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Responses of Successful Latina Students to Academic Challenges of Prerequisite Nursing Courses

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Julie Nadeau

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Walden University
2011

Abstract

Responses of Successful Latina Students to Academic Challenges of Prerequisite Nursing

Courses

by

Julie Wiggins Nadeau

MSN, California State University, Sacramento, 1996

BA, Gustavus Adolphus College, 1981

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Teacher Leadership

Walden University

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Abstract

Nursing schools struggle to prepare enough nurses to meet the health care needs of a diverse and aging population in the United States. Many students do not complete their degrees, contributing to the problem. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and describe how successful Latina students experience and respond to the academic challenges of prerequisite nursing courses. The nursing shortage; healthcare needs of Hispanic patients; student outcomes; self-efficacy, achievement goal orientation, and academic help-seeking; and Hispanic cultural values framed the study. Using semistructured private interviews, the researcher explored the lived experiences of 6 successful Latina students when they encountered challenges in prerequisite nursing courses. Seven superordinate themes emerged following interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data: (a) facing academic challenges, (b) recognizing emotional response, (c) seeking help, (d) transcending academic challenges, (e) owning knowledge, (f) persevering, and (g) living out values and beliefs. The hermeneutic approach allowed participants to describe the transition from avoiding to reaching out for help. Conclusions and recommendations include the need for faculty to recognize and respond to the importance of family, relationships, values, and beliefs to academic success in Latina students. Implications for social change include enhanced faculty ability to support the academic endeavors of this population. Improved graduation rates in Latina nursing students will help to address the nursing shortage and the need for a health care workforce that mirrors the population of the United States.

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Dedication

To Elizabeth Claire and Abigail Jane: You represent the next generation of educated women.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Nursing programs in the 21st century face the challenge of educating enough nurses to meet the demands for health care as the U.S. population ages and becomes more culturally diverse. Programs are expected to increase and maintain student enrollment, retention, graduation, and initial pass rates on the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX-RN; American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2009a; The Task Force to Increase RN Graduates in Texas [Task Force], 2007; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration [HRSA], 2004). Many students, however, struggle to successfully complete the courses required for application to the major. Although more than 100 freshmen designated their major as prenursing at the Hispanic-serving university of interest during the fall semester of 2008, many did not achieve academic success during their first two semesters of college. Specific student populations, including first-generation college and minority students, face barriers and need special attention from faculty members in order to promote academic success in a program of nursing (Amaro, Abriam-Yago, & Yoder, 2006; Anders, Edmonds, Monreal, & Galvan, 2007; Bond et al., 2008; Cason et al., 2008; Doutrich, Wros, Valdez, & Ruiz, 2005; Evans, 2008; Gilchrist & Rector, 2007; Lee, 2007; Sutherland, Hamilton, & Goodman, 2007; Valencia-Go, 2005).

This study was a qualitative exploration of the lived experiences of six successful Latina students as they encountered the academic challenges of prerequisite nursing courses. A summary of the local problem and contributing factors is provided in the following paragraphs. Additional information regarding the problem's impact on

economic challenges faced by students and academic institutions, the nursing shortage,

and the health care needs of a growing Hispanic population is included in section 2 in

order to examine the potential consequences within current "policy, social, and practical

domains" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 26). Research describing the educational

experiences of Latina students is reviewed in section 2 as well.

Problem Statement

There is a problem regarding the academic success and retention of prenursing

students at a Hispanic-serving private liberal arts university in Texas. More than 100

freshman students designated their major as prenursing in the fall of 2008, with plans to

earn a bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) degree, but many withdrew from or earned

failing grades in prerequisite courses. These difficulties occurred despite the presence of

a first-year engagement program that offered multiple avenues for campus integration,

academic counseling, and support, as well as student enrollment in a weekly nursing

seminar designed to introduce students to the profession and to promote their academic

success.

The nursing program at the university of interest offers a BSN. Students in the

prenursing major apply to the nursing program after completing a minimum of 12

prerequisite courses in math, science, and liberal arts. Failure to achieve academic

success in the first year of college lengthens the student's time to application and entry to

the nursing program. Unresolved difficulties in prerequisite courses can affect student

outcomes in the following ways: (a) grade point averages (GPAs) that are not competitive

for admission to the major, (b) delayed application and entry to the major, (c) increased

tuition costs and time to graduation, (d) changing majors, and (e) nonretention in college. This problem can negatively affect the students, the patients for whom they would ultimately care, the university, and the program of nursing. Discussion of the impact of the problem will continue in section 2.

Tinto (2008) emphasized that access to higher education for minority students is not true opportunity unless it is accompanied by the necessary support for success. The institution of interest has a dedicated first-year engagement staff and provides many support services for freshmen. However, there is a need to learn more about how to assist students who have unresolved difficulties in academic courses despite the current programs. Increased faculty understanding of the lived experiences of successful prenursing students is necessary to assist previously less successful students to achieve academic goals.

Contributing Factors

There are many possible factors contributing to the problem of unresolved academic difficulties in the prenursing student population. Students cited family obligations, work, and other distractions as factors related to academic difficulties. Faculty members and advisors noted that students often failed to effectively seek help for academic challenges and that the students who needed help the most did not seek it in a timely fashion. Lee (2007) stated, "Teachers are puzzled, and occasionally frustrated, when students in academic difficulty do not seek help or seek it only when the risk of a course failure looms" (p. 468). A better understanding of how successful Latina students experience and respond to academic challenges will enhance the ability of faculty

members and academic advisers to promote success in the overall Latina student population.

A body of literature exists regarding the Hispanic postsecondary student experience and the barriers faced by Hispanic college students (Alexander, Garcia, Gonzalez, Grimes, & O'Brien, 2007; Amaro et al., 2006; Bond et al., 2008; Cason et al., 2008; Gilchrist & Rector, 2007; Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005; Otero, Rivas, & Rivera, 2007; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Valverde & Rodriguez, 2002; Zalaquett, 2006). Researchers have also explored student perceptions and experiences related to academic help-seeking during nursing school (Doutrich et al., 2005**;** Poorman, Webb, & Mastorovich, 2002; Shelton, 2003). Section 2 will review applicable research.

I did not find studies that specifically targeted successful Latina students and their experiences with the academic challenges of prerequisite nursing courses. Further research that explores the minority student experience of help-seeking during the quest for success prior to and in nursing school is needed. This study explored the perceptions, the responses, and the help-seeking behaviors of successful Latina students as they encountered academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses.

Nature of the Study

The objective of this qualitative study was to provide a better understanding of the lived experiences of successful Latina students as they encountered academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses. Creswell (2007) noted that the social constructivist paradigm is helpful in research that seeks to understand the views of participants, which was the goal of the study. Therefore, the constructivist paradigm guided the research.

I used an interpretative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of six successful Latina students at the given university through semistructured interviews. The interview questions explored the students' lived experiences as they encountered academic challenges. Knowledge regarding the experiences of successful students is expected to add insight into how to prepare all prenursing students for application, admission, and success if admitted to the nursing program.

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is conducted to empower individuals to "share their stories" and to allow the "voices" of participants to be heard (p. 40). Harper (2007) lamented that "talking and listening to students remain uncommon in institutional research" (p. 56). Harper emphasized the importance of qualitative approaches such as phenomenology when researching the trajectories of diverse college students to increase institutional effectiveness when serving minority populations. He stated, "We cannot begin to fully understand and foster conditions to replicate effective educational practices in the absence of voice and sense making among students who actually experienced them" (Harper, 2007, p. 56). The work of Harper, Creswell, and

others (Chism & Banta, 2007; Green, 2007; Harper & Kuh, 2007) influenced me to study the problem qualitatively, using a phenomenological approach. I used their work, along with that of Husserl (1913/1962); Kvale and Brinkmann (2009); Larkin, Watts, and Clifton (2006); Marshall and Rossman (2006); Moustakas (1994); Polkinghorne (2005); Rubin and Rubin (2005); Smith (2007); Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009); Spradley (1979); and Van Manen (1990) to justify and develop the methodology for the study. Sections 2 and 3 will include further discussion of their work.

I recruited participants, collected data through one-on-one interviews, wrote field notes, audio taped and transcribed the interviews, and analyzed the data. This document reports the findings. I initially interviewed each participant using a broad, open-ended question. Additional structural questions, prompts, and probes were used. The follow-up interview with each participant included focused questions, which emerged based on initial responses of participants. I offered a final member-checking interview to all six participants. Two participants completed member-checking interviews with me to validate the findings. I analyzed the data inductively, with collection, analysis, and writing occurring simultaneously. I clustered information into themes and then into superordinate themes (Smith et al., 2009, p. 96), comparing data between interviews and participants to justify the themes and superordinate themes. After the themes and superordinate themes were identified and the data analysis was completed, I examined the findings within a framework of Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy, prior research on personal achievement goal orientation and academic help-seeking behavior,

the Latino culture, and current research on the postsecondary educational experiences of Latina students. Details of the data analysis strategy will be described in section 3.

Research Question

The following question guided the research: What are the lived experiences of successful Latina students as they encounter academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

Subquestions

I generated subquestions following a review of the literature related to Latina postsecondary educational experiences, academic help-seeking, and student success. Subquestions also arose as a result of informal observations and conversations with students at the university. The subquestions guided the development of the study:

1. What academic challenges do successful Latina students experience in prerequisite nursing courses?

2. What factors affect successful Latina students' experiences of and responses to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

3. How do successful Latina students respond to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

4. In what ways (if any) do successful Latina students seek help when facing academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

Section 3 will present a complete description of the methodology and the types of questions that were asked of the participants. The interview schedule is found in Appendix A.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the lived experiences of successful Latina students when they encounter the academic challenges of prerequisite nursing courses. The phenomenon of interest was responses of successful Latina students to academic challenges. Success was defined as a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, while making progress to complete prerequisite courses in five semesters or less.

Conceptual Framework

The study took place against the background of the escalating costs of education, the economic repercussions of low educational attainment by Hispanics, the burgeoning health care needs of a growing Hispanic population, the Hispanic RN shortage within an overall nursing shortage, and the nursing student outcomes at the university of interest. The concepts of self-efficacy, achievement goal orientation, and help-seeking behavior, as well as the cultural values of Hispanic families, were considered.

Nursing Student Outcomes

A brief review of the academic outcomes of students who recently completed the nursing program and the current support services provided within the program is included to provide context for the purpose and selection of the study population. The NCLEX-RN pass rate for nursing graduates of the university program in this study ranged from 80.49% to 92.11% between 2003 and 2007 (Texas Board of Nursing, 2009), with an initial pass rate of 89.66% (52 of 58 candidates passed) in 2009. The Texas state pass rate

was 91% in 2009 (Texas Board of Nursing, 2010). However, nursing program retention and graduation rates resulting in eligibility to sit for the NCLEX-RN averaged only 69% across the state in 2005, with 56% graduating on time (within four or five semesters of admission to a nursing program), 13% persisting, and 31% disenrolling from nursing programs. Baccalaureate programs such as the one in this study had a 74% graduation rate, but only 51% of those students graduated on time. Almost no program claimed "to have a system to identify those at risk" (Task Force, 2007, p. 29). The Task Force (2007) challenged programs to target a completion benchmark of 85%, to "identify best practices for identifying students at-risk," (p. 29), and to "identify best practices for helping those who have been identified for being at-risk to stay in the program and to graduate" (p. 29). The program of interest accepted the challenge.

The given program's graduation rate was 56.3% in 2007, 57% in 2008, and 66.3% in 2009 (Fowler, 2010). Nonretention of students admitted to nursing programs is costly to the students, the programs, the health care industry, and society. As a result of students disenrolling during a program, spaces are left unfilled, graduation rates decline, and the RN shortage continues to climb (Task Force, 2007). A committee had been working on retention issues in the program of interest for 3 years. Intensive tutoring was provided for students experiencing difficulty while in the nursing program. A student earning a score less than 80% on any exam was considered to be at-risk and was contacted by course faculty to come in for tutoring. Mandates for tutoring were listed in course syllabi, and students identified as at-risk were required to seek help. A similar program had not been

instituted for the prenursing students. Therefore, I studied the prenursing student population.

