Mexican American men) to unveil the unique characteristics of these particular groups.

The four studies listed above all have used alternative research methods and descriptive writing styles that validate Latinas/os, and other students of color, experiences. My goal is to also create a research design that uses theory and methodology that acknowledge participants as valued members of academia and validates their distinctive experiences as Mexican American women.

**Discussion of Research about the Identities of Latina/o Students**

To gain insight about the theories and methodological approaches used when specifically studying identity, in this section I will discuss and critique research that has focused exclusively on identity development of Latinas/os in higher education. My focus will be on the research designs of these studies since they informed the development of my own research design. Within this body of research, quantitative studies focus on specific aspects of identity (i.e., ethnic identity) and use scales that measure pre-determined identity characteristics. Whereas the qualitative studies comprehensively address identity development and institutional contexts that influence identity, while using research methods that empower participants and facilitate social justice. There is a larger amount of research about Latina/o ethnic identity and academic achievement, but I selected to evaluate studies more similar to my study to learn about methodologies used in studies exploring identity from more multidimensional perspectives. Thus, in the latter
half of this section I review studies that focused specifically on the multifaceted identities (e.g., ethnicity, gender, sexuality) of Latina women.

The following studies provide important information, but also promote the need for qualitative research to further explore the trends discovered in their studies. For example, Ethier and Deaux (1990, 1994) conducted mixed method studies exploring perceived threats to ethnic identity of a group of Hispanic undergraduate students at two different predominantly White institutions. They found that males who were from predominantly Hispanic communities (in high school), had mainly Hispanic friends, and spoke Spanish more frequently, reported more pride in their ethnic identity and did not perceive challenges to their ethnic identity at their universities. Interestingly, women did not demonstrate this same trait, but compared to men they placed more value on their Hispanic identity. In their follow up study, Ethier and Deaux (1994) found that Hispanic students who had a strong sense of their ethnic identity before entering college, maintained their ethnic identity by participating in Hispanic student organizations and other support services. Ong, Phinney, and Dennis (2006) conducted a quantitative study exploring Hispanic ethnic identity as it relates to academic achievement. Ong et al. findings indicated that Latinas/os who had high levels of ethnic identity and high levels of family interdependence, had higher academic achievement.

**Critique of Research about the Identities of Latina/o Students**

Ethier and Deaux (1990, 1994) and Ong et al. provide important research findings, but their studies lack the richness and description that would provide further insight about these unique trends. Furthermore, both of these research teams used large samples (Ethier & Deaux, n=45; Ong et al., n=123), but their samples contained men and
women of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Central American descent. Lumping Latinas/os of varying cultural backgrounds together dismisses the distinctive features that make their experiences unique. To explore gender and cultural differences, it is imperative to have more unified samples with participants of the same cultural backgrounds (e.g., Puerto Rico) and of the same gender.

Finally, both research teams used scales to measure ethnic identity, but this quantitative approach restricts our understanding about Latinas/os' comprehensive identities (e.g., gender, faith background) in relation to their academic institutions. To investigate identity, Ethier and Deaux (1990, 1994) had participants rank their identity characteristics (e.g., woman, student) in addition to using scales that measured collective self-esteem and participants' perceived threat level to their ethnic identity. Although they inserted a qualitative piece in which participants ranked their identity characteristics, it did not seem there was enough qualitative follow-up, such as questions about why and how participants ranked their identity characteristics.

Ong et al. (2006) used research about Hispanic ethnic, ego, and racial identity to inform their study. They also used several measures including parental support scale, family interdependence scale, and multigroup ethnic identity measure. While using scales are necessary to make generalizations, scales that attempt to measure identity characteristics may neglect the institutional and cultural contexts that influence Latinas/os’ self-concepts (Delgado Bernal, 1998). In these studies, the institutional contexts (e.g., campus climate) of their universities were not thoroughly addressed although these contexts may have significantly impacted participants' self-perceptions.
To learn about methodologies used in studies exploring identity from more comprehensive perspectives, I will now shift to reviewing four qualitative studies that used different approaches to explore identity development of Latina students. Knight, Dixon, Norton, and Bentley (2006) explored how three Latina high-school students used varying social and cultural literacy practices (e.g., family conversations) to negotiate their college-going identities. Holling explored cultural ideologies and experiences that influenced the identity development of eight Chicana/Latina college students. Data incorporated excerpts from a course paper in which students used different Chicana feminist theories to analyze personal experiences that shaped their identity. Delgado Bernal (2006) used life history interviews and focus group data of thirty-two Chicana college students (i.e., students who identified as Mexican, Mexican American, and/or Chicana) to explore how they used pedagogies of the home when encountering academic barriers and how they negotiated their own resistance, identities, and culture in academia. Finally, Bañuelos (2006) explored exclusion and resistance in graduate education among a group of five Chicana doctoral students, thus her focus was on how Latina doctoral students claimed a sense of belonging within their academic programs. The different approaches used to explore identity among these studies fostered multiple ways of thinking about Latina identity development.

The theories used in the studies all incorporated Chicana or multicultural feminist approaches. For example, Knight et al. (2006) used a multicultural feminist critical theory centered on social justice and due to their focus on literacy practices they also used critical literacies theory. Holling (2006) used Chicana feminism as a way to honor the historical and cultural knowledge that participants contributed to the study. This was
further emphasized by Holling's research design, which enabled participants to select which Chicana feminist theories they viewed most descriptive of their own lived experiences. Participants selected theories such as Anzaldúa's (1987) *conciencia de la mestiza* and Saldivar-Hull's (1991) border feminism, to describe how they balanced expectations of two cultures-- their culture of origin and mainstream culture. Participants in Bañuelos' (2006) study also discussed theories they felt applied to their lived experiences. They explained that feminism in general was not inclusive of women of color. The theories selected by researchers and participants highlights the capacity of Chicana feminist theories in capturing a bicultural experience unique to women of color.

Delgado Bernal (2006) and Bañuelos (2006) used Chicana feminist approaches too, but both combined several theoretical approaches to create a multifaceted research design. Delgado Bernal used two concepts: pedagogies of the home and Anzaldúa's *mestiza consciousness*. She defines pedagogies of the home as communication, practices, and learning that occur in the home or in the community. She defines *mestiza consciousness* as "how a student balances, negotiates, and draws from her bilingualism, biculturalism, commitment to communities, and spiritualities in relationship to her education" (p. 117). Therefore, in her study Delgado Bernal specifically examined pedagogies of the home with a focus on these facets: bilingualism, biculturalism, commitment to communities, and spiritualities. Similarly, Bañuelos (2006) drew from three different scholars to create a third space feminist approach (i.e., Emma Perez, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Chela Sandoval). The fact that Delgado Bernal and Bañuelos used multiple concepts and theories to create their research designs emphasizes the "outside of
"the box" approaches that scholars in this area are using to explore the many layers of Latina identity development.

The researchers also used methods that empowered participants. The main goal of Holling's (2006) study was to examine how cultural values, beliefs, and traditions shape Latina college students' identities. Rather than selecting a theory to analyze her participants' narratives, Holling empowered participants by having them analyze their own cultural values and traditions, utilizing the Chicana feminist theories they saw most applicable to their identities. Knight et al. (2006) also empowered participants by working with them as youth co-researchers (YCR). The researchers and YCR developed interview questions that the YCR used to interview one family member who influenced their college-going identity. Knight et al. acknowledged the participants as co-creators of the research project by treating them as equals during the research process. They wanted to demonstrate their resistance of research designs that typically push Latinas to the margins of education (Knight et al., 2006). These are both powerful research designs that significantly validate participants, but do not fit within the positivist framework of how academic studies are usually presented.

As the Latina participants progressed through the empowering research designs, they began developing new self-concepts. Holling (2006) noted that some participants wrote narratives reflecting recognition of ideologies influencing their self-perceptions. Other participants began using theory to question biased traditions (e.g., gender role expectations); they began using their new theoretical perspectives to renegotiate their identities. Similarly, Knight et al. (2006) empowered participants to envision their college-going identities through their own perspectives. In fact, while the research
process required YCR to interview one family member, one YCR held a group interview with her entire family. Her actions demonstrated the ownership she felt as a co-researcher and her actions reflect the development of her own sense of self. Through the use of varying theories and methodologies, these studies not only explored identity, but also promoted identity exploration among their participants.

Several themes that emerged in the studies aligned with the research presented in the first part of this literature review. To illuminate new insights about Latina identity, I will discuss themes that have not been addressed in previous studies. These themes paint a picture of the double sided, often contradictory experiences Latina women must endure. Two new themes addressed in Delgado Bernal’s (2006) study included bilingualism and spirituality. Participants in Delgado Bernal's study ranged from being monolingual to trilingual, thus bilingualism sparked both positive and negative responses. For example, bi- and tri-lingual participants expressed pride in their ability to shift between languages. Yet, those who were more comfortable speaking Spanish doubted their English proficiency in college literature courses. Participants who only spoke English described uncomfortable experiences in which other Chicanos questioned their ethnic authenticity. The participants seemed to describe their language use as both affirming, yet confusing since language simultaneously sparked pride and doubt of their ethnic identities.

Another theme addressed in Delgado Bernal’s (2006) study included diverse spiritual practices. Some participants merged traditional Catholic views with their own personal spiritual practices (e.g., writing, lighting candles). Other participants only selected a few Catholic traditions to incorporate in their lives (e.g., going to church). Many participants often connected spirituality to their commitment to give back to their
families and communities. Holling’s (2006) participants also discussed Catholicism and religion in relation to the pressure of remaining a virgin until marriage and the expectation to do housework and care for family. While participants in Delgado Bernal’s study molded Catholicism to fit their needs and tied spirituality to giving back to their communities, Holling’s participants questioned the biased gender expectations founded in religion. These two studies demonstrate the meaning Latinas may find in spirituality, but also the gender role contradictions that they struggle to negotiate.

While both Delgado Bernal (2006) and Holling (2006) obtained interesting findings, I had questions about the richness of their data. Delgado Bernal had a large sample of thirty-two Chicana college students. Although she used both life history interviews and focus group data, the large number of participants may have decreased the depth of her findings. More clarity was needed about how she gained in-depth understanding with a larger sample size. Holling (2006) had a smaller sample of eight Chicana/Latina college students, but used excerpts from a course paper as data. Holling did not follow-up with interviews regarding the course papers, which may have limited her understanding of the participants' voices and of their course paper content.

It is evident that within this body of research quantitative and qualitative studies approach identity development from different frameworks and therefore provide distinctive insights about Latinas/os in higher education. The quantitative studies reviewed in this section focused primarily on ethnic identity and academic achievement. Their studies yielded crucial findings about the impact of ethnic identity on Latinas/os' academic endeavors, but their studies also promoted the need for qualitative studies to follow-up on the unexplained nuances found in their data (e.g., Hispanic women valuing
their ethnic identity more than men in Ethier and Deaux's [1990] study). The qualitative studies I reviewed used unique theoretical and methodological approaches to capture the multidimensional aspects of Latinas' identities and the surrounding cultural contexts that influence their self-perceptions. As a result, our understanding of Latina identity begins to expand and we see women who are navigating multiple cultural expectations as students, as family members, and as women.

To foster this same type of understanding in my research, I incorporated similar theoretical and methodological approaches. Like Holling (2006), Delgado Bernal (2006), and Bañuelos (2006), I used Gloria Anzaldúa's (1999) Borderlands theory to help me develop a study that captured the fluid nature of identity while also empowering the Mexican American women participants in CES doctoral programs as valued contributors in the research process.

Anzaldúa's (1987) Borderlands Theory

*Caminante, no hay Puentes, se hacen Puentes al Andar*
(Voyager, there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks)
(Anzaldúa as cited in Keating, 2009, p. 73)

In 1987 Gloria E. Anzaldúa, a Chicana feminist, wrote *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, the foundational text of Borderlands theory. Both the creative writing style that Anzaldúa used to structure Borderlands theory and the actual concepts presented in her theory shape who I am as a researcher and how I designed my study. In the following section I will address how Anzaldúa's framework influences my conceptualization of identity. Specifically, I will discuss four concepts within Borderlands theory and how they relate to my study. These concepts include: (a) *nepantla*, (b) *coatlicue*, (c) *coyolxauhqui*, and (d) *la conciencia de la mestiza*. I will then discuss how particular aspects of Borderlands influence my research identity.
Although the book, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* helped form Borderlands theory, it is paramount to explain that it does not encompass the entire Borderlands theory. In fact, Anzaldúa viewed this book as one section of the Borderlands concept and one small piece of her overall life work (Keating, 2005). Borderlands contains a multitude of concepts and theories and can only be described by drawing from different published interviews, articles, and a collection of books that when merged together paint a picture of the insights sparked by her theory. Although I will attempt to comprehensively describe four specific concepts within Borderlands and how they impact my research, it is rare that her theory is written about this way. Many scholars focus on a specific concept in her theory, rather than focusing on the theory from a broader perspective (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). Thus, I fill this gap in the literature by using a more comprehensive approach of Borderlands.

Finally, while I use a linear piece of text to describe Borderlands, I encourage readers to be cognizant of the non-linear features that make the theory so unique. Anzaldúa (1999) viewed rigidity as tragic, and thus her theory naturally defies boundaries and concrete definitions. While this characteristic is what makes her theory so distinctive, it also requires creativity. I also encourage readers to notice the emotions Borderlands evokes as Anzaldúa's approach defies typical academic notions of theory. I hoped to capture these multidimensional characteristics of Borderlands by using a research design that validated the non-linear, unbounded identities of participants.
**Borderlands**

When Anzaldúa (1987) first wrote Borderlands theory, she explained that the physical borderland she wrote about was the Texas- U.S. border, but she expanded on the non-physical dimensions of borderlands,

The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands, and spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy (Anzaldúa, 1987: preface).

From this description it seems the term borderlands refers to multidimensional aspects of borders on different geographical, psychological, cultural, and spiritual levels. But how does this space feel? Anzaldúa (1999) explained, "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (p. 25). These depictions of borderlands create a sense of simultaneous structure and disorganization; a zone of varying emotions. Borderlands seems defined by ambiguity. This theme of ambiguity is prevalent throughout the entire Borderlands theory.

Both the physical and non-physical concepts of borderlands are particularly relevant to my study. A few participants identified with the physical borderlands. However, as Mexican American women navigating numerous cultures, they also identified with the ambiguous psychological, spiritual, and cultural borderlands Anzaldúa (1999) so vividly described.
**Borderland Concepts**

Within the Borderlands theoretical framework there are many concepts. I will describe four that influence how I conceptualize identity and how I approached my study. These four concepts include: *nepantla, coaticlue, coyoxauhqui*, and *la conciencia de la mestiza*. While these four concepts could be thought of as stages of identity development, in alignment with Anzaldúa's (1999) avoidance of rigid boundaries, I refer to them as spaces. Individuals may progress through each space sequentially, they may occupy each space simultaneously, or individuals may not identify with what these spaces represent.

The terms used to describe each concept, or space (e.g., *nepantla*), are very intentional because Anzaldúa used Mexican histories and Mexica goddesses and rewrote them from a feminist, decolonial perspective (Lara, 2005). By rewriting these histories and myths she challenged Eurocentric ways of knowing by demonstrating that there are other ways of knowing, including those of Indian cultures (i.e., Mayas, Incas, Aztecs, etc.). She also placed female goddesses at the center of her theory to honor women and to return to them the power that patriarchal forces took away (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). When one of these terms is referring to a Mexica goddess I will provide a brief description of the myths surrounding the goddess to create richer description.

**Nepantla.** This first space aligns with the concept of the physical and non-physical borderlands I discussed earlier. In fact, Anzaldúa often used *nepantla* and borderlands interchangeably (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008), but for the purpose of this study I will use *nepantla* as one concept within the overall Borderlands theory.

*Nepantla* is a *Nahuatl* term (language of Aztecs) meaning "in-between space" (Keating, 2005) and represents living in the spaces between borders. During *nepantla,*
fixed classifications based on gender, social economic status, and race, begin to diminish as women begin recognizing the multiple, yet related aspects of their identities. Boundaries start becoming permeable so that women can begin transcending rigid categories of identity. While this can be a painful process, it can also facilitate identity transformation (Keating, 2005).

Anzaldúa described *nepantla* as a state women encounter when transitioning from one identity to another. For my study, I viewed Mexican American women as transitioning from one identity to another as they navigated the borderlands of a doctoral program, their Mexican American culture, and other cultural realms. An example may include a woman who moves to a predominantly white city to pursue a doctoral degree at a predominantly white university, and begins realizing that her ethnic identity is now salient since she is an ethnic minority in this new environment. An experience may spur this realization such as, racism. Or, using myself as an example, in State College I am constantly asked, where I am from. When I respond that I from Texas, I often get asked, "No, where are you from?" with the insinuation that I am not from this country. These types of experiences cause me to reflect upon my identity and even if I do not want to, I begin transitioning into a new space. As I realize that I may stand out in State College due to my ethnicity, I now have to develop a new sense of self and be prepared to answer the "where are you from" question. During *nepantla*, Mexican American women may begin realizing the different aspects of their identity- maybe because they are forced to. This difficult recognition may spur identity transformation.
When participants identified with *nepantla*, I explored how they navigated this space. What was this process like for them? Did this process facilitate identity transformation?

**Coatlicue.** *Coatlicue* is a Mexica earth mother goddess of both creation and destruction (Lara, 2005). This goddess represents contradictions, or the fusion of opposite forces (Anzaldúa, 1999). In this space individuals begin recognizing the positive and negative aspects of their multiple identities (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, ability status). To demonstrate this space, I will use myself as an example again. I am proud of my roles within my doctoral program, such as co-teacher, supervisor, and researcher. However, I may not feel comfortable discussing these new roles with my family since they may view my educational endeavors as confusing and as experiences that separate me from them. My pride and my hesitation regarding my new academic roles represent the contradictory aspects of my academic identity. As a result, I may repress this part of myself around my family by not talking about my academic roles with them. For Mexican American women in doctoral programs, this recognition of contradictory identities can be dark and painful. It may cause some women to deny or repress pieces of who they are (interview with Anzaldúa, Lara, 2005).

*Coatlicue* can be painful because it also promotes a difficult progression forward. Moving forward through *Coatlicue*, represents crossing another border (Anzaldúa, 1999). Anzaldúa (1999) explains, "'Knowing' is painful because after "it" happens I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before." (p. 70). This quote encompasses the core of my study. I am interested in the process Mexican American women endure as they leave their home cultures to pursue a doctorate. The
new knowledge and experiences they gain from academia may make them a different person, but it may also make them feel or appear foreign to their home cultures. Referring back to my example about my academic roles. Although I have enjoyed co-teaching, supervising, and researching, I worry that these new experiences make me appear different to my family. I also worry because I feel a little different too. This is scary and painful. I wanted to know if other Mexican American women were experiencing this process and if so, how did they cope with an identity transformation that may have distanced them from their home cultures?

*Coyolxauhqui.* Coyolxauhqui is a Mexica warrior goddess and she is the daughter of Coatlicue. Coyolxauhqui was dismembered by her brother, Huizilopochtli, the god of war. After dismembering her, he banished her to the sky to live there eternally as the moon. This space of *Coyolxauhqui* represents an attempt of putting this dismembered body back together. In fact, Anzaldúa described her struggle in writing, "has been to put us back together again. To connect up the body with the soul and the mind with the spirit." (as cited in Lara, 2005, p. 41). However, using *Coyolxauhqui* to title this space also represents the light she provides as the moon. Thus, as we progress through this space, *Coyolxauhqui* lights our way out of the dark (or out of the darkness that we experience in coatlicue).

I see this concept as experiences Mexican American doctoral students encounter as they synthesize different pieces of their identities. Using the sample I gave above, I am fragmented. When I am with my family, I am not the Tammy I am in my doctoral program. I do not talk about research. I do not talk about counseling. When I am in my doctoral program, I am not the Tammy I am with my family. I do not see people who
look like me or talk like me so I change my language. I repress my past experiences of poverty, *el cucuey*, *tamaladas*, just to name a few. I am dismembered. How can I create a whole sense of self? Navigating these different cultural worlds and figuring out how to create a whole sense of self between both worlds, constitutes my sense of *coyolxauhqui*, or my quest to unite the varying pieces of myself.

Within the framework of *coyolxauhqui* I was interested in how participants attempted to integrate the different features of their identities. How did they establish a whole sense of self? What elements of their home cultures and of academia spurred, or hindered, this integration?

_La Conciencia de la Mestiza (The Conscience of the Mestiza)._ Mestiza literally means a woman of mixed ancestry, particularly of Native American, European, and African American backgrounds (Delgado Bernal, 2006). Although many Mexican American women may have mixed heritage, within the framework of Borderlands, not all Mexican American women have *la conciencia de la mestiza*. This space represents the culmination of all the pain and growth that Mexican American women have experienced as they navigated through *nepantla*, *coaticlue*, and *coyoxauhqui*.

_La mestiza_ encounters “cultural collisions”, but learns how to be comfortable with contradictions and ambiguities inherent in the varying cultural expectations placed on her. Yet, Anzaldúa suggests that _la conciencia de la mestiza_ is not merely putting pieces together or balancing opposing messages, but rather a synthesis that creates a third element: a new consciousness. This new consciousness cultivates new ways of knowing. Thus, _la conciencia de la mestiza_ includes being vulnerable to different ways of seeing and thinking (Anzaldúa, 1999).
La mestiza also turns marginalization into resistance and redefines everything. Anzaldúa (1987) suggests,

For people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castillian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither español ni ingles (neither Spanish or English), but both (p. 77).

This quote demonstrates the creation inherent in la conciencia de la mestiza. La mestiza creates her own language. She uses her voice to speak for herself, to define herself, and to open up new spaces for herself (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). Her voice is neither Spanish nor English, but both and she finds strength in this multilingual, multicultural identity.

I was curious to explore how Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs were enacting la conciencia de la mestiza. Did they use their voices to redefine themselves or to express resistance in their academic programs or in their cultures of origin? Did they take action within their home cultures or academia to create their own spaces? For example, I see myself in la conciencia de la mestiza as I write a dissertation proposal using methods rarely seen in the counselor education literature, as I research a topic that I could not find in any top-tier journals in counseling. This is my conciencia de la mestiza; this is my resistance.

While these four concepts of Borderlands theory may influence how I perceived identity, I did not view these concepts as dictating how my participants would identify their experiences. In fact, I viewed these concepts as ideas that guided my research questions. Combining this theory with themes found in previous research underlined the
purpose of my study, but it did not drive me to categorize participants’ identities and make them fit into preconceived notions of who they should be.

**Borderlands and My Research Identity**

In an interview Anzaldúa stated, "I found that people were using 'Borderlands' in a more limited sense than I had meant it." (as cited in Keating, 2005, p. 6). When I read these words, I vowed to approach Anzaldúa's (1987) theory with an open mind as a way of honoring the vast nature of her work. Open-mindedness is also a critical trait of my research identity. As I write about Borderlands I question, how can I describe and use Anzaldúa's theory without bounding it up? Similarly, when I think of my participants I think, how can I conduct a study, which requires categories, precise description and explanation, without limiting my participants? These questions are not easily answered and as I reflect upon them I realize I am in *nepantla*, the space in-between, in which answers merge with questions, and maybe I never truly obtain a sense of absolute truth. What I do know is that by using Borderlands, I approached my participants in a way that no other theory could facilitate. I honored their ambiguity, fluidity, and creativity, by being comfortable with my own ambiguity as a researcher.

Another aspect of Anzaldúa's Borderlands framework that has influenced my research identity is her writing style. Anzaldúa referred to her writing as "autohistoria-teoría", a genre of writing that incorporates personal and collective history while implementing aspects of a fictionalized autobiography; a personal essay that theorizes (Keating, 2005). To accomplish this genre she used a mixture of history, social protest, poetry, metaphors, and myths. She also used different languages to reflect the content of her theory, "from English to Castillian Spanish to the North Mexican dialect to Tex-Mex
to a sprinkling of Nahuatl to a mixture of all of these, reflects my language, a new language- the language of the Borderlands" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 20).

The fluidity in writing styles and the thin boundaries she placed between fiction and theory demonstrate Anzaldúa's willingness to take risks in her work. She implemented creative approaches (e.g., fiction, metaphor), not typically associated with theory development, as a way of honoring the unique experiences of individuals living among many cultures. As a researcher, I too strive to take such risks to honor the experiences of participants, even if it means employing alternative research methods not often accepted in the academic paradigm.

Finally, the way Anzaldúa viewed her work and her readers influences how I perceive my own dissertation writing and research. When writing Borderlands, Anzaldúa (2009) explained that she used code-switching in language (e.g., Spanish) and in genre (e.g., poetry, memoir) to "jerk" her readers around. Due to Anzaldúa's tendency to spiral in and out of different writing styles, the reader must fill in the gaps to make sense of it all. Readers may also reflect upon their own experiences and relate to her stories. Due to this interactive process, Anzaldúa (2009) viewed her readers as co-creators of her texts. Now, as I write about Anzaldúa, I am a co-creator of her work, interacting with her writing to relate to her stories and to find meaning in her code-switching style. In turn, I created a research design and then participants became co-creators of the study. I am not the sole creator of my dissertation because without participants, I would not have anything to write about.

Writing about Anzaldúa took me into her world. I began by attempting to lay out her theory very logically. I envisioned breaking her theory into segments that followed a
logical path. But then, I free wrote and realized that her theory influenced me on multiple levels: as a researcher, as a Mexican American woman, as a doctoral student developing a dissertation, as a daughter, wife, as a human being. Through this complex web, I found my way and I wrote naturally, intuitively. I strayed from my desire to have structure, comfort, and safety. I fell into ambiguity and I am still scared as I take this trip, but this was my intention in using this theory - it challenges me, my readers, and my participants to experience Borderlands rather than to just read about it.

I also think using narrative methods in my study facilitated a similar process. Collecting participants' narratives of their lived experiences as Mexican American doctoral students enabled me, the researcher, to enter their worlds. As I entered their worlds, I struggled, just as I did with Anzaldúa's theory. However, when I started letting go of my own perceptions of what their experiences “should” be and began accepting the discomfort of engaging in a new world and seeing it from the eyes of the person living it, everything fell into place.

When I translated Anzaldúa's Spanish quotes into English, I realized how challenging it is to capture the essence of her poetic phrases. It does not happen; something is lost. Just as I struggled to translate Spanish to English without losing the poetic meaning, I struggled to not lose the ultimate essence of participants' identities as I translated their stories into a dissertation. Anzaldúa's (1987) Borderlands theory helped me in this journey.

**Counselor/Counselor Education Research**

Although counseling has many characteristics that underlie its strength as a profession (e.g., a professional organizations, ethical standards, an accrediting body), the
counseling profession has struggled to develop a sense of collective identity (Gale & Austin, 2003; Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011; Swickert, 1997). As a result, various scholars have written conceptual and empirical articles about the professional identity of counselors. As a way to explore identity specific to counselors, I will discuss four studies that addressed counselor identity from different perspectives. The first two studies explored how counselors develop a professional identity. The last two studies focused more on counselors’ perceptions about the counseling profession.

**Professional Identity of Counselors**

Auxier, Hughes, and Kline (2003) conducted a grounded theory qualitative study. The purpose of their study was to develop a theory about counselor identity development by exploring the experiences of eight, second-year master level counselor education students. The researchers identified a model they called a recycling identity formation process. This process contained three components: conceptual learning, experiential learning, and external evaluation. Conceptual learning related to traditional learning methods, such as lectures. Experiential learning incorporated learning that occurred during practicum, internship, and group experiences. External evaluation related to feedback from peers, professors, and clients about participants’ counseling skills.

Auxier et al. (2003) found that initially participants valued conceptual learning, but as they progressed through their programs, experiential learning became more important. Experiential learning, however, was highly linked to external evaluation, which seemed to cause participants anxiety. As a result, participants reflected deeply about the evaluations they received to determine how these evaluations fit within their own concepts of their personal and professional identities. In the latter stages of their
development, participants sought experiences to improve their skills. When they encountered new counseling situations that they did not understand, they returned to conceptual learning to increase their knowledge. This cyclical process among conceptual and experiential learning helped participants merge their professional and personal identities as counselors.

Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss (2010) also conducted a grounded theory qualitative study. Their sample contained 43 master’s students in counseling programs. What made this study unique is that participants’ ranged from pre-practicum, pre-internship, and pre-graduation. Gibson et al. (2010) identified a developmental theory of transformation of counselor professional identity. Three developmental tasks emerged: definition of counseling, responsibility for professional growth, and transformation to systemic identity. The first developmental task, definition of counseling, related to how participants defined the profession. The second task, responsibility for professional growth, incorporated who or what participants identified as their source of professional growth. The last developmental task, transformation to systemic identity, referred to how participants perceived their professional identities in relation to their professional communities. During these development tasks, students progressed through different time tasks that included: external validation, course work, experience, commitment, and self-validation.

Findings suggested that participants within different phases of their counseling programs navigated these developmental and time tasks differently. For example, participants at the pre-practicum phase of their program and in the responsibility for professional growth task, perceived professors as responsible for their learning.
the framework of Gibson’s et al. (2010) model, attributing their learning process to professors indicated that participants were in external validation. However, participants in the pre-graduation phase of their program and in the responsibility for professional growth task, often entered self-validation and began viewing themselves as responsible for their professional growth (e.g., attending conferences, continuing education). Gibson et al. (2010) also found that in the last developmental task, participants began merging theory with their experiences and they merged their personal and professional identities. This occurred within the time task of self-validation and within the context of the professional community of counselors.

These two studies increase awareness about counselor identity development. They demonstrate the importance of different types of counselor training methods (e.g., conceptual, experiential, feedback). They also highlight the significance of personal and professional identities to counselors-in-training. In fact, in Gibson et al. (2010) study, a merging of personal and professional identities was fostered within the context of the overall professional community. This finding underlines the importance of a collective professional identity for counselors. Nonetheless, both of these studies focused on master level counselors-in-training. The difference in professional identities between master level counselors and doctoral counselor educators may be vast because the purpose of the CES doctorate is very different than the master’s in counseling. More studies are needed that study the uniqueness of counselor educators to foster a more comprehensive understanding about the collective identity of the counseling profession. To increase understanding about counselor educators, the next two studies include samples with doctoral level counselor educators.
Swickert (1997) conducted a qualitative study focusing specifically on 10 counselor education doctoral graduates from CACREP-accredited programs. All of the participants worked full-time in private practice. Eight were licensed professional counselors (LPC), two were both LPC and licensed psychologists, and two were nationally certified counselors. The purpose of the study was to investigate how these CES doctorates, working as full-time clinicians, viewed their professional identities.

Swickert (1997) found several themes that shed light on the distinctive professional identities of these participants. In fact, the first theme was uniqueness of counselors. This theme was founded on the participants’ unique characteristics (e.g., all of the participants worked pro-bono or at reduced rates) and the belief that participants had in the unique professional identities of counselors overall. Two other themes incorporated dislike for research and dislike of managed care. Many participants identified dislike of research as a reason why they did not pursue careers in academia. Furthermore, participants disliked managed care because they often had to prove their credentials were worthy to receive managed care. In the theme, anger at the turf wars with professional psychologists, participants discussed a power struggle between psychologists and counselors. Although the two participants who were both LPC’s and licensed psychologists professionally identified as counselors, they discussed their awareness that counselors did not receive the same professional recognition that psychologists did. They maintained their licenses in psychology because it afforded them managed care. Finally, another theme, affinity with holistic and preventative medicine, illustrated the participants alignment with a wellness model rather than a medical model.
Mellin, Hunt, and Nichols (2011) conducted a qualitative study with the purpose of exploring how practicing counselors defined the counseling profession and how they distinguished counselors, social workers, and psychologists. Using a survey with several open-ended questions, Mellin et al. recruited 238 participants. Eighty-seven percent of their participants earned a master’s degree in counseling and the rest of the participants either had an education specialist degree or a doctorate.

When participants were asked to define “professional counselor,” three categories emerged: (a) counseling tasks and services provided, (b) counselor training and credentials, and (c) wellness and developmental focus. In the second question, participants were asked to distinguish counseling, social work, and psychology. Five themes emerged. In the first theme, case management and community systems, participants focused solely on social workers and how they do more administrative work, address systemic issues, and link clients to community resources as compared to counselors. Another theme, individual versus global focus, also focused solely on social workers and how they address social issues while counselors focus more on the individual. The second theme, personal growth and wellness, illustrated counselors’ beliefs that social workers and psychologists use medical or pathology approaches when working with clients. Also specific to psychologists, the theme testing and assessment, illustrated participants’ perceptions that psychologists conduct assessments more often than counselors or social workers.

