

CREATING PATHWAYS FOR EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS: UNDERSTANDING THE  
CHALLENGES OF LATINA DOCTORAL STUDENT MOTHERS

A Dissertation

by

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This dissertation meets the standards for scope and quality of  
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

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## ABSTRACT

The experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers are very complex and multifaceted, influenced by the intersectionality of their cultural Latina motherhood and academic doctoral student roles. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers at a South Texas university. This study further seeks to examine how 5 Latina doctoral student mothers negotiate their Latina mother roles with their academic roles. Using qualitative research methods, the collective of data was conducted through an in-depth, unstructured interview. Analysis of the data presented three super ordinate themes supported by sixteen subthemes.

The study, ultimately, concluded that participants experience challenges of balancing their cultural Latina motherhood roles with their academic doctoral roles. The study also found cultural implications for Latina motherhood highly influence how Latina doctoral mother students negotiate their Latina mother and doctoral student identities. Lastly, the study found that for Latina doctoral student mothers, their motherhood remains central to their identity. While the findings of the study added to literature on Latina doctoral student mothers and Women's Way of Knowing further qualitative studies are warranted. To gain an insight into the multifaceted experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers and Women's Way of Knowing, the following recommendations for future studies include qualitative methods of inquire to uncover the perspectives of single Latina doctoral student mothers and Latina doctoral student mothers who are not employed fulltime; qualitative research to examine the impact of Latina doctoral student mother role-modeling for educational achievement.

## DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this my mother, Ofelia Torres who I could not have successfully completed this journey without her ongoing support and encouragement. She has taught me to work hard, value my Latina culture, and treasure the journey of motherhood. Thank you Mom for always believing in me even when I didn't believe in myself. My daughter, Carly Rose Angeles. Thank you for always challenging and motivating me to becoming the best version of myself. I love you with all my heart *mamicita chiquita la mas bonita de mi corazon*. My sister, Tomasina Arredondo who has the most giving heart, beautiful soul, and undeniable inner strength. My brothers Jonathan Garza and Steven Garza. Thank you for always supporting and encouraging me! Finally, my best friend, my biggest supporter, my husband Pierre Angeles. Thank you for believing in me and supporting me even while serving the country, you are my hero. Thank you for your unconditional love, support, and loyalty throughout this journey. *Te quiero!*

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## CHAPTER I: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

One in five women in the U.S. is a Latina, which equates to more than 26 million Latinas in the nation (Gandara, 2015). By 2060, Latinas are projected to account for nearly a third of the female population (Colby& Ortman, 2015). Moreover, the 2016-2017 academic year marked the eighth-consecutive year in which women earned the majority of degrees awarded at the doctoral level (Counsel of Graduate Schools, 2018). While women have shown enormous growth in regard to doctoral degree attainment, disparities among ethnic minority degree attainment remain. According to the 2016 Survey of Earned Doctorates, 54,904 doctoral degrees were earned. Latina/o doctoral earners saw increases from 5% to 7% of all doctoral degree earners between 2006 to 2016; yet, they still account for only a marginal number of total doctoral degree earners (Doctoral Recipients from U.S. Universities, 2018). In spite of numerous challenges, Latinas have made significant progress in degree attainment within the last decade; yet, much more research and support is needed for continued growth in Latina doctoral degree attainment.

Current research has explored Latina's challenges in navigating their experiences within their doctoral program with the sole focus on the identity of a Latina as a student (Gonzalez, 2006; Glidersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez 2011). Like all women in society, Latinas balance many identities and roles. These identities and roles impact all life experiences including the experience of being a doctoral student. For many women who are students, their role as a mother is a life-changing event that impacts all aspects of life (Lynch, 2008). Motherhood in itself is a complex construct with cultural variations among women. Research has shown that doctoral student mothers, like Latinas face unique challenges in their doctoral experiences (Isgro & Castaneda, 2015). According to The National Center for Student Parent Programs, the status of

students who are parents is not recognized as an important part of their identity and experiences within the academic setting (Consulting and Program Evaluation, 2017).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The number of women who earn advanced degrees continue to increase, however; Latina women account for only a small portion of terminal degree earners. From 2014 to 2015, White women earned 66.7 % of doctoral degrees, Asian American women earned 12.7 %, African American women earned 10.3% and Latinas earned 7.3%, respectively (Doctoral Recipients from U.S. Universities, 2018). Literature widely discusses the barriers and discrimination in the forms of micro-aggressions and racism that Latina/os experience with institutional cultural dissonance throughout their doctoral journey (Gildersleeve, Croom, Vasquez, 2011; Gonzalez, 2006). These experiences often contribute to the already high attrition rates in doctoral fields of study, in general (Gonzalez, 2006).

Latina doctoral students and their identity as mothers have not been considered in relation to their role in doctoral degree attainment. Latina mothers are often highlighted in the media by images of illegal immigration, poverty, and family disintegration (Phillips, 2018; Villenas, 2006). The image of Latina mothers by national media has reduced them to invisibility as human beings without consideration of their capabilities of creative intellectual thought, social commentary about life experiences, family, and community (Villenas, 2006). While research has sought to understand the experiences of Latina doctoral students and doctoral student mothers, they have done so in a way that is mutually exclusive and does not consider the intersection of these two identities (Espino, 2010; Gonzalez, 2006; Gonzalez et al., 2001; Prosek & Weisber, 2015).

Latina mothers face unique challenges within doctoral programs. Latina mothers have unique cultural backgrounds and norms that influence their acculturation to doctoral level studies (Castellanos et al., 2005; Gonzalez, 2006; Gonzalez et al., 2001). The transition for Latinas into doctoral level studies can foster feelings of isolation and loneliness as they attempt to balance the role of Latina and new role in academia while finding no solid balance in either (Gonzalez, 2006). While Latinas retain strong ethnic and cultural identities that aid in their sense of belonging within their cultural context, this can often lead to challenges upon establishing another identity in a new environment (e.g., doctoral courses). Phinney, Horenczyk, and Vedder (2001) describe the difficulty in establishing a collective identity within a new context. The difficulties in merging dual identities are described as resulting in either a creating a separated identity for each context or a marginalized identity that fails to meet the needs of either environments' context (Phinney et al., 2001). Gonzalez et al. (2001) found Latinas often expressed feelings of guilt and confusion when attempting to establish new academic identities and retain their cultural one as it pertains to being a mother.

Becoming a doctoral student has a profound impact on the life of a student, especially for students who belong to groups who have been historically excluded from higher education (Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011; Gonzalez, 2006; Soloranzo, 1998). Similar but on a different plane, the transition to motherhood is a major life event that creates major changes in every facet of a women's life from emotional responses, intellectual thoughts, political beliefs, as well as economic status (Belenky et al., 1976, Rich, 1976; Ruddick, 1989). While the experience of motherhood impacts all women in general, women from minoritized groups experience of motherhood may be further impacted by cultural challenges. Women and individuals from minoritized groups also experience high levels of stress, problems with low self-esteem, and

feeling that they are not a part of the culture of their departments (Deem & Brehony, 2000; Nerad & Cerny, 1999). Stearney (1994) describes motherhood as a concept that ties the biological act of birthing a child to the social relationship characterized by emotional intensity, selflessness, nurturing and protection. Brown and Watson (2010) revealed that women suffered in their academic life not due to gender, but due to dual roles as researcher/student and wife/and or mother.

In addition, women that have multiple roles in life such as wife, mother, and graduate student seem more likely to have slower doctoral degree progress (Brown & Watson 2010; Maher et al., 2004). The concept of motherhood is highly complex with variations within race, ethnicity, and class (Hills-Collins, 1994). Literature examines these variations with focus on meaning of motherhood, gendered model, societal role, and expectations in relation to graduate student mothers in higher education (Brown & Watson, 2010; Eisbach, 2013, Espino et al., 2010, Lynch, 2008, Springer et al., 2009). As such, once a woman becomes a mother, she is bound by the expectations attached to her within this role and relative to her particular culture. It is in this role where a balance between meeting cultural expectations and acculturation to academe intersect and have been minimally explored. While literature explores motherhood collectively in terms of how it has been shaped and viewed via historical, societal, and political norms (Rich, 1976; Ruddick, 1985), it has yet to explore the cultural component of Latina motherhood in conjunction with that of doctoral student identity.

### **Purpose of Study**

While literature highlights cultural collective values that contribute to Latina motherhood identity (Marin & Marin, 1991; Marin, 1993, Marin et al., 1997), current literature regarding doctoral student mothers has not explored the negotiation of the Latina cultural motherhood

identity with the doctoral student identity (Lynch, 2008; Brown & Watson, 2010; Eisnbach, 2013). Recognizing the central role that motherhood plays in the Latino culture, it is an area of research that warrants further examination. As such, *the purpose of this study is to explore Latina doctoral student mother's academic experiences as they negotiate their cultural identity as a doctoral student and mother within a South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution.*

### **Research Questions**

The overarching research questions are as follows:

1. What challenges, if any, do Latina doctoral students who are mothers face balancing their academic roles of a doctoral student and their cultural role of being a mother?

Secondary research questions include:

1. What ways, if any, do Latina doctoral student mothers negotiate their identities as Latina mothers and as doctoral students?
2. What role, if any, does acknowledgement by university faculty (professors, advisors, and other university officials) of their status as a mother impact a Latina doctoral mothers doctoral learning experience?

### *Definition of Terms*

To better understand the context of this study, a definition of terms follows:

Latina: Defined as females of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or Spanish culture or origin (“About Hispanic Origin”, 2018).

Doctoral Student: A student enrolled in a terminal degree program.

Mother: Defined as women who are actively mothering dependent children ages 21 years or younger.

Mothering: Maternal thinking resulting from act of mothering based on the agents of maternal thinking; acting in response to the demands of their children, acquiring conceptual scheme, a vocabulary and logic of connections through which they order and express the values of their practice of mothering (Ruddick, 1998). It is particular to what she describes as the intrinsic principles of mothering; child's preservation, growth, and acceptability impacted by her specific barriers to care within societal contexts which is a form of work and of thought. Also, this definition of a mother is inclusive of the insight and lived intelligence fostered through care and training of children that can be done by all, but traditionally done by women.

Motherhood: An institution where the dominant narrative lies between two realities of motherhood. Motherhood which is superimposed based on reproduction and her children. And, motherhood as an institution which aims at ensuring all women shall maintain roles within formed systems of control (Rich, 1976).

### **Theoretical Framework**

To understand the learning experiences of Latina student mothers within doctoral programs, establishing an appropriate theoretical framework focused on gaining insight to the orientation of women's development of knowledge is essential. As such, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg, and Tarule (1997) *Women's Way of Knowing* theory serves as the framework to better understand how the dual roles of Latina doctoral students who are mothers negotiate their experiences within a doctoral program setting. Expanding on Perry's (1970) research on cognitive development regarding male college participants, Belenky et al. (1997) focus on the learning experiences of women. Belenky's et al. (1997) work builds on the findings of Gilligan (1982) regarding morality development of responsibility and care. Prior to this, research focused

on men and boys' use of universal principles/abstract laws versus explore role of morality development of women (Piaget, 1965; Kohlberg, 1981; Kohlberg, 1984). In DOIing so, Belenky's et al. (1997) longitudinal work is premised on 135 women of various backgrounds, ages, geographic locations, social economic statuses, as well as educational background. The use of participants' narratives was highlighted to allow for greater understanding of how women come to know through their said life experiences in relation to various roles and identities.

These narratives highlighted the epistemological development that occurred through women's life experiences and was reflective of their perceptions of self and their inner world. Their findings illustrate how the participants were shaped by views of themselves and their relationship to the world. Five knowledge positions provide in *Women's Way of Knowing* include: *Silence*; *Received Knowledge: Listening to the Voice of Others*; *Subjective Knowledge: The Inner Voice*; *Procedural Knowledge: Separate and Connected Knowing*; and *Constructed Knowledge: Integrating the Voices* (Belenky et al., 1987). The aforementioned knowledge positions will be further discussed and contextualized in Chapter 2, the Review of Literature.

## **Methods**

This study utilized a qualitative methodology of inquiry situated in a constructivist paradigm. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe qualitative research as most appropriate for examining nuances in human behavior in its social context and despite possibility of multiple interpretations and realities, the data captures the complexity of human experience. The study utilized a case study method, whereby the single-case is framed to the participant population of Latina doctoral mothers (Yin, 2011) at a Hispanic Serving Institution. As a research strategy, the distinguishing characteristic of the case study examines: (a) a contemporary phenomenon in its real- life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not

clearly evident (Yin, 1981). Given that constructivism posits that individuals develop subjective meaning of their experiences which have varied and multiple meanings. As such, this study relied as much as possible on participants' views of the situation being studied (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln et al., 2011; Mertens, 2010). Additional data sources to triangulate data were also collected.

The participants were comprised of a purposeful sampling that is governed by emerging insights about what is relevant to the study and purposefully seeks both the typical and divergent data that these insights suggest (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). This required a sampling procedure in order to gain a representative picture through aggregated qualities to maximize the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about the context. Patton (1990) describes that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selection of information rich cases; integral to case study research. One may learn a great deal by focusing in-depth on understanding the needs, interests, and incentives, of a small number of carefully selected individuals (Patton, 1990). Criteria for participants included: 1). self-identify as Latina females, of any age; 2). who have at least one child under the age of 21; and 3). currently enrolled at time of study in a doctoral program at a South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution. The aforementioned criteria of participants, data collection, method of data analysis, and trustworthiness will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

### **Limitations**

A limitation associated with this study is that participants will be exclusively enrolled at one South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution who are doctoral students in a program within the College of Education. Another limitation is that, other than under the age of 21, there is no

specific age requirement for children for participants. This is important to note given that children at different ages have different needs and time constraints on the Mother.

### **Positionality Statement**

I am a Latina and a mother. I was raised and spent a majority of my life up until adulthood in South Texas. I am also a military spouse of active duty service member and in within this experience have lived in various part of United States including the Pacific Region and East Coast. I come from a migrant family background. And, as a young girl exposure to higher education was limited. During my adolescent years, many of my ideas about identity as a Latina mother came directly from my familial experiences and mainstream media. While education was viewed as important within family and cultural structure, there were no models of Latina women and especially Latina mothers in higher education present. Within national media and cinema, my views of the Latina mother were often encompassed to the stereotypical roles they played such as nanny and maid in popular movies like *Spanglish* and *Maid in Manhattan*. Current political discourse surrounding immigration of individuals from Latin America has been highlighted by national media with images of Latina women and their children at the forefront. As I entered higher education, I experienced challenges balancing the cultural identity I had formed within my home among my family members and friends with the identity of a scholar. I found a lack of information regarding the experiences of other Latina mothers who entered into the role of doctoral student. When I entered the doctoral program, I found balancing the roles of the identity of being a Latina and mother in regard to my cultural expectations of what it meant rather confusing and difficult at times. My role as a scholar within the doctoral program seemed to encompass acculturating within a context that fails to acknowledge my role as a Latina mother. This role confusion has presented me with many encounters of uncertainty and at times

isolation within each role. I am constantly seeking to find ways to balance these roles and find ways to navigate in both situations where my role as a Latina and mother are both complementary and contrasting to expectations as a doctoral student. Undoubtedly, within the program I have experiences and interactions that have aided in progressing successfully through the program. These experiences include advising, interaction with faculty, and opportunities to share my experiences of being a student, Latina, and mother.

### **Significance of Study**

This study, which explored doctoral student mother's academic experiences as they negotiate their cultural identity as Latina doctoral student and mother within a South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution is of significance for multiple reasons. First, while previous research has studied both the Latina doctoral women and motherhood as mutually exclusive, this research seeks to understand the intersectionality of both identities as it relates to being a Latina doctoral student who is a mother. Second, there is no existing research that examines Latina doctoral student mothers in South Texas. Lastly, the limited number of Latina doctoral student mother doctoral degree earners warrant further inquiry on this topic.

### **Chapter Review**

Limited research exists regarding the specific doctoral experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers. Research has considered Latina doctoral students and doctoral student mothers separately without consideration of the intersectionality of their dual identities (Gonzalez, 2006, Lynch, 2008). Latinas face challenges negotiating cultural identities within doctoral programs experiencing difficulties balancing cultural expectations, socialization with peers and faculty, and acculturation to academic setting (Espinoza, 2010; Gonzalez, 2008, Gonzalez et al., 2002). Similarly, doctoral student mothers experience difficulties balancing familial responsibilities

with academic expectations (Lynch, 2008). This case study method seeks to explore the gap in research regarding the experiences of dual identities of Latina doctoral student mothers.

Therefore, *the purpose of this study was to explore doctoral student mother's academic experiences as they negotiate their cultural identity as a Latina doctoral student and mother within a South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution.* The literature review will aid in understanding motherhood and Latina academic experiences, while highlighting a gap in inquiry regarding the intersectionality of Latina student mothers in doctoral programs.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Latina Culture and Latina Mothers**

The role of mothers in Latin American cultures has spiritual qualities and deep religious implications that serve to provide stability within their homes and society, collectively, and are guided by cultural values (Swazo, 2013). Knight et al. (2011) similarly describes that a mother's central function within a Latino family centers on the transmission of core cultural values. Cultural values are beliefs shared by a group of people about the social world in regard to oneself, others, and relationships that set a framework for processing relevant social information that are often internalized as deeply held personal values (Campos, Shetter, Abdou, Hobel, Glynn, & Sandman, 2008). Paramount for the Latino community (Moore, 1970), cultural values provide individuals with guidelines for what behaviors will be deemed acceptable and which ones will not (Campos, Shetter, Abdou, Hobel, Glynn, & Sandman, 2008). Unlike other groups who tend to value individualism, Latino culture displays high collectivism (Marin & Marin, 1991). More specifically, Moore (1970) describes familism as "the most important facet of life for Mexican Americans in South Texas" and "a source of emotional and economic support as well as recognition for accomplishment" (p. 104).

*Familismo*. Familismo, defined in the 1950s, is a universal notion that gives strong reference to the emphasis on family goals, properties, support, and desire to maintain the family institution (Bardis, 1959). Alvarez and Bean (1976) note it as the single most important institution for Mexican-Americans. *Familismo* within the Latina/o culture places an individual's family, both biological and extended, above the individual needs of self (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987); a core cultural value (Marin & Marin, 1991). Moreover, Latino families' emotional support system encompasses primary and secondary relatives who are

regularly and readily available to provide help in greater ways than external sources of support (Cobb, 1976).

More specifically, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, and Perez-Stable (1987) asserts that familismo is used to describe beliefs and attitudes shared by Hispanics for their families in regard to loyalty, solidarity, and reciprocity among family members. Behavioral components of familismo are related to the behaviors expressed such as: choosing to live near family, feeling responsibility to visit kin regularly, and providing various levels of extended ongoing support that takes priority over all other tasks (Sabogal et al., 1987). While attitudinal familismo shown through use of language, level of acculturation, and country of origin was observed to be stable throughout generations, behavioral familismo was found to a lesser extent (Sabogal et al., 1987; Rueschberg & Buriel, 1995). Sabogal et al. (1987) argue that failing to acknowledge, understand, and differentiate between attitudinal and behavioral *familismo* can lead to misunderstandings in how individuals display levels of familism, as well as the importance it plays within a Latinas/os life and decision-making process.

Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, and Turner (2012) similarly emphasize the importance of *familismo*, defined by strong identity and attachment to Hispanics nuclear and extended family, to be viewed in its complexity in lieu of stereotypical generality. Smith-Morris et al. (2012) assert that when familismo is often considered in general ways, it fails to grasp the greater significance of larger social connectedness. For Hispanics, family gatherings are viewed as an important part of their life. When faced with conflicting responsibilities of family engagements and demands of work and other lifestyle responsibilities, Hispanics adapt to meet the needs of both. These findings support the work of Sabogal et al. (1987) criteria in regard to family as social support and forms of obligation that Hispanics consistently sought to meet their

expectations. Smith-Morris et al. (2012) suggest that *familismo* be viewed as a living value system that is spoken about for understanding, utilized for means of support, and manipulated for accomplishing multiple goals and serving as a motivation by Latino/a's.

Reflective behaviors of *familismo* include respect and obedience to individuals of authority, helpfulness, kindness, devote loyalty towards those identified as family, making sacrifices, and the individual responsibility of hard work as a means to elevate the family collectively (Martinez, 1988). While familismo is paramount to the Latino culture, the role of Latina mothers is equally foundational.

*Respeto*. The role of Latina mothers' cultural identity and expectations are influenced by the cultural value of *respeto*. *Respeto* acts as a cultural tool for Latino families that provides members of the family with knowledge of appropriate and expected boundaries (Calzada, 2010). Santiago-Rivera, Azara, Santiago-Rivera, and Arredondo, (2002) describe a golden rule of *no faltarle el respeto* (not disrespecting) parents or elders with emphasis for individuals who are considered authority figures. As such, it implies direct obedience; not going against or challenging parents or authority figures; not being or perceived as defiant; and especially, not asserting oneself or views. Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez, and Sadler (1996) describes *respeto* as a feature of Latino identity that calls for showing deference to certain individuals based on their age, gender, or perceived authority via professional position or advanced educational attainment.

Latinas are taught to have *respeto* and behave in a way that would not invite reaction or illicit male response (Castillo, 1995). This puts professionals such as doctors and educators in a role that requires them to be shown high levels of *respeto*. In showing *respect*, Latinas are expected to display behavior that is culturally and socially acceptable and does not bring shame

(*sin verguenza*) affirming families' good standing with the public (Olivas, 2004). In other words, Latinas are expected to conform to certain behaviors and responses despite personal feelings or preferred way of interacting to maintain cultural expectations.

### **Latina Gender Roles**

Latino families have been characterized as being traditional and guided by patriarchal values and systems where Latina mothers have specific roles (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). The role of a Latina mother within her family has been described as shaped by subordination and ruled by male dominance where the husband takes on sole role of breadwinner and the Latina mother as full-time homemaker (Ortiz, 1995). Though antiquated, the traditional Latino family is described as having "rigid divisions of labor...being delegated in role-differentiated ways" (Tharp, Meadow, Lennhoff, & Satterfield, 1968, p. 405). While Latinos are regarded as encompassing male dominance as central to family, Latinas are expected to "respect, obey, and serve" (Tharp et al., 1968, p. 405). Such traditional and gendered roles are viewed as problematic for Latinas who do ascribe to some of the aforementioned cultural stereotypes. What follows is an examination of literature in regard to the role of *marianismo* in the cultivation of cultural gendered stereotypes.

*Marianismo*. Latina mothers play a vital role in development of gender roles in a family system (Niemann, 2004). Within the Latino culture, gender roles are clearly established and are defined by certain behavioral expectations (Castillo & Cano, 2007). Gender roles and expectations define Latina women's identity and are governed by the term *marianismo*. Stevens (1973) coined the term *mariansmo* in her work to highlight the subordinate roles defined by women from Latin America. Her hope was to cultivate greater understanding to the culture's idealized characteristics of Latina gender roles. Idealized characteristics of a Latina include:

being humble, virtuous, and spiritually superior to men. According to Gil and Vasquez (1996), in considering Latina gender roles the ideal woman is dependent, self-sacrificing, submissive, and devoted to her children and husband above all else.