Academic Help-Seeking

Effective help-seeking is important to nursing students' academic and future professional success (Lee, 2007). Howard-York (2006) noted that appropriate use of academic help-seeking strategies is invaluable to successful completion of nursing school and the NCLEX-RN. Howard-York also pointed out that effective help-seeking is essential during the transition to the practitioner role, as nurses pass through the novice to expert stages noted by Benner (2001) in her theory describing the growth of the professional nurse. Furthermore, help-seeking is inherent to professional nursing practice, in which nurses are expected to function as members of interprofessional teams (Barnsteiner, Disch, Hall, Mayer, & Moore, 2007).

Lee (2007) defined help-seeking as "a social process in which faculty and student are engaged with each other toward positive outcomes" (p. 469) and noted that both individual and environmental influences affect whether students engage in help-seeking strategies. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory of self-efficacy and the concept of achievement goal orientation as described by Ames (1992) are helpful to the understanding and promotion of effective academic help-seeking behavior.

Concepts of self-efficacy, achievement goal orientation, and academic help-seeking helped to frame the study, in which I explored successful Latina students' perceptions of and responses to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses. I reviewed literature related to these concepts in order to "help document the importance of

the research problem" and to "inform the questions actually asked" (Creswell, 2007, p. 42). The cultural values of the Hispanic family were considered, as family values and expectations may play a role in students' perceptions of and responses to academic challenges.

The concepts of self-efficacy, achievement goal orientation, and effective academic help-seeking are introduced here and examined more thoroughly in section 2. Bandura (1986) described self-efficacy as a "judgment of one's capability to accomplish a certain level of performance" (p. 391) and noted that self-efficacy affects how long and how hard individuals will persist to reach their goals. Ames (1992) developed the concept of a personal mastery goal orientation (p. 262), in which individuals focus on learning for its own sake. A personal mastery goal orientation contrasts with a personal performance goal orientation (Ames, 1992, p. 262), in which individuals seek external rewards or recognition, rather than focusing on personal mastery and ownership of the material learned. Nelson-Le Gall (1981) described instrumental help-seeking as a positive problem-solving strategy that successful students use to gain independent mastery of difficult tasks and to decrease their need for future assistance.

Karabenick (2004) linked a personal mastery goal orientation to instrumental help-seeking in a study of college students. Howard-York (2006) discovered that high self-efficacy and a personal mastery goal orientation are positively correlated with instrumental help-seeking in a nursing student population. Correlations between these concepts have been researched by others (Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2007; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Nelson-Le Gall, 1987; Nelson-Le Gall, DeCooke, & Jones, 1989; Nelson-

Le Gall & Resnick, 1998; Newman, 2006a, 2006b; Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998; Witkow & Fuligni, 2007), and their work will be synthesized in section 2.

Cultural Values of Latino Families

Ginorio, Gutiérrez, Cauce, and Acosta (1995) noted that the roles within the traditional Latino family were transformed during the last decades of the 20th century. Although it would be erroneous to generalize about the typical Latin American family, the authors emphasized the importance of family values and unity to the Latino culture. I therefore explored the experiences of Latina students within the context and culture of their extended families.

Ginorio et al. (1995) described the cultural values of *respeto, personalismo, familiarismo,* and *marianismo* as relevant to the experience of most Latinas: "Although the strength and form of these values will vary across different Latino groups as well as across social class, acculturation, and generation, most Latinas hold these values in some form" (p. 256). The cultural values listed above are defined in the Operational Definition of Terms section, and section 2 includes a review of Hofstede's (2001) dimensions of culture as related to the study.

Researchers have explored the influence of culture, family, and gender on the transition of Latino women to postsecondary education, as well as the relationships between family life and Latina academic success (Alexander et al., 2007; González, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2007; Olive, 2008; Sy, 2006**;** Sy & Brittian, 2008; Sy & Romero, 2008). Section 2 will incorporate their findings to further develop the framework. I included only Latino women (Latinas) in this study, as the

cultural and family experiences related to academic success may differ between men and women.

Operational Definition of Terms

Key terms and concepts used in this qualitative study are defined as follows:

Academic challenges: Academic challenges refer to the experience of encountering new concepts and information not readily or easily understood; such encounters require extra time and effort on the part of the student in order to achieve long-term understanding and academic success.

Achievement goal orientation: Ames (1992) defined achievement goal orientation as an individual's way of approaching achievement-oriented activities. Ames further described an achievement goal framework as one "that integrates cognitive and affective components of goal-directed behavior" (p. 261).

Allocentrism: Allocentrism is one end of the spectrum that describes the relationship between an individual and the group. Allocentrism is the tendency of an individual to view himself or herself as part of the cultural group at the personal level (Triandis, 2004, p. 90).

Bachelor of science in nursing (BSN): A BSN program is one of three pathways that prepare students to sit for the NCLEX-RN. The other two paths are diploma programs and associate degree (ADN) programs, which take approximately two to three years to complete. BSN programs are traditional four-year college tracks (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2009). Students in BSN programs take core and prerequisite courses during the first three or four semesters of college and complete the nursing

program during the last four or five semesters. They are then awarded a BSN degree. This research study took place in a BSN program.

Collectivism: Collectivism is one end of the spectrum that describes the relationship between individuals and the group within a given culture. Individualism/collectivism is one of the cultural dimensions described by Hofstede (1983, p. 46); collectivism describes the tendency of individuals to view themselves as part of their in-group at the cultural level.

Culturally competent nursing care: Culturally competent nursing care is sensitive to and addresses the unique needs of patients related to their culture. One of the recommendations for enhancing the provision of culturally competent health care involves increasing the number of minority health care providers and leaders (Betancourt, Green, Carrrillo, & Ananeh-Firempong, 2003; Giger et al., 2007). Cultural competence will be discussed further in section 2.

Familiarismo: The cultural value of familiarismo "places the extended family at the center of one's experience" (Ginorio et al., 1995, p. 256). It is possible that dedication and loyalty to the family inspired by familiarismo may influence the academic experiences of Latina students. Familiarismo is sometimes described as *familism,* the Latino value of family closeness, loyalty, and interdependence (Sy & Brittian, 2008, p. 731).

Help-seeking: Help-seeking is "a social process in which faculty and student are engaged with each other toward positive outcomes" (Lee, 2007, p. 469).

Idiocentrism: Idiocentrism is one end of the spectrum that describes the relationship between an individual and the group. Idiocentrism is the tendency for an individual to view himself or herself as separate and distinct from the group at the personal level (Triandis, 2004, p. 90).

Individualism: Individualism is one end of the spectrum that describes the relationship between individuals and the group within a given culture. Individualism/collectivism is one of the cultural dimensions described by Hofstede (1983, p. 46); individualism describes the tendency of individuals to view themselves as distinct and separate from the group at the cultural level.

Instrumental help-seeking: Instrumental help-seeking refers to effective and adaptive help-seeking actively used to promote learning and academic success (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, p. 224; Nelson-Le Gall & Resnick, 1998, pp. 40-41). The term instrumental help-seeking is used to describe the experience of asking for help to promote personal mastery of subject material.

Latina: Latinas are "women of Latin American descent"; the term may be used to describe Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Central and South American women (Ginorio et al., 1995, pp. 241-242). Participants in this study self-identified as Mexican American or Hispanic, five reported family origins in Mexico, and one participant's parent hailed from Puerto Rico. The terms Hispanic and Latina are frequently used interchangeably in the literature (González & Gándara, 2005; Vásquez & Mejia, 2008), and I will use the term employed by the original authors when reviewing or

citing the literature. I will use the term Latina, rather than Hispanic woman, when referring to the participants in this study for consistency and convenience.

Marianismo: The cultural value of marianismo "demands that women model themselves after the Virgin Mary and so see themselves as spiritually superior to men and as capable of enduring great suffering" (Ginorio et al., 1995, pp. 256 & 257). Some women interpret marianismo as "placing one's children's needs before one's own" (Ginorio et al., 1995, p. 257). Ginorio et al. acknowledged that the validity and relevance of marianismo is a source of debate among scholars.

Mastery goal orientation: Ames (1992) defined a personal mastery goal orientation as a type of achievement goal orientation that focused on learning for its own sake (p. 262). According to Ames, individuals with a personal mastery goal orientation are willing to expend effort for long-term understanding and success.

National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX-RN): The *NCLEX-RN* is a standardized exam, which graduates of approved nursing programs are eligible to take. Individuals must pass the exam in order to practice as a registered nurse in the United States. (BLS, 2009).

Personalismo: The cultural value of personalismo "represents a way of staying connected to one's world and involves highlighting the personal aspects of interactions" (Ginorio et al., 1995, p. 256). According to a review of literature by Ginorio et al., Latina women may value relationships over achievement, and they may hesitate to seek help from someone not already known to their family because of personalismo.

Power distance: Power distance is one of the cultural dimensions described by Hofstede (1983, p. 46). It relates to the acceptance of inequality between human beings within a culture.

Prerequisite nursing courses: Prerequisite courses are those that must be successfully completed prior to beginning the nursing program. Prospective students must be enrolled in their final prerequisite courses at the time they apply to the major. Prerequisites at the given institution include English Composition I, English Composition II, Public Speaking, Anatomy and Physiology I, Anatomy and Physiology II, Microbiology, Nutrition, Biochemistry I, Biochemistry II, Probability and Statistics, Dimensions of Wellness, and Computer Literacy. Students may take additional core courses for the liberal arts degree such as history, philosophy, and religion before or after admission to the nursing program. A minimum grade of C (2.0) is required in every prerequisite course. A cumulative GPA of 2.5 is required both in science courses and overall in order for a student to be considered for admission to the nursing program.

Registered nurse (RN): An RN is a health care professional who is authorized to plan, coordinate, and provide nursing care and education. RNs practice in a wide variety of occupational settings. Licensure as an RN in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories requires completion of an approved program of nursing and passing the NCLEX-RN (BLS, 2009).

Respeto: Respeto, or respect, values and acknowledges "hierarchies that define an individual's proper place in society on the basis of age, gender, race and class. For women, *respeto* dictates that behavior toward older individuals or toward most men

should be characterized by a respectful, subordinate attitude" (Ginorio et al., 1995, p. 256). The cultural value of respeto may influence Latina students when they decide whether to be assertive in class or to approach an educator for help.

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy was described by Bandura (1986) as "a judgment of one's capability to accomplish a certain level of performance" (p. 391). Self-efficacy may interact with one's achievement goal orientation in determining the response to academic challenges.

Simpático: Simpático describes a personal trait found within the cultural social script *simpátia*, in which individuals value, expect, and engage in harmonius interpersonal relationships, and they avoid negative interpersonal interactions whenever possible. Hispanics place a high value on simpático and simpátia (Triandis, Marín, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984).

Successful student: Successful students were invited to participate in the research. Success was defined as maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale and staying on track to complete all prerequisite courses within four or five semesters.

Uncertainty avoidance: Uncertainty avoidance is one of the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (1983, p. 46); uncertainty avoidance measures the degree to which individuals within a culture feel threatened by the unknown.

Assumptions

Larkin et al. (2006) and Polkinghorne (2005) cautioned that qualitative research reports do not provide pure accounts of individual experiences. The findings of the study include accounts of experiences that have been coconstructed by the participants and the

researcher. Polkinghorne (2005) cautioned, "Because experience is not directly observable, data about it depend on the participants' ability to reflectively discern aspects of their own experience and to effectively communicate what they discern through the symbols of language" (p. 138). I acknowledge the following assumptions that are made in consideration of the words of Larkin et al. and Polkinghorne:

1. Student participants were able to articulate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in regards to encountering and responding to the academic challenges of prerequisite courses. I assumed that participants had the cognitive and verbal abilities to describe their experiences.

