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Chicanas Completing the Doctorate in Education: Providing consejos de la mesa de poder

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CHICANAS COMPLETING THE DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION:
PROVIDING CONSEJOS DE LA MESA DE PODER

By

Sandra J. Castañón-Ramirez

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PROVIDING CONSEJOS DE LA MESA DE PODER

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CHICANAS COMPLETING THE DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION:
PROVIDING CONSEJOS DE LA MESA DE PODER

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By

Sandra J. Castañón-Ramirez

DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to my husband, José, and to my four boys, Danny, Joey, Mikey, and Kevin. Know that a successful pathway has been paved for you and your children, by the grace of God. This work is also dedicated to *mi gente*. I pray that my completion of this journey proves that we are a people gifted with great perseverance, resilience, and work ethics that can propel us through the many obstacles of a hegemonic educational pipeline. Be strong, *hermanas*, you can do this.

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Thank you to my husband for his acceptance and support through the four and half years of my crying and complaining. Thank you to *las doctoras que son mis amigas*, Gracie, Ines, Jesse, Lily, and Maria Luisa, who were always available to eat *menudo* or have a *plática* to get me through the impossible. Thank you to *las doctoras* Berta Avila y Rebecca Burciaga who offered guidance when needed. Thank you to *los doctores*, Tony and Reyes who calmed the storm in me and gave me a lift up when I needed it. Thank you to my cohort friends, Shari and Regina, who always took my calls or called me to just vent and give support. Of course, let me not forget *las doctoras* in my study, Rosa, Alma, Mia, and Gloria; without you, there would be no study! Thank you to the many Latinas and *Chicanitas* who looked up to me and made me work harder to let them know: *¡Sí se puede!* Deep felt thanks to my committee, Dra. Ruiz-Huston, Dr. Hallberg, and Dr. McNair, for picking me up when all others abandoned me, and for sticking with me to the end. And last, but not least, I give all the glory and praise to my sweet Lord who never left my side and who graced me with the gifts of His Blessed Mother and an anointed church family who constantly prayed and interceded for me!

Con todo mi corazón, le doy a todos, mil gracias.

CHICANAS COMPLETING THE DOCTORATE IN EDUCATION:
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Abstract

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2020

This qualitative study described four *testimonios* from Chicanas who have successfully completed a doctorate in education degree, both Ph.D. and Ed.D. The literature reviewed three important areas of study. The first is a review of the systemic challenges that Chicanas must hurdle; cheap labor, segregation of schools and neighborhoods, being silenced through English-only education, and deficit thinking. The second area of review focused on ways that Chicanas create strategies for success to overcome these challenges. The third was a review of the theoretical literature through a distinctly and relevant Chicana feminist lens.

Chicanas' strategies for success were collected as *testimonios*. These lived stories are shared using a narrative approach and were analyzed through a Chicana feminist lens, allowing the researcher to connect with indigenous roots. Findings include cultural intuition, *reflexión*, *máscaras*, *nepantla*, and *La Virgen de Guadalupe* as themes that enable an understanding of the strategies used by these successful women. This study sought to understand how gender and race impact graduate scholarship among a unique population and adds to the body of knowledge on doctoral education and Latina (specifically Chicana) education in particular.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For many people in America, a college degree is perceived as the passport out of poverty and it is the way to achieve equality and equity in our American society. Social justice advocates would agree with this statement. For example, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor said, “until we get equality in education, we won’t have an equal society” (Phillips, 2011). Furthermore, as a result of this concept that education is essential to the success of our country, public education has evolved to be a property right for every human being residing here, even the undocumented. The Supreme Court ruled in *Goss v. Lopez* (1975) that students have a legitimate claim of entitlement to public education since the state has decided to provide such opportunities and has made schooling mandatory. This right is protected by the U.S. Constitution amendment XIV (McCarthy, 1976) and gives a promise to every human being in America who is seeking this right.

Unfortunately, not every person living in America benefits from this law, and not every ethnicity of people residing in our America can complete an education to the highest degree, public or private. This statement is made based on the low completion rate of 7.8% of the Hispanic population of all women completing the doctorate in education, both Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy degree) and Ed.D. (Doctor of Education degree), in comparison to all other American women, 66% White, 12.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 10.3% black, and 5% of the American Indian population (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2018).

This study sought to understand how Chicanas navigate the educational system, and in particular, an educational doctoral degree program, both Ph.D. and Ed.D. Data were collected that provided a more in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of four Chicanas who

created strategies for themselves to become successful doctors of education, both Ph.D. and Ed.D. Their ways of knowing, a term used by many feminist researchers today (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), their cultural intuition (Bernal, 1998, 1999), their resistance to the status quo (Sánchez & Ek, 2013; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001) and their ways of speaking out (Young & Skrla, 2003), provided more understanding on how the Chicana's experiences in higher education can be successful.

This chapter introduces the background of the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, and the significance of this study. In this chapter and throughout the study, the term Hispanic is used when documenting information extracted by governmental agencies. These types of agencies tend to lump all Mexican Americans, Chileans, and other similar Spanish speaking ethnicities together. When referring to the current population, the term Latinx is used, a more inclusive term. The term Latina is used to refer to all women in these specific categories as a method of unity, however, the Chicana is the focus of this study. The term Chicana sprouted from a historical and political time in our American history and is explained in further detail in Chapter 2. This study defines this term to mean a Mexican American woman who has a political and social awareness of existing inequalities and works towards a more just and equitable society.

Background

Providing any information about the successful strategies used by Chicanas in doctorate programs of education, strategies that assisted them to complete the educational doctorate, both Ph.D. and Ed.D., is important, especially in California. Statistics cite 39% of the state residents are Latino, 38% are white, 14% Asian American, 6% African American, 3% multiracial, and less than 1% American Indian or Pacific Islander (Johnson, 2017). With such an increase in

the Latinx population in California, one would expect to see an increase of the Chicana student completing the Ph.D. or Ed.D. The Latina is now more than 50% of the total female school-age population in California (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015), and so by simple ratios and proportion should have an increase in all degrees. Although Latinas have greatly increased their college enrollment numbers, they are significantly less likely to actually complete a degree, compared to all other major groups. In 2013, almost 19% of Latinas between 25 and 29 years of age had completed a degree, compared to 23% of African American women, 44% of White women, and 64% of Asian women (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015). The scant numbers of Latinx completing the Ed.D. or the Ph.D. are lower than any other ethnicity, graduating only 6.7%, lagging behind Whites with 69%, Asians with 12%, and African Americans with 8% (McFarland et al., 2017). These statistics indicate that there is much to be learned in this area. More research is needed that will help us understand how some Latinas, specifically the Chicanas, have created successful strategies to overcome the challenges within their doctoral programs of education.

This study sought to understand the successful strategies of four Chicanas who have a Ph.D. or an Ed.D. A review of the literature on the challenges that Chicanas must overcome and the motivating factors that assist them to meet the challenges are included in this study. The study also focused on the lived experiences of the participants that tell stories of the resilience of Chicanas becoming *doctoras* (doctors), and their identity development during their doctoral program in education. Their lived experiences as Chicana scholars and leaders are told from an emic, or insider's perspective, and add knowledge to this body of literature that gives voice to

Chicanas with educational doctorates, both Ph.D. and Ed.D., who navigated the challenges of the university system. This study was conducted by a Chicana about Chicanas.

Statement of the Problem

The Latinx high school dropout rate has declined over the last five years, from 18% to 10% in 2016 (Gramlich, 2017). Their college enrollment has also increased from 32% in 1999 to 47% in 2016 (Gramlich, 2017). Although the rates of college attendance by the Latinx people has increased, their completion rates have only slightly improved (Tate, 2017). From 2004 to 2015, the percentage of all bachelor's degrees earned by Hispanic students increased from 7% to 12%, degrees earned by black students increased from 10% to 11%, degrees earned by White students decreased from 75% to 67%, degrees earned by Asian/Pacific Islander students remained at 7%, and degrees earned by American Indian/Alaska Native students also remained at 1% (Snyder et al., 2018). Graduate school enrollment among the population ages 25 to 34 is 7.6% for Asians, 8% for non-Hispanic Whites, 14% for African Americans, and 11% for Hispanics (Snyder et al., 2018). The statistics show that the Latinx educational crisis continues in the United States.

Although the numbers of Latinx men receiving doctorates in education in 2016 are lower than Latinx women, 1,504 compared to 2,724, this study focused on the Chicana of this population (McFarland et al., 2017). Even though there has been an increase of Latinas and Latinos combined who are receiving doctorates, from 5% in 2013 (Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015) to 6.7% in 2016 (National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, 2018), the Latina population still has the lowest college completion rates of all women and the lowest educational attainment in the United States. Further, they are more likely to be living in poverty and as single heads of households than both White and Asian

women (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015; Motel & Patten, 2012; Zambrana et al., 2017). Current educational researchers, such as Gándara and The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics (2015) and Zambrana and Hurtado (2016) would also agree that this demographic is a neglected population group in terms of research and policy, thereby creating an area of further needed research (Motel & Patten, 2012). For these reasons, it was important to seek to understand the reasons for the continued low statistics in Latinas completing the doctoral degree, but especially the strategies for success created by Chicana doctors in education.

Furthermore, the lack of Chicanas with a doctorate, both Ph.D. and Ed.D., limits the employment for these women in education since most leadership positions require the doctorate (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015; Pizarro, 2005). Even though Hispanic people make up 6.7% of students who earn doctorates, only 1.1% of those doctorates are awarded to women (National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, 2018). These lower rates pose challenges to educational administrators and the community at large (Motel & Patten, 2012; Zambrana & Hurtado, 2016). The educational disparity is evident, especially to the Latinx students whose perceptions of their potential may be impacted by these dismal numbers (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015; Pizarro, 2005). The low representation of Chicanas in higher education creates the lack of mentors and role models for Chicana students and directly impacts their success (Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Nora & Crisp, 2009). The similar backgrounds and experiences that the Chicana faculty could share with Chicana doctoral students would enable them to foster the social capital strengths that unify them (Ek, Cerecer, Alanís, & Rodríguez, 2010). As role models, these types of mentorship interactions and experiences

acknowledge and validate the personal and social adjustments called interpersonal validation for Chicanas pursuing the doctorate (Ek et al., 2010; Rendón, 1994, 2009). Validation serves to motivate and empower the individuals in the group as well as the collective (Ek et al., 2010; Rendón, 1994, 2009).

Moreover, there is a need to better understand how more Chicana *doctoras* can be included at the education leadership table. Coulombe and Gil (2016) posited that when organizations understand and value diversity and inclusion, they are better positioned to solve problems creatively and capitalize on new opportunities. American society not only needs more college graduates, but it also needs its graduates to reflect the diversity of the nation; it needs them to embody a variety of multicultural competencies and habits of mind for effective leadership (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the ways that Chicanas successfully navigate their doctoral educational journey.

Overarching Question

The overarching research question of this study was: In what ways do Chicanas perceive and understand their lived experiences through the completion of an educational doctoral program journey?

The sub-research questions of this study were:

1. In what ways do race and gender influence the doctoral experiences of a Chicana?
2. In what ways do cultural expectations influence a Chicana in her educational doctoral journey?
3. What challenges, if any, do Chicanas experience as a student in an educational doctoral program, both Ph.D. and Ed.D.?

Significance of the Study

One in five women living in the United States is a Latina (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015). This statistic alone makes this demographic an important group to study, but more importantly, projections show that by 2060, they will be nearly a third of the population of the United States (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015). Given the low numbers of Chicanas completing a doctorate degree, both Ph.D. and Ed.D., and the increase in the Chicana population, it is significant to understand how Chicanas have overcome challenges in their doctoral study.

The increases of the Latinx population have already posed a critical challenge for educational administrators and personnel and, unfortunately, to the progress of their communities (Motel & Patten, 2012; Zambrana & Hurtado, 2016). Since education impacts the salaries of any person, and these salaries impact future financial success, the economic future of their communities are impacted as well. A study by Georgetown University found that earnings rise substantially for those with doctoral degrees and have predicted lifetime earnings of \$3.3 million (Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, 2011). If we are to interrupt the cycle of disproportionate under-education and poverty among the Latinx population for the future, it is critical to raise the education level and living and working conditions of the Latinx people (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015).

This study sought to gather emic, insider, data that could be a benefit to researchers who seek to understand how Chicanas navigate the educational doctorate of both Ph.D. and Ed.D., successfully. Higher education administrators challenged with the job of boosting completion rates at their institutions can also benefit from this study as they, too, seek to understand how Chicanas overcome challenges and what those challenges are (Hess & Hatalsky, 2018). Policy

makers who are burdened with the draining federal coffers caused by low degree completion rates, and their impending reauthorization of the Higher Education Act where taxpayers pay about \$139 billion per year in grants and loans, understand that the completion rates of any demographic is important (Hess & Hatalsky, 2018). This study also adds to the body of literature that explains the ways in which race and gender directly affect scholarship and leadership, especially the practices of Chicanas and people of color (Méndez-Morse, 2000; Santamaría, Santamaría, & Dam, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

A Chicana feminist epistemological framework in educational leadership research, questions the notions of objectivity and a universal foundation of knowledge (Bernal, 1998). Chicana feminism is focused on the life experiences of the Chicana and involves Chicana participants in a process called *reflexión* (reflection) that explores how their lives are being interpreted, documented, and reported, while acknowledging that many Chicanas lead lives with significantly different opportunity structures than men or white women (Bernal, 1998). Also included in the framework is the concept of cultural intuition (Bernal, 1998) which is explained in more detail in Chapter 2. These research frameworks are relatively new in the academy (Bernal, 1998), celebrating just 20 years, but researchers have accomplished great gains due to their prolific work. This study adds the voices of four successful Chicanas to the existing research.

Furthermore, a resistance to the oppression of the Chicana people has ignited a movement for the last 31 years to have Chicanas research and record truths that counter some of the existing hegemonic literature (Bernal, 1998). It would take a much more in-depth literature review to cover the astounding and prolific work that the many Chicanas have contributed to this body of

literature. Yet, humbly, this study is added to this respected and much needed research. The Chicana scholar movement focuses on Chicanas' assets and their resilience to succeed despite systemic hegemony, deficit thinking viewpoints, and myths. The collected lived stories in this study highlight the success of Chicanas completing doctoral degrees, and how they became who they are.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced a general overview of the economic and educational status of Latinas in the United States revealing high poverty rates and the lowest college completion rates. The specific problem of the lack of Chicanas completing the doctorate was stated as the proposed topic and focus for this study. The research questions, significance of the study, and theoretical framework were also introduced.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The *testimonios* (life stories) from Chicanas who have completed a doctoral journey in education, both Ph.D. and Ed.D., will provide useful information on how and in what ways Chicanas navigate the journey successfully. This literature review has three important areas of review. The first area begins with a brief historical view of the challenges of the Mexican American. Building on this first area, the second area of research reveals how Latina women have negotiated challenges. The third area of this literature review prepares the pathway to understand the Chicana feminist lens that will be used to record and document the participants' voices in their *testimonios*. Chapter 3 will also elaborate more on this lens.

Historical Context

There are specific structural conditions that have constrained our Mexican American women's experiences (Segura, 2003). Many scholars and researchers have focused on this theme, but this study is also influenced by Young (1990) who wrote about the five faces of oppression and how those faces are sometimes hidden and sometimes revealed. Her analogy of the faces blends well with the other analogies of *máscaras* (masks) by Anzaldúa (1987) and carried further by Adams and Bell (2016).

All five faces created by Young (1990) will not be covered, but instead a variance of the concepts will be shifted into four areas. These four categories of challenges are reviewed not to promote categories because categorization in and of itself is oppressive and promotes a certain value on those areas. Crenshaw (1994) stated that the existence of the categories is not the problem, rather it is the values that are attached to them that establish social hierarchies. Therefore, in laying down a context of oppression towards the Latino people, the exploitation of

their cheap labor, the segregation of their schools and neighborhoods, the exclusionary English-only education mandates, and the deficit labels and viewpoints of these people are the four sub areas that are briefly covered in order to remind the readers of what challenges the four participants in this study may have had to overcome. Figure 1 outlines the four areas of oppression that are covered in this chapter.

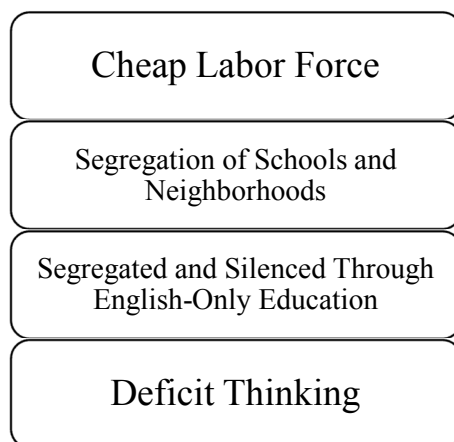


Figure 1. Historical context of challenges.

Challenge: Cheap Labor Force

In today's society, the theories of segmented labor have been used to segregate Latinas into lower paying jobs, and lower status administrative support, clerical, and service occupations (Segura, 2003). Few Latinas who complete higher education pursue a doctorate, and when they do, they enter a labor market that is hierarchically organized along class, race, and gender lines (Segura, 2003). This segmented labor consists of various sub-groups with little or no crossover capability, and a general hiring trend that has resulted in Anglos as bosses and Latinos as laborers (Chávez, 2007; Valenzuela & Gonzalez, 2000). Historically, after the first wave of the *bracero*, or guest worker, programs between 1917 and 1921, the following quote illustrates the

American view of the cheap Latino worker. In a testimony to Congress in 1926, a Chamber of Commerce spokesperson said:

We, gentlemen, are just as anxious as you are not to build the civilization of California or any other western district upon a Mexican foundation. We take him because there is nothing else available. We have gone east, west, north, and south and he is the only manpower available to us. California's specialized agriculture requires a kind of labor able to meet the requirements of hard, stoop, hand labor, and to work under the sometimes less advantageous conditions of heat, sun, dust, winds, and isolation. (Martin, 2003, p. 1)

History also shows that the American government has always been on two sides of the border wall regarding Latino immigration (Faville, 2012). In 1942, during wartime, the United States needed cheap labor so the government instituted the bracero program once again (Faville, 2012; Koestler, n.d.). This program brought thousands of people from Mexico to the United States under temporary contracts to work in agriculture and other seasonal jobs; some called this program "legalized slavery" (Faville, 2012, p. 1). Then, years later in 1954, the United States launched yet another program called Operation Wetback, a program created to send back people of Mexican descent to Mexico (Faville, 2012; Koestler, n.d.). More than 3.8 million people were deported through the operation, and many of them were American citizens (Faville, 2012; Koestler, n.d.).

Latino and Mexican American resistance to discrimination, and the United States' push-pull immigration policy, began as early as the 1920s (Faville, 2012). Cannery and factory workers in the Southwest formed unions and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was created in 1929 with the mission of fighting injustices such as discriminatory hiring practices at railroads (Faville, 2012).

In the 1960s, the Latinos and Mexicans fought for equality and equity: they began to transform their identity and political strategies from seeking whiteness to claiming brownness (MacLean, 2015). Previous to the Civil Rights Act, Mexican Americans were considered White.

This was so because the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo made Mexicans in the United States territory White by recognizing them as citizens when the naturalization laws made whiteness a prerequisite to citizenship. This shift away from whiteness and a turn towards brownness allowed them to create a coalition with African Americans and to be somewhat protected by the Civil Rights Act that created legal remedies to fight the discrimination and oppression they were enduring (MacLean, 2015).

In 1962, Cesar Chavez founded the National Farm Workers Association and led a movement that began with a boycott on grape growers that exploited their Latino and Mexican American workers. By 1969, the leadership of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez in the struggle for justice inspired a national movement for *La Causa* (Weaver, 2009). Other Latino and Mexican American activists also pushed educational institutions to include the contributions of Latinos and Mexican Americans in discussions of U.S. history. Throughout the 1960s, Latino-American and Mexican-American history departments opened at many major universities.

Challenge: Segregation of Schools and Neighborhoods

Due to cheap labor and poor wages, Latinas also tend to live in poor neighborhoods that are racially segregated and generally attend schools that do not prepare them for college (Segura, 2003). This is so because historically, as a colonized people, Mexican Americans have faced segregation in, or exclusion from, many areas including schools, movie theatres, restaurants, and public accommodations, such as swimming pools (Acuña, 2007; Echavarrri & Bishop, 2016; Martinez, 1997). This occurred even though in 1868, the United States passed the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause to the United States Constitution: “No State shall...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws,” (sec. 1) and even though this amendment clause bars states and public schools from denying students their right of access on

the basis of race, national origin, alien status, and gender, that has not been the reality for Mexican Americans in the United States.

Richard Valencia (2005) stated that *Romo v. Laird* (1925) was the first Mexican American initiated desegregation case. The school superintendent's argument in this education case was that because the children in question were Spanish speaking, their needs could be better met in a segregated setting. Under state law at the time, the district could segregate Mexican American students for instructional reasons, but not by race (Valencia, 2005). This case is important because it shows how Mexican American children were segregated under the guise of pedagogy-separation on language grounds to isolate the Mexican American children from White children. This practice, used over and over, was at its core, racialized segregation (Valencia, 2005).

Valencia (2005) explained that in *Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (1930) the Board of Trustees exclusively and illegally maintained the West End School for Mexican American children and that the construction of new classrooms in the West End School would worsen the segregation in the district (Valencia, 2005). The Appeals Court ruled that school officials could not segregate their Mexican American students solely on their ethnic background. The court stated that the segregation practiced by the district was unacceptable since "the rules for the separation are arbitrary and were applied indiscriminately to all Mexican pupils...without apparent regard to their individual aptitudes...while relieving children of other white races from the operation of the rule" (Wilson, 2003, p. 156).

The third major case against segregation was *Roberto Alvarez vs. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District* (1930) (Valencia, 2005). On January 5, 1931, Jerome T. Green, principal of the Lemon Grove Grammar School, stood at the door of the school and admitted all pupils except the Mexican students (Valencia, 2005). Principal Green announced that the

Mexican children did not belong at the school, could not enter, and instructed them to attend a two-room building constructed especially for the Mexican children, *La Caballeriza*, the barnyard (Alvarez, 1986). As a result, 75 Mexican American children went on strike (Alvarez, 1986).