Castillo and Cano (2007) describe that *marianismo* entails the culturally held belief in Latina women's submission to the demands of men and enduring extreme suffering and sacrifices for the benefit of the family. Latinos prescribe to gender norms through providing financially for family, taking a leadership position within the family, and willing to fight for the family (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008). As such, Latinos' roles extend external ways of support for their family and Latinas' tend to take on more intrinsic roles that engage the family. Latinas show support to family through bearing and raising children, taking care of the household, and providing emotional support to family (Arciniega et al., 2008).

When Latinas fail to meet these cultural norms, they are often thought perceived in a negative manner. Arredondo (2002) explains that being viewed as a traitor or *maliche* among Latinas going against the norm leading to the acculturation to not betray family, avoid embarrassing/inappropriate behavior, and put their family's needs before their own advancement or education. The term *malichista* is representative of an individual who is viewed within her culture as disloyal, selling out to the foreigner; therefore, devaluing national and cultural identity in favor of imported and external personal benefits (Cypress, 1991; Mirande, 1985). Castillo (1995) describes that Latinas who do not fulfill perceived Latina gender roles or place their personal career or education ahead of her husband or family needs are at risk as being viewed as traitors and place themselves in a position for family alienation.

*Machismo*. Marianismo acts as a counter to the gender role of *machismo*. In this view of machismo, women are seen as being fragile, dependent, emotionally weak, and in need of

protection (Mirande, 1997). Machismo is affiliated with views regarding a man's bravery and role in providing and protecting his family (Santiago-Rivera, Azara, Arredondo, Patricia, & Gallarado-Cooper, Martiza, 2002). In conjunction with marianismo, machismo (the male gender role) dictates traditional gender roles for a Latina which emphasizes the importance of a woman not working out of the home, especially when she has children (Gil & Vasquez, 1996). This is illustrated with the unspoken traditional belief "a man's place is en el mundo, in the world, and a woman's place is en la casa, in the home" (Gil & Vasquez, 1996, p. 6). Garcia-Brown (2008) similarly highlights that Latina gender roles encompass maternal and domestic endeavors while receiving deep encouragement from her husband and family members. A *marianista*, a woman who follows the belief of values regarding *marianismo*, holds the belief that she is a good woman if she puts the needs of her family and children above her own. As such, many Latinas are discouraged to attain higher education as well as forego educational opportunities for the sake of their families (Confressi, 2002; Ybarra, 1998).

Although the gender role of marianismo, in accordance with machismo, relies on Latina submission and self-sacrifice, positive aspects as a result of these roles should be explored. Stevens (1973) explains that Latinas often take on prescribed roles within their culture and family, even when requiring submissiveness, in order to gain cultural respect which is highly sought and valued. A woman gains the reputation of being strong through her resilience to life and family challenges she endures for her children and family (Muriguia, 2001). Positive characteristics of *marianismo* include loyalty, compassion, and generosity through which she attains being viewed as sacred and honorable (Gil & Vasquez, 1996). While *marianismo* as a traditional cultural value and Latina stereotype may be altering as a result of modern day U.S. mainstream media, it remains influential for Latinas' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Gil & Vasquez, 1996, Marin & Marin, 1991). Swazo

(2013) asserts that machismo is collectively highlighted in a negative manner that is manifested as a collective part of society, not only by Latino men but collective society who view Latinas as non-equals. The aforementioned suggests that there is a particular women's way of knowing in how they navigate motherhood and academia.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg, and Tarule (1986) longitudinally explored women's epistemological development. The longitudinal study included the experiences of 135 women whom they purposely sought to represent diverse backgrounds and educational settings; Ninety of the women who participated were from academic institutions ranging from prestigious ivy league universities, liberal arts, inner city community colleges and various secondary settings (Belenky et al., 1986). Highlighting the importance of motherhood in female cognitive development, the researchers sought to understand how "maternal thinking" influence women's cognitive development (Belenky et al., 1986; Ruddick, 1987). The study sought to understand how women obtain and communicate knowledge and identify the ways of knowing (positions) women valued and ascribed to. Belenky et al. (1986) described their participants ways of knowing within five positions; *Silence*, *Received Knowledge*, *Subjective Knowledge*, *Constructed Knowledge*, and *Procedural Knowledge*. Each position is representative of a woman's way of making meaning of her life experiences, self-perception, and the way in which she views the world (Belenky et al., 1986).

*Silence*. *Silence* is described as where women ascribed to the submission of those with perceived power or authority whom they believe must be obeyed (Belenky et al., 1986). The women were described to have a fragile sense of self and not viewing themselves as being capable of being learners. These women who were found within three family social agencies

(one working with needy teenage mothers by providing mentors who are close in age and also mothers, a self-help group for parents working to overcome a history of child abuse and family violence, and a children's health program) not colleges. They experienced isolation, fear, and lacked awareness due to economic, education, and socialization disparities. For these women, words were perceived to be weapons that could be met with punishment if utilized. The women expressed feeling "deaf and dumb"; "deaf because they felt so voiceless...dumb because they felt voiceless" (Belenkly et al., 1986, p. 25). The women remained dependent on others as they had been cut off from sources of intellectual development and did not trust in their self-abilities and lacked confidence. Therefore, authority figures are sought as a source of dependency to provide guidance as participants lacked belief they were able to remember and take appropriate action.

This aligns with the importance placed on family (*familismo*) among Latinos transmission of cultural values and expectations placed on Latina mother to follow them via collectivism (Swazo, 2013, Marin & Marin, 1991, Moore, 1970). And, if Latina mothers fail to meet these expectations they face being subject to consequences within their family and being seen as violating cultural value of *respeto*. In addition, reflective behaviors of obedience to individuals of authority and not going against or challenging parents or authority figures to avoid being perceived as defiant results in Latina mothers not asserting themselves or their views (Arredondo, 2002). For mothers in general, regardless of race, cultural and patriarchy norms of the duties of motherhood as a priority in life often supersedes all aspects of her life and goals (Rich, 1977). Moreover, Latina mothers have been traditionally guided by patriarchal values and systems shaped by subordination and ruled by male dominance where they are expected to "respect, obey, and serve" (Ortiz, 1995; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002; Tharpet et al., 1968). Marianismo in Latino/a culture highlights this subordination and defined role of submissiveness

among Latina women (Castillo & Cano, Gil & Vasquez, 1996; Stevens, 1973). Among Latina doctoral students this aligns with described experience of isolation due to race, gender, class, and political division from peers who attempt to navigate doctoral experiences in what they described as an academia that is conservative, restrictive, and racist (Cuadraz, 1993; Gonzalez et al., 2002). And, this silence refers to doctoral student mothers not considering cultural ethnicity, engaging in “maternal invisibility” within their respective doctoral programs to maintain being perceived as a “good student” by faculty and administrators (Lynch, 2008).

*Received Knowledge.* Received knowledge is a position that represents the cognitive shift that occurs for women that allows for them to view themselves as a source of authority of knowledge. Within this perspective, women described having a voice and belief in self, an important aspect of cognitive development. As such, for these women, truth exists in binary terms. They often experienced difficulty in questions that required thoughtful response to counter the idea of one truth. As such, women exhibited a lack of confidence in their ability to communicate their thoughts and beliefs. Unlike women in Silence position, women who in Received knowledge position feel confident in their ability to absorb truths they receive from others. As such, many women model their ideas and ways of knowing based on the truth they receive from those they perceive to be credible authorities on knowledge such as teachers and family members (Belenkly et al., 1986).

This can be seen in cultural values of *respeto* for Latinas to show deference to certain individuals based on their perceived authority, professional position, or advanced educational attainment (Arredondo, 1996). This aligns with viewpoints in which women’s practices of childbearing reflect direct ways of conforming to social norms (Ruddick, 1989). In order to do provide this level of care, women must spend a significant amount of time acquiring the

knowledge needed in child development throughout a child's life (Hays, 2006). This knowledge is attained via appropriate childhood professionals who serve as credible figures of knowledge and a barometer to measure mothering proficiency.

*Subjective Knowledge.* The emergence of subjective knowing is a shift from silence, passivity, and being static to taking action, becoming, and encompassing a protesting inner voice (Belenky et al., 1986). A pervasive theme of sexual harassment and abuse through childhood and adolescent sexual trauma as an important factor in affecting learning and relationships with male authorities. Sixty-five percent of women that participated in the study from invisible colleges (family social service agencies) reported being “subject to either incest, rape, or sexual seduction by a male authority over them-fathers, uncles, teachers, doctors, clerics, bosses” (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 59). This perspective transitions from Silence within external truths to new oriented perspective of personal intuitive or subjective knowing (subjectivism). Subjectivism encompasses the belief that truths and rights exist and come from internal intuition. This shift to inner knowledge and resource result when women begin to listen to the voice within self and finds her inner strength (Belenky et al., 1986). And, authors noted the significance of this position not being tied to a specific age but the implications for a subjective knowledge tied to society which values scientific thought and practices.

This aligns with Latina desire to pursue advanced educational attainment via the doctorate despite cultural messages and socialization towards being solely a wife and mother (Anchor & Morales, 1990; Gandara, 1982). Additionally, internal development of personal qualities such as being strong willed, self-directed, and strong goal oriented were noted due to strong models by their mothers and family support aiding in their doctoral attainment (Anchor & Morales, 1990). In other words, the development of Latinas inner qualities allowed them to

reject cultural views of educational attainment as being unfeminine or unsuitable (Castellanos, 1979).

*Procedural Knowledge.* For procedural knowers, recognition was given to rules of knowing that encompassed processes for discerning credibility of authorities and procedures for determining truth and knowing (Belenkly et al., 1986). Procedural knowers are practical and pragmatic problem solvers. Women no longer view opposing views as threatening but are interested in what people think and how they go about forming their ideas, feelings, and opinions. In this position, women think before they speak or often do not speak at all as they obtain highly critical inner voices. And, this silence differs as it not a passive silence but silence of reason based on perceived need to meet objective standards. The majority of women who are referenced in regard to procedural knowledge are “absorbed in the business of acquiring and applying procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge” (Belenkly et al., 1986, p. 95). And, some women became absorbed in the business of acquiring and applying skills needed for obtaining knowledge as they viewed it a desirable skill. In other words, as their skills to acquiring and applying knowledge increased they described their life as more manageable.

This position aligns with process of which Latina doctoral students who attempt to retain their cultural identities from their communities while creating academic ones within new academic environments “wrestling with living on the margins of two worlds” (Gonzalez et al. 2001, p. 574). Additionally, this is seen in the tension and conflict created for Latinas when torn between the needs of her family culture and demands or beliefs the Anglo world when they seek to enter spaces predominantly held by Whites (Anzaldua, 1987). The aforementioned is reflected in their experiences as they pursue doctorate degrees. Similarly, it aligns with describe process of

confusion and desire to understand, navigate, and adapt to competitive academic culture that fosters individuality versus cultural Latino/a value of collectivism (Rendón, 1992).

*Constructivist Knowledge.* Constructive knowing represents the knowers integration of self, mind, and voice. Women within this position are described to share characteristics of being articulate and reflective (Belenkly et al., 1986). Women in this role are described as immensely self-aware in regard to their thoughts, feelings, moods, and desires. And, women within this position are both concerned with others while balancing their own life roles. In addition, women were described as encompassing desire to find voice and make “a difference to other people and the world” even in the smallest way an individual can be engaged in the construction of knowledge (Belenkly et al., 1986, p. 133).

This aligns with Latina doctoral student who are “integrators” and able to find ways to balance their dual identities as students and cultural expectations of being a Latina daughter (Espinoza, 2010). And, through explanation of schooling demands and balancing cultural expectations were able to elicit support from family. This type of integration of identity reflects high levels of biculturalism. Mentors who were able to display cultural competence of *confianza*, *familiso*, and *simpatia* were desired by Latinas to aid in balancing the dual roles of doctoral student and Latina mother. And, when present in Latina doctoral students journey, mentors were considered to be a foundational aspect of building interpersonal skills that were essential to their success (Castellano, 2007; Henderson, 2015; Rodriguez, 2016).

In addition, it is seen in Latina doctoral students who are able to channel inner strength and motivation to succeed despite perceived notions of inferiority by the academy. These women utilized prior injustices as a personal catalyst for strong *successful internal resistance* to their challenges while accommodating to academic practices. For Latinas, the motivation to succeed

was fueled by a desire of achieving the doctorate as a means to attain needed power to make meaningful change within the Latino/a community (Gonzalez, 2006; Morales, 1988). For doctoral student mothers, this came through the transformation from student to research scholar who feels competent in engaging in research, conducting research, developing a positive attitude toward research, and envisioning self as a *motherscholar* or woman scholar (Rockingson et al., 2017).

### **Doctoral Student Mothers**

Doctoral student mothers continue to increase their presence within doctoral programs, however, institutions have been slow to implement procedures and policies that support their academic success (Casendada & Isgro, 2013; Spring et al. 2009). Available literature regarding student parents focus on collective student parenting at an undergraduate level without consideration of gender, finding a lack of policies, procedures, childcare, and financial aid for student parents (Duquaine-Watson, 2007; Estes, 2011). And, student parents have difficulty balancing their dual roles and identities as both student and parent. A majority of literature regarding mothers in academia has solely focused on faculty perspective of being a mother (Halpern, 2008; Hamilton, 2002; Mason & Goulden, 2004; Mason & Goulden, 2009). Latina mothers in academia has centered on faculty who are early tenure track or retrospective views of their doctoral journey (Espino et al., 2010, Castro-Villarreal, & Sosa, 2013). Minimal research has sought to explore the experiences of doctoral student mothers, however, there has been limited or no participation by Latina doctoral student mothers (Lynch, 2008; Springer et al. 2009; Holm et al., 2015; Trepal et al., 2014).

*Motherhood in Society.* To fully grapple the implications of motherhood as it relates to being a doctoral student, it is necessary to understand how motherhood has been constructed within our society. Hill-Collins (1994) described motherhood in its complexities and variations

deeply impacted in relation to race, gender, and class. Becoming a mother is a life altering event with life-long implications that impact a woman physically, emotionally, and intellectually with implications to her views of self, politics, and finances (Crittenden, 2001; Rich, 1977).

Rich (1977) explained motherhood as a natural part of the narrative women are given in society to undertake the sacred calling of childbearing and childrearing. Her foundational work within *Of A Woman Born* highlights the societal role of motherhood with regard to various roles, power, structures, and its function within institutions that it had not been contextualized before. She explores the roles of power negotiation within larger societal structures, along with historical narratives of women and motherhood. And, Rich (1977) describes how women take on the duties of motherhood as a priority in their life, one that supersedes all other aspects, desires, and goals she has for herself. Gilligan's (1982) work in female moral development described women's socialization to nurture others often at their own expense and solve problems in ways that do no harm termed as *ethic of care*. Intensive mothering, according to Hays (2006), incorporated the notion of caregiving that only a mother can provide and includes putting the needs of her child above her own.

Rich (1977) describes that motherhood exists within a patriarchal culture that determines what role "women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male" (p. 57). As such, when men and women take on the same role it takes on different meanings based on gender; and, women are only allowed as much power as they are given by a man based on how long one is willing to pay the price for it. The role of women throughout history has been constructed in literature primarily by male writers through a lens which she describes as "sexist" (Rich, 1977, p. 65).

As men have historically held power, motherhood within the patriarchal system is one aspect where women have felt control and authority within their respective motherhood roles within families (Rich, 1977). And, the limited power and authority a woman attains when she becomes a mother is also impacted by male control and manipulation dynamic and undertones. Furthermore, Rich argues that men from very ancient times have sought power over others “beginning with women and her children” (Rich, 1977, p. 64). She also notes that an abundance of literature exists describing “the effect of this condition upon the psyche of the powerless, all of it applicable to women though the writers have been male, and sexist” (Rich, 1977, p. 65; See Frantz, 1967; Freire, 1971; Memmi, 1968). As a result, many narratives about women have been written by men.

Similarly aligned, Ruddick (1989) incorporates views of motherhood from a practicalist viewpoint in which women’s practices in child bearing reflect direct ways of social conformity and impact on intellectual thought. In this context, motherhood is an act that can be done by many but primarily done by mothers. As such, motherhood is described to be an act of practice creating aspects of identity that would not occur otherwise. Her theory is centered on the maternal work involving the activities of preserving the life of a child, promoting the growth of a child, and training the child towards the goal of social acceptability (Ruddick, 1989). In order to provide this level of care, women must utilize time to acquire knowledge needed in child development to recognize these needs at all spans of time throughout her child’s life. Such knowledge was derived from appropriate by childhood professionals who serve as the barometer of her parental efficiency (Hays, 2006). Ruddick then argues that practices of motherhood should be used for the purpose of peace making action. Furthermore, she discusses the implication for

this process being relative to narrative of docile female nurturing the characteristics necessary for the act mothering to her child.

Hill-Collins (1994) discussed the importance of how society politics and values shape the family through social construction defined by “gendered system of social organization” that occurs more broadly at the family level where identities are reproduced (Hill-Collins, 1994, p. 62). This gendered identification of tradition for a woman is important to the ideology of a women’s identity and role. And, has been further ingrained within notions of a culture that allows for discrimination in a women’s life. A pressure exists for women to assume some level of mastery and/or perfection regarding their role in motherhood termed *new momism* (Crittendonson, 2001). In explaining the progression of women in equality, she states “women may be approaching equality...but mothers are still far behind” (Crittendonson, 2001, p. 7).

To further support the aforementioned, Stearney’s (1994) description of motherhood is one were the biological act of childbearing entails an immediate social relationship of protection, nurturing, and intense selflessness. And, it is assumed and expected that women naturally encompass the innate emotional skills of being a caregiver, sensitivity, and compassion.

Similarly, McMahon (1995) discussed that to be considered a “good mother” one must follow the norms of devotion as primary caregiver who is consistently nurturing and whose level of care supersedes and cannot be replaced by secondary caregivers such as daycares, fathers, or grandparents. As such, intensive mothering exists in a societal climate which politics encourage privacy of a woman’s private life, as well as exclusion of this life from other aspects of her life (Hays, 2006).

*Balancing Motherhood and Student Identity.* The aforementioned factors of mother intersect with the expectations and systems of higher education for doctoral student mothers.

Lynch (2008) discovered mothers face unique challenges in regard to self-identity and socio-cultural supportive experiences as a mother and doctoral student in the structure of the American academic academe. Findings indicated that doctoral student mothers engage in “maternal invisibility” within their respective doctoral programs and among faculty as a way to maintain a “good student” cultural narrative. In other words, doctoral student mothers often choose to hide their status as mothers within their doctoral programs as they believe it conflicts with the ideal of what a doctoral student should be. Doctoral student mothers discussed purposefully hiding their motherhood or refraining from discussion of this identity unless explicitly. This was described as purposeful in maintaining the ideal student identity by being devoted entirely to academic endeavors as a “serious student” imploring a “don’t ask, don’t tell” mentality in regard to motherhood (Lynch, 2008, p. 596).

Doctoral student mothers felt that exposure of their dual roles as student and mother would be “held against them” making effort to be immensely accommodate and visible in academic appointments/meetings (Lynch, 2008, p. 597). In addition, both cultures of being a student and being a mother served as an influence that lead “academic invisibility” in personal family setting. In other words, doctoral student mothers purposefully choose to hide their academic identities within their family setting to maintain a narrative of a “good mother” whom priority role lies focuses on child rearing obligations (Hays, 1996). Participants described that hiding their role as mothers within academe led them to counter that in their personal lives by being highly visible in their child’s lives. This highlighted visibility was emphasized via being a stay at home mother or if a working mother volunteering within child’s school to be a “room parent”. The student mothers were vastly aware of the cultural narrative of motherhood and expectations of it. These experiences represent the separated identities of doctoral student

mothers within personal and academic lives. Lynch (2008) offers that maternal invisibility may further allow for lack of academic culture to evolve to meet the needs of doctoral mothers since it is not at a visible forefront.

Brown and Watson (2010) similarly found that participants indicated difficult “switching roles” as they described being pulled between their roles of doctoral student and being mothers. Participants felt guilt in they perceived they had failed their duties as a student, mother and/or wife. Moreover, they also felt immense personal pressure to maintain responsibilities within their role as mothers. As such, many mothers experienced guilt related to competition of time between doctoral study and motherhood. The process to develop identities that intersect is especially difficult for women who retain primary responsibilities for meeting the ongoing needs of her child which can be both immensely psychologically and physically trying (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Springer et al. (2009) noted the similarities in culture among being a doctoral student and mother requiring intense devotion and dedication, yet also operating in ways that sharply contrast one another. Eisenbach (2013) expressed similar struggles in her own descriptions and desire to balance her role as mother, doctoral student, and wife which induced feelings of stress. Like previous studies, her role as a doctoral student competed heavily with her role as mother as it relates to time commitment for both responsibilities which altered life changing decisions (e.g., childbearing) as well as conflict with her spouse. Likewise, Trepal et al. (2014) found doctoral mothers expressed difficulties managing roles and feeling guilty regarding time commitment required to be a successful doctoral student. To mediate time commitment, Holm, Prosek, Godwin -Weisberger (2013) empirically found that perseverance and time organization aided in

motherhood. Additionally, many doctoral student mothers noted that spouses aided in their doctoral success which will be further explored within the next section.

#### *Various Levels of Familial Support*

*Spouses.* Husbands of doctoral student mothers were frequently cited as a primary form of support during their doctoral studies (Eisenbach, 2013; Espino et al., 2010; Lynch, 2008). Support from husbands was described in the form of being a primary financial earner and/or providing care for child during doctoral studies (Eisenbach, 2013; Lynch, 2008). Despite the support from husbands, stress materialized into arguments in regard to time commitment to studies that took away from time spent with spouse and child leading (Eisbach, 2013). For spouses who are also in academia, they are also better equipped to understand the doctoral student process even if other family members did not (Espino et al., 2010). In addition to emotional support, spouses also provide a level of financial support as Latina mothers pursue their doctorate.

*Finances.* Doctoral student mothers face financial concerns related to financial aid, health care, and childcare cost (Lynch, 2008). Many doctoral student mothers have noted that financial support from spouses allowed them financial security as doctoral students but addressed the external constraints in independence they relinquished in the form of more domestic role in return for it (Brown & Watson, 2010; Lynch, 2008). In addition, mothers noted that often times childcare was prohibitory due to high cost and financial limitations and were left to rely on friends, family, and spouses (Lynch, 2008). Doctoral student mothers also face unique challenges navigating institution policy in regard to childcare as well as faculty.

### **Latina Doctoral Students**

Latinas are the lowest percentage of graduate degree earners when compared to all other combined female groups (Gandara, 2015). In 2012, less than 1% of Latinos/as had earned a doctoral degree compared to 4% Asians, 2 % Whites, and 1 % Black (“The Conditions of Latinos in Education: Fact Book 2015”, 2015). According to a report by the Lumina Foundation, less than 1% out of every 100 Latinos/as in the K-12 educational pipeline will earn a doctoral degree (Padilla, 2007). While admission into a doctoral program can be an especially difficult transition for individuals in general, for Latinas the cultural identities and familial responsibilities along with demands for academic success can prove to be a difficult challenge to negotiate (Espinoza, 2010; Gonzalez et al., 2006; Gonzalez, 2001).