2. Student participants were able to identify additional factors and personal obligations that affected their experiences of academic challenges in prerequisite courses. I assumed that participants had an understanding of their situation and its effects on their actions and academic performance.

3. Student participants were able to describe their thoughts and feelings about seeking help for academic challenges.

4. Student participants had insight into their personal thoughts and feelings.

5. Student participants were willing to discuss their personal thoughts and feelings with me.

6. Student participants responded to interview questions honestly.

I accepted that achieving entirely pure accounts of participants' experiences was not realistic. The assumption that data gathered from interviews would tell me about

participants' "involvement in and orientation towards the world, and/or about how they make sense of this" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 47) was key to the study.

Scope and Delimitations

I purposively selected and interviewed six successful Latina students attending a private Hispanic-serving liberal arts university in Texas during April and May 2010, in an attempt to document their lived experiences related to the academic challenges of prerequisite nursing courses. Participants self-identified as successful according to the participation criteria and volunteered for the study. Participants were 19 or 20 years of age, all were fluent in English, all were U.S. citizens, five were born in the United States, and one was born abroad to parents working overseas. Four participants were second-generation U.S. citizens, with at least one parent born in Mexico or Puerto Rico. Two participants were fourth- or higher-generation U.S. citizens, with all parents and grandparents born in the United States.

All participants listed English as their primary language, and three considered themselves to be fluent in Spanish as well. Two of the students who were fluent in Spanish had been raised in homes in which Spanish was the primary language. One participant noted that Spanish was the primary language spoken in her home while she grew up, but she did not consider herself to be fluent in Spanish.

Three participants lived with their families near the university, two participants hailed from a different part of the state several hours away, and one participant was an out-of-state student who left her family and traveled across the country to attend college in Texas. One participant was an only child, and the others reported having between one

and three siblings. Three were the oldest in their family, and two had one older sibling. Five of the participants had two parents who lived together, and one participant had parents who were divorced. All participants described having an ongoing relationship with both parents. Two participants lived on campus, one lived in an apartment with her boyfriend, and three lived with their families within commuting distance of the university.

Four participants noted that they were the first member of their family to attend a four-year college and would be the first to earn a college degree. All would be the first of their siblings to earn a degree. Four participants reported that one parent had some college experience but had not completed a degree. One participant reported her mother as having earned an associate's degree and her father as having earned a baccalaureate degree. The grandmother of another participant had earned a baccalaureate degree as well. The education of all other grandparents ranged from some elementary school to high school graduate. None of the participants reported a level of education beyond a baccalaureate degree within their immediate families.

One participant reported a family income of less than $20,000 per year. Two participants reported family incomes between $20,001 and $40,000 per year, one reported a family income between $40,001 and $60,000 per year, and two reported family incomes between $60,001 and $100,000 per year. All participants reported receiving parental assistance to finance college. Families contributed between $500 and $12,000 annually to finance the participant's education. All reported receiving one or more academic scholarships, two reported receiving Pell grants, and two reported using student loans.

Participants had successfully completed between two and four semesters of prerequisite nursing courses at the time of participation. Participants' standardized achievement test (SAT) scores ranged from 850 to 1070 on the combined math and verbal parts of the exam. Participants' college GPAs ranged from 3.13 to 3.76 at the time of participation in the study. Three had been accepted to begin the nursing program in the semester following participation in the study.

The purposeful selection of successful students at the given institution was intended to enhance the usefulness of the findings to the program of interest, but the boundaries may decrease the generalizability of findings to student populations at other educational institutions. Smith et al. (2009) emphasized that results of interpretative phenomenological analysis studies lend to "theoretical transferability rather than empirical generalizability" (p. 51). Study findings can be linked to the professional experiences of readers of the reports and to the literature. I will discuss transferability in the final analysis and discussion of results.

Limitations

I am a faculty member at the university, so access to participants was convenient, and the dean welcomed the research. Glesne and Peshkin (1992), however, noted potential problems related to conducting "backyard research" (p. 21) within the investigator's institution. Problems may arise related to conducting the research, reporting the findings, and maintaining credibility of the findings in such studies. Steps to minimize compromise were employed and will be noted throughout the methodology section.

An ethical consideration related to backyard research in this setting includes a fear by students that nonparticipation may reflect negatively on them. Students who were recruited received assurance in writing that they were not required to participate and that nonparticipation would not be reported to faculty members or reflect negatively on them in any way. I also informed prospective participants that I did not serve on the committee that evaluates students for admission to the nursing program.

I brought prior knowledge, thoughts, feelings, and experiences to the study. Babbie (2007) stated, "The way we ask questions subtly biases the answers we get" (p. 306). Therefore, it is possible that I may have subconsciously influenced participant responses. For example, I had reviewed the literature about relationships between self-efficacy, achievement goal orientation, and help-seeking behavior. Based on studies reviewed as well as informal conversations with students and faculty members, I also had ideas about the relationships between culture, ethnicity, and help-seeking behavior. Although it is impossible to control personal bias entirely, I attempted to minimize the effects through use of *bracketing* (Husserl, 1913/1962, p. 100). I avoided any mention of culture, ethnicity, self-efficacy, or achievement goal orientation during the interviews unless first discussed by the participant.

Another threat to the quality of the proposed research was the *translational competence* (Spradley, 1979, p. 19) of the informants, which allowed them to translate responses into my cultural reality prior to answering questions. This threat is inherent to research conducted with informants who speak the same native language as the

researcher. I carefully designed the questions to reduce the risk related to translational competence.

Additionally, the researcher "filters the data through a personal lens" and "cannot escape the personal interpretation brought to qualitative data analysis" (Creswell, 2003, p. 182) when engaged in qualitative research. Therefore, "*reflexivity,*" or self-awareness (Creswell, 2007, p. 11; Creswell, 2003, p. 182), on my part was important. I kept a journal and reflected on any biases, interests, or preconceived notions in an ongoing manner, in an effort to promote reflexivity.

A final threat to quality was the potential contamination of participants as a result of their proximity to one another. Although participants were assured of confidentiality and were asked not to discuss their participation or interviews with anyone, it is possible that participants may have shared some information with other students who were participating. Sharing had the potential to affect future responses by other participants, decreasing the originality and credibility of their comments. I reminded participants of the importance of original answers to the research questions in an attempt to gain cooperation regarding this issue.

I used a number of the strategies recommended by Creswell (2003) to enhance the credibility of the research. As previously noted, clarification of bias, comparison of data between participants, and member-checking were completed. I spent "*prolonged time" in* the field (Creswell, 2003, p. 196) by conducting multiple interviews and actively engaging with the data at length. Additionally, I looked for "*negative* or *discrepant information*," and I used "*peer debriefing*" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). Participants'

statements that ran contrary to the overall themes will be noted in section 4. My doctoral

chair reviewed and scrutinized the study with me. Finally, I attempted to provide a "*rich,*

thick description" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196) of the lived experiences of the participants,

using verbatim quotes to capture the essence.

As with any study, the validity of the findings was dependent on the willingness

of participants to respond openly and honestly to the questions asked of them. Students

who consent to participate in research involving time-consuming interviews may not be

representative of the eligible students who choose not to participate. As noted above, the

findings may not be generalizable to other populations of nursing students.

Significance of the Study

Although a few researchers such as Poorman et al. (2002) have explored help-

seeking behavior in nursing students from a qualitative perspective, there is a lack of

research related to this concept in Latina prenursing students. This study will help to

address the local problem, advance knowledge within the profession, and promote

positive social change.

Application to the Local Problem

The findings of the study will offer an increased understanding of successful

students' perceptions of and responses to the academic challenges of prerequisite nursing

courses. Granting student participants the opportunity to express their experiences and to

be heard may have helped them to feel valued and appreciated. I will share findings with

other prenursing students, and the findings may be incorporated into student learning

activities. Sharing the research findings with the prenursing student population may empower students to understand and change personal behaviors as they pursue academic success. Notably, student participants had an opportunity to see the importance of research in nursing education.

I will share the findings with faculty members, academic advisors, and staff members who work to increase retention of freshmen in all majors at the university. Insight into the behavior and experiences of successful Latina students may assist educators to provide optimal support to promote the academic success of previously less successful students. The findings may also help members of the nursing program selection committee to recognize the student applicants most likely to succeed in the program.

Professional Application

Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, and Day (2010) challenged nursing programs to recruit more diverse students to meet the needs of the U.S. population. Bond et al. (2008) noted, "The shortage of Hispanic nurses cannot be addressed effectively without understanding their perspectives on nursing and nursing education" (p. 136). The current study adds to the growing body of literature that describes the needs of Latina nursing students, and the research findings may help institutions that are challenged to serve increasingly diverse student populations. Additionally, the findings may assist nursing education leaders to design programs of study that meet the needs of diverse students, to develop experiences that educate faculty members on best practices for student support, and to shape nursing student bodies for academic success.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change from the research include enhanced faculty ability to support the academic endeavors of Latina students who desire to earn a BSN degree. Students who complete prerequisite courses and gain admission to the nursing program within three to five semesters of starting college, graduate after five semesters in the nursing program, and pass their NCLEX-RN on the initial attempt will enter the workforce sooner and begin to reap the economic and professional returns of their educational investment.

The professional and economic benefits to the successful Latina student have the potential to be passed on to society. According to Oseguera, Locks, and Vega (2009), "The country cannot afford to continue undereducating the fastest growing population in the United States without experiencing serious consequences related to economic viability and global competitiveness" (p. 47). Robles (2009) emphasized:

The spillover effects of a wealthier and more educated Latino population has countless benefits to society, not to mention the increased societal savings in the form of lower expenditures on a number of currently escalating social ills: prison costs, health uninsured costs, foster care cost, juvenile system costs and other costs associated with education investment neglect. (p. 17)

Robles also noted that increasing baccalaureate degree attainment in the Latino population would benefit the nation economically as a result of the higher federal and social security taxes paid by Latinos with baccalaureate degrees and higher incomes as compared to those without degrees. Robles estimated that raising Latino educational

outcomes into line with those of non-Hispanic Whites would result in economic gains of approximately $15 billion for the nation.

Promoting Latina student success meets the mission of the school of nursing at which the study was conducted. Higher retention and graduation rates reflect positively on the university of interest and allow the nursing program to remain eligible for grant awards that would help to expand programming to more students in the future.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, improved retention, graduation, and licensure rates in the Latina student population will help to address the nursing shortage and to prepare a professional nursing workforce that reflects the population of the state and the nation. A BSN degree offers many avenues for career success and service to humanity, particularly in view of the Hispanic nursing shortage. A diverse nursing workforce will be better able to deliver the care recommended by the American Academy of Nursing (AAN). An AAN expert panel developed standards for culturally competent care from within a social justice framework, supported by documents such as the United Nations' *Declaration of Human Rights,* the World Health Organization's *Declaration of Alma Alta,* and the American Nurses Association's *Code of Ethics* (Douglas et al., 2009). Douglas et al. (2009) emphasized, "Every individual and group is entitled to fair and equal rights and participation in social, educational, economic, and. . . healthcare opportunities" (p. 257). Research that increases the knowledge of how to enhance acceptance, retention, graduation, and licensure rates in Latina prenursing students may help to address Standard 7: "Nurses shall be activists in the global effort to ensure a more multicultural workforce in healthcare settings" (Douglas et al., 2009, p. 258). The

research may ultimately result in improved health care opportunities and outcomes, particularly for members of underserved Hispanic populations.

Transition Statement

Section 1 introduced a research study designed to explore the problem of unresolved academic difficulties of Latina students in prerequisite nursing courses at a Hispanic-serving liberal arts university in Texas. The impact of the problem on various stakeholders was introduced against the background of current challenges faced by academic and health care institutions. I summarized the methodology within the conceptual framework and discussed how the limitations were minimized. The section closed with a summary of the significance of the study and the implications for social change. A review of relevant research and literature follows in section 2, the methodology is delineated in section 3, and research study findings are reported in section 4. Section 5 will conclude with connections to the literature, recommendations for practice, and implications for social change.