The Mexican community of Lemon Grove, in February 13, 1931, charged that the school had no legal right since 95% of the children were American born citizens “entitled to all the rights and privileges common to all citizens of the United States” (Alvarez, 1986, p. 8). The school board’s rationale was that they were concerned with the Mexican children’s education; the new school was to be an “Americanization school” where they could take care of the deficiencies of the children (Alvarez, 1986, p. 6). They also wanted to avoid the deterioration of American students as a result of their contact with the Mexicans and wanted to teach English and American customs to the Mexican students and bring them up to par with the American children (Alvarez, 1986). Most of the children already spoke English, and many didn’t even speak Spanish (Alvarez, 1986). On March 30, 1931, a judgement was passed in favor of the Mexican community; segregation was ceased in that district (Valencia, 2005).

During the Lemon Grove time period of 1930, the Governor of California received a report from one of his commissions entitled, *Mexicans in California* (Alvarez, 1986). This report considered all people of Mexican descent as Mexican nationals and did not differentiate between Mexicans born in Mexico or United States citizens of Mexican descent (Alvarez, 1986). During the following year, city and county law enforcement officials made public raids arresting Mexicans. The result was the deportation and voluntary repatriation to Mexico due to coercion of hundreds of thousands—an estimated 400,000 to one million—Mexican and Mexican-Americans, during the Great Depression (Alvarez, 1986). Surrounded by all of this controversy,

the district attorney's office had chosen to defend the school board's actions and the local attempt at segregation was also supported at the state level (Alvarez, 1986).

A statewide survey in 1931 revealed that 85% of California schools segregated children of Mexican descent in either separate classrooms or schools (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2007). The survey also found that rarely did these children receive an education equal to that provided to the other students in the community. In 1931, a state court judge ruled that the Lemon Grove segregated school was not educationally justified or supported by state law. The judge ordered the Mexican-American children to attend school on an equal basis with the others in the community. This was the first successful school desegregation court decision in the nation (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2007). It only applied, however, to Lemon Grove (Alvarez, 1986).

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed to eliminate this argument once and for all (Valencia, 2005). It states, no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. This legislation carried financial consequences if a school, agencies, or institutions did not provide equal opportunity to all students. The importance of this area of research establishes a foundation for the many possible reasons that the Latina educational pipeline is not concretely complete. This area of research also reveals that Latinas have been historically, legislatively, and socially excluded from educational services for many years and are still suffering the aftermath of *de jure* segregation. Needless to say, the many lawsuits cited in this small section of oppression made a case for desegregation.

In a different perspective of how segregation impacts the educational pipeline, other scholars have found that there is clear evidence that experience with diversity produces both short and long-term advantages in terms of intellectual and social development (Orfield & Lee, 2005). Many researchers believe that a segregated neighborhood affects children's cognitive development and long-term educational outcomes (Burdick-Will et al., 2011; Chetty, Hendren, & Katz, 2016; Reardon, 2013; Sharkey, 2010; Wodtke, Harding, & Elwert, 2011). These findings strongly suggest that exposure to more desegregated settings can break the tendency for racial segregation to become self-perpetuating for all students later in life. Furthermore, students of all races who are exposed to integrated educational settings feel much more comfortable about their ability to live and work among people of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Orfield & Lee, 2005). Unfortunately, today's inner-city schools look much like the Mexican schools of the 1930s where Latino English Language Learners are struggling to learn English because they are segregated and isolated from their English-speaking peers in what some researchers have termed ESL ghettos (Arias, 2007; Valdés, 2001).

Challenge: Segregated and Silenced Through English-Only Education

Supporters of segregation believed that the Mexican American child was intellectually inferior. This statement was confirmed when the judge in *Mendez v. Westminster School District of Orange County* (1946) reviewed this argument and ruled that segregating children because they were Mexican American violated the United States Constitution by suggesting inferiority among the children where there is none (Strum, 2016). It was exactly the same assertion that the NAACP used in their argument in *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), asserting to the courts that forcing minority children into separate schools sent the message that they were

not as good as others. It has been found that those low expectations led to low levels of learning (Strum, 2016).

The 1970s introduced major court cases that influenced the testing of culturally diverse students (McLean, 1995). In the court case *Diana v. California State Board of Education* (1970), nine Mexican American children used Spanish as their primary language (McLean, 1995). These students were placed in special education programs after receiving assessments that were conducted in English. The court ruled the school districts of California were to test children in their primary language and to use non-verbal tests as well as extensive supportive data (McLean, 1995).

This argument for segregation was again ruled down in the case of *Lau v. Nichols* (1974). The court found that the school system of San Francisco failed to provide students of Chinese ancestry with English language instruction or other adequate instructional procedures, thereby denying them a meaningful opportunity to participate in the public educational program (Arias, 2007). In deciding the case, the court stated: “There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974, p. 414).

In 1976, the California legislature approved the passage of the Chacon-Moscone Bilingual-Bicultural Education Act which made it legal to give non-English-speaking students access to the curriculum through their primary language (Gifford & Valdés, 2006). Macías (2001) argued that federal policies, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, and the 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* U.S. Supreme Court decision had created a context in which states like California were encouraged to repeal existing laws limiting or prohibiting the use of

non-English languages in education (Gifford & Valdés, 2006). The Chacon-Moscone Act of 1976 required schools to provide pupils who were limited or non-English speaking with equal educational opportunities (Gifford & Valdés, 2006). In 1980, the Bilingual Education Improvement and Reform Act mandated schools to provide bilingual education to limited English-speaking students (Gifford & Valdés, 2006). These two statutes, however, expired in 1987 and were not renewed. California's Bilingual Education and Reform Act (1980) could be seen as a covert exclusionary policy (Gifford & Valdés, 2006). It allowed Spanish-speaking students to be educated separately from other students, and it justified this separation as was done in the case of *Mendez v. Westminster School District of Orange County* (1946) by arguing that the special language needs of certain groups of students required the development of unique educational programs designed to meet their special needs (Gifford & Valdés, 2006).

For those concerned about segregation, bilingual education appeared to be a language policy that masked exclusion (Gifford & Valdés, 2006). For those concerned about educating students in a language that they did not understand, bilingual education was a compensatory education policy that focused on language, the condition that prevented students from accessing the curriculum (Gifford & Valdés, 2006). Over time, negative views about bilingual education helped to eliminate it in California.

Those against segregation believe that the institutions in this society promoted prejudice and discrimination and insured the desires of the Anglo population to preserve the status quo and maintain an unequal system (Acuña, 1988). Although both *Brown* and *Lau* were to give America a vision of equal opportunity through education, that still remains to be seen as re-segregation and increasing segregation of Latinos surges across the nation (Arias, 2007). The last two decades have transformed the demography of every school district across the nation, so that Latino

students are represented in every state of the country with increasing segregation (Arias, 2007). Latino students, English Language Learners, and fluent English speakers have become the fastest growing and most highly segregated minority group in the nation (Arias, 2007; Orfield & Lee, 2005). This increased segregation of Latino students in schools and communities makes access to English, in and out of school, problematic (Arias, 2007).

Challenge: Deficit-Thinking

The fourth area of oppression, deficit-thinking—social constructions of inferiority—has shaped the life experiences of the Latinx people in the United States (Guerra & Nelson, 2010; Zambrana & Hurtado, 2016). Their ethnic values have been viewed as deficits without regards to structural inequality (García & Guerra, 2004; Gorski, 2010; Guerra & Nelson, 2010; Weiner, 2006; Yosso, 2005; Zambrana & Hurtado, 2016). According to Gorski (2010), deficit ideology is a worldview that explains and justifies outcome inequalities, such as test scores or the levels of educational attainment by indicating that there are supposed deficiencies within the individual and communities (García & Guerra, 2004; Valencia, 1997; Weiner, 2006; Yosso, 2005). People continually justify the existing social conditions by identifying the problem of inequality as located within, rather than as pressing upon, these Mexican American communities so that efforts to redress inequalities focus on “fixing” people rather than fixing the conditions which oppress them (García & Guerra, 2004; Gorski, 2010; Weiner, 2006; Yosso, 2005).

From educational inequities to unjust housing practices, deficit ideology can be understood as a sort of “blame the victim” mentality that is applied, not to an individual person, but systemically, to an entire group of people, often based upon a single dimension of identity (Gorski, 2010). According to Gorski (2010) and this group of researchers, deficit ideology is the belief that inequalities result, not from unjust social conditions such as systemic racism or

economic injustice, but from intellectual, moral, cultural, and behavioral deficiencies assumed to be inherent in disenfranchised individuals and communities (García & Guerra, 2004; Gorski, 2010; Guerra & Nelson, 2010; Valencia, 1997; Yosso, 2005).

Educators in particular may make generalizations that particularly perpetuate the deficit-thinking perspective that culturally and linguistically diverse children and families are deficient and in need of remediation (García & Guerra, 2004; Valencia, 1997). These views hinder the educator's ability to appreciate and utilize the resources or the funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) in every family and to view teaching and learning as an interactive process (García & Guerra, 2004). García and Guerra (2004) worked at providing professional development that works at deliberately and systematically eliminating an educator's tendency to label students as at risk based on their demographic characteristics. In its place, García and Guerra (2004) offered an alternate, ecological view of educational risk that broadens the analysis of their students under achievements or failures to include the school, the classroom, the teacher, and the pedagogy-related variables that could have contributed to their academic difficulties. In addition, through discussions about cultural variations in home-community-school patterns of socialization, participants of their workshops become increasingly aware of their students' as well as their own culturally biased behaviors and values and gain access to alternate explanations for academic outcomes (García & Guerra, 2004).

Overcoming Oppression from Within

Because Latinas are marginalized people in the United States, because they have been the objects of assimilationist policies, and because their culture, language, and customs have been considered inferior, they have had to construct their own theory of identity and subjectivity (Elenes, 1997). Elenes (1997) synthesized the concept of identity that has been theorized by

scholars such as Anzaldúa (1987). She posited that the Latina has a kind of dual identity; they don't identify with the Anglo-American cultural values, and they don't totally identify with the Latina cultural values (Elenes, 1997). The Chicana is a "synergy" of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness (Elenes, 1997, p. 365). There are several branches of thought on this concept of dual identity, but this study focused on the concepts of *nepantla* and *máscaras*, and the term *mestiza*, person of mixed Indian and Spanish heritage, because this study's *testimonios* refer to these concepts.

Creating Her Safe Space: *Nepantla*

Nepantla is a Nahuatl word that refers to an in-between space, a place where change occurs during the many transitional stages of life and can be used to describe a variety of issues related to the identity of the Latina (Keating, 2006). During *nepantla*, worldviews and self-identities are shattered. *Nepantla* can be painful, messy, confusing, and chaotic; it can signal unexpected, uncontrollable shifts, transitions, and changes, but *nepantla* can also be a time of self-reflection, choice, and potential growth (Keating, 2006). In short, it is a space that can reflect the duality of the Latina identity. Latinas are posited as important objects of study, but their own conceptual production remains unacknowledged (Pisarz-Ramírez, 2007); perhaps this is why this space must be created. This space, referred to by Mora (1993) as the land in the middle, echoes the plurality of worlds coexisting among the *Nahuas* in the 16th century (Pisarz-Ramírez, 2007). This space is used often in Chicana and Latina anthropology, social commentary, criticism, literature, and art. Therefore, this concept is inserted as one that may be used by any of these four *doctoras* (doctors) to identify her space that she created in order to counter the hegemonic space of her educational and neighborhood world.

Anzaldúa (2002) wrote that in *nepantla* a person is exposed, open to other perspectives,

more readily able to access knowledge derived from inner feelings, imaginal states, and outer events. They see through them with a mindful, holistic awareness; seeing through human acts both individual and collective allows a person to examine the ways knowledge, identity, and reality, is constructed and explored, and how some of those constructions violate other people's ways of knowing (Abraham, 2014). A person in *nepantla* can bring about "a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 102) and gives us "a new story to explain the world and our participation in it" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 103). Anzaldúa described *nepantla* as a way of "theorizing unarticulated dimensions of the experience of *mestizas* living between overlapping and layered spaces of different cultures, and social and geographical locations of events and realities – psychological, social, political, spiritual, historical, creative, imagined" (Anzaldúa, 2000, p. 268).

Creating Her Safe Space: *Nepantleras*

Segura (2003) wrote of the creation of two worlds as well; she calls it a labyrinth of Chicana/Latina intellectual production. Her research focused on the Chicana/Latina in higher education and revealed that they are seen as "others" (Segura, 2003, p. 30). Segura (2003) also revealed that they engage in "counterhegemonic intellectual production that challenges the Eurocentric masculinist text of their respective disciplines" (p. 30). Anzaldúa (1987) would call these types of Chicanas/Latinas, *nepantleras*.

Nepantleras are threshold people: they move within and among multiple, often conflicting, worlds and refuse to align themselves exclusively with any single individual, group, or belief system (Anzaldúa, Ortiz, Hernandez-Avila, & Pérez, 2003; Keating, 2006).

Nepantleras must be willing to open themselves to personal risks and potential wounding which include, but are not limited to, self-division, isolation, misunderstanding, rejection, and

accusations of disloyalty. Yet the risk-taking has its own rewards, because *nepantleras* use their movements between worlds to develop creative, potentially transformative perspectives; they respect the differences within and among the diverse groups and, simultaneously, posit commonalities (Keating, 2006).

Anzaldúa (2002) explained these Latinas as those who facilitate passages between worlds. *Nepantleras* live within and among multiple worlds, and develop a perspective from the cracks (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2006). *Nepantleras* use their views from these cracks-between-worlds to invent holistic, relational theories and tactics enabling them to reconceive or in other ways transform the various worlds in which they exist; *nepantleras* have a global consciousness (Keating, 2006). As Anzaldúa explained in a 2003 interview, *Nepantleras* are the supreme border crossers who act as intermediaries between cultures and their various versions of reality; they serve as agents of awakening, inspire and challenge others to deeper awareness, and greater *conciencia y conocimiento* (conscience and understanding) (Anzaldúa et al., 2003; Keating, 2006).

Finding Her Identity: *Mestiza*

Anzaldúa (1987) stated that the new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions and a tolerance for ambiguity (Bernal, 1999). She learns to be an Indian in Mexican/Latina culture, to be Mexican/Latina from an Anglo point of view; she learns to juggle cultures (Bernal, 1999). Within a Chicana feminist epistemology, the reference to borderlands refers to the geographical, emotional, and/or psychological space occupied by *mestizas* (Anzaldúa, 1987; Bernal, 1999). Anzaldúa believed that those individuals who are marginalized by society and are forced to live on the borderlands of dominant culture develop a sixth sense for survival (Anzaldúa, 1987; Bernal, 1999). Therefore, Chicanas and other marginalized peoples

have a strength that comes from their borderland experiences (Anzaldúa, 1987; Bernal, 1999).

Xicanisma, describes Chicana feminisms that are developed from and carried out to workplaces, social gatherings, kitchens, bedrooms, and society in general (Castillo, 1994).

To conclude this section on the *Xicanx/Latina* identity, it would be an honor to include Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa's words verbatim. Her valued definition and detailed characteristics of the duality of identity, that perhaps the women in this study have had to take, is legendary. Many scholars have cited her, and when searching the Internet for the seminal scholar in this area, her name surfaces repeatedly. Her words were chosen to explain this dual identity presented in this study because she is not only referred to as the founder of *Xicanisma*, but she also accentuates the lack of *Chicana* doctoral graduates. In 2005, the University of California Santa Cruz, posthumously awarded her a Ph.D. because this legendary woman was never able to complete this journey even though she attempted several times (Cantú, 2011). Anzaldúa (1987) wrote:

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality; she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. She can be jarred out of ambivalence by an intense, and often painful, emotional event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence. I'm not sure exactly how. The work takes place underground-subconsciously. It is work that the soul performs. That focal point or fulcrum, that juncture where the *mestiza* stands, is where phenomena tend to collide. It is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness—a *mestiza* consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm. (p. 79)

Finding Her Identity: *Máscaras*

Máscaras refers to the idea of having a dual identity as well; Latina women are many times forced to wear *máscaras*, or masks, to cover a brown face of identity (Montoya, 2014). Montoya talked about beginning her lectures at Harvard University in Spanish, and in *reflexión*, that was her way of challenging White space. For her, institutional power was denied to her because her act of unmasking, of speaking Spanish, that was perceived as an act of opposition. As the first Latina admitted into Harvard Law School in 1974, she learned to knowingly carve out a *brown space* in the legal academy (Montoya, 2014). In other words, her use of Spanish and other racial markers, was to see if the audience was open to moving out of White space. Because of a negative attitude toward Mexican immigrants, speaking Spanish was allying oneself with those who are seen by many as lazy, dumb, uneducated, and immoral. By beginning her lecture with a greeting in Spanish, she constructed herself as Latina, as a brown woman, and triggered the stereotypes that accompany those identities. Claiming the right to use Spanish in academic discourse is an important form of resistance against cultural and linguistic domination. It is a stand against cultural hegemony (Montoya, 1994).

Unmasking is both an expression of personal identity and an invitation to others to situate themselves within a consciousness of otherness, a place where they can have dialogs on social power and subordination (Montoya, 2014). The terms *outsider* and *other* are two words of identity used by Montoya to refer to persons who identify with traditionally marginalized or subordinated groups, such as gays and lesbians, people of color, women, and/or those who live in poor and underserved communities, often called the poor. The two words are also used instead of the term minorities because of the rate of population change in various parts of the country (Montoya, 2014). The concept of the other was borrowed from anti-colonial studies, feminism,

and postmodernism, and is used to show relationships of inequality and assumptions about inferiority. Furthermore, Montoya described silence around the issues of race and identity as a mask. Silence provides protection (Montoya, 2014).

Cruz (2014) elaborated on Montoya's (2014) concept and spoke to the symbolism of the masks. Masking is a metaphor for the assimilative process and it is a demand of education (Cruz, 2014). For Cruz (2014) and Montoya (2014) there is an assimilative pressure that requires those outside of the dominant frame to wear a mask and to mistrust or to mask the truth of themselves and their difference. Furthermore, these Latinas posited that the mask required by educational institutions creates very real challenges to actual intellectual diversity, autonomy, self-determination, and maintenance of identity (Cruz, 2014; Montoya, 2014).

Masks have symbolic power and spiritual significance (Cruz, 2014). Cruz compared the contemporary university experience with the indigenous *Zapatistas* (a Mexican indigenous guerrilla army). She described the modern indigenous resistance movements, and their meanings of masks run very deep. For example, for the *Zapatistas* who wear masks, their masks symbolize autonomy and egalitarianism. With the mask, they gave up the word or their voices so they could be heard; and by wearing masks they gave up their faces so they could be seen (Cruz, 2014).

There are multiple representations of wearing a mask. One representation is of no face, a representation of a faceless, global majority which is excluded from decision making (Cruz, 2014). Another representation of the mask is the disguise of the modern state and the increasingly small global ruling party. Masks can be transformative, and they can be representations of another symbolically significant identity. They can obscure identities to protect one's own identity; they can challenge, and they can critique power. Finally, they can

give face to previous invisibility. In considering masks in educational institutions, the masks can represent assimilation into the dominant knowledge frame that our educational institutions represent. The mask can also represent the masking of identity that occurs to protect our true identities in these institutions. In short, the masks in academia may represent the many ways in which the true self, particularly if it is *other*, is transformed, cloaked, suppressed, oppressed, or protected, including in the performance of identity, expression, and the production of knowledge (Cruz, 2014).

The metaphor of masking is directly linked to assimilation because assimilation has always been the primary task of the American educational system (Cruz, 2014). There is a danger of masking in the forgetting of the masked self, the tribal self, and the eventual transformation into the mask of Whiteness (Cruz, 2014). This act of masking illustrates the shifts and the changes that are fundamentally required in a movement from tribal knowledge systems to another knowledge system. It is the indigenous cultural understanding of masks, and even the modern indigenous resistance's use of masking that helps us to understand not only the transformative power of masks, but also the protective power and the symbolism of masks (Cruz, 2014).

Searching Further Within: Cultural Intuition

Cultural intuition refers to the unique viewpoints that a Chicana/Latina researcher has and brings to the research process (Bernal, 1998). It is also incorporated into the Chicana feminism framework. Bernal (1998, 2016) reimagined the notion of theoretical sensitivity precepts by Strauss and Corbin (1990) to describe four sources, or unique viewpoints, that Chicana scholars bring to the research process: one's personal experience, the existing literature, one's professional experience, and the analytical research process (Bernal, 1999). It is intended to be

an evolving concept and scholars such as Calderón, Bernal, Huber, Malagón, and Vélez (2012) have outlined this. The Chicana intuition extends one's personal experience to include collective experience and community memory and gives importance to the participants' engagement in the analysis of data (Bernal, 1999).

Personal experience. This component of cultural intuition refers to the background that each of us bring to the research situation (Bernal, 1999). Feminist scholars contend that the researcher is also a subject in her research and her personal history is part of the analytical process (Bernal, 1998). Chicana feminism extends this personal experience to include collective experience and community memory and emphasizes the importance of the participants' engaging in the analysis of data (Bernal, 1999). Through their past experiences, these individuals have acquired an understanding of certain situations and why and what might happen in a particular setting under certain conditions (Bernal, 1999). They have their ways of knowing; their stories are not to be regarded as just random stories, but as *testimonios* of authority and strength that demonstrate women's participation and leadership (Bernal, 1998).

This framework also says that personal experience goes beyond the individual and has ties to family and reverse ties to the past (Bernal, 1998). Personal experience is partially shaped by collective experience and community memory (Bernal, 1998). Through the experiences of our ancestors, our elders, Chicanas/Latinas carry knowledge of conquest, loss of land, school and social segregation, labor market stratification, assimilation, and resistance (Bernal, 1998). Community knowledge is taught to us through our legends, *corridos* (Mexican folk ballad), storytelling, behavior, and through the scholarship in the field of Chicano Studies (Bernal, 1998). Some of these stories may contain religion, mysticism, and urban challenges. This knowledge that is passed to us from generation to generation can assist us to survive life and can give us an

understanding of certain situations and explanations about why things happen the way that they do under certain conditions (Bernal, 1998). Scholars, such as Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005), have asserted that this unique knowledge comes from the intertwinement of collective experience and intuition in African American communities as well and provides one source of cultural intuition from which to draw upon during research of Chicanas/Latinas (Bernal, 1998).