Literature highlighting the experiences of Latina doctoral students is largely limited and outdated (Anchor & Morales, 1990; Cuadraz, 1993; Gandara, 1982; Gonzalez et al. 2001). Existing research in regard to Latina doctoral student experiences often is not specific to Latinas from a gendered perspective, but often include Latino males as well (Cuadraz, 1993; Gonzalez, Marin, Figueroa, Moreno, & Navia, 2001; Gonzalez et al., 2002; Solorazano, 1998). This suggests that the lack of research does not disaggregate gender within the Latino/a doctoral narrative. Nonetheless, Latinos/as experience within doctoral programs is marked by challenges, feelings of isolation, micro-aggressions, overt gender and racial discrimination, lack of access to faculty and mentorship that provides support within cultural context of Latina/o identity, and lack of support for research dealing with issues specific to Latina culture (Cuadraz, 1993; Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011; Gonzalez et al., 2001; Gonzalez, 2007; Solorazano, 1998). Omayra (2017) similarly found that Latinas note the importance of ethnic identity, struggles with adjustment, and academic challenges. To mediate these challenges, research has consistently highlighted the role of the family in Latina graduate school success.

*Family influence.* Gandara (1982) examined the factors that influenced Latinas completion of doctoral or professional degrees. Among the most important factors that influence Latina achievement include: strong models provided by their mothers, emotional support they received from their families, and attending schools that were highly integrated. Parents of these Latinas were found to be highly supportive of higher education and non-traditional backgrounds for their daughters, especially their mothers (Gandara, 1982). Similar assertions highlighted the role of family as highly influential in Latinas' decision to pursue a doctoral degree (Anchor & Morales, 1990). Furthermore, family dynamics and responsibilities aided in Latinas development of personality qualities such as being strong-willed, self-directed, and strong goal-oriented which aided them in their goal to attain a doctoral degree.

Anchor and Morales' (1990) also noted the family role in Chicanas' socialization in preparation for being a wife and a mother. For these Latinas, cultural messages regarding specific idealized roles did not impact their desire for doctoral attainment due to their familial influence. Additionally, Anchor and Morales (1990) highlight an old Spanish proverb: "El mujer que sabe Latin, no tiene hombre ni buen fin" which translates to "the women who knows Latin, neither catches a man nor comes to a good end"; this illustrate the ingrained cultural belief that for Chicanas', education is unsuitable and unfeminine (Castellanos, 1979). While Latinas' family message regarding education are important, long held cultural roles and expectations for Latinas by their family are also vital factors that influence Latina doctoral students (Espino, 2010, 2016; Gonzalez, 2006).

Without a doubt, Latinas are highly influenced by messaging received from their family in regard to both their education and expected family obligations (Espino, 2016). Latinas who attempt to retain cultural identities from their respective communities of origin, while creating

academic ones within new academic environment “wrestle with the reality of living on the margins of two worlds” (Gonzalez et al., 2001, p. 574). Anzaldúa (1987) describes the tension and conflict created for Latinas when torn between the needs of her family culture and the demands or beliefs the Anglo world when they seek to enter spaces predominantly held by Whites (e.g., doctoral programs). Rendón (1992) similarly describes the pain she felt from cultural separation and feelings of shifting loyalty from cultural family views and roles to the individualistic, focused, and isolating elite academy. She recalled the painful feelings of being lost and alienated upon her first move from home with little cultural support as none of her professors were minorities and other Latino students seem to be experiencing similar emotions. She described hearing her mother say “estás loca como piensas ir al colegio si nadie nuestra familia ha ido?” (Rendón, 1992, p. 57). Rendón goes on to explain the confusion she experienced wondering how she would adapt to a competitive academic culture that fosters individuality. And, further explains that current higher education practice encourages an individual to turn away from individual culture so that they may accept the academic culture (Rendón, 1992).

*Balancing family and student identities.* Espinoza (2010) further notes Latina doctoral students’ need to balance their dual identities as students and family expectations of maintenance of the “good daughter” status. To balance the dual identities, two types of integration of family emerged as either the “integrators” or “the separators”. While integrators explicitly utilized explanation of schooling demands to elicit support, separators actively sought to keep the role within family and with school obligations separate as a way to reduce risk of conflict and tension (Espinoza, 2010). Both types of integration reflect high levels of biculturalism to help balance Latinas’ dual identities.

The need to balance dual identities was further noted in the work of Espino, Munoz, and Marquez Kiyama (2010). Espino et al. explored the cultural family expectations of being a wife, mother, and daughter. While Espino reflected on her struggles to accept her academic identities along with the opportunities it allowed her, Munoz expressed challenges balancing the cultural expectations of wife and motherhood within an academic career. Marquez-Kiyama described difficulties being separated from her family during her doctoral studies. For Espino et al. (2010), the struggles of entering the academy were marked by conflicts with regard to cultural family expectations. Other studies, such as Gonzalez et al. (2001) describes Latina isolation from family due to cultural dissonance between family and university culture. Participants described feelings of vulnerability, transition, and adaptation to academic culture considerably different from their family culture. Participants experienced, guilt, pain, and isolation at their awareness of the significant changes in their identity where they had become unrecognizable to family (Gonzalez et al., 2001). Lack of family understanding, entering an unfamiliar world, lack of adequate Latino/a presence in their departments, experiencing ‘outsider-within’ status, and enduring identity changes, yearning for validation, and enduring conflict between two worlds (Gonzalez et al., 2001, pp. 572-578). For Latinas, family can both serve as verbal support towards the doctorate as well as personality development or a complicating facet that aids in fostering a contradicting dynamic where family culture and academia conflict.

### **Institutional Challenges**

Graduate school for minoritized populations continue to be oppressing and dehumanizing (Castellanos, Gloria, & Kamimura, 2006; Gay, 2004). As diversity within doctoral programs in the United States has increased, limited literature reflects on racial and gender aspects of

Latina/o experiences (Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez 2011; Gonzalez, 2006; Solorazano, 1998).

Cuadraz's (1993) case study explored experiences of Latino/a doctoral earners at University of California finding that students experience isolation due to race, gender, class, and political division. Latino/as noted participation in gender, academic, or community advocacy groups as a means for enduring the doctoral program and finding work that aided in addressing issues within their cultural community. As such, Gonzalez et al. (2002) extending on their 2001 work, found that Latina/o PhD students to find the nature of the academia to be conservative, restrictive, and racist. Within this study, Latinas' narratives illustrated the paradoxical belief that in the academe one is free to challenge and explore ideas but were bonded by conservative thoughts and feelings of restriction on ideas in regard to research on Latino/a race and ethnicity that were seen as inferior.

Latinas noted some of the educational challenges at the graduate school level consisted of overt and covert racism that began in graduate school at the master's level and often carried onto the doctoral level (Gonzalez, 2006). Other challenges voiced by Latinas included lack of financial support, gender discrimination, racial discrimination, socioeconomic discrimination, tokenism, and lack of department mentorship (Gonzalez, 2006), particularly the lack of graduate faculty who look like them. Castellanos et al. (2006) notes that the absence of Latina/o representation within departments provides additional stress to Latinas/os. In order to cope, Gonzalez (2006) found that Latinas either left the doctoral program altogether or changed programs to survive when racism and hostility became unmanageable within their department. Similar findings were evident in the work of Gildersleeve, Croom, and Vasquez's (2011). Their study of Black and Latina/o doctoral students at research institutions highlights the daily

experiences of racism that doctoral students of color encounter during daily interactions and how they have socialized themselves to respond or not to them. As such, the participants' narratives described how they negotiated and coped with racism that often made them critically reflect on the reality of their treatment.

### **Resistance, Resiliency, and Accommodation**

Despite the tensions between family and student roles, and institutional challenges, Latinas remain resilient in their pursuit of graduate education. Anchor and Morales (1980) note that, despite the reported disagreement and challenges by discriminatory environment, Chicanas used these experiences to channel inner strength and motivation to succeed as a way to disprove preconceived notions of their inferiority. An assertion that is also supported by the work of Morales (1988). While women personally acknowledged the injustice of systematic barriers via some institutional policies and faculty interaction, they understood that to be successful they had to navigate the system within parameters of accepting institutional means of attainment (Anchor & Morales, 1988). Chicanas (used interchangeably with Latinas) choose to utilize strong internal resistance to their challenges while accommodating to academic practices which was crucial for their success. This described resistance practice was known as 'resistance with accommodation'; a form of resistance that "rejects and challenges existing power relationships but accepts the institutionally approved means of attaining educational advancement" (Anchor & Morales, 1999, p. 281). The Chicanas described experiencing prior injustices which served as personal catalyst to complete the doctorate and attain a position of power to create meaningful change.

Gonzalez (2006) coined the terms *successful resistance* and *unsuccessful resistance* to describe the two patterns of academic socialization the women integrated (Gonzalez, 2006) in graduate school/doctoral program, Latinas who were able to engage in *successful resistance*

utilized Spanish language in self-expression, had supportive scholars who were like-minded, implored a determination to succeed to prove capabilities, assertive against discrimination, found outside mentors, and used their research as advocacy for the Latina/ community. Many Latinas had research topics and interest that integrated both cultural and academic identities to challenge current systems as a means to advocate for their community was also noted in other research (Espino et al., 2010; Vasquez et al., 2001). *Unsuccessful resistance* was characterized by disengagement, missing class, avoidance of sexist and racist peers and faculty, giving up resistance, and conforming to white normative. The latter resulted in health issues and further marginalization and isolation. In another study, Gonzalez (2007) similarly found that: a) social competence; finding positive in negative experiences, (b) problem-solving; through critical and resourceful thinking, (c) autonomy; independence and self- control and (d) sense of purpose; finding greater external desires as internal motivation were all pertinent for their success.

*Networks of Support.* Latinas encounter family, institutional, and personal obstacles during doctoral studies. As such, resistance and networks of support become essential in successfully navigating their doctoral journey (Anchor & Morales, 1990; Gonzalez, 2006; Gonzalez, 2007). Mentoring can mediate the struggles that Latina doctoral students face that are associated with family expectations, financial aspect, learning about academic culture, and doctoral student expectations (Contreras & Gandara, 2006). Mentoring relationships can serve in building relationships with faculty, establishing professional networks of support, and engaging in scholarly activity which all aid in socialization within the doctoral process (Gardner, 2008; Gonzalez, 2006; Henderson, 2015; Rodriguez, 2016). More specifically, Rodriguez (2006) highlights the integral role of a mentor's ability to devote time and care to cultivate self-efficacy as scholars and capabilities of producers of scholarly work, especially if a Latina is mentored by

another Latina. Despite having strong support within their families, Latinas need educational mentorship to guide them through educational experiences that lead toward success (Henderson, 2015). A desire for a mentor with cultural competence in *confianza*, *familismo*, and *simpatia* were described. According to Castellanos and Gloria (2007), Latina/o students will benefit from value centered interactions and interpersonal engagement in mentorship where students feel *respeto*, *confianza*, and *conexión*. Within the Latino community, values such as *respeto* (respect), *confianza* (trust), and *conexión* or *personalismo* (connection or personalism) are highly valued (Marin & Marin, 1991).

Despite the importance of academic mentorship, Latinas may have difficulty finding an advisor who can serve as a role model, aid in socialization to the field of academia, and support ethnic/cultural based research (Castellano & Gloria, 2007; Gonzalez et al. 2002). When Latina doctoral students are unable to attain mentorship, they continue to struggle to balance family cultural expectations with academic responsibilities which subsequently contributes to difficulty with their socialization into academic culture (Espinoza, 2010; Gonzalez, 2006).

### **Various Levels of Institutional Support**

*Institutional Policy: Childcare and Faculty.* Trepal et al. (20014) found doctoral student mothers had a difficult time managing dual roles of a doctoral student and a mother given the lack or inconsistent support from their respective programs. Departments, in other words, provided limited information on resources and programming tailored to the needs of graduate parent students (Springer, Parker, & Reid, 2009). And, only 15 percent of the departments offered family-friendly spaces, dissertation support groups, childcare subsidies, or faculty training on issues related faced by student-parents (Springer, Parker, & Reid, 2009). Interestingly, Holms, Prosek, and Weisberg (2013) found that doctoral mother participants did not believe it

was the responsibility of the university to provide full-time childcare but suggest use of a short-term campus child care option as a resource for doctoral student mothers, lactation rooms on campus, and creation of doctoral mother support groups. While some of the suggestions address the practical needs, the premise that universities not provide full-time childcare can be reflected in the reality that mothers feel the long-term commitment remains with them. Still, even for practical reasons, women act as their own agents for change advocating for support services as they became aware of need (Holm, Prosek, & Weisberg, 2013).

Given the financial commitment and stress associated with pursuing a doctoral degree, Lynch (2008) found that doctoral student mothers were concerned over reliable and affordable childcare. Many participants noted the cost of on-campus child-care as prohibitory in regard to cost and an incongruence in servicing hours versus the demands of doctoral program classes, meetings, and lab work. Such research suggests that despite their role as doctoral students, their role as a mother remains primary to the needs of their new academic schedules. Cost of campus childcare is deemed so prohibitive that despite the availability of these services on some universities, no one utilized the services (Lynch, 2008). The aforementioned was argued by participants that on-campus childcare was for faculty/administrator parents (Lynch, 2008) rather than for doctoral student mothers. The lack of financial inclusion of childcare was also scrutinized with teaching, graduate, or research assistantships on campus. Given these challenges, many doctoral student mothers sought the aid of childcare from spouses, family, friends, or affordable trustworthy alternatives (Eisnbach, 2013; Lynch, 2008).

*Faculty Support.* Lynch (2008) highlighted to the importance of faculty role model mothers and scholar's interaction impacting doctoral student mother's academic experiences. With their grounded theory study, Rockingson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, and Lunde (2017) generated

a theoretical model to explain the process in which women develop as scholars and intersect to other identities such as motherhood. The theoretical model notes that women doctoral student transformation from student to research scholar entails being competent in research, confident in conducting research, developing a positive attitude toward research, and envisioning self as a *motherscholar* or woman scholar (Rockington et al., 2017). The primary method of achieving a vision as a *motherscholar* was described to occur through direct engagement and relationship of a doctoral student mother with a “strong female faculty” who was viewed by the student as balancing these multiple identities as a female scholar and mother successfully (Rockington et al. 2017, p. 59).

While in theory, the *motherscholar* is logical it remains highly invisible in the academy. Espino et al. (2010) note “It’s not like I had many faculty who truly understood my plight. Where are the faculty who are Chicana mothers? I can only think of one at the moment. Don’t you find it odd that I can only name one person?” (Espino, 2010, p. 809). This suggests that Latina doctoral student mothers may not feel completely understood within their dual identities and lack faculty Latina mother scholars who can serve as an academic role model. Kennelly and Spathar-Roth (2006) further argue that the lack of female faculty equates to the lack of role models which can explain why graduate students with children are not often found in higher ranking doctoral programs. Spring et al. (2009) found in surveying PhD departments of Sociology regarding support services for students with children found that there are few if any institutional supports available. Moreover, Spring et al. (2009) suggest that faculty obtain limited knowledge regarding doctoral students with children. Most processes involving students with children are handled via a case-by-case scenario which further perpetuates the narrative that doctoral students with children are not the norm. Spring (2009) also found structural lags within

the institution that suggests that policies have not caught up with the reality of needs for doctoral student mothers. In addition, limited institutional policy regarding mothers tended to be specifically tailored to address faculty mothers not students (Springer et al., 2009, p. 445). Eisenbach (2013) described challenges on faculty designing class assignments that required additional time outside of class that competed with time needed for devotion to motherhood.

Engagement with faculty plays an integral part for doctoral mothers in the social construction of their dual identities (Lynch, 2008). Lynch found doctoral mothers reported receiving a mixture of both engagement that was perceived as supportive and unsupportive. Mothers explained unsupportive engagement included faculty giving advice that was hurtful. Lynch (2008) found that participants reported they would like to see greater sensitivity from faculty on combining their roles of motherhood into the academy. Interestingly, doctoral student mothers reported social emotional support from faculty was not exclusive to female faculty. This supports Brown and Watson's (2010) finding faculty supervisory relationship are not impacted by gender. Still, at a department level, Trepal et al.'s (2014) study found that female faculty were more understanding of the need for doctoral student mothers to bring their children to class. On the contrary, one participant recalled a female faculty members words, "don't use your child as an excuse when you can't do something" (Trepal et al., 2014, p. 38).

#### OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

Latina doctoral student and doctoral student mothers face unique challenges as they navigate their doctoral journeys (Cuadraz, 1993; Gonzalez et al., 2006; Gonzalez, 2001; Lynch, 2008; Solorazano, 1998). Latina doctoral students often find difficulty integrating their cultural expectations, values, and norms into their roles as doctoral students. Latina doctoral student are influenced by Latino/a cultural gender roles and early messaging regarding what is achievable

and acceptable life roles (Anchor & Morales, 1990, Anzaldúa, 1987, Castellanos, 1979). Similar but on different plane, doctoral mothers face challenges as they seek to navigate society cultural expectations of motherhood and meet the demands of doctoral study that often fails to acknowledge the role of student mothers (Eisenbach, 2013, Holm et al. 2013, Lynch, 2008). As such, Latina motherhood is highly complex and has cultural, political, and societal implications which must be considered to further understand Latina doctoral student mothers doctoral experience (Hills, 1994, Rich, 1977. *Women's Way of Knowing* (Belenkly et al., 1986) provides a foundational theory regarding the different cognitive positions a woman utilizes as it relates to her life experiences, roles, values, and ideas to utilize in further exploring the experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers. In regard to higher education and doctoral attainment, literature has yet to explore Latina doctoral student mother's academic experiences as they negotiate their cultural identity as a doctoral student and mother within a South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution.

## CHAPTER III: METHODS

This section introduces the research methodology for a qualitative case study regarding the experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers. The research plan including methodology, method, participant and site selection, IRB approval, data collection and data analysis are the primary components of this chapter.

This study sought to gain an understanding of Latina doctoral student mothers academic experience framed by the following research questions:

1. What challenges, if any, do Latina doctoral students mothers face balancing their academic roles of a doctoral student and their cultural role of being a mother?

Secondary research questions include:

2. What ways, if any, do Latina doctoral student mothers negotiate their identities as Latina mothers and doctoral students?
3. What role, if any, does acknowledgement by university stakeholders (professors, advisors, and other university officials) of their status as a mother impact a Latina doctoral mother's doctoral academic experience?

### **Methodology**

Qualitative research methodology is descriptive in nature and seeks to convey what is already in existence rather than applying generalization to findings to greater populations (Jackson, 2012). As such, the design of qualitative research serves in describing the interactions of a phenomena that cannot be fully or appropriately measured utilizing quantitative design methods (Stake, 2013). To better understand the academic experiences of Latina doctoral mothers within their respective doctoral program, this study utilized a qualitative methodology of inquiry. Qualitative research focuses on studying the meaning people give their lived

experiences (Yin, 2011). According to Creswell (2009, 2018), qualitative research is a method utilized for studying and comprehending the meaning individuals give to various aspects of their life within a certain context that allows for use to broaden topics covered by previous research done. Moreover, qualitative research is warranted when a phenomenon exists that has yet to be widely researched (Glesne, 2016). A qualitative research methodology allows for data to be reported in more in-depth ways of participants experience that aid in understanding of the phenomena (Creswell, 2009). As such, qualitative research serves as a basis for interpretation of the interactions of an individual within societies (Merriam, 1998). According to Yazan (2015), a researcher's view about the construction of knowledge along with their epistemology dictate the conceptualization and operation of inquiry. Yazan (2015) explains qualitative research explores the experiences of a specific phenomenon that exists among individuals for interpretation through construction of knowledge. Qualitative research is holistic, empirical, interpretative, and empathetic in nature that can only come from integration that occurs between researcher and participant (Yin, 2014). The aforementioned is foundational to qualitative research given that the researcher acts as primary instrument for data collection to gain understanding and form interpretations (Creswell, 2009).

### **Method**

Case study design is a method that is used in qualitative research. Based on Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993), a case study is a systematic qualitative research method that involves in-depth study of instances of the phenomenon within its context that conveys both perspectives of the researcher and participant. As a research strategy, the distinguishing characteristic of the case study is that it attempts to examine; (a) a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not

clearly evident (Yin, 1981). Case studies are a design of inquiry used within many fields for evaluation where researchers develop in-depth analysis of a case which, in this case, would involve multiple individuals meeting designated criteria (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2012). For this study, an exploratory single-case study framed in a constructivist approach was employed whereby the participants collectively served as the case (Yin, 2011). According to Yazan (2015), a researcher's view about the construction of knowledge along with their epistemology dictate the conceptualization and operation of inquiry.

As such, case study research provides the means for the researcher to capture complexity of real cases within contemporary phenomena in real life context with a specific emphasis in the uniqueness of human experiences (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2013). According to Merriam (2009), there are many variations in the case study method which may include a single individual, group of individuals or institutions/organization. And within a case study, cases are bound by both time and activities over a specific time period utilizing specific procedures (Stake, 1995, Yin, 2009, 2012). Case study research design is comprised of five components: a study's questions; its propositions, if any; its unit(s) of analysis; the logic linking data to the propositions; and the criteria for interpreting the findings (Yin, 2009). Case studies usually tend to be more in-depth in regard to data collection through participant observation, interviewing, document collection and analysis (Glesne, 2016). Case study is ideal when seeking deeper understanding of the complexity and uniqueness of cases in real-world context (Yin, 2014). As such, Yin (2014) notes that case studies aid in the discovery of knowledge relevant to organizations, groups, or individuals.

## **Participant and Site Selection**

The participants were comprised of a purposeful sampling that is governed by emerging insights about what is relevant to the study and purposefully seeks both the typical and divergent data that these insights suggest (Erlandson et al., 1993). Purposeful sampling is a non-random method of selection of participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This requires a sampling procedure in order gain a representative picture through aggregated qualities to maximize the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about the context. Patton (1990) describes that the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selection of information rich cases and one may learn a great deal by focusing on in-depth on understanding the needs, interests, and incentives, of a small number of carefully selected individuals. In this study, the information rich cases comprise a single case of Latina mothers who are also doctoral students at a Hispanic Serving Institution. In addition to purposeful sampling, snowball sampling was utilized in which cases were recommended by individuals who know other individuals that meet the interest of the research (Patton, 2002). Snowball sampling is particularly useful when there are limited knowledge or ways of finding participants (Glesne, 2016).

Criteria for participants were as follows: 1). self-identify as Latina females, of any age; 2). have at least one child under the age of 21; and, 3) currently enrolled at time of study in a doctoral program at South Texas University (pseudonym). A total of five participants are included in the study. Patton (2002) describes that use of small sample allows for in-depth focus of participant experiences. A Hispanic Serving Institution in South Texas was the site selection due to the available population of Latina doctoral student mothers; a geographic location that encompasses a rich Latino/a culture within the region.

## **IRB Approval**

Prior to data collection, the Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved procedures for the research study. Every study involving human participants regardless whether qualitative or quantitative research requires prior approval from the respective institutional review board (IRB) (Yin, 2011). IRB is responsible to ensure compliance with applicable federal law in regard to protection of human participants, the rights to informed consent regarding the research, prevention of violations in regard to confidentiality and anonymity, and rights to privacy (Lincoln & Tierney, 2004). Once IRB approval was granted and participant consent was given, data collection commenced.