These two studies highlight the perceptions that counselors have about counselors and the counseling profession. For example, in both studies participants emphasized counselors’ use of a wellness model rather than a medical or pathology focused approach.
This emphasis on the wellness model indicates the importance of this approach to the professional identities of counselors and helps differentiate counselors from other mental health professions. Additionally, participants from both studies emphasized a distinctive counselor identity. Specifically, a theme within Swickert’s (1997) study was the unique identity of counselors. Participants in Mellin’s et al. (2011) study also focused on the uniqueness of counselors. One participant described counselors as “innovative” and “non-ordinary.”

However, while these two studies provide critical insight about the professional identities of counselors, there are several critiques I must point out. Firstly, their sample compositions were lacking racial/ethnic diversity. In Swickert’s (1997) study, nine out of ten of their participants identified as White. Similarly, in Mellin et al. (2011) study, there sample demographics contained: 200 participants who identified as White, 16 as African American, 10 as multiracial, seven as Hispanic/Latino, two as Asian, and one as Native American. Due to the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in higher education, these skewed samples are inevitable. However, future studies that focus on specific groups may help slowly increase understanding about the unique experiences of underrepresented students in the counseling profession. Moreover, although the samples in these studies contained CES doctoral graduates, neither of the studies focused on individuals who specifically align with a CES professional identity. To gain insight about the issues specific to counselor educators at the doctoral level, in the next section I chose to focus on studies that examined the experiences of CES doctoral students.
Counselor Education and Supervision Doctoral Students

Counselor educators train our future counselors and potentially sustain the counseling profession at the master and doctoral levels (Alexander-Albritton, Hill, & Hanks, 2007). Yet, there is lack of research about future counselor educators as they navigate the doctoral student experience (Hughes & Kleist, 2005). As a result, I only found four studies investigating the overall counselor education doctoral student experience. In the following section I will review these four studies and conclude with implications for my own research.

Studying CES doctoral students. The following two studies, which I will critique, examined experiences that counselor education and supervision doctoral students encountered during their programs. Hughes and Kleist (2005) focused on the first-semester experience, while Protivnak and Foss (2009) explored student experiences throughout the doctoral program. Hughes and Kleist provide general understanding about the first-semester, but Protivnak and Foss seem to promote deeper insight and foster directions for future research of the overall counselor education doctoral experience.

Hughes and Kleist (2005) used grounded theory methods to develop a model of the first-semester experience. Their sample contained three women and one man who were first-year students in a CACREP (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs)-accredited doctoral program. Three participants were Caucasian and one was an international student from Africa. All participants were in their 30's, they were full-time students, and they worked with faculty co-teaching and conducting supervision of master level students. Findings suggested that the participants fluctuated between three phases: vicissitudes, integration, and confirmation. The phase of
vicissitudes occurred during the first few weeks of the semester and incorporated feelings of self-doubt and confusion. During the middle of the semester, participants began describing integrative behaviors such as asking faculty and senior students about department expectations (e.g., expectations about course work, co-teaching, attending conferences). As students learned how to meet these expectations, they began feeling assured as counselor education doctoral students. The final phase, confirmation, occurred toward the end of the semester and included feelings of affirmation. Participants received affirmation through positive feedback from peers or faculty, or even through the absence of negative feedback, which helped them feel more confident in their capabilities as doctoral students.

Hughes and Kleist (2005) shed light on what it may be like for a first-year counselor education doctoral student, but their study lacks the depth typically associated with qualitative research. For example, grounded theory often requires data saturation (Patton, 2002), which is challenging to fulfill with four participants. Therefore, a larger sample size may be needed to enhance the quality and thoroughness of the model created. Although the sample may have facilitated exploration of gender issues or perspectives unique to an international student, these topics were not addressed. Moreover, the researchers focused on how students integrated into the program, but did not discuss how doctoral programs may adjust to meet student needs. Using different forms of qualitative methods (e.g., ethnography) may have stimulated further description and insight about the experiences that counselor education doctoral students face in their first-semester of graduate school.
Protivnak and Foss (2009) conducted a more in-depth qualitative study through the use of a different type of research design. In order to investigate common experiences among counselor education students, Protivnak and Foss recruited a larger sample, a method uncommon in qualitative studies. Due to the large sample size, they did not use typical qualitative methods such as individual interviews or focus groups. Instead, participants completed an on-line open-ended questionnaire about their doctoral program experiences. Their sample contained 141 counselor education doctoral students.

The commonalities that emerged in this study demonstrate the complexities and compromises that constitute the doctoral student experience. Themes included: (a) department culture, (b) mentoring, (c) academics, (d) support systems, and (e) personal issues. When describing department culture, some participants reported positive experiences with faculty and peers, but others expressed difficulties. For example, they described their departments as political, competitive, and subject to turf wars between different programs (i.e., counseling psychology, counselor education). Some participants reported cultural mismatches, such as transitioning from a collectivist framework to an individualistic mindset. This cultural transition enabled students to self-advocate; a skill described as critical for survival within the program.

The theme of mentoring incorporated positive mentoring relationships with advisors and faculty outside of participants departments. Other participants expressed frustration with faculty who were too busy to help students or who viewed students as competitors to limited resources. Particular to the theme of academics, students discussed the educational value of completing comprehensive exams, while others expressed
confusion about graduation requirements, especially for dissertation (e.g., timelines, roles of committee members).

Support systems were another significant aspect of the doctoral student experience. Classmates, especially those more advanced in the program, seemed to be vital support systems to participants. On the other hand, many participants reported losing friends, relationships, and critical time with family due to the intense demands of their doctoral programs. Finally, the theme of personal issues entailed participants' health and finances. They reported neglecting their health and lacking the energy required to persist within a doctoral program. Participants also discussed lack of finances for living expenses and academic expenses, such as attending conferences. These themes demonstrate the complexity of this topic by presenting both positive and challenging experiences related to culture, environment, and interpersonal relationships.

Protivnak and Foss (2009) provide crucial insight about the experiences of counselor education doctoral students. However, to build upon their research, follow-up studies are needed with more diverse, yet smaller samples using qualitative methods that capture the nuances within each theme. For example, the sample in their study contained 141 participants of which 100 participants were White and 33 participants were male. To increase diversity of perspectives, sample demographics must change to include more men and more racial/ethnic minorities. While the large sample size in this study helped the researchers meet their goal, studies with smaller samples sizes and different methods, such as individual interviewing, are now needed to access the depth of students' experiences. Ultimately, by altering sample demographics and size, as well as using different types of qualitative research methods, we can see if these themes re-emerge. If
so, we can increase our understanding of these themes and explore other issues, such as difference of experiences based on gender, ethnicity, or age.

The next two studies I will evaluate examined factors that hinder progression within CES doctoral programs. Hoskins and Goldbert (2005) investigated factors that influenced students to leave or persist in their doctoral programs. Galvin, Fallon, Tang, and Chen (2009) explored a similar topic, but focused on the dissertation process by exploring factors that impede students from completing their dissertation.

Hoskins and Goldbert (2005) interviewed thirty-three current and former CES doctoral students in CACREP accredited programs. Twenty-eight of the participants were white women and most were in the early stages of their doctoral programs (i.e., 21 first and second year students). Four participants had graduated, 24 were persisting, and 10 had either temporarily or permanently discontinued. Participants identified student-program match as essential to attrition. Within this broad theme of student-program match, there were several components including: academic match, social/personal match, student expectations, and student experiences. Academic match incorporated students evaluating their own career goals in comparison to the program's focus on teaching, practicing, and/or research. Social/personal match referred to relationships with peers and faculty. When students encountered unexpected events (or their expectations were not met), such as their program shifting from a practitioner focus to research focus, they questioned if their needs and goals fit with the program. Some participants left if they did not match. Social/personal match also prompted some students to leave due to their intense feelings of disconnection from the department with faculty relationships playing a significant role on student attrition.
Galvin et al. (2009) used a phenomenological approach to explore factors that hinder completion of the dissertation. Their sample contained five counselor education doctoral students who had passed their comprehensive exams and who had been in "all but dissertation" status for five or more years. There were three men and two women, ranging in ages 30-59 and all were working full-time in counseling or a related field. Themes that emerged as hindering dissertation completion included: lack of connection to department (e.g., lack of support from advisor), personal/family responsibilities (e.g., divorce, illness), and job related barriers. Participants in this group identified job related barriers as working full-time in a well-paying position that did not require a Ph.D. Hence, they felt less motivated to complete the dissertation.

Both of these studies captured aspects of CES doctoral programs that impeded progression in CES doctoral programs. Characteristics of doctoral programs were addressed such as department academic focus (e.g., teaching, research) and relationships (e.g., with faculty and peers). However, students' personal processes were also addressed such as evaluating career goals to determine fit with doctoral program or personal problems that also influenced attrition for participants. These studies begin exploring characteristics of departments and how students think about and react to these characteristics, however studies are needed that can expand our understanding of this process.

Hoskins and Goldbert (2005) conducted in-depth interviews for their qualitative study, but it was unclear what theories and qualitative method they were using to shape their study. The researchers created working hypothesis and sought data saturation, but did not clarify what qualitative method they were using that required hypothesis and data
saturation (e.g., grounded theory). When analyzing their data they used a model from Tinto (1993) about doctoral student persistence, but they did not thoroughly describe this model and how it informed their data analysis. Ultimately, using qualitative methods is beneficial when exploring new areas of research, but it is essential to thoroughly describe the research theories and methodologies that are shaping the research to increase clarity and overall trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Although Galvin et al. (2009) identified phenomenology as their qualitative approach, they did not clearly explain how their research methods were in alignment with this approach. Phenomenology fosters understanding the essence of a lived experience (Crabtree & Miller, 1999), but their data collection methods did not seem to align with the complexity and detail typically associated with a phenomenological approach (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). They had a smaller sample size of five, which would typically facilitate more depth, however the individual interviews conducted with each participant were extremely brief, lasting only 20-30 minutes. These interviews were their only source of data. Due to the short interview length and the lack of other sources of data, their study seemed to lack an in-depth phenomenological framework.

In addition to the qualitative methods having limitations, both Hoskins and Goldbert (2005) and Galvin et al. (2009) had skewed samples. Hoskins and Goldbert recruited thirty-three participants, but twenty-eight of the participants were white women. Although Galvin et al. (2009) had better gender representation (three men, two women), their sample contained all Caucasian individuals. The samples in these studies exemplify the need for researchers in counselor education to actively recruit more diverse participants to provide more diverse research findings.
Implications for Future Counselor Education Research

Due to the lack of research about counselor education doctoral students, I did not find many studies to review. Of the studies I reviewed, the samples rarely included students of color. However, due to the history of underrepresentation of ethnic minorities as students and faculty in counselor education (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2003), exploring the doctoral experience for ethnic minorities is imperative to learn about this underrepresentation. As a result, I conducted a study exploring the identities of Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs.

Within the counseling literature there is a heavy reliance on normative methods especially among multicultural studies and studies investigating identity (Lee & Tracey, 2005). Normative methods incorporate using psychometric scales (or other commonly defined psychological structures) to measure constructs and compare participants' scores on the scales. Contrarily, ideographic methods are focused on how individuals think about a particular phenomenon. Due to the focus on attaining individuals' unique perspectives, scales are unnecessary (Lee & Tracey, 2005). Therefore, I bridged this gap in the counseling research by using a qualitative approach that fostered ideographic research methods. By using qualitative methods with Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs, I investigated how they processed their own identities and the cultures of their departments. Themes similar to the ones found in Protivnak and Foss' (2009) also emerged, which I will discuss in the final chapter.

Another way in which I filled a gap in counselor education research was by using Anzaldúa's (1999) Borderlands theory that enabled me to capture the distinctive experiences of Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs. Researchers
focusing on the identities of Latina women in higher education have used Chicana feminist frameworks to shape their studies. As scholars in the areas of education, Latina/Chicana studies, and women studies, using Chicana feminist approaches is not unusual, however in the counseling and counselor education literature this rarely, if ever, occurs. I filled this gap by using Borderlands theory. Borderlands theory shaped my research focus and the qualitative method I used, but this theory also shaped who I am as a researcher.

**Summary and Conclusion**

In this literature review, I discussed themes pertinent to Mexican American women doctoral students around family and academic culture. I then identified research specifically focused on the identity development of Latinas/os in higher education. Within these areas of research, there are studies that used more traditional quantitative and qualitative research methods. However, there are also more recent studies that incorporated diverse methodological approaches to capture the unique experiences of Latinas/os while challenging academic cultural norms and increasing social awareness (K. González et al., 2001; K. González et al., 2002; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008). These more recent studies influenced my research design, which incorporated qualitative methods while challenging academic cultural norms.

Due to my focus on Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs, I concluded my evaluation of the research by reviewing studies of CES doctoral students. I learned that researchers are not using the types of theories and methodologies that scholars in areas, such as education and Chicana/Latina studies are using to explore Latina identity. Yet, these different research approaches capture and validate the distinct
lived experiences of Latina women. To fill this gap in the counselor education literature, I decided to use Anzaldúa's (1987) Borderlands theory to explore the identities of Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs.

Anzaldúa provides educational researchers with an alternative to the dominant frameworks of rationalization and positivism while providing a framework that captures the unique cultural experiences of women living among many cultures (Cruz, 2006). Therefore, I used her theory to develop an empowering research design that challenged dominant research approaches especially within the counselor education literature. The multidimensional nature of the Borderlands framework enabled me to study the diverse experiences of Mexican American women in a way that recognized both the cultural traditions and the importance of empowering participants to name their own experiences and affirm their identities (Delgado Bernal, 2006).
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Researcher Lens

To fully describe my methodological selection process I must first explain my theoretical orientation as a researcher and how this influences my decision to use qualitative methods. As a researcher, I align with a constructivist paradigm and critical theoretical perspective (Ponterotto, 2005). The concepts underlying a constructivist paradigm resonate with me because I view reality as a construct developed in the mind of an individual. As a result, I perceive research as collaboration between participants and researchers so that interpretations about lived experiences are co-constructed (Ponterotto, 2005). I also acknowledge that my values, feelings, and life experiences unabashedly inform how I view the world— including how I approach and conduct research. Consequently, I sought for self-awareness throughout the research process so that I could better understand how I influenced the research process.

Another important aspect of my research identity is critical theory. Critical theory is founded on the tenant that individuals form meaning about reality within a social and historical context, but this meaning is also constructed within power dynamics. Moreover, traditional research paradigms contribute to the maintenance of these skewed power dynamics such as, gender, racial, and class oppression. While there are many types of critical theories, such as a queer theory (Ponterotto, 2005), I do not ascribe to a specific critical theory, but rather use a general critical theoretical perspective as I design my dissertation. My goal is to use my research to challenge traditional conventions that limit a broader acceptance of life experience and knowledge (Ponterotto, 2005).
Anzaldúa's (1999) Borderlands theory also supports my critical research perspective. Anzaldúa used various creative, fluid writing methods to challenge traditional conventions about theory development and about individuals living among cultures. Through the use of her theory I introduce vocabulary tied to mythology and other forms of language (i.e., Aztec language), such as *coatlicue*; terms that many individuals may not feel comfortable reading or pronouncing. These unfamiliar characteristics disrupt the traditional paradigms about how dissertations should be written. Thus, I approach my goal of challenging traditional academic conventions that limit a broader acceptance of life experiences, especially those of Mexican American women doctoral students (Ponterotto, 2005).

**Research Design**

**Narrative Research.** Although the term narrative often defies precise definition (Riessman & Speedy, 2007), for the purpose of my dissertation I describe it simply; narrative research is the study of stories (Polkinghorne, 2007). While many types of qualitative research methods incorporate narratives, in narrative research, narrative is both the method and phenomena of study (Clandinin, 2007).

As a narrative researcher working from a constructivist approach, I examine the content and stylistic features of stories, such as story structure (i.e., starting point, plot) and the story telling styles of participants. By exploring both the content and stylistic features of stories, I begin grasping the meaning participants attribute to their experiences and the fluid connections they forge between past, present, and the future (Polkinghorne, 2007; Reissman, 2003). I do not, however, view stories as accurate and factual representations of participants' life events. In other words, my goal as a narrative
researcher is to attain in-depth understanding about how participants comprehend their experiences, not to verify the factuality of the reported life events in their narratives. This perspective is vital to the quality and trustworthiness of my study, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

**Why Narrative.** As part of my Qualitative Research Methods course, instructed by Dr. Michelle Miller-Day in spring 2010, I completed a pilot study in which I used individual interviews to explore the experiences of Latina doctoral students. This study sparked my interest in narrative research. While working with the Latina doctoral students, I was intrigued with how they storied their lives and how they engaged with their stories to make sense of their identities (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). During the participant interviews, my first grand tour question (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 2005) was, "Tell me the story of your academic journey." Thus, participants had freedom and authority over how they told their stories. I highly value this freedom as a researcher and strive to implement it in my dissertation research as well.

During the analysis phase of my pilot study, I was intrigued with how participants structured their stories, which is an integral emphasis of narrative research. One participants' narrative reminded me of a mosaic with many small pieces scattered throughout time, but as a whole all her small stories formed a grand picture of her journey toward the PhD. Another participant began her story with life experiences in her master's program and discussed her path toward a Ph.D. in a linear fashion. The last participant started her story early in her life, at a tragic moment— the death of her father. According to a narrative research approach, the way participants start their stories, the
development throughout their stories, and the end (even if not yet reached) sheds light on how participants perceive their life (Muller, 1999).

I was also interested in how the participants chose to tell their stories (e.g., using humor, body language) and what they chose to reveal, which are also important aspects of narrative research (Muller, 1999). All of these facets: content, story structure, and style of story telling, created unique narratives illuminating how the Latina participants in my pilot study understood their lived experiences in a doctoral program. Due to the multifaceted perspectives I gained through their narratives, I have decided to use narrative in my dissertation research.

Narratives also capture cultural context, which made this research method a viable selection for my study about cultural navigation. Narratives are situated within social, historical, and cultural contexts (Riessman, 2003) and serve as vehicles that unify shared meanings and help transmit the values that are founded in these contexts (Polkinghorne, 1988). By studying social, cultural, and historical structures inherent in stories I attained understanding about how participants perceived and experienced various cultural spheres (Riessman, 2003).

Another benefit of narrative research is that narratives can foster understanding about identity (Hoshmand, 2005; Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 2003). In fact, many narrative researchers view narrative as performance of identity (Langellier, 1989; Riessman, 2003). Analyzing narratives as identity performance expands the focus beyond the text (i.e., story content) to include how a story is performed for an audience; or in the case of my study the interviewer. The concept of identity as a performance does not suggest inauthenticity, but rather recognizes that identities are located within social
interactions (Riessman, 2003). As I mentioned in chapter one, I also view identity as enacted and as a fluid concept negotiated through life stories (Anzaldúa, 1999; Polkinghorne, 1988). Therefore, by analyzing narratives as performances, I attained in-depth understanding about participants' identities.

Finally, narratives facilitate a research process that empowers participants and challenges dominant ideologies of academia (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Rodriguez, 2006, 2010). For this reason, researchers exploring cultural contexts unique to graduate students of color have also used narrative approaches (González et al., 2001; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008; Rodriguez, 2006; Muller, 1999). I too used a narrative research design that empowered participants as authorities of their own voices and that situated participants as collaborative members of the research process. Specifically, I conducted semi-structured interviews and used trustworthiness methods that enabled participants to have control over how their voices were represented. Lastly, the stories of Mexican American women are so often neglected in academia, thus making their stories the focal point of my study challenges dominant ideologies (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Rodriguez, 2010).

**Research Questions**

**Research Question 1**
How do CACREP-accredited Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral programs impact the identity development of Mexican American women students?

**Research Question 2**
How do Mexican American women doctoral students navigate their cultures of origin and the academic cultures of their CACREP-accredited Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral programs?
Follow-up question to Research Question 2
How does this cultural navigation impact how students feel and act within their cultures of origin and within their academic CACREP-accredited CES doctoral cultural realms?

Participants

Sample size is an important issue when using a narrative approach. A review of the literature highlighted several studies that informed my study. Researchers who have used a narrative approach to explore the lives of students of color in higher education have had sampling sizes ranging from two to six participants (Galindo & Escamilla, 1995; K. González et al., 2001; K. González et al., 2002; Murakami-Ramalho, Piert, & Militello, 2008; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). In these studies, the researchers conducted in-depth explorations of their participants' lived experiences. Because I also used narrative inquiry and sought depth rather than breadth (Patton, 2002), I had a smaller sample size of five (Creswell et al., 2007). This sample size enabled me to explore participants' experiences in depth- creating rich and descriptive data (Patton, 2002).

Sample Demographics

To attain this sample, I used purposeful criterion sampling since I wanted to explore the lived experiences of a particular group of individuals (Patton, 2002). My criteria for inclusion were based on ethnicity, gender, education level, and type of doctoral program. Specifically, I recruited participants who were Mexican American women students in Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)-accredited counselor education doctoral programs. I also employed snowball sampling. In this case, participants knew others who met the criteria of the study and that were also information rich cases (Patton, 2002).
Ethnicity and gender. As mentioned in chapter one, data from the national Survey of Earned Doctorates in U.S. universities indicate that from 1990-2000, Latina women generally earned more doctoral degrees than Latino men, which suggests that Latina women are doing better than Latino men in doctoral education. However, when the statistics were further investigated, they indicated that Latina women were the most underrepresented in doctoral education when compared to women of other ethnicities. These statistics initiated my exploration of Latina women in doctoral education. I chose to focus on Mexican American women because even though they are the largest subgroup of all the Latina sub-groups (i.e., Cuban, Puerto Rican, etc), between 1990-2000 they were also the group that experienced the largest disparity in doctorate production (Watford, Rivas, Burciaga, & Solorzano, 2006). This discrepancy fueled my desire to explore their experiences in doctoral education.

Additionally, I recruited Mexican American women who were either first-generation U.S. born or who had moved to the U.S. as young children. Although I had no criteria based on the label participants selected to ethnically identify. I chose to work with women of Mexican descent who were born in the U.S. or who moved to the U.S. at a young age because they potentially experienced a lifetime of navigating U.S. culture and Mexican culture. This bicultural experience was critical to my study, because this type of experience, in addition to navigating a CES doctoral program, appeared to highly impact the identities of my participants.

I chose to exclude women who were raised in Mexico beyond childhood because their experiences are different than Mexican American women born or raised in the U.S. The distinction between Latina women born in the U.S. versus Latina women born in
their country of origin was emphasized by two participants in my pilot study. One participant had recently moved to the U.S. to earn her doctorate. Compared to the other two participants who were born and raised in the U.S., her experiences were markedly unique. Not only was she adjusting to her doctoral program, but also to living in a completely new environment. Another participant actually differentiated between the experiences of international graduate students versus students of different ethnicities raised in the U.S. She described a "bicultural" experience in which she learned to navigate American culture and her culture of origin from a young age.

**Education level and type of doctoral program.** I recruited participants in CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs due to the need for research in this area (Hughes & Kleist, 2005) and due to the distinctive characteristics of these programs. Similar to other doctoral programs they require students to complete course work, comprehensive exams, and dissertation, but unlike other doctoral programs they also require students to complete additional hours in counseling (i.e., counseling practicum and counseling internship), complete a supervision practicum, and to complete teaching internships (i.e., co-teaching with faculty).

My goal was to work with participants at different stages in their programs (e.g., first-years, doctoral candidates), therefore I did not have criteria based on year/stage in program. I hoped that by having participants at different points in their CES doctoral programs, I would gain a more comprehensive sense of participants' identities over the span of a CES doctoral program.

Ultimately, my representation of participants included five women who ranged in age from 27 to 37. One woman identified as Latina, two identified as Mexican American,
one identified as Chicana, and one identified as Hispanic. Regarding relationships status, two participants were married. One participant was engaged. One was in a relationship and one did not discuss relationships. One participant had two children and all of the other participants did not have any children. In terms of program status, one participant was in the first year of her doctoral program. Two participants were in their second year and one of these women was preparing to take her comprehensive exams. One participant was in her third year and preparing to write her dissertation pre-proposal and one was in her sixth year writing her dissertation pre-proposal.

Methods of Recruitment

Mexican Americans make up approximately 80% of the Latina/o population in the Southwest United States (Contreras, & Gándara, 2006). Jointly, California and Texas are home to approximately half of the nation’s Latina/o population (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2006). According to the CACREP directory of CACREP-accredited programs, however, California universities currently do not offer doctoral degrees in any of their CACREP-accredited programs. Therefore, my goal was to find participants in CES doctoral programs in Texas.

Strategies to recruit participants in Texas incorporated working with key informants. Key informants are individuals who can provide access and sponsorship to information or individuals that would otherwise be unavailable to me as the researcher (Gilchrist & Williams, 1999). Firstly, I used my professional network of CES faculty at Penn State to connect to four other CES faculty in CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs in Texas. The faculty in Texas sent my recruitment e-mail to their departments. My recruitment e-mail included my research purpose, sample criteria, and requested
eligible individuals to contact me (see Appendix A). One of the Texas faculty members posted my recruitment e-mail on her department website. Another key-informant I contacted was a CES alum and a former co-worker. She connected me with two Texas CES faculty members. These faculty members also sent my recruitment e-mail to their department list-servs. One of my participants also attempted to connect me with two women who met my sample criteria, but these women were not responsive to her request.

Although I did receive participants from these efforts, I had not met my minimum sample goal. After conferring with my dissertation chair, I decided to expand my recruitment efforts beyond Texas. I used several avenues to recruit participants outside of Texas. Firstly, I attended a national counseling conference and literally introduced myself to strangers in an attempt to meet CES doctoral students who met my sample criteria. I also attended a Latino symposium at the conference and tried to recruit participants. I met a CES professor at this symposium who attempted to connect me with a student who met my criteria, but she did not respond to our requests. Finally, another professor I met at this conference sent my recruitment e-mail to her department list-serve and a list-serve that reached individuals throughout the mid-west U.S. Ultimately, these recruitment efforts enabled me to attain a sample of five women who met my sample criteria.

Once I had access to potential participants, I followed up with a phone call to further explain the study and set-up an interview time, date, and location (when applicable). All participants were e-mailed informed consent forms (see Appendix B), which were reviewed, signed, and collected during individual interviews.


**Procedures**

In the following section, I will discuss my data collection procedures. Before beginning this discussion, I will address the relationship between my research questions and data collection methods to facilitate understanding of how I am approaching data collection. From a positivist perspective, data collection methods are created by logical deduction from the research questions, however as a qualitative researcher I view my research questions and the data collection process as two distinct pieces of my overall research design (Maxwell, 2005). What this means is that I did not literally translate my research questions into data collection methods. For example, I did not design an interview protocol ensured to obtain responses from participants to answer my research questions. Rather, I developed methods that enabled me to attain narratives that provided insight about the phenomena I was studying. This distinction is important and will be thoroughly addressed when I discuss my interview protocol.

Additionally, while my research questions influenced my data collection methods, so did the contexts in which I conducted the research. These contexts included, but were not limited to, my doctoral committee members, the research field in which I collected data, and participants. Therefore, I developed data collection methods that provided the data I needed, keeping in mind the contexts in which I was working (Maxwell, 2005). However, because I could not predict all of the different cultural or social contexts I encountered, I was flexible about my data collection methods, especially once I entered the field to collect data. This theme of flexibility is integral to qualitative research in general (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 2005) and was paramount to my entire research design.
Interview Methods

I attained narratives by conducting individual semistructured interviews with each participant (Miller & Crabtree, 1999) Interviews lasted between an hour to two-hours. One interview was conducted over the phone and one interview was conducted over skype, a free internet based phone service. Three interviews were conducted in-person and were held in locations preferable to participants. All interviews were digitally recorded.

My selection of this interview method was influenced by my perception of the role I fulfill as an interviewer and the roles that participants fulfill as interviewees. Firstly, as a narrative researcher I viewed the participants, or interviewees, as narrators. This meant that I did not perceive interviewees as having the answers to my research questions, but rather I saw them as narrators with their own voices and with their own stories to tell (Chase, 2010). Together, both the narrators and myself participated in a conversation in which stories emerged that shed light on the phenomena I was studying (Miller & Crabtree, 1999; Polkinghorne, 1988).

Consequently, as an interviewer I invited stories from narrators. To facilitate this process, I used an interview guide and conducted semistructured interviews (see Appendix C for interview guide). Semi-structured interviews are guided, open-ended communication events and interview guides are outlines that provide direction during the interview process (Miller & Crabtree, 1999). Because I used a semistructured approach, I used my interview guide loosely. For example, interviews started with a generative narrative question, which was a broad open-ended question that encouraged narrators to tell their stories in detail (Flick, 2010). In addition to the generative narrative question,
my interview guide for the semistructured interviews contained questions, probes and prompts that I used to gain more details from participants. While I began each semistructured interview with the same generative narrative question, the other questions, probes, and prompts I used during each interview changed depending on the narrator and other factors that influenced the interview (e.g., interview environment, story genres, etc.) (Miller & Crabtree, 1999).

Prior to the interview meeting, I also informed narrators about the option to bring artifacts to the interviews, such as photos or letters, to provide a visual aspect to their narratives. Another example of an artifact is a memory box, which is a collection of items that trigger memories (Creswell et al., 2007). My plan was to ask narrators to tell me about their artifacts and how they contributed to their stories or to ask narrators to tell me stories involving the artifacts of their choice (Bach, 2007). Using artifacts during the interviews provided insight about the personal, cultural, and historical contexts of narrators' stories. However, only one participant, unintentionally, provided artifacts, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Finally, throughout the data collection process I kept a journal to note thoughts and feelings about the interviews and the research process overall. I did not take notes during interviews; thus before and after interviews, I wrote about the interview setting, body language of interviewer and narrators, emotions sparked throughout the process (e.g., happiness, curiosity), artifacts, and other pertinent experiences. This journal helped me process my reflexivity (i.e., my own assumptions, beliefs, and biases)(Creswell & Miller, 2000). This journal was also used during the data analysis phase of my study.
**Data Analysis**

Narrative analysis incorporates examining the content of stories, but also exploring how and why events are storied (Riessman & Speedy, 2007). To meet this objective, I had four stages of data analysis. These phases included: (a) listening to narratives, (b) transcribing and interpreting individual transcripts, (c) searching across different fields of experience, and (d) exploring differences and commonalities among participants (Fraser, 2004).

By using a multi-phased analysis, I aimed to gain a more in-depth understanding about participants' identities and their experiences as CES doctoral students. In this section, I will thoroughly describe these phases. Although each phase of analysis illuminated insight about all of my research questions, I will identify when and how a phase aligned more with a particular research question.

**Phase One: Listening to Narratives**

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. However, the digital recordings alone were the basis of the first phase of analysis: listening to narratives. This phase incorporated hearing the stories of the narrators and experiencing the emotions of narrators and interviewer (Fraser, 2004). This phase was facilitated by a journal I kept during the data collection phase of my study (as noted in the data collection section). I referred to this journal while listening to the digital recordings since the thoughts and emotions recorded in the journal impacted how I interpreted the digital recordings. I also took notes in the journal while I listened to the narratives about thoughts, emotions, and emerging interpretations. Questions I asked myself as I listened included:
o How were emotions experienced by narrators and interviewer during the interview?

o How did each interview begin, progress, and end?

o How was I feeling as I listened to the interviews? (Fraser, 2004)

These questions helped me focus on the structure of stories as well as the types of stories (e.g., funny, sad) that narrators provided (Fraser, 2004).

Phase one of data analysis provided insight about the general concept of my research questions: identity. Through exploring the emotions of narrators and myself, and by exploring the narrators' story-telling styles (i.e., style and content), I developed a sense of the overarching 'feel' of the participants. For example, in the pilot study I conducted, my first interviewee laid out her entire narrative in a linear fashion. Although some of her stories were emotional, she refrained from expressing her emotions. Contrarily, my other two participants traversed through time, telling me stories from different points in their lives. One participant laughed, cried, and changed her tone of voice often, and the other used descriptive vocabulary, humor, and facial expressions to demonstrate the emotionality of her stories. These facets of their stories provided a 'feel' of each participant and a sense of their identities. Obtaining this information in my current study illuminated my understanding of narrators' unique identities and laid the foundation as I progressed to the later stages of data analysis.