Section 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the lived experiences of successful Latina students when they encounter the academic challenges of prerequisite nursing courses. Section 2 will address literature related to the major themes of the study. The section will initially describe the strategy used to access the literature. Three broad areas of theoretical writings and research will then be synthesized: (a) race, culture, and ethnic identity; (b) the Hispanic experience in higher education; and (c) theoretical writings and research related to academic help-seeking behavior. Section 2 will conclude with a review of literature that addresses the phenomenological approach.

The review of literature will begin with a description of the impact of nursing student academic difficulties on students, patients, and academic institutions. The review is followed by a discussion of race, culture, and ethnic identity, which will help to frame the study within the culture of the participants and the patients who would ultimately benefit from their care. Subsequently, I will review studies that examined the academic experiences of Hispanic students in the postsecondary setting, including barriers and supports experienced by the students. This part of the review will focus on research regarding Latina students in higher education, including their transition to college, the influences of family and culture, and their postsecondary journeys. The literature review related to Hispanics in higher education will narrow to research conducted in Latina nursing students during their undergraduate education, and it will conclude with literature regarding mentoring.

Following the review of literature regarding Hispanic students, the review will move to theoretical writings and research addressing relationships between self-efficacy, personal achievement goal orientation, and help-seeking behavior, particularly with regard to student success. The review of research studies in this section will progress from studies of general college student populations to studies in nursing student populations. The literature on help-seeking behavior will be connected to Latina nursing students, considering their culture. Finally, a review of literature that supported the use of phenomenology will be presented. The procedure for searching the literature follows.

Literature Search Strategy

As described in section 1, I noted a problem regarding the academic success and retention of prenursing students at the given institution. After observing student behavior as well as talking with faculty and students, I learned that many of the students did not seek help effectively when they encountered difficulties with course work. I initially searched the literature using terms such as *nursing student success* and *nursing student retention,* using the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) and Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition databases. I also examined the literature published by professional entities such as the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, The Texas Board of Nursing, and The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Several authors addressed academic help-seeking and its relationship to nursing student success (Howard-York, 2006; Lee, 2007; Poorman et al., 2002; Shelton, 2003). Lee (2007) defined help-seeking as "a social process in which faculty and student are

engaged with each other toward positive outcomes" (p. 469), and noted that both individual and environmental influences affect whether students engage in help-seeking strategies. "Individual factors include student self-efficacy beliefs, goal orientation, motivation, and self-regulating behaviors. Environmental factors of interest include the learning environment and approach of the teacher" (Lee, 2007, p. 469). Lee further emphasized the need for nursing faculty to "develop an understanding of theory, research, and strategies related to encouraging students toward success" (p. 468). Following the initial review of the literature on nursing student success, I expanded the search terms to include *academic help-seeking*, *self-efficacy*, and *achievement goal orientation*, and I used databases such as Education Research Complete, the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), EBSCO, and Academic Search Premier.

As the given university is a Hispanic-serving institution, I also used search terms such as *Latino, Latina,* and *Hispanic nursing students; Latino, Latina,* and *Hispanic student success*; and *minority student success*. These search terms were combined with *postsecondary education*, *higher education, student retention,* and *student withdrawal*. This portion of the review included searching all issues of *The Journal of Hispanic Health Care International, The Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, and *The Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* published since 2005 to learn more about the issues currently facing Hispanic students in postsecondary educational settings as well as the issues related to Hispanic patients in health care systems. Additionally, I reviewed literature related to culture, specifically searching for the work of Hofstede and Trompenaars, as recommended by my committee chair.

Literature Related to the Problem

The problem of unresolved academic difficulties among nursing students was introduced in section 1. The problem impacts the students, the patients for whom they would care, the programs of nursing in which they are enrolled, and the academic institutions that admit them. The impact on the various stakeholders will be described in the following paragraphs.

Impact on Student Outcomes

Students with unresolved academic issues may experience delayed entry into programs of nursing, extending their time in college. Long-term consequences to the students may include a delay in or loss of earning potential in the face of student loans that come due, giving up a lifelong dream, and limited professional opportunities due to nonattainment of a baccalaureate degree. Unresolved academic issues are particularly concerning for Latina students. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, only 12% of Hispanic women in the United States have a baccalaureate degree or higher. Hispanic women make less money, are more likely to work in blue collar jobs, and are more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanic women (Gonzalez, 2008).

Impact on Patient Populations

The problem impacts the patient populations that successful students would ultimately serve. Patient outcomes are directly related to adequate numbers of qualified RNs (Buerhaus, 2008). According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ; 2007), higher RN to patient ratios are "associated with a reduction in hospital-

related mortality, failure to rescue, and other nurse sensitive outcomes, as well as reduced

length of stay" (p. 2). A brief overview of academic preparation options for RNs follows.

There are currently three types of programs in the United States that prepare RNs:

(a) associate degree programs, which are most often found in community colleges and

require two to three years to complete; (b) diploma programs, which are sponsored by

hospitals and require approximately three years to complete; and (c) BSN programs,

which are offered by four-year colleges and universities and require approximately four

years to complete. The BSN degree is often required for nurses who aspire to work in

leadership positions (BLS, 2009). Notably, the AHRQ (2007) also discovered a

"significant negative correlation between the percentage of nurses with Bachelor of

Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees and the incidence of deaths related to health care (r = -

0.46, p = 0.02)" (p. 3). A complete discussion of the debate regarding minimum RN entry

level preparation is beyond the scope of this paper.

The current nursing shortage in the United States is expected to worsen over the

next decade, and a deficit of 500,000 RNs nationwide is predicted by 2025 (AACN,

2009a; Buerhaus, 2008). The Texas RN shortage is expected to reach 52,000 by 2020

(Task Force, 2007). A shortage of minority nurses exists within the overall nursing

shortage, with the most significant deficiency found in the number of Hispanic nurses

(Rivera-Goba & Wallen, 2008). Although the U.S. population was 13.7% Hispanic in

2004, Hispanics made up only about 1.7% of the U.S. RN workforce at that time (HRSA,

2006). Nationwide, Hispanics accounted for only 5.4% of graduates from baccalaureate

nursing programs in 1999 and 6.1% of graduates from baccalaureate nursing programs in

2008 (AACN, 2009b). Hispanic RN graduates from all types of professional nursing programs in Texas increased by 62% between 1997 and 2005, but they still accounted for only 21% of graduates from professional nursing programs in Texas in 2005, despite the fact that Hispanics accounted for 35% of the state population (Task Force, 2007).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), the Hispanic population continues to grow; it accounted for 15.1% of the nation's population and 36% of the Texas state population in 2007. Although Hispanics made up only 6% of the elderly population in the United States in 2005, they are expected to comprise 17% of the elderly U.S. population by 2050. Additionally, Hispanics suffer higher rates of obesity and diabetes than do non-Hispanics (Livingston, Minushkin, & Cohn, 2008). The aging of the Hispanic population along with the prevalence of chronic illnesses in the population can be expected to increase their needs for professional nursing care.

A shortage of minority healthcare professionals has been associated with health disparities in minority populations (Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce, 2004). Although a detailed discussion of Hispanic health disparities is beyond the scope of this paper, examples include more years of life lost prior to age 75 due to strokes, chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, diabetes, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and homicide as compared to non-Hispanic Whites. Hispanics also have higher rates of death due to asthma, higher rates of cervical and stomach cancers, higher rates of tobacco use, and higher rates of obesity than do non-Hispanic Whites. Finally, Hispanics trail the majority population in important health indicators such as percentage of individuals with health insurance, percentage of individuals who have a regular source

of ongoing health care, and percentage of children and adults who are fully immunized (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2004). The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Clinical Center (2000) noted that one component of addressing health care disparities includes the presence of minority health care professionals with whom minority patients can identify.

The Task Force (2007) determined that a 50% increase in all graduates eligible for licensure by 2010 was necessary in order to meet the professional nursing needs of Texas:

> To meet the projected demand for RNs to care for the citizens of Texas, not only must enrollment capacity continue to expand, but efforts must also be directed to insure that qualified students admitted to nursing programs across the state, complete these programs in a timely, efficient manner, and are prepared to pass the state licensing exam so they may enter the RN workforce. (p. 11)

When discussing the nursing care needs of the Hispanic population, Anders et al. (2007) emphasized, "In an effort to provide culturally competent nursing care to this growing populace, more Hispanic registered nurses are urgently needed" (p. 128). Therefore, nursing programs have an obligation to the public, in addition to the students, to increase admission, retention, graduation, and NCLEX-RN pass rates, particularly in Hispanic students. Cultural competence and the relationships between culture and health care will be explored later in this section.

Impact on Educational Institutions

Finally, the problem of unresolved academic difficulties impacts the ability of educational institutions to serve students. Universities spend a great deal of money recruiting and admitting students. The costs to the university are high if students withdraw prior to graduation. McClung and Werner (2008) noted, "Irrespective of the level of a college's endowment, the university must attract and retain students in order to thrive, grow, and fulfill its social and economic mission" (p. 107). The authors pointed out that low retention rates are indicative of not providing adequate "value" to students and are likely to harm future enrollment (McClung & Werner, 2008, p. 111). Declining enrollment limits the ability of an institution to grow and serve.

Within the nursing programs themselves, failure to produce more graduates who pass their initial NCLEX-RN may affect program funding and accreditation (K. Light, personal communication, May 28, 2009). Texas House Bill 4471 (2009), signed into effect by Governor Rick Perry on June 19, 2009 (Texas Legislature Online, 2009), noted that grants from the professional nursing shortage reduction program must be awarded for costs related to preparing more RNs, such as "encouraging innovation in the recruitment and retention of students, including the recruitment and retention of Spanish-speaking and bilingual students" (Texas H. B. 4471, 2009, p. 5289). Therefore, promotion of nursing student academic success at this Hispanic-serving institution is critical to future funding and expansion of programs.

Initial Findings Related to the Minority Student Experience

My initial review revealed that specific student populations, including first-generation college and minority students, face barriers and need special attention from faculty members in order to promote academic success in a program of nursing (Amaro et al., 2006; Anders et al., 2007; Bond et al., 2008; Cason et al., 2008; Doutrich et al.; Evans, 2008; Gilchrist & Rector, 2007; Lee, 2007; Sutherland et al., 2007; Valencia-Go, 2005). A number of researchers studied the attributes and experiences of successful Hispanic students (Cerna, Pérez, & Sáenz, 2009; Gloria et al., 2005; Otero et al., 2007). Several studies focused on the Hispanic postsecondary experience within the culture of the family and the culture of the university attended (Alexander et al., 2007; Cerna et al., 2009; Sánchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2005; Zalaquett, 2006), and a number of researchers specifically studied the Latina college experience (Gloria et al., 2005; Gonzalez, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Sy, 2006; Sy & Brittian, 2008; Sy & Romero, 2008). The initial findings motivated me to search for additional studies related to Hispanic family culture, university culture, and Latina success.

Johnson (2006) reviewed several decades worth of literature on historical trends and the relationships between racial discrimination, marginalization, and academic self-efficacy of Hispanics. He noted the difficulties faced by students whose dominant cultural values differ from those of the mainstream educated population:

> For a person of the margin to succeed in higher education, they must be able to
> negotiate the two worlds in tandem. It is twice the work. To succeed, they must
> negotiate and decode the language of their family culture on a personal level,

while decoding the mainstream culture on a professional level. (Johnson, 2006,

pp. 81–82)

Johnson's work provided additional support for reviewing the literature related to family,

culture, academic self-efficacy, and achievement goal orientation in this population of

Hispanic students.

As discussed above, the literature also revealed that Hispanics are underserved in

health care systems and that the shortage of Hispanic professional nurses plays a role in

poorer health outcomes of Hispanics in comparison to the general population. The

findings helped to narrow the study population to Latinas, who comprise approximately

50% of the given program's student population. Throughout the literature review, I

considered ideas regarding the most appropriate methodology for the intended study.