Existing literature. Technical literature which includes research studies and theoretical or philosophical writings and nontechnical writings like biographies, public documents, and cultural studies writings are other sources of cultural intuition (Bernal, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Insight into data collected could be provided by these types of sources, and a sensitivity as to what to look for in the data (Bernal, 1998).

Professional experience. The researcher's professional experience can also be a source of cultural intuition (Bernal, 1998). Years of experience in a particular field can provide an insider view of how things work in the field (Bernal, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This experience helps to foster understanding in ways that are different from those with little or no experience (Bernal, 1998). The more professional experience one has, the richer the knowledge base and insight one will have (Bernal, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Analytical research process. The analytical research process is also a source of cultural intuition. As the process occurs, the researcher gains insight and understanding through the interaction with data (Bernal, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This comes from making comparisons, asking additional questions, thinking about what one is hearing and seeing, sorting data, developing a coding scheme, and engaging in concept formation (Bernal, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In her framework, Bernal (1998) extended Strauss and Corbin's process by including Chicana/Latina participants in an interactive process of data analysis. Chicana/Latina

scholars have a sense of cultural intuition that is different from that of other scholars (Bernal, 1998; Villenas, 1996). A Chicana/Latina researcher's cultural intuition is achieved and can be nurtured through personal experiences influenced by ancestral wisdom, community memory, and intuition (Bernal, 1998). Thus, cultural intuition is a complex process that is experiential, intuitive, historical, personal, collective, and dynamic (Bernal, 1998).

Searching Even Further Within: Her Sacred Space, *Conciencia y Conocimiento*

An important disruption to typical approaches to educational research is the way in which spirituality or spiritual activism (Anzaldúa, 2002) is present, explicitly or implicitly, in many conceptualizations of cultural intuition (Bernal, 2016). Indeed, a sense of personal and political urgency to address educational inequities within Chicana/Latina communities is often linked to a spirituality tied to struggles for social justice (Bernal, 2016). In her article, Bernal (2016) reviewed some of the scholars who are including this piece in their research; scholars such as De los Ríos (2013), who pointed to how a methodology born out of her own cultural intuition allowed her to weave together her intellectual, political, and spiritual work. Soto, Cervantes-Soon, Villarreal, and Campos (2009) connected the material and spiritual worlds within a pedagogy/methodology they call Xicana Sacred Space (XSS). In conceptualizing a XSS, these authors, stated Bernal (2016), expand cultural intuition to include spirituality as “a fundamental tool for those seeking ongoing reflexivity and a more natural approach to research rooted within our *mestiza* consciousness,” (Soto et al., 2009, p. 761). Cultural intuition conceived in this way gives scholars permission to incorporate Chicana politics of spirit into the research process (Bernal, 2016).

Within this realm of spirituality and *mestiza* consciousness, is the presence of La Virgen de Guadalupe. In 1531, La Virgen de Guadalupe, the Virgin Mary, the mother of God, appeared

on four occasions to the Nahua, Juan Diego, on Tepeyac Hill, in Mexico City, asking that a church and devotion be established in her honor there (Leatham, 1989). Mary's image was miraculously stamped onto Juan Diego's *tilma* (cactus fiber cloak) and has remained remarkably intact to this day. The image of La Virgen de Guadalupe aided in the easing of tensions between Indians and Spaniards in the 1530s. La Virgen de Guadalupe became a key symbol of hope and rallying point for the early Mexican patriots of the 17th century, was on the first banner of the independence movement, and became a leading symbol for *Zapatista* revolutionaries in Mexico (Leatham, 1989).

La Virgen de Guadalupe is often referred to as a *mestiza* who mediates between the Spanish belief system and the religious sensitivities of the indigenous Mexicans (Leatham, 1989). She combines opposing forces so that new life, not destruction, will emerge (Leatham, 1989). She is a role model of strength and an enduring presence who offers hope, love, and justice and also connects these concepts to the wider community (González, 1998; Rodriguez, 1994). She is also seen as a source of empowerment not only for Mexican-American women, but also for all women (González, 1998; Rodriguez, 1994).

King (2006) stated that La Virgen de Guadalupe is the first *mestiza*, the first Mexican. She is said to mark the birth of a new land and a new people; she is not European or pre-Hispanic, but both. Anzaldúa referred to her as a synthesis of the old world and the new, of the religion and culture of the two races in her psyche, the conquerors and the conquered. Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta carried the banner of La Virgen de Guadalupe in their struggle for economic justice for farm workers. Huerta is quoted as saying that she is a symbol of faith, hope, and leadership (King, 2006). La Virgen de Guadalupe is also the symbol of an ethnic

identity that unites people of different races, religions, and languages: “She manifests, symbolizes and activates the power of the people” (King, 2006, p. 1).

Theoretical Framework: Chicana Feminisms

A Chicana feminism framework was the theoretical lens employed in this study. The study’s focus is Latina women who may identify as Chicanas. This framework of Chicana feminism is used by a group of scholars such as Dolores Delgado Bernal. Some adaptation of general precepts by the feminist movement with references to historical scholars Maynard (1994) and Opie (1992) are included. Chicana feminism allows the researcher to situate how culture and gender intersect and impact how some Latina women manage their identities in the roles that they play in their personal, academic, and professional lives. Educational research that uses a Chicana feminist epistemological framework questions the ideas of objectivity and a universal foundation of knowledge (Bernal, 1999). It is focused on the lived experiences of Chicanas and involves the Chicana participants in the reflection and analysis of how their lives are being interpreted, documented, and reported, while acknowledging that many Chicanas have led lives that had significantly different opportunity structures than men or White women (Bernal, 1998). Also included in the framework is the concept of cultural intuition (Bernal, 1998). Chicana feminisms have developed from stages of history, including the Chicano/a movement, the women’s movement, and the civil rights movement that challenged such issues as racism, sexism, patriarchy, socioeconomic inequities, and power (Pérez-Huber & Cuevas, 2012).

Additionally, from these scholars a critical feminist framework of racialized intersectionalities, pedagogies of praxis, and empowerment have emerged. Chicana feminisms have transformed over time and inscribed into history counternarratives, *testimonios*, and *autohistorias* (autobiographies) that preserve and document experiential knowledge of Chicanas

that have been erased by imperial, colonial, and hegemonic feminist discourses. Chicana feminist scholars theorize from lived experience a knowledge base to understand, critique, and challenge systemic oppression and theorize identity, sexuality, body, resistance, healing, transformation, and empowerment. Moreover, Chicana feminist scholars assert that it is important to create feminist-oriented research practices that critique oppression within a history of colonialism, patriarchy, and white privilege (Pérez-Huber & Cuevas, 2012).

In the use of this framework, it is suggested that Chicana feminists participate in the role of resistance that has an emancipatory and transformative intent that seeks a more just and equitable educational pipeline (Sánchez & Ek, 2013; Scott, 1990; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). The use of this framework also joins this study to other studies that resist epistemological racism (Bernal, 1999; Scheurich & Young, 1997) and uncover untold histories (Bernal, 1999). Their stories will place these Chicanas as central subjects and will give them a forum—a safe space—to speak and reflect on their stories of school resistance, success, and perhaps, grassroots leadership (Bernal, 1999). This framework is drawn from Black, Native American, and Chicana/Latina feminists whose history arises from the social, political, and cultural conditions of Chicanas/Latinas (Bernal, 1999). Focusing this research within the experiences of Chicanas means that we deconstruct the historical devaluation of Spanish, the patriarchal ideology that devalues women, and the scapegoating of immigrants (Bernal, 1998). Finally, a Chicana feminist epistemology is focused on the historical legacy of Chicanas' resistance and therefore is the pursuit of social justice in both research and scholarship (Bernal, 1998).

What some scholars say that distinguishes this type of feminist research from others is the emphasis on gender divisions in social life (Maynard, 1994). Also, it is important to note that feminist researchers modified many existing techniques in qualitative research (Bernal, 1999;

Maynard, 1994). In feminist research, the researcher is not constrained by guidelines that say she must be an emotionally detached sponge while the participant is a passive giver of information (Maynard, 1994). Feminists have rejected what they refer to as a power hierarchy between researcher and researched. Research then becomes a means of sharing information and the researcher's personal involvement as the interviewer is an important element in establishing trust and obtaining quality information. Another way that feminist research may be considered distinctive is its potential to be political in nature by possibly bringing about change in women's lives (Maynard, 1994).

There are at least three ways that Chicanas may be personally empowered through participation in a research project (Opie, 1992): first, through their contribution to making a social issue visible; second, the therapeutic effect of being able to reflect on and re-evaluate their experience as part of the process of being interviewed; and third, the generally subversive outcome that these two consequences may generate. It is also possible that the researcher may be empowered in these ways as well (Maynard, 1994; Opie, 1992).

A Chicana researcher's cultural intuition, described earlier, is similar in concept to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) theoretical sensitivity, which states that it is a personal quality of the researcher based on the attribute of having the ability to give meaning to data (Bernal, 1998). This framework posits that theoretical sensitivity actually comes from four major sources: one's personal experience, the existing literature, one's professional experience, and the analytical research process itself (Bernal, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This study's use of cultural intuition and a Chicana epistemology may expose human relationships and experiences that are not visible from a traditional patriarchal position or a liberal feminist standpoint (Bernal, 1999). Within this framework, Chicanas become agents of knowledge who participate in intellectual

discourse that links experience, research, community, and social change (Bernal, 1999).

Further, a Chicana feminist epistemology must be concerned with the knowledge about Chicanas and must maintain connections to indigenous roots by embracing dualities (Bernal, 1999). Concepts such as *mestiza* and *Chicanisma* are unique to a Chicana epistemology (Bernal, 1999). The term *mestiza*, already described, implies a new Chicana consciousness that connects cultures, races, languages, nations, sexualities, and spiritualities (Bernal, 1999).

Her Voice-*Testimonios*

The genre of *testimonio* is rooted in oral cultures and in Latin American human rights struggles. It has evolved through the work of Moraga, Anzaldúa, the Latina Feminist Group (2001), and others who have reshaped the genre to reveal the power of *testimonio* to expose the brutality, disrupt the silencing, and build solidarity among women of color (Anzaldúa, 1990; Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012). The Latina Feminist Group are 18 Latinas who give *testimonios* of their lived experiences through a book they published in 2001. *Testimonio* is a genre used by educational scholars to challenge objectivity by creating a space where the individual, the *testimonialista*, has a collective experience that illustrates marginalization, oppression, or resistance (Bernal et al., 2012).

Testimonios as a genre was birthed in Latin America to give personal accounts of the struggles that Latino people encountered and gave them a vehicle to create solidarity among themselves while they revealed their oppressive life situations (DeNicolo & González, 2015; Elenes, 2000; Huber, 2008; Latina Feminist Group, 2001). *Testimonio* is also viewed as a narrative for social justice that creates change in a hegemonic society (Bernal, 1998; Elenes, 2013). Giving voice to people who have suffered oppression can be healing and empowering (DeNicolo & González, 2015; Elenes, 2013; Huber, 2009). Furthermore, the *testimonio* can also

be a call to action by shedding light on this oppression (DeNicolo & González, 2015). The use of the framework also suggests that Chicana feminists participate in the role of resistance that has an emancipatory and transformative intent that seeks a more just and equitable educational pipeline (Sánchez & Ek, 2013; Scott, 1990; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Testimonios con Reflexión from Within

Espino, Vega, Rendón, Ranero, & Muñiz (2012) defined *reflexión* as the examination of the inner self and sharing that inner self with a trusted dialogue partner. Through *reflexión*, *testimonios* move beyond self-reflection and self-inquiry toward a shared experience where dialogue partners reflect the truths back to each other as they share their own life journeys. This process accounts for the distortions and (mis)perceptions of the collected *testimonios* based on the oppression that continues to manifest itself within academia, connecting each of them to one another in the midst of racist, sexist, and classist environments. *Reflexión* helps to situate and explain how their lived experiences exist within a broader set of social and institutional structures. Through this process data can be analyzed at multiple moments in time (Espino et al., 2012).

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed some of the challenges that Latinas have endured historically in the United States of America, such as cheap labor, segregation, and deficit thinking. Also included were the concepts of *nepantla*, *mestiza*, *máscaras*, cultural intuition, *conciencia y conocimiento*, and the use of *testimonios*. The Chicana feminist framework and tools used by Chicana/Latina scholars to gather and record data was also introduced.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study employed a Chicana feminist lens to examine four narratives from participants who have completed a doctoral degree in education, either a Ph.D. or Ed.D. The *testimonios* from these participants who have accomplished this journey can add to our knowledge about the ways that some Chicanas have created strategies for success. Their ways of knowing can help other researchers who focus on the educational pipeline for women of color, especially the Chicana in a doctorate in educational leadership program and can also provide more understanding of the successful strategies that have been created and the potential benefits these women bring to the leadership and scholarship table (Santamaría et al., 2014).

This study collected the voices and lived experiences of four participants from an emic, or insider's, perspective, and may provide more information that explains the ways diverse women navigate the educational challenges of their doctoral education. This study adds to a growing body of literature on the ways in which race and gender directly affect scholarship and leadership, especially the strategies of women and people of color voiced through their own perspectives (Méndez-Morse, 2000; Santamaría et al., 2014). It also adds to the literature of the *testimonio* to collect truths and untold stories (Bernal, 1998).

This chapter introduces the guiding research question: In what ways do Chicanas perceive and understand their lived experiences through the completion of an educational doctoral program journey? It also explains the narrative research design employed in this study including sampling, data collection, and data analysis processes. Lastly, this chapter states the limitations of the study's generalizability due to researcher assumptions, the role of the researcher, and researcher positionality.

Description of the Study

Qualitative methodology was the best design for this research. It allowed for an in-depth conversation about how and why Chicana women are successful in completing the doctorate in educational leadership (Maxwell, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This approach produced the data needed to better understand the challenges that impact the perceptions and strategies of the successful Chicanas' journeys in a doctorate in educational leadership program and their certain ways of knowing how to succeed, data that could only be collected through personal interviews (Maxwell, 2013). This approach produced findings that could not be collected by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Qualitative research allowed me to explore and understand the meaning that the individuals in my study shared to better understand the social problem of the lack of Chicanas completing the doctorate (Creswell, 2013). The process of this research involved open-ended inquiry questions (see Appendix A). The questions were designed to probe for the participants' perceptions and meanings of their doctoral journeys. The data collected were in the form of *testimonios*. The data analysis process derived the themes apparent in the data through interpretations of the meanings that were shared and made (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013).

The qualitative research approach consisted of a set of interpretive practices that made the participants' world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). With the use of the *testimonios* gathered through individual and group interviews, conversations, audio-recordings, and memos, this study provided meaning to the lives of the four participants (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Maxwell, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This also created data triangulation to strengthen findings and conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the process, I kept my personal reflections and memos in a journal. The research journal assisted me in reflecting on

the research decisions I made in the data collection and analyses processes to help develop trustworthiness of this study's findings and conclusions based on the triangulated state collection approach (Richards, 2006).

Testimonios are a type of narrative research. Narrative research is a concept of life as narrative, and argues that human beings construct meaning, make sense, and engage in world making through narrative (Golsteijn & Wright, 2013). This process occurred through creating, telling, hearing, recording, and reading the lived stories of the participants. This approach of recording the *testimonios* in this study sought to analyze the storied way in which the four participants made sense and meaning from their experiences during the completion of their doctorates (Golsteijn & Wright, 2013).

The richness of description and interpretation is revealed through the *testimonios*, excerpts of which are reported in this study (Richards, 2006). This process came from my cultural intuition, philosophical assumptions, worldviews, and the theoretical lens (Maxwell, 2013) of Chicana feminism. The Chicana feminist epistemological framework was the overall theoretical lens employed in the data analysis process. This framework assisted in analyzing the data and situating how culture and gender intersected and impacted how the participants managed their identity in the roles that they played in their personal and professional lives.

Overarching Question

The overarching research question of this study was: In what ways do Chicanas perceive and understand their lived experiences through the completion of an educational doctoral program journey?

The sub-research questions of this study were:

1. In what ways do race and gender influence the doctoral experiences of a Chicana?

2. In what ways do cultural expectations influence a Chicana in her educational doctoral journey?
3. What challenges, if any, do Chicanas experience as a student in an educational doctoral program, both Ph.D. and Ed.D.?

Narrative Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design because it was concerned with the inquiry into the meanings people make of their experiences (Patton, 2002). Data were collected through the lived stories of my participants and with their *papelitos guardados* (protected papers) (Bernal, 1999; Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). Their narratives were their life stories that told the sequence of events of their doctoral journeys that are significant for both the narrator and the audience. As the participants shared their stories, they did not do so in isolation independent of their contexts, but instead both the individuals and their contexts were captured (Moen, 2006).

There are three basic claims to narrative inquiry that I kept in mind while collecting and analyzing the data: (1) human beings organize their experiences of the world into narratives; (2) narrative researchers maintain that the stories that are told depend on an individual's past and present experiences, their values, their audience, and when and where their stories are being told; (3) and that the various layers of their voices are able to be heard (Moen, 2006). The *testimonios*, or narratives, are the participants' personal stories shaped by their knowledge, experiences, values, and feelings (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Moen, 2006). At the same time, they are also collective stories that are shaped by the cultural, historical, and institutional settings in which they occurred (Moen, 2006). These lived stories of experience were shaped through discussions in a *plática*, and an individual dialogue. The four Chicana participants in this study and I worked together in this collaborative dialogic relationship. Data were collected in the form of interviews, a focus group, audio recordings and transcripts, field notes, and my researcher journal (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Although narrative research has many forms that may use a variety of analytic practices (Creswell, 2007), I chose to use a specific type of narrative design where the *testimonios* provided an account of participants' doctoral journeys that was chronologically connected to help give meaning to their experiences (Creswell, 2007). This narrative study had a specific contextual focus on Chicanas who completed the doctorate in educational leadership (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). The narratives were guided by a Chicana feminist perspective (Creswell, 2007).

The method of conducting a narrative study does not follow a lock-step approach, but instead represents an informal collection of activities (Creswell, 2007). I followed Creswell's recommendations by first making sure that my research questions fit my narrative design. This study also fit the guidelines for narrative research because it is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a small number of individuals. Second, I selected four individuals who had stories of lived experiences to tell and were willing to spend time to tell me their stories individually and then in a focus group. The third step was to collect information about the context of their stories. I situated the individuals' stories within each of the participants' personal experiences, homes, culture, race, gender, and their historical contexts of time and place (Creswell, 2007). As the fourth step, I analyzed the participants' stories, and then restoried them into a framework that made collective sense. Restorying is a process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework. Within this framework I gathered their stories, analyzed them for key elements, and then rewrote the stories to place them within a chronological sequence (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). During this process of restorying, I provided a causal link between struggle and outcome among ideas.

In the fifth and final step, I collaborated with my participants by actively involving them in the research process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As the researcher, I collected the stories, negotiated my relationship with the participants, created smooth transitions, and provided ways to be useful to the participants. In this process, we all negotiated the meaning of the stories and added a validation check to the analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Within the participants' stories, I could have interwoven my own story since I was gaining insight into my own lived experience as a doctoral student, but I chose to save that for a later piece of writing (Huber & Whelan, 1999). In short, this narrative study tells the chronological stories of individuals and their doctoral experiences set within their personal, social, and historical contexts and including important themes discovered in the telling and restorying of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Figure 2 illustrates the research design.

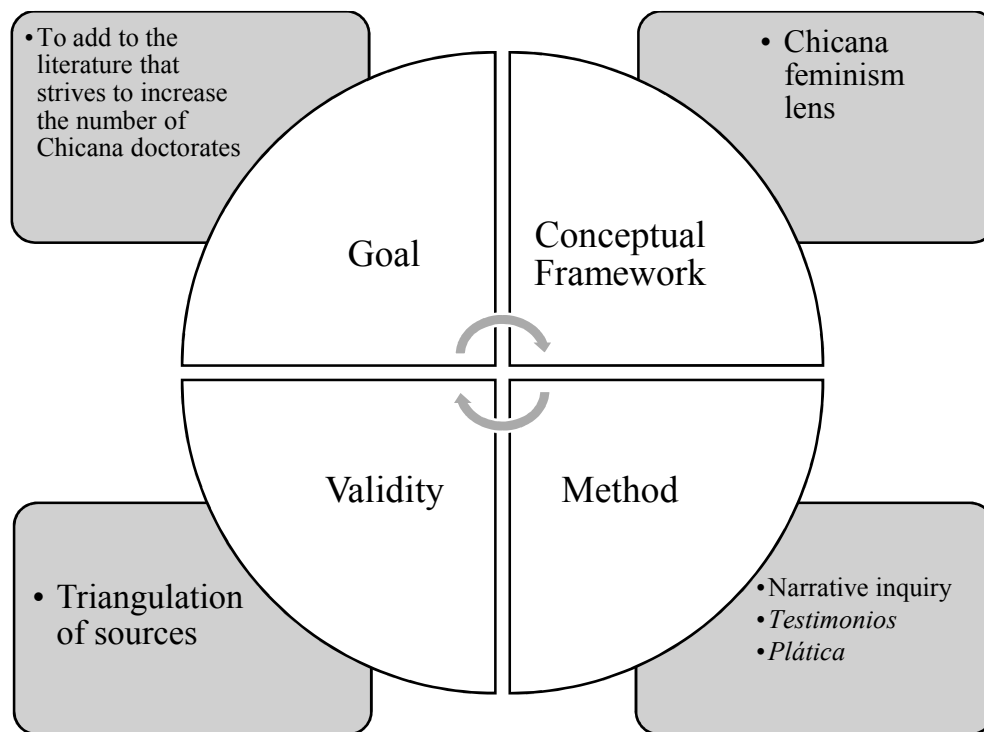


Figure 2. Research design.