**Phase Two: Transcribing and Interpreting Individual Transcripts**

The second phase of analysis was broken up into four steps: (1) detailed transcription, (2) deciphering stories, (3) coding stories, and (4) exploring stylistic features of stories.
(1) **Detailed transcription.** The first step in the second phase of analysis was to transcribe in detail the interview digital recordings. To transcribe in detail meant I transcribed all aspects of interviews such as, pauses, silences, and verbal utterances in addition to narrators' words. Transcribing these types of details helped capture the storytelling style of each participant. As a narrative researcher, I value verbal fragments as much as I value the fluent, more coherent phrases of speech because I view these communication features as data that provides insight about narrators' identities (Fraser, 2004). I also transcribed in detail so that readers can see the transcriptions without my analysis (Riessman, 2003). This increased confirmability of my study, which will be discussed further in the final section of this chapter.

(2) **Deciphering stories.** Next, I divided individual transcripts into stories, which involved ample interpretation. To establish stories within transcripts, I examined transcripts for ideas expressed, or "scenes" (Fraser, 2004, p. 189) that had plots. While some narrative researchers propose specific types of plots, such as tragic and comic (Polkinghorne, 1988), I used a more broad approach and looked for plots by exploring events or experiences that narrators presented as meaningful. To help me identify scenes that had plots, I also looked for beginning and/or ending phrases, such as "It all began..." or "that was the end of it." (Flick, 2009). While working with transcripts in which narrators provided artifacts, I also used narrators' descriptions of artifacts and my journal notes about artifacts to help me establish story scenes and plots. For example, a photo may represent the climax or plot of a particular story. However, it is important to note that separating individual transcripts into smaller stories was not easy because stories
often overlapped or unfolded in multifaceted ways, which is why this process required significant interpretation.

I also began numbering sentences and stories within individual transcripts. I numbered by sentences, rather than clauses, to decrease the fragmentation of the transcripts (Fraser, 2004). After the transcripts were divided into stories, I also numbered and named each story. I named stories based on story topics or by using quotes from stories. Numbering sentences and stories helped when referencing and using particular sections within transcripts (Fraser, 2004).

(3) Coding stories. After numbering and deciphering the stories of each transcript, I began analyzing the stories within individual transcripts. To analyze stories, I first read through the stories a few times and wrote research memos about the emotions and meaning of each story. As I read through the stories, I referred to journal notes I took about artifacts and questioned how the artifacts impacted story meanings. I also referred to the journal notes I took during the first phase of analysis (i.e., listening to narratives) to remember what it felt like to purely listen to the stories. This process helped immerse me in the data (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). After reading through a transcript several times, I then began categorizing stories based on topics and/or meanings presented in the stories. In other words, I compared and contrasted stories within individual transcripts. I then grouped stories based on their similarities and these groupings helped me create codes based on the stories' topics. Codes highlighted how I selected to categorize stories. An example code was, "stories about crossing boundaries within an academic context" (Fraser, 2004).
Through story coding, I began obtaining a more comprehensive understanding about story genres within individual interviews. I also obtained a sense of specific, unified experiences related to my research questions. In the final phase of my study, I then compared stories between and among transcripts to gain a more textured understanding about identity and the cultural spheres of CES doctoral programs and narrators' cultures of origin.

(4) Exploring stylistic features of stories. In addition to coding stories, I also explored stories for speech patterns, contradictions, and turning points. When analyzing the stories based on speech patterns, I focused on the pauses in speech, utterances, cadency, and vocal inflections. When analyzing the stories for contradictions, I explored story content and story-telling style (Fraser, 2004). For example, narrators may contradict themselves in story content by saying they feel unsupported in their doctoral programs, but later tell stories about all the support they receive in academia. On the other hand, they may discuss feeling completely happy about their choice of doctoral program, but their facial expressions and body language may appear sad.

Finally, turning points are when narrators identify a radical shift in their expected life course (Creswell, 2007; Riessman, 2003). For example, in my pilot study one participant started the interview with a turning point: the death of her father. Turning points alter the meaning of past experiences and ultimately shape individuals' identities (Riessman, 2003). When exploring speech patterns, contradictions, and turning points, I asked myself:

- What did these characteristics of narrators' stories reveal about the story in which they appeared?
What did these characteristics of narrators' stories reveal about the overall narrative presented?

What did these characteristics signify about narrators' identities?

Analyzing stories for speech patterns, contradictions, and turning points required more of a focus on story-telling style. By focusing on narrators' story telling styles, I gained more clarity about the multidimensional meaning they attributed to story content. I also began understanding the distinctive characteristics of each participant, which shed light on their unique identities.

**Phase Three: Searching across Different Fields of Experience**

In phase three of analysis, I challenged myself to look beyond single dimensions of stories by examining intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural aspects of each individual transcript. This provided insight about how participants interacted with different aspects of their environments (Fraser, 2004), which was integral to my study since I explored how participants interacted with their CES doctoral programs and with their cultures of origin.

**Intrapersonal.** Intrapersonal characteristics of narratives include participants' internal body-mind interactions. These interactions can be identified through self-talk or through participants' discussion of emotions that were concealed to other characters in their narratives. Exploring these types of intrapersonal experiences shed light on research question two and the follow-up question to research question two. These questions addressed how Mexican American women navigated the cultures of their CES doctoral programs and their cultures of origin and how they acted, thought and felt during this cultural navigation. Because cultural navigation is a complex concept, exploring
narrators' inner-thoughts and emotions helped address this issue from a different perspective.

**Interpersonal.** Interpersonal interactions included those that participants have with other people. To identify interpersonal interactions within narratives, I found terms such as "I said" and "she said". Learning about the interactions participants had with individuals within their CES doctoral cultures and their cultures of origin provided insight about cultural navigation by providing specific examples of social interactions.

**Cultural.** In my analysis of cultural contexts, I explored individual transcripts for descriptions of both culture of origin (e.g., ethnicity, home community) and narrators' CES doctoral programs (e.g., classroom environments, campus). Although intrapersonal and interpersonal analysis also illustrated cultural contexts, this part of the analysis was different because I specifically explored cultural contexts through narrators' language use (Fraser, 2004).

I explored these cultural realms (i.e., culture of origin and academic culture) through language use because language is situated within cultural contexts and thus can provide in-depth understanding of narrators and their cultural surroundings (Fraser, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1988). Additionally, I examined this facet of storytelling because language emerged as a powerful theme in my pilot study. In my pilot study participants discussed how they used certain vocabulary in different cultural contexts and they discussed their use of English and Spanish. Therefore, in this study I explored two facets of language: vocabulary selection and English, Spanish, or other language use. Although I write about examining these two language features separately, analysis of these characteristics often overlapped and supplemented each other.
I first analyzed language use by exploring narrators' vocabulary selection around their cultures of origin and their CES doctoral program cultures. Questions I asked myself during this part of analysis included:

- How did different cultural contexts influence narrators' vocabulary use?
- What emotions did narrators link with specific words?
- Was narrators' vocabulary selection important to their stories' plots or to their expression of their identities?

Exploring specific vocabulary selection helped me understand how narrators chose to talk about specific cultural settings and/or how different cultural settings influenced narrators' vocabulary selection.

Second, I looked at English, Spanish, or other language use. Not all Mexican Americans speak Spanish, English, or other languages, but there are many who do. In fact, there are many who consider multilingualism (or lack thereof) an integral aspect of their ethnic identities (Delgado Bernal, 2006). Questions I asked during this part of analysis included:

- Did narrators' switch between languages within the interview? What did this signify?
- How did they talk about their mono- or multi-lingualism?
- How did language use impact their sense of ethnic identity? Their cultural navigations?

My goal in analyzing English, Spanish, and other language use in different cultural contexts was to learn more about narrators' ethnic identities.
Ultimately, the objective of phase three of analysis was to examine narrators' interactions with different aspects of their environments. This helped me learn about the social structures and cultural conventions that narrators' perceive as part of their CES doctoral programs and their cultures origin (Fraser, 2004). Additionally, I gained awareness about experiences of border crossing and the feelings, thoughts, and actions narrators associated with cultural navigation.

**Phase Four: Exploring Differences and Commonalities among Participants**

In the final phase, I used observations and interpretations made during all phases of analysis to explore differences and commonalities among and between participants (Fraser, 2004). I then developed common categories across all narratives.

Although I write about my phases of analysis in a sequential manner, actual analysis did not occur chronologically. As I listened to and read through the transcripts, interpretations based on different phases of analysis emerged (e.g., recognizing plot, vocabulary selection, etc). Therefore, I took research memos throughout all phases of data analysis to notate these observations and how they emerged.

**Researcher Focus**

"How do we reconfigure ourselves as witnesses when our observations of poverty and oppression include the communities of our families?" (Cruz, 2006, p. 65). This question deeply resonates with me as Mexican American woman and now as a researcher studying women like myself. In my pilot study, I identified with participants and I also related their experiences to the historical and social experiences of my family and my home community. Now for my dissertation research, as a Mexican American woman in a CACREP-accredited CES doctoral program, I again shared many commonalities with my
participants that made our research relationships unique. An important question I asked myself was: how can I conduct my dissertation research without feeling biased?

As part of qualitative methodology, acknowledging myself, and my relation to participants as a researcher, is integral to the authenticity of my study (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Miller-Day, 2004). To me, cultivating an authentic study does not mean eliminating my perspectives from the research, but rather taking steps to increase my self-awareness. Therefore, I used different forms of writing to explore my reflexivity (i.e., my own assumptions and beliefs) and how it influenced the research process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Integrating this type of writing into my study also aligned with the heuristic influence on narrative research. Heuristic inquiry incorporates the personal insights and experiences of the researcher with the experiences of the participants as they all collaborate to learn more about the phenomena being explored (Miller-Day, 2004; Patton, 2002).

**Writing as a Method of Inquiry**

Writing tools are inherent in qualitative research through the use of journals, field notes, and memoing (Miller-Day, 2004; H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 2005). While I used journals and memos during the research process, I also used writing as a method of inquiry by employing different writing forms to challenge the way I viewed the research process. Similar to a narrative research approach, writing as a method of inquiry promotes learning about how individuals construct the world, how individuals construct their identities, and how they construct meaning of others (Richardson, 2000). Throughout the entire research process, I kept a personal journal. I also had a notebook with me at all times to jot down ideas about my dissertation. Finally, I used free form
writing in which I wrote whatever came to mind in any form (e.g., poetry, random words). Later, I re-read and re-wrote the text, gaining clarity of the essence of my thoughts. Through journaling and free form writing, I began to understand how language shapes my view of the world and of my research process. These writing tools helped me challenge my biases and comfort zones when thinking about research methods and my research participants. My hope was that writing as a method of inquiry expanded my worldview thus enriching the quality of my study.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness incorporates being conscientious of accounting for multiple perspectives of a qualitative study (Patton, 2002). Trustworthiness criteria help establish the quality of the research and include: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this section, I will define each criterion and discuss methods I employed specific to each criterion to increase the trustworthiness of my study.

Before addressing each criterion, I must describe my understanding about the nature of the data I collected to establish a foundation of trustworthiness for my study (Polkinghorne, 2007). By using stories in my research, I was not determining the accuracy of the events depicted in these stories. Rather, I explored the meaning participants ascribed to these events, regardless of the accuracy. I viewed stories as evidence of personal meaning, not of factual events (Polkinghorne, 2007).

I also used a hermeneutic position in which I acknowledged that I cannot transcend my own social, historical, and cultural contexts. My interpretations as a narrative researcher were always from a certain perspective. As a result, I do not claim
that my interpretations are the only interpretations possible, but that they are viable and
grounded in the evidence provided (Polkinghorne, 2007; Riessman, 2003).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the accuracy of information gathered in the research (Lincoln
& Guba, 1985). I enhanced credibility in my study by using rigorous research methods
and establishing the credibility of the researcher (Patton, 2002). Rigorous methods that I
used included data triangulation, thick description, and respondent validation. Data
triangulation involved comparing the consistency of information obtained at different
times during a study and by different sources within the same method (Patton, 2002). I
used the literature/theories, interviews, and artifacts as three different sources all being
compared within the method of narrative inquiry. Thus, I reviewed empirical articles in
my research area that provided a foundation for the purpose and importance of this study.
I conducted individual interviews to collect narratives. When participants provided
artifacts (e.g., photos, keepsakes), I attained another perspective about their narratives
when participants described artifact meaning and relevance. Data triangulation enabled
me to see multiple perspectives of the phenomenon I was investigating (Patton, 2002),
but because only one participant included an artifact in her narrative, I also used thick
description to further enhance credibility. I provided long, verbatim composites of
participants’ narratives to promote the authentic voices of each participant. This method
helped me stay grounded in the data and increased the credibility of my findings.

In addition to data triangulation, I also conducted respondent validation and peer
debriefing to increase credibility of the data analysis. Respondent validation incorporated
negotiating the meaning of the participants' narratives with the participants, which is a
paramount aspect of narrative research (Creswell et al., 2007). This entailed sharing individual interview transcripts and/or drafts of findings with the respective participants and asking for feedback or clarification (Patton, 2002; Polkinghorne, 2007). When conducting respondent validation with my participants, one participant had me change two words in her transcript and one participant clarified her use of laughter during our interview. When conducting peer-debriefing, I met with a colleague in the CES profession and reviewed my research memos and code books to see if the categories I identified aligned with categories she identified. Her and I reached consensus, which helped me gain clarity about emerging categories in my study (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007).

Finally, to establish the credibility of myself as the researcher, I used self-reflective journals, research memos, and writing as a method of inquiry in my dissertation to reveal information about myself that may have impacted data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Patton, 2002). These various writing methods, which I discussed in previous sections, promoted self-awareness of my own biases and also illuminate my credibility as a researcher by giving readers insight about aspects of myself (e.g., gender, ethnicity) that impacted how I approached participants and interpreted their experiences.

**Transferability**

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings in the research are transferable to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, transferability is important because it expands the findings of a study. Extrapolation further enhances transferability because it demonstrates that the researcher has thought about other settings in which the findings may be applicable (Patton, 2002).
Extrapolations are "modest" (Patton, 2002, p. 584) suppositions about the applicability of a study's findings to other similar, but not identical, environments. In my study, I worked with a unique group of women: Mexican American women doctoral students, in CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs. However, I may make extrapolations about the findings of my study about other Mexican American women (i.e., within the same age range and socioeconomic background) earning CES doctoral degrees. I remain very specific about potential extrapolations because due to the depth and small sample size of my study, I am cautious about transferability. Furthermore, as a researcher with a constructivist approach, I am intensely fascinated with the particular experiences of the women with whom I interviewed. I am seeking to learn about the specific contexts they discussed, the cultural variables they introduced, and how they interpreted their identities. The purpose of my study was not to promote one perception of truth or to make generalizations, but rather to provide different perspectives and encourage dialogue about these perspectives (Patton, 2000).

**Dependability**

Dependability refers to how dependable a study is and is similar to the quantitative term, reliability. Ensuring dependability may include researchers using journal writing to reduce reactivity or researchers taking steps to maintain participant confidentiality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As mentioned before, I used a journal and different methods of writing to process my reflexivity (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I also maintained confidentiality of participants by using pseudonyms for participants, by keeping doctoral institutions anonymous, and by not revealing any personally identifiable
information. Only I have access to the interview digital recordings. All electronic files containing data are password protected and only I have access to these files.

**Confirmability**

Finally, confirmability refers to clearly explaining every aspect of the research process so that others can confirm the findings (Hoshmand, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Two ways I address confirmability is through my interview transcriptions and by creating a paper trail. As mentioned earlier, I transcribed the interview digital recordings in detail so that readers can view the transcripts without my analysis (Riessman, 2003). I also created a paper trail consisting of my journals, memos, and other writing so that my self-awareness and biases are illustrated as they naturally evolved throughout the research process. These features make my analysis more transparent so that readers can follow the presented evidence to draw their own conclusions (Polkinghorne, 2007).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have described the constructivist and critical frameworks that underlie my dissertation study. I also described my selection of a narrative research approach to obtain in-depth insight about the identity and cultural navigations of Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs. My data collection, procedures, and analysis are all informed by narrative methods in which the objective is to understand the meaning that participants ascribe to their lived experiences.

Due to my own identity as Mexican American women in a CES doctoral program, it was imperative that in this chapter I addressed managing my own biases during the research process and establishing trustworthiness of my study. Using various methods to establish trustworthiness, such as data triangulation and respondent validation, increases
my self-awareness, and fosters a study that acknowledges participants as valued members of the research process.

As I transition to the latter half of my dissertation, I must discuss the organization of the final chapters. The following chapters are organized to best represent the voices of each narrator and are formatted as one chapter per participant. These chapters are divided into two sections. The first section contains an abbreviated narrative to provide readers with the overall narrative in each women’s own voice. I must mention, however, that in most cases the narratives transcripts were 40-50 pages in length and I narrowed them down to approximately 10 pages. Thus, this process required that I take my own lens as a researcher and draw out the most important facets of the narratives. The second section within the participant chapters is a discussion about the first three phases of analysis that I did with each individual transcript. My aim in using this structure is to highlight the uniqueness of each narrator and to gives readers a sense of the distinctive identities of each narrator. Specifically, I addressed my first research question: (1) How do CACREP-accredited Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral programs impact the identities of Mexican American women students? In chapter nine, which follows the participant chapters, I will discuss phase four of analyses in which I identified the differences and commonalities among and between participants. This chapter addresses my final two research questions.

When using quotes and excerpts from narrators’ stories to demonstrate key points, I aimed to keep narrators’ speech in tact. Therefore, I did not take out all of their space fillers (e.g., “um”) and I spelled some words phonetically to illustrate their pronunciation. I also used ellipses to represent brief pauses. When absolutely necessary, I used brackets
to indicate when I inserted words to increase clarity or used alternative words to protect the identities of participants. At the end of the quote or excerpt, I included the story number and the line numbers so that readers can refer to transcripts and verify or make their own interpretations.
CHAPTER FOUR: MARTINA’S NARRATIVE

“Not wanting to always follow what I’m supposed to do, I guess, culturally.”

I guess it goes back probably to… maybe even my master’s program. There were always times within my master’s program that I knew I wanted to continue on. I knew I wanted get my PhD. Throughout my master’s program, I had a lot of experiences with family that wondered what I was doing. Why wasn’t I married yet? Why didn’t I have kids? So, from that kind of a cultural aspect, there was a lot of confusion, but yet acceptance. I guess I was kind of…the one in the family that always wasn’t going to follow the…I was more independent. I suppose that would be a way to say it. So, that’s how it probably initially started.

When I finished my master’s program I was ready to have a job and I think that was probably more accepted by family at that point. They had a little bit more understanding because I had taken on some supervisory roles and administrative at a local community mental health center that was also affiliated with a hospital. So, there were a lot of accomplishments at that time and when I had decided to go back to school again, I had been married just for a year. Again, kind of hearing some pressures about, I was getting older and still hadn’t started a family. By this point, my father had passed away and my brother was very ill. For me, it was just like this was the time. I felt very stable in my marriage, that I could take this on and I knew, as I was getting older, if I didn’t get started, it wasn’t gonna happen…if I didn’t take advantage of an opportunity.

As I started my program I had qualified for a dean’s graduate fellowship. One of the professors that interviewed me was also the director of our office of ethnic inclusion. They look at underrepresented groups, first-generation college students and I kinda had
fit into multiple categories. So, I was nominated and received that and for doc students, 
they give twenty a year for the whole university. We have like 30,000 students. So, it was 
huge. It goes into our four-year program. Your first year and your dissertation year are 
stipend and they give you a full ride. So, they pay you and they pay for tuition. Your 
second and third year they pay for tuition, but those are your service years. So, twenty 
hours of service as a grad assistant, research assistant, TA, whatever that is. So, I had 
originally thought I was gonna go part-time and I knew it was gonna take me forever to 
finish, but I thought, “I can go part-time. I can start a family.” I can do all of these 
moreful things and then I had this great fellowship that was offered to me. I’m like, 
“Well great.” It kinda jarred everything for me, but it also allowed for a lot of 
opportunities that I would not have been able to take advantage of had I tried to go part-
time and not take this fellowship. I don’t think it would have happened had I not had that 
professor there that was advocating for underrepresented groups. So, that’s kinda how the 
journey began.

Now, in my second-year that particular professor is very much my mentor. My 
advisor probably is not the greatest advisor. She just went up for her third-year review. 
So, I think she’s kinda got a lotta things going on. She just took on a national role….long 
story short, she’s pretty busy. So, I haven’t really sought her out for a lot of things and I 
don’t know that there’s always a great fit. We’ve never once talked about culture or 
ethnicity, if anything we’ve talked about being catholic and those catholic pressures, 
maybe, but I seem much more comfortable with the professor that happens to be half 
Native American. So, although we have a lot of diversity in [this city], the state is not that 
diverse. So, that’s kinda at least how it started.
[In this program] they’re very proud to be research extensive and they really do push us with the research. My master’s program was more of a teaching institution. So, I didn’t have that experience. The pressure to really publish and get studies going and out there, um, when I see some of my colleagues that are a year or two ahead of me and they’re, ya know, tryen to interview and they’re tryen to get jobs, I see the importance of all of that too. I think it’s really kind of changed my perspective. I think when I first started I was really just into wanting to teach and be a professor. Now, I feel a lot different, ya know, [teaching] is an element of it, but it’s not all I can do…. [I can also do] the research piece primarily and probably showing leadership through that research. Then also the service… I wouldn’t say that that’s probably as high. I think more when I was working in the field and more my master’s program, I did a lot more service. Not that I don’t do it now, it’s just not as, um, high ranking for me right now.

I have tried to become involved with as many articles and things that are going on. For instance, I wrote a couple of pages for one professor’s book that’s gonna be coming out and getting published. So, that was an opportunity where she’s like, “Listen, if you send it to me, we’ll get it in there and we’ll figure out how you can get published.” So, what a great opportunity. One of my professors in the developmental class had put a call out if anybody was interested [in collaborating]. So, I’ve really tried to take advantage of opportunities. So, I have that one. I have another one with a [professor] who does work on gifted and leadership. That’s really not my research interest, but I thought, “Ya know what, the more that I can participate and the more that I can have a variety of opportunities to really just see how the publishing goes, the better it’s gonna be for me.”
I have another project going on right now. I’m part of a doctoral student retention program. Somehow I got nominated to be kinda the….poster child for it, I guess, so to speak, which is great. We wrote an autoethnography of our experience with this program and it’s within our entire college of education. We looked at it from an international perspective, from a Mexican American perspective, and then a student that came from the south who had three children. So, just really kinda taking in some diverse lenses and pulling them together. We’re all in different programs. One’s in science education. What would I have to do with her if we didn’t have this community building activity? I also work for the office of graduate teaching excellence and then I’m a research assistant for the department.

Plus, I commute. I drive an hour. I had been budgeting four hundred dollars a month my first year to be driving back and forth and to be parking. That’s a lot of money and so this year it was like five hundred dollars a month just to get an apartment [closer to the university]. So, my home and my mortgage and my dogs and my husband are [an hour away] and then I have just a small apartment [near the university]. We kinda just calculated it and it wasn’t just financial, but it’s kind of for me. I was asking myself, “What is my time worth?” Driving back and forth, that’s two hours in a day, that’s ten hours a week, that’s forty hours a month. Who has an extra forty hours a month just to sit in a car? So, that was just the avenue that I took and I’m very thankful for it cuz we’ve had some really crappy weather and it was nice to know that I had a place to stay and I didn’t have to worry about anything.

I think some of the opportunities that [my mentor] has provided me, um, it’s just on a different…..level. She’s already tenured. She’s an associate professor. So, I think
that has an element to do with things. She’s really gotta lot of networking opportunities. She’s really a fantastic person and my own advisor, like I said, she just went up for her third-year review. She’s identified as a clinical assistant professor. I don’t even know how that tenure process works with clinical, but she’s just kinda starting. My mentor had told me, “We gave her to you or we gave you to her as an advisee because we’d knew you’d be easy. We know you’re strong. You’re a self-starter. You’ll find those opportunities.” So, I think that although it was a compliment, I still needed that extra piece and she really kinda provides that for me. So, grant opportunities, other experiences. Because I know her on a different level, um, more of a mentor level versus an adviser. She’s really helped in my journey right now.

[In my department], we have a very diverse group of professors. We have a very diverse program. We have a lot of international students. The faculty has done some work internationally as well, and so bringing those perspectives. The full professor, he has his own center. It’s really great. Then of course my mentor, who is half Native-American, the things she discusses and talks about…..not something that you would get from all professors. We have an African American male professor who’s fabulous and then the clinical assistant professor that does more of our pracs and internships and helps to supervise those. So, [the faculty], they’re all very developmentally focused. That would probably be one thing that they have ingrained in us completely is development. So, that’s been a strength for [the university], of course with the research as well.

[My mentor], I think from her Native American background, she brings up things that we’re not always aware of because the literature isn’t there. So she will really push some of those articles to us to not forget about more underrepresented groups and the
recognition that there’s even more underrepresentation among Native Americans. That has been very helpful. In my master’s program the faculty there were all Caucasian male or female and I would have never had that experience. I don’t remember anybody pushing Native American articles or anything like that to read about other than, somewhat superficially in a multicultural class.

[As a doctoral student, my family] it’s pretty much the same. I still get a lot of comments about, am I gonna be a professional student….am I ever gonna be done? People try to be polite, but when they don’t understand something, at least in my family, it seems to be very superficial. So, it’s like, “How is school?”…”Oh, it’s very intense.” That might be my response and there’s really no follow-up cuz there’s no experience there. I don’t come from a family that values education. Like I mentioned in starting the doc program, it’s like, “You’re gonna do what?” I think my mom, to this day, probably still doesn’t understand exactly what I’ll be doing. Not too long ago I said, “Well mom I’m going to be a counselor educator.” She’s like, “That’s it? You’re going to school for this whole time?” It’s just…the culture does not embrace or understand. My grandpa never had any….I think maybe kindergarten in Mexico. My grandma made it until she was at least fifteen for education, but I find myself as a granddaughter and as a daughter, often having to explain bills or health care things or whatever because there’s that lack of understanding and lack of experience.

I think I’ve been fortunate to….probably just always have, I don’t know, a rebellious side to me, not wanting to always follow what I’m supposed to do, I guess, culturally I would say. I went to a catholic grade school and really felt like I had a lot of opportunities that were given to me there and a lot of rewards from the education itself. I
would say it was the education environment where my need to be successful or feel appreciated….. came from, maybe more so than from family. The positive reinforcement was very strong at school, particularly. Growing up my father had been in a life threatening accident and was hospitalized for like two-and-a-half years. During that time I lived with my grandparents and so I didn't really get that assistance that I needed, early on. I really had to seek that out in my educational environment and I was lucky enough to have really supportive teachers there. So, I think that that just kind of continued on for me. It was something that was instilled early on and I’ve been blessed to have really good professors and mentors in my life that continue to push me too.

My father passed away in 2007 and then my brother passed away during my first-semester of my doc program. So, that was pretty traumatic. I think during that first semester I was probably questioning…I mean it was such an adjustment…being a student again. My husband’s a social worker. We had a great three bedroom house, ya know, and then get just student salary….things like that. It was quite an adjustment anyway and then about six-weeks into the program is when my brother passed away and I was questioning, “Is this right for me? Is this what I need to be doing?” But I was lucky to keep moving forward. My brother passed away on Thanksgiving Day. Then the next week going back to class, there was like two weeks left before finals and I had papers due and I had things due and I think I really immersed myself in school until I had Christmas break.

Interestingly enough, after that happened my husband brought home a puppy, one of these dogs, and I’m like, “What are you doing? I just need to grieve. I just need a month off.” And he brings home a dog and I’m like, “This is the worst thing possible you’ve ever done.” But I couldn't send him back. He’d come from a kill shelter and so
anyway, long story short, then I was raising a puppy, and potty training, and doing that stuff. I think I just stayed so busy, I just kept moving forward that way. In reflection, as much as I didn’t want this dog, he’s wonderful…kinda a healing for me, I guess.

I certainly think [academia and family] all play some pivotal roles in making up who I am. I think that if I looked at academic environment first, for me, it’s not just a job and it’s not just a career. It becomes a life style and it becomes who you are. So, it’s not, I do research, it’s I’m a researcher….and I think that that takes some time to integrate and to develop. From a family perspective, they give me the lens and the perspective of how I look at things. So, I don’t necessarily see things all the same way because of maybe some of those grief and loss issues as well. So, it’s not just from a family that maybe doesn’t value education and doesn’t understand, but my own experiences and how that kinda colors my lenses and how I perceive things. From my home life, my husband’s very supportive. He has no interest ever in going back to school. So, he’s just super supportive to me and he’s like “Everyday that you’re writing, I just know I’m never going to go back to school again.” So, I’m very lucky to have that kind of a support system.

I also think it’s individual characteristics. So, if I haven’t found that my needs got met in one area, family, academic, or home, I will seek it out somewhere else….whether it’s mentors or past employers. So, that kind of ambition was probably more of a paternal trait. My mom likes to remind me that I am very much like my father when he was my age. I do think that it comes from those opportunities and those experiences that were not just given to me, or happenstance, or serendipity, but also the ones that I was able to seek out because I wanted more.
Our [doctoral] program prides itself on being a generalist program. Like my background is clinical mental health, so I need to do a prac and an internship in schools so that as an educator I can have the ability to do both. They really work on our marketability and how can we be the most well-rounded. In the same sense, they like us to focus in on our research interests, of course. My research interests go with undocumented immigrants, particularly youth. Lately, it’s been focusing more on how school counselors work with career guidance with these students when there’s such a fear of deportation and there’s such a fear of everything. How do you help these students, because of their lack of citizenship, even think about careers and jobs? So, that’s kinda been my focus right now. So, they like us to narrow research, but more generalist as far as the teaching, service stuff.

[My research interest] ya know, I have some personal experience with that…with my mom’s husband. We have some family experience with that as well, not to the point where those individuals got deported, but they are looking at how did they get their pardons? How did they become citizens and how do they get their papers…so to speak. So, it certainly has affected my family. But that took some developing for sure because initially I was more interested in wellness. Unfortunately, that’s so saturated. Everything has wellness stuff. It’s kinda difficult to really narrow that down. So, I really looked at, “Where can I look at areas that would really hit some populations that I don’t have a lot of experience with?” That’s kinda how that started.

So, next year I’ll teach group. Oh, I’m excited. I'm excited to have my pracs next year too. It’s been two years of course work. It’s been two years of not working with people. Ya know, it’s really like, “God I miss that.” So, it’s exciting to not always be
reading and writing and to have that element, that balance a little bit. I would comp either summer or fall of my dissertation year, my fourth year.

I think that I look at things much more contextually than I did before [my doctoral program] and much more developmentally. I noticed that I changed because I apply those things to different avenues in my life. I would think, well, just more developmentally about it, particularly with adult development. We’re really being forced to look at lifespan development, ya know, for people to think that it stops at eighteen, or for the majority of individuals to think that once you’re an adult, you stop growing. So, I think I’ve really taken context more into consideration as well as development. My husband and I went to a restaurant last night for dinner where, just like young kids just acting ridiculous…probably like freshman in college, ya know. Maybe an initial reaction would be irritation, like, “I’m just here to eat dinner.” And now it’s like, “You know what, they’re in college and I remember what I was like as a freshman in college. I’m sure I looked just like them.” So, I think age probably has helped with that too.

Well, like I said, [academia] is a lifestyle…you just don’t turn it off. Similar to counseling, it becomes integrated in who you are, in your identity. Like I said, I don’t do research, I’m a researcher. So, it becomes more of how you identify yourself as well.

I think that we certainly are underrepresented. I don’t know what avenues are available to recruit more because culturally, there’s such a pressure to drop out and to conform. It would be great to have more counselor educators that are female and Mexican American, but I don’t even know where you would start to recruit and do that. I think it starts early. This is certainly a long haul too and so you have to have that commitment and that drive to continue and that’s not always an easy thing for anybody.
[The cultural pressure] it’s probably kinda read between the lines, unspoken, ya know, “Your cousin has three kids already. When are you gonna start?” or, “Why aren’t you guys just working?” It’s not overt pressure, like it’s just let me point out how you don’t fit.

I certainly don’t sit and talk [with family] about the last fifteen articles I’ve read about career counseling…ya know what I mean. No, no, no, no, not at all. I think at school I just feel a little bit more….the things that I’m interested in I can share with others and at home it just becomes different. So, with family it becomes more about relationships than it does education or academic scholarly conversation.

Like I mentioned before, my plan was to go [to school] part time and work part-time and probably start a family and take as long as it took to finish. I went from thinking about finishing within in ten or eight years to getting done in four and having this opportunity. I didn’t know I got [my fellowship] until two weeks before classes started. So, it was right away I had to like decide and of course, ya know, I don’t pass up an opportunity like that. I had to quit my job and I had to live on a much smaller financial scale. It created a whole new path, but had I not had those opportunities, had somebody not wanted to advocate for underrepresented groups that would not be my story. So, it certainly changed it, by far.