### **Data Collection**

Data serves as the primary foundational aspect for a research study (Yin, 2011). Data collection is incorporated through individuals, setting, context and the impact of it on the individual (Patton, 2002). As such, data are the smallest elements resulting from described experiences or observation, to name a few (Yin, 2011). Within this research study, multiple data sources via an open ended semi-structured interview, demographic profile, and observations were utilized to triangulate data and build a rich description of participants.

*Interviews.* Glesne (2016) notes semi-structured interviews utilize questions that may emerge in the course of the interview which may result in adding or replacing interview questions. Interviewing serves as an appropriate method of collecting data for research regarding the experience of Latina doctoral student mothers as it utilizes a person's explanation through behavior, action, or recollection (Yin, 2011). Interviews are a primary method of data collection in preserving the essence of the meaning of experience (Merriam, 2009). Data was collected from five participants through a one-time in-depth, semi-structured interview (See Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol).

*Demographic Profile Sheet.* Additional data was collected via a demographic profile sheet (See Appendix B). Participants were asked to complete the demographic profile sheet prior to the interview. In addition to questions regarding doctoral year of study, age, marital status, and employment, participants were asked questions pertaining to motherhood including number and age of children, among other relevant questions. Demographic profile sheet aided in gaining background and contextual information for better understanding of participants (Thorne, 2016).

*Observation.* Observations were utilized with participants during interviews, as well as other interactions such as scheduling interviews and/or follow-up interaction. The researcher utilized a reflexive research journal to non-verbal cues, inclusive of vocal tone, pace of speech, and participants comfortability with researcher and interview protocol. Observations aid in the researcher's ability to understand "motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviors, and customs" that allow for insight into the inner world of the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 193). As such, it permits the observer to act as own data source for understanding of unique culture within natural setting. Within the role of observer-participant the researcher's participation within observation is secondary to his role as researcher in gathering information (Merriam, 1988).

*On-line Guided Questions.* Three online questions (See Appendix C) were utilized as an additional form of data collection. Following a face-to-face interview, participants received an electronic link to access and answer three open ended questions pertaining to the experience of being a Latina doctoral student mother. In this study, the online guided questions were requested of participants to increase personal reflections on their thoughts related to their doctoral experiences of support and challenges.

*Member Checks.* Member checks were utilized as means for clarification on participants' response and were utilized during and post interview process. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the process of member check is "whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of the stake holding groups from whom the data were originally collected" (p. 314). Member checks were utilized during interviews as a way to clarify researcher's interpretation of participant response. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to review data transcript and clarify or provide feedback as needed as well as aid in any possible bias by researcher in regard to interpretation.

*Peer debriefing.* Peer debriefing was utilized throughout the study. The purpose of the peer debriefer is to provide feedback to the researcher regarding methodology choices, challenge the researcher by asking probing questions, and redirect if needed to assure personal feelings of researcher are not influencing data interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Erlandson et al. (1993), researchers should consult with professionals who are directly outside of the context but knowledgeable on research topic who can provide feedback and, when needed, redirect inquiry. As such, the peer debriefer who was chosen for this study is a current professional within the field of higher education and social sciences and former colleague, who is familiar with the scope of study and was willing to provide feedback regarding my decisions for research processes.

*Research Reflexivity.* A reflective journal acts as a diary of sorts that is beneficial when utilized for daily or regular entry that provides records of information regarding the insights, logistics, or methodology decisions of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A reflective journal via word process and print out as a form of self-reflection as a research regarding methods and process of research was kept. The use of reflexive journal assisted in researcher

self-reflection on personal beliefs, thoughts, and behavioral responses. The journal served as documentation to record and to organize thoughts and decisions pertinent to the study while ensuring trustworthiness.

*Assurances of Confidentiality.* Several safeguards were utilized to ensure the confidentiality of participants. Confidentiality is inclusive of protecting what a researcher disseminates and avoid putting participant in undesirable situation as a result of their participation in the study (Erlandson et al., 1993; Yin, 2009). Prior to the interview process, all participants received detailed information regarding the purpose of study, interview protocol process, and consent form. Participation within this research study required signature on consent form prior to interview. During initial contact, all prospective participants were notified of confidentiality in participation and again prior to actual interview in order to ensure complete understanding. In addition, there are no identifiers linking to participants will be any type of document that may be published. Self-selected pseudonyms are utilized throughout all aspects of studying including transcription, coding, and reporting data to protect participants anonymity. Any information determined to be likely to the identification of a participant will be excluded to preserve confidentiality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Erlandson et al., 1993; Yin, 2009).

### **Data Analysis**

*Unitizing Data.* Following data collection all data was transcribed verbatim. After the interview, all data inclusive of researcher notes was transcribed into interview transcripts. Then the data content within the interviews was parsed into units. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), “data analysis involves taking constructions gathered from the context and reconstructing them into meaningful wholes” (p. 333) and the first step in the process requires unitizing data. A unit is considered to be the smallest piece of information that can stand alone and can range in

encompassing few words, sentences, or a paragraph (Erlandson et al., 1993). Each interview transcript was read, unitized, analyzed via content analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During this process statement, phrases, or sentences that are significant in understanding the participants responses were emphasized.

*Coding.* After unitization, the coding process began. Coding is described as a progressive process that aids in determining categories and themes requiring frequent, ongoing sorting, and defining (Glesne, 2016). Researcher gathered data that share same descriptive or theoretical idea into groups that will be labeled with a code, therefore; creating a “thematic organizational framework” (Glesne, 2016, p. 196). Qualitative data analysis software was utilized, specifically DeDoose. Qualitative data analysis systems promote transparency in the flexibility of responding to new categories as they emerge (Richards & Richards, 1991).

*Categorizing & Discovering Patterns.* Emergent categorization involves sorting units of data into categories that both emerge as a result of the researcher’s intuition and that are theory driven (Erlandson et al., 1993). As such, categories will emerge as the researcher utilizes intuition in identifying patterns among data to determine general and main ideas discussed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Olson, 2011). Therefore, the researcher will gave importance to analyzing data for emerging patterns identified. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describes constant comparative method as systematic comparison seeking to identify both similarities and differences among units of data. The process of categorizing and discovery of patters aided in identifying key themes and establishing categories.

*Developing and Labeling Categories.* With qualitative data, there is importance in showing the relationship that exist among data (Glesne, 2011). Saldaña (2009) described that

“coding is not just labeling, it is linking” (p.8). As such, in coding data the researcher is creating a “framework of relational categories” in regard to the data obtained (Glesne, 2011, p. 195).

*Identifying Themes.* Theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Emerging themes were organized into clusters that contain patterns then into themes through comparative method. Units of data were sorted and resorted frequently to ensure consistency in developing appropriate patterns for determining themes. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe this technique as comparative method, which is the method of consistently comparing a unit of data to another unit of data in a constant comparative method. Sorting and resorting served to identify themes and allow researcher to begin developing categories for similar themes. Patterns and/or themes emerged more evidently through use of coding and following analysis categories and themes that emerge will be extensively explored in Chapter 4.

### **Ensuring Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research serves to highlight the level of quality, rigor, and integrity within a study (Glesne, 2011). Additionally, it incorporates various aspects inclusive of truth value, plausibility, rigor of design and methodologies utilized, and both credibility of data and the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlighted that in naturalistic inquiry, trustworthiness is better utilized to describe qualitative research. As such, four aspects of trustworthiness that must be established by researcher include: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

*Credibility.* Credibility is the first criterion in establishing trustworthiness. Establishing credibility relies on the ability of the research to clearly define relationship between study’s findings with reality in order to achieve “degree of confidence in the truth of the findings”

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe techniques such as peer debriefing, member checking, and triangulation as integral to credibility. As aforementioned, the use of peer debriefing and member checking were utilized within this study to secure credibility. Additionally, use of field notes, reflexive journal, observations obtained, and interviews were carried out within this inquiry as a means of triangulation.

*Transferability.* Transferability is another aspect of establishing trustworthiness and refers to the degree a research study methodology can be applied in other contexts among other participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Erlandson et al. (1993) describe that transferability can be achieved through use of in-depth detailed relationships of the content and context being studied through use of “thick description” (p. 33). For the purpose of this study, thick description of participants were achieved via purposeful sample and demographic profile. More specifically, the demographic profile included questions in regard, but not limited to, age, marital status, number of children, employment status, and year of doctoral study. All of the aforementioned seeks to increase transferability. Still, Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that responsibility of transferability to study lies in those who would apply in receiving context.

*Dependability and Confirmability.* Dependability and confirmability are the third and fourth aspects of ensuring trustworthiness. The researcher utilized a reflexive journal to support dependability and confirmability of this study. A reflexive journal includes basic information regarding researcher’s insights, reasoning, and methodological approaches. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe dependability as evidence of replicability in the process in that if the study were repeated with similar participants in the same context, it would yield similar findings. And, confirmability seeks to question how the findings of research are supported through data. Confirmability of data is the ability for it to be traced from the inclusion of a collective structure

of interpretations back to its inherent source (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Within this study, the process of using a reflexive journal, debriefer, and member checks was employed. Debriefing was inclusive of conversations that seek to clarify and ensure data collection in decreasing researcher bias. Reflexive journal aided in assessing researcher's thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. In addition, the use of member checking occurred throughout the data collection for purpose of clarification and further development of understanding of data.

### **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to gain greater understanding of the doctoral experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers within a South Texas higher education institution. Use of qualitative research methods for data collection includes semi-structured interviews, a demographic profile, and observations. Participants were selected with the use of purposeful sampling that will allow for relevant and information-rich data. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researcher searched for common patterns to identify themes that emerge throughout participant unitized data from transcribed units following interviews. Moreover, the researcher also utilized recorded observations, field notes, and reflexive journal as well as employed several techniques to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

## CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Students should follow the guidelines of their committee chairs and programs/departments/discipline. This study sought to explore Latina doctoral student mother’s academic experiences as they negotiate their cultural identity as a doctoral student and mother within a South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution. More specifically, the study employed a qualitative method via a case study whereby 5 Latina doctoral student mothers, from a South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution were interviewed. Participants also completed a demographic profile sheet and all five anonymously responded to three online guided questions. Data were transcribed and analyzed via content analysis whereby themes emerged. The themes and subthemes that emerged from data analysis are presented in the table below and illustrated in this chapter.

Table 1: Themes That Emerged From Data Analysis

Themes	Subthemes
Characteristics of Successful Latina Mothering for Latina Doctoral Student Mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultivating a child that is independent and financially self-sufficient</li> <li>Serving as a role model for educational attainment</li> <li>Teaching your child to be respectful, develop a social-consciousness and being a good person.</li> </ul>
Supportive Relationships for Latina Doctoral Student Mothers Throughout the Doctoral Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support from spouse</li> <li>The role of employment supervisors and co-workers</li> <li>Community building with Latina doctoral student mothers</li> <li>The evolving role of faculty</li> </ul>
Integrating Latina Motherhood and Doctoral Student Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrating Latina motherhood identity into class discussion and assignments</li> <li>Integrating Latina motherhood into research.</li> <li>Integrating doctoral student role with ,otherhood.</li> </ul>
Recognizing the Invisibility of Latina Motherhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of acknowledged understanding of Latina motherhood by faculty</li> <li>Limited Latina motherhood representation among faculty</li> <li>Lack of mentorship</li> <li>Lack of policy/procedure transparency</li> <li>Lack of support services for Latina mothers</li> <li>Lack of Latina motherhood in curriculum</li> </ul>

### *Characteristics of Successful Latina Mothering for Latina Doctoral Student Mothers*

All participants in this study described what they define as successful mothering, culturally as a Latina mother. More specifically, successful mothering was described as occurring when their child is independent and financially self-sufficient, when as a Latina mother you are able to serve as a role model for educational attainment, and teaching your child respect and social consciousness.

*Cultivating a child that is independent and financially self-sufficient.* Several participants discussed that successful mothering occurs when your child displays personal independence and is financially self-sufficient. Pilar, when describing what successful mothering meant to her, stated:

I can say that like with my oldest daughter she finished school, is striving to do better and is living on her own. She doesn't ask me for money ever, she doesn't ask me for anything. She is very independent. She is very successful. She is a lot like mama. I taught her to work hard for everything she has. (p. 2)

For Pilar, her success as a mother is defined in her daughter's ability to display personal and financial independence. Like Pilar, Angela discusses successful mothering in regard to desired outcomes and behaviors for her daughter. She states, "I think a mother can feel good about letting her child go off, like to college, and be able to stand on their own and make those right choices independently with the skills you have given them" (p.2). Like Pilar, Angela sees successful mothering in regard to the ability to act in making choices independently that aid in completion of school and ultimately, personal independence. Azul, like Pilar and Angela, also describes successful Latina mothering for her occurring with a child who is independent. Azul simply and firmly states, "It means your child is strong and independent" (p.1). She further

explains, “It means they are going to demonstrate that they can keep order in their lives just like you taught them” (p.1). Azul further explains that due to her child’s learning disabilities, his independence may not look like others or be achieved through educational attainment but will still be present with the skills she has taught him.

Like Pilar and Azul, Iza described the importance she, as a mother, places on her children to become independent adults and how her role as a doctoral student assists them in that process. Iza stated, “So being in this program, it’s more like no, I need to teach you (Iza’s child) how to be independent because that’s important. Whatever trauma, whatever grief he will go through he will be fine, and that independence is important” (p. 2). For Iza, it is important for her child to be personally and financially independent as way to avoid or minimize the challenge and trauma she views as an inevitable part of life. Iza further comments that being a Latina mother is complex and often Latina mothers can be their own harshest critic. Iza stated, “Well as a Latina mother I don’t know if you can always be successful because you’re going to fail at times, all mothers do. Nobody is perfect, and I think we are own worst critic, but I think successful mothering is about teaching your kids to be independent and teaching them to do things on their own” (p.6). She further noted independence is much more valuable than financial earnings. Iza further shared, “A child’s successful if they are able to take care of themselves financially and being able to do what they choose to do.... It’s just about what makes them happy and they’re not struggling for things” (p.3). Like Iza, Pilar also described the importance of her child being financially independent stating, “She’s completely financially independent, and for me that is the biggest thing because she does not need to depend on anyone” (p.3).

For the participants, independence and personal financial stability were described as key characteristics of successful mothering. Many of the participants described independence in the

ability for their child to reach a certain level of educational attainment that contributed or fostered personal and financial independence. In addition, many of the participants described experiencing life challenges that they believed resulted from a lack of personal and financial independence and thus influenced their perspective on the value of mothering a child towards independence. It is interesting to note that instilling independence in their child(ren) counters cultural norms for the role of women, suggesting that as Latina doctoral student mothers they are eager to redefine antiquated cultural definitions of gender (e.g., dependence on a man/spouse).

*Serving as a role model for educational attainment.* All of the participants in this study recognized the importance as Latina mothers to serve as an educational role model for their children. Within their respective roles as Latina mothers and doctoral students attaining a doctorate degree, they serve as a model of the possibilities for educational attainment. Many participants conveyed a belief that if their child/children viewed them as able to achieve their educational goal of a doctoral degree, they would then have “no excuses” or reason to believe they could not achieve their educational aspirations.

In describing what cultural values are important to her as a Latina mother, Pilar stated, “Leadership in a family as a mother is most important. Inspiring others to go to school and being a role-model for that. As a Latina mother, you are the role model for your family, they follow your lead” (p. 1). Pilar further echoed,

Being a Latina mother to me means I instill education because even though there is supposedly no longer biases, they still exist for women, Latinas, and mothers. And, education will bring you a better life where there are more opportunities [are] afforded to you and it’s important to me that I model that to my children.  
(p.1)

For Pilar, modeling education as a Latina mother is important due to her experiences and beliefs of continued bias against women, Latinas, and mothers in society and consequently, how education may be a way to lessen the impact of that bias.

Like Pilar, Angela describes the importance for her as a Latina mother to be an educational role model for her daughter. Angela describing how she balances being a role model and doc student stated,

Well, I think just the responsibilities that we take on is something that kind of creates a little bit of a delicate balancing act for us all the time. You know we take on the role, that's of being very involved with our children and their education which isn't always easy but also trying to do very well in our school stuff so that we can be that model for our child so they can also do well in school. (p. 1)

Both Pilar and Angela convey being a role model for educational attainment for their children, a role they place great importance and high value. Angela noted the “delicate” balance that Latina doctoral student mothers often embody, as they not only seek to serve as a role model for their children's education but also simultaneously work to be successful within their own complex educational requirements. Angela further described her work ethic as a Latina mother,

I think you know just being a role model to her [daughter] is important. She sees the amount of work and effort that I put into everything with school and that I believe is worth it at the end. I always remind her you know that anything that we do you know should be done with a lot of effort and commitment. (p. 2)

For Angela, her commitment and dedication to school and the completion of her education is something she would like her daughter to be able to view and display in her own studies. Like Pilar and Angela, Azul also shared, “I feel like I am modeling a behavior I would love my child

to demonstrate, to follow my path if he could” (p. 1). Azul describes that her child has a learning disability and as such, she takes pride in assisting him with all aspects of his education and modeling educational attainment for him. Although Azul realizes his educational attainment may be different than her own educational journey, she still views and values the importance of serving as an educational role model for him. Azul further conveys that she feels her child has an awareness to her dedication to her education. She stated, “I think he sees how hard I work with school. He sees I want to go further in life than where I am. I see the position I am in and I want to go beyond that. I hope I model something for him. It is instilled in him that don’t accept where you’re at, don’t be complacent, strive for better” (p. 3). This suggests that Azul is cognizant of her intentionality to serve as a role model that seeks to further her life.

Esperanza, like Azul, Pilar, and Angela, conveys the importance of modeling education for her children. Esperanza describes that her way of modeling educational attainment for her children has been normalizing herself *both* as a Latina mother and being a doctoral student within their household. Esperanza further explained how she normalizes education for her children by stating, “I think for my children they don’t understand the bigger context and what it means but I see that it seems very normal for us right now. It’s normal to be a Latina mom and be a doctoral student. It’s normal to have support from my family and husband to do that, that is becoming their norm because they see me” (p.1). In essence, that having educational aspirations should be the norm. Esperanza stated,

I think that (her status as a Latina doctoral student mother) will change their views of what the future will look like for them whether they decide to, you know, go to college or get a terminal degree. I know that they will know that this is something that is in their realm. And, if they wanted to do that, they have access and they would have my support.

I think they are being able to see a lot more people go to college and go further than I ever got to see, and I know it will make a difference. (p.1)

For Esperanza, serving as an educational role model has resulted in normalizing for her children her role as a Latina mother and also as a doctoral student, something she lacked as a child herself.

Like Esperanza, Iza also describes how she has been a role model for her children that aids in their understanding of the value and prestige of education. When describing how she has served as a role model to shape their understanding of education, Iza acknowledged, “So they see the aspect of prestige it brings from their level...They have seen throughout the years people say, wow you have so many master’s degrees! To me, now they associate well now you’re getting your doctorate” (p. 4). Iza went on to describe that although her children may not want to pursue such a high level of education as the doctorate, they view education as powerful. Iza stated,

I don’t think they want that much education. To them, the doctorate is like their way up there. For them, their teachers aren’t up there but having a doctorate, being a doctor, having those two little symbols attached to your name is like for them ‘Oh my God!’ That prestige it brings, it’s very prestigious to have a doctorate and they see that. (p.4)

Iza’s status as a doctoral student created an opportunity for her children to engage in discussions exploring their beliefs on education. For Iza, serving as an educational model allows her children to see high educational attainment as something that is possible for themselves. Iza utilized her role as a Latina doctoral student mother to further model and normalize the doctorate as something attainable and not only for others that are “way up there”.

*Teaching your child to be respectful, develop a social-consciousness and being a good person.* All of the participants in this study recognized the importance of teaching their child(ren)

to respect, develop a social-consciousness, and “be a good person” as key aspects of successful Latina mothering. When asked about what comprises successful Latina mothering to her, Angela stated, “They are going to be respectful of themselves and respectful of others. You know those things are important” (p. 1). For Angela, it is important for her child to be able to encounter any situation with respect for herself and respect for others. Like Angela, Azul also described the importance in mothering her child to show respect. Azul shared, “I think a successful Latina mother would have her children in line and they would demonstrate what you taught them, like respect. They are going to demonstrate respect for others, and they are going to demonstrate respect for you as their mother” (p. 1). Azul emphasizes the value Latina mothers place on their children learning respect, to others and especially, to their mothers. Azul further described how respect could be shown, “Paying attention when people talk to you, following rules that are set and not going against that, only asking guidance when you really need it” (p. 2). Azul’s description of showing respect reflects being alert and accepting rules without asking questions, unless when dire assistance is needed. Azul’s statement highlights how cultural views of respect for Latinos often relate to agreement without resistance or question.

Like Azul, Iza describes the importance of respect in communication with others especially when views and beliefs differ. Iza shared, “You’re going to teach your child how to respect people. How to talk to people in a respectful way yet, being very honest about their own feelings but not in a bad way or negative way. Not in a way your disrespecting their values or their opinions but you’re sharing your values and opinions” (p. 3). Iza believes that showing her children respect, now more than ever is essential for healthy communication with others who have different views. Iza describes,

Respect and valuing themselves as well as understanding other people are not going to have the same opinions they have and understanding that, that's okay. They don't have to agree with them, and they can have these differences of opinion, they might be coming from different cultures, or just in general. Being able to say okay that's your opinion but this is where I stand, but I respect where you stand. As long as it's not I'm going to kill somebody or wear a swastika or something like that. (p. 6)

Iza describes the importance of teaching her children to have respect for others through displaying of tolerance and acceptance of others.

Participants also described successful mothering occurring when a child develops a sense of social consciousness characterized by self-efficacy, problem solving, and holding steadfast to values. Angela stated, "I think to be a successful mother you have to instill in your child a sense of responsibility and a sense of you know self-efficacy and problem solving" (p. 2). Angela further described how culturally her mother and sister-in-law have influenced the way she mothers her daughter's social consciousness. Angela further stated,

Part of it might be perspective and experience, I know seeing my mom and sisters-in-law, I mean people around me. I know I see a lot of similarities in our struggle to make sure that we instill certain values in our kids. And, so a lot of that might tend to bleed into the perspectives that I take and having social justice conversations. For example, you know kind of our bigger purpose...I kind of lead into the way that I parent just based on learning about leadership styles and social consciousness. (p. 5)

From shared personal struggles, Angela and other Latina doctoral student mothers sought to instill certain values in their children which has influenced her leadership style and perspective on social justice issues. Like Angela, Esperanza described the importance she placed as a Latina

mother fostering her children's critical thinking skills. Esperanza stated, "I want them to value education, learning, and being a critical thinker. I think that is something I value...I want them to see that" (p. 2). For Esperanza, it is critical in her mothering to display the importance and value of social consciousness so that her children adopt similar beliefs. Iza, similarly highlights social justice to build social consciousness within her children, "They hear me and my husband having these debates about privilege and having privilege in this society. He's very black and white and I operate in the greys. They hear that and they ask, what does that mean? And, we will tell them" (p. 4). For Iza, intentional discussions with her family on power and privilege in society allows her children to explore the topic of privilege in society, information she feels is necessary for them to develop a social consciousness.