Race, Culture, and Ethnic Identity

Following determination of the study population, I reviewed literature regarding

the term(s) by which to describe participants. A number of academic publication titles use

the term Hispanic, as does the U.S. Census Bureau. Originally, the term Latino broadly

described individuals from countries with official languages that derived from Latin.

Today, Latino refers to a "person of Hispanic ancestry who lives in the United States"

(González & Gándara, 2005, p. 394). Therefore, all Latinos are Hispanic, but Hispanics

become Latinos as a result of their connection to or residence in the United States.

González and Gándara (2005) clarified the historical and political differences between

the terms: "'Hispanic' emphasizes historical connections among people of Spanish-

speaking origin, whereas 'Latino' points to political differences between these people and

the Anglo population" (p. 396). González and Gándara noted that many appreciate the term Latino, as it richly describes the ethnic identity of Hispanics in the United States.

Preferences regarding terminology vary among individuals. The American Psychological Association (APA; 2010, p. 75) suggested use of country of origin as one possibility for describing participants, and encouraged researchers to use the term preferred by their participants. As noted in the Definition of Terms section, Hispanic and Latino are often used interchangeably (González & Gándara, 2005; Vásquez & Mejia, 2008). Therefore, I use the term employed by the original authors when citing literature in sections 1 and 2. Sections 3, 4, and 5 use the term Latina, as the participants will be Hispanic women living and attending college in the United States.

Relationships Between Culture and Behavior

The concept of culture arose repeatedly in the literature regarding Hispanic health care and Hispanic student success. The prominence of culture in the initial articles reviewed led to searching the literature for the origins of behavior within a cultural context. The review of literature related to Hispanic student success and the role of culture as it relates to student behavior and health care outcomes enhanced my understanding of the problem of unresolved academic issues in Latina college students and its impact on students, future patients, universities, programs of nursing, and society. The problem's impact was described earlier in this section.

Triandis (2001) emphasized the relationships between group culture and individuals' personalities, and stated, "*Customs* are aspects of culture and *habits* aspects of personality" (p. 910). He further described personality as a "configuration of

cognitions, emotions, and habits which are activated when situations stimulate their

expression. They generally determine the individual's unique adjustment to the world"

(Triandis, 2001, p. 908). Therefore, it is necessary to consider students' culture when

exploring their habits of responding to the stimulus of academic challenges. Culture also

plays an important role when investigating Hispanic Americans' habits of responding to

illnesses and to their health care providers in the United States.

Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimensions

Numerous theoretical frameworks exist regarding the study of culture. A brief

review of the work of Hofstede (1983, 1986, 1997, 2001) is provided as background for

the concept of cultural competence in nursing care as well as a framework within which

to explore the responses of Latina students to academic challenges. Hofstede's work

explored how individuals in different cultures respond to four universal problems: "(a)

social inequalities, (2) dealing with the unpredictable, (3) relation between individual and

group, and (4) emotional role division between the genders" (Meeuwesen, van den Brink-

Muinen, & Hofstede, 2009, p. 59). According to Triandis (2004), "Hofstede's work has

become the standard against which new work on cultural differences is validated" (p. 89).

Based on recommendations by Triandis and my committee chair, I included Hofstede's

model in the conceptual framework.

Hofstede (1983) studied the attitudes and "work-related value patterns" (p. 46) of

various cultures during the second half of the 20th century. He analyzed data from more

than 116,000 questionnaires completed by individuals from 50 countries and three

combined-country regions at two points in time, conscientiously matching the samples

between countries. Four dimensions of culture that vary between groups emerged from his analysis: (a) *power distance,* (b) *collectivism* versus *individualism,* (c) *femininity* versus *masculinity*, and (d) *uncertainty avoidance* (Hofstede, 1983, p. 46). Following ecological statistical analysis which correlated the variables between countries, Hofstede assigned numerical values for the dimensions to 50 countries.

The following paragraphs describe the dimensions as they relate to educational settings, and compare the dimensions between Latin American cultures and the dominant U.S. culture. Numerical values assigned to each dimension are compared between the United States and Mexico, as most of the proposed research study participants were Mexican American. I will discuss possible effects of the dimensions on relationships and behavior in health care and educational settings.

The power distance dimension relates to acceptance of inequality between human beings. This dimension is measured by the power distance index (PDI). Individuals from cultures with higher PDIs are more accepting of inequality than are individuals in cultures with low PDIs. Employees in high-PDI countries rarely question their bosses, they view their bosses as autocratic or paternalistic, and in many cases, they prefer this type of management. Employees in low-PDI countries are comfortable questioning their bosses, and they prefer a consultative style of management (Hofstede, 1983; 1997, p. 27). Students in high-PDI countries do not question their teachers, they are more dependent on their teachers, and they are unlikely to talk in class unless invited to speak (Hofstede, 2001, pp. 100–101). Latin American countries have higher PDI scores than does the

United States; Mexico's PDI is 81, as compared to a PDI of 40 for the United States (Hofstede, 1983, p. 52).

A second dimension of culture described by Hofstede (1983, 2001) is that of individualism versus collectivism. Individuals from collectivist cultures view themselves as part of their in-group, and those from individualist cultures see themselves as distinct and separate. The U.S. individualism index value (IDV) of 91 is the highest of the 50 countries scored, and Mexico's IDV is 30 (Hofstede, 1983, p. 52; 2001, p. 215). In the educational setting, students from collectivist cultures view themselves as part of a group and rarely speak out. Additionally, they strive to maintain harmony and to avoid confrontation so individuals and their in-groups do not "lose face." The combination of collectivism (low IDV) and high power distance (high PDI) result in classrooms that are teacher-centered, with little two-way communication (Hofstede, 2001, p. 235). These concepts should be considered when exploring the willingness of Latina students to speak out or ask for help when they face academic challenges.

As noted above, Triandis (2001) distinguished between the terms used to describe the customs of the culture and the terms used to describe the personal habits of individual personalities within a given culture. While individualism describes one end of the spectrum of the relationship between the individual and the group at the cultural level, idiocentrism describes this habit at the individual personality level. Similarly, while collectivism describes the polar opposite of individualism at the cultural level, allocentrism describes it at the individual personality level.

Triandis (2001, 2004) cautioned against generalizing and emphasized that most individuals exhibit a combination of collectivist (allocentric) and individualist (idiocentric) cognitive responses depending on the situation. Yet, Triandis (2001) also noted that people in individualist cultures more often prioritize their own goals, while people in collectivist cultures give priority to the goals of their in-group. In the case of students, Latinas may therefore be more likely to attend to the needs of their family than to their academic needs when the two compete. Sy (2006), Sy and Brittian (2008) and Sy and Romero (2008) researched the effects of family obligations on the academic plans and performance of Latina students. They reported positive as well as negative effects, and the details of their research will be presented later.

The dimension of masculinity and femininity affects students and their experiences in educational systems as well. Masculine cultures are highly competition and performance-oriented, and feminine cultures are more concerned with the welfare of all. Men and women have more perceptual differences and are treated differently in educational systems of masculine cultures. The United States and Mexico do not score significantly differently on this dimension. Mexico's masculinity index value (MAS) is 69, only slightly higher than the U.S. MAS of 62 (Hofstede, 1983, p. 52; 2001, p. 286). Therefore, this dimension will not feature prominently in the literature review.

The avoidance of uncertainty dimension varies between the United States and many Latin American countries. This dimension describes the degree to which individuals within a culture feel anxious or threatened by the unknown. Mexico's uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) is 82, but the UAI of the United States is only 46

(Hofstede, 1983, p. 52; 2001, p. 151). Students in low-UAI countries do not feel the need for highly structured course situations, and they are comfortable if the teacher admits to not knowing an answer. Students in high-UAI cultures such as Mexico prefer high structure, expect their teachers to be experts, and rarely voice disagreement with a professor (Hofstede, 2001).

Hofstede (2001) proposed a fifth dimension of culture, long-term orientation versus short-term orientation following additional research in the 1980s. Individuals from cultures with high long-term orientation (LTO) index value scores see perseverance, frugality, and looking ahead to the future as important. Individuals from cultures with a short-term orientation (low LTO scores) live more in the moment and expect quick results. Students in high LTO cultures value persistence more than do students in low LTO cultures (Hofstede, 2001, p. 360). Hofstede provided LTO values for 23 countries, including the United States, Canada, and a number of countries in Asia, Africa, and Western Europe. He did not, however, present values for Central or South American countries other than Brazil.

Relationships Between Culture and Education

The paragraphs above noted important differences in students' perceptions of and responses to stimuli in educational settings between the dominant cultures in the United States and Mexico. Students representative of traditional Mexican culture would demonstrate high PDI, high UAI, and low IDV in comparison to students who are representative of traditional U.S. culture, which is characterized by low PDI, low UAI, and high IDV. Although Hofstede (1997, 2001) discussed the relationships between the

dimensions and students in educational settings, it is important to note that the 116,000

surveys on which he based his theory were completed by adult employees, not by

students. Although these characteristics cannot necessarily be generalized to all students,

the dimensions measured by the PDI, the UAI, and the IDV will be considered during the

final analysis of data and in the discussion of the findings.

Relationships Between Culture and Health Care

The first decade of the 21st century was marked by a number of publications

noting the need for culturally competent health care and the shortage of health care

professionals with Hispanic ancestry (Betancourt et al., 2003; Giger et al., 2007; Rivera-

Goba & Wallen, 2008; Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce,

2004; Tuck, Harris, & Baliko, 2000; Warda, 2000, 2008). The problem of Hispanic

disparities in health care was delineated above. This section offers a brief discussion of

culturally competent care.

According to Betancourt et al. (2003), a culturally competent health care system is

"one that acknowledges and incorporates–at all levels–the importance of culture,

assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance toward the dynamics that result from

cultural differences, expansion of cultural knowledge, and adaptation of services to meet

culturally unique needs" (p. 118). Based on their extensive review of academic,

government, and foundations publications, Betancourt et al. noted that there are

organizational, structural, and clinical barriers to culturally competent care. A major

organizational barrier is the paucity of minority health care workers and leaders who are

able to deliver care and organize systems of care with consideration of the beliefs and

values of a given minority population in mind. This deficiency affects all facets of health care, including diagnosis, referrals, patient satisfaction, patient compliance, and outcomes. Although professionals from outside a given cultural group can learn how to provide care that is culturally competent, this learned skill is not a substitute for the presence of health care workers who have the inside perspective of a given group. Therefore, the professional health care workforce needs to reflect the overall population that it serves (Betancourt et al., 2003).

The AAN's Expert Panel on Cultural Competence (Giger et al., 2007) provided a more recent definition of culturally competent health care:

> Cultural competence is having the knowledge, understanding, and skills about a diverse cultural group that allows the health care provider to provide acceptable cultural care. Competence is an ongoing process that involves accepting and respecting differences and not letting one's personal beliefs have an undue influence on those whose worldview is different from one's own. Cultural competence includes having general cultural as well as cultural-specific information so the health care provider knows what questions to ask. (p. 100)

The expert panel offered 12 recommendations to the AAN regarding education, practice, research, policy, and advocacy to improve the health of minority populations. Two of the recommendations were directly related to increasing the numbers of minorities in the professional nurse workforce. Recommendation 6 stated:

> The AAN shall seek resources to develop and sponsor studies to describe and identify principles used by organization magnets that (a) provide an environment

that enhances knowledge development related to cross-cultural, ethnic

minority/stigmatized populations, and (b) attract and retain minority and other

vulnerable students, faculty, and clinicians. (Giger et al., 2007, p. 99)

Recommendation 9 stated, "The AAN must collaborate with racial/ethnic nursing

organizations to develop models of recruitment, education, and retention of nurses from

racial/ethnic minority groups" (Giger et al., 2007, p. 99). The recommendations lend

support to the urgency of the problem introduced in section 1 of this paper. Nursing

schools across the United States are searching for effective and efficient ways by which

to prepare a nursing workforce that reflects the demographics of the population.