**Three Phases of Analysis**

In the following sections I will discuss three phases of analysis I did with Martina’s individual transcript. These phases included: (1) listening to narratives, (2) exploring stylistic features of stories including speech patterns and turning points and (3) searching across different fields of experiences, which included examining intrapersonal,
interpersonal, and cultural features of Martina’s narrative. Martina’s narrative was highly focused on her academic and professional identity. While she did discuss her family, she provided fewer details about them as compared to the details she provided about her academic experiences. Overall, Martina created a narrative that painted a picture of a strong and determined individual successfully navigating her CES doctoral program.

**Listening to Narratives**

During this phase of analysis, I aimed to gain a sense of Martina’s identity and to lay the foundation as I progressed to the later stages of data analyses. Therefore, I kept journal entries about three specific questions as I listened to our recorded interview. The first question I thought about was, how were emotions experienced by Martina and I during the interview? Martina and I conducted our interview via skype, an internet based video and phone service. This form of communication enabled us to see each other’s body language and gave me a window into her home. Martina sat at a desk with two big dogs that stayed by her side the entire time. When the dogs started playing, Martina had to calm them down a few times. Regardless of the brief interruptions from the dogs, Martina stayed on track with her narrative. Although she discussed very tragic experiences, such as her father being hospitalized for two years after a near-fatal accident and the loss of her father and brother, she did not go into depth about her emotions related to these experiences. She admitted that grief and loss have shaped her worldview, but she did not explain how they have shaped her worldview. However, I also felt hesitant to probe her about the loss of her father and brother due to the sensitive nature of these topics.
The second question I addressed incorporated the organization of Martina’s narrative. Specifically, I focused on the beginning, middle, and end of her narrative. Martina started her narrative with her experiences in her master’s program and then proceeded chronologically to the present. Once in the present she elaborated on the academic opportunities that have enhanced her professional development. An important feature of her narrative sequence was that she began and ended her narrative with two important topics that shaped the theme of her narrative and provided vital insight about her identity. Firstly, she began and ended her narrative describing how she deviated from her family’s expectations of her, which shed light on her identity in relation to her family. She explained, “always had…a rebellious side to me, not wanting to always follow what I’m supposed to do, I guess, culturally [story 19, line 202].” She then began and ended her narrative by describing the fellowship she received, how it changed her educational path, and how it was specifically for underrepresented students. The reoccurrence of these two topics created an important theme to Martina’s plot that highlighted her determination to overcome cultural expectations placed on her by family and her determination to excel in her doctoral program. Within the Borderlands framework, Martina seemed to be enacting La consciencia de la mestiza by learning how to overcome and be comfortable with the contradictions inherent in the varying cultural expectations placed on her (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Finally, for the last question, I reflected upon feelings I experienced throughout the interview. I felt very impressed by Martina’s perseverance, especially during tragic moments. However, I also perceived her moderate emotional expression as an implicit message that she was not comfortable discussing the intensity of the grief and loss
experiences that she mentioned in her narrative. The focus of her narrative was on the positive experiences she was having as a doctoral student and I felt great hearing about her experiences. However, I could not help but also think about what it must be like to lose both father and brother at a young age.

**Exploring stylistic features of stories**

**Speech patterns.** The speech patterns in Martina’s narrative provided more insight about Martina’s identity. She spoke loudly, assertively, and concisely. For example, she explained, “if I haven’t found that my needs got met in one area, family, academic, or home… I will seek it out somewhere else [story 24, line 262].” She seemed to identify with this assertiveness and her ability to seek out opportunities, “I do think that it comes from those opportunities that were…happenstance or serendipity, but also the ones that I was able to seek out because I wanted more [story 24, line 265].”

Moreover, her sentences were very concise. She did not use run-on sentences or space-fillers, with the exception of “um.” These speech patterns presented Martina as a confident and precise person. Unsurprisingly, there did not appear to be any contradictions in her narrative, which aligned with her straightforward nature.

**Turning points.** There were several events in Martina’s life that seemed to represent turning points. For example, her father passed away, her brother was sick, she felt stable in her marriage, and she was getting older; these circumstances merged to create a turning point in which she began applying to doctoral programs. She stated, “it was just like, this was the time [story 4, line 24].” However, another major turning point was her brother’s death, which caused Martina to reflect on her decision to pursue a Ph.D. Because he passed away during her first-semester in graduate school, Martina
questioned, “Is this what I need to be doing? [story 20, line 224]” During this time she “immersed” herself in school work and kept busy by caring for a new puppy. She explained, “as much as I didn’t want this dog, he’s wonderful…kinda a healing for me [story 21, line 237].”

Although Martina described both her father’s and brother’s deaths as “traumatic” and influential of her “worldview,” she did not provide description about how they shaped her worldview. Her dogs, however, created a visual and interactive perspective of her story. Through skype I could see how Martina cared for her dogs throughout the interview. Even though they were very large and playful, she never kicked them out of the room. She would calm them down, but still continue talking. Martina described them as “healing” agents, which was exemplfied when I saw her affection toward them. Martina may have not been able to voice all of her thoughts and feelings about the loss she experienced, but I gained a more personal understanding of her healing process by viewing her interactions with her dogs.

Searching across Different Fields of Experience

**Intrapersonal.** Martina’s intrapersonal interactions highlighted her determination to excel as a doctoral student and future CES academician. Several intrapersonal interactions demonstrated the actions she took to be more successful in her doctoral program, such as renting an apartment near her university instead of commuting. Other internal dialogue demonstrated her strong motivation. For example, Martina explained her internal thoughts about academic opportunities, “I thought, ‘Ya know what, the more that I can participate and the more that I can have a variety of opportunities to really just see how the publishing goes, the better it’s gonna be for me’ [story 11, line
96].” Ultimately, all of Martina’s intrapersonal interactions revolved around academia, which emphasized the theme of Martina’s narrative: her determination to be successful in her doctoral program. This theme seemed to be integral to Martina’s overall identity.

**Interpersonal.** Martina’s interpersonal reactions included faculty and family. Martina only described three interpersonal interactions with faculty that, like her intrapersonal interactions, illustrated the determination Martina had as a doctoral student. Two of the interactions focused on publishing opportunities with faculty. Martina explained, “I just tried to become involved with as many articles and things that are going on [story 11, line 88].” The other faculty interaction was with her mentor who discussed why Martina had been assigned to a faculty advisor who was very busy. Her mentor told Martina, “We gave you to her as an advisee because we’d knew you’d be easy. We know you’re strong. You’re a self-starter. You’ll find those opportunities [story 14, lines 135-137].”

Through these faculty interpersonal interactions, Martina revealed more about her identity by using different characters in her narrative to provide the audience with varying points of view. The first two faculty interactions were from Martina’s point of view and highlighted why she took advantage of academic opportunities. However, in her last faculty interaction she switched points of view and began telling her story from a different character’s perspective (i.e., her faculty mentor).

In narrative inquiry, characters within narratives are very important because they are separate from the narrator, but simultaneously always part of the narrator since they are portrayed through the eyes of the narrator. Furthermore, characters provide the audience with different perspectives and the narrator can use characters to switch among
varying points of view (Polkinghorne, 1988). In Martina’s case, she used these different points of view to emphasize her strong inner-drive and to show that faculty members are also aware of her inner-drive.

While Martina’s interactions with faculty were supportive, most of the interpersonal interactions she incorporated with family depicted her family’s confusion about her academic pursuits. Again, Martina shifted viewpoints and provided questions her family members asked her that revealed their perspectives. For example, they asked, “Your cousin has three kids already. When are you gonna start? Why aren’t you guys just working or what? [story 33, lines 344-346]” As Martina explained, by pursuing a doctorate she did not follow the expectations her family had of her. These expectations included having children and working, rather than being in school. This theme is evident in previous studies that indicate Mexican American families expect women to remain committed to familial obligations regardless of academic demands (Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; González, 2006; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006; Macias Wycoff, 1996).

In summary, Martina switched back and forth between her point of view and the points of view of different characters (e.g., faculty members, family). This enabled her to portray two different facets of her identity. In the interpersonal interactions with faculty, Martina portrayed herself as determined and as a “self-starter”. In the interpersonal interactions with family, she portrayed herself as “rebellious,” unwilling to follow familial and cultural expectations.

**Cultural aspects.** In this phase of analysis, I used language to explore culture. Language is situated within cultural contexts and thus can provide understanding of narrators and their cultural surroundings (Fraser, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1988). Therefore, I
specifically looked at two features of language: (1) vocabulary selection and (2) English, Spanish, or other language use. Martina, however, did not mention English, Spanish or other language use in her narrative. Therefore, I focused on her vocabulary use. In alignment with the overall theme of Martina’s narrative, the vocabulary she used highlighted her determination and the importance of her identity as a researcher. In fact Martina explicitly stated, “Similar to counseling, [academia] becomes integrated in who you are, in your identity. Like I said, I don’t do research, I’m a researcher. So, it becomes more of…how you identify yourself as well [story 31, lines, 332-334].” As I discussed earlier, Martina stated that if her needs did not get met in one area of life, she will make sure they get met by seeking out resources elsewhere. Martina described this trait as “ambition.” Her ambition seemed apparent when she explained how she selected her dissertation research topic. Although Martina expressed interest in wellness, she decided that topic was too “saturated.” So, she asked herself, “Where can I look at areas that would really hit some populations that I don’t have a lot of experience with? [story 27, line 299]” By selecting a topic that she is less familiar with, Martina hoped to enhance her professional development. This trait fit well with the culture of her doctoral program, which she explained, “they really work on our marketability and how can we be the most well-rounded [story 25, line 270].” In fact, Martina’s goal was to become a counselor education faculty member and to demonstrate “leadership” through her research.

Ultimately, Martina created a narrative that illuminated her strength to cope with messages from her family that conflicted with her desire to earn a Ph.D. She also used her narrative to demonstrate her inner-drive and determination to persist in her doctoral
program and take advantage of all the academic opportunities possible. It seemed that Martina fit well with the academic culture of her doctoral program, but she did not fit as well with the cultural expectations of her family. It was apparent, however, that she had developed strategies to navigate both her academic culture and her family culture that enabled her to meet her professional goals.
CHAPTER FIVE: HELENA’S NARRATIVE

“Before I was looking at the play and now I’m backstage”

[I am in] my last semester of my second year [and taking comps this summer]. Oh my gosh. [Comps] is two whole days--a Friday and Saturday. We're there from eight in the morning ‘til five in the afternoon. We have to do four essays each day and then it’s over everything we’ve learned in the two years, like career, theories, statistics, ethics, consultation, and bla, bla, bla. I kinda feel like it’s dumb because it’s like, that may not even show everything we know and you’re expecting us to remember stuff from first semester-- no notes. I mean they want you to cite things and I’m like, “Seriously? How am I gonna remember that?”

I absolutely loved our master’s program. My background was marriage and family and community and I really looked up to all my professors. So, I was like, “Oh my God, I totally wanna go on and learn some more,” cuz I learned so much coming from a psychology [undergraduate program] going to counseling. Everything I learned in psyc helped, but I wanted to work with people, rather than with graphs and things like that. So, that’s kinda what I was expecting out of the doctoral program here. I applied other places, but I chose to come here and I would totally change that if I knew then what I know now. It’s a lot different. Even though I had the same professors, it feels like before I was looking at the play and now I’m backstage.

Like my professors and stuff, I kind of don’t see them the same. Like, I guess more negatively cuz I was expecting to learn more things and we’re really just learning the same master’s stuff and we’re learning how to teach that to people. I’m just really disappointed to be more than honest, like, with the program. I just expected more
knowledge rather than me teaching it right now. They should have had a class specifically teaching something, instead of making all of our classes teaching to each other. The [professors] don’t really teach all that much. Like our theories class, we had to present an hour and a half on a theory that we chose out of a hat. Teacher never taught. We never learned anything past master level theory. So, I just felt like it was kinda disappointing and that’s kinda how a lot of the classes have been. That’s why I think I would choose a different school, if I knew what the classes were going to be like. It’s actually kinda pathetic, but we even have drama within students, which I find ridiculous cuz we all have different interests and futures. People are so like, catty within our own cohort. We have eleven people cuz we had twelve, but one….chose not to come back last semester.

It just kinda upsets me that [faculty] want us to graduate, but yet they make it so hard to. Like, they don’t really give us guidance like on, “Ok, this is what I’m expecting from you.” Yet, we turn in a paper and then we get in trouble for it and they’re like, “This is still master’s level.” Well, you haven’t told us…..what makes a difference between a master’s and a doctoral? It was just, some of those things have never been told to us and then we get in trouble over it. It’s like, figure it out yourself or something and I don’t think it’s like an age thing either cuz a lot of people in the cohort have talked about it. [The faculty] blame it on us. They’re like, “Well, you should’ve brought this to our attention sooner.” And then when we do, they’re like, “Well, I’ll meet with you later….and ya know, my door is always open.” But then sometimes, like this one professor we had, she’s like, “Well, if ya’ll have any questions about my class, like a question regarding an assignment,” she’s like, “ask one of your cohort members. Ask a
couple of them and then, ya know, try to check the internet and then if you still can’t find it, then you can come to me, but only after you’ve used all your resources…” She no longer is here, but…..

The only thing I’m looking forward to is to finish comps. Like, that’s what my vision is. Like yesterday I just finished like this huge stats test. So, the next big thing is comps. So, that’s just what I’m picturing. I’m like, after that I don’t have to see these people ever again. Like, I’m going to work on my own. Do my thing. The people on my committee, the good thing is like I get to choose them. So, I picked the ones that I really get along with or that I think are actually interested and if their research interest is like what I want to do. So, I for sure already have a chair and one member so I still need like two more people.

I consider myself a positive person and stuff and it’s been hard, like stressful too. Then, for some classes we don’t get stuff back and then we get our grades at the end of the semester and we’re like, “Why?” No one ever told us what we had in this class. Like, this one teacher, I was having trouble in her class and she helped me and she’s like, “By the way, you didn’t make a good grade on that assignment,” after like she walked me through it. So, I felt so positive about it and when I got it back I was like, distraught.

[In] my future…I don’t see myself as a counselor educator. I see myself more as a clinician, but I think of the things I’m learning from here, like what I wouldn’t want to do….just my interactions with people and like to just be straightforward. Say if I had a supervisee that was coming from a masters and I’d be like, “Well, this is what I’m expecting from you…” like in detail, ya know? So, then there’s no question about it. And for some freakish reason, [if] I had to be a counselor educator, I would definitely make
sure that I give my students, like, everything I possibly can, prepare prior to, not just come to class, like, “Ok, ya’ll are gonna do whatever…”

At the beginning of this program, oh my gosh, it was so stressful for me. I would literally cry every day cuz I’m like, “Oh my god, like this is so much. I don’t know what to do.” I felt so overwhelmed. So, I hadda learn how to cope with that, but I mean schools is my life. Like, I hardly get to hang out with any of my friends. I’ve had to, like even stop talking to some of my friends, only cuz I don’t have time and they’re like, “Well, we don’t want to invite you because we already know you’re doing homework….does it really take that long to do all that homework?” and I’m like, “Ya’ll don’t understand.” And for me it’s harder like, to do my work cuz I’m ADD and dyslexic. So, it’s like twice as hard. If I read something, I’m not going to remember. So, I have to read it again. So, it just makes it a little bit tougher.

First semester, like when I had some of my friends, like it would help me separate. Like, I was able to just be completely myself, like not student Helena or anything. Like, just hang out with them and be a dork. It was so weird cuz I would work out and everything, but then with school I had to stop working out and out of the two years that I’ve been here, like I’ve gained thirty pounds. So, I’m like, “Forget this, I’m not gonna let it run my life anymore.” So, now I’m on this like whole fitness thing and eating right. Even though I wanna be done within a year, like with my dissertation, I’m gonna like enjoy the summer. I wanna be normal. Like I wanna go to the movies or go to a beach or do something like that. I think because I didn’t have an outlet, made it so much harder and more stressful. That’s why whenever I talk to someone that wants to apply [to the doctoral program], I’m like, “Well, just make sure you have, like, a side life. Don’t
give that up completely.” I think that kinda helps keep you sane and like be okay with everything

Well, it’s really cool cuz some of my friends, I’m able to talk to them about [school] and stuff. All of them are really supportive. They’re like, “Cool, one day we get to call you doctor.” I’m like, “Heck, yes!” My mom she’ll be like hugging me when she sees me for a long time. A lot of times she’ll be like, “Do you have time to hang out, just you and I?” So, whenever I do have time, I’ll like take her out to eat and we’ll talk. [My family] is super supportive. They pray for me all of the time and that’s something that’s really important to us, is our faith. I wouldn’t even say religion cuz that’s not really….we’re just Christian, believe in god. That’s actually a huge support, just within myself. I pray and do my best and I know God has me here for a reason. So, I’m like, “Please help me,” like I know I’m not alone. That’s what really comforts me, a lot.

I’ve been going to school seriously, since kindergarten, like non-stop. I think the only summer I had off was between high school and college and then I’ve gone all the way through. I was like telling one of my friends, “I think I’m totally gonna need counseling, like for life after school.” That’s like what I’ve been in my whole life, and it’s kinda weird adjusting to it. I know I’ll probably find things to do and everything, but I have to make sure that I still have a schedule of writing and doing that kind of stuff. I have a time line for like my dissertation, but the whole transition, I think it will take a lot of adjustment.

We have a May-master class that’s gonna, quote unquote, prepare us for the comps, which is only two weeks. Supposedly, the teacher gives us questions in class and then just makes us write. So, we just take our laptops and write during class. [A
professor] told us an example [of a comps answer]-- they’ve had like ten to twenty pages on just one. I was like, “One, really? You should be thankful if you get like a half a page out of me.” I’m all about simple. So, I’m like, “Oh my god, your expectations are ridiculous.”

I think at the beginning [of my doctoral program] I was more, like, naïve. I saw my professors, like, they’re so awesome. They’re really into what they talk about. Then, I spent more time with them and I realized, “Wow, honestly, you’re just an asshole and you should just retire.” I guess before I didn’t really have a backbone. It was like, covered in cotton candy. Now, I feel like I stand up more for myself, since [the doc program] sucked so bad….just finding, like ways to cope. Ya know, I can’t bring that home all the time. I don’t like feeling sad or mad about these people. All I have to do is worry about myself. Whenever I’m outta here I want to make a difference and I’m gonna do everything I can. So, this is kinda like, what I have to do for now.

It’s really weird cuz [my cohort] got real cliquish. It’s really due to like one person and that one person is kinda like the ringleader. There’s four other girls that follow. It’s like mean girls. It’s really pathetic and they’re like thirty something, like really? I think the little ring master, she just wants attention. [In class] she talks over everybody and it’s always about her and she’s always late and that’s never been addressed in class or anything. That upsets me, cuz then we get lectures about, “Oh, ya’ll aren’t’ showing up to class and ya’ll don’t take this seriously…” Our teacher even made us have group counseling with like, everyone in the cohort. We literally sat in a circle and even to this day we kind of laugh about it, like circle time. We talked about people being on time, texting in class, stuff like that. She’s still never on time. So, I think it would’ve
been like, so much more nicer, like people would get along better and help each other, but it’s really her that like, stops it.

[I’ve grown these past two years]…. I guess not taking people’s crap anymore and also being able to say no politely. Not taking on like every project. A lot of students will [publish] with professors just to get their name out there and it’s not even within their interest. For me, it’s more about quality. If it’s something I might be interested, then I look into it. I see myself, like more genuine and true to myself. I want to have a private practice, like this is just getting me ready so then I can start that. I see that a lot even with [student] presentations. Everybody travels everywhere and, like, I don’t know. I don’t have money to go and do that. I don’t really think [faculty] truly understand that.

We have a play therapy conference coming up here. So, I’m going cuz that’s like one of my things and it’s [here]. We have like an organization, a chapter [here] of play therapy. So, I’m involved in that. I feel like that’s more important to me, than ya know, some of the other stuff people are doing. Play therapy, like in the doctoral department is frowned upon. They’re like, “There has not been anything published that actually shows that play therapy is effective.” It upsets me cuz they either make fun of it or say like it’s worthless, when I’m like, it actually changes kids lives. They don’t find it interesting, so they don’t care.

The people in my cohort, a lot of them do homework the night before and I have to do everything like a week in advance cuz I have to like, write it up, proof read it myself, and then go to the writing center, get it proof read, have someone else proof read it. It’s a lot of work and then with the reading….I read stuff over and over and over again. The cool thing that I figured out when I was in the master’s program, I use color paper,
like really bright paper for all my classes and my teachers hate it. I have like colored pens that help keep [things] in my mind. Somehow it just works for me.

But, it’s also made it hard though. A lot of teachers, they know my disability and this is like up there with bad experiences. We had to do a power point presentation for one of my classes and honestly, all I forgot was a comma and a period, out of all of it. My teacher was like, “Oh, you forgot a comma.” So, I keep going and he’s like, “Oh, you forgot a period,” and then people started saying, “Oh, that’s really unprofessional,” and then the teacher was like, “Yea, I agree. Does anybody else have any thing they wanna tell her?” One girl was like, “Yea, that would actually be horrible if you used that presentation at a conference. People would just get up and walk out.” It was first semester and I was horrified. Then everybody else shared. There was just a couple of people that didn't. This one person, her background is teaching students with disabilities, she stood up and said, “Ya know, that’s really mean. Ya’ll are just beating the dead horse like over and over. She only forgot two things. It’s not that big of a deal.” So, then our teacher was like, “Well, what would you want me to do? Not address it and then her look dumb whenever she does this?” She said, “No, I’m just saying that ya’ll could give her the feedback nicely.” I was just like up there and I had like a couple of slides. I just like fast forward through it and got up and left. I was like, “Oh my God. I can’t believe that just happened.” I felt like crap and then that same teacher, we had him the following semester for another class and we had to do a presentation again. So, not only did I get it revised like 20 times, but like he did say, “Oh, let’s all clap for Helena. She did better on her presentation this semester, than last semester.” That was him being nice, but inside I was just like, “Fuck you. I don’t need your approval anymore.” So, it was horrible, but like
inside, I cried about it and I told my family and that helped me feel better. I don’t know how I went back like, I just have to finish.

But, I kind of feel like just throughout my whole like, program, like I’m kind of looked at like, “Oh, the kid with the disability” or like, “Oh, ya know, she’s not that smart,” and that kind of stuff. I know I have problems, like with my writing. My teachers will tell me stuff and it affects my grades. I try to just do everything on my own and not take my test at the testing center… cuz I wanna be able to feel like I worked just as hard as [my classmates], like I’m doing the same things as them. It’s not like my test was altered because I’m dyslexic and you’re not. Sometimes I wish I didn't have it just to make it a little bit easier, but then I wouldn’t be the same person, wouldn’t be as grateful for what I’m going for. So, I’m just like, “Wow, thanks God.”

It was hard like feeling like I didn’t have anyone I could count on in the cohort, like if I had a question or something. I didn't want to make myself anti-social either, like I was polite and got along with everyone, whenever I had to. Now, [I’m] definitely just stronger and more focused. Not only could I get through [my doctoral program] without a panic attack, but also, it almost feels like the worst is behind you type of thing. [My doctoral program] also made me realize that what I wanna do, is actually like one-on-one counseling and not all this other stuff.

My dad’s actually from Mexico and like he lost his mom when he was like six and his dad when he was like ten. So, then like he got adopted. My mom’s actually from [here]. My dad doesn’t have any education background, like he graduated middle school and my mom, actually while my sister and I were in elementary, my mom went back to community college to get a certification, nurses aide. That was kind of like a big deal.
Ever since I was small, my mom would always say, “Ya know, when you grow up you get to choose whatever you want, but you’re gonna go to college....” I was diagnosed, with dyslexia and ADD like in first grade, but my parents were always like, “That’s not gonna stop you.” So, I always knew I had their support.

I guess elementary and middle school was kinda hard because I was in resource classes. Once I got to high school, I had a horrible counselor. She wanted to keep me in resource class and I was like, “No. I think I’m ready for big people school.” So, she’s like, “We’ll try it...see what happens.” So, I ended up like taking regular people classes my freshman year and then the next time I was like, “I wanna try honors” cuz I really liked math and science and she’s like, “Oh my gosh, no. You can’t do that.” Then my mom’s like, “Are you sure you wanna do that?” and I’m like, “Heck yes.” Spanish is actually my first language. So, I took like AP Spanish and got credit for that. I ended up graduating with honors and like 4.0 and the stupid lady had said I probably wouldn’t even go to college, that I should just go for something like vocational. By the end [of high school], I was like, “I wanna be a shrink.” I knew I would have to get a doctorate degree. My sister was already at a community college here. So, she like helped me apply.

Being Hispanic, I grew up with my parents working hard, any job they could take. I remember we used to have to clean a church every Sunday. We just had to work for stuff. That’s when I knew for sure I would go to college. My parents were like, “We don’t want you to work hard like us, but do something you like.” So, even though I’ve never had money, it’s more important what I do with my life and that I’m happy....that I hopefully help change some things.
My sister and my mom, they tell me all the time, “I’m just so proud of you,” and that like helps me so much. I just feel so encouraged. They’re like, “We know how hard it must be for you and even though we don’t know exactly what it feels like to be in your shoes, we know you try really hard.” The other day, I like started crying cuz we have this thing called hooding. You invite like everyone you know, and it’s really intimate cuz it’s only people in your department. Then like you walk up there and they put this hood on you saying like you’re the next generation. They’re like literally right there. It’s not like graduation where you can’t even see people. I was thinking, “What would it feel like to be in that moment, like being hooded [for my doctorate] and seeing my family?” Oh, I’m gonna cry. Everything I’ve worked for, this moment is what it comes down to. [My family], they’re there, doing it with me, like they’re also graduating.

My sister, some days she’ll be like, “I just miss you.” It’s funny cuz her and I, we’re like really close. It’s only us two. She cheers me up sometimes and that’s awesome. My dad, he’s just like, “Make sure that you do something that makes you happy.” Since faith is really important to us, it’s like, “What does God want you to do?” My dad, after I got my bachelor’s, he’s like, “What are you gonna go for, your master blaster?” Cuz he speaks Spanish. So, he’s like, “I don’t understand this.” We have this joke at home. I said, “I’m gonna do my dissertation like the Diary of the Wimpy Kid that has like pictures and stuff. I’m gonna put mazes and pop-ups. So, dad, I’ll be done in no time,” and he just starts laughing. Sometimes he’ll be like, “Are you doing homework for el libro (the book)?” that’s what we call the dissertation and I’m like, “No, not yet,” and he’s like, “Well, don’t worry, it will just take you a couple of weeks.” He’s like, “Oh, well you’re already done with classes.” So, he tells his friends, “She’s already gonna
graduate.” I’m like, “Dad, no I still have to write the book,” and he’s like “Ah, pero es todo que tienes que hacer. Ya todo paso lo mas dificil (Ah, but that’s all you have to do. The most difficult has past.)”

Three Phases of Analysis

In the following sections I will discuss three phases of analysis I did with Helena’s individual transcript. These phases included: (1) listening to narratives, (2) exploring stylistic features of stories including speech patterns, contradictions, and turning points and (3) searching across different fields of experiences, which included examining intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural features of Helena’s narrative.

Helena used humor and laughter to shape the emotions in her narrative. She also used descriptive metaphors, vivid characters, and switched between English and Spanish to provide texture to her stories. Overall, Helena’s narrative presents a multidimensional picture of Helena’s experiences as a counselor education doctoral student.

Listening to Narratives

Firstly, while listening to Helena’s narrative I asked myself, how were emotions experienced by Helena and I during the interview? In Helena’s case, the interview environment and Helena’s body language played significant roles in the emotional experience of her narrative. We conducted our interview in her office at the elementary school where Helena is a part-time school counselor. Her office was full of colorful decorations, student artwork, and toys. Helena sat at her desk and frequently shuffled the items on her desk. She also wore two bracelets and fidgeted with them throughout our entire interview. While the office felt bright and welcoming, Helena’s frequent fidgeting distracted me and created a quick and scattered feel to her narrative. The emotions we
experienced also felt rushed and scattered because Helena used humor and body language to quickly alter the mood of her stories. For example, at one point she cried when talking about her family and I became tearful because I related to her strong family ties, but she quickly diverted these emotions with jokes and laughter. The impact of her varying body language and speech patterns will be discussed further in the next section.

The second question I asked myself was, how did Helena’s narrative begin, progress, and end? Early in her narrative, Helena revealed that she is “disappointed” with her doctoral program and this disappointment served as the plot of her narrative. While faculty and classmate interactions were key reasons for her disappointment, she began her narrative with a brief description of her comprehensive exam process. This immediate introduction places the comprehensive exam as a key figure that created a multifaceted understanding about her frustration with her doctoral program. Specifically, Helena described the comprehensive exams using words such as, “dumb,” “seriously?” and “ridiculous.” The vocabulary she used to describe “comps,” provided a fuller perspective about her disappointment for her doctoral program. Moreover, she also told stories about comprehensive exams that involved a comps preparatory course and faculty expectations. These stories provided more detail about her doctoral department culture overall. Helena also seemed to view comprehensive exams as an escape route from her cohort. She explained, “after [comps] I don’t have to see these people ever again [story 7, line 100].” The dislike Helena expressed toward her cohort created another perspective as to why she felt disappointed with her doctoral program. In summary, the organization of Helena’s narrative revolved around a specific plot: the disappointment she had with her doctoral program. This plot linked the various stories and figures (i.e., comprehensive exams) she
introduced in her narrative to foster an in-depth understanding about her experiences within her doctoral program.

Finally, I reflected upon feelings I experienced throughout the interview. Initially I felt distracted by Helena’s body language and sudden emotional jolts within her narrative. However, toward the end, I could relate to her moving stories about her close family ties. I also felt inspired by the stories regarding her persistence in education regardless of the obstacles she encountered regarding ADD and dyslexia. When, I left the interview I greatly respected Helena’s persistence in her doctoral program.

Exploring stylistic features of stories

Speech patterns. A prominent speech pattern within Helena’s narrative was her frequent use of “like.” I did not notice how often she used “like” until the listening and transcribing phase of data analysis. During these phases of analysis, the use of this word overwhelmed me and distracted my focus from the content of her stories. The use of “like” also played a significant role in the one major contradiction apparent in her narrative.

Contradictions. Although Helena did not appear to have contradictions within the content of her narrative, there was a significant contradiction between the content of her stories and her communication cues. Specifically, Helena used humor and laughter when discussing sad or frustrating stories. As mentioned above, the excessive use of “like” in conjunction with these communication cues detracted from the meaning and emotions of her stories. In the original transcripts I notated laughter, pauses, and other body language. The following excerpt from Helena’s original transcript illustrates her use of laughter and humor while telling an emotional story:
Helena:

But like, I was actually thinking, I’m like, “What would it feel like to be in that moment?”

Like, um (short pause), like being hooded and seeing my family.

Oh, I’m gonna cry (laughing).

Like, it’s so exciting, but like, I don’t know (laughing, while tearing up).

I’m sorry (laughing).

Tammy:

That’s okay. That’s okay. Sounds like they’ve been great inspirations or supportive?

Helena:

Yes, definitely (laughing), and just like, oh, okay, like everything I’ve worked for, for this moment is what it comes down to (starts tearing up), like (begins crying and pauses for a moment).

Sorry (softly giggles while crying).

Tammy:

No, it’s okay. It’s okay. I can definitely relate to that.

Helena:

(Pause) I just- it will be awesome! (laughing)

(Laughs) Like, they’re there like, doing it with me, like they’re also graduating (tears up).

Tammy:

Yea, I could relate to that (I tear up a little too).
Helena:

(Silence while she cries and then giggles softly) Definitely.

So, that’s kinda like…what I think about when things get hard, like (short pause), or when I’m like, “Ahhh, I don’t wanna study anymore.” (laughing)

[Stories 55-56, lines 673-683]

This excerpt was very emotional for both Helena and I, but as the notations demonstrate, even as Helena cried, she was laughing. When I left the interview, I thought Helena had not said anything negative about her department due to her humor and laughter. However, when I transcribed her interview, I realized she had been very forthright about her dislike of faculty and classmates. For example, Helena discussed her thoughts about faculty, “Like, ‘Wow, you’re just, like honestly, you’re just an asshole,’ like, ‘And you should just retire,’ like, like, ‘Wow and you’re lazy’ [story 31, lines 346-348]”), However, her contrasting communication cues had been so powerful that I initially missed her angry emotions. This contradiction played a significant role in how I, the audience, interpreted her stories and provides insight about how Helena expresses emotions.