Participant Selection Strategies

The accessible population of Chicanas who have completed the doctoral journey in educational leadership is extremely limited. As stated before, only 7.8% of all doctorates conferred to women in 2016 were awarded to Latinas (Snyder et al., 2018). Therefore, the snowball effect was used to secure four participants, Chicana women who have completed a doctorate in educational leadership, either Ph.D. or Ed.D., and who were willing to share their lived experiences. This procedure identified potential participants with information-rich stories from among my professional academic network and was, therefore, a form of convenience sampling (Creswell, 2013).

Outreach began with a friend at my university (see Appendix B for recruitment script). Outreach to her and others at the university for names of possible participants occurred immediately upon institutional review board (IRB) approval of the study proposal. Although

Creswell stated that narrative sampling can be limited to one participant, the sample size in this study was four, chosen to provide ample opportunity to identify themes within each individual case as well as cross-case theme analysis (Creswell, 2013). This sample size also aided in the feasibility of data collection and analysis and timeliness of study completion.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collected for this study were primarily *testimonios* that were semi-structured, interviews that had open-ended questions and elicited stories of the participants' lives (Creswell, 2013). There were two phases to the collection process. The paragraph after the section, *Testimonios: Giving Voice to the Participants*, gives a more detailed explanation of the phases that took place. It is important to first review the role of the *testimonio* in my procedure. This explanation will assist the reader to better understand this process.

Testimonios: Giving Voice to the Participants

The use of *testimonios* was incorporated into this study. There is no single definition of *testimonio* or requirements for how this technique should be used in research, so I allowed the process to develop organically (Huber, 2008). *Testimonios* have a long and varied history; it is most often seen as a voice from the margins or from the subaltern—a political approach that elicits solidarity from the reader (Bernal et al., 2012). *Testimonio* is and continues to be: 1) an approach that incorporates political, social, historical, and cultural histories; 2) an accompaniment to one's life experiences; and 3) a means to bring about change through consciousness-raising (Bernal et al., 2012).

In bridging individuals with their collective histories of oppression, a story of marginalization is voiced to elicit social change (Bernal et al., 2012; Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2016). *Testimonio* transcends the descriptive discourse to one that is more

performative (Bernal et al., 2012, 2016). The narrative story that emerges from the *testimonio* simultaneously engages the personal and collective aspects of identity formation while translating choices and silences. It engages the reader to understand and establish a sense of solidarity as a first step toward social change. The women who engage in the *testimonio* sometimes bring out their written *papelitos guardados* and roles filled in times of transition emerge. *Papelitos guardados* are both concrete and abstract notions of self during various points in one's life; some are shared openly with others, but other *papelitos guardados* are written in journals or filed in one's mind (Bernal et al., 2012, 2016).

Testimonios can be understood as a bridge that merges the brown bodies in our communities with academia (Bernal et al., 2012, 2016). *Testimonio* is process; methodology; a product; inclusive of text, video, performance, or audio; and a way of teaching and learning, pedagogy. As a process, *testimoniar*, meaning to give testimony, is the act of recovering *papelitos guardados*, previous experiences otherwise silenced, and unfolding them into a narrative that conveys personal, political, and social realities. One's *testimonio* reveals truths and how one has come to understand them. *Testimonio* bridges or serves to connect generations of displaced and disenfranchised communities across time and also serves as a bridge to connect the lived experience as a data collecting tool and as the analytical process (Bernal et al., 2012, 2016). The above explanation guided me in this process of data collection that was divided into two phases (see Figure 3).

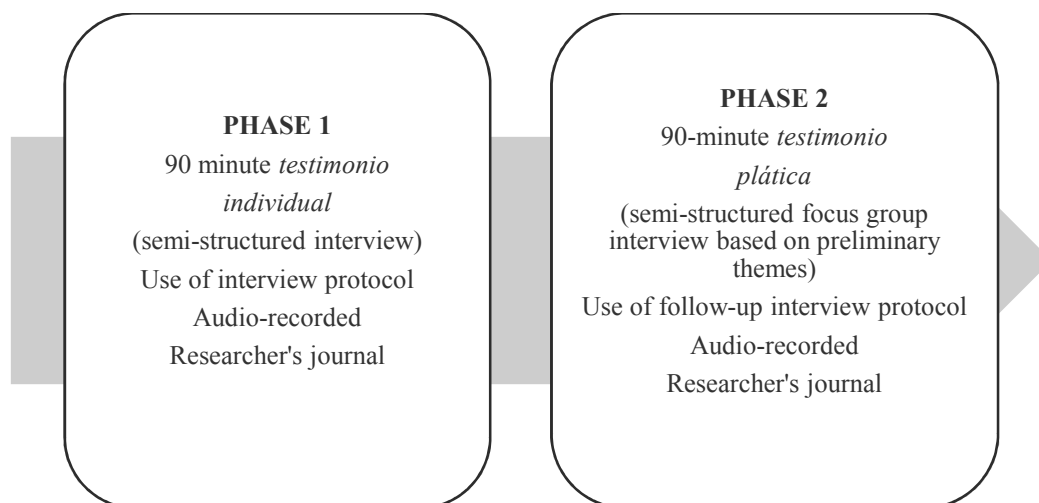


Figure 3. Data collection process.

Phase One of Data Collection

The first phase was preliminary data collection. Ninety minutes of *testimonio* time was scheduled with each of the participants. Since conducting a pilot study, I had learned that it may take at least 30 minutes to establish trust and for the participant to feel comfortable enough to open up. For this reason, 90 minutes was allotted to assure that enough data could be collected. During the remaining time, the participants were asked the prepared questions and a storied response occurred. With their permission, more time was taken to complete data collection. The questions were strategically designed to ask how, what, or why and they elicited the participant's perspectives, thoughts, and opinions (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2017). The use of audio-recording to collect all *testimonios* was used. This process captured the detailed stories of the participants' lives (Creswell, 2013).

It was important for me not to project my own ideas and biases so I was especially careful to make sure that the participants discussed their own perceptions and strategies (Fusch et al., 2017; Wolcott, 2009). For this reason, an open-ended question interview protocol was used for each participant (Amerson, 2011; Chenail, 2011; Fusch et al., 2017) (see Appendix A).

This preliminary data collection process was precious time devoted to active listening and building trust (Creswell, 2013). The mere opportunity of being able to grasp any bit of knowledge from these women was a privilege, and I believe they sensed that; their cultural intuition set in, as did mine (Bernal, 2016). This first phase of data collection, individual *testimonios*, took place at a university library that was nearest the participant's home and the campus invoked and stimulated memories of their doctoral journey. This place was also selected because it was a quiet location free from distractions that facilitated the audio-recording (Creswell, 2013). I took every step necessary to make the participant feel comfortable. All four participants arrived on time and eager to share their lived experiences with me.

Phase Two of Data Collection

The second phase of data collection was a type of follow up, a focus group *testimonio*, or *plática*; that was built upon the data collected in the first phase. Before the *plática* took place, I had a chance to do some preliminary analysis and was able to devise preliminary themes. This was important because the *testimonialistas* (participants) also had a chance to be in a state of *reflexión* of their life stories and return to voice anything else they wanted to say. Based on the themes from the first *testimonio*, I provided a specific frame for *reflexión*. This frame generated the *plática*, focus group questions and also served as a type of member checking of themes from the first phase of *testimonios*. The *plática* did not take more than 90 minutes and was also audio-recorded. This occurred at a university library conference room and stimulated answers that reflected the participants' perceived identity as doctoral students in educational leadership.

The use of *the plática* discussion provided the opportunity for the generation of new ideas (Breen, 2006). The focus group interview was aimed at collecting high-quality data in a social

context (Patton, 2002), and did indeed help me better understand the specific challenges that these women endured from their individual perspectives (Khan & Manderson, 1992).

Triangulation of the data collected from the individual *testimonios* and the *plática* was enabled through member checking and researcher reflection (Patton, 2002). Each participant was given time to review and comment on her individual *testimonio*, and the themes from the first phase were used in designing the frame of *reflexión* for the *plática*, and on the reported findings of her *testimonio*. I used member checking, also known as informant feedback or respondent validation, as a technique to help improve accuracy, credibility, and transferability of the study's findings (Thomas, 2017).

The use of audio-recording to collect the individual and focus group *testimonios* enabled me to listen to the participants' voices and allowed for them to have a created space at the analysis table as if they were present with me. The questions were typed out with plenty of space to jot down notes, but the movement of the story was so quick that I needed to be present, in the moment; thus, I did not have the time nor the desire to take notes. It was not until afterward that I made notes in my research journal. Also, a map of possible themes was also constructed to capture notes after the completion of the *testimonios*. The *testimonios* flowed naturally and quickly, so I allowed them to develop naturally on their own. I used a reliable recording tool called Zoom H6 with an iPhone as a backup. The device proved to be more than adequate with good playback quality. Participants were first asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix C). I made a schedule for all four participants for individual *testimonio* time within the same week. I thought this might turn out to be a challenge, but instead all four participants were very cooperative. Both phases of data collection were scheduled close together so that the participants were able to remember what they said in the first round of data collection. That was

also convenient for me to remember as well, and it was easier for me to make connections between all four *doctoras*.

All audio data were stored on a protected flash drive with a second drive as a back-up. All written transcriptions, journals, flash drives, notes, and consent forms were stored in a locked filed cabinet within a private research space created for this study (Creswell, 2013). Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect her identity and provide anonymity as suggested by Creswell (2013).

Data Analysis Procedures

The data in this study were prepared and organized for analysis as recommended by Creswell (2013). After each *testimonio* a transcript was immediately created. Taking the suggestions of Bernal et al. (2012), the analysis began with me as I worked closely with each *testimonialista* to bring attention to her experiences. I became what Bernal et al. (2012) referred to as interlocutor, a translator whose knowledge of English and Spanish became a filter to move from one language to the other as needed as I analyzed the data. Bernal, Aleman, and Garavito (2009) stated that the *testimonialista* is the holder of knowledge who disrupts the traditional academic ideals of who can produce knowledge. At that point in the research analysis, I was transformed into a Chicana scholar who was considered the “outside” ally and activist who brought attention to the conditions of the participants in this study (Bernal et al., 2012). Throughout this analysis process, it was my mission to achieve this level of in-depth insight. I then reduced the data into themes through a multi-layered process of coding and re-coding, and then condensing of codes (Creswell, 2013).

Reflexión: Reflecting on Her Voice

The data analysis process entailed much *reflexión*. In examining the exchange between and among Chicana scholars, Espino et al. (2012) uncovered an innovative methodological technique for bridging *testimonios* across lived experiences. This technique is referred to as *reflexión* and enhances the level of knowledge construction that the *testimonio* offers in formulating a collective consciousness across generations and social identities, crafting theories about Chicana scholars in academia, and demonstrating that lived experience is integral to knowledge creation. In short, through the process of *reflexión*, I spent many hours of examination and analysis of the *testimonios*. Attention was given to the details of the interaction with the participants, the dialogue in the *testimonios* between the participant and me, and the lived story that was recorded.

Espino et al. (2012) defined *reflexión* as the examination of the inner self and sharing that inner self with a trusted dialogue partner. Through *reflexión*, the *testimonios* of these Chicanas moved beyond self-reflection and self-inquiry and moved toward a shared experience where we, as dialogue partners, reflected the truths back to each other as my participants shared their own lived doctoral journeys with me. This process erased the distortions and (mis)perceptions of the collected *testimonios* that were based on the oppression that they experienced and were manifested within academia, binding each of them to one another in the midst of their racist, sexist, and classist environments. *Reflexión* helped to situate and explain how their lived experiences existed within a broader set of social and institutional structures. Through this process, the data were analyzed at multiple moments in time (Espino et al., 2012).

The use of the microphone and transcribing feature on my Apple desktop worked well for this study. These tools allowed me to review the data, the *testimonios*, the dialogues, many times

over, and made it feasible to review the data with *reflexión*. First, I extracted, through the highlighting feature, recurring critical race theory (CRT) (Pérez-Huber, 2010) and Latina critical race theory (LatCrit) themes about the challenges that these women experienced and witnessed in their journeys. I did this because Chicana scholars Bernal et al. (2012) stated that “*testimonios* are analyzed from a Latina critical race and Chicana feminist theoretical lens that allows us to name some of the challenges encountered in schools and to better understand how Chicana students respond to and heal from their experiences” (p. 365).

The analysis was multi-layered and I also recorded any *consejos* (advice) from the Chicanas about the how and in what ways that they were able to be resilient through their experiences. It was important to note that *testimonios* are an epistemology of truths and how these women have come to understand them (Bernal et al., 2012, 2016). It was also important that my study delved into the process of *reflexión* on a continuous basis and revealed how the participants used it. Furthermore, it was important to record and analyze how these *testimonios* demonstrated the possibility of social change and transformation of self and society (Bernal et al., 2009). My participants and I sought what Anzaldúa called a healing image, one that transforms consciousness; bridges our mind, body, and spirit; and reconnects us with others (Bernal et al., 2009). This did occur in what I call a *mesa de poder*, a table of power, where most of the transformation arose.

Much of the *reflexión* in this process relied on cultural intuition, part of the process of *testimonios* (Bernal et al., 2016). Reliance on the process of bridging and building theory was also adhered to. Both the collector and the one sharing a *testimonio* learns from and is changed by the encounter (Bernal, 1999; Creswell, 2007; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006). That is what happened in this research process; the participants and I negotiated the meaning of their stories

and that added validation to the analysis (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Within the participants' *testimonios*, I too gained insight into my own doctoral journey (Creswell, 2007; Huber & Whelan, 1999).

Also included in my data analysis were some select coding methods suggested by Saldaña (2013). Figure 4 provides a visual of the various coding techniques I chose to utilize from his long list of methods. I included: narrative, verbal exchange, structural, descriptive, emotion, values, evaluation, pattern, focused, and theoretical coding. Finally, data were recoded into themes.

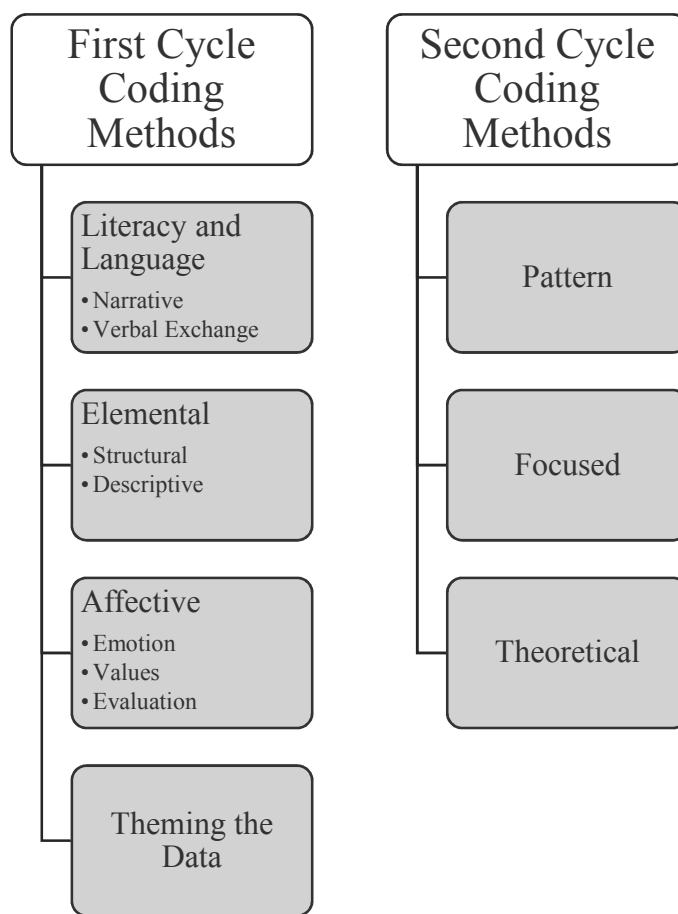


Figure 4. Saldaña's (2013) coding methods employed in this study.

Role of the Researcher

It is not my role to determine what is truth in the *testimonios* that the participants shared with me (Huber, 2009). My role was to understand their realities within the larger context of structural and systemic inequality within and beyond educational institutions (Huber, 2009). My role as a researcher was an emic one since I call myself a Chicana who participated in The Chicano Movement and who has dedicated a lifetime to social justice. My role was also etic, from outside the doctoral position, because my doctoral journey was not finished; this is why I have chosen not to include my own story. Furthermore, my job was to communicate, in both subtle and direct ways, that I wanted to know what the participants knew so that I too, could come to understand how they became successful, and perhaps I, too, would be able to *testimoniar* my lived experience in this process at a later time (Heyl, 2001).

Researcher Positionality

It is important to recognize that personal ties to any study may be both a hindrance and a valuable resource (Maxwell, 2013). My assets are many, but in particular, being a retired Chicana teacher and community leader, and one who is in a doctoral program, are characteristics that propelled me into an emic, insider, position with substantial cultural intuition. My ethnicity allowed me to quickly enter a space of trust because it was a space that both the participants and I shared. It was my intent as the researcher to always be cognizant of this privilege, and so I constantly strove to make sure that my own life experiences and perspectives did not take over the study.

Of course, I could not remove myself from the study. Who I am is what made the data collection process unique. My cultural intuition, my *reflexión*, gave me the ability to enter into the space beneath the surface, the space that was analyzed in this study. It was what the Chicana

world of academia needs and wants: Chicanas researching Chicanas. I am 67 years old, a second generation American and the first in my family to go to college. My life of poverty and segregated schooling was the same for my participants. I took brief notes in a journal, and I frequently reviewed my stance as the data collection and analysis progressed. I consciously made room for their stories. I took every precaution to be dependable and trustworthy so that who I am, a scholar and researcher, and what I have experienced, did not shed my own biases in the analysis; rather, I became a viable instrument to collect meaningful data (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I especially searched for the differences and surprises in the participants' stories. Figure 5 illustrates my positionality.

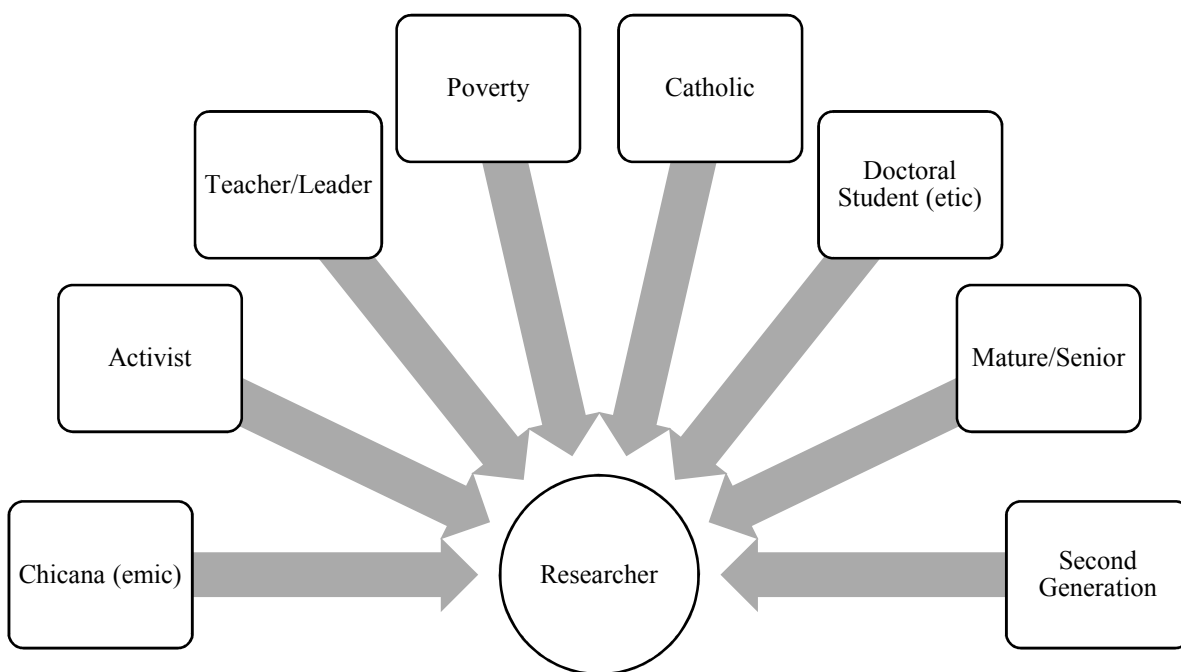


Figure 5. The researcher's positionality.

Assumptions

My assumption was that my sample size was sufficient for saturated, valuable, and meaningful data collection and that my participants' *testimonios* were honest. I also believed that the *testimonios*, both individual and those of the *plática*, were enough to triangulate the data.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the narrative research design of this study, the Chicana feminist theoretical framework and lens used to view the data, the data collection process of *testimonios* and a *plática*, and the data analysis processes used to give voice to the four Chicana participants who have successfully completed their educational doctorates despite the oppression that they have endured throughout their lives.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand the ways that Chicanas successfully navigate their doctoral education journey. The persistently low numbers of Chicanas completing this journey despite population trends in California, and the United States, made it urgent to address this issue. Given the growth of the Latino population in California, especially in our public schools, the addition of Chicanas at the educational leadership table can provide more diversity with appropriate needed insight into the struggles faced by Latino children.

Data from four *testimonios* and one *plática* from Chicanas with doctorates in education were collected for this study. This chapter presents the lived stories of the four participants in this study. The dialogue is mostly verbatim with appropriate transitions and removal of words such as umm, so, and like. Pseudonyms, transitions, and slight alterations, such as generic terms for universities, professors, and geographical locations were created to protect the identities of each participant. These steps were necessary to adhere to the ethics of social science research.

This chapter also outlines the themes collected from the data. The validation of themes triangulated with the *testimonios* of the participants within the *plática* follows the individual themes devised from the individual *testimonios*. Also presented in this chapter are the themes of the data using a Chicana feminism lens. Chicana feminism (Bernal, 1999) allowed me to situate how culture and gender intersect and impact how some Chicanas manage their identities in the roles that they play in their personal, academic, and professional lives. Chicana feminism also incorporates CRT and LatCrit themes and helped to guide the process of analysis employed in this study. The data were collected to better understand how the four participants understood and perceived their doctoral journeys.

The overarching research question of this study was: In what ways do Chicanas perceive and understand their lived experiences through the completion of an educational doctoral program journey?

The sub-research questions of this study were:

1. In what ways do race and gender influence the doctoral experiences of a Chicana?
2. In what ways do cultural expectations influence a Chicana in her educational doctoral journey?
3. What challenges, if any, do Chicanas experience as a student in an educational doctoral program, both Ph.D. and Ed.D.?