Additionally, the AAN, the Transcultural Nursing Society, and national nursing experts

continue to dialogue about how to most effectively provide culturally competent nursing

care (Douglas et al., 2009).

Culturally Competent Care as Related to Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture

Hofstede's (1983, 2001) dimensions of culture provided perspective for the need

for a nursing workforce that reflects the nation's population and for the provision of

culturally competent health care. Tuck et al. (2000) and Warda (2008) emphasized the

importance of the value of collectivism, defined by Warda as "the concern for groups,

aggregates, and communities" (p. 195), when working to improve access to health care

for all individuals in the 21st century. Additionally, Warda (2008) challenged nursing

education programs to integrate the Hispanic cultural patterns of simpátia and

personalismo into the curriculum to make it more welcoming to Hispanic students and to

enhance the ability of all students to provide culturally competent care to the growing

Hispanic population in the United States. The recommendations were based on earlier research from which Warda (2000) developed a theoretical framework related to Mexican Americans' perceptions of culturally competent care.

Warda (2000) facilitated semistructured focus group interviews during the spring of 1996 to explore the concept of culturally competent care from the perspectives of Mexican American health care recipients and Mexican American RNs. Twenty-two Mexican Americans participated in one of four focus groups. One focus group consisted of four female RNs and one male RN. The remaining three focus groups included health care recipients. One group comprised four men, one group comprised seven women, and one group comprised three men and three women. The separation of the RNs, who had been indoctrinated in the Western biomedical model, from recipients of care was a strength of the research. Warda's use of a group of women, a group of men, and a group with equal numbers of men and women was a strength as well. The divisions minimized the possible influence of RNs on recipients, men on women, and/or women on men during focus group interviews.

Participants ranged from 27 to 73 years of age. More than half had not completed eighth grade; 58% were low income; 82% reported low to moderate acculturation on the validated scale used by Warda (2000); 80% were born in Mexico and had lived in the United States for a mean of 14.5 years; and 64% were married or partnered. The number of college-educated participants equaled the number of RNs. The RNs all reported their health as good to excellent, but 64% of the other participants reported their health as fair.

Warda (2000) audio taped and transcribed the interviews, coded the audio taped transcriptions, identified concepts, formed categories, and developed a theoretical schema. The researcher subsequently developed a theoretical framework to describe the perceptions. A Hispanic RN who was a qualitative research expert confirmed the data analysis, and the researcher validated findings with one member of each focus group to enhance credibility.

Warda (2000) discovered that participants described congruent health care experiences, which enabled them to deal effectively with health care issues. The congruent experiences contained the elements of system supports, valuing, personalismo, and cultural comprehension. System supports included harmonious communication characterized by at least some use of Spanish language and a source of regular primary care. Personalismo included respect, caring, understanding, and patience when communicating. Therefore, congruent health care experiences were characterized by pleasant encounters and expressions of caring.

Incongruent health care experiences, or those which hindered the participants' abilities to deal with health-related issues, emerged as well. Incongruent experiences included discounting, systems barriers, and blaming. Discounting was defined as the "failure to acknowledge the clients' perception of the health care situation" (Warda, 2000, p. 213). Blaming involved the client's perception that the health care provider held him or her responsible for health issues. System barriers included illness-based care, long waits, dissonant communication, language difficulties, inadequate cultural knowledge

related to the importance of family involvement in health care decisions, lack of client education, and lack of humanistic care.

Warda (2000) also reported the participants' descriptions of their personal and cultural characteristics. The cultural self was characterized by family, spirituality, health beliefs and practices, and health care options. Family support and family obligations were central to the cultural self of all participants, including the Mexican American RNs. The acculturated RNs, however, did not value family involvement in decision making as highly as did the less-acculturated health care recipients. Spirituality was characterized by use of prayer, centrality of faith to one's life, and a sense of *spiritual dualism*, in which there is a "symbiotic relationship between God's power and individuals' power to exert control over their lives" (Warda, 2000, p. 216). Health beliefs and practices also comprised the cultural self. Use of unauthorized prescription medications and reliance on folk healing were not uncommon. Finally, many participants reported that limited knowledge of the health care system was a barrier to their care.

Warda's (2000) findings aligned with the work of Ginorio et al. (1995) and Triandis (1983). For example, Warda found personal relationships with health care providers, characterized by simpátia, personalismo, and respeto, to be essential to Mexican American individuals' experiences of consuming health care. This finding is consistent with those of Ginorio et al. in regards to the cultural values of the Latin American family. Warda noted that participants often preferred to receive professional services from a friend, even if the friend was not highly competent, and noted that

Triandis found this behavior, also described by Ginorio et al., to be highly relevant in collectivist cultures.

Finally, the Mexican American RNs in Warda's (2000) study did not rely heavily on family involvement when making decisions about their personal health care, but they nonetheless emphasized the importance of involving Hispanic families in decisions. Family support and family obligations remained very important for the acculturated RNs as well as for the health care recipients. The importance of family support and obligations in both acculturated and nonacculturated Mexican American participants, which emerged in Warda's study, is consistent with the findings in a number of research studies involving Hispanic students (Cason et al., 2008; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Sy, 2006.; Sy & Brittian, 2008; Sy & Romero, 2008; Zalaquett, 2006), which will be discussed later in the literature review.

More recently, Meeuweson et al. (2009) investigated relationships between four dimensions of culture and the delivery of culturally competent care in a study of 307 general practice physicians and 5820 patients in 10 European countries. The researchers analyzed videotapes using Roter's interaction analysis system (RIAS) and collected additional information from physicians and patients using questionnaires. The cultures in the 10 countries were characterized by various combinations of the dimensions of individualism versus collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, long-term versus short-term orientation, and masculinity versus femininity. The researchers found four dimensions to be predictive of variations in medical communication, despite the fact that the dimensions originally derived from Hofstede's (1983) research in employees of a

large multinational company more than two decades earlier. Meeuwesen et al. cautioned

that the predictive relationships were true at the national level and would not necessarily

apply to individual encounters.

The findings of Meeuwesen et al. (2009) cannot be generalized to relationships

between health care providers and Hispanics in the United States, but the study did

demonstrate significant relationships between four of Hofstede's (1983) dimensions of

culture and the communication patterns between patients and physicians. Studies using

Hofstede's dimensions in patient populations in the United States were not found, but the

recently published work of Meeuwesen et al. demonstrates the relevance of Hofstede's

work to culturally competent patient care in today's setting. Their work also lends

support to the idea that a cultural mismatch between patient and health care provider may

affect patient outcomes. Further research in patient-physician relationships and patient-

nurse relationships is necessary to increase the understanding of how to provide culturally

competent health care to Hispanics and other minorities in the United States. Additional

research which builds on the earlier work of Warda (2000) would be helpful to further the

understanding of providing culturally competent care to Hispanics in particular.

Cultural Values of Nursing Students

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2006) noted that cultures around the world

develop values that allow their members to survive and flourish in the surrounding

environment. Contrasting values, such as Hofstede's collectivism versus individualism,

are present in every culture. The authors asserted that highly productive cultures have

optimal synergy and complementarity between contrasting values. Effective cultures

recognize that although one end of a values spectrum is more outwardly apparent, the opposite end exists in latent form and may be expressed indirectly by members. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars emphasized that cultural intelligence requires respecting both ends of each values spectrum, recognizing that contrasting values exist in all cultures, and realizing that movement between opposing ends of a value continuum is necessary and effective.

Trompenaars and Wolliams (2003) cautioned against "throwing out the best of what already exists" (p. 361) when effecting cultural change in organizations. They recommended the use of a "'through'" process which "takes the existing culture to be reconciled with the new culture" in order to preserve the best of the current organizational culture as change occurs (Trompenaars and Wolliams, 2003, p. 362). Although their research was done in organizations, it is worthy of consideration as it relates to the education of a professional nurse workforce that is optimally poised to deliver culturally competent care. Nurse educators must recognize that some of the values inherent to academic success in Latina prenursing students may be less suited to the provision of culturally competent care of Hispanic patients. It is possible that analysis of the stories of successful Latina students may illuminate whether the students have been able to embody values that serve them well academically without giving up the values that are most important and dominant in their culture of origin.

As noted in section 1, the cultural values of respeto, personalismo, familiarismo, and marianismo are found in most Latino families (Ginorio et al., 1995). A number of

research studies have considered the extent to which these values are present in and relate to the experiences of Latina students. A review of the studies will follow.

Hispanics in Higher Education

As noted in section 1, unresolved academic difficulties impact the retention and degree attainment rates of Hispanic students. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2003), although 30.3% of Hispanics had some college experience, only 10.4% had a bachelor's degree or more, and only 3.8% had earned an advanced degree. Their bachelor's degree rate was the lowest of any ethnic group, compared to 27% of non-Hispanic Whites, 44.1% of Asian Americans, 14.3% of African Americans, and 11.5% of American Indian and Alaskan natives reporting a bachelor's degree or higher. A review of relationships between culture and academic success follows.

Based on his research findings, Hofstede (1986) discussed the relevance of cultural differences between teachers and students. He noted that problems in teacher/student interactions can arise from:

1. differences in the social positions of teachers and students in the two societies;

2. differences in the relevance of the curriculum (training content) for the two societies;

3. differences in profiles of cognitive abilities between the populations from which teacher and student are drawn;

4. differences in expected patterns of teacher/student and student/student interaction. (Hofstede, 1986, p. 303)

He emphasized that "the burden of adaptation in cross-cultural learning situations should be primarily on the teachers" (Hofstede, 1986, p. 301). Hofstede's findings lend support to the need for nurse educators to find out more about the student populations they serve.

Research in Latino Postsecondary Student Populations

A sizable body of literature has accumulated regarding Latino experiences in higher educational settings. Researchers have explored the barriers and supports that students experience, and a variety of interventions designed to enhance student academic outcomes have been investigated. A review of these studies follows.

Otero et al. (2007) studied 106 Hispanic college freshmen who were designated as academically at-risk. Students completed a 130-item survey on background information, attitudes and behavior related to college, and attitudes and perceptions about mentoring. The researchers used a logit statistical model to determine factors predictive of continued enrollment, the dependent variable, in a population of Hispanic first-year college students. The model successfully predicted retention for the following year in 79% of cases studied. Female gender predicted retention (∂ 0.2508; $p < .05$), as did a higher level of maternal education, although it fell just short of being statistically significant (∂ 0.0228; $p = .1124$). A higher level of paternal education (∂ -0.0219; $p < .10$) and a higher family income (∂ -0.0092; $p < .05$) were inversely related to retention. Indication of intention to graduate from the institution was most highly predictive of retention (∂ 0.4234; $p < .05$), and valuing the importance of grades was predictive as well (∂ 0.1499; $p < .10$). Informal interaction with faculty and staff members was not predictive of retention, although social integration with peers was valued as important by students who

persisted. Participant satisfaction with the academic experience was unrelated to their continued enrollment. The researchers emphasized that all participants in the study were academically at risk and that the findings may not apply to other populations of Hispanic students.

Otero et al. (2007) acknowledged that only 134 of 311 at-risk students participated. The findings may not be reflective of nonparticipants who are at risk, nor of low-risk students. Additionally, although the authors reported that 62.6% of the participants came from families with annual incomes of less than $25,000, the authors did not publish the number or percentage of men and women who participated in their study. The research raised a number of questions, including why higher family income and higher levels of paternal education would be predictive of lower retention rates.

Zalaquett (2006) inductively analyzed the stories of 12 Latino students who overcame disadvantages and successfully attended an urban, commuter university. Student participants of Cuban, Venezuelan, Mexican or Puerto Rican descent contributed written accounts of the life experiences that influenced their journey to college. Ten participants were female, two were male, and their average age was 20 years. Ten were first-generation college students, six were immigrants, and three were migrants. Two professionals, one Latino and one non-Latino, evaluated the stories for representativeness and relevancy prior to Zalaquett's analysis.