Several participants also emphasized that successful mothering results in your child being a "good" person by following rules, engagement in the church/community, and treating others well. Pilar in describing how she believes she has successfully mothered her daughter stated, "She has never gotten in trouble with the law. She's a very good person, she has a lot of integrity whether people are watching her or not" (p. 2). For Pilar, being a good person is inclusive of following rules, avoiding actions that can result in consequence, and acting in good consciousness even when others are not around. Like Pilar, Angela describes viewing her daughter as being a good person. For Angela, she believes her emphasis on faith and community service as a mother has influenced her daughter positively. Angela stated,

So, one of the things I really instilled in my child from an early on is our Catholic faith. You know I mean she grew up in a church and very involved with community services, you know being a very good person. And, being patient with the elderly and with children, being respectful to adults and her peers. (p. 2)

Angela emphasizes the incorporation of religious teaching, maintaining faith, and respect for others as pillars of being a “good person”, all qualities she feels her daughter displays. Similar to Pilar, Azul recognized the importance of raising your child to be “good” describing this when your child abides by rules and treats others well. She shared “They will have order in their life and basic understanding of the rules of how to treat another person, being more good than bad. And, helping someone out when they need it” (p.1).

*Supportive Relationships for Latina Doctoral Student Mothers Throughout the Doctoral Process*

Every participant in this study discussed supportive relationships that contributed in the decision to pursue a doctorate, ability to successfully continue in the program, and assistance to support their mothering and doctoral demands. More specifically, the participants discussed the role of their husbands, parents and grandparents, employer supervisors, professional colleagues, peer support from other Latina doctoral mother scholars, and faculty.

*Support from Spouse.* All of the participants in this study were married. In addition, all the participants highlighted the important role their husbands have played not only in their decision to pursue a doctorate but in caretaking responsibilities for their children and providing emotional support. Esperanza, a first-year doctoral student and whose husband supported her decision making about whether or not to enter a doctoral program shared,

I considered going back to school for a long time. I got my Masters in 2002 and I've been working at the University for 15 years. During that time that I've seen other colleagues go back for classes and so it has been in my mind for a while. And there were years that I was like no, I don't need it. I'm not interested and then it would come back around. And, so last year, or maybe it was the year before, you know I really started telling my husband I think this is something that I need to do, and I want to do. It would be

beneficial for my career and beneficial for all of us. And, he was like do it, go for it, so eagerly, you know how much work it is and take this many hours and I would you know be would be away from you all. You know and he was like ‘no absolutely you know you should do this’. And, so I knew early on before I had decided, okay I have his support. (p. 1).

For Esperanza, her decision to pursue a doctorate culminated after over a decade of consideration to apply for the program due to her concerns on how it would impact her family. Esperanza in describing how her role as a Latina mother impacted her decision-making process to pursue a doctorate, stated, “I think being a Latina mother is like I am always thinking about both, not just myself but both systems (herself and family)”. This exemplifies the complexity involved for many Latina mothers who seek to keep their families at the forefront of their decision-making process while seeking to make decisions to advance themselves through education. Esperanza’s difficulty in reaching a decision to pursue a doctorate that spanned over a decade illustrates the complexities and sacrifices a woman and mother faces in the need to put her family before herself. Only when Esperanza was certain of her husband’s support, did she begin to consider her pursuit of a doctorate as a viable option.

Likewise, Pilar shared the influence of her husband in her decision on whether to enter a doctoral program, regret for not pursuing doctoral studies sooner, and her husband’s support when they collectively decided it would be the right time for her to pursue a doctorate. She disclosed,

I got married young. When I worked on my master’s that took a lot of time away from my family and my husband told me um, that its wasn’t smart to do a doctoral program then. My husband is very supportive but it’s just that it takes away from the family unit.

Think about it, that's all we do, write, read, write, read. And when you're doing that you can't be fully present with your husband, family, or your kids. That is the hardest part. (p. 1).

Unlike Esperanza's husband, Pilar's husband voiced concerns in the timing of her doctoral pursuit due to potential ramifications of being away from the family unit. Along with her own concerns about meeting the needs of the family, Pilar husband's concern resulted in her decision to postpone entering a doctoral program until a later time that was *collectively* agreed upon with her husband. Her decision to ultimately delay pursuing a doctoral degree reflects Pilar's value of her husband's opinion and her willingness to maintain order of her family above all. Like Esperanza, Pilar delayed her doctoral studies in order to first meet the needs of her family before her own educational ambitions. By default, ascribing to traditional roles associated with the maternal role of the primary caretaking of her family.

Like Pilar, Iza describes concerns her husband had in regard to doctoral studies competing with perceived family obligations as a Latina mother. However, Iza knew she wanted to pursue a doctoral degree and adamantly rejected traditional cultural norms expected of Latina mothers along with messaging from her husband that countered her beliefs. She asserts, the following with regard to her relationship with her husband, "My family and relationship with my husband is different because I am different. I don't ascribe to Latino machismo where women are subservient to their husbands and all that bullshit" (p. 2). Iza's husband, like Pilar's husband, questioned the implications a doctoral program would have on family, especially in regard to childcare taking practices. She further shared,

Because as our boys have gotten older, they gotten used to us doing everything for them and I am like no. That's been an issue between my husband and I because he always

wants to cater to them. So, some of those traditions come out. But no, I am not going to do that because they can do that for themselves. He can fend for himself; you know I need the help. I can't be serving and doing this stuff for everybody. I am taking care of stuff that I need to take care of for school. And, he's like, well ya I see your point. (p. 3)

For Iza, she describes utilizing what she describes as “re-educating” her husband and children with regard to countering the traditional cultural roles Latina mothers have in their family. Iza's recognition and rejection of traditional gender roles for Latinas allowed her the foresight to create opportunities to discuss her role as a Latina mother and how she chooses to define it within her own life and family. Iza's husband was raised with traditional cultural values of Latino man as a “rescuer” or “savior” for a Latina.

Another, participant Azul, disclosed how her husband's support is seen in his willingness to take on the role as her “stand-in” within the family so that she is able to be a doctoral student. She shared, “My husband helps me with my child, he is my partner in crime. He is there for me when I can't be there for my child. He is my substitute basically” (p. 3). Azul described her husband's support and willingness to fill her role in the family when she is away, such as caring for her child and assisting with his homework. Azul explained that due to her child's learning disability, she is very involved in every aspect of his learning. Her husband's willingness to take on this role is a key factor for her success in the doctoral program. Azul's views on the level of care that *only* she can provide her son reflects the Latina mother cultural role that embodies the ability to optimally care for their child at all times. Azul shared, “He can't do everything I do but he tries. And, he will come to me and ask me and I will give him guidance as far as he is asking because if it wasn't for my husband I don't know if I would be able to go through this program because I would not have anyone to watch my child” (p. 3). Azul acknowledges that despite her

husband being unable to provide the exact level of care for her child that she can that without his support, she would not have been able to enter or be successful in a doctoral program due to an absence in childcare. Azul, like Pilar, describe the support from their husband in child care-taking as essential to their success. Similarly, Esperanza describes her husband's willingness to understand and support her doctoral journey, "My husband has been very supportive of me going through this process. And, he really has not made any assumptions, but you know kind of asked me what do you need or what would be helpful right now so I appreciate that" (p.1).

As noted above, most husbands supported the participants in multiple ways. The support of their respective husbands cannot be minimized as all participants noted the essential role in their ability to be successful in their doctoral programs. Despite husbands who expressed concerns regarding time commitment required of doctoral study along with impact to caretaking roles, participants mostly described their respective husband as willing to adjust to new roles in the family to support them in their doctoral studies.

*The role of employment supervisors and co-workers.* All of the participants in the study maintain full-time employment, while enrolled as a doctoral student. The participants' employment varies from federal government level agencies, private and public K-12 schools, to higher education institutions. All of the participants in this study described both emotional and professional support from supervisors and coworkers in their ability to enter and continue within their doctoral programs. Azul in describing the supports that have aided in her doctoral studies shared, "My former supervisor is the one [who] pushed me to get in the doc program. The employees at work, I am actually the supervisor at work. So, they understand that I am going through the doctoral program and I am a mother, so they actually help me in a lot of the duties that I need to fulfill with a lot of the roles I have" (p. 7). Azul describes how employees

recognize the need to support her to complete work tasks if she has to take time off to complete her doctoral work. Azul explains her co-workers are eager to support her to maintain employment and fulfill the requirements associated with being a doctoral student. She states, “My employees are really proud of me” (p. 7). Azul describes how her employees’ support of her, primarily Latina and Latina mothers is due to a mutual understanding of the challenges associated with personal advancement when also a Latina mother. This suggests that the cultural aspect of Latina motherhood remains present in families. Like Azul, Esperanza described the support her supervisors played in her decision to pursue doctoral studies. She stated,

Well, my supervisor was one of the first people that I told when I was thinking about it. I asked her to be a reference. I asked my next level supervisor to be a reference. So, I think I involved them in the process to let them know I was thinking about it. I asked for their support and I got that support. I think they were very happy for me when I got accepted in the program. (p. 4)

The support that Azul and Esperanza receive highlight the importance of support for Latina mothers from their employers and employees. Support from their respective employer to pursue and to be successful in their doctoral studies while employed full-time was critical. This suggests that support from their employers is key to their successful pursuit of doctoral studies. Like Azul and Esperanza, Angela described having support from co-workers. Some co-workers were also pursuing doctoral studies and thus, an understanding of mutual experiences was evident. Angela described that despite the challenges of a four -hour round trip commute to the university and rigorous coursework, adjustment to a change in workplace demands due to Covid-19, was easier as her co-workers were also experiencing it. Angela recognized that co-workers who are also

Latina mothers in doctorate programs serve as a major support as they could relate to her struggles which is not the norm for many Latina mothers.

*Community Building with Latina Doctoral Student Mothers.* Participants recognized and valued the relationship with fellow Latina doctoral student mothers (used interchangeably with Latina moms). Participants discussed the importance of connections to others they deemed like themselves throughout their doctoral program. Participants described support for other Latina moms regarding program choice, integrating Latina mother culture with doctoral study, and navigating doctoral program in times of uncertainty. Angela described the role of other Latina mothers in her decision to pursue a doctorate. She stated, “I think I’ve been heavily influenced by a lot of people who have earned their doctorate degree there...Um, who were also mothers, some of them were Latinas, some were not, but they grew up in the area and so they didn’t really consider themselves anything other than you know from this culture and community” (p. 4). For Angela, exposure to other Latina mothers who had attained a doctorate allowed her to view doctorate as attainable for her. Like Angela, Esperanza valued the input and advice from other Latina mothers in her decision to pursue a doctoral program and purposefully sought out others she deemed like herself. Esperanza noted,

So, I decided last year that okay, I’m going to look into it more seriously than I ever had before...and part of that was considering two different programs. And, then I talked to people in those programs and I chose people that I knew were mothers and that had a similar, or what I thought was similar life or seemed similar to me. I interviewed them and tell me like what is it really like because I wanted to make an informed decision about coming back to school and making such a big commitment. (p. 1)

For Esperanza, finding someone she viewed as similar to gain an understanding on doctoral programs was essential and something she utilized purposefully.

Like Esperanza, it was also important for Pilar to make connections with other Latina moms as a means to access knowledge she felt she would not have been able to access from non-Latina mother peers. In describing personal relationships of support, Pilar explained, “I think the collegial among students, there are a few Latina moms and we help each other with things. I think that it is very important because there have been times I think, I can’t do this or I don’t know what to do, and you know who to go to for help” (p. 3). Pilar conveyed her comfort in approaching other Latina mothers for guidance on department policy or dissertation process, due perceived less judgment and greater willingness to help. For Angela, Pilar, and Esperanza, an immediate trust exists in the experiences and knowledge of others deemed like them with their status as Latina mother and/or viewing them as collective part of the Latino community and culture where they were accepted, heard, and understood.

*The evolving role of faculty.* Support from department professors was described in forms of integrating Latina motherhood into classroom, kindness and patience, and providing helpful guidance. Angela, expressing her joy for having one professor finally integrate Latina motherhood into academic discussion stated,

This semester I was super impressed Dr. [Professor’s Name] you know I know that she is a mother, you know, and Latina. She would very often have to bring in those two aspects into the conversation, you know? Just seeing what she has been able to accomplish serves as a really good role model for me. You know, I mean she's just kind of like at a different level. I mean just the way that I see her it's just like wow, she's so accomplished and so

articulated and still very caring. It so all of those things are really have left an impression on me. (p. 11)

Angela described a professor who was a Latina mother but did not purposefully integrate those roles into the classroom and consequently, did not deem her a good Latina mother role-model. In describing this previous professor, she stated, “A professor that I had last semester was Latina and a mother, but I didn’t really consider her a very good role model because of the level of rigor, lack of focus, and certain things like that” (p. 6). In regard to the professor she did perceive as a good role model, Angela expressed being surprised about the level of intelligence she perceived from this Latina mother professor and her accomplishments, despite her motherhood status. Angela’s surprise and delight came from lack of previous exposure to professors who are Latina mothers in academia. Additionally, Angela’s statements highlight that even at times when a Latina mother professor is present, they may fail to integrate their cultural Latina motherhood roles into academic classroom dialogue. Angela further described support from a non-Latina in understanding her role as a mother through kindness and empathy. Angela stated,

And, now Dr. [Professor’s Name] I have her this semester as well as she's super, super supportive and very kind and patient and all of that I'm not sure if she's a mother. I mean I know she's not Latina. I think she's been very kind of responsive to our needs and but that's I mean those are pretty much the only interactions I've had with the professors so far. (p. 8)

Esperanza also conveying the importance of supportive messaging from professors regardless of Latina motherhood status stated, “I also have some good faculty that have been very um, just in kind of the language they use you can tell they are aware that a lot of people in this program are

working and may have children” (p. 3). Like Angela and Esperanza, Azul described the positive support from her professors despite ethnicity or motherhood status rooted in empathy and understanding as imperative in her doctoral success. Azul describes her actions as being purposeful to seek professors and to develop relationships for guidance in the doctoral process. Azul acknowledges that within her department of study, a helping profession, and her professors having those skills to be empathetic and respectful has been a privilege that many Latina mothers may not experience. Angela stated, “And with the professors, it is just seeking out their guidance. What do I need to do, how do I do this, they are basically not only my teachers, but they are my mentors. They play a big role in my doctoral experience and have given me a lot of guidance as where I want to go with my doctorate” (p. 4). For Azul, being able to understand the skills necessary to build academic relationships with professors and utilize personal communication skills to do so was immensely beneficial for her.

#### *Integrating Latina Motherhood and Doctoral Student Roles*

Four out of five participants in this study discussed ways in which they feel they integrate their Latina mother and doctoral student roles. More specifically, the women described integrating their Latina motherhood and doctoral student roles by including cultural views as a Latina mother within classroom discussion and assignments, integrating motherhood experiences into research ideas, and discussing with their children certain aspects of the doctoral program.

*Integrating Latina Motherhood Identity into Class Discussion, Assignments, and Research.* Angela, when asked about negotiating her dual role as a Latina mother and doctoral student stated, “Well I think it’s actually very hard to separate those roles because I always have to be mindful that I am both at the same time” (p. 5). For Angela, her role as a Latina mother and doctoral student are mutually inclusive. Angela further described her difficulty in separating

personal beliefs based on cultural norms of mothering, something she adapted from her family views which she voices within the classroom. Angela added,

Part of what my integrating looks like for me has to do with my perspective and cultural experiences being a Latina mother in this world. I know seeing my mom and my sisters in the way they mother and their life experiences has impacted the way I do it. I kind of see a lot of similarities in our struggles as Latina mothers. We try to make sure that we instill certain values in our kids. And, so a lot of that tends to bleed into the perspective that I take and the opinions and beliefs I hold on social justice issues and the conversations that occur within the classroom as well as my writing assignments and dissertation research topic. (p. 5)

For Angela, as a Latina mother she is heavily influenced by the cultural values of her family and as such, it has influenced the way she views the world, social justice issues, and research interest as a doctoral student. Like Angela, Iza feels it would be very difficult if not impossible to separate the role as a Latina mother from being a doctoral student. Iza shared, “I don’t think you can ever separate it (being a Latina mother and doctoral student). It’s a part of who you are. . . . Your role as a Latina mom is really who you are as a person and it’s going to come out in every single thing you’re doing” (p. 6). For Iza, her role as a Latina mother is central to her identity and every aspect of her life. Similarly, Iza in describing how she integrates her role as a Latina mother into her role as a doctoral student stated, “I do a lot of personal connections with culture and it being from a Latina mother perspective as far as classroom discussion, reflections, or paper even though they (professors) don’t always want that unless it’s [a] multi-cultural class” (p.7). Iza describes her integration of Latina mother and doctoral identities occurring within discussion and assignments as part of the doctoral program. However, Iza’s statement highlights

the inextricable link of her roles as a Latina mother and doctoral student, having to be both simultaneously. Further, she perceives that integration of such roles in the doctoral curriculum and classroom assignments as not always desired by professors.

Like Iza, Azul explained that her integrations of her Latina motherhood into classroom discussion and assignments is purposeful as she is aware that her maternal role remains salient. Azul stated, “He [her son] is always on my mind, and I have used my experiences as a Latina mother to influence my studies and areas of research” (p.5). Azul went on to further explain that her role as a Latina mother deeply influences her leadership style as well as her areas of research within Latinx community. Azul stated,

Within in my job, I am always looking for ways to work with Latino children, that’s the population I work with and a lot of it is re-mothering. My first year as a doc student I had to do a literature review and I didn’t know what to do it on. The professor gave us full range and I didn’t know what to do and my son kept coming up to me. I just wondered about using certain research tools working with Latino children and would that be something Latina mothers would be responsive to. And, if I wasn’t a Latina mother I don’t know if I would have considered it from that angle, I wouldn’t be aware of those implications. (p.5)

For Azul, her integration of being a Latina motherhood and doctoral student came by utilizing personal knowledge of the cultural role of Latina motherhood to inform her research. Azul further explained that she will also “bring up” that she is a mother and has a child in classroom discussion, “When we are in class sometimes I will bring them (her child) up in discussion and discuss the role as a mother and being a Latina, it’s important to me” (p.1). Azul’s role as a Latina mother is one that she highly values as a salient part of her identity, which

heavily influences the beliefs and perspectives she brings to classroom discussions and her research within the community.

Like Pilar, Angela, and Azul, Esperanza also discussed how the Latina motherhood role with being a doctoral student can also not be separated. Esperanza stated, “I don’t think you can separate the roles because I feel like those are part of who I am” (p.5). For Esperanza, her integration of roles is shown through engaging her children in aspects of her role as a doctoral student. Esperanza stated,

I try to involve them in it ...I let them look and see like this is what the WebEx meetings look like. I’ve let them look at some of the textbooks I’m reading. I read my paper to them the other day, so they know like this is what I’m working on. For me, as a Latina mother it’s important they feel included in every aspect of my life including me being a doctoral student. (p. 4)

Esperanza highlights her integration as a Latina mother and doctoral student is situated in cultural values as a Latina mother whereby she includes her children in all aspects of her life, including her doctoral journey. For these participants, they had no desire to operate in two different roles but rather worked to integrate both the Latina mother and doctoral student roles in their respective homes as well as in their respective academic experiences.

### *Recognizing the Invisibility of Latina Motherhood*

The second theme that emerged from the findings noted *Recognizing the Invisibility of Latina Motherhood*. Several participants discussed the various challenges that shape their experiences as Latina doctoral student mothers. The participants doctoral experience highlights maternal invisibility with lack of policy, curriculum, and support services acknowledging their motherhood and associated areas of needed supports. The first subtheme details the challenges of

Latina doctoral student mothers encounter due to the lack of understanding of Latina motherhood by educational stakeholders. The second subtheme addresses the limited faculty representation of Latina motherhood noted by participants. The third subtheme describes challenges lack of policy transparency and support services for Latina doctoral student mothers. The fourth subtheme discusses lack of presence of Latina motherhood within doctoral curriculum.

*Lack of acknowledged understanding of Latina motherhood by Faculty.* Several participants candidly discussed feeling Latina motherhood by school stakeholders was not fully acknowledged or understood. Pilar shared her frustration with the lack of acknowledgement and understanding by faculty, “They don’t see us. Why don’t we talk about the fact that we are Latinas, mothers, and are doc students in the program? It’s just we’re students in the program, but that’s not all of us and by not seeing the other parts what that is truly doing and what is it saying about that part of our self. I mean think about! I think about it!” (p. 5). Pilar maintained an active awareness and sentiment that her identity as both as a doctoral student and as a Latina mother were not being fully acknowledged or recognized. She further describes that because society views Latina motherhood as less significant, academia as a microcosm of society does as well. For Pilar, lack of acknowledgment and understanding is seen as disrespectful and an attempt to silence the largest and highest valued part of a Latina mother’s self. Pilar described her frustration in engaging with faculty in her academic department sharing,

I think they [modify] need to be more sensitive, they kind of still have that male privilege going on. That male white privilege still exists. Yes, we are living in this academic bubble that’s of a subculture of our world and you see it in our academic culture where we Latina moms aren’t really seen. We aren’t seen in a way that is like

valued or acknowledged even and it shouldn't be that way especially if we are expected to be innovative, but academia isn't, it's very outdated. (p. 5)

Pilar further went on to describe that she had experiences engaging with male professors who she felt not only exhibited a lack of understanding of Latina motherhood but actively conveyed antiquated and chauvinistic views that a mother's place is at home with her children.

Pilar stated, "You have some male professors (within her respective program), who are male chauvinist who definitely would think your place is at home and don't know why you're sitting there". Pilar's belief was based on perceived attitudes of a male professor for his lack of understanding of Latina mother's role in their family by highlighting an example of a qualifying comprehensive exam date that was given alongside a holiday. For her, this holiday is highly culturally regarded within her family as is her role in this family gathering. However, due to scheduling of this comprehensive exam, a doctoral program requirement for advancement to candidacy, her role and enjoyment for her children on this holiday was compromised. It is important to note that the date of the comprehensive exam was set by the department, not one faculty member. The aforementioned is not information that the participant was privy to.

Pilar further explained she felt the timing of the assigned comprehensive exam took time away from her enjoying the holiday, time she could never get back. Pilar emphasized how the current Covid-19 quarantine requirements did not allow for a large family gathering, time she sacrificed last year due to the comprehensive exam due date. Pilar also noted her frustration in learning of modifications for this year's exam were made due to Covid-19. Pilar, explaining her desire to understand the accommodations made for the pandemic but not for consideration of the prior year explained, "That was very wrong because they have adapted to this quarantine now...So to me that says everything you can make it work, you can make it fit. Why are you

doing that to an individual!?! Why does it take a pandemic!?!”. Pilar struggled with understanding what she experienced as a blatant disregard for her role as a mother. Like Pilar, Esperanza described an experience of disconnect when it came to understand her Latina motherhood by a male professor. She stated,

I know this faculty member with a doctoral degree and that person is very encouraging to me like you should go back to school different program. And, one day I was like you know kind of half joking, I said but I have small children. And he was like I have small children too. And, then he laughed, and he goes but I guess I kind of neglected them.

And, I was like yeah. (p.1)

Esperanza’s experience with a male professor, although light-hearted, highlights a lack of understanding of the cultural and societal implications of motherhood for Latinas who are doctoral students and the difference in responsibilities mothers and fathers may undertake while being a doctoral student. This highlights that academia may fail to understand and to acknowledge differences in gendered and cultural experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers. And as such, Latina doctoral student mothers may be expected to adapt to a doctoral environment that was not created for or with consideration of them. Both Pilar and Esperanza illustrate how one’s maternal role is not at the forefront of department and professional decisions.