Turning points. Turning points often change the meaning of past experiences and as a result change individuals’ identities (Riessman, 2003). In Helena’s case, her turning point stories incorporated overcoming obstacles and seemed to illustrate a strengthening of her identity. Firstly, Helena discussed an incident that happened during her first class presentation as a doctoral student in which her professor and classmates harshly criticized her grammar errors. Helena admitted that she “cried on the inside.” However, when this same professor complemented her second presentation, she described her internal
thoughts, “Fuck you. Like I don’t need your approval anymore [story 42, line 498-499].” This first turning point story represented a shift in Helena’s identity. In her first presentation, she valued the feedback from her professors and classmates, but by the second presentation she transcended the need for their approval and focused on her internal drive to complete her doctoral program. Helena explained at the conclusion of this turning point story, “I just have to finish [story 42, line 509].”

In her second turning point story, Helena described how she fought to be transitioned out of her high school “resource classes,” which she was placed in due to her attention deficit disorder (ADD) and dyslexia diagnoses. Although Helena’s high school counselor doubted her abilities, Helena eventually made it into honors courses and graduated with a 4.0 grade point average. This also marked the time Helena decided that she wanted to be a “shrink.” This second turning point story is very powerful because it illustrated how Helena used her voice to speak for herself and to open up new spaces for herself; an integral feature of Borderland theory, *la conciencia de la mestiza* (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). It also seems to represent an important professional identity shift; the point in which she realized she could and would pursue a doctorate degree.

**Searching across Different Fields of Experience**

**Intrapersonal.** Helena’s intrapersonal interactions reveal key features of her identity, such as her faith background, and foster insight about important characters in her stories. For example, Helena explained how she prayed to God during difficult times in her doctoral program, “So, I’m like, ‘Please help me,’ like ‘I know I’m not alone’ [story 22, lines 256-257].” This intrapersonal interaction provided a window into how Helena used faith as support. Helena also revealed her internal thoughts about the character “the
ringleader,” a classmate who Helena greatly disliked, “I’m just like, ‘Oh my god. You’re so annoying [story 33, lines 377-378].” This intrapersonal interaction exposed her true feelings about the “ringleader,” which Helena depicted as a villain in her narrative. She also used intrapersonal thoughts to illustrate positive thoughts about her family and friends. Ultimately, the varying intrapersonal interactions within Helena’s narrative highlight multiple perspectives about her identity and about the important characters in her narrative.

**Interpersonal.** Helena described interpersonal interactions between her family and friends, faculty members, and her cohort. Although she mentioned she lost friends due to the demands of her program, the friends she kept were supportive of her. Additionally, her family was very supportive of her, but her interpersonal interactions illuminated the complexity of their support. Her mother and sister admitted not knowing what it was like “to be in your shoes [story 55, line 667]” and her father explicitly stated, “I don’t understand [story 58, line 715].” Yet, regardless of their lack of understanding toward Helena’s doctoral experience, they supported her by respecting the time and space she needed to complete her course work. This characteristic in Helena’s narrative was also supported in research. Many Mexican American students have parents who did not participate in higher education. As a result, Mexican American doctoral students seemed to find emotional support from their families rather than specific academic and/or career advice (Gándara, 1982; González et al., 2001). It seemed that Helena highly valued her family’s support and provided an emotional story that demonstrated her sense of unity with her family through her academic experiences, “they’re also graduating [story 55,
line 681].” The interpersonal interactions regarding her family and friends demonstrate the positive and supporting individuals in her life.

On the other hand, interactions with her faculty and classmates were usually described negatively. Firstly, she described not liking her program because faculty were busy with research and did not express their academic expectations clearly. In addition to negative experiences with faculty, Helena stated that there was “drama” in her cohort, which she believed changed the entire academic culture. She told several stories with the main character “the ring leader” and explained, “Like people would get along better and help each other, but it’s really her that like, stops it [story 34, line 391].” This disappointment with her doctoral program seemed to prevent Helena from truly connecting with her academic culture. This was also demonstrated when she discussed not attending conferences, not publishing with faculty, and her research (i.e., play therapy) not being supported in her department. These interpersonal interactions seemed to compound her dislike for the field of counselor education overall and had critical implications for her professional development, which will be discussed further in the final chapter.

**Cultural aspects.** Language is situated within cultural contexts and thus can provide understanding of narrators and their cultural surroundings (Fraser, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1988). Therefore, in this phase of analysis I specifically looked at two features of language: (1) vocabulary selection and (2) English, Spanish, or other language use. Helena’s vocabulary selection was unique because she used descriptive metaphors to describe her experiences. For example, when comparing her master’s and doctoral program, she stated, “it feels like before I was looking at the play and now I’m backstage
She also described how she has changed during her doctoral program, “I guess before I didn’t really have a backbone. It was like, covered in cotton candy” These descriptive words and metaphors can be perceived as means of constructing reality (Polkinghorne, 1988). Helena’s metaphor use may suggest she views the world through a creative and visually descriptive lens.

Regarding her English and Spanish use, Helena identified Spanish as her first language. She discussed this topic in her second turning point story, in which her bilingualism enabled her to earn college credit in high school. Spanish influenced how she identified ethnically and how she communicated with her family as well. Specifically, when I asked her about her preferred ethnic label, she explained, “I don’t know, like to me Latina sounds more like, American and I feel like I’m more Spanish than anything, like more Hispanic [story 1, line 3].” Helena specifically indicated Spanish as integral to her ethnic identity. Spanish also seemed important within her family. In fact, her family connected to Helena’s academic culture through their language. Specifically, her father called the dissertation “el libro (the book).” This multicultural overlap between her family culture and academic culture seemed to help Helena’s family make the doctoral program something they could understand.

Spanish also shaped how Helena and I related to each other. Toward the end of her narrative, when talking about her father Helena used Spanish and did not translate, assuming I would understand. Additionally, when she explained how her father called the dissertation “el libro,” I discussed how I struggled to communicate what a dissertation is in Spanish too. This language commonality seemed to enhance our connection as two Hispanic women in doctoral programs.
CHAPTER SIX: LUCIA’S NARRATIVE

“It’s also about surviving as a person of color around people that are not”

First of all, I feel that it’s exciting to be there…essentially I feel like I’m taking that role of being the only one in the department. At the same time I feel that it’s also difficult because I’ve tried to step out of the department and find someone of color that I can discuss what happened last semester and there’s nobody really to talk to except for one professor. Although I appreciate his time it’s different because he’s not a woman, which I’ve brought to his attention, “No offense, it’s not your fault, but you don’t identify as a woman” and so it’s different.

I feel as if there’s two strikes against me because I'm not afraid to go around and say that I’m Latina. I’m very proud and I feel that a lot of people don’t like that. They don’t like that or may feel that I’m a bit too proud about it and maybe prefer that I just blend in because I can if I wanted to. I have the light skin so I really could, but that’s never been my style so I'm not gonna start now and again, especially being the only one, it makes me even more proud and want to share more of what my culture means to me with these people. So, it’s exciting.

I would also say that….I don’t know how to say this, it’s upsetting sometimes. It’s just- because it makes me wonder why am I the only one. So, I hear them talking a good game about diversity and I appreciate that. I love that we bring it up in research. I love that we bring it up everywhere, but what does that really mean? I feel as if it’s become a word that we just throw around just to shut up people of color. Do we really know what it means? Because when we return back to our in-group, do we really stop to wonder what they may be going through and how much more harder it may be that it’s
not just about the course work, it’s not just about getting grades and meeting all the requirements. It’s also about surviving as a person of color around people that are not. So, that’s upsetting.

So, my in-group would consist of, just mostly people of color. Did I pick it out that way? No, it’s just so happened to be that way. So, when I look at some White students or counseling psyc students, if they were all congregated together and somebody had brought up what they had said about me, would they have said, “Hey, that’s not right” or would they have sat back and just been quiet? Because what I’m hearing is that they just sat back and were quiet and that to me speaks volumes. You’re condoning it silently. So, you [support diversity], but yet, when you go back to your in-group you don’t do……you don’t say anything. You’ve voiced to me that it’s not right, but you didn’t say anything to these people. That could have been a moment of education and you chose not to accept it. That’s what I mean by in-groups.

So….it came to me that [some students] were [saying racial comments about me]. I decided I was going to bring it up to [one of my professors], this isn’t right, you know? If I were Black, I don’t think they would have said [something about my race] because that’s set in stone almost that that’s not okay to say, but when it came to a Latina, that was fine? And from what I understood this was said in front of faculty members and nobody stopped it. So, I felt that I needed to step in and speak up and say- this isn’t right. Is this because I’m the only Latina and maybe you’ve never been around Latinas and you feel it’s okay to say? So, you know I bring this up with [my professor] and it took about a month for anything really to get addressed. We had two separate meetings with the [students].
[Now], I feel intimidated. In class I am completely uncomfortable with [the students who talked about me] in there. I don’t want to talk. I don’t want to say anything because I don’t know what might be taken out of my mouth and used against me. So, did it help? Not in my opinion. It did not help me. It felt as if I am almost, and this is going to be a strong word to say, that I’m almost being punished for speaking up. That I shot myself in the foot for speaking up and I should have just….I could have just sat back and said, I’m not going to do anything about it and I feel like that’s the choice that some people may have preferred that I had taken and that’s not what I chose to do. It’s just the atmosphere. I feel that….people don’t want to work with me. Opportunities are not coming my way as I see they are with other students. I don’t really know how else to say it, but I just feel some people are just plain uncomfortable around me. Maybe they feel that anything they say I might take it and pull out the race card. When, ya know, do they have some validation for that? Perhaps. If they chose to have that conversation with me, I would be more than willing to hear how they feel around me, but I’m not getting that. So, I’m only left with my own thoughts and my own conclusions.

One thing that I also want to bring up that kind of rubbed me the wrong way was [one professor] validated that she heard [the racial comment] more than once and didn’t think anything of it. Then said, “Because I didn’t think you were Latina. You don’t look Latina,” and I heard that a couple of times from different people, that I don’t look Latina.

So, I go back to what I said before about diversity, what does it really mean? Is there a checklist that I don’t know about what Latinas look like? Where have I been that I don’t know about this template? I’m still struggling with that. That these people may think I’m less Latina and will chose to not recognize it because I don’t look like it. What
do I need to do to make them believe or should I even try to make them believe? Do I need to come in playing Mexican music and wearing the Mexico flag.....a sombrero? What do I need to do? You don’t look Latina so I’m not going to believe that you are and therefore when a comment is being made like this, I’m not going to see how that might be hurtful for you because you don’t look like a Latina to me. I don’t know what that is supposed to mean to me, other than an insult.

I don’t know if that’s more work on my part that I need to do. Am I supposed to act White, quote unquote, because I’m in a space with predominantly White people? Am I supposed to leave my culture behind when I’m in [the department] and then if I choose to acknowledge it outside, that’s my choice? But know that might come with some repercussions. So, I’m struggling and does it make it any easier for me to be in this program? Not at all. Does it make me feel any more comfortable or safe to be in the program? Not at all!! It makes it that much harder. So, it’s beyond race. It’s beyond being prejudice or discriminated against. It’s just the way that I look. It’s surface. It’s that easy for them to say, you don’t look this way, I’m not going to treat you that way.

Well, this is where I might feel lucky that I have a White boyfriend who can help me through this. He knows that I’m a proud Latina. He knows that culture means a lot to me. So, this was the first time he actually decided to say something and said, “Yo, you do come off as angry and people are not going to hear you when you come off as angry. So, I know that you’re passionate about this, but you have to find a different way for other people to hear you because they’re not hearing that passion. They’re hearing anger.” So, I took those words and kept them in my heart. So, when I [confronted a student who was saying racial comments about me], I tried to remain as calm as possible so that I could
heard. I felt that I did it in a smart way because I didn’t jump across the table. I didn’t scream. I didn’t do all the things that in my head that I was illustrating that I wanted to do. Ya know, I was real calm about it.

So going home over the break I let it be known that I was going to really think about whether or not I was coming back. I still had a chance to leave the program. I still had a chance to fill out applications for another program- perhaps where there might be more people like me and this maybe wouldn’t happen, but those are all what if’s. Finally I just said, “Damn it! I got here by my own accord- my own hard work and I’ll be damned if these people push me out. Fuck them…..I’m going to go over there and continue with what I started with. I’m not going to take the easy road out and then assume that if I were to go to a different program that this wouldn’t happen again. That’s a huge assumption because I am in a doctorate. So, am I going to find more people like me? No, I’m not. There’s a huge chance…it doesn’t matter where I’m at. So, I’m not going to let these people shove me out. If anybody is going to be shoved out, I’m going to shove them out. How dare you make me feel as if I’m in the wrong for speaking up about something you said about me. That’s not fair. So, I came back with a whole new attitude- a whole new outlook on things and said, “I’m here and that’s it. They have to deal with it.” So, that’s the attitude I’ve had and that’s what’s keeping me going.

I feel that I let the White people get the best of me. I feel that there were moments that I slipped up and I showed anger. I shouldn’t have done that. I should never do that. I let them see that it bothered me and I wasn’t strong enough so I’m kicking myself in the ass for not being strong enough in those moments. So, I feel intimidated that I allowed them to see just a glimpse of that. There’s a way to say it and still get the message across
without actually showing it and what it’s doing to me. I’d have to learn how to have a poker face and I don’t know how to have that. You can easily tell how I feel by how I am expressing myself or how I look. That’s just the way that I’ve always been. I don’t bull shit. I’m real with people, [but] at the doctoral level I should have known better because I’m not in my community.

This isn’t my community. I’m not around my family and friends. These people aren’t ones that I would turn to if I really needed something. Academically, sure I might turn to my advisor, but anything beyond that no, I wouldn’t. I don’t like to ask for help in any way and that includes with my family and friends, but I would at least ask it out of them. If I absolutely had to, I probably wouldn’t ask it from people at the program because I don’t know how it might be construed and I don’t know how it might be twisted. I feel as if I should be that comfortable to ask anything, but I’m not. I’m not at that point yet because of the experiences that I’ve had. I might turn to other people who are older and more accessible before I would a professor. There’s some [professors] that I feel….somewhat comfortable with. With my advisor I feel that I can be a little bit of me and he won’t think that I’m fucked up in the head or that I’m being too Latina or anything like that. Definitely with [my professor of color], I have shown my anger. I have shown tears around him and did I regret it afterwards? A little bit because I don’t know what repercussions that might have for future opportunities if he thinks I might be too emotional in certain situations or whatever.

It would be really nice to have a Latina female there, one who speaks Spanish, even though I don’t. Then I could talk about my struggles with not being able to speak Spanish and how that makes me feel less Latina, especially when these people are
questioning that I don’t look it. So, I second guess, maybe I’m not because I don’t speak Spanish, maybe they’re right.

I see that others are getting opportunities to write book chapters and teaching classes, and getting invited to conferences by professors and that’s not happening for me. I don’t have professors coming up to me saying, “Hey, you want to get together and do this….Hey, you want to write this paper.” So, I want to know why that’s not happening for me. I’m only left with my own thoughts and my own guesses as to why I’m not receiving the same opportunities so I assume that because I spoke up about what happened, I’m not going to get those opportunities because they didn't like that.

I question myself and my identity with being Latina, but I also just question why I’m here. Was I picked or was I chosen because I marked off a box? I’ve even brought that up out loud several times and I’ve heard from several people, “No, no, no. You really were qualified.” How do I know that though? If I’m the only one, then how can I not feel that that had something to do with it? Why aren’t [Latinos] part of the faculty? You mean to tell me, none have ever applied? Do you mean to tell me no other students have ever applied? Again, how are you reaching out to them? So, I question why I’m here. I question if I’m really wanted after feeling that people don’t want to work with me. Maybe I deceived them in some way that they didn’t know about and now they’re regretting and kicking me out would be a lot harder than just letting me try to leave on my own. So, if we don’t offer her any opportunities, maybe she’ll leave.

I do have a month off [this summer] that I could go home. Will I question whether or not I can come back? Now, a lot of that is really going to rest on whether or not I’m going to get funding for the third year. I’m going to have to have a back up source. It may
be private loans. It may be, ya know, borrowing from grandma, or whatever….I’m gonna have to have a back up plan for that, but am I gonna question whether or not I should leave because of the way these people are making me feel? It’s too late for that. They already made up their minds of who I am. I can’t change that. My mind’s made up about who they are. So, I can’t get mad at them for that if I’m doing the same thing.

I feel that unspoken division [between counselor education and counseling psychology] really plays out in the classroom, which makes me feel a hell of a lot more intimidated. I feel stupid in that space. I feel like I can’t speak up. The only time I am speaking up is when we talk about multicultural issues, but that’s only condoning their image of me, but that’s what I feel the most comfortable speaking about. You all are not educated on that, obviously, with the way things happened. So, I’m going to speak up when those type of topics are being brought up.

I grew up in [a small town] and it’s very diverse there. I didn’t have any of these experiences as direct as I’m having here in that setting. So, my community mostly consists of family. There’s just some things that I don’t feel that I can talk about with [them]. With my friends I feel that I can just be me. So, my community, I would identify as mostly my friends.

I didn’t feel that I could share this with my family- all that was going on. It took me a little while to even bring it up with my brother. My brother tends to wanna…rush to protect me. I finally mentioned a little bit and it was through text message and…. he didn’t give the reaction that I thought he was going to. It was, “Fuck those White people…..you’re always going to deal with that.” He said, “You’re just gonna have to deal with it and especially at the level that you’re at I would expect for it to happen. I’m
not surprised to hear that this is happening, but that’s fucked up.” I finally didn’t tell my mom until… the winter break and the reason why I think I was not wanting to tell her was because everything somehow burrows down to my fault. She’s very direct. I don’t feel that she blamed me for it per say, but I knew that was going to be her response and I think that’s why I didn’t voice it with her.

[My mom]… has never said… I don’t want you going there. My grandma has made it very clear she does not like me moving across the country. She’s even had physical illnesses because of it. She just does not want to deal with us being away because she raised us. My mom always had to work. She was a single mom. So, nobody made it flat out known that they didn’t want me here except for [my grandma]. My mom makes comments every now and then that she doesn't like that I’m so far away. So, I don’t really feel that I had their support a 100% with choosing to go. Now, on the one hand my mom, she’s always said, “You need to go and get an education so you can see the world and have opportunities that I didn’t have.” She had me when she was nineteen. So, we’re close in age and I feel that that’s what I did, but since I did it, I don’t think they expected me to do that. So, again, she’s never said, “I hate that you’re there. I wish you wouldn’t have gone,” but she’ll say other things. She sends me a text and says, “I’m wearing the snuggie you got me. It reminds of me of when you were still here and when you were safe.” So, it’s those little innuendos that are… behind those statements that I know that they don’t like that I am here. I didn’t want to give them any more reason of saying, “See, I told you. You shouldn’t have left. I told you not to go.” In a way I think that is blaming me for what happened and blaming me for going through this because I
chose to be here. If I had chosen not to come here then it wouldn’t be happening and I
would be at home and everything would be safe.

Did I voice it with my friends that I look to more for support? No, I didn’t even
do that with them. I think that I thought everybody was going to blame me for it because
they know how I am. For example, my friend who identifies as gay… if anybody knows
what this might feel like, would be him. I feel that he has, quote unquote, coconut
tendencies because he said, “Well, you can pass. Why don't you just act White? Why do
you wanna make it so hard on yourself? You can make it easier if you would shut up and
just do what the White people say.” They’re blaming me. So, I didn’t really feel I had
much support from my community with the issues that I’ve had to face so far and that’s
kinda turned me off in bringing up anything else.

If I’m at home with my boyfriend, I’m me about 98%. When I went back home to
my mom’s house, I’m myself about, I would say, 88%, maybe 84. Here, I think people
are lucky if they even get 60 and that might be a stretch. If I’m in the department, it’s
probably more like 40. I can’t be myself around these people. It’s not just the department.
It’s this city. It’s this state. It’s this region. It’s everything. There’s no Latinos.

I think I’ve definitely become stronger and I think somewhere along the way
because of this stuff, I’ve gotten a little less motivated. Not to finish the program, of
course I want to finish. I’ve been waiting my entire life to do this, but I feel a little less
motivated to let people get to know me, to make friends with people. I’ve always been a
social butterfly and I’m noticing that if I stay in my apartment on the weekends and don’t
leave, I’m fine with that and that’s never been me. So, I feel that I’m changing. It’s like
I’ve gotten to a point where I don’t care what these people think. As I said earlier,
they’ve made up their minds about me. I’m not gonna change their minds. It’s not my goal. My goal is to finish the program. If I don’t make any genuine friends along the way, oh well. That’s unfortunate, but I’m getting used to the idea.

I had higher expectations, that I would form these friendships that I would carry on the rest of my life. I feel that I may with [a few people], but again they’re people of color. I feel that some of my friendships are superficial and I don’t want it to be that way, but I feel they’re superficial with me, that they’re just down-right afraid of me.

I think even when I just went home over the break [the doctoral program] changed my outlook on certain things. I’m a little bit more careful with my language. I think I’ll notice more of the ignorant statements that other people will make that may be offensive that I didn’t quite catch on to and because I’m now the center of it. Like my brother, he says certain things that rub me the wrong way. Before I came [to the doctoral program], they didn’t. I knew it was offensive, but it didn’t bother me, but now I actually stop and say, “Ya know, maybe we shouldn’t say that.”

I’m actually more worried about offending people because I have been offended here and before I don’t think I really gave a shit about offending people. I didn't really care if I did. It’s like, so what, deal with it, be tough like me, but now I realize, especially being in a cohort of people who are not as assertive as I am, I do have to watch what I say because I don’t want them to get the wrong idea. I don’t want to hurt their feelings, but I do want them to want to work with me. So, in order to do that, I do have to watch what I say and I have to watch that attitude.
Three Phases of Analysis

In the following sections I will discuss three phases of analysis I did with Lucia’s individual transcript. These phases include: (1) listening to narratives, (2) exploring stylistic features of stories including speech patterns, contradictions, and turning points and (3) searching across different fields of experiences, which include examining intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural features of Lucia’s narrative. Two important themes emerged across all phases of analysis, which I will further discuss in this section. Firstly, there was a significant turning point that occurred early in Lucia’s doctoral program that shifted how she perceived her academic environment and her ethnic identity. Secondly, Lucia’s narrative illustrated the boundaries she perceived between herself, her academic culture, and her family.

Listening to Narratives

During this phase of analysis, I aimed to gain a sense of Lucia’s identity and to lay the foundation as I progressed to the later stages of data analyses. The first question I thought about was, how were emotions experienced by Lucia and I during the interview? From my theoretical perspective, I view stories as a performance of identity (Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 2003). Thus, when asking this question I also thought about how the narrator positioned the audience and how the audience positioned the narrator (Riessman, 2003). In our case, Lucia seemed to use her ability to be direct and expressive to draw me into her stories. As Lucia mentioned in her narrative, she did not know how to have a “poker face.” She explained, “you can easily tell how I feel by how I am expressing myself or how I look. That’s just the way that I’ve always been. I don’t hide things” [story 11, lines 290-292]. This characteristic was evident during our
interview. For example, when Lucia expressed upsetting emotions, she raised her voice, used curse words, and vivid facial expressions to increase the intensity of her stories. I, as a Latina doctoral student, could relate to the content of her stories. Her expressiveness and my empathy seemed to elevate both of our moods because as her tone of voice rose, so did mine. Additionally, my responses to her upsetting stories revealed my shock and included comments such as, “I can’t believe that,” and “Oh my god.” Lucia, the narrator, positioned me, the audience, in suspense as I listened to the riveting details of her stories. In turn, I, as her audience, used comments that encouraged her to continue telling her stories. The emotions Lucia and I experienced provide insight into the evocative nature of her stories, but also into Lucia’s ability to capture her audience with an expressive communication style that exhibits the intensity of her own emotions and thus heightens the emotions of her audience.

The second question I asked myself was, how did Lucia’s interview begin, progress, and end? The structure of Lucia’s narrative revolved around a turning point, or a major experience that shifted her expected life path (Creswell, 2007; Riessman, 2003). Because her entire narrative was focused on this turning point, it was evident that it made a significant impact on Lucia. In fact, within the first three minutes of her interview, she briefly introduced the discriminatory incident. As her narrative progressed, the climax was a detailed description of this experience. In the concluding segments of her narrative, Lucia described how the discriminatory experience altered how she interacted within her doctoral program and how she communicated this event to her family and friends. The organization of Lucia’s narrative revealed the importance of this turning point, which I will discuss further in the next section.
Finally, I reflected upon feelings I experienced throughout the interview. Lucia’s interview was difficult to listen to because I felt worried for her and I felt an overwhelming responsibility to maintain her confidentiality. I worried because Lucia discussed feeling “intimidated” in her academic environment and revealed strategies she used to protect herself, such as avoiding her department and not talking in class. These comments resonated with me because I also experienced a significant turning point my first year in my doctoral program, which caused me to change advisors and to avoid my doctoral department. Thus, my worry for her was compounded by my own experiences and I felt pulled to help Lucia. I also realized that Lucia equated confidentiality with safety, which was an important theme in several of Lucia’s stories. For example, after the discriminatory incident she questioned her safety “Does it make me feel any more comfortable or safe to be in the program? Not at all” [story 8, lines 174-175] and in another story, Lucia’s mom sends her a text with the final phrase, “when you were still here and when you were safe [story 24, line 518]”. It was apparent safety was important to Lucia and I did not want her to feel unsafe within the context of my study. Awareness of my worried feelings and my desire to keep Lucia safe increased my understanding of how Lucia and I related to each other and how these emotions may have emerged in other phases of analysis.

**Exploring stylistic features of stories**

**Speech patterns.** The speech patterns in Lucia’s narrative seemed to indicate her expressive nature and ability to engage her audience. These speech patterns included her sense of humor, curse words, and emphasizing words and emotions. Specifically, Lucia used humor throughout her entire narrative, even when telling upsetting stories. This
speech pattern illustrated Lucia’s humorous nature, but could also be interpreted as sarcasm or as a strategy used to detract from distressing emotions. Toward the middle of her narrative, she began using curse words and quickly asked me, “Oh, was I supposed to say that? [story 10, line 221]” However, she later stated, “Fuck, this is my interview. I can say what I want [story 13, lines 680-681],” with laughter. While cursing seemed to be a common feature of her vocabulary, she also tended to use curse words when discussing distressing topics. Additionally, she used other tactics to accentuate important points and emotions, such as saying words louder, changing her facial expressions to match the tone of her story, and using hand gestures. For example, when discussing a quick decision, she snapped her fingers to emphasize quick. These speech patterns illustrated Lucia’s multifaceted story-telling style, which incorporated using humor, cursing, and using body language (e.g., facial expressions, hand gestures) to provide texture to her stories.

**Contradictions.** While Lucia’s body language and story content were consistent, there were two important contradictions within the content of Lucia’s narrative. The first contradiction appeared to lead to a cycle of isolation. Lucia mentioned that she felt frustrated because she thought people in her doctoral department did not want to talk or work with her, but she admitted that after the discriminatory incident, she was less motivated to forge relationships with her peers as well. Therefore, it seemed like a cycle. Lucia felt isolated and as a result, she isolated herself. This sense of isolation also emerged in the second contradiction.

The second contradiction involved her academic community and her home community. Lucia expressed feeling distant from her academic community by explicitly stating, “This isn’t my community. I’m not around my family and friends [story 12, line
Yet, while it is evident she valued her family and friends, she seemed distant from that community as well. Lucia thought they blamed her for the discriminatory incident that happened in her doctoral program so she chose not to rely on them for support. It seemed that Lucia felt isolated from both her academic and home communities. Isolation is an important theme that has emerged in similar research as well. Studies exploring Latinas/os’ experiences in graduate education suggest that Latina/o students who move away from home, like Lucia, and who lack support from family, due to their inability to understand academic culture, reported feelings of isolation (González, 2006; González et al., 2001). This is an important implication for CES professionals and future studies.

Moreover, specific to identity, these contradictions illustrate the boundaries Lucia placed between her and her academic community and between her and her family. She appeared to navigate these boundaries by persisting within her doctoral program through the use of specific strategies (e.g., avoiding department, not talking in class). She also remained close to her family, but did not go to them for support. Thus, it appeared she was navigating nepantla, the "in-between space" (Keating, 2005). Nepantla, as described by Anzaldúa (1987), signifies a space in which multiple aspects of identity arise. By recognizing these boundaries Lucia may have noticed different dimensions of her identity. This was also evident when she used percentages to compare the extent of which she could be herself and in which contexts, “Here, I think people are lucky if they even get sixty and that might be a stretch” [story 26, line 569]. This comparison illustrated her awareness of the identity shifts she made depending on the environment she was in, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.
**Turning points.** Lucia’s entire narrative revolved around a turning point; a discriminatory incident directed toward her. This turning point completely shifted what she had previously expected would happen in her doctoral program, how she interacted with her academic community, and how she conceptualized her own identity. Lucia discussed her expectations of her doctoral program prior to beginning, “Yea, I had higher expectations. That I would form these friendships that I would carry on…colleagues that I would carry on the rest of my life [stories 29, 30, lines 662-663].” It was evident that after this turning point, Lucia no longer believed she would develop these types of relationships and instead felt isolated. She also altered her behaviors in her department since this discriminatory experience prompted her to question her safety. As a result, Lucia did not talk during class and avoided the department. Most importantly, this turning point shaped Lucia’s identity. She explained that when people told her she did not “look Latina,” it made her “second guess” herself. When I asked for clarification, she explained:

> Well I question myself and my identity with being Latina, but I also just question why I’m here. Was I picked or was I chosen because I marked off a box and it just so happened that I [am a counselor]? [story 16, lines 346-347]

Her statements signified how she questioned her ethnic identity, but Lucia also questioned if it was her ethnic identity that enabled her to enter her doctoral program. Overall, this turning point triggered a shift in how she perceived her academic environment, but also a shift in how she thought about her own identity.
Searching across Different Fields of Experience

**Intrapersonal.** Lucia’s intrapersonal interactions mainly involved her classmates and faculty. In alignment with the negativity she experienced during the discriminatory incident, most of her intrapersonal interactions provided clarification about why and how she thought people within her department viewed her negatively. For example, she explained what she believed others were thinking about her and how their negative thoughts about her decreased her access to opportunities, “‘Well, she’s this way and she’ll say that and she’s going to do it this way,’ and they’re going to make all these assumptions about me and so those opportunities will no longer be available for me [story 18, line 358].” Her internal dialogue shed light on the depth of her discomfort within her academic environment and provided insight about how she was thinking about the academic culture in which she lived.

**Interpersonal.** Lucia described several interpersonal interactions among her faculty and classmates, but similar to her intrapersonal interactions, they were often negative experiences. Although she mentioned feeling somewhat comfortable with her advisor and another faculty member of color, she also talked about her anger regarding a faculty member who told her, “you don’t look Latina [story 8, line 142].” The negative experiences she depicted with faculty outweighed the positive and suggested that Lucia had not made any strong connections with faculty within her department. This lack of faculty relationships may be detrimental to her academic success because research suggests that faculty play an important role in CES doctoral student retention (Hoskins & Goldbert, 2005).
The interpersonal interactions that Lucia presented among family and friends focused on how she did or did not tell them about the discriminatory incident she experienced. These interpersonal interactions shed light on how her family and friends thought about Lucia’s decision to pursue a doctorate out of state. Specifically, her family appeared to worry about her safety and her friends “blame” her for the discriminatory incident. Although her family and friends were people she identified as her “community,” these interpersonal interactions illustrated why Lucia perceived boundaries between herself and her family and friends.

**Cultural aspects.** In this phase of analysis I used language to explore culture. Therefore, I specifically looked at two features of language: (1) vocabulary selection and (2) English, Spanish, or other language use. Lucia’s vocabulary illustrated how she perceived herself in relation to her academic culture. Her vocabulary also demonstrated her perceptions about identity and in particular, her ethnic identity.