Zalaquett (2006) sought to discover core factors related to participants' success and analyzed the students' written accounts for the presence of barriers. The researcher entered raw data into an Excel spreadsheet, analyzed and categorized words, and

determined word frequency as part of the inductive methodology. The barriers, previously described by Immerwahr (2003), that emerged included minimal adult support and misinformation related to college opportunities and admission processes. The barriers were most daunting for students whose parents had no experience with higher education and minimal English fluency, especially if high school counselors and teachers did not provide adequate support. The barriers resulted in poor choices about higher education.

Each participant described family support, despite parents' lack of familiarity with postsecondary education, as crucial to their academic success. The students credited valuing education, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment as key to their continued success. Additional factors contributing to academic success included supportive friendships with peers, scholarships, and support from external mentors. High school teachers were influential when involved, although most participants did not report receiving support during their secondary education (Zalaquett, 2006).

Zalaquett (2006) emphasized that even successful Hispanic students encounter barriers. Notably, the importance of familismo was present across participants' stories. The researcher recommended that college educators respect and include parents in conversations about Latino students' progress, as family support is key to success.

Sánchez, Reyes, and Singh (2005) used grounded theory to research the role of significant relationships in the postsecondary educational experiences of five male and five female Mexican American students between the ages of 18 and 20 at an urban university in the American Midwest between 1999 and 2001. Latinos comprised 14% of the student body. Two students were first-generation citizens, seven were second-

generation, and one was third-generation. All but two were first-generation college students.

The study was situated within a social capital framework, and the researchers conducted two in-depth semistructured interviews with each of the 10 students and one interview with each of the 12 individuals who supported seven of the student participants. Eight of the support persons were women, and four were men. Support persons ranged from 20 to 62 years of age. Support persons' levels of education ranged from having completed elementary school to having completed a graduate program. The social support providers included parents, a sibling, romantic partners, friends, and professionals such as clergy, mentors, teachers, and counselors. Few of these mentors, however, came from within the educational system. Interestingly, although all participants had been assigned a peer mentor, none of them mentioned the peer mentor as a source of support (Sánchez et al., 2005).

Sánchez et al. (2005) employed triangulation of data, member-checking, peer debriefing, and prolonged engagement to enhance credibility. Interrater reliability of the coding between the two coders was calculated as well. Key findings are described in the following paragraphs.

According to Sánchez et al. (2005), participants reported five forms of educational support received, including "*cognitive guidance, emotional support, informational and experiential support, modeling,* and *tangible support*" (p. 57). Participants reported receiving support in seven areas of their educational life, including "*classes, go/finish, major/career, college application process, motivation toward school,*

scholarships/financial aid, and *teachers"* (Sánchez et al., 2005, p. 59)*.* Additionally, the

participants reported that support persons were individuals who they "looked up to, cared

for, respected, and trusted" (Sánchez et al., 2005, p. 62).

Participants reported that parents provided support in "*classes, go/finish,* and

major/career" (Sánchez et al., 2005, p. 59). Although parents frequently provided

cognitive guidance, a number of them acknowledged that they were limited in their

ability to offer help once their child's academic knowledge surpassed their own. At this

point one father noted that he continued to monitor his son and helped his son to seek

educational assistance within the school system. Parents were the only support persons

reported to have provided all five forms of educational support. The other support

persons provided four forms, with the exception of tangible support, which was only

provided by parents.

Sánchez et al. (2005) emphasized the importance of the social capital provided by

the support persons to the academic success of the participants. The researchers noted

that the study highlighted "the significant, positive impact of parents on their

academically successful Mexican American youths" (Sánchez et al., 2005, p. 62).

Notably, resourceful parents with limited educational experience assisted their children to

build their social capital through connections with others once the needs of the child

surpassed what the parents could provide in terms of academic support. Additionally, the

informational and experiential support provided by the parents regarding their own

stories of limited education and poverty enhanced the academic success of some student

participants. As previously discovered by Fuligni and Pedersen (2002), a number of the

student participants were motivated by a desire to honor their families and to respect the sacrifices made by their parents on their behalf. The research of Fuligni and Pedersen will be reviewed along with the studies related to Latina students and their family obligations.

Cerna et al. (2009) studied the attributes and values of students who successfully completed a baccalaureate degree within 6 years. They drew data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's 1994 survey of college freshman at 262 public and private four-year institutions, most of which were private, four-year, liberal arts colleges. The researchers followed the sample longitudinally and collected completion data from the institutions in 2000.

From the data, Cerna et al. (2009) compared a sample of 547 Mexican American men, 776 Mexican American women, 234 Puerto Rican men, 335 Puerto Rican women, 442 other Latino men, and 624 other Latinas with a sample of 19,470 White men and 26,419 White women. Descriptive analysis of degree attainment between groups in the study of 48,846 total participants found that 67.3% of White women, 64.1% of White men, 61.5% of Mexican American women, and 53% of Mexican American men completed their degrees within 6 years.

Cerna et al's. (2009) study was situated within a conceptual framework that considered elements of social capital, cultural capital, human capital, and economic capital as they related to the degree attainment of successful students. Factor analysis revealed that all Hispanic subgroups of students had higher financial concerns related to the cost of college than did the White students ($p < .0001$), an important measure of economic capital. All Hispanic subgroups reported higher civic/social mindedness ($p <$

.0001), a cultural capital measure, than did the White students. All Hispanic subgroups reported that their decision to attend college was influenced by a mentor, a measure of social capital, at a significantly higher level ($p < .0001$) than did the White students. The reported influence of mentors echoed the findings related to key support persons published by Sánchez et al. (2005). Finally, the Mexican American and other Latino students reported higher self-efficacy scores, a measure of human capital at a significantly higher level than did the White students ($p < .001$; Cerna et al., 2009).

The researchers used multivariate analyses to predict relationships between demographic, institutional, and capital independent variables and the dichotomous dependent variable of degree attainment or not within 6 years for the Mexican American students. They then compared the findings between degree-attaining Latino male students and Latina students. As noted in the descriptive analysis, Latina students were more likely to successfully attain a degree than their male counterparts. High school GPA was the strongest predictor of degree attainment for both men and women (Cerna et al., 2009). Some key variables that predicted success for the Latinas follow.

GPA was the strongest predictor of degree attainment for Latinas (log odds ratio = 1.41, $p < .001$; Cerna et al., 2009, p. 141). The researchers discovered that the amount of personal savings with which to pay for college was also highly predictive of Latina success in college (log odds ratio = 1.16, $p < .01$). Latinas who chose their college based on low tuition (an economic capital variable) were more likely to attain their degrees (log odds ratio 1.31, $p < .05$). Latinas who entered college with major financial concerns were 20% less likely to graduate (log odds ratio = 0.80, $p < .05$). However, Latinas enrolled in

selective private institutions were more likely to attain a degree than those enrolled in public universities (log odds ratio = 0.55, *p* < .05). It is possible that Latinas with higher GPAs received more financial aid based on academic merit and therefore had more options related to selective schools.

Finally, the desire to live near home, a cultural capital variable, significantly predicted degree attainment for Latinas (log odds ratio = 1.26; *p* < .05; Cerna et al., 2009). This finding aligned with those of Sy (2006), which will be reported in the following section. Although family obligations contributed to increased stress among Latina students, the combination of family support and family obligations did not negatively influence GPAs among Sy's participants.

The size of Cerna et al's. (2009) sample was a strength of the research. Additionally, the researchers looked at students longitudinally over 6 years. Their findings related to the importance of mentoring and self-efficacy in successful Hispanic students who attained college degrees supported the decision to review recent research studies related to mentoring (Bordes & Arredondo, 2005; Negroni-Rodriguez, Dicks, & Morales, 2006; Torres Campos et al., 2009; Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006) in this student population and to review Bandura's (1977, 1986) work on self-efficacy. The following paragraphs will review research that focused on Latina students or that uncovered findings specifically related to Latinas.

Experiences of Latina Students in Higher Education

Numerous researchers have chronicled the experiences of Latina students in higher education. As with the studies that considered both male and female Latino

students, the studies of Latinas in college have investigated the barriers and supports experienced, as well as the influences of family and culture on the students' transitions to postsecondary education. The studies reviewed in this section were carried out in various geographic areas within the United States and included Latina students with a variety of Latin American backgrounds. Some studies have uncovered the concerns and fears that Hispanic parents face when sending their daughters off to college as well as the stress felt by Latina students (Alexander et al., 2007; Gloria et al., 2005; González et al., 2004). Others have researched and described the responsibilities and roles of Latina students within their families (Sy, 2006; Sy & Brittian, 2008; Sy & Romero, 2008).

Gloria et al. (2005) quantitatively studied 98 Latina undergraduates at a university in the Southwestern United States regarding their perceived educational barriers, cultural fit, coping responses, and psychological well-being. Nearly 80% of participants were of Mexican heritage. Participants ranged from first- to fifth-generation U.S. citizens; the mean GPA of participants was 2.99; and many were the first in their families to attend college. Ninety-three of the participants reported that they "valued the degree that they were currently working toward" (Gloria et al., 2005, p. 165), and 96 reported that they expected to eventually earn a graduate or professional degree.

Participants completed a demographic sheet and five standardized instruments: (a) the Perception of Barriers (POB) Scale, designed to measure their perceptions of barriers related to staying in college or that might cause them to leave; (b) the University Environment Scale (UES), which measured their perceptions of the university environment; (c) the Cultural Congruity Scale (CCS), which measured their perceptions

of the cultural congruity, or fit, between university values and their personal values; (d) the List of Coping Responses (LCR), which assessed the coping responses they used when encountering educational problems and difficulties; and (e) the Psychological Well-Being Short Scale (PWBSS), which assessed their psychological well-being (Gloria et al., 2005, pp. 168-169). Cronbach alphas of the tools in this study ranged from .71 to .86.

When asked to indicate the degree to which they used the coping responses on the LCR, the most common response was "I talk with others about the problem (friends, relatives)," followed by "I try to actively find out more about the situation and I take some positive planned action," followed by "I draw upon my past experiences; perhaps similar situations might help" (Gloria et al., 2005, p. 171). Least common coping responses were "I don't worry about it. Everything will probably work out fine," and "I seek professional advice (physician, psychologist, counselor)" (Gloria et al., 2005, p. 171). Although nearly 39% of participants indicated that they expected to encounter barriers that would make it difficult to complete their education, almost all participants (92) believed they could "overcome any barriers that stood in the way of achieving their educational goals" (Gloria et al., 2005, p. 172). Use of t tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) determined that participants' coping responses did not differ according to heritage, generational status, year of college, family income, family educational history, or GPA.

Gloria et al. (2005) conducted bivariate correlations of the variables studied, and they uncovered several significant relationships. Psychological well being was significantly related to cultural congruity ($r = .30, p \leq .01$), and these students most often

used the following coping responses: (a) taking positive planned action ($r = .44, p \leq$ .001), (b) drawing on past experiences ($r = .25, p \leq .05$), and (c) seeking support from their cultural group ($r = .24, p \leq .05$). Students who reported higher cultural congruity with the university also perceived fewer educational barriers that would cause them to withdraw ($r = .28, p \leq .01$) or that would arise if they stayed ($r = .39, p \leq .001$). These students most often used the coping response of taking positive planned action ($r = .27, p \leq .01$). Students with positive perceptions of the university environment also perceived fewer barriers that would cause them to withdraw ($r = .26, p \leq .01$), perceived fewer barriers that would arise if they stayed ($r = .32, p \leq .01$), and reported more cultural congruity with the university ($r = .54, p \leq .01$). These students were also more likely to take positive planned action in response to challenges ($r = .27, p \leq .01$; Gloria et al., 2005, p. 173).