The above questions guided data collection, while the presentation of the data through *testimonios* allowed for the participants' voices to be at the center of this study. This next section presents their voices infused with their reflections on their doctoral journeys. Following each paragraph of *testimonio*, I added details that enhance understanding.

Individual Testimonios

Rosa's Testimonio: "You Must Have *Ganas* in Order to Succeed in Anything"

Born in a border town between the United States and Mexico, Rosa is the eldest daughter in a family of eight children. Her parents were both laborers and were already deceased when she began her doctoral journey. Professionally, she was a teacher who was recruited from out of state and then put in charge of the local Teacher Corps. She was also a principal, an assistant superintendent, and was and is, a community leader. Today, Rosa is a 76-year old activist who marched with Cesar Chavez; she protested, picketed, and continues to speak against injustice. She is married to an educated Chicano and has one educated daughter. She is currently CEO of a non-profit whose mission and goals are to preserve Mexican history, art, culture, and traditions,

and is the president of a local Mexican American coalition comprised of key Mexican American non-profit organizations whose mission is to speak against injustice. She shared:

In those years, we had a lot, a lot of support. They wanted you to succeed and they helped you in any way. I go back to the 60s, you know, when Chicana became a term to identify you as being Mexican and being for certain things in society, like believing in your race and knowing who you were. Many of us didn't know. I remember when I got to California; people didn't even pronounce their last names correctly; they Anglicized their names. So, that was the one thing I noticed; I guess I had an identity. I noticed the differences here. People were protesting with signs and all that right here. Those were the times. I know a lot of people didn't accept the term Chicana. I remember getting into arguments with people about it. I said, well, call me whatever you want. I know who I am. But a lot of them didn't want to be referred to as a Chicana.

Rosa explained the cultural climate of the 1960s and the Chicano movement. She came to California seeking a better job in the education field and found the people struggling to find their Mexican American identity, an identity that she felt she already had:

The only influence in my life has been my husband. And he, in a sense, encouraged me to go ahead. I went into the doctoral program because people kept telling me I should. I didn't necessarily want to do it. You know I never thought about it. I was satisfied with the masters. In those days, there were no Latinos at the university, but my husband decided to register anyway in a new program at the university. So, having more Latinos on the university campus made a difference. I did go, but I wasn't in their program. I was in my own program.

Rosa followed her husband to the university because she learned that the program that her husband enrolled in had outreached to Mexican American educators, counselors, and administrators. It was a special program for educators working with children who were learning English as a second language. She continued:

You didn't have many of us at the university. There were no Mexican women. There weren't any. But there were some Anglo ones, White women. As a matter of fact, they probably treated me better. I think they were very sensitive because those were the times, you know. I'm sure they went out of their way to make me feel comfortable and that. So, I never felt it. They did the same with Blacks, you know, one or two, not too many. You know how they go out of their way to make you feel good or whatever. I think in their minds that's what happened.

Rosa described the cultural climate of the university that she attended to get her doctorate. She talked about the support that she felt. Her comment has references to race and gender:

Culture to me always comes in many ways in how you relate to your experiences. In that respect, you are always behind. I saw that in studies, studying with groups. They knew more about life than I did at that time because they had been exposed to it, whereas, I had not. I was behind; so, I had to try harder; I had to work harder. It didn't come as easy. It was like they were all smarter than me. Because, you know, they knew; they had been to different countries and I had not even left the city. I saw that they understood more easily than I did. It came easier to them because of their exposure. I was the only one, the first one in my family to graduate from even high school. I went to all Mexican schools. In my hometown, they were segregated. So, I'm sure our education wasn't as good as theirs, just because of our experiences.

Rosa's comment made reference to segregated schools in her city that in her opinion did not give her the same quality education that Whites received. She also made reference to her lack of experiences that impacted her doctoral studies. There was an implication of her lower economic status and segregation due to race:

The only one family that I had at that time was my husband. To me he was great support because he is a Latino man, and many macho men would not have accepted that. I would hear the White women say, "I've got to do this for my husband; I got to go because I have to do this for my husband." They had commitments that their husbands expected of them. If I had to worry about what he wanted or what he expected of me, probably it would have been another kind of stress. Because you stress out anyway. It would have just added to it. But I didn't have them. I'm lucky that I didn't have that.

Rosa's comment referenced gender and indicated spousal support that was different from other women, both Latina and White. She offered more:

When I finished my studies, you know, we had to take an exam that everyone was dreading. You know, everyone dreads exams. Then when I finished that I guess I was so tired, you know. I mean, that just tires you out, and I wasn't going to do the dissertation. I had no plans of doing it, but the head of the education department drove me to do it. He kind of ordered me. He said, "You got to do it." I had had my little girl. She was about three or four. He said, "You should do it for her." I even dedicated my dissertation to her because I had to leave her at home many times when I had to study and do things. She suffered a little bit but she was too young to realize it, but that's where my husband also came in, taking care of her.

Rosa's comment referenced two support systems, her husband and her university department chair. It also referenced a theme of the Chicana mother as a role model. Rosa continued:

I learned things, methods, strategies that I could talk to my staff about. It also helped being among my peers who were also in education; they were principals. So, we would talk about it and I would learn about new programs. As a matter of fact, many of them would come to visit my school to see certain programs that I had that they didn't have. I was in an all minority school and they didn't know how to do things for minorities. So, they wanted to come to see my school; a lot of them would come. So, you know, we learned from each other and that helped because I was always interested in improving my school.

Although Rosa's previous comments about her doctoral journey stated that her segregated race hindered her progress, here, her statement showed her race as an asset. She recalled:

I remember a sense of pride. Well, I felt good. I don't know what the teachers told them but they said, well it was a very high title. Of course, kids, every time they came to my office, they thought they were going to get a shot because they thought I was a medical doctor, right? They didn't know the difference, you know. For me, it was just nice to be called that. Well, you know, you are happy that you have accomplished this, and they are kind of a reflection of that because they're addressing you, you know, as a doctor. I don't use the word doctor at all. Now it's just a title to me. As a matter of fact, I can't remember the last time somebody called me a doctor. To tell you the truth people don't know. I think it was more at the beginning and then after that you kind of forget about it. It's no big thing. In your community, however, with your *gente*, it was different because there they look up to you because you have a doctorate. I just see that people have more respect for you because they look at education as something meaningful, and they don't see too many Chicanas or Chicanos that have high levels of education. So, when they do, they like "aww," you know, like, "you're so smart." The parents, well, they were from a low social economic status. So, to hear that you are a doctor, they didn't think very many people could achieve that. When there is somebody who achieves it and they are right there talking and working with them, they hold you in really high esteem. In that respect, it was very positive, having it was positive. I don't know if it would've happened the same way if I hadn't had it. I did notice that they were very proud. They would say, "Here is our principal, Dr. Rosa," and they would make a big thing out of it.

Rosa commented about how she perceived her title as doctor. As she spoke about how unimportant she thought it to be, she gradually remembered how her school community

expressed great pride. She then emphasized how important it was and is to her Chicano community who rarely sees one of their kind reaching this status. Rosa reflected:

I always thought that when they said doctor, the audience expected a lot more from you. If you didn't come through, they probably dreaded it. I mean, I never heard it, but that's my feeling, you know. When somebody has so many degrees, you have expectations of them. So, it could be detrimental in that case. If you don't act the way they think you should act, anything like that could work against you because they have this mentality about what you should be. If you're not, then they ask, "How did she get a doctorate?" You know what I mean?

In the paragraph above, Rosa explained her reluctance to call herself a doctor. She explained that there is a certain perception by some people to expect more from a person who has a doctorate. In closing her personal *testimonio*, I asked her what recommendations she had for future doctoral candidates. She closed with the following *consejo*:

In Spanish, how do you say, *ganas*? You have to have that in order to succeed in anything. You've got to have it within you.

Ganas means desire; you have to want it.

Alma's *Testimonio*: "Education Is the Key Out of Poverty"

Like Rosa, Alma was born in a border town. She is a 63-year-old activist and organizer. She is biracial, Mexican Chinese, and is trilingual. Her parents are divorced; she was raised by a strong Mexican Chinese woman who worked for social justice. Although she was married to a supportive spouse at the time of her doctoral journey, she is currently divorced with one highly educated son. Alma was part of the first *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán* (MEChA) movement where she participated in many protests and like Rosa, continues to advocate for social justice in higher education. She has an MBA and an Ed.D. Professionally, she has been a professor, a dean, and a director in the California State University, University of California, and California Community College systems. Currently, she is an academic dean, a member of two dissertation committees, and a member of a task force that will create a new university. She is

also an active community leader and sits on various non-profit boards whose missions are to provide pathways to social justice. Alma began:

I come from parents, one who was born in Mexico, immigrated to America and then worked in the agricultural fields. Her motivation was to have her children be educated. So, from a very young age of three or four years old, I was translating for my mother who spoke Cantonese, Mandarin, and Spanish. The cultural aspect of socialization started very young for me, and I understood that education was a way out of the fields. This idea was ingrained in us in everything that we did, specifically, in doing our homework, and in teaching us multiple languages at a very young age. We could write in Cantonese, English, and Spanish. Education was very important, even our catechism. I was doing catechism in two languages before I was five. So, my mother's way of instilling in us the importance of learning was in everything that we did. There wasn't just one way or one modality for doing things. It was in everything that we did; learning was always an educational adventure, from a very young age. She would say, "You don't ever want to get into a situation where you don't understand or you can't read what they are telling you to do. You don't know if it's the right thing." She was very much into social justice because she helped a lot of people after she became an immigrant. So, I translated for her. I filled out documents by the age of five even though I could barely write. There were multiple ways that my culture instilled in me that education is the key out of poverty. Education also is a way to help others and to be part of the social justice movement.

Alma stated that at a very young age, her mother taught her the value of education and the assets that her race gave her. There are also references to cheap labor, immigration, English language learners, and the need for social justice work. Alma shared:

At night, I was a breast-feeding mother and I would stay up late. After, I would put the baby to sleep to work on my doctoral homework. The support that I received was from a very supportive mom. She lived with me for a year to help me because it was too hard to breast-feed at night and get sleep. So, she took the night shift to make sure that I got some sleep before I got up to go to work the next day. She did that because she didn't want me to fail. She had a third-grade education, but she was a force to be reckoned with. Even when she couldn't understand English, she was not going to let me fail. She made sure that I got some sleep, some rest. She did not want me to get discouraged because failure was not an option; she was a tough Chinese woman.

Alma described the strength and perseverance of her role model, her mother. She also made reference to the support she received during the doctoral journey and the resilience that her mother cultivated. Alma reflected on the start of her doctoral journey:

And I said, “Don’t you have any Latinas in your program?” And he said, “No, we don’t have any Latinas; we don’t right now.” So, I think he was a huge influence in my picking the university for my doctorate. He clearly valued the contributions that I could make and it proved to be true, all the way through the program. I was the only Latina; one was Asian; one was White and myself. We worked together, and we took the classes together.

This paragraph described two things. First, like Rosa, there was a lack of Latinas in her academic program. Second, like Mia whose *testimonio* follows, Alma embraced the Latina side of her biracial status. Alma revealed:

I’ll give you two examples; one was positive and one was negative. I will give you the positive one first. Dr. X, who happened to be Chinese, treated me like her daughter through the program. The minute she found out that I was Chinese, I told her I was mixed because I had a Mexican father. She ignored the Mexican part and took me under her wing, and I took all the cultural classes with her because she was just an inspiration to me. She was so supportive and it was the right connection.

Alma made reference to a type of *máscara* that hid her Mexican heritage so that she could successfully complete her doctorate. She continued:

I’ll tell you about another person and how he treated me; I won’t mention his name, Doctor M. He just had a problem with my being a Latina, an intelligent and accomplished Latina. At that time, I was a dean. I know there was one African American in the class, but she dropped the class, and I believe she dropped out of the program because of Dr. M. I don’t know of any others but I know for myself it was easier to find another concentration and start over again. I switched one of my concentrations because of him. I didn’t want him writing questions because in my day we still had to take a comprehensive exam. My saving grace was Dr. B. I had to pay more money; I had to take additional courses. But when he paired me with Dr. X., all that was forgiven; all that was forgotten. I gladly took the additional units that I had to, and I paid for them because my experience was so positive then. Race does play a critical role in how people treat you, perceive you, not just in life as a Latina but also in the level of intelligence or the lack of it that you bring to the table. A lot of times you’re excluded because of the perceptions of your cultural background or race.

Alma described a challenge she had to hurdle in her doctoral journey. She described how she had to change her concentration because the professor in charge did not think highly of her Latina race. She had to begin her journey all over again so that she could work with a Chinese professor who ignored her Latina side but embraced her Chinese side. As a result, she had to

take new courses and pay more money for them. She emphasized how her Latina side was perceived as a deficit. Alma reflected:

It was interesting that there weren't any cohorts in those days; it was just a class. I was the only Latina. There were educators, two school superintendents, one assistant superintendent, and there were two other college students that were in in my classes. The rest dropped out. Because we were all educators and worked together, we had a lot of respect for each other. Once we began our journey together, or maybe the first third of the program, we knew each other from work but we then knew each other as scholars. It was very interesting, the dynamics of the group, because as I said earlier, people perceive what your level of intelligence is. They perceive different things about you, until they get to know you. Once they know you, and you're accepted into the group, then a lot of those misconceptions fall by the wayside. I found that to happen. It happened here during my doctoral journey. It says a lot when people are encouraged and motivated by others who are so supportive. It feels good to be supported and to have people who believe that you're going to do it. So, it was an incredible experience for me because I think I had a very good team behind me.

Alma again made a reference to perceived levels of intelligence and expanded her explanation to include the need to know each other. She continued:

There are multiple stories that I could share because I passed my comprehensive exams. Of course, Dr. B was the first one to notify me. I had to know; I told him, I said, "If I don't pass them, I am not taking them again." He said, "No, be positive; I know you are." We also found out that many didn't pass, a lot of them didn't pass the first go. I realized that everything that everybody had told me, about my competence, my level of intelligence, my ability to get through this program, and the fact that I never doubted myself because of them, I mean, you always have a pebble in your shoe. You have it in your shoes through the whole program. It was a journey worth doing but at that moment, when I found out I had passed my comprehensive exams, that's when I said to myself, *¡Ya soy doctora!* I couldn't wait for commencement.

Here, Alma spoke with excitement about the end of her doctoral journey.

Mia's Testimonio: "It's in Your Blood, Work Ethic, Commitment, and Willingness to Keep Trying"

Mia is a 40-year old wife and mother of four. She is bilingual and biracial, Mexican White American. Her parents are divorced; she was raised by her Mexican grandparents and her White mother who, like Alma's mother, embraced her husband's Mexican heritage.

Professionally, she is a university professor, a dean, and an administrator. Like Alma, she has an MBA and a Ph.D. Mia is not active in the community but tries to advocate for social justice and diversity at a predominately White university. Apparently, this is difficult and she was reluctant to speak of specifics. Although much was shared in her *testimonio*, she felt uncomfortable allowing me to share much of it. As a result, her *testimonio* focuses on her insistence of social justice topics within her doctoral journey. She adds the category of class to the intersectionality of race and gender with an emphasis on diversity. Mia explained:

I should probably clarify why a term like Chicana works better for a person like me who is biracial. My Chicana side has more of an identity to it. I think it is a healthier term for someone like me because it's a choice; it's a lived experience; it's a commitment to use that term.

Mia explained why she became a participant in this study. She identified as a Chicana even though she is biracial. She saw the term as a choice. Mia offered:

The doctorate was probably a little easier because I had already been through undergraduate and graduate school, and I made more accommodations of how I was going to approach the doctorate. I did my masters too intensely; I dropped weight and well, dropped everything, pretty much. I had to re-introduce myself to my family. Whereas in my doctorate journey, I took it slow, one course at a time. So, I guess I planned my journey around being able to fit in my family expectations. I was more in control of that experience; I was choosing to be able to balance my family and still be on holiday or spend time with my grandmother. I would explain to her what I was doing, for example, in this thing called school. The next day she would tell me, for example, "I was praying to our saints and I looked at the clock when you were in that presentation or exam to help you." It was the cutest thing because she was trying to connect with what I was doing.

Mia stressed her choice again to take a healthier approach. Her path to her MBA was unhealthy therefore she strived to take her time in her doctoral journey. Her family obligations and expectations were her priority. She mentioned her grandmother several times and stated a spiritual tradition she learned from her. Mia continued:

I probably wrote two or three proposals before I got to the one I settled on, and that is probably tied to the cultural expectations of paying it forward, of service, making a

difference, of being a good representative of the group, and making the most of the privilege that you have been afforded because you know that statistically you are very rare, and not many people get the opportunity. So, I think that shaped my choice in course projects and my choice in thesis, but I would say that I am grateful that I approached the doctorate, now in hindsight, looking back, in a much healthier fashion than I probably did any of my other studies, and probably than I do work.

Mia again emphasized her health. She didn't say too much more about that and remained silent about other details, but this is the second time she referred to it. Also in this paragraph, she referred to her insistence of social justice topics, and of a cultural obligation to pay it forward.

Mia shared:

The person that got me to take my first class and then apply was the instructor. She had a social justice mind. She was going and finding people like me who didn't fit, or looked like me or was reflected in the program currently, and was bringing people in. We were a mix of people that she brought together. I joined a cohort that was not on pace with me. It helps because if you don't ever feel like you truly fit in, or as good in the program, you are just going to work harder which is typically the approach. It's almost like a corn maze; you just keep going.

Just like with Rosa and Alma, Mia implied that her university made an effort to recruit people of color. Mia did tell me that she was the only Latina in all of her classes, just like it was for Rosa and Alma many years before. She also implied that she felt like she never fit in and found it healthier to not be in a cohort but to instead take only one course at a time relieving herself of any connection. She explained:

It is a Chicana thing. I wouldn't say that others don't have it. I would say because I have studied culture and history of our people it's just in your blood and it's who you are. The work ethic and the commitment, the willingness to keep trying even if it takes circles and twists and turns, and the ability to reach into other sources of inspiration or support or foundation is in your blood. You know, like my grandma who prayed to a saint when I was giving a presentation was what it took to get me to use my voice in that presentation. Or knowing your history and being committed to topics that are not popular. Sometimes I find that it's not uncommon, especially if you are trying to write on a social justice related topic that others don't understand.

Mia stated the challenge that she experienced. She indicated that some professors could not understand the social justice topics she chose to write about. She also made mention again of

a family tradition of spirituality. There was also a reference to a Chicana's work ethic and commitment, and a reference, like Rosa and Alma, to a Chicana's ability to persevere in difficult times. Mia revealed:

I didn't even know the power of a doctorate until I had it. Once I had it, it was more something that you downplay, until you need to use it and then you use it to your advantage. So, when someone is trying to create a barrier for a student or not hear my voice then, guess what? They get to call me doctor. After I defended my findings, one of my committee members leaned in toward me and whispered to me that statistically there are very few of you and you should be very proud of that. After I thought about it more and more, then I understood what she was saying.

Like Rosa, Mia found it difficult to refer to herself as a doctor. In reflection, she realized that she did push the title when she had to. She also made note that she realized that there are very few Chicanas with doctorates. When asked what she wanted to say to current and future doctoral students she offered the following:

Find someone who can help you get through and understand the structures of the higher education system of your program, and the people in their cultural identity and norms of that specific environment. This is important to that part of the journey. That's my purpose for sharing because there might be someone who sees their self in me and won't have to triangulate and then twist and bend to interpret my message.

Gloria's *Testimonio*: "It Is About Building Power"

Gloria is 33 years old, born in Mexico but brought to the United States when she was 9 months old. She is a house partner and mother of a beautiful little girl who was born during Gloria's doctoral journey. Like Alma and Mia, her parents are divorced, and she was raised by a very strong Mexican mother. She was undocumented while completing all of her education. Like Alma, she was a MEChistA and an activist throughout her education. Professionally, she is an associate professor at a CSU and is a director of a non-profit whose mission is to advocate for social justice in schools and parental empowerment. She shared:

You know that's a loaded question. For the most part, culture, in terms of pride, and I know from my parent's education, was at the forefront. My mom only had a third- grade

education but returned as an adult to finish her high school; she earned a business administration certificate. Then my dad finished high school and also earned a business administration certificate. They both knew the value of education, but they didn't know there was more until they migrated here from Mexico to the United States. They realized that there was an abundance of opportunities in terms of what education can offer.

Gloria related how both her parents taught her the value of education. She also pointed out the difference in opportunities that America has to offer in terms of education:

But in the gender role, that was a little iffy. I think my dad, for example, didn't expect that I would go as far. He said, "Okay, you got your BA and so now it's time to settle, have a family." When I said I was moving away again, he couldn't understand. He believes, as a woman, I needed to settle down and have kids. He had a very hard time understanding why I would pursue graduate school, but my mom fully supported me. So, I think in terms of economic development, he was all for my education. But when I went too far, he was like, "This is too much." My parents are divorced; they've been divorced for 20 years now. My mom said, "You have to keep pushing. If I was not able to do it, then you can do it. You just definitely should go for it." Culture in those two ways, gender and economics, was a little different towards the end of my education pipeline.

Gloria's experience with her father echoed the traditional role of the Latina who is expected to have children and settle down. She indicated her father's acceptance that a college degree is necessary for a better economic status, but he did not support her higher education.

Gloria also noted the support from her mother and pointed out that her parents were divorced:

My mom paid my car insurance bill. This was a huge help but now, in reflection, I'm thinking about the sacrifices that she made even with the little bit that she had. Paying the car insurance bill was huge. She also took up extra shifts and did multiple things to make sure that she gave me the things that I needed. For example, she bought a bunkbed for me and my roommate; she made us meals.