Like Pilar, Azul described her feelings of a lack of genuine understanding of cultural implications of Latina motherhood despite attending a Hispanic serving institution with professors who are frequently in the presence of Latina mothers. Azul believes that the understanding held by professors within the department comes from literature at a superficial level. In describing faculty understanding of Latina mothers, Azul, stated, “They are not

immersed in the culture. You can study it, you can read it, you can learn it, but if you're not immersed in the culture and you're not acculturated to the culture you cannot understand the full complexity of it" (p. 1). Azul believes a false understanding of the culture of motherhood among Latinas exist among faculty without regard to the cultural differences in how motherhood is defined. Azul describes many times faculty with the best intentions feel they have a genuine understanding of cultural implications of Latina motherhood because they have read articles and are in close physical proximity to Latina mothers, but do not possess *an actual* understanding of culture of motherhood within Latino community. Like Azul, Iza described a lack of genuine understanding of Latina motherhood by faculty. She stated,

I don't know any faculty specifically that had children underage while they did their doctorate, no. They don't understand that because they got their doctorate before being a mother. Then the aspect of being a Latina when there are not that many Latina mothers in the program. I don't think they really understand the pressure of being a mother, and being a Latina, in the setting and trying to get all this done. (p. 9)

Azul and Iza statements describe that while they acknowledge professors may obtain some form of knowledge regarding Latina motherhood, they overall feel that it is not adequate or encompasses the genuine experience of being a Latina doctoral student mother. This is likely because some participant's perceived that most faculty did not have children as doctoral students.

Additionally, Azul explained she felt a lack of understanding on the level of effort and hard work she exhibits as a Latina doctoral student mother. In describing what she wanted professors to understand about her in her role as a Latina mother and doctoral student, Azul stated, "I worked harder for this degree than my fellow cohort members because I not only had to make time for my education, I had to make time for my child. The effort behind this degree was

2x that of a non-parent student and especially a non-Latina parent student” (p. 5). Azul’s statement illustrates that Latina mothers work harder to earn a doctoral degree because they have to expound their energy in two facets; as a doctoral student and as a Latina mother. Similarly, Angela stated, “That as a Latina mother, I find myself, taking on more responsibilities to maintain a positive home environment. In my role as a doctoral student, I think there is a need to prove that achieving a doctoral degree as a Latina mother is possible” (p. 1). Angela’s statement describes how she feels a cultural responsibility to maintain a peaceful home for their children and family, while simultaneously intrinsically motivated to prove their capabilities and to be understood in a doctoral setting.

*Limited Latina motherhood representation among faculty.* Several participants discussed experiencing limited representation of Latina motherhood faculty that shaped how they negotiated their own Latina motherhood academic identities through their doctoral journey. Pilar shared her own views on Latina motherhood faculty representation, “So even though there might be minimal representation of Latinas, they don’t grasp the experience of motherhood, because motherhood is very specific to what you’re doing and being” (p. 9). For Pilar, she did not deem the minimal representation of Latina faculty as inclusively modeling an integration of cultural Latina motherhood and academia. Pilar emphasizes the uniqueness of being a Latina mother and classifies it exclusively to the practice of doing and being, “And until you’re a mom you don’t realize what moms go through and the things there obligated to” (p. 5).

Iza, like Pilar, disclosed similar sentiments in regard to limited Latina motherhood represented within faculty that could serve as model for successful integration of academic and mother roles stating, “There’s very few. There’s not a lot. No. Less than a handful, less than half a handful actually. There’s not a lot of Latinas in general, and not any mothers. And, I think that

is something the university needs to change. Having mentors that look like you, understand the culture of being a Latina mother is important especially at the doctoral level” (p. 15). Like Esperanza, Iza acknowledged limited Latina motherhood representation among faculty stating, “When I think about the faculty that I know exists then Latina mothers are not representative of larger faculty members” (p. 6). Pilar, Iza, and Esperanza’s thoughts on lack of collective representation of Latinas contributes to an even fewer presence of Latina mothers in the academy. For the participants, the lack of Latina mothers represented in faculty further challenged the opportunity to view models of integration of academic and cultural Latina mother roles.

Azul, in conveying whether she believed Latina motherhood was represented in her respective faculty stated, “For the department that I am in no. Absolutely not” (p. 6). Azul further explained that although she did not have exposure to Latina motherhood as a doctoral student, she did previously at the master’s level. Azul explained feeling lucky having Latina faculty who were also mothers at her master’s level, as it helped her to see herself as a Latina mother as capable of not only earning a doctoral degree but balancing the roles of Latina motherhood in academia. Azul stated,

I got really lucky to know them in my master’s program but they’re not there while I am in my doctoral program. One left last year I believe and so in observing them and how they were able to balance being a faculty, being a mother, and mentor it was really awesome for me to see because it made me realize I can do this. Um, they model the life of Latina motherhood academia balance I was looking for. So just realizing that this is possible was driving force for me to move onto the next level of doctoral studies. (p.7)

Azul’s description of “luck” in experiencing access to faculty who model Latina motherhood highlight the limited opportunities and access of faculty who model Latina motherhood. Having

exposure to faculty who are Latina mothers at a master's level allowed her to view a model of the integration of Latina motherhood and academia, a model she had not previously seen. Azul in explaining how beneficial it was for her to have faculty who were Latina mothers further stated, "Yes, it really did help because I honestly didn't have that image before and seeing it like opened my eyes to it because I guess I hadn't thought about it before because I never saw it" (p.7). For Azul, she experienced a lack of exposure to Latina faculty who were mothers; therefore, did not have an image of successful integration of Latina motherhood and academia. When Azul was finally exposed to Latina mother faculty at a master's level, this proved vital in helping her to form a vision of integration of Latina motherhood and an academic identity for herself. Azul's experience highlights the importance of Latina motherhood in faculty for Latina doctoral student mothers who can serve as a model for possibilities of academic and Latina mother identity integration.

*Lack of Policy/Procedure Transparency.* Several participants in the study discussed a lack of policy transparency within their programs. Pilar stated "Most challenging thing about the doctoral program is there is no directive. There is really vague guidance in the program. And, if you don't know anyone that has been in the program it's even more difficult. Because as mom" (p.4). Pilar went on to discuss that a lack of clear and transparent policy further added to the struggles of being the first in her family to pursue a doctorate degree. Pilar stated,

But if you have had someone, say your parents had the degree then they know the ropes and they can help you, but I don't. I guess I am the only one at this point that has gone further than a master's so who can I rely on?! And, then at the school there hasn't been that type of the guidance. Even in some of the classes, you self-taught yourself. Other students, mostly White have relationships with certain professors and they know the

information. Or, they knew someone in the program who tells them this or that or gives them something. While others, and I am going to say myself and few Latinas mothers have to learn for ourselves and just figure it out. (p. 4)

For Pilar, a lack of transparency of procedures in the doctoral program were further complicated by lack of personal social capital of family that had attained doctoral degree. Additionally, Pilar's statement highlights difficulties for Latina doctoral student mothers in regard to access information relevant to doctoral studies and academic relationships with faculty and peers. To mitigate such experiences, Pilar built relationships with other Latina doctoral mothers to gain essential information related to the doctoral program. Pilar in describing her relationships with other Latina mothers in the program stated, "There are a few Latina mothers in the program, and we help each other out with questions we have or clarification with assignments or even now with the dissertation process. They are my go to, and I know I can go to them when I have question and don't have anyone else to ask" (p.1). Similarly, Iza described the difficulties she experienced due to lack of policy transparency, "I think the most challenging part of the doctoral process is that they don't tell you the process of what you need to do" (p. 3). Iza further described the challenges she faced in accessing information on the various phases throughout a doctoral program. Iza, stated

You were supposed to get it in the handbook, but the handbook is outdated. But it seems to me every person I talk to that was not a Latina, which were more White people more than anyone... White women more specifically than anyone else, they knew what the next steps in the process was but the rest of us didn't. If you're a Latina mother, you can't always be at the school or stay after class for an hour and chat it up with the faculty you know?! I need to get home to my kids. (p.5)

Pilar and Iza both experienced difficulties accessing information in regard to their respective doctoral program. Iza's statement suggests that for Latina mothers they may not have the ability to build relationships with faculty that allows access to information through being on campus or after class due to the obligations they have as a mother. In addition, they both make specific mention that they perceive fellow White students to have relationships with faculty that allow them access to doctoral information. Pilar's and Iza's statements illustrate the importance of making doctoral policy both clear to understand and to access for all students, particularly Latina mothers.

Like Pilar and Iza, Esperanza recognized the benefits of access to relationships to help understand the doctoral process. Esperanza, describes how working at the university and being an administrator has helped her to understand the doctoral process. She stated, "I think back to be a master's student I was coming and going to classes, I wouldn't engage in the campus at all outside of just going to class. And, so because of my administrator role I know that is also something that non-traditional students are doing. I can see I know more about resources because I work at the university and because I have worked there so long, and it is possible that another student might not know" (p. 5). Esperanza recognized her ability to have access to knowledge resulted from her employment with university, familiarity with policy, relationships with faculty, and resources that other students may not have. This suggests that her access to this knowledge and relationships were due to her on-campus job.

Iza, in describing the difficulty of obtaining information on doctoral policy and procedures stated, "It's like its top secret and were working for the CIA with classified information. This cannot be this difficult. We kind of got to figure it out for ourselves. It's that bootstrap mentality. Well I figured it out and you got to figure it out, which I don't think it's

right...And, some advisors are so global, we are not at that level. Can you speak a little more Latina Doctoral Moms for dummies” (p. 3). Iza’s experience represents the frustration that comes with her difficulties in academic culture that limits access of information to some, lacks transparency, and overall difficulty in attaining information without developing relationships with faculty. Furthermore, Iza’s statement may also represent how Latina doctoral student mothers view faculty knowledge as superior to their own and desire communication that they perceive as more culturally inclusive to their Latina motherhood role.

*Lack of Support Services for Latina mothers.* All participants discussed support services currently not offered within their departments/university that would be helpful in the doctoral journey as Latina doctoral student mothers. Participants described supports such as childcare, mentorship, and inclusivity of acknowledging their mothering status within the syllabus. In describing additional support in regard to childcare Azul stated,

I have seen other Latina mothers, in fact I have one in my cohort she has a five-year-old and she is pregnant herself. I think if you don’t have family support with childcare, which is big for Latina mothers, it’s impossible. I know it’s impossible but having some type of babysitting services where they can attend classes or make it possible for single Latina mothers who have children that they need babysitters [for] to attend classes, but they don’t have anyone around. (p. 3)

Azul emphasizes the important role family serves for Latina doctoral student mothers in providing care for children when they are engaging in doctoral studies. Additionally, Azul highlights that doctoral studies for Latina doctoral student mothers essentially becomes impossible, if support from family in caregiving of their child is absent. In describing how the department/university could support student mothers with regard to childcare Azul stated,

“Creating opportunity for childcare, childcare financial aid, or at the very least information about resources in the community for childcare would be helpful” (p. 4). Like Azula, Pilar describes a lack of support in consideration to caregiving:

What helps me is my mother, because she watches my children. I wouldn't be able to do it if it wasn't for her helping me with my kids... The department of (Name of Program) is non-supportive in that way. They have no consideration; you're going to do this there's no consideration well what about childcare and it's not like the school offers any assistance with that. (p. 5)

Pilar's and Azul's statements highlight how Latina doctoral student mothers face difficulties regarding childcare within their respective departments who have little support or no supportive resources for them. This suggests that departments, academia at large perhaps, do not acknowledge the identity of mothers in their respective doctoral students.

Esperanza, in her role as a university administrator has acknowledged the need for support when it comes to childcare as she stated, “As someone who has worked at the university for a long time. I've been an advocate for the university having a daycare and recognize the need for childcare. I would be in support of that” (p. 4). In her role as an administrator, she acknowledges an awareness of the university's need to support childcare for its students and describes that although it has been a topic of discussion to some extent, it [the university] has yet to implement support in this area.

For Pilar, the lack of mentorship and guidance that specially integrates her mother and student identities could be mediated by support groups that focus on her mother and student roles and the opportunity to socialize with other Latina doctoral student mothers. Pilar stated, “I am thinking more opportunities to socialize with other students who are in the program and have

children. I think socials where people in the program who have children can talk about how they manage those roles and compare notes to support each other” (p 3.). For Pilar, the ability to establish social networks of support with other Latina doctoral student mothers would allow her to feel better understood in her role as a mother and doctoral student; a support that she unfortunately is currently not experiencing.

Iza also conveyed a need for additional support and opportunities to discuss their cultural role as a Latina mother and a doctoral student. Iza stated,

I think there could be more for Latina mothers, something about sessions how to mediate family and in traditional setting because that’s one of the things my friends and I talk about. We are doing our own practices within our own families because we have that background we know how to do that there are people who don’t know how to balance and integrate. And, I think it has to be another Latina faculty that does that (conduct education session)...it cannot be another Anglo person that does that. Not because I don’t like them or whatever but because they’re Anglo and don’t understand the culture setting. It also has to be someone similar to the people in the program maybe another Latina mother that worked herself up in the world. The only way to bond is if we have something in common. (p. 5)

Iza recognizes the need for additional opportunities to engage and to discuss how to integrate the roles of both Latina motherhood and doctoral student as important in balancing the roles. Iza specifying the need for a Latina mother faculty to lead the discussion of balancing the roles of Latina motherhood and doctoral studies speaks to desire to be understood, validated, and feel commonality with other Latina mothers who

can model doctoral attainment. It also suggests that cultural differences are prevalent in motherhood. Moreover, it brings visibility to the Latina doctoral student experience.

Lastly, all participants described a lack of acknowledgment of motherhood for student parents in the syllabus. Azul stated,

I don't think it takes account for Latina mothers or just mothers, in general. I think that at the doctoral level that they need to integrate that into their syllabus. Even just having a little snippet saying, 'we understand we have parents, that have children, that get sick, uh let us know if there is something we can do, something to that affect. They don't address that at all'. (p. 6)

Like Azul, Esperanza in describing the syllabus inclusion on parental status stated, "There have been other statements about self-care, mental health, but I cannot think of anything I have seen specific to be a parent in the syllabus" (p. 4). Similarly, Pilar and Azul further note there was no explicit acknowledgment of mothering roles as it relates to potential issues that may arise throughout the semester. Pilar stated "No, not at all". While Azul stated, "Absolutely not, I have never seen that in there (within syllabus) but I know they do include that at other universities" (p. 6). All the participants highlighted a lack of inclusion of the doctoral student mother status that discusses circumstances that may arise within the syllabus.

*Lack of Latina Motherhood in Curriculum.* Participants described feeling a lack of integration of Latina motherhood into the curriculum. The lack of Latina motherhood in the curriculum was described as both a lack of integration of their personal Latina motherhood identities within assignments/discussion and lack of inclusion of learning materials from the cultural aspect of Latina mothers. Pilar in describing how academia separates her roles as a Latina mother and doctoral student stated, "They [faculty and department stakeholders] need to

be more sensitive about that integration in the classroom. Yes, we are living in this academic bubble that's kind of a subculture of our world and you see it in our academic culture whereas Latina moms aren't really seen" (p. 6). Like Azul, Iza described a lack of integration of Latina motherhood in the curriculum. Iza stated,

They want you to connect things to whatever the book saying, whatever chapters. And you're connecting stuff but you're connecting the conversation based on your experiences but it's not inclusive of Latina motherhood. Professors won't make that connection, they're just doing this chapter and this chapter. I see it that way. The latitude it does give you, and it's a very small latitude from the basis of your perspective experiences but often they [faculty] don't want that unless you're in multi-cultural class. (p. 7)

Iza's statement illustrates a belief that classroom instruction is filtered to make connections to reading materials in particular ways that may not directly relate to or pay respect to their lived cultural experience of Latina motherhood. Esperanza further describes a lack of gendered and cultural inclusion in foundational educational readings. She stated, "Nobody ever talks about Latina motherhood; I will tell you that for a fact. Most of the writing is for men, um very few from women, other than [Scholar's Name] who is the guru but it's not even coming from her cultural perspective. I wouldn't be able to tell you if she was Asian, she was from a tribal Native American culture, a mother, not a mother... I don't see it has a lot of her ethnicity or culture which is important" (p. 7). For Iza and Pilar, their academic experience in the classroom did not foster an environment that integrates their Latina motherhood or cultural role of motherhood as personal connections to learning materials. These experiences also highlight the cultural

influence of their identities as inextricably linked to participants as both mothers and doctoral students.

Iza further discussed that while the writing style narrative of testimonio exist to highlight the lived experiences of Latin American women, it is not included in curriculum. Esperanza stated, “Now there is people who do testimonios. I think that particular part, but we don’t talk about testimonios in our program. Um, some professors do but not very many. That is inclusive of our culture as Latina mothers, but we don’t do that in our program. They (the department) don’t have you write a paper based on a testimonio” (p. 13). Esperanza’s experience within doctoral curriculum suggest that there is a lack of inclusion of culturally integrated methods of research that seek to honor Latina mothers lived experiences.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study sought to gain insight into the doctoral experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers. The previous chapters discussed the design of the study, the theoretical framework and relevant literature on the issue as well as the methodological approach and the findings of the study. This chapter will detail conclusions that have been drawn from the findings with regards to the research questions and theoretical framework, the implications of findings, and recommendations for future research. First, I will provide a brief overview of the study.

### *Brief Overview of Study*

Latinas collectively, continue to be underrepresented in doctoral degree attainment with limited research that specifically explores the experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers suggesting that further studies are needed to gain insight into their doctoral experiences. The purpose of this study was to explore Latina doctoral student mother's academic experiences as they negotiate their cultural identity as a doctoral student and mother within a South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution. The overarching research questions that guided this study were 1.) What challenges, if any, do Latina doctoral students who are mothers face balancing their academic roles of a doctoral student and their cultural roles of being a mother?

Secondary research questions included:

- 2). What ways, if any, do Latina doctoral student mothers negotiate their identities as Latina mothers and as doctoral students?
- 3). What role, if any, does acknowledgement by university faculty (professors, advisors, and other university officials) of their status as a mother impact a Latina doctoral mothers doctoral learning experience?

The theoretical framework that guided this study was Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg, and Tarule (1997) *Women's Way of Knowing* theory focusing specifically to understand how the dual roles of Latina doctoral students who are mothers negotiate their experiences within a doctoral program setting. I included an extensive review of literature pertinent to Latina culture and Latina Mothers, Latina doctoral students, and doctoral student mothers. To be fair, it is important to note that several factors can influence a Latina doctoral student mothers experience, this study focused on understanding the negotiation of doctoral academic identity and cultural identity as a Latina mother. While research exist on the experiences of Latina doctoral students collectively, limited research exist that explores the specific doctoral experiences of Latina student mothers.

A constructivist view (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) framed this study. Five participants took part in this study, all participants were exclusively from one South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution. Participants self-identified as Latina, were enrolled in a doctoral program within said South Texas Hispanic Serving Institution, and have at least one child under the age of 18.

Table 2. Participants' Demographics

<i>Name</i>	<i># of Children</i>	<i>Anticipated Year of Graduation</i>
<b>Azul</b>	1	2021
<b>Iza</b>	3	2022
<b>Pilar</b>	3	2021
<b>Angela</b>	1	2022
<b>Esperanza</b>	3	2023

\*Pseudonyms

Data were collected through online semi-structured interviews that lasted approximately 35-90 minutes. Ancillary data were collected from participant responses on a demographic profile and three online guided questions which further inquired about the challenges of doctoral student mothers, faculty understanding of the cultural implications of Latina motherhood, and desired support services. After I transcribed the interview, data were analyzed through content analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data were coded and categorized by similar or repeated ideas, or categories. Member checking, peer debriefing, and reflexive journal were employed to ensure the trustworthiness. Participants electronically received a copy of their respective transcript and were encouraged to clarify any statements or interpretations made.

### *Analysis and Discussion*

What follows is a discussion of the themes that emerged from data analysis and theoretical framework utilized to frame this study. *Securing and Search to Balance Cultural Roles of Motherhood and Being a Doctoral Student*, *Negotiating Latina Mother and Doctoral Student Identities*, *Institutional Challenges of Maternal Invisibility and Lack of Support Services for Latina doctoral student mothers* were common themes that emerged. What follows is an exploration of the themes that emerged from data analysis in relation to the research questions of this study.

*What challenges, if any, do Latina doctoral students who are mothers face balancing their academic roles of a doctoral student and their cultural role of being a mother?*

Securing and Searching for Support to Balance Cultural Roles of Motherhood and Being a Doctoral Student

A repeated challenge for Latina doctoral student mothers was finding a balance between their cultural roles of being both a Latina mother and roles of being a doctoral student. Uniquely, the

idea of balance in their roles as a doctoral student and cultural roles of being a Latina mother occurred even before their decision to ultimately pursue a doctorate. For these Latina mothers, balancing these roles was not an individual decision but instead one that occurred as a collective family decision. This study reiterated previous findings about the importance placed on family; defined as *familismo*, a universal notion that gives strong reference to emphasis on family goals, support and the desire to maintain the family institution above all else (Bardis, 1959). *Familismo* is noted as the single most important institution for Latino families that places an individual's family above the needs or desires of self (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987); a core cultural value (Marin & Marin, 1991). Critical to finding a balance in their Latina mother and doctoral roles was to secure support from the respective spouse *prior* to their decision to pursue doctoral studies. Importantly, before the Latina mothers even became doctoral students the cultural implications of their motherhood role as central to the family resulted in their decision to pursue the doctorate to be a collective family decision. This further supports the previous research that situates family as a core cultural value.

Latina mothers play a vital role in the family system where gender roles and expectations define Latina women's identity and are governed by the term *mariansmo* (Castillo & Cano, 2007; Niemann, 2004). According to Gil and Vasquez (1996), in considering Latina gender roles the ideal woman is dependent, self-sacrificing, submissive, and devoted to her children and husband above all else. Latinas show support to family through bearing and raising children, taking care of the household, and providing emotional support to family and when they fail to meet these demands are often considered in a negative manner as a traitor or *mailiche* (Arciniega et al., 2008; Cypress, 1991; Mirande, 1985). Castillo (1995) describes that Latinas who do not fulfill perceived Latina gender roles or place their personal career or education ahead of her

husband or family needs are at risk as being viewed as traitors and place themselves in a position for family alienation. The findings of this study corroborated the aforementioned research.

Even though the participants noted several sources of support, it critical to note that most participants delayed their admission into doctoral programs by years due to the need to secure spousal support and wait for the “right time” based on the age of their child/children. Husbands of doctoral student mothers were frequently cited as a primary form of support during their doctoral studies in terms of being a primary financial earner and/or providing care for child during doctoral studies (Eisenbach, 2013; Espino et al., 2010; Lynch, 2008). Interestingly, participants within this study did not mention financial support from their respective spouse during doctoral studies as a factor in pursuing doctoral studies, all participants noted engaging in full-time employment. Iza, Pilar, and Esperanza discussed delaying doctoral entry for over a decade when they and their spouse collectively determined it to be the “right time” for children and family. This finding supports Gilligan’s (1982) work in female moral development, whereby she described women’s socialization to nurture others often at their own expense and make decisions in ways that do no harm to others termed as *ethic of care*. Rich (1977) further describes how women take on the duties of motherhood as a priority in their life, one that supersede all other aspects, desires, and goals she has for herself; a sentiment that was shared by a majority of the participants. Azul described that her husband provides support in providing care to her child while she is away for doctoral studies, while mentioning her belief that his care is not comparable to the level of care she and only she can provide for her children. According to Hays (2006), *intensive mothering* incorporates the notion of caregiving that only a mother can provide and includes putting the needs of her child above her own.