Throughout her narrative, Lucia used vocabulary that demonstrated the division Lucia perceived between herself and her academic community. For instance, Lucia used terms such as, “in-group,” “poker face,” “White people,” and “these people” when referring to her academic environment. These terms suggested a division. Specifically, “in-group” suggested there was an out-group and “poker face” suggested that Lucia created a division between her inner thoughts and what she outwardly presented while in her academic culture. Her vocabulary also suggested that she felt ostracized by people within her department and therefore protected herself, as illustrated in the following quote, “So, I’m not going to let these people shove me out.” [story 10, line 231, emphasis added]. Through the use of “these people,” Lucia separated herself from her academic
community. Then, she insinuated that her department was ostracizing her by trying to “shove” her out. She stated that she would not let them do this, thus demonstrating her need to protect herself. The following quote also demonstrated this point, “I feel that I let the White people get the best of me….I showed tears and I let them see me sweat and I shouldn’t have done that” [story 11, line 252, 254]. The boundaries Lucia perceived between herself and her academic community were important to note especially because they are intensified by Lucia’s perception that her academic community was attempting to shun her.

When discussing her home culture, Lucia appeared to use different types of vocabulary. When talking about friends, Lucia mainly focused on their reactions to the discriminatory incident. The vocabulary in these descriptions was tied to ethnicity, such as “coconut tendencies” and “passing.” The term “coconut” derives from the appearance of a coconut, which is brown on the outside and white on the inside. Thus, coconut refers to someone who outwardly appears Latina/o, but who acts White. In Lucia’s narrative, passing refers to a Latina/o who has physical features associated with being White (e.g., blonde hair, colored eyes) and therefore can pass as White. These cultural metaphors demonstrated Lucia’s and her friends’ perceptions of her academic culture, which seemed to rely heavily on a cultural divide between Latina/o and White.

In regards to identity, she appeared to view identity as a choice or fluid. This is evident in her consistent use of “identify as.” For example, she stated, “I made it known to the group that I choose to identify as Latina and not Hispanic” [story 32, line 703, emphasis added]. She also used “identify as” when referring to gender and sexual orientation. As mentioned earlier, Lucia used percentages to discuss how her identity
changed depending on the cultural context. This fluid concept of identity shed light on how Lucia thinks about her own identity and aligned with Anzaldua’s (1999) concept of identity as enacted and fluid. While Lucia appeared to perceive many boundaries among her, this fluid concept of identity suggested she navigated these boundaries by shifting through different identities at different times.

Finally, I explored Lucia’s transcript for English, Spanish, or other language use with the goal of learning more about Lucia’s sense of ethnic identity. Lucia did relate Spanish to her ethnic identity, but because faculty questioned her ethnicity (e.g., “you don’t look Latina”), Lucia also began questioning her ethnic identity within the context of her academic culture. Lucia explained that her brother speaks Spanish and stated, “he portrays himself more Latino than what I do as a Latina [story 23, line 484].” This quote indicated the connection she made between Spanish and being Latina/o. This connection was especially relevant in her academic culture because people in her department were questioning her ethnic identity. Lucia explained,

Then I could talk about my struggles with not being able to speak Spanish and how that makes me feel less Latina, especially when these people are questioning that I don’t look it and so I second guess, “Well, maybe I’m not because I don’t speak Spanish, ya know, maybe they’re right.” [story 14, lines 318-321]

This is a powerful excerpt, which exemplified her perceptions of ethnic identity, but also demonstrated how the discriminatory incidences within her doctoral program prompted Lucia to feel less Latina. In an environment in which Lucia was attempting to develop critical thinking and research skills as a doctoral student (Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008), this additional stress could have significant influences on her academic success.
In summary, Lucia presented a narrative that revolved around a turning point that had significantly shaped her perspectives about herself and her academic environment. While Lucia created strategies to maneuver amongst her academic and home cultures, these strategies did not come without consequences. As a result, Lucia was concerned about having access to opportunities within her doctoral program. She also doubted her own ethnicity within her academic culture and although she cared for her family and friends, she was hesitant to rely on them for support because she feared they would not understand. Ultimately, her goal was to finish her program and her narrative portrays the complexity of how she was achieving this goal.
CHAPTER SEVEN: MARISOL’S NARRATIVE

“It’s been bitter sweet”

It’s been bitter sweet, if I use an adjective for my journey. It’s like anything else, there’s been high points and low points and high points where I least expected there to be high points. I’ve felt a lot like an outsider and a step-child in this program because my background is social work. I’m a clinical social worker in a counseling program. So, in many ways I’m going out of my discipline and that’s been what’s made the journey so difficult at times because my bachelor’s and my master’s is in social work and so the whole social justice aspect of things, that’s what I was taught. So, to surrender that for a little bit and just learn something else that doesn’t focus as much on social justice was difficult and there were a lot of times where I would speak up in class and I felt like such an outsider and I still feel like that cuz it’s a different philosophy and it’s a different culture. So, the journey has been bitter sweet.

I’m done with course work and I’m done with comprehensives. I’m just doing dissertation. I’m at pre-proposal right now. That’s where I’m at, partly due to working last semester. I [recently] resigned. My schedule was pretty erratic last semester with the baby. I [just] had a baby and I have a two-year old. Between that, work, and life just getting in the way…it took forever to get my ideas together. I just submitted my draft for my pre-proposal.

I have to say that just being Latina and entering a doctoral program, I already felt like I had a chip on my shoulder, like I wasn’t smart enough and my confidence was lacking. I felt like an outsider by virtue of being Latina, or a woman of color in a doctoral program, and then that was compounded with being a licensed clinical social worker.
What I was bringing to the table wasn’t necessarily matching their philosophy, even though in my previous course work it was so important, the social justice aspect. So, it was very strange in the beginning.

I don’t regret my decision [to enter a doctoral program], but to be very honest with you, I picked the wrong program. It’s just the wrong program because it’s just not a good fit for me. What’s been taught there, what the professors research interests are hasn’t been consistent with what my interests were. I still keep going back to the macro-level issues and this program doesn't really focus on the macro-level issues and so I’m just thinking, it’s not a good fit for me. Don’t get me wrong, I’ve had some classes that I loved. The relational cultural theory piece of this program was one of the best classes I’ve ever had. That’s what kept me in the program, basically…and the relationships with other students. My cohort, I got really close to them, especially during the research sequence, which for me was the most difficult part of the program.

Like I said, the journey has been bitter sweet. I’ve had to stop. I’ve had two kids, from the time that I started ‘til now. So, I’ve had to take semesters off. Those gaps have made me feel like it’s taken forever. There’s distance created with my cohort because they kinda left me behind. I had already established this really strong connection with my cohort and I had to drop [one] semester because I had a baby. So, that’s been really difficult, to have a baby and to be in a doctoral program, but I suppose a lot of women go through this because these are the years that a lot of women typically have kids. I got married the summer I started the program. I started summer of ’06 and I’m still in the program and it’s 2011. So, it’s been a while.
During comps I was in my first trimester with my second child. So, I had morning sickness while I was taking comps. That was a pretty crazy time. From comps ‘til now, I’ve never felt so lonely cuz I think this piece is just about studying, obviously for comps you have to study a lot and that’s kind of a solitary journey. No one else can do that for you. With dissertation it’s the same idea. I’m just alone in this process. It’s not like I have my cohort to support me, they’re all at different places now. So, it’s been pretty lonely. I feel like I haven’t received a whole lot of support. My chair is preoccupied with other things and it takes her a long time to get back to me, which I suspect happens a lot. I have a chip on my shoulder cuz again, I’m a social worker and I’m thinking, “You know what, they don't care.” That’s how I feel at the end of the day. So, I really have to advocate and be persistent about sending things to professors, e-mailing them, calling them. This has been really hard for me because I’m an introvert and so I have to be assertive and say, “Ok, look this is what I’ve done. This is what I need….”

It’s all dependent on me. I feel disgruntled and a lot has to do with things that are out of my control: professors that don’t get back to me, I can’t force them to call me, instruments that I would like to use, I can’t force those professors to e-mail me in a timely manner. It’s just a lotta things that are out of my control and I’m just in my head thinking, “When am I gonna see the light at the end of the tunnel? When am I gonna establish some continuity of thought with what I wanna say and how I’m gonna do this?”

The writing alone is so different. Last semester I would try so hard and I felt like somebody put a curse on me because every time I scheduled time to work on dissertation, something would happen… one of my kids got sick, or I would get sick, or I would get in a car accident, or I didn’t have a baby sitter. So, I felt like there were a lot of barriers,
even up until this semester and I just started running because I was so angry and not knowing why the universe was doing this to me every time I would schedule time to work on my dissertation. So, of course being Latina, I felt, “Oh, somebody had to have put a curse on me. Everything’s going wrong.” And my mom had made the comment, “Why don’t you just go to church?” and I thought to myself, “I need to try something and I need to believe in something bigger than me.” I think that’s been the interesting part of this journey too is that everything is analyzed and religion being part of that. I would always judge and thought, “Oh, it’s just so shaming, the catholic religion. I don't need it,” but I grew up catholic. I feel like I’ve come full circle with that and I feel like a better person because I am going to church and believing in something bigger than me.

All I can do is keep trying and finish. I owe over $50,000 to this institution and I have no other alternative. I’ve entertained other ideas about transferring to another program, but my husband, being Latino and being very rigid about education and money, he said, “You have to finish.” So, that’s what I’m doing. He doesn't always understand this process and I know he gets frustrated, but without him I could never do this. He’s carrying the financial burden because I’m not working and he’s okay with that. He’s been very supportive, surprisingly for a Latino male.

I was working full-time before I started the program and then I switched over to part-time and that was working great. When I got pregnant with my second child, it started becoming problematic because I had a child already. It was just hard to maneuver everything and counsel college students [at work]. I was pregnant and still had to study and try to figure out what the hell I was going to do for dissertation. I have bags under my eyes. My hair’s greasy cuz I haven’t washed it. I have a two-year old that’s throwing
tantrums and I have to listen to a college student talk about roommate stuff. I didn’t have enough space in my brain to get it together.

[Because I worked at a university] I had talked to a professor [there] and asked her to be on my committee. I would send her e-mails and this may have been just me feeling intimidated by her because this is a thing, Latina professors are pretty hard core, especially when it comes to working with Latinos. That’s been my experience. They’re the most challenging professors. So, I felt really intimidated by her and at the same time I wanted her to be on my committee. I just felt like she wasn’t really interested and she had said yes initially, but I still felt like it was an ambivalent yes. I just said, “I appreciate everything, but I found somebody else to be on my committee.” She was fine with it. I don’t think she cared either way. So, brilliant professor, but didn’t work out. I really miss that part about [my old job], having access to professors. I had put in seven years of my life at [that job]. It was hard to let my professional identity go. I have no professional identity. I’m just a student and I’m saying that facetiously because being a student is a lot of work, but I don’t miss working there. I miss not having that professional identity, but at the same time I like not having to get up and be somewhere at eight o’clock in the morning.

My [dissertation] topic, as of now, is looking at Latina college students and measuring how much acculturation relates to sexual decision making. A lot of the data has come out of the public health clinics and so what I saw missing was Latinas in college and higher SES Latinas, or middle to higher SES Latinas and where are they are at with sexuality. That was my question and virginity being such a big part of the culture, where do they stand on that? So, I’m doing a virginity beliefs scale as well. So, that’s
really what I wanna know and being so pissed off that Latinas don’t really have access to any comprehensive sex education. There is cultural silence related to this topic. So, they don’t always have the means to make important decisions. How are you gonna negotiate a healthy sexual relationship if you don’t know anything about sex? Cuz I grew up on the border and the dialogue is always so shaming when it comes to sexuality.

I think that [dissertation writing] is a very formal way of writing and you have to be APA consistent and APA changes. I’m writing the way I’m talking, which I try really hard not to do, but inevitably it’s coming out. I’ve had to re-program my brain and be very clear and concise, not to use bias, and having to cite everything. Nothing is an original thought. So, it really deters from just writing. I love to write and it’s something that I pride myself on. It took me about a semester to figure out, how am I gonna write in such a way that none of these thoughts are my own? I have to stay true to who I am, but cite everything.

I get a feeling that things are complicated and they’re complex and that things aren’t so linear. I feel like I have to argue that with my husband or with my mom because they accept everything and I just feel like I'm at a place where I’m, “Why are you accepting this? You have to question everything.” So, that’s made me not the most favored family member. My husband and I always argue because commercials are so sexist and misogynistic. I think being a doctoral student has made me….disgruntled and intolerant of things that are misogynistic and unjust.

Because of that, since I started this program I’ve lost friends. That’s been a big compromise, but they don’t understand and it’s hard to explain to any body that doesn’t go through this and then having kids on top of this. At the end of the day, I can’t sit here
and explain to this person why it’s so important what I’m doing. It’s so important to me. It’s important to my family. They don’t get it. I feel like I’ve become more complicated, complex, but it’s nothing that I’m ashamed of. I’d rather be complex than cliché and predictable and formulaic.

My brother, my uncles, and my dad have the tendency to use certain words, or talk about women in a certain way and I’m not as tolerant with that. They talk about the gay community in a negative way and again, it’s something I’m not ok with. It’s almost like I have more clarity now, but more intolerance at the same time….with family members or friends and I just say to myself, “It’s not worth it to start a fight or speak out.” So, I have to do a check-in and say to myself, “Ok, is that an appropriate thing to say? Should I just leave it alone?” I need to respect that not everyone is at the same place and just because I’ve been through this journey and I’ve studied about social justice, there are other people that don’t care about that and I have to respect that. I can’t force anyone to be interested in something they’re not interested in. So, I have to tell myself, “Ok, they don’t get it. It’s not a big deal. Leave it alone.” I always have internal dialogue. Don’t all grad students have internal dialogue, that’s louder sometimes than the actual dialogue?

I didn’t make a lot of friends the first semester, even the second semester. The cohort above me had already been established and they were very cliquish and no one really looked like me. I mean, a lot of mostly women with blonde hair. I felt like an outsider because I would say things just abruptly without checking-in and everyone would look at me really strange, but I didn’t care. I felt like, “If I don’t say something now, I’m gonna regret it. So, I have to say it.” I remember distinctly, [when] I took the
race and gender class, every week I would be so upset. I would say something [in class] because I felt like no one got it. I remember a student who was finishing up the program and she kept talking about how she didn't see any sexism in [metropolitan city] and there was no racism there. The whole time I’m thinking to myself, “What the fuck are you talking about?” I spent ten years in [metropolitan city] and I knew that there was racism. I just felt like there was this façade. Everybody claims to be so diverse, but really there’s a lot of racism in [metropolitan city]. If you’re a person of color, and you’re an immigrant, or you’re lower SES, we’re okay, but oh my god, if you’re a Latina and you have a doctorate or your higher SES, I don't think the more dominant community in [metropolitan city] can handle that. They don’t know how to…be around you. I kept saying to her, “I spent ten years there and I saw sexism all over the place.” I thought it was ridiculous for her to say something like that. Those kind of comments kept coming up. I really saw this better than attitude and not really getting why it was so important to talk about race, class, and gender, and not reading. I couldn’t stand it when students would come to class and wouldn’t read or wouldn't come to class at all. I thought to myself, “You’re in a doctoral program, you don’t even come to class. This is crazy.”

Yea, I felt like I was the only person that cared. The minorities in the class got it, obviously, but that tone permeated in other classes and I just gave up. I said, “I can’t keep advocating and I can’t speak up all the time.” I felt like every week I was speaking up and it was useless. What was helpful for me was to vent to my co-worker at the time cuz she got it. She was in a doctoral program at [another university]. She’s a woman of color and she was my oxygen. A lot of folks that I worked with got it. It was social workers that got it and then at that point that’s when I knew, I’m in the wrong program. I
eventually established relationships with people [in the program] that got it and there were few who spoke out. It was the cohort after me that took the class after I took it and had the same complaints. They became a source of support for me too.

So, that’s how I got through. I just stopped talking. I just came to terms with the idea that not everyone gets it and not everyone’s gonna care. The way they’re affected by racism, sexism, is not the same as my experience and so they’re not gonna care in the same way for a lot of different reasons. The last couple years that I was in [metropolitan city], which was a big part of why I moved [here], I felt the same way. That’s when I was working amongst a lot of social workers, but I felt the same way. I kept having to speak up or having to explain who I was. Being asked, was I born in the United States? Do my parents speak English? And these were social workers that were educated. It was the same idea when I took the race and gender class…just feeling like they don't get it. I felt at the time, you’re in a doctoral program, you’re working with diverse populations of the public and you feel like there’s no sexism?

Then there was another student from [out of state]. She made the comment that she can’t stand [this city]. She’s sick of [this city] and she can’t wait to leave. I’m like, “What the fuck you doing in this program?” There were comments like that, that would just… and I didn’t care. I said what I needed to say. Then later on, as I was going to sleep I would think to myself; “I can’t believe I said what I said.” There have been several students like that who I feel are going through this program because they don’t have anything to do and then there are the other kind of students who are not from this area, who feel like [this city] is beneath them, the population is beneath them and that would make me crazy, but I suppose that could happen in any program.
When I first started the program I felt like I was in a weird place because the very first class, there was only one other student of color. There were maybe two or three other Latinas and the camaraderie amongst us was just there. They were great, loved them. We all had dark hair, brown skin. The professors would always mix up our names and that’s kinda insulting because they think we all look alike. I remember [telling my friend], “I feel weird. There’s just a bunch of blondes with fake boobs.” Seriously, I walk into this class, most of them are blonde, size two, with fake boobs. I felt like I was in a strange place and then making these strange comments about diversity. So, the Latinas in that program, great sources of support. It was never an issue of competition. That’s what also helped me get through.

I grew up on the border. So, that was home for a long time, but I don’t really consider that home anymore. My home is [here], my home is where my kids are, my home is where my beagle is, where my husband is. Being raised on the border continuous to be a big part of my identity, but I’ve also been through so many changes within this program. I got married, that changed everything. When I had my first child, the changes were profound. I don’t see the world in the same way. Being a mom…. profound changes and nothing could have prepared me for this and it’s still a work in progress cuz I don’t know what I’m doing. When it comes to dissertation, I don’t know what I’m doing. So, I’m at the nexus of learning how to be the parent of two boys under the age of three and learning how to navigate the whole dissertation process. Both processes represent ambiguity for me and I’m not okay with ambiguity. Sometimes I just have to surrender to it and say, “It’s out of my hands.” If I’m fighting or resisting the ambiguity, I’m wasting my time because nothing changes, but if I go take a run, for example, I’ll clear my mind.
and I’ll feel better. If I don’t hear from a professor, when I sent an e-mail a week ago, what can I do? Don’t get me wrong, I’ll wanna cry, but I just have to say to myself, “Embrace the ambiguity.” I’ve been pleasantly surprised, when I do that….things are okay.

I prided myself on not being dichotomous when I first started the program. As I proceeded on this journey, I discovered that I’m more dichotomous than I thought I was. So, I think that’s what I’ve learned about myself and how I’ve changed from the very beginning ‘til now. I want things to be clear and distinct, especially when I’m writing. I’m doing quantitative research, but I think it suits me, surprisingly. I’ve also discovered that, and this is going to sound like a contradiction based on what I just said, I'm very complex and I’m okay with that. I think if I was not like that, I wouldn’t be at this point. I think I’ve learned to accept, as compared to the beginning where I was unsure and I felt this lack of confidence. I had a chip on my shoulder cuz I was one of the few Latinas in this program. At this point, I’m okay with liking things that most people don’t like. I like independent films so much and I don’t like the corporate crap that mainstream produces. I felt most of my life, so inadequate and weird cuz I don’t like the things that most people like. So now, I’m ok with it. It took a long time to get to that point.

All I have is right now and what’s most important to me-- my family, of course, comes first and my education. I think one of the biggest arguments I’ve had with people and getting judged by family and friends, “Oh, you’ve committed so much time to this. Your kids are in day care, but you’re not working.” I’ve just lost friendships and relationships because I’ve been on this journey or not had time to commit to gatherings because I have to study. I think it was at that point that I said, “You know what, I care,
but not enough to quit what I’m doing.” Education is so important that I’m gonna have to compromise some relationships. All I have space for is my family, my kids, they come first, and my education. But that’s what I thrive on, evolving and gaining knowledge. My nightmare is to be stagnant. There are negative things that have happened throughout this journey, but I still learn, even if I don’t agree with something.

That’s been a big part of this journey too, is to accept bicultural identity. I don’t think that if you’re a person of color and you don’t accept bicultural identity that you can be successful in a doctoral program because that would mean to negate who you really are. So, you accept who you really are, but you also accept that you have to shift and be a certain way in a certain context to navigate that environment successfully. When I was around my Latina classmates, I didn’t have to do that at all, but when it came to speaking up in class, of course. Being from the border I remember my first semester [in college] there was this guy in my class and he would make fun of the way I talked. He said, “You sound like you’re from the border. Why do you talk like that?” and that resonated with me. I thought, “I don’t get it? What is it with the way I talk?” They were stupid things, like I would say, “For reals?” Then the more I worked after I graduated, I started realizing how important it was to speak properly.

To me it’s all about how you represent yourself and having to work harder and I hate saying that, but that’s the way I feel. Especially in academia, when they’re gonna judge me on everything. I have to work twice as hard to speak the proper language and to write properly. I’m not gonna say it’s not important because it is. If you want to be successful and you wanna move up… but not everyone understands that and not everyone respects that because it’s like selling out. It’s not being true to who you are. I
think you can do both. You can be true to who you are, but also wanna be successful and I think that’s been a big part of why I’ve lost a lot of relationships too. The women don’t understand that drive to be successful, especially when it comes to education and again, it’s not anything that I could force someone to desire. It’s what I want and I’m not gonna apologize for it.

**Three Phases of Analysis**

In the following sections I will discuss three phases of analysis I did with Marisol’s individual transcript. These phases included: (1) listening to narratives, (2) exploring stylistic features of stories including speech patterns, contradictions, and turning points and (3) searching across different fields of experiences, which included examining intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural features of Marisol’s narrative. Overall, Marisol’s narrative was a deeply reflective account of her experiences within a doctoral program as she juggled multiple identities: Mexican American, woman, mother, wife, and student. A major concept that emerged within her narrative was how Marisol navigated between ambiguity and dichotomy. Various strategies she used to navigate this spectrum included adopting new behaviors and shifting identities.

**Listening to Narratives**

Firstly, while listening to Marisol’s narrative I thought about how we both experienced emotions during the interview. Marisol and I conducted our interview in a small quiet coffee shop where she frequently worked on her dissertation. The comfortable atmosphere and her familiarity with the location enhanced our ability to connect. Moreover, her stories were very insightful. She once stated, “even before this interview was set up, I would ask myself, ‘If anybody asks me what have I learned about myself”
since I started this journey’...[story 53, line 608],” which suggested that she independently reflected upon her life experiences. I related to her because I am also very reflective. This commonality created positive feelings. She seemed to reciprocate these feelings because toward the end of our interview she mentioned, “I’m really enjoying the conversation. It’s fascinating to hear people’s journeys and just to sit and talk and not be distracted [story 45, lines 504-506].” The comfortable environment and Marisol’s insightful stories created a relaxing feel and a narrative that we both seemed to enjoy creating.

I also examined the organization of Marisol’s interview by focusing on how her narrative began, progressed, and ended. In the beginning of her narrative, Marisol provided a plot and a description of a narrative scheme that demonstrated how she made meaning of her experiences as a CES doctoral student. Marisol started her narrative with an overall description; “It’s been bitter sweet, if I use an adjective for my journey...[story 2, lines 6-7].” This descriptor created a theme, or a plot that provided significance to the progression of its events (Polkinghorne, 1988). By using bittersweet as her plot, Marisol united the stories within her narrative into a meaningful whole.

Right after creating a plot, she explained that she felt like an “outsider” in her program due to her professional background as a social worker. This sense of being an outsider could be referred to as an interpretive, or narrative scheme. Marisol seemed to use this scheme to establish the significance of past experiences and to anticipate the consequences of future actions (Polkinghorne, 1988). For example, she explained, “I would speak up in class and I felt like such an outsider and I still feel like that.” This quote illustrates how she used the narrative scheme of being an outsider to understand
past and present situations. In fact, later in her narrative she discussed her dissertation and stated, “I’m a social worker and I’m thinking, ‘You know what, it’s really, they [faculty] don't care’ [story 13, line 115].” This indicated that Marisol was using this narrative scheme to understand her current situation and speculate why faculty were not being responsive to her during the dissertation process. Ultimately, Marisol organized her narrative around a plot that provided larger meaning to the stories in her narrative (i.e., bittersweet) and used a narrative scheme that highlighted how she navigated her academic environment.

Finally, while listening to Marisol’s narrative, I reflected upon feelings I experienced throughout the interview. The main feeling I experienced was gratitude. I felt thankful to have heard her stories because they seemed so genuine and deep. I also felt gracious to have had the opportunity and privilege to gain access to her life stories. These feelings increased my responsibility as a researcher to represent her voice to the best of my ability.

**Exploring stylistic features of stories**

**Speech patterns.** Marisol used a wide range of descriptive vocabulary. She also integrated emotional side stories that added a deeper understanding of her experiences. Descriptive vocabulary she used included: journey, surrender, bittersweet, misogynistic, frivolous, facetious, cliché, formulaic, façade, nexus, ambiguity, dichotomous, stagnant, and camaraderie. This descriptive, and varied vocabulary enhanced the meaning of her stories, providing richer understanding of her life experiences. Additionally, she used side stories to illuminate topics in her narrative. For example, when we were discussing her classmates she told several stories about classroom interactions. She said them louder,
faster, and with great emotion. At the end of these series of stories she stated, “So, I forgot what your question was because I became so incessant with …[story 32, line 379].” These speech patterns demonstrate how she used descriptive vocabulary and emotional side stories to increase the depth of her stories. In her narrative, Marisol also discussed the importance of language use, which may be another reason she used diverse vocabulary. This will be discussed further in the last section of this chapter.

Contradictions. Marisol seemed very self-aware and therefore identified several contradictions in her narrative. For example, she expressed discomfort with ambiguity, but also explained that she must “embrace ambiguity [story 44, line 495]” to persist through the dissertation process. She described herself as “dichotomous”, but then stated, “and this is going to sound like a contradiction based on what I just said….I’m very complex [story 47, line 534].” The contradictions in her story seemed to represent this complexity. Specifically, she embraced ambiguity by surrendering to the things she could not control during the dissertation process. However, she explained that due to her dichotomous nature and preference for conciseness, she chose to use quantitative methods for her dissertation study. When I asked her about her relationship with ambiguity, she responded, “I think that there’s a big contradiction there, or like everything else, it’s fluid [story 54, line 637].” In fact, she seemed to use fluidity as she shifted between ambiguity and dichotomy. In terms of Borderlands theory, Marisol was enacting la conciencia de la mestiza by becoming comfortable with the contradictions and ambiguities embedded within the cultural expectations placed on her (Anzaldúa, 1999).
One contradiction she made, but did not seem aware of was based on her concept of social workers. First she explained, “social workers, they just get it, it’s like water, it’s like air [story 35, line 396].” In fact, she attributed her feelings of being an outsider in her doctoral program on this distinction: social workers “get it” and counselors do not. Later in her narrative, however, she described how her former social worker colleagues questioned her ethnicity,

Was I born in the United States? Do my parents speak English? And these were social workers that were educated … and so, it was the same idea [here], when I took the race and gender class…just feeling like they don't get it [story 38, lines 413-416].

This quote illustrates that similar to individuals in her doctoral program, her social worker colleagues also prompted her to have feelings of being an outsider. She may not be aware of this contradiction because awareness would deflate her narrative scheme of being an outsider in her doctoral program because of her social work background (i.e., “I’m a clinical social worker in a counseling program [story 3, line 10].” To maintain this narrative scheme, she must preserve a positive view of social workers who “get it.” Staying oblivious to this contradiction may prevent her from having to associate her feelings of being an outsider in her doctoral program to other reasons that may be too painful or difficult to acknowledge.

**Turning points.** There were two major turning points in Marisol’s narrative that revolved around ambiguity and seemed to highly influence her identity. These turning points included: becoming a mother and learning how to navigate the dissertation. The interesting part of her narrative was that they happened simultaneously. Thus, she
discussed them as parallel processes: “I’m at the nexus of learning how to be the parent of two boys under the age of three and learning how to navigate the whole dissertation process [story 43, line 487].” These turning points forced her to confront ambiguity; something she openly admitted disliking. For example, because she could not control all that happened to her children (e.g., sickness, lack of baby sitter) and how her committee responded to her dissertation (i.e., answering e-mails, etc.), she decided to “embrace the ambiguity [story 44, line 491].” Within the framework of la conciencia de la mestiza, being comfortable with ambiguity was an integral aspect of navigating multiple identities. Moreover, being vulnerable to different ways of seeing and thinking (Anzaldúa, 1999) were also key features, which Marisol seemed to exhibit, “that’s what I thrive on, is evolving and learning and…gaining knowledge, even if I don’t agree with it [story 51, line 591].” Therefore, these turning points indicated significant identity shifts for Marisol. They also suggested that she was using her life experiences to develop new ways of knowing, but as she described motherhood and the dissertation process, “it’s still a work in progress [story 43, line 485].”

Another turning point that occurred in Marisol’s undergraduate program seemed to make a substantial impact on her view of language: “There was this guy in my class and he would make fun of the way I talked. He said, ‘You sound like you’re from the border. Why do you talk like that?’ and that just resonated with me…[story 55, lines 658-661].” In fact, this event seemed to trigger a new framework about how Marisol perceived language in academia. Specifically, Marisol explained that being “bicultural” was an important part of her experiences as a Mexican American woman in a doctoral program. She stated, “They’re gonna judge me on everything and I have to work twice as
hard to speak the proper language and to write properly.” It was evident that Marisol balanced ambiguity as she navigated motherhood and the dissertation process. This turning point, however, also suggested that she used language to shift between identities within her academic environment.

**Searching across Different Fields of Experience**

**Intrapersonal.** Marisol seemed to use internal dialogue to navigate through challenging situations within her academic and family environments. For example, Marisol used her internal dialogue to empower herself to make education and family her first priority,

> I just have to say to myself, ‘This is my priority. This is everything I’ve been working toward since 2006 and I need to finish. I have no other alternative and all I have space for is my family, my kids, they come first, and my education [story 48, lines 572-574].’

This quote demonstrated how her inner-thoughts helped her find the confidence to progress toward completing her Ph.D. program. Within a family context, she did internal “check-ins” to decide if she would challenge her family when they said comments she did not agree with. Through the use of intrapersonal strategies, Marisol seemed to navigate her academic and family cultures in a way that facilitated self-respect, but also respect for others who did not share her experiences (e.g., “I need to respect that not everyone is at the same place [story 30, line 338]”).

**Interpersonal.** Marisol’s interpersonal interactions included those within academia and those with family. Most of the interactions she discussed around academia included “frustrating” exchanges with her classmates. With her cohort and her Latina
classmates, however, she described supportive interactions. Unfortunately, these supportive relationships decreased due to Marisol’s temporary breaks from the program when having children. Marisol depicted the distance created between her and her cohort, “they kinda left me behind [story 10, line 95]”. Similarly, the lack of interpersonal interactions with faculty aligned with her statement that she felt “lonely” in the dissertation writing process. She seemed to lack support from her cohort and her faculty. These interactions painted a more secluded journey in which Marisol used different strategies (e.g., running, embracing ambiguity) to persist toward completion. This was a critical finding because in a study by Galvin et al. (2009), lack of connection to department and family responsibilities (e.g., childcare), were factors that impeded CES doctoral students from completing their dissertations.

Her family and friend interpersonal interactions incorporated supportive and unsupportive interactions. For example, her husband was supportive of her, but some family and friends questioned why she dedicated so much time toward her education. Marisol even explained that she lost friendships due to her focus on education, negligence of social outings, and misunderstandings about her decision to place her children in daycare while writing her dissertation. The questioning from her family and friends regarding childcare was supported in the literature as well. Research suggests that Mexican American families may still expect women to remain committed to familial obligations regardless of academic demands (Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; González, 2006; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006; Macias Wycoff, 1996). These conflicting messages prompted Marisol to reevaluate how she persisted toward completing her program. Again, she seemed respectful of divergent views, but confidently explained her
educational priority, “It’s not anything that I could force someone to want or to desire. It’s what I want and I’m not gonna apologize for it [story 56, lines 681, 683].” She seemed to use this internal strength to endure both supportive and unsupportive interactions with family regarding her academic journey.

Cultural aspects. In this phase of analysis I used language to explore culture. I specifically looked at Marisol’s vocabulary selection and how she discussed language use in general. Marisol’s vocabulary selection was very diverse as discussed earlier, but she also used idioms that suggested she viewed her world from a multidimensional perspective. She frequently used the phrase, “So, that’s where I’m at” to end a story. This phrase seemed to suggest that her experiences placed her in a location. On the other hand, she frequently used visual idioms as well (e.g., “when will I see the light at the end of the tunnel,” and “I don’t see the world in the same way”). She also used spatial terms: she did not have “space” in her life for anything outside of education and family and she did not have “space” in her brain when working and developing a dissertation topic. These phrases seemed to demonstrate how she perceived the different cultural worlds around her: spatially, visually, and insightfully.