As a result of her reflection for this *testimonio*, Gloria stated that she realized how much her mother sacrificed to support her through her educational journey:

I grew up here but I was born in Mexico. I was brought very little; I was like nine months. So, I don't remember growing up in Mexico. Because I was undocumented for so long, I wasn't able to have ties to Mexico. I was unable to go back. As a result, the city is my home. Just recently I became a US citizen, like two weeks ago. Growing up I wasn't able to apply; I had to wait about 10 years before I got my residency to be able to become a citizen. But then I pursued college, and I didn't have the money to apply. They didn't have the waiver system at that time. Just recently, I was able to get enough

money to put in my application. It took about a year and half though, to process. It's a very long time. But it's done; it's over. Now this year coming up will be the first time I can vote. So, it's exciting to have another layer of protection too because we never know what the Trump administration will do with permanent residents. There was a huge urgency for me to get my citizenship. Yeah, it was a lot and when I think about trajectory, especially in the way that my family raised us here in the city. They were very much focused on making sure that we got an education but that we also came back to help. A lot of our family didn't get the opportunity to go to college or they chose not to. When it comes to our family, I think we can really speak to that experience of being the first generation and being the first for a lot of things.

Gloria made many references to the immigration system and the impact it had on her pursuit of education. She also stated the fear that she had due to the Trump administration:

Yeah, I was the first to complete college. Now there are more of us in the family, but I'm still the only one that pursued a Ph.D. So, there are still a lot of questions. I think a lot of my family members don't know what that is still. They're very proud when they talk about me, you know? Someone in their family has a Ph.D. Being able to go by those letters has had a big impact on everybody, and they want to learn more and they want to hear about more of what can be done. Once you have those letters, ¿*Cómo se dice*? It's a very difficult role to adjust to because sometimes I don't like to say that I'm a doctor. It makes me feel very awkward. I don't know. It's been three years, but I still feel that sometimes I'm a little hesitant to use my Ph.D. Then I remind myself how hard it was to get one, and how big of an impact that has made for my family and for myself. So, I try to carry and call myself doctor more often, now, especially when I'm in spaces that are dominated by white men, or men, men of color, who want to control and own narratives. That's when I say, "Okay, this is why I'm supposed to be here. I'm supposed to name that I am the doctor because otherwise they try to erase you either way. It is terrible, just the dynamics. I'm trying to challenge myself to really utilize the Ph.D. in a way that is going to bring better opportunities for the women in our community and also visibility and voice to the issues that I want to speak to. But it is still intimidating at times to call myself doctor; I'm not used to that.

Like Rosa and Mia, Gloria too had a difficult time accepting her title as a doctor. She, however, also learned the power of the title, especially around men who tried to erase her voice:

So, because we are such a very small number, it (race and gender) impacts everything. For example, one specific thing that I can remember is mothering while doing the doctorate. There are not many Chicanas who become moms while trying to get their doctorate at the same time. At my university, opportunities would always go to the men because they were mostly available. They were readily available for the advisors, the mentors. We knew that the *mujeres*, there were five of us who became moms during that time that we were in our doctorate, were being dismissed. We would see folks presenting, co-authoring pieces. They would go through streamlines very quickly, but the

mujeres would always be left either trying to figure out how we could dip into those opportunities or create our own opportunities. Usually it would take months for them to sign off on projects we wanted. So, it was very difficult.

Gloria pointed out how her gender was slighted and had no opportunities given to her in her department. Because she had become a mother, she was perceived as not being available to present or publish. She was treated differently:

So, I think it was gender. I had to make a choice, and I had to really align myself with other moms who were either getting their doctorates or who had already received their doctorates. I think the other piece also for me, in terms of race, just being Chicana or identifying as Chicana, the IRB process was rough, especially for research one institutions where data collection or research is not valued in the same way as STEM. So, we really had to make the case that our research was very unique, even though it's already unique because of the stories that we are trying to capture. But trying to have the IRB and sometimes even your own committee believe that the topic you are about to research should be supported. I still had to strive to do even more, and it was very exhausting at times. It was tiring, and it placed me in a very self-doubt mode. I wondered if the institution was just doing this for lip service. "We're including 10% of our Hispanic or Latino population or Chicano, but in practice we don't really work with them, you know. We just check our box." It becomes very frustrating and so I tried my best to not let that take me away from wanting to teach and be a researcher. Because even then, people question you all the time.

Gloria stated her biggest challenge was her gender and her Chicana framework. As a woman with a child, her department bypassed her for important opportunities. She believed that even the IRB did not value Chicana topics for dissertations:

In my cohort, there were three Latinas; only two out of the three finished. There was a lack of mentorship for sure. They picked favorites; that was very evident. It was nasty at times, messy. Being outspoken is seen as inappropriate or unprofessional. So, it was really interesting how the social justice faculty pushed us to go back to the institution at times. Even though that's not how they got there. I came from a very social justice minded department; their research was refreshing. But, when it came to mentoring the next-generation of scholars, there was a huge disconnect. We were not getting the tools that we needed. Then they left, and the university did nothing to fill that gap to continue this generation and then the department fell apart too. Everybody started leaving for the same reason. As faculty, they were not getting supported so they had to go elsewhere to get support. So that left a gap. Mentorship was key and so I think that was why a lot of students ended up not being able to finish within their timeline. For example, I have a very close friend, also from that department, who is going to finish, hopefully, in the next month or so. It took him nine years, and it took him nine years not because he didn't

have the grit or because he didn't have the beautiful research project, but because the mentorship wasn't there. His whole committee was nonresponsive or not answerable to him. He was doing stuff around the LGBTQ plus and the Latino community. I feel that there was a lot of that, making a priority for some students while other students stayed behind. If you didn't fight for yourself then nobody else was going to fight for you.

Gloria described the disconnect that she saw happen in her department. Although she previously described how she was passed over because of her mothering, she now described the lack of mentoring for marginal people. She commented on the lack of support of a social justice department that fell apart therefore impacted many of those in the doctoral journey:

I was lucky to have at least five or six strong *mujeres* in my doctoral circle, and we held onto each other. We said, "We need to support each other and finish together." But that was a combination of five different cohorts, some who had been in the program for four years to some people who had just joined the department. We bonded together and told each other, "Let's make this happen!" All of us finished, but it couldn't have been without each other's support. The faculty was in and out.

Gloria described her greatest support, other Chicana mothers:

I think gender was where they treated me different, when I was pregnant. My adviser, who I will not name, my first adviser, I told her I was pregnant; I was going into my third-year of my doctorate. I had finished all my coursework and had just done my exams. I said, "Hey, I'm pregnant so I'm going to have my baby." My advisor responded, "Oh, I don't think that's a good idea. You might not finish. Yeah, congratulations, but here are the things that are going to become very challenging for you." It really got to me. It definitely got to me.

This is the second time Gloria mentioned this challenge. Her advisor saw her differently when she became pregnant:

So, let me tell you a good story. There was a professor, well, he's retired now, and he was the department chair when I got into the program. When he found out that I was pregnant, he quickly signed me up for an independent study. He said, "This is a mentorship study. I want you to finish. I'm here to support you." Here's this white faculty guy who is about to retire. He was telling me the opposite of the other Chicana professor. I saw him automatically as an ally.

Gloria specifically named a Chicana advisor as a hurdle in her program:

I think it was because of a Chicana professor. I mean, she was in that department when she had two kids while she was a freshman faculty member. He would always talk about

her. He would say, “She stepped up to the end, but she was very vocal about what she needed while she was pregnant, and obviously as a faculty colleague, my role is to support my colleagues. How can I support you?” It sounded like he received a lot of mentorship from her on how to support women of color and women while mothering.

Gloria continued to explain why the white faculty member may have been so supportive:

Yeah, I think being far away was a challenge. When you pursue education outside of your hometown, the distance in geography becomes an issue. When I did my masters, I went to a far-away city. I lived in that city for three years. That was my first time really leaving because the other city where I did my bachelors was not too far, and I would go back home every weekend. When I was away- away, I think there were moments that were too lonely. I needed to build community quick otherwise I did not want to be there. So, being far away made me get homesick and outside of that I had to also deal with the imposter syndrome at my institution. So, I was quick. I had to figure out my community. Who was going to have my back? The imposter syndrome was so real at times.

Gloria added more challenges that she had to endure and pointed out the tie to her family was especially hard to live without. She also pointed out the imposter syndrome she experienced:

I think finances were also an issue, not an issue but a huge challenge. That was the first time I took out loans. I graduated with a BA loan free; I had no debt. So, when I went to get my masters and my Ph.D., it was like, whoa. I had to take out loans if I wanted to complete those programs in a timely manner. That was scary. No one tells you about the finances and how to build your credit while you’re a student. That comes with cultural wealth, right? My family, they’re not into the credit card business and they don’t know how to build wealth in the economic system. So, there were things that I was learning as I went, and sometimes it got out of hand.

Gloria explained the financial challenge of paying for her higher education:

OOO, I got the chills. You make me cry, Sandi. I think when I realized was when I read the acknowledgment piece to my dissertation. That became really real. Yeah, that was the moment. Because *alli*, I was thanking everyone; I didn’t do this by myself, right? I didn’t think of the crazy thing of becoming a doctor by myself. There were people who planted that seed.

When asked how she felt when she knew that her journey was finished and she was finally going to be a doctor, Gloria remembered all those who helped her achieve this. When

asked if there was anything she wanted to say to current and future doctorate students, she gave this *consejo*:

So, there are two things. I think motivation, for sure; keep that hope alive. Optimism is important. Recognize your tools; ask yourself what did you do to get through? How do we make it, like what your question was, what would I want different if I were to go back? What were the tools. This is not just like documenting again; it is not only just for history like they say, historical purposes. It is really about building power. I also think mentorship is important. I probably would have been more demanding on that front if I knew what I needed to ask for. Now in hindsight, it's okay. Students need to demand that there be a check-in, consistent check-ins. Students need to know that they need to ask for their timelines and how their committee is supposed to support them. So, in terms of mentorship, I would redesign that for myself. One of the specific things is publishing. It's not enough to just be done with coursework and to do your research. Apparently, we also have to publish, and no one told me that. No one told me that out of all that theorizing, I should've been producing some publishing work. Now I am in the job market, third year into it. I had to find work full-time. I didn't get to publish a lot while I was a student or graduate student, and now I have even less time to figure out my publishing game. Yet, that is a huge requirement of the job market, to be in the professorate. So, I'm a little upset about that because my department didn't tell me. They didn't create pathways for me to see that if you're going to go into the faculty route, here are the things that you have to work on. No one told me that it is encouraged for your adviser to co publish with you.

Gloria spoke directly to doctorate students who want to become professors. She talked about demanding consistent check-ins, and the need to publish or co publish. She stated that in the process of seeking work at the university, this is what is required to get hired.

Discussion of Triangulation of Data within the *Plática*

The *plática* proved to be much more than a simple member checking tool. There were some differences from the data of the individual *testimonios*; the theme of the Chicana *doctora* identity transformed. Also, the themes of the importance of mentorship and the influence of spirituality were emphasized as the *doctoras* voiced their lived experiences in the doctoral journey.

Research Question 1: Perceptions Due to Race and Gender

The theme of identity is prominent in the Chicana feminist framework (Bernal, 1999). The scholars using this framework confirm that the narrative story that emerges from the *testimonio* simultaneously engages the personal and collective aspects of identity formation while translating choices and silences (Bernal et al., 2012, 2016). This concept was also confirmed by this study; the collective aspects of the *plática* transformed the theme of identity for each woman. The term *Chicana* refers to her race and gender. The participant's perception of how her race and gender influenced her doctoral journey changed in a collective environment. The perception changed from a negative and deficit-point of view to one of a positive asset and empowerment. Specifically, Research Question 1 asked: In what ways do race and gender influence the doctoral experiences of a Chicana? This stimulated a great discussion, but for some, race and gender were viewed separately.

Chicana identity, race, and gender. Rosa believed she was academically deficient in her doctoral journey due to her race that forced her to attend segregated schools. She made no reference to her gender but did directly state that her academic deficiency was due to her race. Perhaps she thought both men and women suffered from segregated schools equally. She noticed the difference between her doctoral classmates and herself. She stated that she had to work harder to keep up. Most of what she described was primarily from a negative perception. Even when she described how her university and White peers went out of their way to make her and other minorities feel welcomed, she concluded by implying that she never felt welcomed. She said that "in their minds" they perceived that they welcomed her.

Alma also believed that her race was perceived as a deficit in her doctoral studies, but she also believed that her gender was slighted as well. She relived how she struggled with a White

male professor who perceived her Mexican identity as deficient; she was forced to restart her journey with a Chinese female professor. Although this change helped her succeed, the new professor ignored her Mexican identity, perceiving it as deficit. As a result, Alma had to use a *máscara* that hid her Mexican side as she embraced her Chinese side.

Mia believed that her Chicana blood gave her a good work ethic, a commitment and a willingness to keep trying. Her statement implied that her journey was difficult, but she persevered because that is what Chicanas do. Different from Rosa and Alma, she emphasized that her Chicana identity was an asset during her journey. Her comment is actually bittersweet because although her words focused on the positive attributes of her race, she reminded me that it is a race that must struggle. It is the repeated struggle that has forced the Mexican people to learn how to persevere. Many of her comments also reflected how she never felt like she fit in, and how she never thought that she was good enough to succeed.

Gloria did not believe that her Mexican race was an issue since she attended a Hispanic serving institution (HSI). She did, however, believe that her gender impacted her identity and self-worth and then as a result, influenced her doctoral journey. Gloria's pregnancy during the writing of her dissertation changed how others perceived her and served as a great challenge to receive the resources she needed to succeed. She believed that she was ignored and isolated due to her new mothering identity while the males were given special treatment.

Race and gender: La Chicana, collective transformation. Gloria was the only one who had other Latinas in her cohort and in her department. The impact of being the only Chicana in a doctoral program may have a bigger impact than we think. I say this because when all four participants sat at the same table, I noticed a change in the way they spoke and in how they perceived their identity. Even their words became more positive. All four participants used

positive and inspirational words of description when speaking about their journey and their identity as a Chicana and the influence that had on their journeys. How they perceived their race and gender's influence on their journey began to transform. Even their tone became more positive. During the *plática*, all four participants consistently used positive and inspirational words of description when speaking about their journeys and their identities as Chicanas who persevered and became *doctoras*. Resilience, perseverance, *familismo*, spirituality, and a commitment to social justice was voiced.

When the women gave their individual *testimonio*, they spoke mostly about the challenges they had to overcome. They spoke about the deficit-thinking of their peers, professors, and administrators. When the women came together for the *plática*, they spoke of how they persevered and how important it was that they finished. They spoke about meaning and purpose. They spoke about social justice. They stated that their successful journeys and doctoral completion betters their communities. Although all four, when alone, were reluctant to even refer to themselves as *doctoras*, in this *plática*, as they revealed the oppression that they felt during their journeys, they all agreed that they had earned a place at any educational leadership table. They voiced that they should have pride as they recognized that only a few have experienced their success and they are role models to those who come next. They stated that their journeys were necessary for them to complete in order to earn the respect of all others at the education table.

Research Question 2: Cultural Expectations

In response to Research Question 2: In what ways do cultural expectations influence a Chicana in her educational doctoral journey, the traditional view did not exist. The cultural

expectation has traditionally revolved around *machismo* and *marianismo*. A woman's traditional role in a family is as primary care giver and submissive wife (Mendez-Luck & Anthony, 2016).

Family support: *Familismo*. Many scholars have written about the theme of *familismo* that explains the family support that a Chicana receives. Three of the women in this study, Rosa, Alma, and Gloria, requested that I add the great influence that their husbands had in their successful completion of their doctorates. Rosa did not have any family since she left her hometown and both parents were deceased. Her husband provided great support by taking care of their small child and took on many home chores so that she could be stress free to work on her degree. She pointed out that her husband was different from other Mexican husbands since he was not a *macho*. Gloria's partner became a house husband so that she could focus on completing her journey. This is a rare status for most Mexican men who traditionally are the bread winners. Although Alma's mother lived with her for one year while she was breast feeding, her husband took on most of the house chores when his mother-in-law was not there to help. Mia was not married at the time and her family did not understand her journey. This theme is a relatively new addition and focus for the Chicana. Rosa stated, "Good thing he wasn't a *macho*. He is Mexican but he is very different." Gloria agreed:

Same here. I think my partner was very influential. He followed me places. So, I think that I was, I don't know, very blessed. Then when we found out we were going to have a baby, he decided to be a stay at home dad because he knew that the timeline was important.

Research Question 3: Challenge of Deficit Thinking

In response to Research Question 3: What challenges, if any, do Chicanas experience as a student in an educational doctoral program, both Ph.D. and Ed.D., the theme of deficit thinking arose. Deficit thinking occurs in various forms, both externally and internally. For example,

educators express deficit thinking when they attribute students' struggles in school due to their culture (Guerra & Nelson, 2010).

Exclusion due to deficit thinking. Alma stated, "There are some faculty who will always believe that you don't belong there." Mia agreed and stated that some faculty will not find social justice topics on culture and intersectionality valuable. These are topics that Chicanas find useful, but Mia believes that some faculty are not comfortable with them because they don't understand them. She asserted that, "It is easier for them to make you the deficit."

All four participants agreed that exclusion as a result of deficit thinking continues today and is one of the greatest challenges that Chicanas face in the doctoral journey. Alma stated that it won't change for a long time. This was interesting data because these are four Chicanas who have lived in America from 1943 to the present, 2019, and have gone through the complete educational pipeline. Mia stated that one could argue that the system has improved in some way, but it hasn't moved in many other ways. Gloria repeated her stance that many professors at her university expressed deficit thinking toward women who were involved with mothering during their dissertations and found that viewpoint didn't change for her in the work environment either. When I look at this theme from the perception of the women's Chicana identity, I see that all four saw themselves lacking in some way, due to who they are.

Mentorship. Another theme that surfaced in the individual *testimonios* was mentorship and this was also emphasized in the *plática*. Gloria asserted this need since she realized that it was lacking in her doctoral journey and she considered the lack of mentorship as a challenge. She believed that a good mentor would have helped her get through the challenge of deficit thinking. Rosa and Alma agreed; they had department chairs and professors who supported them at crucial times so they knew how important this was for them to meet the challenges that they

had to conquer during their journeys. Member checking occurred in the *plática* and what followed was an on-the-spot mentoring from the older *doctoras*, Rosa and Alma, to the younger *doctoras*, Mia and Gloria. Gloria stated:

We are emphasizing mentoring as a response to deficit thinking. Now that we are part of these major roles even before as students you know, in college, we gave voice and also urgency for mentoring to be the center of a lot of the things we did. Now, as professionals, that will continue. It doesn't go away. That is always going to be important.

Alma responded to Gloria by saying that they as young professionals still working in the educational system, must take on the responsibility of mentorship. She stated, "It is your responsibility as young women, to help mentor that pipeline but not in isolation." She added that we have earned the right to be at the table, but we must assert our way because we will not be asked. Gloria stated that many of the young people she mentors today cannot conceptualize the history of what has made their path easier. She said, "We have work to do to make sure that young people understand what has happened for many decades for us to even be at the table now."

Rosa's belief is somewhat different. She thought that sometimes we are not asked to sit at the table because the "others" do not even realize that they are excluding us. She believes that the system has been in place so long that they just automatically do what they do. She also cautioned the women that we must not insist because then we are seen as troublemakers whom no one wants at the table. I found this to be interesting coming from a devout and vocal activist. The above responses that included what they thought is important for the future generations is actually a perception of why Rosa, Alma, Mia, and Gloria found their journeys to be so difficult.

Spirituality. The theme of spirituality arose as a response to the women's challenges, but this may also be viewed as a cultural expectation. Rosa stated that she was always praying to

God so she could finish something in her doctoral program. Alma responded, “Yeah, I was doing that all of the time to be able to turn it in with the rest. *¿Cómo se dice?* In English? With a song and a prayer.” Mia corrected her and said, “I think it was a wing and a prayer.”

Of the four women, Mia had spoken about her family tradition of praying to the saints, and that it had assisted her through her doctoral presentations and exams, but she was silent about this during the *plática*. She did, however, nod in affirmation as the other two women spoke of their beliefs. Gloria, who has a master’s degree in Chicano Studies, had a different perspective. She spoke about Chicana feminist theory and scholars who write about body, mind, and spirit and the combination, making sure they are not siloed concepts. She said you must balance all three. The readings she did for her master’s program made her question her Catholic beliefs at times but she concluded by stating, “There was a reliance on it for me to finish.”

Commitment to social justice. This theme could be considered a cultural expectation, or it can be seen as a response to the challenges that the *doctoras* experienced in their doctoral journeys and in their lives in general. Rosa engaged in the fight for social justice before and during her doctoral studies. Rosa marched with Cesar Chavez as they sought justice for field workers who toiled as America’s cheap labor and received little compensation. Most importantly, these activists asked for better working conditions that had better water and hygiene facilities and were free from harsh pesticides. Rosa also worked hard for affirmative action through a program called Teacher Corps so that more Chicanas could have access to teaching positions.

Alma confirmed Rosa’s work when she stated, “That also helped to build the teacher pipeline.” Alma and Gloria were active members of MEChA, an organization that protested and demanded equity for all Chicano/a college students. Gloria also worked for her university’s

Educational Opportunity Program, where she specifically fought for better educational opportunities for underserved students. Mia did not engage in public activism, but consistently sought to write about social justice issues even though her professors did not support, value, or understand them. All four participants, embraced their race and gender, their Chicanism, and were well aware of the challenges that they endured as they sought to complete their doctoral journeys. Table 1 provides a brief overview of the general themes in this study.

Table 1

Central Themes

| Theme | Brief Description | Example |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Chicana Identity: Race/Gender | Self-perception Others' perceptions <i>Máscaras, Nepantla</i> | The women's <i>testimonios</i> revealed how they and others perceived them by race and gender and how that perception influenced their journeys. |
| Challenges | Deficit-thinking Self/others Oppression due to Race/gender | Rosa, due to her race, attended segregated schools. She felt behind academically. Alma had to hide her Chicana race. Mia had to push back to be able to write about her race and its issues. Gloria endured exclusion as a result of her gender. |
| Spirituality | The influence of faith in God | All four women prayed to get through. |
| Social Justice | The commitment to social change and justice | All four women believed and embraced social justice. |
| Support System | <i>Familismo</i> , the importance of family | The three married women had husbands who were very supportive. Three of the women had mothers who also were supportive. One created her own group. |

Chapter Summary

Chapter four presented the *testimonios* of four Chicanas who completed a doctorate in educational leadership. This chapter also outlined five central themes; Chicana identity, challenges, spirituality, social justice, and support systems, collected from four individual *testimonios* and one *plática* from a blend of the traditional methodology of Creswell (2013) so that readers could understand the Chicana feminist lens guided by Bernal (1999).