While participants did not explicitly discuss challenges with regard to academics, they instead discussed the challenges in terms of their motherhood roles. Often times discussions centered on determining who will provide care for children during time away by securing spousal support, securing other sources of support remain of significant importance (e.g., immediate family), and experiencing guilt for time spent away from their child/children to pursue doctoral studies. The challenges noted by the participants supports previous research (Brown & Watson, 2010; Eisenbach, 2013; Lynch 2008; Trepal et al.; 2014, Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004) that indicates that for Latina doctoral student mothers their motherhood roles remains at the forefront of their identity and even when they became a doctoral student, they never operate outside their motherhood identity; as such, the balance becomes difficult at times. For participants, even the decision to pursue a doctorate is not rooted in selfishness but instead an un-selfish act that occurs collective as a family decision and motivated in modeling re-defining gender roles and the possibility for educational achievement for their child. As such, the challenge of finding balance for Latina doctoral student relies on their ability to secure support from spouses and other sources of support (e.g., family, colleagues, peers who identify as Latina mothers) to meet the need for child care, connect with others they deem like themselves, and to understand their cultural Latina motherhood and doctoral roles.

*Support from others.* Latina doctoral student mothers utilized support from others to find balance within their Latina motherhood role and academic doctoral roles. Participants described the priority of securing support for child caretaking of their child/ren when they are away with an emphasis on care from a spouse or family member. Several participants discussed in addition to securing support form spouse also seeking and securing support from their family for child-care taking prior to finalizing decision to pursue a doctorate. Esperanza described that after reaching

agreement with her spouse about the “right time” to pursue a doctorate knowing she had family support solidified her decision to apply for doctoral program. Like Esperanza, Pilar also discussed the vital role of family support stating, “What helps me is my mother because she watches my kids, I wouldn’t be able to do it (doctoral studies) without her helping me with the kids”. She went on to convey her beliefs that caregiving has changed where Latina mothers now are not solely at home due to having a grandmother that can and is willing to provide caretaking support for their child/ren noting “its huge in Latino culture”. This supports previous research that highlights the importance of emotional support of mothers for Latina doctoral students (Gandara, 1986). This study provides unique perspective on the desire and vital role for Latina doctoral student mothers to secure family support, desiring it especially from their mother, to provide care for their children when they must be away for doctoral student related commitments. Securing multiple sources of support to pursue and persist in their doctoral program supports previous research that posits that Latinos utilize family as a social support to meet various personal and professional obligations (Sabogal et al., 1987). The aforementioned ultimately suggests *familismo* be viewed as a living value system utilized for means of support and manipulated for accomplishing multiple goals and serving as a motivation by Latino/a’s (Smith-Morris et al., 2012).

*Support from supervisors and colleagues.* Participants also described seeking support from supervisors and colleagues to balance their roles as Latina mothers and doctoral students. Azul discussed the support she received from her supervisor, who was also a Latina mother, who had encouraged her to pursue her doctorate. In addition, she describes her colleagues as understanding her mother and doctoral student roles and offering her support at the workplace (covering shift and employment duties) in order to meet the demands of both her roles.

Esperanza also discussed how she was purposeful in securing support from her supervisors prior to applying and seeking out others in similar employment positions who she knew were mothers and in the doctoral program. Esperanza in explaining the importance of finding support to balance her roles as a mother and doctoral student stated, “I wanted to connect with that group (Latina mothers within her work space and in the doctoral program), the people that I could really relate to and could relate to what I was going to go through and could help me”. Esperanza conveyed the importance of having a support system within her place of employment that understands her role as a Latina doctoral student mother and can provide her support in negotiating those roles. Such findings support the vital role supervisors and co-workers play in the support system for Latina doctoral student mothers.

*Connecting to Other Latina Mothers in Academia.* Participants discussed a desire to make connections with other Latina doctoral student mothers for support and understanding as a means to find balance. Latina doctoral students often find difficulty integrating their cultural expectations, values, and norms into their roles as doctoral students (Anchor & Morales, 1990, Anzaldúa, 1987, Castellanos, 1979). Similar but on a different plane, doctoral mothers face challenges as they seek to navigate society cultural expectations of motherhood and meet the demands of doctoral study that often fails to acknowledge the role of student mothers (Eisenbach, 2013, Holm et al. 2013, Lynch, 2008). The aforementioned findings were corroborated in this study. All of the participants in this study discussed a desire to connect with their Latina doctoral student mother peers for socialization and support. The desire to connect with other Latina doctoral student mothers to aid finding a balance in their role is indicative of the challenges Latina doctoral mothers face in managing their motherhood roles with their academic roles. One could argue that this is also an attempt to create a visible system of support

to be able to mediate challenges with their salient identity of motherhood not being evident in doctoral studies. Latinas who attempt to retain cultural identities from their respective communities of origin, while creating academic ones within new academic environment “wrestle with the reality of living on the margins of two worlds” (Gonzalez et al., 2001, p. 574). Anzaldúa (1987) describes the tension and conflict created for Latinas when torn between the needs of her family culture and the demands or beliefs the Anglo world when they seek to enter spaces predominantly held by Whites (e.g., doctoral programs). The aforementioned previous findings were corroborated in this study as participant actively sought other Latina mothers as a form of support.

*Dealing with guilt being away from child/ren.* Participants described the challenge of experiencing guilt in their roles as Latina doctoral student mothers when they had to be away from their children due to doctoral student obligations. Such guilt can be indicative of the priority of Latina mothers even in their pursuit of a doctorate. For Latinas, pressures to meet traditional cultural gender norms regarding motherhood, retain cultural value of familismo and marianismo further provide challenge to find balance for Latinas who step out of their traditional motherhood roles (Arciniega et al., 2008; Cano & Cano, 2007) was evident in this study. Pilar described her frustration with the doctoral written comprehensive exam being administered over Easter, not due to academic rigor but instead to the time it took away from her children on a holiday and the guilt she experienced as a result of it. Azul also described the challenge and guilt she feels being away from her child during class and not able to assist him with his homework and provide him the level of care to her child she would like to. The participants experienced guilt related to their self-perception within their motherhood role, that they made a decision to pursue a doctorate, and how their decision has influenced their child/ren and family. The

participants' guilt is reflective of the importance they place on their role as mothers as central to not only their families but their own identities. This finding supports previous research that asserts doctoral student mothers experience difficulty "switching roles" as they described being pulled between their roles of doctoral student and being mothers (Brown & Watson, 2010). Additionally, these doctoral student mothers felt immense personal pressure to maintain responsibilities within their motherhood roles and as a result experienced guilt when they perceived they had failed their duties as a student, mother and/or wife. This finding supports the work of Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) who found the process to develop intersecting identities especially difficult for women who retain primary responsibilities for meeting the ongoing needs of her child(ren) which can be both immensely psychologically and physically trying.

*What ways, if any, do Latina doctoral student mothers negotiate their identities as Latina mothers and as doctoral students?*

#### Negotiating Latina Motherhood and Doctoral Student Identities

The participants discussed several ways in which they negotiate their cultural Latina motherhood roles with their academic roles as doctoral students. All the participants conveyed a belief that they did not, nor did they believe it was possible to ever fully separate their motherhood roles from their doctoral student roles. Instead, participants discussed how they negotiate these roles by clearly defining what successful mothering is for them, serving as a role model for education to change cycles of generational poverty, managing the perceived impact their doctoral student role had on their child, and desiring increased representation and connection with Latina mother faculty. All forms of motivation that situated their identity as mothers as salient throughout the doctoral journey.

*Defining Successful Motherhood for Latina Doctoral Student Mothers.* All of the participants were able to describe ways in which they define successful mothering. Participants defined successful mothering by cultivating a child that is independent and self-sufficient, serving as a role model for education, and raising a child that is respectful, has a social consciousness and a “good person”. Participants discussed mothering with emphasis on independence and self-sufficiency regarding finances and the ability to financially support oneself. For Azul, Iza, and Pilar the emphasis on mothering towards personal and financial independence stemmed from both childhood experiences viewing family financial dependency parents and/or growing up in poverty. This supports previous research that found that Latina doctoral students who grew up in families considered low socio-economic status were highly motivated to pursue a doctorate as means to advance and overcome poverty (Gandara, 1982). Many of the participants described early childhood experiences of viewing parents or grandparents in relationships that prescribed to traditional Latino/a roles where Latina is homemaker and provides care for children, while the husband works outside the home to primarily financially contribute to the family. Latino families have long been characterized as being traditional and guided by patriarchal values and systems where Latina mothers have specific roles, where the husband takes on sole role of breadwinner and the Latina mother as full-time homemaker (Ortiz, 1995; Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). Participants described their belief that mothering their child to making choices independently would not only aid in their completion of school but ultimately yield personal and financial independence that would allow them to circumvent operating within traditional Latino/a gender norms.

All of the participants described the importance of modeling educational attainment for their child as a means to overcome generational poverty. Several participants described their

experience with generational role-modeling by their mothers or grandmothers and the influence it had in how they define successful mothering for themselves. Foundational research by Gandara (1982) and Anchor and Morales (1990) found role-modeling by mothers to be among the most important factors that influence Latina doctoral achievement, a finding that was corroborated in this study. Similarly, Belenkly et al. (1986) describes received knowledge as a position in which women feel confident in their ability to absorb truths they receive from others. Many women model their ideas and ways of knowing based on the truth they receive from those they perceive to be credible authorities on knowledge, such as family members. The aforementioned was evident in this study as several participants described their mothers and/or grandmothers modeling pride in their motherhood role, making motherhood a priority in their life, and modeling hard work as way to advance and escape poverty. Participants described viewing their mother's role in the family structure adhering traditional Latina gender roles of financial dependency on their husbands, taking on primary responsibility for caretaking, and being a traditional housewife. For the participants, viewing their mother's traditional role served as a catalyst to re-define gender roles for themselves as mothers within their own marital and family systems to serve as a role model for their children for educational attainment. This suggests that participants are cognizant of the crucial role that their role as a mother play in modeling educational achievement for their child(ren). While participants described many challenges as aforementioned in the previous section, serving as a role-model for their child/children was described as the greatest motivation for persistence to earn a doctorate to exemplify educational attainment for their children. For all of the participants, the act of role-modeling as a mother for their child was passed down from their own maternal figures and highly influenced how they perceive successful mothering. As such for the participants,

generational role-modeling as a mother for their children serves as the most vital factor in personal motivation and persistence towards doctoral completion.

*Raising a respectful child.* Several participants described the importance of mothering a child to show respect. *Respeto* acts as a cultural tool for Latino families that provides members of the family with knowledge of appropriate and expected boundaries (Calzada, 2010). And, as such for Latina doctoral student mothers, mothering their child to be respectful to others served as way to measure of their success in their mothering role. When asked about what comprises successful Latina mothering to her, Angela stated, “They are going to be respectful of themselves and respectful of others. You know those things are important”. Azul described how respect could be shown, “Paying attention when people talk to you, following rules that are set and not going against that, only asking guidance when you really need it”. Azul’s description of showing respect reflects being alert and accepting rules wholly and asking questions only if urgent assistance is needed. Azul’s statement highlights how cultural views of respect for Latinos often relate to agreement without resistance or question. The findings support the work of Santiago-Rivera, Azara, Santiago-Rivera, and Arredondo (2002) who describe a golden rule of *no faltarle el respeto* (not disrespecting) parents or elders with emphasis for individuals who are considered authority figures. In addition, Arredondo (2002) found Latinas display reflective behaviors of obedience to individuals of authority and not going against or challenging authority figures to avoid being perceived as defiant results in Latina mothers not asserting themselves or their views. This supports the findings of this study in regard to mothering with an emphasis on *respeto*. And, the findings support similar findings of the foundational research of Belenky et al. (1986) that explained the position of *Silence* described as where women ascribed to the submission of those with perceived power or authority whom they believe must be obeyed.

Therefore, authority figures are sought as a source of dependency to provide guidance as participants lacked belief, they were able to remember and take appropriate action which is also supported within this study where Latina doctoral student mothers parented their children to view authority figures as worthy of their full attention and respect. This study supports prior research that highlights the of core cultural values of Latina mothers as Latina doctoral student mothers placed importance on mothering their children to show *respeto*, a core cultural value, and indicative of the significance it holds with how Latina doctoral student mothers operate.

*Raising a child that is “good person”*. All the participants discussed the importance of mothering their child to be a “good person”. For Latina mothers, a positive aspect of the cultural value *marianismo* includes displaying compassion and generosity through which she attains being viewed as sacred and honorable (Gil & Vasquez, 1996). Angela described the struggles and pressure she and other Latina mothers feel to instill certain values in their children which has influenced her perspectives on social justice issues and leadership style. All the participants described how being a doctoral student has further exposed them to the importance of social justice, social consciousness, and “being a good person”. Similarly, Iza highlights how she negotiates her Latina motherhood and academic doctoral student roles by discussing social justice issues explored within classroom to build social consciousness within her children. Iza stated, “They hear me and my husband having these debates about privilege and having privilege in this society...They hear that discussion and they ask, what does that mean? And, we will tell them” (p. 6). For Iza, incorporating and explaining discussions with her family on power and privilege in society further allows her children to explore the topic of privilege in society to develop a social consciousness and incorporate the knowledge she has obtained as a doctoral student into her motherhood role. These findings further support the work of Stevens (1973), Gil

and Vasquez (1996), and Castillo and Cano (2007) that highlight the cultural gender role of Latinas in being humble, virtuous, and spiritually superior to men.

Belenkly et al. (1986) describes constructive knowing to represents the knowers integration of self, mind, and voice and as such, women in this role are described as immensely self-aware regarding their thoughts, feelings, moods, and desires. And, women within this position are both concerned with others while balancing their own life roles. In addition, women were described as encompassing desire to find voice and make “a difference to other people and the world” even in the smallest way an individual can be engaged in the construction of knowledge (Belenkly et al., 1986, p. 133). The emphasis on successful mothering focused on raising a child to be a “good person” influenced by both academic discussions surrounding social justice issues and cultural influences of *mariansmo* highlights integration of cultural motherhood and academic roles. This type of integration—evident in this study—can be described as reflective of high biculturalism and aligns with Latina doctoral student who are “integrators” and able to find ways to balance their dual identities as students and cultural expectations of being a Latina daughter (Espinoza, 2010).

*Perceived Impact on Child.* All the participants discussed how they believed their status as a doctoral student impacted their child/ren. More specifically, several participants conveyed how they believed their time away from their children due to their doctoral studies negatively impacted their child. Yet, participants also acknowledged that the overall, long term impact would be positive to display high educational attainment possibilities. Rich (1977) explained motherhood as a natural part of the narrative women are given in society to undertake the sacred calling of childbearing and childrearing, putting prioritizing the needs of child even at the expense of self-desires and goals. Stearney’s (1994) description of motherhood is one where the

biological act of childbearing entails an immediate social relationship of protection, nurturing, and intense selflessness for child. Additionally, cultural norms of *marianismo* for Latina mothers place importance on meeting children's needs thru self-sacrifice and failure to do so puts a Latina mother at risk of being seen as a traitor or *maliche*, one thought to turns against traditional cultural norms for personal benefits (Arciniega et al., 2008; Arredondo, 2002). Participants in this study described the time commitment challenges of being a doctoral student and how they negotiated being away from their child by focusing on the long-term positive outcomes of their doctoral attainment. Many of the participants described delaying their doctoral entry due to concerns of how it would impact their child. The importance Latina doctoral student mothers place on the impact they perceive their doctoral student status has on their children further exemplifies how their motherhood role is central to their identity, serves as a significant factor in their decision of when to pursue doctoral studies, and acts a central motivation towards persistence for doctoral completion. The aforementioned suggest that there is a women's way of knowing in how they navigate motherhood and academia which corroborates existing research (See Belenkly et al., 1986; Rich, 1977; Ruddick, 1987; Trepal et al., 2014; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

*Desire to Connect with Latina faculty who are mothers.* Several participants discussed a desire to connect with Latina faculty who are mothers who could model successful integration of both cultural Latina motherhood and academic roles. Previous research has found that Latina doctoral students desire relationships with faculty who are able to display Latino/a cultural competence of *confianza*, *familismo*, and *simpatia* to aid in negotiating their cultural identities while forming academic ones (Castellano, 2007; Henderson, 2015; Rodriguez, 2016). Support from Latina faculty mother was described in forms of integrating Latina motherhood into

classroom, kindness and patience, and providing helpful guidance. Several participants within this study described their relationship with Latina faculty mothers as a significant support in negotiating their Latina motherhood and academic identities. For participants, the relationship they formed with Latina faculty mothers served as a model for possible integration of roles. Angela in describing a Latina faculty mother stated, “This semester I was super impressed Dr. [Professor’s Name] you know I know that she is a mother, you know, and Latina. She would very often have to bring in those two aspects into the conversation, you know? Just seeing what she has been able to accomplish serves as a really good role model for me” (p. 6). Many participants described that they had no previous exposure to Latina faculty who were mothers in their academic journeys and therefore, did not have an image or example of the integration of roles. Participants desire to connect with Latina faculty mothers signify the importance for their need to be understood in their motherhood roles and have a vision of successful Latina motherhood and academic integration. Their need to see and to know Latina faculty mothers as role models supports existing research (Anzaldúa, 1987; Castellanos et al., 2006; Espino et al., 2010; Gonzalez, 2006; Rodriguez, 2016). Additionally, Latina doctoral student mothers who are unable to connect with other Latina faculty mothers may experience challenges in their ability to negotiate and to successfully integrate mother and academic roles. The aforementioned further supports the work of Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) who found the process to develop academic and motherhood identities can be immensely psychologically and physically trying.

*What role, if any, does acknowledgement by university faculty (professors, advisors, and other university officials) of their status as a mother impact a Latina doctoral mothers doctoral learning experience?*

## Institutional Challenges of Maternal Invisibility and Lack of Support Services for Latina Doctoral Student Mothers

Research has documented that while doctoral student mothers continue to increase their presence within doctoral programs, institutions have been slow to implement procedures and policies that support their academic success (Casendada & Isgro, 2013; Spring et al., 2009). The findings of this study support previous research that explores the doctoral experiences of mothers regarding lack of policy and support services that contribute to increased maternal invisibility in academia (Lynch, 2008; Springer et al. 2009; Holm et al., 2015; Trepal et al., 2014). Lynch (2008) discovered doctoral student mothers engage in purposeful maternal invisibility, hiding their maternal roles, within advising or meeting with faculty and classroom discussion to preserve “good student narrative.

This was described as purposeful in maintaining the ideal student identity by being devoted entirely to academic endeavors as a “serious student” imploring a “don’t ask, don’t tell” mentality with regard to motherhood (Lynch, 2008, p. 596). An important theme that emerged from this study were participant’s recognition of maternal invisibility within their doctoral program due to a lack of acknowledgment of motherhood roles occurring within various levels. Participants often spoke about the lack of Latina faculty mother representation to serve as role models, lack of motherhood role mentioned in syllabi, lack of motherhood and especially Latina motherhood presence in curriculum, lack of mentoring, lack of resources, and lack of support group and socialization opportunities.

*Lack of role models who are limited faculty Latina mother representation.* Within this study, several participants described a lack of role-modeling opportunities that model successful integration of Latina motherhood and academic roles. Specifically, participants noted the lack of

Latina faculty mothers within departments who can role-model cultural motherhood and academic identity integration. Azul in responding whether she felt there is representation of Latina mothers in faculty stated, “absolutely not”. Azul, Iza, and Pilar each described a lack of representation of Latina mother among faculty which further was complicated by feeling a lack of genuine understanding of Latina motherhood among faculty collectively. Pilar described the immense stress she felt from the doctoral program due to lack of understanding of her Latina motherhood role in regard to practices and felt that is a direct result of lack of representation of Latina motherhood faculty who can understand, advocate, and serve as a role model for students. The findings of this study corroborate the work of Castellanos et al. (2006) who noted the absence of Latina faculty representation within departments provides additional challenge and stress to Latinas. Additionally, findings in this study mirror findings in Lynch (2008) that doctoral student mothers engage in maternal invisibility in academia and may further allow for lack of academic culture to evolve to meet the needs of doctoral mothers since it is not at a visible forefront. This suggest that role-modeling for Latina doctoral student mothers plays a vital role in negotiating motherhood and academic identities that is critical to their success as a doctoral student. Findings in this study support the previous research highlighting the challenges voiced by Latina doctoral students over the lack of Latina faculty representation within departments (Gonzalez, 2006). Like similar findings in previous research (Lynch, 2008), this study found doctoral student mothers are challenged due to the lack faculty who are mothers who can aid in modeling integration of roles and understanding and support. The finding in this study regarding desire of doctoral student mothers to have engagement with strong female Latina faculty mothers corroborates previous findings in research such as Rockingson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, and Lunde (2017) who generated a theoretical model to explain the process in which

women develop as scholars and intersect to other identities such as motherhood. The primary method of achieving a vision as a *motherscholar* was described to occur through direct engagement and relationship of a doctoral student mother with a “strong female faculty” who was viewed by the student as balancing these multiple identities as a female scholar and mother successfully (Rockingson et al., 2017, p. 59). And, the findings in this study support Rockingson et al. (2007) research in theory and logical, the *motherscholar* remains highly invisible in the academy. This is similar to Espino et al. (2010) who noted, “It’s not like I had many faculty who truly understood my plight. Where are the faculty who are Chicana mothers? I can only think of one at the moment. Don’t you find it odd that I can only name one person?” (p. 809).

*Lack of visibility in syllabi.* Doctoral student mothers continue to increase their presence within doctoral programs, however; institutions have been slow to implement procedures and policies that support their academic success (Casendada & Isgro, 2013; Spring et al., 2009). The aforementioned research was supported by the findings of this study as all of the participants discussed a lack of acknowledgement of motherhood roles within course syllabi. Azul in describing the lack of acknowledgment of parental role within syllabi stated, “I think that the doctoral level that they really do need to integrate that into their syllabus. Even just having a little snippet in saying, we understand that we have parents, that have children that get sick, uh let us know if there is something we can do something to that effect. They don’t address that at all” (p. 6). Esperanza in describing the syllabus exclusion parental status stated, “There have been other statements about self-care, mental health, but I cannot think of anything I have seen anything specific to being a parent in the syllabus” (p. 4). This finding also supports the work of Lynch (2008) who argued that academia may foster desire for students to maintain an ideal of pure devotion to doctoral studies and, therefore, encourage maternal invisibility. As such,

doctoral student mothers who seek to maintain the academic image of pure devotion to doctoral studies may hide their motherhood and further maternal invisibility. Duquaine-Watson (2007) in examining policy in higher education for mothers argued that as the composition of higher education continues to evolve and become diverse, higher education policy and the role of higher education as an actor for social justice must meet the needs of its student mother population (Duquaine-Watson, 2007). The aforementioned also aligns with Belenky et al. (1986). The lack of inclusion of aspects of Latina motherhood within the syllabus may lead to Latina doctoral mothers being silenced in the roles they live as mothers as they may perceive absence as purposeful by faculty whom they view as credible holders of knowledge. Ultimately, this lack of inclusion reinforces an absence of opportunity exists that acknowledges the lived experiences and may further cause a Latina doctoral mother to deny her feelings, thoughts, and beliefs in her role as both a mother and student.