Another important theme of Marisol’s narrative was language use. As discussed earlier, a significant turning point in which a classmate told Marisol she talked like she was from the “border,” shifted her perspective of language. As she progressed toward her doctorate, she began viewing proper language use as important. She appeared to perceive academia as a different cultural sphere in which formal (i.e., precise, non-biased, cited) language is required. To navigate this language requirement, she discussed navigating a bicultural identity in which she shifted her verbal and written language to succeed in
academia. However, she expressed a desire to stay true to herself while still “citing everything.”

In Borderlands theory, nepantla, or "in-between space" (Keating, 2005), represents living in the spaces between borders. Various features of Marisol’s narrative aligned with nepantla and Borderlands theory overall. For example, Marisol seemed to use a fluid, bicultural identity to navigate nepantla. She shifted between using language formally within the academic context, while still infusing her authentic self into her writing. Additionally, Marisol’s identity was highly influenced by growing up on the U.S. Mexico border, another in between space. This border identity also aligned with the physical borderlands that Anzaldua (1987) wrote about when creating Borderlands theory. The theme of ambiguity was also central to Marisol’s narrative, just as it is to Borderlands theory (Anzaldua, 1987).

Finally, the mythology inherent in Borderlands theory, was a characteristic of Marisol’s spiritual identity as well. She mentioned attending church, but she also stated, “of course being Latina, I felt, “Oh, somebody put a curse on me’ [story 15, line 137].” In Mexican culture, there are various spiritual and mythical beliefs. Being cursed, or getting ojo (the evil eye), is one of those beliefs, which is why Marisol connected it to her ethnic identity. In fact, when I sent Marisol her transcripts, she replied that her story about being curse sounded very “border Mexican.” This comment exemplified her strong connection to her Mexican culture and with the physical borderlands that have shaped her identity. This spiritual aspect of her narrative was also supported in research in which studies exploring the experiences of Chicana college students found that participants used diverse spiritual practices, often merging traditional Catholic views with their own
personal spiritual practices (Delgado Bernal, 2006). Some participants also discussed Catholicism and religion in relation to the pressure of remaining a virgin until marriage (Holling’s, 2006), which is linked to Marisol’s dissertation research. Overall, Marisol created a narrative revolving around ambiguity and borderlands. Although she felt like an “outsider” in her program, she has developed different strategies to navigate the borderlands and juggle her multiple identities.
CHAPTER EIGHT: CARMEN’S NARRATIVE

“I think they have helped me reconnect to my Mexican identity.”

Well, I always knew, since I was probably [in] seventh grade. I think that’s when I realized I wanted to be a counselor and my mom who was born in Mexico, she ended up getting pregnant the semester before she graduated from college and so growing up I always had her kinda push me. So college was never an option for me, it was like you have to go, you can’t make the same mistake I made, that kind of thing.

So, school was definitely my priority growing up and then I went to college and got my degree in psychology and that’s where I learned that in order to be a counselor, I had to get my master’s. So, I enrolled in a master’s program as soon as I graduated from college and then once I was in college I had the opportunity to work as a graduate assistant for a learning center and they had me teach a couple of undergrad courses and I fell in love with teaching. So, it was like, how can I combine counseling and teaching and at that time I was already contemplating a Ph.D. My mom was like, “Well, ya know, you’ve been going to school all this time, might as well go all the way” and I actually didn’t know what a Ph.D. program was until my senior year in college. Anyway, I started looking around and I was pretty set in applying to counseling psyc programs, but then I met somebody who had graduated with a degree in counselor education and supervision and she was telling me what it was like and what it was about and I looked into it and that’s how I ended up applying for this program and I have to say it’s probably been the best decision I’ve made.

I love the program. The professors are amazing. They’re very flexible and supportive. I have to say that I’m very lucky that I was able to get into this specific
program. I don’t know if my experience would have been the same somewhere else. I’m finishing up my third year. So, I’m done with course work. I’m done with internship. The way our program is, you have two years of course work and then the third year is focused on internship. So, you have to complete two internships. All of them are focused on clinical work, supervision, and teaching, both semesters. So, I’ve been trying to get that finished and I’ll be done in May. I’ll be pre-proposing [soon] and hopefully proposing end of fall, but it’s been an amazing experience.

Like I said, the faculty are great. I mean, none of our faculty are Mexican, Mexican American, or Hispanic. I have to say that even though they can’t necessarily relate with everything that I’m going through, they’re very open and willing to help me out with whatever. I don’t think any of my committee members knew anything about my research study and they have been one hundred percent supportive about it. That’s been great.

I am hoping to do my dissertation on…. it’s going to be qualitative. It’s going to be on the experiences of Mexican deportees, focusing on those individuals who are still here, who had a partner that was deported and I’m gonna try to just focus on Mexican origin individuals. [To pre-propose], you have to meet with all of your committee members for about an hour and it’s similar to the proposal, but it helps to better structure your proposal. So, you get all of the feedback that you can get and then you incorporate that feedback and then you finish the first three chapters. You submit them and then you can propose.

So…during the program, like, my second semester I completed a clinical practicum and then in the summer, I completed a multicultural clinical practicum and
then in the second year, after taking a supervision course, I completed a supervision practicum and then this last year, I have two internships focused on supervision, teaching, and clinical work. So, I do three-hundred hours of all three combined. Last semester I co-taught a practicum class and then this semester, I’m co-teaching an advanced qualitative research class. I have to say throughout the program, they’ve encouraged us to co-teach. So, prior to internship, I was given the opportunity to co-teach a couple of other classes without it counting for my internship, but it’s great that they’re so open to you doing what you really wanna do and for me it was focusing on teaching.

If you were to ask me [to] name one professor that I really get along with, I think that would be very difficult for me to do cuz I feel like they’re all so open about working with you. I have four of them on my dissertation committee, but I have worked on individual projects with three others. So, I have worked with a lot of them even though they’re not necessarily gonna be involved in my dissertation process. So, they’re all very outgoing. What I love about them is that they’re so driven. I think that unlike other places that I’ve heard about, they’re very willing to kinda bring you on board with whatever it is that they’re doing and they totally give you credit for it. I’ve never had an experience where I did something for someone and it hasn’t been acknowledged and all of them seem to get along really well. I’m sure that there’s sometimes that they don’t agree on some things, but they definitely keep that under wraps. Like our students, we never find out any drama that’s going on. We never get involved in any of it.

All of the faculty are completely willing to meet with you. For example, we met with students who were applying for the doc program here and one of them was asking me, “How approachable are they?” Well, they’re totally approachable. That day I’d been
in to like four of their offices. I walk down the hall and I have to talk to different people and I just kinda walk in and they put everything aside to work with you. I mean it’s just great. I have to say that I’m very very very grateful that I have all of them. They’re so encouraging and they’re the reason why I think that I’ve pushed myself so much. Because they’re always inviting us to do things, “Hey, there’s a conference here. If you need to submit something, let me know. Email me your proposal and I’ll review it for you.” So, things like that.

I’m doing a second qualitative study that [my chair] has completely helped me with and I’ve presented on it a couple of times and I’ve asked him, “Do you want your name on my presentation?” He’s the one that helped me submit my IRB and edit and he’s like, “No, this is your project. It’s my job to help you” So, it’s very obvious that they really want what’s best for you and they want you to grow and push yourself and do all these things, but not because they want to make themselves look better. They’re amazing.

I’ve always known that I wanted to teach and I wanted to practice, but I think that being so involved in research has pushed me to really focus on research when I graduate. I was thinking of applying to teaching institutions and just focus on teaching, but after working with all of them…they’re so patient about teaching you methodology, or even with statistics, or things you don’t understand, that it’s not as scary to me. I look up to a lot of them. I know we have one of our faculty members, she’s so young, and she has like, two children and she graduated, maybe six or seven years ago, and she has like more than thirty publications and I'm like, “Oh, my gosh, ya know, and she’s a woman.” So, that made me realize, that I can be a mom and I can still be a good researcher and a good faculty member. One of my mentors, who also has her children, she has been a great
influence also, cuz I see everything that she does and I’m like, “I wanna be like that one
day.” They’re just so student-centered. I think I really look up to them for sure.

I think I was torn for a while. I didn’t know what I wanted to do cuz for so long,
ya know, you think of yourself, “Ok, I’m going to be a psychologist.” Throughout my
master’s program, ya know, I worked hard to have really good grades and get involved in
research, so that I could have a better chance of getting into a counseling psyc program. I
met [a counselor education graduate], second to the last semester of my master’s
program, right when I was, ya know, filling out applications and looking at schools and I
remember that I had been looking at schools and I remember that I started looking at
what counselor education and supervision programs were like.

So, I wanted to stay somewhere close [to home]. [I decided] to look at counseling
psyc and counselor ed, and I came across my university’s website and it was just very
user friendly. So, I said, ya know, I’m going to see what the application looks like. So, I
 kinda started filling it out and at the same time I was filling out applications to counseling
psyc programs. This counseling ed program is the only one that I had started filling out
the application for. I’m not even kidding you, the day before Christmas, the director of
our doctoral program called me and he’s like, “I’ve noticed that you started filling out
your application, but you haven’t turned in your materials and I was just, ya know,
checking to see if I could help you with anything.” I’m at Wal-Mart thinking, “Oh my
gosh, what is this man doing? It’s the day before Christmas.” This man is so committed
that he is spending his Christmas break making sure that he his helping out in any way. I
had never met him before and I remember hanging up and telling my sister, “If all of the
faculty are as nice as that man was, I’m gonna go there.” So, my sister’s like, “You told
‘em you were gonna finish the application, but I thought you didn’t know if you wanted
to go into counselor ed.” I’m like, “I promised him I was gonna finish my application and
if he took the time to call me and check up with me, I’m gonna finish the application.”
So, I came home and I submitted everything. I interviewed for other counseling psyc
programs and it didn’t seem like a good fit for me. In the back of my mind, I was like,
“Maybe counselor ed is better for me.”

So, I interviewed here over the phone and everyone sounded so nice…nice
enough for me to like drive over here cuz I’m like so confused. So, I drove over here
during spring break. [The director of the doctoral program] had arranged for some of the
faculty to meet with me on a Wednesday morning, like in the middle of spring break.
They took me out for coffee, answered my questions, and I was like, “Ok, this is where I
need to be.” They were all so nice and like, who does that? Who comes in to work during
spring break, when they have children, they have things to do, just to meet with a student
who’s not even their student yet, ya know? So, that to me showed commitment and I’m
like, “Ok, this is the place for me.” That’s how I ended up here. I think those two major
things were what made me decide that this is what was best for me.

So, I feel very grateful and lucky that I have [these faculty] and I chose this
program cuz it’s been a very good fit for me. I really appreciate the fact that even though
they invite us to present and each faculty has their own research area- I have never felt…
pushed. I have never felt like I needed to go that route with my own interest. I have
always felt that they allow me to do what I’m interested in and they’re just very
supportive. For example, none of my faculty from the counseling department knew much
about my dissertation topic and instead of saying, “Well, no, how about you do this or
how about you do that?” They were like, “Great. Educate us. Tell us what it’s about and we’ll help you with whatever we can.” So, I feel like they’ve allowed me to, ya know, still be very connected to my Mexican culture without making them feel uncomfortable or making them feel like they can’t help me. So, the advanced qualitative course that I’m co-teaching is through [another] department and I’m working under a professor that’s the director of the Hispanic Center and my chair is the one that encouraged me to do that.

He’s like, “No Carmen, go. Do whatever you need to do.” He’s like, “If you wanna get involved in the Hispanic Center, I encourage you to do so.” He could have been like, “No, you have to co-teach with a professor here in the counseling department.” Instead he’s like, “No, do what you need to do.” So, I think it really allowed me to be me without them turning away and not supporting me because I’m not wanting to do what they’re wanting me to do, ya know?

The two studies that I’ve done so far have revolved around things that I’m interested in. Anything that I’ve ever done is something that I have chosen to do, not that they’ve told me, “This is what you have to write about.” So, I think they have helped me reconnect to my Mexican identity cuz they’ve encouraged me to do whatever I need to do.

When I first came into the program I had another [dissertation] topic in mind, but something was just like, “Well, ya know, I really like this topic, but I don’t know if it’s enough for me to want to dedicate a whole year or two of my life writing about it.” Then I went home during Christmas break. My mom was telling me…cuz she’s very close to the [Mexican immigrant] community because she’s one of the few that can speak English, even though she speaks it with a very thick accent. So, her and my two sisters,
who speak English very fluently, were able to help translate for people whenever something was going on. So she was telling me about ICE having more of a presence, more than they had ever had before. They’re the immigration enforcers within the country. They had started to pick up people and deport them. My mom was telling me how people were terrified, that people she knew were missing work, or they weren’t sending their children to school. Nobody wanted to leave their house because they were afraid of getting deported. She’s like, “Ya know, you have to remember that whenever you decided to go to school and get your Ph.D., that you can’t forget that you have to give back to your community. So, whenever you graduate, I want us to work together and find a way to help these people.” She’s like, “Just don’t forget where you came from. Imagine what it would be like if I couldn’t leave my house because, ya know, I was afraid of getting deported or what would happen if I was deported? What would happen to your siblings?” It made me realize, all of my life I have tried to look for something that connected my school life with what I saw when I got home. This is the perfect opportunity. Why not make this my dissertation? I talked to my mom and she was very excited. From there, I just took it and ran with it and here I am. She’s definitely what’s driven me to get this far.

I was born in Mexico and I moved here at the age of five. My mom and my sister and I were the only ones that were here undocumented for the first six years that we were here and I remember my mom has always been very connected to the Mexican community, or more specifically, the immigrant community because we were part of it for so long. I think we didn’t get our residency card until I was maybe twelve. So, she’s always been somebody’s translator or she’s the one that goes advocates for people. I
remember if any of my friends ever got in trouble at school and their mom couldn't come in, my mom would be the one to go in and try to advocate for them. So, I’ve always learned that I am privileged because I have had the opportunity to get an education and my mom’s always reminded me of that. She’s like, “Not everybody gets to do what you have had the chance to do. So, don’t forget that there’s other people, it’s not like they have chosen not to get an education, but circumstances haven’t allowed them to do so. Don’t forget that you were there and our family was there at some point. So, you have to give back.”

We lived at a town and she would leave burritos wrapped in plastic bags along the fence. So that when people were crossing over and they were starving they could feed themselves before having to walk ten miles to town. So, she taught me to not forget that these people are human, that it could’ve been us, it could’ve been her and that it could have been my dad. She’s always taught me to be aware of how privileged we are…that we had the chance to get legalized, that I had the chance to go to school, that she had a job. I think she constantly reminds me that I shouldn’t take it for granted because there’s other people that don’t have what I have.

So, by giving back to the community she means, “Don’t forget that we struggled when you were young and that I would’ve wished that somebody would’ve helped us, the way you can help other people right now.” Thinking back on what my mom must’ve gone through with me growing up, ya know, she had six kids. I’m like, “I would’ve wanted somebody to help her, the way I can help people.” I think that’s always been a crucial factor for me. She comes off as a very strong woman and she has very strong values and…she’s a great person. My parents divorced when I was a freshman in high
school. So, it’s been just my mom. It’s funny cuz I was just telling my fiancé that I think I blame my mom for being exactly how I am and who I am. She has had a major influence on my life and everything about who I am, I think, comes from her.

In my program I always try to let the professors know how thankful I am about being here. I don’t take it for granted at all, whereas I have noticed other people have, ya know? I don’t know if it’s a cultural thing. I don’t know if it’s the way I was raised, but my mom reminds me that this is a privilege, that this is not something that everyone gets a chance to do. So, I think the faculty realize that I am grateful to be here and I try to make the best with what I have. I think that’s why I always take advantage of opportunities and I think the faculty realize that and that’s why they’re willing to get me involved in anything they think I would enjoy.

So, my colleague and I, she’s the one that I’m closest to and she’s also from [another country]. So, she and I always talk about how to us, it’s a privilege to be here, but out of all our cohort I think we’re the ones taking advantage of the most opportunities because we realize that this is….ya know, something that not everybody gets to do. So, I think that’s one of the main ways that [my doctoral program] has affected me. Ya know, it allows me to really strive for getting the best out of the experience. Like, “Oh, I’m just gonna do the minimum amount of work and graduate.” No, if anything I feel like I need to prove to myself, to my family, and to the faculty that this is something I’m totally grateful for and I’m gonna take advantage of it. The faculty are great cuz I think they see that and they’re always encouraging me, opening up doors to other projects. I think that’s probably the main way [my doctoral program] has affected me.
I think I trust myself more and my decisions more, perhaps now than when I first started [my doctoral program]. Ya know, I think at the beginning I was like, “Well, am I really gonna be okay?” I’ve done well in my undergrad and my master’s, but I wasn’t sure if I had what it took to get through the program and now, it’s like I’ve done so much and I think I have learned to trust that I can do whatever I wanna do. Whereas, at the beginning, I think I was a little more skeptical about what I could actually accomplish and now I’m like, “Well, ya know, what’s the worst that can happen if I’ve gone through these three years and they’ve been so difficult? I think I can pretty much tackle anything that comes next.” So, I think trusting myself more. I think the experiences with the faculty have been very validating, ya know, cuz sometimes I felt like, “Are they just being nice just because I’m a student here?” But now presenting with them or them looking through manuscripts I’m submitting, and I get their feedback and I’m like, “Ok, I can actually do this.” So, it’s been a very validating experience and I think that’s helped me trust myself more and be more confident about what I can do.

[Our faculty] are so great. I work with Spanish speaking clients for my clinical part and none of the faculty speak Spanish. The supervisor who I was under for my clinical internship last semester, I did my case scripts in Spanish and she went out of her way to find another professor who would translate my case scripts for her so she could understand it. So, again, ya know evidence that they let me do whatever I need to do and whatever I want to do even if it takes them having to do extra work.

**Three Phases of Analysis**

In the following sections I will discuss three phases of analysis I did with Carmen’s individual transcript. These phases included: (1) listening to narratives, (2)
exploring stylistic features of stories including speech patterns and turning points and (3) searching across different fields of experiences, which included examining intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural features of Carmen’s narrative. Overall, Carmen provided a narrative in which she traversed back and forth through time to highlight the depth and meaning of her academic journey. Her narrative had a positive tone that emphasized how she has developed a multifaceted professional identity.

Listening to Narratives

Firstly, while listening to Carmen’s narrative I asked myself, how were emotions experienced by Carmen and I during the interview? Our interview was different because, unlike all of the other interviews I conducted, Carmen and I did our interview over the phone. Prior to our interview beginning, I felt nervous about conducting an interview in which I could not see her body language and other important communication cues. However, Carmen’s narrative was extremely positive and I felt very inspired during and after the interview. As narrator, Carmen spoke slowly, as if she was giving me time to let the meaning of her words sink in. I, as the audience, provided positive feedback that demonstrated my appreciation of her stories, such as “that’s great,” and “sounds awesome.” This positive interplay of emotions was an integral theme of Carmen’s overall narrative.

I also examined the organization of Carmen’s interview by focusing on how her narrative began, progressed, and ended. An important characteristic of Carmen’s narrative was the way she navigated time. Within the first five minutes of her interview, Carmen provided a chronological description of her journey toward the Ph.D. She started in seventh grade, when she realized she wanted to be a counselor, and described how she
progressed from being a psychology undergraduate to the present, a counselor education doctoral student. This story gives a brief synopsis of her entire narrative that introduced her mother, a key character throughout Carmen’s narrative, and reveals the “ending” (i.e., “that’s how I ended up applying for this program and I have to say it’s probably been the best decision I’ve made [story 2, line 21]”). Carmen then begins telling her story backward, by explaining her present experiences as a doctoral student and then jumping back to how she was admitted into the program. As a result, the audience understands the beginning of her story in light of the ending, which is a reversal of how we usually experience time. This created a link between the past and the present, as Carmen drew on her past memories to illuminate understanding about her present experiences (Polkinghorne, 1988). Although Carmen started chronologically, she used vivid memories to guide the audience back and forth through time, creating a historical understanding of her academic journey (Polkinghorne, 1988). The organization of her narrative sheds light on how Carmen navigated time and memories to make meaning of her lived experiences.

Finally, while listening to Carmen’s narrative, I reflected upon feelings I experienced throughout the interview, which included feelings of inspiration and admiration. I felt inspired by Carmen’s positive experiences with faculty and research, which seemed to prompt her to excel in her doctoral program. I also admired her mother and the relationship Carmen had with her mother. Similarly, my mother is a significant role model for me. This commonality influenced how I perceived and related to Carmen.
Exploring Stylistic Features of Stories

**Speech patterns.** Because Carmen and I did our interview over the phone, I relied heavily on her speech patterns to obtain a deeper understanding of Carmen. Carmen’s speech patterns, which included a relaxed speech cadence and long sentence structure, created a calm and positive ambiance for her narrative. Carmen spoke slowly; therefore she did not stutter often or use many space fillers, such as “um” or “uh.” Unlike short and choppy sentences, which may create a rushed feel, her long sentence structure created a sense of continuity and rhythm. These speech patterns influenced the way I experienced Carmen’s narrative.

**Turning points.** While there did not appear to be any contradictions in Carmen’s narrative, there were many turning points. The fact that she described several turning points, suggested she was very aware of shifts in her life and how these shifts shaped her identity. However, the turning points she discussed were influential to one aspect of Carmen’s identity, her professional identity. First, she realized she loved teaching,

I had the opportunity to work as a graduate assistant for a learning center and they had me teach a couple of undergrad courses and I fell in love with teaching. So, it was like, ‘Ok, how can I combine counseling and teaching?’ [story 2, line 15-16]

In this example, the opportunity to teach expanded her career goal of being a counselor to include teaching as well. Another turning point she described was when she interviewed with faculty at her current doctoral program, which shifted her from attending a counseling psychology program to pursuing a doctorate in counselor education. Other turning points included changing her research focus to incorporate more of her cultural heritage and expanding her professional identity to include research. Ultimately, these
turning points suggested that as a doctoral student, her professional identity was very salient.

**Searching across Different Fields of Experience**

**Intrapersonal.** Most of Carmen’s intrapersonal interactions illustrated how she negotiated her professional identity. Additionally, while some people use intrapersonal interactions to inform the audience about internal thoughts they may not want other characters in their stories to know (Fraser, 2004), Carmen’s intrapersonal interactions were often positive reflections, in question form, that helped her better understand a given situation. For example, in her narrative, Carmen shared her internal thoughts about how she grew to trust herself more as a doctoral student, “I think at the beginning I was like, ‘Well, am I really gonna be okay?’ [story 27, line 285]” which eventually led to, “Well, ya know, what’s the worst that can happen if I’ve gone through these three years and they’ve been so difficult? I think I can pretty much tackle anything that comes next [story 27, lines 289-290].” This internal dialogue sheds light on how Carmen’s professional identity has developed since being a doctoral student.

**Interpersonal.** Carmen frequently used interpersonal interactions in her narrative that provided insight into how she perceived her academic culture. All of the interpersonal interactions that Carmen shared regarding her department were positive and involved faculty members. Carmen did not, however, share interpersonal interactions between her and her classmates. This suggested that she may not interact with her classmates often or that she may attribute the positive perceptions she has of her department primarily to the support she received from faculty. Carmen also shared interpersonal interactions she had with her family, but these were often conversations she
Carmen’s narrative had a very positive tone. Her interpersonal interactions and how she perceived her academic culture align with this positive tone as well.

**Cultural aspects.** In this phase of analysis I used language to explore culture. I specifically looked at two features of language: (1) vocabulary selection and (2) English, Spanish, or other language use. Carmen’s vocabulary around ethnic identity was diverse. For example, when describing her dissertation research topic, she used the term, “Mexican origin,” which indicates someone who has Mexican ancestry, but may not have been born in Mexico. Additionally, when I asked about her ethnic label of choice, she stated, “I think Mexican American, Hispanic, Chicana, all three of them I think I’ve used. I think it just depends [story 1, lines 1-2].” She seemed comfortable using different terms depending on the cultural context she was in. This is important to note because ethnic identities can be very personal, political, and are often tied to marginalization (González, 2006; Malott, 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2000). The diverse vocabulary she used around ethnicity provided insight into her concept of ethnic identity overall.

Carmen also used the word “partner” when discussing her dissertation research. The use of this term implied that she chose to use a term more inclusive of different types of relationships. The intentionality apparent in her vocabulary selection when discussing ethnicity and relationship status suggested that she may think thoroughly about the impact of the language she uses in her research.

Other vocabulary that Carmen used implied a merging of multiple identities. Specifically, Carmen seemed to be uniting her home, gender, and professional identities.
At one point, Carmen explicitly stated, “I have tried to look for something that connected my school life with what I saw when I got home [story 19, line 215],” indicating a linking of her academic and home identities. She also specifically made this connection with her ethnicity “I think [faculty] have helped me, kind of, reconnect to like, my Mexican identity [story 17, line 185].” Carmen also mentioned other aspects of her identity, such as being a future mother, “So, that made me realize, that I can be a mom and I can still be a good researcher and a good faculty member [story 12, line 109].” Overall these quotes indicated that Carmen may be the process of merging multiple identities (e.g., mom, ethnicity, researcher), or as Anzaldúa (1999) refered to it, Carmen may have la conciencia de la mestiza. La mestiza uses her voice to speak for herself, to define herself, and to open up new spaces for herself (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). Because Carmen was in an academic culture in which her faculty completely supported her and her Mexican culture, Carmen seemed able to define who she wants to be as a professional. I will discuss professional identity further in the next chapter.

Finally, while exploring Carmen’s narrative for Spanish, English and other language use, I found that her use of Spanish emerged within the theme of giving back to her community. For example, Carmen’s mom and sisters translated for Mexican immigrants who did not speak English. Additionally, Carmen counseled Spanish-speaking clients. These examples demonstrated how Carmen and her family used their bilingualism to give back to their community. The theme of Latinas/os using their education and professional roles to advocate for the Latina/o community has emerged in similar studies as well (J. González, 2006; K. González et al., 2001; K. González et al., 2002; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008). Like Carmen, studies suggest that many Mexican
American graduate students realize that their family members and community members may not have had the opportunities they have had and therefore feel compelled to give back to their communities (González et al., 2001). Giving back to their communities includes conducting research that advocates for Latinas/os and creating community programs prompting social change for marginalized groups (González, 2006; González et al., 2001; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008). Similarly, Carmen was pursuing a dissertation topic that will help Mexican immigrant deportees and she will eventually collaborate with her mother to help the Mexican immigrant community. Ultimately, giving back to her community appeared to be an integral aspect of Carmen’s professional identity.
CHAPTER NINE: FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Four categories emerged in my study and each category had several sub-categories. The first three categories revolved around academia and the final category incorporated sub-categories that highlighted the multiple cultural spheres that the women in my study seemed to navigate. Each category and sub-category provide insight about the last two research questions, which are: (a) How do Mexican American women doctoral students navigate their cultures of origin and the academic cultures of their CACREP-accredited Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral programs? and (b) How does this cultural navigation impact how students feel and act within their cultures of origin and within their academic CACREP-accredited CES doctoral cultural realms?

The first three categories included: (1) strategies to enhance professional development, (2) developing a professional identity, and (3) strategies to persist. Within these three categories there were sub-categories. Category one had two sub-categories: using faculty as resources and taking advantage of academic opportunities. Category two had three sub-categories: accepting a counselor educator professional identity, rejecting a counselor educator professional identity, and integrating research into professional identity. Lastly, category three had three sub-categories: using voice to protect self, using silence to protect self, and fighting to finish.

The fourth and final category, navigating borderlands, had four sub-categories that illustrated how participants navigated the various cultural spheres in their lives. These sub-categories included: integrating family and academia, borders between family and academia, integrating ethnic and academic identities, and borders between ethnic and academic identities.
It is important to note that within the first three categories about academia, there was a division among participants. Two participants, Carmen and Martina, perceived their doctoral programs positively, but three participants, Helena, Lucia, and Marisol, expressed more challenges in relation to their doctoral programs. As a result, several of the categories were divided between these two groups of participants. This is actually a significant finding that underlines the importance that academic culture may hold for Mexican American women pursuing doctoral degrees in CES.

**Strategies to Enhance Professional Development**

**Using faculty as resources.** This first sub-category only emerged for Martina and Carmen, who expressed positive academic experiences in their CES doctoral programs. When discussing their academic cultures, they both primarily focused on faculty, rather than peer relationships. They seemed to use these relationships to foster their academic success. For example, Martina described her mentorship relationship, “So, she’s [mentor]… gotta lot of networking opportunities. She’s really a fantastic person and my own advisor, like I said, she just went up for her third-year review [story 14, lines 130-131].” In this story Martina stated that she intentionally sought mentorship from another faculty member since she perceived her advisor to be too busy. This mentorship enhanced Martina’s professional development by facilitating access to opportunities. Similarly, Carmen stated, “[Faculty] are so encouraging and they’re the reason why I think that I’ve pushed myself so much. Because they’re always like, inviting us to do things [story 10, lines 89-90].” In this excerpt, Carmen depicted faculty support as motivating and as her primary access to different projects. Martina and Carmen also seemed to have positive experiences with all faculty in their departments,
beyond their doctoral committees, and they both worked on projects with faculty outside of their departments.

**Taking advantage of academic opportunities.** Another way that Martina and Carmen enhanced their professional development was by taking advantage of every academic opportunity possible. Martina explained, “the more that I can participate and the more that I can have a variety of opportunities to really just see how the publishing goes, the better it’s gonna be for me [story 11, line 96].” This quote exemplified Martina’s motivation to enhance her professional development. Carmen also discussed her motivation, “I know that not everybody has the chance to do this…. I think that’s why I always take advantage of opportunities that are given to me [story 26, lines 270-271].”

Although Martina and Carmen have differing reasons for taking advantage of academic opportunities, the result is the same; they have either conducted their own research or collaborated on research projects. Additionally, they both have published and presented at conferences. All of these actions are critical to the professional development of emerging scholars.

These two sub-categories are important findings because previous research suggests that faculty relationships and access to academic activities (e.g., conferences, publications) positively influence doctoral student persistence (Protivnak & Foss, 2009; Vaquera, 2007). Marisol, Helena, and Lucia, however, are not accessing these resources. In fact, Martina and Helena had markedly different perspectives about taking advantage of academic opportunities outside of their research interests. Martina perceived taking advantage of every academic opportunity as a strategy to gain experience publishing, but Helena desired to be more “genuine” and only pursue projects within her research area.
She described students who work on projects outside of their research interests, “you’re doing it for the wrong reasons, just so then you could…be famous, [story 35, line 404].” These quotes illustrated the difference in how Martina and Helena were approaching their doctoral programs and may have attributed to why they were having different experiences regarding their professional development. However, regardless of why Marisol, Lucia, and Helena did not seem to connect with faculty or participate in academic activities, lack of access to these resources may hinder their satisfaction and/or their persistence in their doctoral programs (Protivnak & Foss, 2009; Vaquera, 2007).

**Developing a Professional Identity**

**Integrating research into professional identity.** In the previous category, Martina and Carmen both used faculty and academic opportunities to enhance their professional development. Similarly, their narratives illustrated how they both were merging research into their professional identities. They ascribed this new development to the culture of their doctoral programs. For example, Carmen acknowledged that she began her program with a desire to be a professor at a teaching institution, but the support of her faculty encouraged her to pursue a career in academia with a focus on research. She explained, “after working with all of [the faculty] and they’re so patient about teaching you methodology, or even with statistics, or things you don’t understand, that [research] is not as scary to me [story 11, line 104-105].” Carmen’s focus on research was also evidenced by the two qualitative research projects she independently conducted within the first two-years of her doctoral program. Martina also discussed entering her doctoral program with a focus on teaching, but then decided she wanted to pursue a career as a professor who demonstrates “leadership” through research. She attributed her
new emphasis on research to being in a research-intensive doctoral program and explained, “It’s not, I do research, it’s I’m a researcher [story 23, line 252].” This statement exemplified how Martina was infusing research into her identity.

Lucia, Helena, and Marisol, on the other hand, did not mention wanting to pursue careers in academia and/or research. Lucia’s lack of discussion about research may have been due to her first-year status in her doctoral program. In fact, research suggests that the first-year experience for CES doctoral students is full of self-doubt, anxiety, and learning how to fit-in to the doctoral program (Hughes and Kleist, 2005). Lucia may have been focused on adjusting to a new environment, rather than thinking about research. However, Marisol and Helena, were more advanced in their doctoral programs, but seemed to have different perspectives about research due to their professional identities. I will discuss professional identity further in the next sections.