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter includes a brief overview of this qualitative study. It describes the problem, purpose, methodology, and the major findings organized by research question. This chapter also presents a discussion of the findings, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research.

Study Summary

Although California has seen a continual surge in the Chicana population, it has not seen any critical mass of Chicanas completing the doctoral journey in education. Their absence creates a lack of diversity and equity at universities, and also creates an absence of appropriate insight into the struggles faced by Chicana students today. It doesn't give Chicana graduate students much hope for support or success, nor does it provide a sense of belonging in higher education. For some students, this may even be a deterrent to try to seek and complete a doctorate in education. Perhaps this is one of the reasons our enrollment and completion rates are so low and continues to be the lowest of all ethnicities despite the fact that Latinos/as comprise the majority of the California population today. This is the problem that motivated me to pursue this study. It is a problem that merits more research, especially regarding Chicanas who did complete this select higher education journey. Thus, the purpose of this study was to describe the ways that Chicanas successfully navigate their doctoral education journey.

My choice to use a Chicana feminist framework was to showcase current and previous Latina and Chicana researchers, because while they do exist, they are not usually referred to or studied in the university classroom. I collected data in the form of *testimonios* from four Chicanas with doctorates in education and conducted one *plática* where they collectively

discussed their four histories of oppression. My study gives voice to my participants who shared their stories of marginalization with the intent of also eliciting social change (Bernal et al., 2012). I also chose to honor the few Chicana *doctoras* who have come before me by using a Chicana feminist lens to analyze the data so that it might be a model for future Chicana doctoral students. The *doctoras* and I engaged in critical *reflexión* into our personal experiences within the sociopolitical realities of the completion of the doctoral journey at four predominantly White institutions and one HSI (Bernal, 1998; Espino et al., 2012). I have re-storied their *testimonios* to be counternarratives to the other stories that have been written about us for too many years, especially by those who were not Chicanas. The question that drove this study was, in what ways do Chicanas perceive and understand their lived experiences through the completion of an educational doctoral program journey? To facilitate the data collection the following sub questions were used:

1. In what ways do race and gender influence the doctoral experiences of a Chicana?
2. In what ways do cultural expectations influence a Chicana in her educational doctoral journey?
3. What challenges, if any, do Chicanas experience as a student in an educational doctoral program, both Ph.D. and Ed.D.?

These questions opened up so many perspectives from the participants, and what follows is a discussion of what I found to be reflective and meaningful of their perceptions.

Discussion of the Findings

Even though each participant in this study had different perceptions of her own journey, all four *testimonios* revealed thematic similarities within their Chicana identity, the challenges they experienced due to being Chicana, and their use of spirituality and family support that helped them to get through their program. Each major theme overlapped with each other and

created many sub-layers of perceptions within each theme, making it very difficult to separate them completely (see Figure 6). As a result, I chose to weave those themes into my responses to the research questions in this chapter. I believe that my study collected sufficient data to answer each of the semi-structured questions, and the *testimonios* gave insight into the successful journeys of my four participants. What follows are the three research questions and the major findings drawn from the *testimonios*.

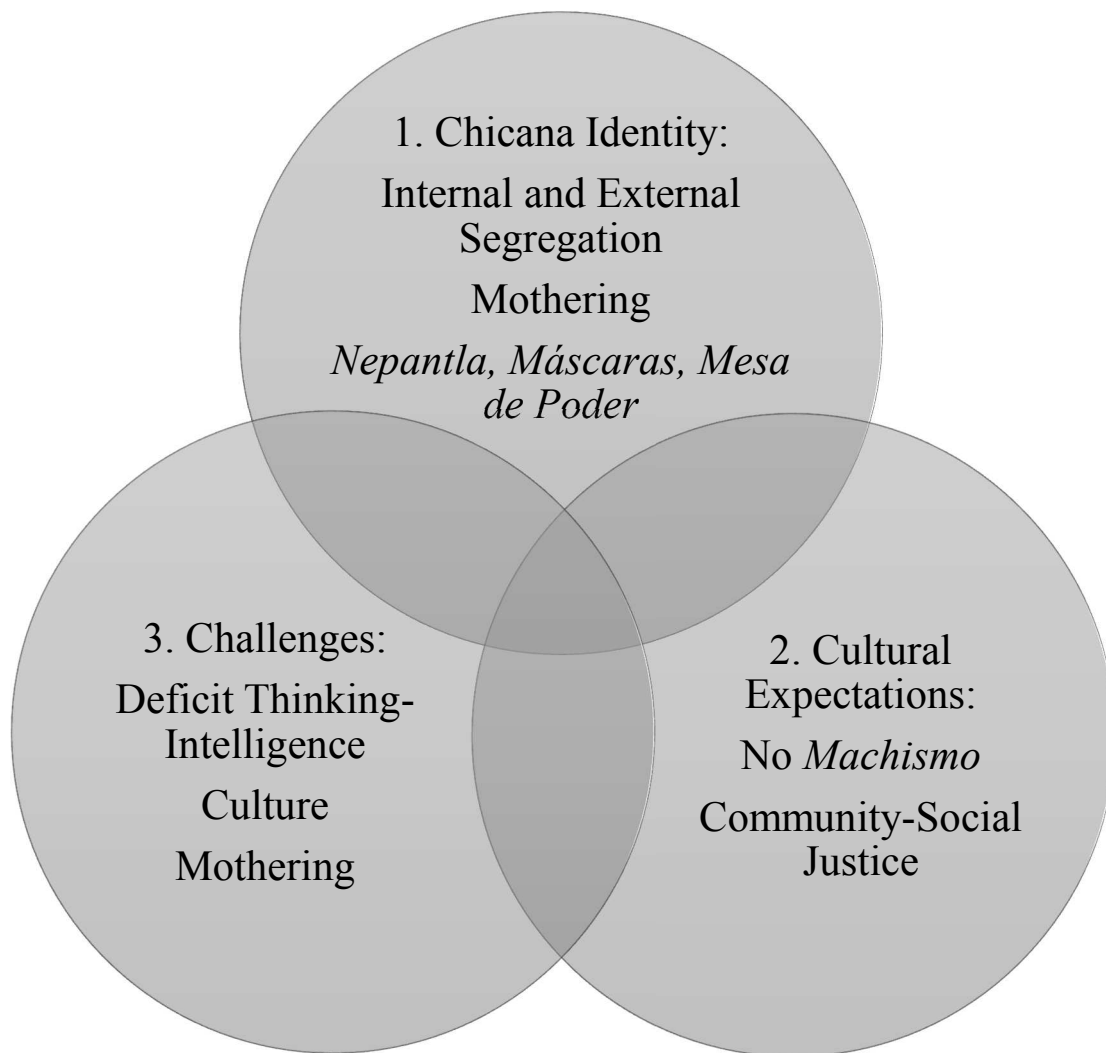


Figure 6. Intersection of themes.

In What Ways Do Race and Gender Influence the Doctoral Experiences of a Chicana?

What I found was that all four of my participants revealed that their race and gender influenced their journey. The findings also suggest that the influence of being Chicana within a doctoral program goes deeper than just the academic ability required by the degree. The following themes describe the ways that race and gender influenced the doctoral experiences of these four Chicanas.

Chicana identity. What this study found was that race and gender influenced how each of these Chicanas viewed herself and her self-worth, thus influencing her experiences in her respective doctoral program. The *testimonios* suggest that the Chicana identity of these participants, inundated with historical and current oppression (Prieto & Villenas, 2012), was deeply internalized, more so than for those who might experience typical imposter syndrome at the doctoral level. Their sense of belonging within their program was marred by the aftermath of segregation. All four of my participants grew up in either *de jure* or *de facto* segregation. Based on their *testimonios*, the data suggest that the impact of their childhood segregation directly influenced their perceptions of race and never left their consciousness. For example, Rosa did not believe she was as good in the program as any other person; her mandated segregated schools were not as good as non-segregated schools and did not prepare her for higher education. Alma believed she was not perceived as intelligent by her professors; her family immigrated from Mexico and lived in a segregated neighborhood with neighbors who could not read or write English. Mia, segregated due to her socioeconomics, believed her professors did not align with her Chicana social justice values and beliefs; as a result, she had to battle to keep her choice of topics for research. Finally, Gloria, segregated due to her English as a second language tracking, believed that she was purposely and repeatedly passed over because of who she was. For these

women, their race and gender was a reason that they felt deficient, isolated, and that they perceived their doctoral journey was so difficult and challenging.

Real or perceived, these data provide suggestive evidence that segregation places an unjust burden of historical oppression on the shoulders of Chicanas. The load is so heavy that it may deform the person's psyche if she chooses to carry it. These findings are consistent with previous research that uncovers the layers of impact on the psyche of a segregated and isolated segment of society (Strum, 2016). They also suggest that current research that has its foundation formed by the arguments of *Brown v the Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) and asserts that segregation inflicts a psychological wound is consistent with this study (Valencia, 2005). Also, studies that use the Coleman Report of 1966 that argued that segregated schools have material inequalities (Echavarri & Bishop, 2016) are also confirmed by this study. Based on these findings, I assert that segregation impacts the perceptions of segregated people throughout the educational pipeline. However, these findings that are compatible with previous research differ in the area of outcomes. Previous research has stated that educational outcomes are limited (Echavarri & Bishop, 2016), but these participants succeeded despite their perceived and experienced oppression.

The data suggest that these participants created a strategy to counter the oppressive narrative. They considered themselves deficient, but unique, and transformed their load from burden to one that created strength and perseverance. Some researchers refer to this as their safe space, their *nepantla* where they built the resilience they needed (Prieto & Villenas, 2012). Mia said it best in her *testimonio* when she stated that it's in our Chicana blood (resilience) and it's who we are; we have a work ethic, a commitment and willingness to keep trying, and the ability to reach into other sources of inspiration or support. This finding is consistent with previous

research that asserts that our many years of oppression has taught us to know that we can endure, regardless of the racism, classicism, or genderism that may insist that we are not good enough, therefore, do not deserve to have a seat at the leadership table (Mora, 1993). These participants voiced this awareness in their *testimonios*.

The findings further suggest that the participants internalized racial oppression but consciously suppressed an overt reaction. This seemed to be evident in every *testimonio*, regardless of age. Each participant was consciously aware of what people thought about Mexican ethnicity and seemed to accept the belief that the White race is still regarded as supreme and that *Chicanisma* is still viewed as deficient. This factor was a strong motivator for each participant to create a third space that would build up her own perseverance and strength that she believed she inherited. This seems to mean that although our Chicanas in doctoral programs appear to be confident, accepted, and at home within their academic programs, most likely that was not the case. Creating a third space is consistent with previous research (Anzaldúa et al., 2003; Keating, 2006; Segura, 2003).

Nepantla and máscaras. The findings also suggest that the theory of *nepantla* may still be a useful way that Chicanas successfully navigate their doctoral journeys. The theme of *nepantla*, creating one's sacred space, emerges from this analysis of internalized oppression. Coined by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), and developed by past scholars (Anzaldúa, 2002; Bernal, 1998; Elenes, 1997; Mora, 1993) and more current scholars (Burciaga, 2007; Keating, 2006; Pizarz-Ramírez, 2007; Prieto & Villenas, 2012; Segura, 2003), the Chicanas in this study believed that becoming *nepantleras* influenced the successful completion of their doctoral journeys. Rosa created a space to work harder away from the other students; Alma changed space to make room for a different chair who was not Chicana; Mia moved through her space

slowly taking classes one at a time because she didn't want the program to make her physically sick; Gloria gathered other Latinas from different cohorts to create a new space of support. This may mean that the ability to adapt, to move from space to space, and the knowledge of how to seek refuge in a created third space, is necessary for women such as these participants. This study found that these Chicana doctoral students had a cultural sense of their status as a people, and that awareness helped them create a sacred space to build the resilience and perseverance that they needed to combat the challenges that emerged, both internally and externally.

The *testimonios* also provided data to suggest that they may have learned this approach from a strong mother. Three of the four participants were raised by a divorced mother. All of those mothers were marginalized and challenged with raising daughters alone. Although none of them completed the educational pipeline, they did model survival strategies and strength that were likely developed by their borderland experiences (Anzaldúa, 1987; Bernal, 1999). The participants' strong mothers influenced these Chicanas on their doctoral journeys. The findings are compatible with previous research that shows evidence of the importance of mothers as role models of strength and resilience (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015).

The findings of the *testimonios* of these Chicanas also reveals that their cultural intuition and lived childhood experiences led them to do what they had to do, which is consistent with prior research (Bernal et al., 2016; Calderón et al., 2012). They hid, they masked, and they silenced their voices in their external programs, but internally, they suppressed their challenges and obstacles and created their own space that paved a new road for them. This road led them to a strengthened Chicana identity. When the broken educational pipeline tried to eliminate them as

refuse through its cracks, these women survived by flowing in their created and creative *nepantla*.

The findings based on all four *testimonios* suggest that each participant was aware of the faces of oppression explained by Young (1990), having lived them. As a result, they suppressed or covered the microaggressions hurled at them by their programs by using *máscaras* to shield them and to hide any overt reactions. These women chose not to create conflict; they chose not to challenge the White space status quo (Montoya, 2014) knowing that perhaps it would be a losing battle. They chose to remain silent. This finding is compatible with research by Montoya who asserted that the silence around issues of race and identity is a mask of protection.

What also emerged in the findings was that even the stronger Chicanas in this study had a tendency to hide or negate their identities, their *Chicanisma*, by using *máscaras* in addition to creating a third space (Cruz, 2014; Montoya, 2014). Previous research may refer to this as assimilation, but this study negates that concept. These findings surprisingly suggest that the masks were only used temporarily to become invisible for the time needed. This finding supports previous research by Cruz (2014) who found that women give up their face in order to be seen. What this may mean for this study is that temporarily masking one's identity is power. It means more than mere assimilation; it means transformation.

All four participants confirmed in their *plática* that the work of adding more *doctoras* of education to the leadership table is a battle that will not be won in our lifetime nor in generations to come. This finding also suggests that the stigma of being Chicana is one that these Chicanas, although social justice advocates, chose not to address. Instead, they chose to complete their journeys in whatever disguises they could create so that they could have a chance to become leaders in the field of education, a field that they believe is where a difference can be made.

Social justice. Social justice, a characteristic of the Chicana identity, is a strong motivational factor that influences the Chicana doctoral experience. Evidence of *conciencia y conocimiento*, conscience and understanding, of the issues was found in each *testimonio* (Anzaldúa, 2002; Bernal, 2016; De los Ríos, 2013). This finding confirmed and is consistent with Chicana feminist theory that asserts that there is a creation of empowerment when a Chicana is aware of her historical oppression. Bernal (1998) referred to this as community knowledge passed from generation to generation. Each participant voiced that she realized that her completion of the doctorate would make her a part of social justice change. All four were aware of Latinos/as' low rates of doctoral completion. This motivating factor to change those statistics created *ganas*. My findings indicate that each *testimonio* also showed this sense of purpose and motivation, and that it was a positive factor that urged and influenced each participant to complete her program. They regarded their completion as a means of resistance to the status quo.

In What Ways Do Cultural Expectations Influence a Chicana in Her Educational Doctoral Journey?

The role of the woman in Chicana culture has traditionally been perceived as one of *marianismo*, a submissiveness to our macho men. Women are expected to serve unconditionally. This study found evidence that suggests otherwise.

***Familismo* and its changed cultural expectations.** Although this study's findings do support the tradition of *familismo*, family support, it found that the traditional cultural expectations of the Chicanas' roles in each of their families was different. The myths of the demands and expectations of Mexican culture on the domestic responsibilities of a married woman are contradicted in this study. I found that regardless of age, each Chicana participant in this study was not expected to be the submissive caregiver. None of the women had kitchen or childcare responsibilities because either a mother, a husband, or both, readily performed all duties, thus allowing the Chicana students to focus mainly on their doctoral journeys. This supporting factor may mean that the Chicana family unit values the educational journey for women much more than other scholars have previously found.

A surprising finding from the *testimonios* of all three married Chicanas was that the husbands and partners of these participants took active roles as caregivers in support of the completion of their partners' doctorates. *Machismo* in these Chicana homes dissolved into a partnership of mutual support, especially in the area of education. Since the husbands and partner were also educated, this finding may mean that as Chicano men successfully struggle through the pipeline themselves, they are more aware of the challenges their spouses endure. This study found Chicano men to be supportive and did not fit the historical *machismo* role.

What Challenges, If Any, Do Chicanas Experience as a Student in an Educational Doctoral Program, Both Ph.D. and Ed.D.?

There were two major kinds of challenges that I found in this study, challenges of participants' self-perceptions, and those that were created by the doctoral education system. The *testimonios* revealed that both types of challenges negatively impacted the doctoral journeys of the participants, but these women created a resistance strategy to overcome their challenges. Their strategies support the research that many Chicanas create their own spaces, their *nepantla*, and some put on *máscaras*, to become who they need to be in order to get through their programs successfully (Anzaldúa, 1987, 2002; Anzaldúa et al., 2003; Keating, 2006; Mora, 1993; Pizarz-Ramírez, 2007; Segura, 2003). This also suggests that the space created in *nepantla* builds resilience.

Deficit thinking continues to be a major challenge. Deficit thinking emerged as a primary challenge that these Chicana *doctoras* faced while on their doctoral journeys, consistent with previous research. Chicana ethnic values have been viewed as deficits without regard to structural inequality (Guerra & Nelson, 2010; Zambrana & Hurtado, 2016). This may mean that this type of thinking about Chicana ethnicity is still very much ingrained in higher education today. This may also indicate that Chicana research has not been and is not being taken seriously by academia.

Although I did not ask specific questions about the types of curriculum used in their programs, the presence of ethnic deficit thinking reported by the participants in this study may suggest that their professors and doctoral leaders, regardless of the time period, did little to address this issue. This may also suggest that the absence of Chicana research as a model for

excellence within the university doctoral curriculum tends to reinforce this deficit thinking towards Chicana culture. Certainly, if not reinforced, the absence does little to support it either.

This study found that three out of the four participants were the only Chicana in their doctoral cohort with no Chicana professors to serve as role models. Chicana doctoral students are not the only ones who see very few Chicanas in doctoral programs; the others, the majority White students and Black students, see that as well. Their absence may also reinforce deficit thinking for those other doctoral students and professors as well. To them, it may appear that since Chicana are not there in large numbers, it is because we don't value the doctorate, can't afford it because we are generally cheap labor, and/or aren't intelligent or otherwise capable enough to make it to this level of education. These doctoral students become educational leaders, and I assert that they carry this perception of Chicana with them to whatever institution they lead. As a result, they too may continue to perpetuate the deficit thinking of our Chicana ethnicity.

The data further suggest that being the only Chicana in the cohort challenged participants' sense of belonging. With the exception of the youngest participant who attended a HSI and was able to seek out other Chicanas to create a new group of collaboration, the other three participants found it challenging to collaborate with anyone else in their cohorts. This may mean that these participants did not feel comfortable with the other students' races and or ethnicities; and they did not trust that those students would see their worth. It may also mean that the other students did not feel comfortable with them either or saw them as deficient.

This study found that all four of the Chicana participants needed help and guidance to successfully achieve all the requirements for their doctoral degrees. None had academic resources or funds of knowledge in their homes so they relied on their institutions. This study

also found that the lack of Chicana *doctoras* in their departments hindered their access to any kind of trusted mentorship with doctoral faculty. The findings indicate a great need for mentorship, which is consistent with previous research. Scholars have written that mentorship interactions and experiences acknowledge and validate personal and social adjustments, called interpersonal validation, for Chicanas pursuing higher education (Ek et al., 2010; Rendón, 1994, 2009). Validation serves to motivate and empower individuals in a group as well as the collective (Ek et al., 2010; Rendón, 1994, 2009).

Data also suggest that challenges came from within the Chicanas themselves as well as from their doctoral programs. Rosa's challenge was academic; she had to work at keeping up with her peers, a result of her education in segregated schools. Those schools were created because historically, America's educational leaders believed that the Mexican ethnicity was deficient and should be segregated. Alma's challenge was a professor that didn't think she was intelligent due to her *mestiza* Chicana ethnicity. He believed what the majority of America believes; he believed that she was deficient. Mia's challenge was the lack of support for her research and writing. Her professor did not see any value in the social justice topics that she chose. This may mean that he believed that research of color is deficient. Gloria's greatest challenge was with her department that didn't see her as professorial material since she chose to have a baby during her doctoral journey. She was not invited to publish or to present at academic conferences. The university leaders knew the importance of these activities for her career pathway, but saw her as deficient. In short, this study found data that suggest that all four of these women were challenged by a deficit mentality demonstrated by each of their *testimonios* regardless of the time period that these women were in a doctoral education program.

This study presents some interesting data that may suggest that the cultural climate of the nation at the time of the participants' academic studies may also create challenges for Chicana doctoral students. Rosa revealed a nation interested in affirmative action, therefore wanting her to complete her degree in order to increase enrollment numbers and federal financial support for her university. In that case, university leaders appeared to be more welcoming. None of the other participants found that to be true for them at their universities. Alma experienced the backlash of affirmative action, Mia experienced a resistance to diversity, and Gloria experienced a nation that wanted to send her back to Mexico. I can't help but wonder how much the Trump administration has impacted my current journey. As a marginalized people, we all are feeling this new wave of hatred. As human beings, we can't help but think that hidden biases are quickly surfacing and will create even bigger and greater challenges for us.

As already stated, these Chicana doctoral students met their challenges by creating their *nepantla* and using *máscaras* when needed. They also had tremendous support at home from partners and spouses who relieved them of any domestic responsibilities so that they were free to study. They had strong mothers as role models who were themselves marginalized and who were able to raise them to be resilient and strong to complete their journeys. Furthermore, all four *testimonios* revealed an even deeper support that most students do not speak about, their spirituality.