*Lack of presence in curriculum.* Several participants described feeling a lack of integration of Latina motherhood into the curriculum. Specifically, lack of Latina motherhood in curriculum was described both in terms of personal Latina motherhood identities within assignments/discussion and lack of inclusion of learning materials from the cultural aspects of Latina mothers. Villenas (2006) and Phillips (2018) discussed that societal views of Latina mother are highlighted in the media by images of illegal immigration, poverty, and family disintegration. The image of Latina mothers by national media has reduced them within society to invisibility as human beings without consideration of their capabilities of creative intellectual thought, social commentary about life experiences, family, and community (Villenas, 2006). The findings of this study supported the aforementioned research. Pilar stated, “They [faculty and department stakeholders] need to be more sensitive about that integration in the classroom.

Yes, we are living in this academic bubble that's kind of a subculture of our world and you see it in our academic culture whereas Latina moms aren't really seen" (p. 6). Iza discussed a lack of integration of Latina motherhood in the curriculum stating, "They want you to connect things to whatever the book saying, ...but you're connecting the conversation based on your experiences but it's not inclusive of Latina motherhood...The latitude it does give you, and it's a very small latitude from the basis of your perspective experiences but often they [faculty] don't want that unless you're in multi-cultural class" (p. 7). Both Iza and Pilar's statement highlight their belief of classroom instruction filtered to make specific connections in particular ways that do not account for their lived cultural experiences as Latina mothers and doctoral students. Participants also described feeling their academic experience in the classroom did not foster an environment that integrates their Latina motherhood or cultural role of motherhood as personal connections to course material. Iza further described her frustration with lack of gendered and cultural inclusion in foundational education materials from Latinas and mothers. She discussed that while the writing style narrative of testimonio exists to highlight the lived experiences of Latin American women, it is not included in curriculum. Iza stated, "Now there is people who do testimonios...but we don't talk about testimonios in our program" (p. 14). Based on the participants' experiences, there is a lack of inclusion of culturally integrated reading materials and methods of research that seek to honor Latina mothers lived experiences within the doctoral curricula.

*Lack of mentoring.* Research has highlighted the lack of mentorship as one of the challenges experienced by Latina doctoral students (Cuadraz, 1993; Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011; Gonzalez et al., 2001; Gonzalez, 2007; Solorazano, 1998). And, particularly mentorship from faculty that looks like them (Gonzalez, 2006). Several participants candidly

discussed the lack of mentorship within their doctoral programs corroborating existing research. Henderson (2015) described that while Latinas possess strong cultural family support in pursuing education, they often lack access to individuals with experience in navigating higher education and need mentorship to guide their experiences that lead toward success. Pilar described the lack of mentorship that occurs from advisors, “Yes, we have advisors but that hasn’t been helpful, someone to take you under their wing that is not happening” (p. 4). Like previous research (Castellano & Gloria, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2002), this study found that despite the importance of academic mentorship, Latinas may have difficulty finding an advisor who can serve as a role model, aid in socialization to the field of academia, and support ethnic/cultural based research. Additionally, several participants discussed the desire for mentorship by a Latina faculty who was a mother whom they perceive would genuinely understand their cultural roles of motherhood. Participants specifying the need for a Latina mother faculty mentorship underscores their desire to be visible, understood, and validated with other Latina mothers who can model doctoral degree attainment. It also suggests that cultural differences are prevalent in motherhood. Contreras and Gandara (2006) found mentoring can mediate the struggles that Latina doctoral students face that are associated with managing cultural obligations and doctoral student expectations in academic culture.

Castellanos and Gloria (2007) posit that Latina/o students will benefit from value centered interactions and interpersonal engagement in mentorship where students feel *respeto* (respect), *confianza* (trust), *personalismo* (personalism), and *conexión* (connection); all highly valued cultural norms within Latino community. Additionally, specifying the need for a Latina mother faculty to lead the discussion of balancing the roles of Latina motherhood and doctoral studies speaks to desire to be understood, validated, and feel commonality with other Latina

mothers who can model doctoral attainment. Gonzalez (2006) coined the terms *successful resistance* and *unsuccessful resistance* to describe the two patterns of academic socialization for women. Latina mothers who were able to display successful resistance were able to connect with supportive scholars who were like-minded who could engage in exchange of shared cultural knowledge and cultural lived experiences (Gonzalez,2006). Despite the research that notes the importance of mentoring, this study found that there was a lack of representation and mentoring to their identities as Latina mothers in their respective doctoral programs.

*Lack of resources.* All of the participants discussed a lack of resources available to support Latina doctoral student mothers at both the department and institutional level. Specifically, participants discussed a lack of resources with childcare as well as a lack of support group and organized opportunity for socialization with other Latina faculty mothers and Latina doctoral student mothers. This finding further supports the work of Trepal et al. (2014) who found that doctoral student mothers had a difficult time managing their dual roles of a doctoral student and a mother given the lack or inconsistent support services from their respective programs. Azul described the importance of childcare for Latina doctoral student mothers and how in the absence of family support, doctoral studies becomes nearly impossible. Azul stated, “I think if you don’t have family support with childcare, which is big for Latina mothers, it’s impossible (to be a doctoral student)” (p.4). Furthermore, Azul stated, “Creating opportunity for childcare, childcare financial aid, or at the very least information about resources in the community for childcare would be helpful” (p. 4). Pilar further describes the essential need for university support with childcare resources stating, “The department of (Name of Program) is non-supportive in that way. They have no consideration; you’re going to do this, there’s no consideration well what about childcare and it’s not like the school offers any assistance with

that” (p. 5). The aforementioned finding supports the work of Lynch (2008) and Holm, Prosek, and Weisberg (2013) who found that doctoral student mothers face challenges as a result of the lack of institutional child-care campus options and lack child-care resource information for doctoral student mothers; findings that were supported in this study. Esperanza also acknowledges an awareness of the university’s need to support childcare for its students and describes that, in her role as an administrator, although it has been a topic of discussion to some extent the university has yet to implement support in this area. This suggests that at a department level, university level, and academia at large perhaps, do not acknowledge the identity of mothers as central and fail to recognize what can be done to support this student population.

Research by Cuadraz (1993) and Gonzalez (2001, 2002) found that Latina doctoral students face several challenges in their socialization to the doctoral program. To corroborate their findings, several participants also described a desire to connect with other Latina doctoral mothers for socialization and support through department organized support groups and socials. Pilar described a desire for support groups and the opportunity to socialize with other Latina doctoral student mothers within her doctoral program. Pilar in describing the supports she desired stated, “I am thinking more opportunities to socialize with other students who are in the program and have children. I think socials where people in the program who have children can talk about how they manage those roles and compare notes to support each other” (p. 3). For Pilar, the ability to establish social networks of support with other Latina doctoral student mothers would allow her to feel better understood in her role as a mother and doctoral student; a support that she is currently not experiencing. Iza also conveyed a need for additional support and opportunities to discuss their cultural role as a Latina mother and a doctoral student. Iza stated, “There could be more for Latina mothers, something about sessions how to mediate

family and in a traditional setting...but it has to be another Latina faculty that does that...it cannot be another Anglo because they don't understand the culture”(p.6). Iza recognizes the need for additional opportunities to engage and to discuss how to integrate the roles of both Latina motherhood and doctoral student as important in balancing the roles.

### *Implications of Results*

The findings of this study indicated that participants faced challenges in securing sources of support (e.g., family, spouses, Latina doctoral student mother peers, supervisors, co-workers) prior to making the decision to pursue doctoral studies and experienced guilt from their decision to pursue doctoral studies as a result of their perceived cultural role as a Latina mother. This study also found that the cultural implications for Latina motherhood highly influenced how Latina mother doctoral students negotiate their Latina mother and doctoral student identities. Lastly, the study found participants encountered several institutional challenges due to lack of maternal visibility with lack of policy, support services (e.g., childcare, support group), Latina faculty mother representation, and opportunities for mentorship. Based on the findings, three recommendations for practice are recommended.

### *Recommendations for Practice*

1. *Departments should ensure faculty make explicit mention of motherhood as it remains critical to cultural and woman identity.* It is recommended that departments ensure faculty make explicit connection to motherhood within syllabi, curriculum and assignments, and class discussion to support and promote maternal visibility for Latina doctoral student mothers. Several Latina doctoral student mothers in this study noted absence in the syllabi acknowledging the motherhood role and associated obligations with regard to class requirements, curriculum inclusive of cultural aspects

of Latina motherhood, and encourage and support integration of lived experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers into academic assignments. Latina doctoral students face challenges integrating their cultural expectations, values, and norms into their roles as doctoral students and argue for greater need for integration of cultural aspects into academia to support Latina doctoral students (Anchor & Morales, 1990, Anzaldúa, 1987, Castellanos, 1979). Similar but on a different plane, foundational research by Belenky et al. (1986) and Rich (1977) highlight that for women motherhood plays a central role in their life impacting them socially, emotionally, and intellectually. Research by Eisenbach, (2013), Holm et al. (2013), and Lynch (2008) highlights the need for greater integration of motherhood roles into academia in combatting challenges doctoral student mothers face. All of the aforementioned can begin to be addressed in faculty's explicit integration of motherhood role within their academic setting.

2. *Universities should ensure support services and resources are available that support the needs of Latina doctoral student mothers.* It is recommended doctoral programs ensure support services and resources such as child-care, child-care resource information, support groups, and peer mentorship are available. Several Latina doctoral student mothers described challenges related to lack of child-care. Lynch (2008) and Holm, Prosek, and Weisberg (2013) found that doctoral student mothers face challenges as a result of the lack of institutional child-care campus options and lack child-care resource information for doctoral student mothers and encourage institutions to seek ways to address these challenges. Additionally, participants discussed a desire to make connections with other Latina doctoral student mothers for

support and understanding as a means to find balance through peer support group and peer mentorship. Latinas have unique cultural backgrounds and norms that influence their acculturation to doctoral level studies and increase their need for support and understanding (Castellanos et al., 2005; Gonzalez, 2006; Gonzalez et al., 2001). Additionally, Phinney, Horencyk, and Vedder (2001) describe the difficulty in establishing a collective identity within a new context. Such services from an institutional level can aid in the aforementioned.

3. *Departments should ensure role-modeling opportunities exist for Latina doctoral student through representation of Latina faculty mothers who can serve as role-models for motherhood and academic integration.* It is recommended that departments ensure opportunities exists for role-modeling of integration of Latina motherhood and academia. Several Latina doctoral student mothers in this study noted the lack of Latina mother faculty available within their respective programs that can serve as role-models. Research has highlighted the challenges voiced by Latina doctoral students over the lack of Latina faculty representation within departments (Gonzalez, 2006). Similarly, a lack of faculty who are mothers to aid in modeling integration of roles and understanding and support was noted challenging for doctoral student mothers (Lynch, 2008) According to Rockingson et al. (2017) the primary method of achieving a vision as a *motherscholar* was described to occur through direct engagement and relationship of a doctoral student mother with a “strong female faculty” who was viewed by the student as balancing these multiple identities as a female scholar and mother successfully (p. 59). It could be argued that if departments

support the visibility of the maternal role in faculty, that it would permeate into faculty's interaction with doctoral students.

### *Recommendations for Research*

Because research on the doctoral experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers remains limited, further studies pertinent to this demographic are warranted. To gain insight into the multi-faceted educational experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers, the following three recommendations for future study are offered.

1. *It is recommended that researchers explore the doctoral experiences of single Latina doctoral student mothers.* All the participants in this study were married and described their spouse as a vital form of support both emotionally and in providing child-care for their child. Because supportive spouses was described as a major form of support for Latina doctoral mothers in this study research is needed to explore needed areas of supports for single Latina doctoral mothers. Such an analysis is necessary to determine how and in what ways single Latina doctoral student mothers create networks of support during their doctoral studies.
2. *It is recommended that researchers explore doctoral experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers who are full-time students and not employed full-time.* All the participants in this study noted they were employed full-time, financially independent and financially stable. As such, further studies are needed to explore the doctoral experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers who are full-time students and employed less than full-time, and/ or in graduate assistant positions. Such disaggregation seeks to uncover and shed light on Latina doctoral student mothers

- with various employment statuses and how, if any way, it influences their doctoral experiences.
3. *It is recommended that further studies examine the impact of Latina doctoral student mother role-modeling for educational achievement.* Because of Latina faculty underrepresentation, research has highlighted the challenges and desire of Latina doctoral students for faculty who can role-model cultural and academic integration. All the participants in this study described a desire for a role-model to aid in modeling integration of their cultural motherhood role with academic role. Because of the emphasis of Latina doctoral student mothers desire for role-modeling, greater research is needed that explores the impact of role-modeling for Latina doctoral student mother's educational achievement.
  4. *It is recommended that researchers employ qualitative methods of inquiry to uncover Latina doctoral student mothers needs and challenges.* Because limited research exists that examines the experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers and the exact number of Latina doctoral student mother degree earners is largely unknown, greater need for research that examines needs and challenges remains warranted. Ultimately, the Academy is in need of much improvement in addressing the needs and challenges of Latina doctoral students.

### *Final Thoughts*

While the findings of this study provided insight into the challenges and doctoral experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers and how they negotiate their cultural roles as Latina mothers and academic roles as doctoral students, other questions about the larger diverse population of Latinas doctoral student mothers remain unanswered. The underrepresentation of

Latina doctoral student mother experiences in research do not represent their absence but perhaps instead their maternal invisibility. As such, as the number of Latinas pursuing doctoral degrees continues to grow, it remains important for research to continue to explore their lived experiences so their voices can be magnified and increase maternal visibility for Latina doctoral student mothers.

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## APPENDIX A



OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE  
Division of Research and Innovation  
6300 OCEAN DRIVE, UNIT 5844  
CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS 78412  
O 361.825.2497

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Human Subjects Protection Program	Institutional Review Board
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DATE: April 24, 2020  
TO: Rosa Banda  
CC: Carla Angeles  
FROM: Office of Research Compliance  
SUBJECT: Exempt Determination

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On April 24, 2020, the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Institutional Review Board reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Exempt
Title:	Creating Pathways for Latina Leadership: Understanding the Challenges of The Latina Mother Doctoral Student at a Hispanic Serving Institution
Principal Investigator:	Rosa Banda
IRB ID:	TAMU-CC-IRB-2020-04-040
Funding Source:	None
Documents Reviewed:	600.01 Form, Initial Submission-CarlaA4-21 800.01 Template^J Dear Subject Letter-CarlaAngeles4-21 800.01 Template^J Advertisement - Flyer for StudyCarlaAngeles4-15 1200.03 Template, Information Sheet-CarlaAngeles 4-21 InterviewProt-DemographicProfile-OnlineQuestions4-21 LetterofSupportDepartmentofCounselingandEdPsych LetterofSupportDepartmentofEducationalLeadership CITI and CV documents

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Institutional Review Board reviewed the project and based on the information provided has determined the research meets exempt category: 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2) (Research involving use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior).

**Therefore, this project has been determined to be exempt from IRB review. You may proceed with this project.**

**Reminder of Investigator Responsibilities:** As principal investigator, you must ensure:

- 1. Informed Consent:** Ensure informed consent processes are followed and information presented enables individuals to voluntarily decide whether to participate in research.
- 2. Amendments:** This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. **Any planned changes require an amendment** to be submitted to the IRB to ensure that the research continues to meet criteria for exemption. The Amendment must be approved before being implemented.
- 3. Completion Report:** Upon completion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a **Completion Report must be submitted.**
- 4. Records Retention:** All research related records must be retained for **three (3) years** beyond the completion date of the study in a secure location. At a minimum these documents

## APPENDIX B

### INFORMATION SHEET

#### **Creating Pathways for Latina Leadership: Understanding the Challenges of Latina Doctoral Student Mothers**

##### **Introduction**

The purpose of this form is to provide you information to help to make the decision on whether to participate in this research study.

##### **Why is this research being done?**

The goal of this research study is to understand the experiences of Latina doctoral student mothers as they negotiate their cultural roles as Latina mothers and academic roles as a doctoral student.

##### **Who can be in this study?**

We are asking you to be a part of this research study because you are a Latina doctoral student mother enrolled in a doctoral program within the College of Education and Human Development. To be eligible to be in this study, you must:

- Self-identify as a Latina
- Be enrolled in a doctoral program within the College of Education of Human Development
- Have a child under the age of 21

##### **What will I be asked to do?**

Being in this study involves completion of demographic profile, one time interview via WebEx, and completion of online-guided questions. If you agree to be in this study, you will be in this study for approximately 90 minutes.

Below are common study procedures that you can choose from or add your own.

If you choose to be in this study, the following things will happen:

- You will be asked to complete a demographic profile, answer some questions by semi-structured interview via WebEx, and complete on-line guided questions about your experiences as a Latina, doctoral student mother in the College of Education and Human Development.

##### **What are the risks involved in this study?**

This research involves minimal risks or risks that are no more than what you may experience in everyday life.

**Confidentiality risk:** Your participation will involve collecting information about you. There is a slight risk of loss of confidentiality. Your confidentiality will be protected to the greatest extent possible. You do not have to give any information to the study that you do not want to give.

- **Audio/Video Recording:** If you choose to participate in this study, your interview will be audio recorded with no video. Any audio recordings will be stored securely in a

password-protected file on Carla Vasquez-Angeles' password protected computer. Any recordings will be kept until it has been transcribed and de-identified via the use of self-selected pseudonym. After transcription, the recording will be permanently deleted after the completion of this study.

**What are the alternatives to being in this study?**

Instead of being in this study, you may choose not to be in the research study.

**What are the possible benefits of this study?**

There may be no direct benefit to you from being in this research study. By being in this study, you may help researchers learn more about Latina doctoral student mothers in the future.

**Do I have to participate?**

No. **Being in a research study is voluntary.** If you choose not to participate, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**What if I change my mind?**

You may quit at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may decide not to participate or quit at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi or any cooperating institution being affected.

**What about protecting my information?**

This study confidential.

When information collected about you includes identifiers participant: name and email, the study can involve confidential information.

Your information will be protected by:

- By restricting access to only authorized personnel, storing data in password-protected, secured location, etc.
- The interview once transcribed will be confidential (a process by which identifying information is removed) by using pseudonyms (a fictitious name). The interview recording will be deleted after the completion of the study.
- Using coded information: Your direct personal identifiers will be removed from the research record and replaced by a code. The key that links the code to your personal identifiers are stored separately from the research record under restricted access.
- All research records will be kept securely.
- Research records will be seen only by authorized research team members.
- We will share your information only when we must, will only share the information that is needed, and will ask anyone who receives it from us to protect your privacy.
- No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any report that might be published or presentation.

Once data analysis is complete, your identifiers will be removed from the research data. Your information collected as part of this research, even after identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

All research records will be kept securely. Research records will be seen only by authorized research team members. We will share your information only when we must, will only share the information that is needed, and will ask anyone who receives it from us to protect your privacy.

**Who can I contact with questions about the research?**

Dr. Rosa Banda is in charge of this research study. You may email Dr. Banda at [rosie.banda@tamucc.edu](mailto:rosie.banda@tamucc.edu) with questions at any time during the study.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a research participant?**

You may also call Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Institutional Review Board (IRB) with questions or complaints about this study at [irb@tamucc.edu](mailto:irb@tamucc.edu) or 361-825-2497. The IRB is a committee of faculty members, statisticians, researchers, community advocates, and others that ensures that a research study is ethical and that the rights of study participants are protected.

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE**

To participate in this research study, please email the student researcher, Carla Vasquez-Angeles at [cvasquez8@islander.tamucc.edu](mailto:cvasquez8@islander.tamucc.edu) . By completing the demographic profile and contacting the student researcher, Carla Vasquez-Angeles at [cvasquez8@islander.tamucc.edu](mailto:cvasquez8@islander.tamucc.edu) to schedule a WebEx interview, you are agreeing to participate in the study. By participating in this study, you are also certifying that you are 18 years of age or older.

If you do not agree to participate in the research study, do not fill out the demographic profile and take no further action.

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Protocol

The overarching research question is as follows:

1. What challenges, if any, do Latina doctoral students who are mothers face balancing their academic roles of a doctoral student and their cultural role of being a mother?

Secondary research questions include:

2. What ways, if any, do Latina doctoral student mothers negotiate their identities as Latina mothers and doctoral students?
  3. What role, if any, does acknowledgement by university faculty (professors, advisors, and other university officials) of their status as a mother impact a Latina doctoral mothers doctoral learning experiences?
- 
1. Share with me what being a Latina mother means to you.
  2. How would you describe yourself as a Latina doctoral student mother to someone else?
  3. In what ways, if any, has your family culture influenced the values that are important to you as a Latina mother?
  4. Share with me how you would define successful mothering.
  5. Looking back on your time as a Latina doctoral student mother, what academic, professional, or personal relationships have been important for you in your success as a doctoral student?
  6. How do you think, if at all, has your status as a doctoral student impacted your child?
  7. In what ways, if any, has your role of as a Latina mother and doctoral student been acknowledged by school stakeholders, administrators, faculty, advisors, etc.?
  8. Are there support services you would like your program to provide as a Latina doctoral student mother that it does not?
  9. What aspects of your program have been most helpful and most challenging in relation to your role as a Latina doctoral student mother?
  10. In what ways, if any, do you separate your roles as Latina mother and doctoral student?
  11. In what ways, if any, do you integrate your roles as Latina mother and doctoral student?
  12. Do you think academic policy as it relates to syllabus and department planning for students is inclusive in acknowledging and accommodating to the needs of Latina doctoral student mothers?
  13. Do you feel faculty is knowledgeable regarding the cultural aspects of Latina motherhood? If so in what ways? If not in what ways?
  14. As a Latina doctoral student mother, do you think there are Latina mothers represented in faculty and administration who can serve as role models for successful integration of both roles in academia and motherhood?
  15. Is there anything else, you would like to share with me about your experience as a Latina mother doctoral student that I perhaps did not ask?

## APPENDIX D

### Online Guided Questions

#### **Latina Doctoral Student Mothers Online Questionnaire**

*What is the greatest challenge you are facing right now balancing your role as a doctoral student?*

*What is the one thing you would want staff, faculty, and administrators to know about your experience as a Latina doctoral student mother?*

*What do you think is the greatest support needed for current Latina doctoral student mothers to be successful in their doctoral studies?*

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FG9NSKF>

## APPENDIX E

### **PARTICIPANT PROFILE SHEET**

1. What year of study of year of doctoral study are you in?
2. What is your field of study?
3. What is your expected graduation?
4. What is your hometown?
5. What is your age?
6. Are you currently employed?
7. What is your marital status?
8. How many children do you have?
9. What are the ages of your children?
10. What pseudonym for your name would you like me to use for you in this study?