**Accepting the counselor educator professional identity.** Both Carmen and Martina strongly identified with the professional identity of counselor educator. For example, Carmen initially wanted to pursue her doctorate in counseling psychology, but selected a counselor education program, which she described, “it’s probably been the best decision I’ve made [story 2, line 21].” Martina specifically told her mother she wanted to be “a counselor educator.” Additionally, they both discussed wanting to pursue an academic career as counselor educators. Professional identity for counselors is important because the counseling profession has struggled to develop a sense of collective identity (Gale & Austin, 2003; Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011; Swickert, 1997). Studies exploring the identities of professional counselors are beginning to emerge, but few studies have focused primarily on CES doctoral students and professionals. Carmen and
Martina’s strong sense of a CES professional identity emphasize the need for more studies investigating how a CES professional identity impacts the collective identity of counselors.

Along the same lines, Lucia identified with a counselor professional identity. However, she demonstrated her professional identity by focusing on the relationships between counselor educators and counseling psychologists within her doctoral program. For instance, Lucia described counseling psychologists as over analyzing client issues and stated, “I don’t feel counselors are that way. I think we know that people are entitled to bad days [story 33, line 718-719].” This quote seemed to demonstrate a difference in the way Lucia perceived that counselors and psychologists work with their clients. In several studies investigating the professional identities of counselors, many counselors identified the wellness model as a key aspect of their professional identities. They also associated psychologists with a medical or pathological approach when working with clients (Mellin et al., 2011; Swickert, 1997). In Lucia’s case, she also seemed to associate the counseling psychologists in her program with more of a diagnostic approach as compared to counselors.

Lucia also described the department climate between counselor educators and counseling psychologist, “I feel that unspoken division really plays out in supervision and in the classroom [story 18, line 370].” This category of a division between counselors and psychologists has emerged in other studies as well (Protivnak & Foss, 2009; Swickert, 1997). In fact, the division she described between counselor education and counseling psychology in particular, also emerged in a study of CES doctoral students in which participants described their departments as subject to “turf wars” between different
programs. Participants reported this type of environment as detrimental toward their overall CES doctoral experience (Protivnak & Foss, 2009). This is important to note because Lucia already expressed discomfort in her program due to a discriminatory experience. Further discomfort regarding a professional division among counselor educators and counseling psychologists may be detrimental to her persistence in her program.

Rejecting the counselor educator professional identity. In contrast, Helena and Marisol did not identify as counselor educators. Helena explained, “I don’t see myself as a counselor educator. I see myself more as like, a clinician [story 10, lines 129-130].” In fact, Helena seemed to dislike counselor education because she started one story with the statement, “and if for some freakish reason I had to be a counselor educator… [story 10, line 137, emphasis added].” In this story she explained that she wanted to start her own private practice after graduating. Similarly, Marisol explicitly stated, “I’m a clinical social worker in a counseling program [story 3, line 10].” This difference in professional identity made her feel like an “outsider” and “step-child” in her doctoral program.

Similar to Helena, Marisol did not plan to pursue a career in academia, but wanted to work in a college-counseling center upon graduating. This finding is unique because it exemplified Helena and Marisol’s desire to provide counseling services in their future careers rather than pursuing academic careers. This is not shocking because many individuals who earn CES doctorates select this career path. In a previous qualitative study, Swickert (1997) sought to learn more about the professional identities of CES doctoral graduates who were working full-time clinicians. All of the participants in this study identified as counselors. What is unique about Helena and Marisol is that they did
not identity as counselors. This finding supports the need for more studies investigating the complex professional identity of CES professionals who do not align with a counselor identity.

Moreover, this finding is pertinent to Helena and Marisol’s persistence in their doctoral program. In a study by Hoskins and Goldbert (2005), a key component that influenced CES doctoral student attrition was academic match. Academic match incorporated students evaluating their own career goals in comparison to their program's focus on teaching, practice, and/or research. It seemed that Helena, who was preparing to take her comprehensive exams, and Marisol, who was writing her dissertation pre-proposal, were not perceiving a good match between their career goals and their doctoral programs. This may significantly impact their progression through the final segments of their doctoral programs.

**Strategies to Persist**

**Using voice to protect self.** Lucia, Helena, and Marisol seemed to use their voices to speak up and protect themselves within different facets of their doctoral programs. For example, Lucia described using her voice to defend herself against a racially discriminatory comment directed at her, “So, I felt that I needed to step in and speak up and say, ‘This isn’t right’ [story 6, line 80].” Helena used her voice to protect her research interest in play therapy even though faculty in her department did not seem to value this topic. She also learned how to “politely” say no when feeling pressured to take on additional projects and described this as, “not taking people’s crap [story 13, line 396].” Marisol, on the other hand, described using her voice to dispute “strange
comments about diversity [story 40, line 450]” that were made during class discussions. She stated, “I didn’t care, ya know, I said what I needed to say [story 39, line 427].”

Marisol also described having to use her voice to state what she needed from faculty during the dissertation process. She explained, “I really have to advocate and push and be persistent…. I’m an introvert and so I really have to step out of my comfort zone and be assertive [story 13, line 119].” This assertiveness was also reported in a study of CES doctoral students in which participants described transitioning from a collectivist framework to an individualistic mindset and self-advocating to survive within their doctoral programs (Protivnak & Foss, 2009). It appeared that Lucia, Helena, and Marisol were all using their voices to self-advocate and persist within their programs.

Moreover, using Anzaldúa’s (1987) Borderland theory, a woman who uses her voice to speak for herself and to open up new spaces for herself is enacting la conciencia de la mestiza (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). Prior to starting this study I was curious to explore how Mexican American women CES doctoral students enacted la conciencia de la mestiza. I wondered if participants used their voices to redefine themselves or to express resistance in their academic programs? Within the sub-category of using voice to protect self, it seemed that Lucia, Marisol, and Helena used their voices to express resistance towards injustice and/or to express their needs as doctoral students. In fact, Helena recently informed me that she will conduct her dissertation research on play therapy and be the first in her department to do a dissertation on this topic. In alignment with Anzaldúa’s (1987) la conciencia de la mestiza, Helena used her voice to create a new space in which she could conduct the research she felt most passionate about.
Contrarily, because Carmen and Martina discussed positive experiences within their doctoral programs, they may not have needed to use their voices as protection.

**Using silence to protect self.** Although Lucia and Marisol used their voices within their academic cultures, they perceived negative consequences for using their voices. These consequences eventually influenced them to stop using their voices. Specifically, because Lucia perceived being “punished” for speaking up against the racially discriminatory comment, she used silence to protect herself against further ramifications. Lucia explained, “[In class] I don’t want to say anything because I don’t know what might be taken out of my mouth and used against me [story 7, line 125].” Marisol “gave up” talking during class because nothing seemed to change. Marisol stated, “I felt like every week I was speaking up [in class] and it was useless…[so] I just stopped talking [stories 34-35, lines 400-401].”

Both of these sub-categories, using voice to protect self and using silence to protect self, also emerged in a study by González (2006). González found that Latinas in doctoral programs either found or lost their voices. When Latina doctoral students found their voices, they appeared more motivated to pursue careers in academia. Latinas who lost their voices, however, felt powerless and feared speaking up during class due to the consequences. Like the participants in González’ (2006) study, Lucia and Marisol both quit using their voices as a form of protection against unwanted consequences. Additionally, neither of them discussed pursuing careers in academia.

**Fighting to finish.** In this last sub-category, Helena, Lucia, and Marisol all shared the drive to complete their doctoral programs regardless of the challenges they encountered. For example, after enduring a harsh critique from her professor and
classmates, Helena explained, “I don’t know how I went back [to class]…I just have to finish [story 42, line 509].” Lucia also seemed to demonstrate this inner motivation to finish even though she felt uncomfortable in her academic environment. She explained, “I got here by my own accord- my own hard work…. I’m going to go over there and continue with what I started [story 10, lines 219, 222].” Marisol stated, “I owe over $50,000 to this institution and I have no other alternative, but to finish [story 17, line 156].” All of these quotes highlighted their internal drive to persist even during challenging times. In contrast, Martina and Carmen did not express the fight to finish because they did not seem to be encountering the same types of obstacles as Helena, Lucia, and Marisol.

Navigating Borderlands

Of the four concepts within Borderlands theory, two emerged and influenced the name of this category: navigating borderlands. The first concept that emerged was nepantla, which represents living in the spaces between borders. The other concept that emerged was coyolxauhqui, which represents an attempt of integrating multiple identities and cultural spheres (Keating, 2005). These two concepts were enacted in multiple ways throughout the following sub-categories.

Integrating family and academia. Carmen and Helena both appeared to be enacting coyolxauhqui (Anzaldúa, 1987) by integrating their family and home lives with their academic lives. For example, when discussing her dissertation topic, which incorporated exploring the experiences of Mexican origin deportees, Carmen said, “I have tried to look for something that connected my school life with what I saw when I got home….and I’m like, ‘this is the perfect opportunity’ [story 19, line 215].” Carmen’s
mother also encouraged Carmen to use her academic skills (e.g., research) to give back to her community and told her, “don’t forget where you came from [story 19, line 211].”

These examples highlight the integration Carmen began as she merged her research with her home life. Helena also appeared to be merging her family with her academic life, especially by stating that when she graduates it will be like “[my family is] also graduating [story 55, line 663]”. Helena’s family openly admitted that they “don’t know exactly what it feels like [story 55, line 667]” for Helena as a doctoral student, but they valued her academic goals. Their support was also evidenced in the language they used to connect to her academic experiences, such as using “master blaster” and “el libro [the book]” to refer to her graduate education experiences.

Previous research also indicates that, like Carmen and Helena, Latina/o graduate students frequently rely on family for support. Furthermore, many Latina/o students’ family members did not attain a higher education and therefore lack understanding about academia. As a result, similar to Helena, Latina/o students often rely on family for emotional support rather than career or academic advice (Achor & Morales, 1990; Gándara, 1982; González et al., 2001).

For Carmen and Lucia, their mothers in particular, played significant roles in their educational endeavors. Carmen’s mother was an integral pillar of her home life and her academic life. For example, Carmen’s mother encouraged Carmen to continue her education and to use her education to give back to the Mexican immigrant community. Lucia also discussed her mother’s support of her educational goals. Lucia said that her mother always told her, “You need to go and get an education so you can see the world and have opportunities that I didn’t have [story 24, line 510].” This is an important
finding because many studies reveal that, like Carmen and Lucia, the mothers of Mexican American women in higher education provide vital encouragement of their daughters’ educational aspirations (Gándara, 1982; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006; Mycias Wycoff, 1996; Ramirez Lango, 1995). Although further research is needed to understand fathers’ support, both Carmen and Lucia’s mothers separated from their fathers when they were young, which may have contributed to the significance of their mother’s support.

**Borders between family and academia.** In contrast to Carmen and Helena, Lucia, Marisol, and Martina appeared to perceive boundaries between family and academia. These boundaries decreased how much they communicated with their family about academia. As mentioned earlier, Lucia’s mother encouraged her to pursue higher education, but was now worried because Lucia chose to attend school out of state. Lucia explained, “My mom makes comments every now and then that she doesn't like that I’m so far away. So, I don’t really feel that I had their support a 100% with choosing to go [out of state] [story 24, lines 506-507].” Lucia also differentiated how comfortable she felt at home with family versus how she felt in her academic culture, “I can’t really be myself [story 26, line 577].” These borders caused Lucia to decrease how much she told her family about her doctoral program. Marisol also recognized borders between family and academia. Marisol explained,

> I feel like I see something that nobody else sees and it makes me… not the most favorite person to be around during family gatherings because I see things that I know are wrong… I think, to some degree, being a doctoral student has also made me disgruntled [story 27, line 312].
As a result of the differences Marisol perceived between herself and her family, she did “check-ins” to filter what she said around family. Finally, Martina described her family, “I don’t come from a family that values education… it’s just, the culture does not embrace or understand [story 18, lines 187, 197].” Martina did not discuss academia with her family as she explained, “at school I just feel…the things that I’m interested in I can share with others and at home it just becomes different [story 34, line 354].”

For Lucia, Marisol, and Martina, pursuing academia seemed to divide them from their families. This aligns with coatlicue, a concept in Anzaldúa’s (1999) Borderlands theory, which represents crossing another border. Anzaldúa (1999) explained, "'Knowing' is painful because after ‘it’ happens I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before (p. 70).” Lucia, Marisol, and Martina seem to be enacting coatlicue in which moving forward through academia enabled them to see new perspectives and changes in their identities. However, these changes also created borders between them and their families.

**Integrating ethnic and academic identities.** The sub-category of integrating ethnic and academic identities only emerged with Carmen. Carmen seemed to have support from her mother and faculty members to merge her ethnic and academic identities. For example, Carmen and her mother immigrated to the U.S. when Carmen was a young child. Now, Carmen and her mother use their personal experiences, and Carmen’s educational opportunities, to give back to the Mexican immigrant community. Carmen also worked at the Hispanic Center in her institution and conducted her counseling practicum with Spanish speaking clients. Carmen explained, “I think [faculty] have helped me reconnect to like, my Mexican identity cuz they’ve encouraged
me to do whatever I need to do [story 17, line 185].” This academic and ethnic integration was a significant finding in a study by Murakami-Ramalho et al., (2008) in which doctoral students of color reported gaining skills, such as analytical thinking and research, while also finding ways to maintain their ethnic identities through their academic work.

Although Carmen was the only participant that forged strong connections between her ethnic and academic identities, Carmen, Marisol, and Martina were all planning to conduct dissertation studies that increase awareness about the Latina/o community. Specifically, Carmen will study the experiences of Mexican origin deportees, Marisol will study Latinas’ sexual decision making strategies, and Martina will study school counselors working with Mexican students who are at risk of being deported. This characteristic of using their academic experiences to give back to their communities was found in many studies exploring the experiences of Latina/o graduate students. In these studies, many Latina/o graduate students were using their research to advocate for Latinas/os (González, 2006; González et al., 2001; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008).

**Borders between ethnic and academic identities.** Martina, Lucia, and Marisol perceived boundaries between their ethnic and academic identities. For example, Martina expressed a belief that many Mexican American women must overcome the cultural pressures to “conform” and “drop out” of school in order to pursue a higher education. She described the subtle nature of these cultural pressures: “read between the lines, unspoken, ya know, “Your cousin has three kids already. When are you gonna start? [story 33, lines 343-345]” The cultural pressures described by Martina were found in previous studies as well. Research suggests that for many Mexican American women
graduate students, family expectations may include caring for family members, pressure to marry, and pressure to have children (Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; González, 2006; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006; Macias Wycoff, 1996). In Martina’s case, she admitted that she has “a rebellious side to me, not wanting to always follow what I’m supposed to do…culturally [story 19, line 202],” which has helped her persist in academia. These examples demonstrate the borders Martina perceived between her academic identity and the expectations of her ethnic culture.

Lucia described herself as proud of her Latina culture, but her stories about her academic experiences prompted her to think about ethnic authenticity. Because many of her peers and faculty stated that Lucia did not “look Latina,” Lucia began questioning if she had to perform ethnicity when in her academic environment. She explained, “Am I supposed to act White, quote unquote, because I’m in a space with predominantly White people?...Am I supposed to leave my culture behind when I’m [on campus] [story 8, lines 166, 168].” These examples illustrated the borders Lucia perceived between her academic and ethnic identities.

Early in her narrative, Marisol described what it was like to be a Mexican American woman in a predominantly White doctoral program. She explained, “I guess that’s when I was lacking the most confidence, in the beginning of the program…for being a woman of color, not seeing a lot of people who looked like me…”[story 5, line 42].” As her narrative progressed she painted a complex and colorful picture of her ethnic identity, which incorporated being from a border town, her language use, and claiming a bicultural identity to navigate academia. She discussed bicultural identity:
I don’t think that…if you’re a person of color and you don’t accept bicultural identity that you can be successful in a doctoral program because that would mean to negate who you really are. So, you accept who you really are, but you also accept that you have to shift and be a certain way, in a certain context [story 55, lines 644-646].

Marisol’s description of her ethnicity in relation to academia highlighted an identity shift in which Marisol altered her ethnic identity in order to successfully navigate her doctoral program. While Martina and Lucia seemed to perceive a harsh division between their ethnic identities and academia, Marisol viewed bicultural identity as a way to permeate these boundaries.

Finally, Helena was the only participant that did not mention ethnicity in relation to academia. Helena told me that there were many Hispanic students in her doctoral program. Research suggests that Latina/o students who pursue doctoral education at institutions with a large number of Hispanic students and faculty may have more affirming experiences and may be more likely to persist (Vaquera, 2007). Although Helena had other concerns about her program, due to the large number of Hispanics in her program, this may have decreased the saliency of ethnicity to Helena.

Ultimately, the commonalities and differences among and between participants increase awareness about the multiple identities that Mexican American women CES doctoral students are navigating. Findings highlight numerous factors that could be detrimental to the persistence of Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs, such as lack of faculty support and academic match between students and their doctoral programs. These findings also build on previous studies and theories, demonstrating the
relevance of this study to Mexican American women and the profession of counselor education and supervision.

**Limitations**

There were three limitations to this study. The first limitation incorporated sample size. The purpose of my study was not to make generalizations. However, because of the small sample size (i.e., five), I remain very specific about extrapolations that can be drawn from this study (Patton, 2002, p. 584). The findings from this study are limited to Mexican American women between a small age range of 25-37, primarily without children, in CACREP accredited CES doctoral programs.

The second limitation to this study included representation of different doctoral program stages. More representation of women at different stages of their CES doctoral programs may have enhanced understanding about identity and the CES doctorate experience. In this study, one participant was in her first year, two were in their second year, one was in her third year, and one was in her sixth year writing her dissertation pre-proposal. This limited the context provided about stage of doctoral program.

Additionally, a division emerged in this study: two participants depicted their doctoral programs very positively and three participants expressed more challenges with their programs. A larger sample with participants that were spread across the different stages of their CES doctoral programs may have provided more insight about this division.

A third limitation to this study was that I used interviews as the primary and only source of data, which required complete reliance on self-report. To address this limitation, I used thick description, respondent validation, and peer debriefing (Patton, 2002; Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). I used thick description of
participants’ stories by providing long, verbatim composites of their entire narratives. This maintained the authenticity of participants’ voices and enabled me to provide detailed analysis and description that was true to participants’ experiences. I also sent the numbered and storied transcripts to all participants to obtain feedback and clarification about anything they believed I misinterpreted. When conducting peer-debriefing, I reviewed my findings with a colleague in the CES profession to see if the categories I identified aligned with categories she identified. Her and I reached consensus, which helped me increase the credibility of my findings. However, it is important to note that the purpose of the study was to explore how participants attributed meaning to their experiences; therefore, I did not view their narratives as factual representations of life events (Polkinghorne, 2007; Reissman, 2003).

**Implications**

Findings from this study align with previous research, which suggests that Latina/o graduate students are finding ways to merge their academic interests with their ethnic identities (González, 2006; González et al., 2001; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008). If CES staff and faculty can help facilitate this type of professional development, they may be able to create academic environments more conducive to increasing the number of Mexican American women pursuing doctorate degrees in CES. In the following section I will discuss methods that facilitate the multifaceted professional identities of Mexican American women in CACREP-accredited, CES doctoral programs. I will conclude with a discussion about future research topics pertinent to the CES profession.
Counselor Education and Supervision Doctoral Programs

Lack of Latina women in CES faculty positions. In this study both Lucia and Martina discussed the need for more Mexican American women Counselor Educators in faculty positions. To emphasize the importance of their concerns, statistics demonstrate that this issue is nation-wide. In 2003, of the 568,911 faculty members employed in the U.S., only 18,475 (3.2%) were Latina/o. Latina women compromised only 3.7% of all female faculty employed in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, 2006-2007). These statistics demonstrate the severe lack of Latina women in the professoriate overall. This deficiency is critical because studies suggest that increasing the number of Latina/o faculty may aid in the persistence of Latina/o students in doctoral programs. Moreover, an increased number of Latina/o faculty members may play a critical role in helping Latina/o doctoral students pursue careers in academia (Contreras & Gandara, 2006; Vaquera, 2007). To increase the number of Mexican American women CES faculty members, counselor educators within academia must use aggressive recruitment and retention strategies while providing strong guidance of Latina CES doctoral students into the professoriate.

Providing empowering academic mentorship. Martina and Carmen discussed having faculty mentors that exposed them to research and publishing opportunities. Carmen mentioned working with Spanish speaking clients in her counseling practicum. Additionally, almost all of the participants in my study were planning on writing dissertations that aligned with their ethnic identities. These opportunities seemed meaningful to the participants and enabled them to give back to their communities. Previous research also emphasizes the importance of academic mentorship that increases
Latina/o students’ exposure to research and publishing while empowering Latina/o students to conduct research pertinent to their ethnic identities. Providing this type of empowering mentorship may increase the satisfaction and persistence of Latina/o students in doctoral programs (Contreras & Gandara, 2006; Gonzalez et al., 2002; Vaquera, 2007).

Other ways that CES faculty and staff could provide empowering mentorship is by being aware of the meaning of ethnic and/or bicultural identities for Mexican American women. CES professionals can also be aware of what it means to have and/or lose voice within an academic environment, like the participants described in this study and in other studies as well (Achor & Morales, 1991; González, 2006; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008). Furthermore, recognizing the complex role that family plays for Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs may help CES faculty and staff provide the critical support that Latina/o CES doctoral students need. This may include incorporating their family into academic events such as informing students that their families can attend their dissertation defense meetings.

Overall, as indicated in this study, Martina and Carmen described supportive academic environments in which they developed interest in pursuing careers as CES faculty members. Providing this type of empowering mentorship may help other Mexican American women in CES, CACREP-accredited doctoral programs develop similar career goals, thus increasing the number of Mexican American women as CES faculty members.

**Academic match.** A category that emerged in my study and that also emerged in a previous study about CES doctoral students was the importance of academic match
toward doctoral student attrition (Hoskins & Goldbert, 2005). In my study, both Helena and Marisol expressed a strong disconnection between their professional identities and the academic focus of their doctoral programs. Due to the unique nature of CES doctoral programs, which incorporate practice, teaching, internships, and research, explicitly communicating the focus of the program may help students decide if pursuing a doctorate in CES is the best fit for them. Promoting a stronger academic match for CES doctoral students, may significantly improve persistence and satisfaction for Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs (Hoskins & Goldbert, 2005).

**Future Research**

Several directions for future research exist that could increase understanding about the experiences of Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs. For example, investigating the experiences of participants at different stages of their CES doctoral programs may increase awareness about the challenges and benefits students encounter based on the varying demands of each stage (e.g., candidacy, counseling practicum, etc.) Furthermore, while most participants in my study sensed a need to shift identities when entering academic culture, one participant merged her ethnic identity with her professional identity. Exploring how a research identity emerges in relation to ethnic identity may increase understanding about the type of support CES professionals can provide to Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs.

When families are supportive it can be beneficial for doctoral students, but some Mexican American women may have families who do not understand or support their educational goals (J. González, 2006; K. González et al., 2001). In particular, support from mothers towards their daughters’ educational goals emerged in this study. This
theme has also emerged in previous research (Gándara, 1982; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006; Mycias Wycoff, 1996; Ramirez Lango, 1995), which prompts the need for further studies about the mother-daughter relationship for Mexican American doctoral students.

Moreover, because there is a scarcity of research about Latina/o fathers, studies about the academic support fathers give their Mexican American daughters is severely needed. Overall, gaining insight about parental support of Mexican American women in CES doctoral programs is critical because research suggests that family support is integral to the persistence of Latinas/os in higher education (Achor & Morales, 1990; Gándara, 1982; González et al., 2001; Ong, Phinney, & Dennis, 2006). Understanding how parents influence their progression through a CES doctoral program can enhance the way faculty and staff work with this student group.

Finally, because there is an underrepresentation of Latina/o women in CES faculty positions, researching how Latina women in CES doctoral programs progress toward the professoriate would be worthwhile and help to increase the number of Latina CES doctoral students pursuing careers as faculty. In my study, research seemed to impact participants’ decisions to pursue careers as faculty or careers as clinicians. Similarly, Swickert (1997) found that CES doctorates that chose to be full-time clinicians rather than faculty expressed a dislike for research. More studies are needed that explore the influence of research on CES Latina students’ decisions to become faculty members.

In summary, the findings and implications of this study are paramount due to the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in counselor education (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2003). As the Latina/o population in the U.S. rapidly increases (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004), counselors are needed who can provide services to such a diverse group of
clients. Understanding the identities of Mexican American women earning doctoral degrees in CES enhances the ability of CES faculty and staff to recruit and retain Mexican American women in CES. As a result, Mexican American women can contribute to a more diversified counseling training curriculum and provide the empowering mentorship that Mexican American and other CES students of color so desperately need.
REFERENCES


Rendón, L. I. (1992). From the barrio to the academy: Revelations of a Mexican American "scholarship girl". *New Directions for Community Colleges, 80*, 55-64.


APPENDIX A

Recruitment E-mail

Hello,

My name is Tamara Hinojosa and I am a third-year doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) doctoral program at The Pennsylvania State University. Under the advisement of my dissertation chair, Dr. Jolynn Carney, I am conducting my dissertation research about the identities of Mexican American women who are students in CACREP-accredited CES doctoral programs. This study has been approved by the Penn State IRB and is being conducted for research purposes.

In conducting this research, I aim to provide insight about the cultural characteristics of both CES doctoral programs and Mexican American women that impact the identities of Mexican American women doctoral students. My goal is that this information will facilitate development of strategies that will increase the number of Mexican American women in the CES profession.

Mexican American women who participate in this study will be asked to complete confidential individual interviews via phone or Skype (i.e., free on-line video calling). Interviews will be audio recorded and last 60-90 minutes.

I am seeking participants who are Mexican American women, who were born in the United States, and who are currently in CES, CACREP-accredited doctoral programs.

If eligible and willing, please contact me at tjh249@psu.edu. Or, if you know any other women who fit my sample criteria, I would sincerely appreciate if you sent this message to them as well.

Thanks,

Tamara Hinojosa
Doctoral Candidate
Counselor Education and Supervision
316 CEDAR Building
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802
APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Self-Identity Of Mexican American Women in Counselor Education Doctoral Programs

Principal Investigator: Tamara Hinojosa, Graduate Student
316 Cedar Building
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 769-3722; tjh249@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. JoLynn Carney
303 Cedar Building
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-2404; jvc15@psu.edu

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research study is to explore the cultural characteristics of both Counselor Education and Supervision (CES) doctoral programs and Mexican American women by investigating the identities of Mexican American women CES doctoral students. I aim to acknowledge diverse ways of knowing and to promote the professional identities of Mexican American women doctoral students in CES programs.

2. Procedures to be followed: You will be asked to participate in an individual interview. Interviews will be audio-recorded. You can choose not to answer certain questions.

3. Duration: Interviews will take 60-90 minutes to complete.

4. Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. All data will be stored on the primary investigator's computer and will be password protected. Only the primary investigator will have access to these files. Audio recordings will be destroyed by the year 2013. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

5. Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Tamara Hinojosa at (210) 488-1397 with questions or concerns about this study.

7. Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.
You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

______________________________________________  Date
Participant Signature

______________________________________________  Date
Person Obtaining Consent
APPENDIX C

Interview Guide

Before beginning interview clarify what ethnic label she prefers and use that label throughout interview.

1. *Generative narrative question:* Can you tell me the story of what it is like for you to be a Mexican American women in a CACREP-accredited CES doctoral program? Please include everything you find relevant about your experiences and add as many details as you would like. I am very interested to learn about who you are.

   a. Follow-up on topics she introduced using her language

2. How do your experiences in your CES doctoral program influence your identity?

3. [If not mentioned] Can you tell me about your home (e.g., family, community)?

   a. How does your home (use vocabulary she used) influence your experiences as a Mexican American CES doctoral student?

4. Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not covered?
APPENDIX D

Excerpt of Research Memos

Numbering L1: While numbering her transcripts it’s a bit hard. I read aloud to decipher when a sentence has emerged. Is it when one thought is all in one? Or it’s a string of thoughts tied together with “and”, “or”, “but”, and “ums”?

BUT, sentences can also start with and, but, or other connecting words. It’s tough making these decisions because it’s all through my lens.

I lean toward longer sentences to keep her speech in tact.

Storying L1: Yes, this will be new and challenging.

I’m using brackets to clarify her stories. She assumes I know a lot of the details so leaves specific things out. I’m italicizing words that trigger story beginning, endings, and themes/plots(?)

Red= deletions that will reveal identity

I use the last sentence of some stories as the first sentence of the next story. They are transition statements.

Using her own words as story titles helps me see themes in her overall narrative (e.g., her narrative genre) and helps me see speech patterns.

Overall narrative/genre: the racial experience she endured. Her Interview narrative is really divided. The first half is academic and the second is “home”- as if she purposefully keeps the two separate….somehow.

MA3- I’m changing how I number self-talk and dialogue. Each line will start with “I said” or “I was like,” We’ll see how it goes. It may make it easier when I go through the transcripts looking for interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogue.

L1 and MA3 both discuss speaking up in class about diversity issues. They also both describe how they eventually “stopped talking” in class as a way of protecting self (L1) and/or giving up/not wanting to feel “disgruntled” anymore (MA3).

Contradiction: MA3 favors social workers/the field overall, but then she says social workers were just as naïve/culturally ignorant to her when working in another agency.

Ma3 forgets questions because she gets caught up in providing details about her experiences, which often lead to tangents.

She brings up ambiguity and living on the US/Mexico border, which fits perfectly w/ my theory.

She literally points out her contradictions, but late in the interview describes it more as fluidity.

She also talks about bicultural identity and shifting between identities, to successfully navigate academic contexts.
## APPENDIX E

### Code Book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Brief Definition</th>
<th>Full Definition</th>
<th>When to Use</th>
<th>When NOT to Use</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies narrators use to persist/ survive</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategies employed that help narrators persist in doctoral program and that demonstrate inner strength.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fighting to Finish</strong></td>
<td>Finding</td>
<td>Finding strength to complete doctoral program</td>
<td>Strategies used that required finding internal strength and motivation to persist toward completion of doctoral program.</td>
<td>Finishing doctoral program is described as a fight or struggle that must be overcome.</td>
<td>If finishing doctoral program is not described as a struggle that must be overcome; if not describing finishing doctoral program as a necessity.</td>
<td>Helena: “And like, I told my family and that like helped me feel better, and my friends and stuff… but it was hard, like (short pause). I don’t know how I went back like, I just have to finish.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Using Voice to protect self in academic culture</strong></td>
<td>Using voice</td>
<td>Using voice/speaking up during class or while communicating with professors/staff to advocate for academic needs or to protect self.</td>
<td>Using voice/speaking up is described as a necessary strategy to self-advocate, protect self, and/or stand up for values/belief within academic culture.</td>
<td>Using voice is not framed as necessary to self-advocate or protect self.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Martina: “So, I really have to advocate and push and be persistent about sending things to professors, e-mailing them, calling them, and this has been really hard for me because I’m an introvert and so I really have to step back out of my comfort zone and be assertive.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And say, “Ok, look this is what I’ve done, this is what I need….”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using silence to protect self in the academic culture</th>
<th>Using silence within academic culture</th>
<th>Silence is used to protect self against negative consequences within academic culture.</th>
<th>Silence is described as a necessary strategy to protect self against hostility or negative academic consequence</th>
<th>Silence is described as useless, or silence is NOT framed as beneficial for self-protection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“In class I am completely uncomfortable. I don’t want to talk. I don’t want to say anything because I don’t know what might be taken out of my mouth and used against me.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vita of Tamara J. Hinojosa

Education

Ph.D., Counselor Education & Supervision, Pennsylvania State University, December 2011
M.Ed., College Student Affairs, Pennsylvania State University, May 2006
B.S., Applied Learning & Development, University of Texas at Austin, December 2003

Publications


International and National Presentations


Teaching Experience: Courses Taught/Co-Taught

Group Work in Rehabilitation & Human Services (Pennsylvania State University), Spring 2011, Spring 2010.
Diagnosis for Counselors (Pennsylvania State University), Summer 2010.
Community Mental Health Practice & Services (Pennsylvania State University), Spring 2010.
Disability Studies: Culture and Disability (Pennsylvania State University), Fall 2009.
Student Development: Personal & Academic Success (San Antonio College), Fall 2007.