Use of spirituality as a hope to tolerate challenges. Despite the challenges that the four participants had to endure, data analyzed in this study demonstrate that each of these women found the hope that they needed within their religion and spirituality. Much of the current Chicana/Latina scholars separate the theme of spirituality because there are so many aspects and differences of belief among Chicanx and Latinx women today. In reference to the Mexican

culture, the *plática* in this study produced data that included the theme of spirituality from mostly a Catholic heterosexual stance.

This study found that these successful women used their spirituality as a way of resistance and as an asset to defeat the challenges that these women had to endure. Rosa was always praying to God to finish something. Alma confirmed that she did also, all of the time. Although Mia said little on this theme within the *plática*, her individual *testimonio* had several references to her grandmother praying for her and that these prayers did make a difference. Also, Mia's input into the *consejos* listed in Appendix D, advises future Chicana doctoral students to find that foundation that they may need in their *fé*, or faith. Gloria reached into her training of the indigenous side of her ethnicity and recalled the books and resources from her master's degree in Chicana Studies. She gave a scholarly insight to all the participants. She said that for her, spirituality did a lot. It did so because she learned so much from Chicana feminist theory. Those scholars write about body, mind, and spirit and the combination, and they recommend that you don't silo those three concepts. Gloria strove for balance. Gloria's data were also consistent with Mia's decision to take classes one at a time so that this imbalance didn't make her physically sick. This may mean that an aspect of successfully completing the doctoral journey, especially for some Chicanas, is the importance of prayer and a balance of body, mind, and spirit. For Gloria, there was a reliance on prayer to finish.

This finding unveils spirituality as a major motivational factor for all four participants who confirmed that spirituality was recognized as an asset to their quest for doctoral completion. This is an aspect of their academic journeys that is not well incorporated as public institutions separate religion from secular concerns. It is an aspect of inclusion that prohibits any one religion to be in the dialogue, but it is one that many Chicanas still embrace and still believe to

be instrumental to their journeys. This may indicate that the absence of at least a discussion about spirituality in a doctoral study may be viewed as yet another microaggression.

Mesa de poder y fuerza grupal, a table of power and the force of a group, emerged as a resistance to challenges and a visual and auditory transformation. The final and most important theme found within this study was discovered in the *plática*. When reflecting on the overarching question that drove this study, in what ways do Chicanas perceive and understand their lived experiences through the completion of an educational doctoral program journey, data suggest that bringing the women together to reflect on their journey may alter their own perceptions. In this study, perceptions of the importance of their completion changed from a deficit point of view in their individual *testimonios* to one of a positive empowerment in their *plática*. The perception of the participants' Chicana identity also changed, rather was transformed, through this method of collective *testimonio*.

The theme of identity is taken from the Chicana feminist framework (Bernal, 1999), a framework that shaped and created the analytical lens of this study. The narrative that emerged from the *testimonio* simultaneously engages the personal and collective aspects of identity formation while translating choices and silences (Bernal et al., 2012, 2016). This study is consistent with this framework. In the individual *testimonios*, all four participants were greatly humbled and spoke of their reluctance to be called a *doctora*. They were all given time for *reflexión* on their individual *testimonio* before attending the last data collection in the *plática*. Yet, surprisingly, as a collective, their stance grew into what I call a power stance. I call this a *fuerza grupal*, a group force, that has the power to refine, transform, and make new our Chicana identity. My finding mirrors Gloria's statement: "The letters that you add to your name after you complete a doctorate in education, is one of the best ways to add power to your community."

As I sat at the *mesa de poder*, table of power, and listened to the dialogue between the four Chicana *doctoras*, the collective consciousness across generations, from Rosa's lived experiences in the 1960s to Gloria's current Latinx lived experiences, their Chicana identities ignited with such *orgullo*, or pride. This grew before my very eyes. All of the women began to move beyond self-reflection and self-inquiry toward a shared experience where their truths were relayed to each other as their words bounced back around their circle of great knowledge, their *mesa de poder*. The cultural intuition of all those in the room was validated as one could see the faces of affirmation beaming and the various heads nodding in agreement. At that point, I could see that a solidarity had formed and identities were being transformed. The identities of the participants evolved into a more powerful stance; a transformation of each Chicana *doctora's* self-identity melted into one common group identity. This suggests that bringing Chicana doctoral students together to reflect on their challenges may empower them to complete their academic journeys. This may be essential since many Chicanas are the only ones in their doctoral programs.

In that moment, when I saw this transformation occur in our *plática*, my study was not only validated, but I was validated as well. This feeling was so overwhelming that when I left the table and sat alone in my car, I had a very spiritual experience. I gave all the glory to my Lord, Jesus Christ. I recognized that I too was transformed, and I was thankful. I too was the only Chicana in my cohort.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

This study informs practice in the educational field in several ways, but I make a recommendation for practice in the area of social justice change that could increase the enrollment and completion of the Chicana doctoral student. My study suggests needed change in

educational practice: infusing more Chicana scholars within the curriculum as models for research, creating Chicana resources including mentors that serve as successful role models and guides, and revising the doctoral process making it more Chicana friendly. Focusing on one race and gender may appear to be discriminatory at first glance but this study took place in order to seek an understanding of why there are specifically low numbers of Chicanas who complete the doctorate in educational leadership. This low statistic impacts everyone, not just the Chicana.

The significance of this study, stated in Chapter 1, reveals that one in five women living in the United States is a Latina (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015). This statistic alone made this demographic an important group to study, but more importantly, projections have shown that by 2060, they will be nearly a third of the population of the United States (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015). Given the low numbers of Chicanas completing a doctoral degree in education, both Ph.D. and Ed.D., and the increase in the Chicana population, it would be extremely significant for universities, especially in California, to understand how they can assist this growing population of Chicanas to overcome challenges in their doctoral studies.

Furthermore, scholars have found that the increase in the Latinx population has proven to continuously challenge the progress of their communities (Motel & Patten, 2012; Zambrana & Hurtado, 2016). The economic future of California communities is a vital area that is being affected. We know that education impacts the salaries of any person, but these salaries not only impact the future financial stability for that individual, but they also impact the community at large. Completing a doctorate could lead to a Chicana earning at least \$3.3 million in her lifetime (Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, 2011). Needless to say, if we are to interrupt the cycle of disproportionate under-education and poverty among the Latinx population for the future,

thereby improving the economic growth of our communities, it is critical to raise the education level of Latinx people (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015).

Curriculum

The results of this study suggest that deficit thinking is a major challenge for Chicanas in doctoral programs (García & Guerra, 2004; Gorski, 2010; Guerra & Nelson, 2010; Segura, 2003; Weiner, 2006; Yosso, 2005; Zambrana & Hurtado, 2016). The low numbers of Chicana *doctoras* in the field of education may be a result of oppression, and it creates an unbalanced learning environment on the university campus. This implies that university leaders are not truly aware that this is happening on their campuses. This study reveals that more inclusive and creative practices are needed by higher education leaders today. University leaders must not become complacent in their efforts to dissolve deficit thinking. It may be easier for them to focus on their already full curricula, but creating tactics to minimize the harmful impacts of deficit thinking will go much further than impacting a single Chicana doctoral student. Therefore, I suggest that the curriculum of any doctoral program might include positive Chicana role models as esteemed researchers, and of course other researchers of color. Having a more diverse choice of texts and articles that are used in the classroom could encourage every student and professor to see that there are Chicanas publishing and that they are valued in academia.

Another suggestion is to conduct ongoing and informal discussions with students to address any issues that they may be experiencing. Collective dialogues could be designed to prompt action and could also bring awareness of values and beliefs. This study's findings imply that these types of dialogues need to be infused with sensitivity, compassion, awareness, and understanding about what it feels like to be regarded as different and deficient in today's

America. Given the outcry against “others” from the Trump administration, the screams of deficit thinking will most likely become more overt and damaging to our students, thus I suggest urgency in this area. Talking about race and gender, along with other types of marginalization, is too difficult for many people, but this study reveals that creating a space for a *mesa de poder* can empower everyone at the table. Efforts in this area will benefit all marginalized students, not only Chicanas, and professors as well. It will also teach White students and professors to be better informed leaders. Our state continues to fill its classrooms with people of color making this an urgent mission. When these doctoral students become leaders, universities’ investment of time and money in this area will directly contribute to much-needed social justice change, in thought, beliefs, and actions, especially in the communities that these people will lead.

Resources within the Doctoral Program

Deficit thinking is likely present within the walls of all American universities or the low numbers of Chicana doctorates would have increased and there would be no need for this study. Educational institutions justify these low numbers by suggesting that the deficiencies are within the individual or the community (García & Guerra, 2004; Valencia, 1997; Weiner, 2006; Yosso, 2005). This study suggests otherwise. It would behoove a university to take a more scrutinizing look at whether the tools and resources that they offer to their students are not limiting and non-inclusive. Along with foundational and creative texts and articles written by Chicana researchers, this study suggests that university professors add new resources written by Chicana professors.

Furthermore, resources that could assist students to better understand why they may feel the way that they do in a doctoral program, especially the microaggressions that they may encounter, could be helpful at creating a more equitable and just environment. This goes beyond

typical imposter syndrome. Chicana doctoral students may know how their segregated communities might have impacted them, but they may not know how to overcome any trauma that may have attached itself to their identity and self-worth. This is a sensitive topic and the university must be careful that they do not perpetuate this way of thinking, or even justify it. Thus, I recommend that professors be more inclusive in their recommended resource lists. This is not to categorize Chicanas and other students of color, but to suggest such readings as a means of empowerment. Universities could also bring in Chicana speakers who would be willing to hold discussions on their scholarly contributions.

Research and public policy reports, such as the Coleman Report, state that most segregated schools do not have the same type of resources that non-segregated schools do (Valencia, 1997). Yet, most educational leaders mistakenly think that by the time a student reaches the doctoral level, that the student would have had many opportunities to fill in the educational gaps caused by their segregated school attendance. Although this study was not designed to seek evidence in this area, the data suggest that this was not the case for all four participants. The Chicana participants suffered an aftermath of segregation that didn't go away even as doctoral students. Rosa was more vocal by saying she had to work harder academically than her peers because she attended segregated schools. Handbooks with necessary doctoral vocabulary and processes written by current Chicana research scholars could help fill such gaps. Most Chicana scholars have similar lived experiences of having attended segregated schools and also have the cultural intuition that may address issues found within a doctoral program that may be invisible to professors who are not Chicanas.

I also recommend that university leaders create special workshops that could provide Chicanas with ways to build up their self-esteem and give concrete hope that they can finish their

doctoral programs, especially since they know that it is a feat that few of us have accomplished. This study shows that Chicanas are still synthesizing the concept of their identities and may need guidance in creating their *nepantla* (Abraham, 2014; Anzaldúa, 2002; Elenes, 1997; Keating, 2006; Pizarz-Ramírez, 2007; Segura, 2003). Workshops and conferences with Chicana *doctoras* as speakers and facilitators might be offered on a regular basis. These workshops could provide a safe space, a *mesa de poder*, for collective dialogue about their specific challenges and possible solutions. The advertisement of these kinds of events can be a great marketing tool for program developers and their need for increased enrollment. It could be an inspiration for potential Chicana students who would perceive it as a welcoming academic environment, and they in turn might encourage others to join them.

Although this study did not examine how heavy the workload is for current professors and university educational leaders, it has been my own lived experience in a doctoral program that has shown me that most professors and leaders are underpaid and overworked. That is why I suggest that a university that is dedicated to developing its institution to be an agent of change, and is working toward developing social justice leaders, hire a Chicana *doctora* to organize these types of interventions for their Chicanas. She could also bring all Chicana students from various master's and doctoral programs together. They might then create a collective *mesa de poder* that could mentor and guide each group. The *testimonios* in this study revealed how mentorships could have a positive impact on a Chicana's doctoral study (Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Nora & Crisp, 2009), so it is expected that this suggestion would be well received by students. The mentorships may offset the low numbers of Chicana professors or lack of Chicana professors in an academic program. Partnerships with other universities who employ Chicana professors could be made in order to create a pool of Chicana *doctoras* for mentorship.

Doctoral Process Specifically

This study suggests that the doctoral process might be the weakest and least taught aspect of any doctoral program. Doctoral leaders are aware that all students, not just Chicanas, find the process very difficult. Yet, this study reveals that Chicanas in doctoral programs are least likely to have access to people who have completed this journey; which suggests that they might need more guidance to navigate the doctoral process. In both Mia's and Gloria's *testimonios*, they found this to be an unexpected hurdle that they perceived to be discriminatory and led them to feel different and apart from their peers.

Most classes in a doctoral program may not have the time to address this process, and even so, most students may not know enough about their program to ask the appropriate questions. I suggest that educational leaders create specific and creative paths with appropriate one-on-one guidance for a quicker and less intimidating IRB acceptance process, for example. It would also be helpful to have ongoing communication and training for those who serve on IRB committees, especially in the types of methodologies and frameworks of social justice that Chicanas and other people of color may choose to use in their dissertations.

This study also suggests that Chicanas may want to become professors. Therefore, it is recommended that educational leaders provide guidance and opportunities for them to publish and or co-publish articles for publication. As verified by Gloria's *testimonio*, in order for the doctoral student to be ready to enter the professoriate, opportunities for publishing, and or co-authoring journal articles, could be given during and after the doctoral journey. If there are no Chicana professors in an academic department, partnerships with other universities could be created.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study collected *testimonios* from four Chicana *doctoras* who were of different ages and who completed their doctoral journeys at different time periods. Future research with a more homogeneous group could produce more insight into the strategies that are working for Chicanas in a doctoral program of education. Chicanas of the same age while in the doctoral journey and in the same time period could produce deeper insight into challenges as well as successes. The growing population of Latinas pose a continued need to research this demographic that has not been sufficiently researched (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015), and their continued low numbers of completion of the doctorate in education continues to pose a sense of urgency for educational leadership.

California's current struggles and hardships in the area of poverty has created an abundance of neighborhood segregation and demands further research on what that trauma does to a doctoral student who grew up immersed in these neighborhoods' *de jure* and *de facto* segregation. What are our university school leaders doing to address this and why are their strategies not working? Previous research found that this structural inequality creates a deficit ideology that continues to be ingrained in our universities today (Guerra & Nelson, 2010; Zambrana & Hurtado, 2016). More research is needed in this area to assist our educational leaders with better insights into how to create programs that may begin to dissolve deficit thinking on their campuses.

Three out of the four participants in this study were raised by a strong single mother who was Catholic. Further research on the successful strategies, values, and beliefs that these mothers pass on to influence the completion of a doctorate would also add insight into much needed successful strategies. This would be beneficial since there continues to be a 40-50%

divorce rate in America (Lewis, 2018), and this could mean that more and more Chicanas who enter a doctoral program may have been raised by a single mother. Further research on the influence of the Catholic religion on a Chicana's quest for social justice might also be of interest, since, as already stated, all four participants in this study were Catholic. However, further examination of a broader, faith-based impact would be of tremendous value as well.

Finally, like Pérez-Huber and Cueva (2012) and Huante-Tzintzun (2016), I too realized and experienced the power of *testimonio* to not only document, but also theorize, experiences of struggle, survival, and resistance to oppression. More research of this kind should continue to be developed, and like Huante-Tzintzun, I too challenge other Chicanas/Latinx to use these methods without the help of traditional White methodologists; rather, stretch research boundaries and use *testimonios* and *pláticas* as a form of inquiry and analysis (Huante-Tzintzun, 2016). I also agree with Bernal et al. (2012) that *testimonios* demonstrate the possibility of social change and transformation of self and society. We need more research created by our *gente* about our *gente*. It is the best way to give power to our voices. The use of the *plática* in research should also continue because it is there that a collective voice of power can be created (Bernal, 1998). I saw the *mesa de poder*, *la fuerza grupal*, grow and strengthen before my eyes. It is real, *hermanas*.

Concluding Remarks

This dissertation joins many others in the field of Chicana feminist research, and like Pérez-Huber and Cueva (2012) stated, it is a means of fighting against the injustice that many Chicanas and Latinx face in the educational pipeline. This study is written intentionally to join the research of other women of color and their struggle within academia. Along with other CRT and LatCrit founding scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa, this dissertation has attempted to create a bridge between our struggles and promises of the education system in the United States. It has

used the *testimonios* of Chicana *doctoras* who have voiced struggles and oppression as a result of a corroded hegemonic pipeline that has kept us from obtaining a critical mass of scholars and a just and equitable flow of educational completers. These *testimonios* join the other voices of women of color and like theirs, disrupt the silence, invite connection, and inspire collectivity (Bernal et al., 2012). This study is social justice scholarship that will forever live on within this critical body of research.

I close with the following echoes of my participants from their decades of lived experiences that emphasize the continued low numbers of Chicana educational doctors in American society and the urgency to rectify this problem. One could see how even after 279 years of combined lived experiences shared by these four participants and me, the researcher, oppression still manifests itself within academia.

Echoes of Las Voces de Chicana Doctoras

Rosa: You didn't have many of us at the university. There were no Mexican women.

Alma: I was the only one.

Mia: You realize that you are an anomaly or the only one.

Gloria: Because we are such a very small number, it impacts everything.

Sandi: It still hasn't changed, but I now have hope.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Overarching Research Question

In what ways do Chicanas perceive and understand their lived experiences through the completion of an educational doctoral program journey?

Sub-Research Questions

1. In what ways do race and gender influence the doctoral experiences of a Chicana?

Related Interview Questions

- a. Can you tell me a story that illustrates a time that your race and gender impacted your doctoral journey?
 - b. Can you think of a time that one of your professors or colleagues treated you differently because of your race or gender?
 - c. Why do you think that happened or didn't happen?
2. In what ways do cultural expectations influence a Chicana in her educational doctoral journey?

Related Interview Questions

- a. How did your culture affect your doctoral journey?
 - b. In what ways did your family support you, or not support you?
 - c. How did your family influence you to continue or not continue the program?
 - d. Can you walk me through a specific incident?
 - e. Why do you think that happened or didn't happen?
3. What challenges, if any, do Chicanas experience as a student in an educational doctoral program, both Ph.D. and Ed.D.?
 - a. Can you think of a time in your doctoral journey that could have gone better; can you walk me through that?
 - b. Tell me about a faculty relationship that helped you through this process.
 - c. Can you tell me a story about how you felt when you realized that you were going to be a *doctora*?
 - d. Please tell me why this was possible?
 - e. Why do you think that others might find your journey completion important?
 - f. What *consejos* do you have for current and future Chicana doctorate candidates?
 - g. This is your story, your testimonio of a very important time in your life. Is there anything else that you think must be said? The floor is yours, hermana. Let me hear your *voz*.

APPENDIX B: VERBAL RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

In person or telephone:

I am Sandra Castañón-Ramirez, a doctoral student from the University of the Pacific who is working on my research. Thank you for agreeing to speak to me. You were referred to me by a mutual friend or acquaintance. I am recruiting Chicanas, aged 30-80, with doctorates in education who would be willing to share their lived experiences in their doctoral journey. Do you want to participate in my research study?

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF CONSENT

BENERD SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH SUBJECT'S CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

LATINAS COMPLETING THE DOCTORATE

Name of Lead Researcher: Sandra Castañón-Ramirez

Name of Faculty Advisor: Dr. Hallberg

My name is Sandra Castañón-Ramirez and I am the lead researcher in this study. I am a graduate student at the University of the Pacific, in the Educational Leadership and Administration Department. This study will be in partial fulfillment of my Doctorate in Educational Leadership. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you completed a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and/or Administration, and you define yourself as a Chicana between the ages of 30-80 years old. Your consent is being sought to participate in a research study, and your participation is entirely voluntary.

The purpose of this research is to record successful life stories of Chicanas who completed a doctorate in education. The objective is to gain insight into strategies that women like these create to become successful. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in two interview sessions, one individual interview session of 90 minutes and one follow up focus group of 90 minutes. If you are unable to attend in person, for whatever reason, I will use Zoom video conferencing as a backup method to audio record you. With your permission, added time may be needed to complete the interview. The interviews will ask you to respond to open ended questions about your doctoral journey and the strategies you used to complete the degree. With your approval, both interviews will be audio recorded with a Zoom H6 audio recorder or the Zoom video conferencing tool.

There are some possible risks involved. The possible risks are: Subjects may feel embarrassed during the interview. Memories of the oppression may jar an emotional response such as anxiety. There is a minimal risk of the loss of confidentiality. Participants will see each other in the focus group; so, if you agree to be in the study, you are asked to retain confidentiality by not speaking about the content or the participants of the focus group to other people. The benefit of this study is: This gives an opportunity for a disenfranchised population to speak out and have their voice heard.

We will take reasonable steps to keep confidential any information that is obtained in connection with this research study and that can be identified with you. Only me (the researcher) and my research advisor, Dr. Laura Hallberg, will have access to the data collected during the research study. Pseudonyms will be used during, after and in the report of the results of the research study. I will transfer the audio recordings to my password protected computer. Afterwards, the computer file will be transferred to a flash drive that will be stored in a private locked file cabinet. In short, all data, both written and electronic data will be locked away in a file cabinet that was specifically purchased for this research. Your signed consent form will be

confidentially kept in a locked file cabinet for three years after the completion of this research study.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please contact me at [REDACTED] or contact my faculty advisor Dr. Laura Hallberg at lhallberg@pacific.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or wish to speak with an independent contact, please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, University of the Pacific at (209) 946-3903 or by email at IRB@pacific.edu. In the event of a research-related injury, please contact your regular medical provider and bill through your normal insurance carrier, then contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that your participation is completely voluntary, that you will not share any information you hear in the focus group or the identity of any participant, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

You will be offered a copy of this signed form to keep.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Research Study Participant (Print Name): _____

APPENDIX D: CONSEJOS DE LA MESA DE PODER

- Take time for yourself.
- Make a financial plan to pay for your program.
- Find creative allies and supporters and like-minded motivators; they should come from varied perspectives and aspects of your life. You need a team who have that experience of the journey you're going to go through.
- Find that foundation in your fé.
- Continue to break the mold.
- Be bold; know that you have rights.
- Demand what you are paying for.
- Make sure that you get to write about what you're passionate about; do not let that be steered by someone else's gain or benefit.
- Definitely unite; create a collective at your school where you can talk very honestly about being a Chicana in graduate school.
- Definitely, write about your experiences because that is what will help us restructure power in our schools, the way we frame graduate school for Chicanas more specifically.