Although this study used a cross-sectional rather than a longitudinal design, used a nonrandom sample, and relied on student reports of GPA, it uncovered important relationships between university environment, cultural fit, and perception of barriers in this sample of Latina undergraduates. The students who felt the university environment was welcoming and who reported a good cultural fit also perceived fewer barriers and reported choosing to take "positive planned action" when they encountered difficulties (Gloria et al., 2005, p. 173). This highlights the importance of providing a welcoming, culturally congruent environment for Latina students.

Gloria et al. (2005) documented that participants most often coped by talking over problems with family and friends, despite the fact that most came from families without

college experience. This highlights the importance of family to Latina students and may reflect the cultural value of familiarismo, as described by Ginorio et al. (2005). The importance of family support to the participants in the research of Gloria et al. echoed the findings of Sánchez et al. (2005) and Zalaquett (2006). One of the least reported coping responses involved asking professionals for help. This finding reflects the cultural value of personalismo (Ginorio et al., 1995), which involves hesitancy to go outside of the family or beyond those with whom one has a personal relationship to ask for help. Although the findings of Gloria et al. may not be generalizable to other populations of students, the sample was culturally similar to the student population at the university of interest, as most participants were of Mexican heritage.

González et al. (2004) chronicled the increases in college enrollment and graduation rates of Latina students during the 1990s and sought to uncover factors related to college opportunities for Latina students and to explore issues related to their leaving the family home. Using life history research methods, the researchers interviewed 12 Latina students attending one of two highly selective universities and interviewed 10 Latina students who began at a community college and then transferred to the University of California. All the participants grew up in working-class homes and attended public schools that served students of low to middle socioeconomic status.

The major findings were related to family relationships and expectations. Participants expressed breaking the expectation that they would live at home during college as a major challenge, despite their desire to become independent. Students said they and their parents experienced a tension between the benefits of opportunity and the

costs of leaving the family. Parents desired increased educational opportunities for their daughters, but they believed their daughters needed someone to care for them. Students reported that their parents accepted the transition better if they knew their daughter would have a sibling, a church, or Latina friends and faculty members for support. The participants expressed guilt and difficulty related to remaining away from family throughout their college experience, and they were troubled by the thought of continuing the separation for graduate school (Gonzalez et al., 2004).

Gonzalez et al. (2004) analyzed their findings from a Chicana feminist perspective. They noted that the participants were trying on new roles and negotiating new relationships with their families. The participants demonstrated their ability to care for themselves, a key finding, but family tension accompanied the process. Gonzalez et al. emphasized the need for postsecondary educators and staff to support Latina students and their families throughout this transition. Their findings supported the assertion by Johnson (2006) that minority students must put forth double effort in order to remain connected with their family culture and to adapt to the mainstream culture of higher education in the United States.

Using an ethnographic case study approach, Alexander et al. (2007) described barriers faced by Hispanic students transferring from community college to four-year college settings in Texas. The researchers used ethnographic methods, including participant observation, interviews, and case studies. Participants were currently enrolled in a course on Latino culture, in which they learned ethnographic field methods. The volunteer participants used these ethnographic field methods to examine their own

families on variables such as country of origin, current residence, educational

background, and employment. The researchers subsequently conducted 12 individual

interviews with students and family members, and constructed six representative case

studies based on the participants' observations to illustrate commonalities and differences

between students. The use of participant observations in addition to interviews enhanced

the ability to triangulate data, and it strengthened the findings.

Alexander et al. (2007) identified key variables such as family educational level

in order to focus the observations, interviews, and review of participants' observations.

The researchers used the key variables to code field notes and to analyze the data. Data

matrices were created to compare and contrast coded data from interviews, observations,

and document reviews. Finally, the researchers clustered coded data into thematic

categories.

Key barriers to transfer to a four-year institution included lack of familiarity with

higher education, inadequate academic preparation, English language deficiencies,

nontransferability of courses, finances, social and cultural barriers, student attitudes,

institutional barriers, nonappreciation of the value of higher education, gender and

traditional culture, and residency status. Hispanic parents voiced difficulty with

relinquishing supervision of their daughters, and they expressed fear that college would

expose their daughters to ideas outside the family belief system (Alexander et al., 2007).

Although this study researched transfer barriers rather than academic success, it

is relevant to the proposed research. As did Gonzalez et al. (2004), Alexander et al.

(2007) uncovered the strong influence of the traditional Hispanic family culture on the

educational choices of Latinas. Once again, the researchers emphasized the importance of including Hispanic parents in their children's educational planning and processes. They also recommended that faculty mentors be assigned to Latinas to role model and emphasize the importance of higher education in Hispanic populations.

Sy (2006), Sy and Romero (2008), and Sy and Brittian (2008) studied a Latina college student population in southern California, considering the concepts of: (a) familism–the Latino value of family closeness, loyalty, and interdependence (Sy & Brittian, 2008, p. 731); and (b) marianismo–the Latino value that emphasizes the submissive role of women who sacrifice their own needs to prioritize those of the family (Sy & Brittian, 2008, p. 730). The three studies are compared and contrasted in the following paragraphs.

Sy (2006) surveyed 117 Latina college students from immigrant families in Southern California to explore the influences of family and work on participants' college transition. Most participants (80%) were Mexican Americans who were second-generation U.S citizens. Average age of the participants was 18.7 years; 82% of participants were second-generation U.S. citizens, and 18% were foreign-born. Most (67%) were the first generation to attend college. Participants attended a large public university (46%) or a small private liberal arts college (54%).

The study researched the effects of the mother-daughter relationship on the participants' fulfillment of family obligations, the effects of these obligations on school-related stress and academic achievement, and the effects of concurrent work on the students' college transition. Participants completed a questionnaire about the mother-

daughter relationship, which incorporated subscales of connectedness, interdependence, and trust in hierarchy. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three subscales ranged from .81 to .86. Participants also completed a scale that measured language brokering (Cronbach's alpha was .90), a scale that measured time spent with their families (Cronbach's alpha was .80), a scale that measured work-school conflict (Cronbach's alpha was .85), and a scale that measured stress related to both work (Cronbach's alpha was .82) and school (Cronbach's alpha was .67). Participants provided their current college GPA (Sy, 2006).

Sy (2006) used path analyses and covariance matrices to determine relationships between variables. The researcher noted that the use of LISREL 8.54 allowed "simultaneous estimation of multiple pathways from predictor to outcome variables, including indirect effects" (Sy, 2006, p. 375) when compared to multiple regression techniques. The key findings follow.

The mother-daughter relationship directly and significantly predicted participants' family interactions, and the relationship indirectly affected GPA and school stress. Trust in hierarchy (a subscale of the mother-daughter relationship) significantly predicted language brokering (.31; $p < .01$), while connectedness (another subscale) significantly predicted time spent with family (.25; $p < .05$). Spending time with family was significantly and positively correlated with GPA (.22; $p < .01$). Spending time with family was negatively correlated with school stress, but this relationship was marginally significant (-.14; $p < .10$). Language brokering for the family did not significantly affect

GPA. Language brokering was significantly and positively correlated with school stress

(.26; $p < .01$), however (Sy, 2006).

Work hours did not directly or indirectly affect GPA at a level that was

significant. Work was significantly related to lower school stress (-.20; $p < .05$), possibly

because working students spent less time engaged in family language brokering (-.39; $p <$

.001), although the reasons for that were not discovered. Work-school conflict had a

direct and positive effect on work stress (.45; $p < .001$) and on school stress (.37; $p < .01$).

Work-related stress had a direct and significant positive effect on GPAs (.31; $p < .01$).

This unexpected finding balanced out the direct significant effect of work-school conflict

on GPA (-.29; $p < .01$) for an overall nonsignificant effect. The finding also differed from

previous findings in Caucasian and African American students (Sy, 2006).

Sy (2006) emphasized that the findings demonstrated the complexity of the family

relationships and work as related to academic achievement. For example, the effect of

family obligations on achievement differed depending on the type of obligation. It is

possible that the effect of work on achievement depended on the nature of the student's

job. Finally, Sy noted that participants' achievement motivation may help to explain the

complex relationships between work and school conflict, stress, and achievement.

Sy's (2006) documentation of Cronbach alpha coefficients between .67 and .90

for each of the scales increased the credibility of the results. The researcher reported use

of a number of fit indices for the model used, including a goodness-of-fit index and a

comparative fit index, which ranged from .95 to 1.0, as well as a root mean square error

of approximation between 0 and .05. Sy conscientiously described the process by which the original model was revised in order to provide the best fit for the data.

Sy (2006) acknowledged a number of limitations. Course load at the time of participation was not measured and could affect the findings. Participants did not provide their birth order or their place of residence, which could influence family relationships and obligations. Although including participants from a public and a private school enhanced the generalizability of the findings, it is possible that variances between the two groups of participants could affect the results. One additional limitation of the study is that self-reported GPAs may not be entirely accurate. Participation was increased through the course credit given for completion of the online survey at the public university and through the incentive of entering a raffle for a $50 prize at the liberal arts institution. Benefits of increased participation must be considered against risks of possible coercion.

Sy and Romero (2008) used a framework of ecological systems theory to research the effect of family obligations on Latina students' experiences in the undergraduate college setting. The researchers conducted semistructured interviews with 20 first- and second-generation Latinas between 18 and 29 years of age who were currently attending or had attended a four-year college in Southern California. Sy and Romero used grounded theory methodology to analyze the data.

Becoming self-sufficient to ease the burden on the family, contributing money to the family on a voluntary basis, and serving as a surrogate parent for younger siblings emerged as the major themes. The concept of surrogate parenting emerged primarily from the interviews with daughters of single parents. The researchers related the themes

to the cultural values of familismo and marianismo and noted the tension between parental support for participants' education and parental expectations of daughters related to family caretaking assistance. Sy and Romero (2008) acknowledged that the findings in this group of 20 students in Southern California may not be reflective of other populations of Latina students. The researchers published the interview protocol as an appendix, lending credibility to their findings.

Using a theoretical framework of ecological systems theory, Sy and Brittian (2008) surveyed 296 Latino, European American, and Asian American women just prior to their transition to college. Thirty percent of participants identified themselves as Latina, 20% self-identified as Asian, and 41% self-identified as European American. One-third of the sample participants were first-generation college students, and 52% of these participants were Latina. All participants completed an online survey. Survey responses to items measuring actual family obligations were compiled to create a score for family obligations (Cronbach's alpha = .77). Additionally, participants indicated where they planned to live and how many hours they planned to work.

Sy and Brittian (2008) quantitatively analyzed the surveys to determine the impact of family obligations on decisions made regarding work and housing during the freshman year. One-way ANOVA compared the family obligations of students from the three ethnic groups. The researchers used ordinary least squares regression analyses to identify predictors of planned work hours. Variables included family income, parent education, college generation, and high school GPA in the first step. Family obligations

were added in the second step. Multivariate logistic regression analysis was used to predict the dichotomous dependent variable of residential plans.

The Latinas reported a significantly greater number of family obligations than did the other two groups of women, but their obligations did not affect their plans to work during school or their plans to live at home versus away from home. Asian American students who reported a higher number of family obligations planned to work less, and European American students who reported a higher number of family obligations planned to live at home significantly more often than did those without obligations. Sy and Brittian (2008) postulated that family obligations may be the norm in Latino families and therefore do not influence transition decisions such as work and place of residence. Notably, family obligations remained constant in first-, second-, and third-generation Latina students in this study.

The findings related to family obligations across the studies above were consistent for the most part with the earlier quantitative research of Fuligni and Pedersen (2002), who longitudinally studied 745 young adults in northern California from Filipino, Latin American, European, and East Asian backgrounds during the 1990s. Participants completed questionnaires during their senior year of high school and again after one to three years. The researchers designed the questionnaires to measure three measures of familial duty based on literature reviews and data from focus groups: (a) current assistance, (b) respect for family, and (c) future support. Additional data was obtained from school records of and from follow-up telephone interviews with the participants. Fuligni and Pedersen used analyses of variance to determine differences regarding sense

of familial duty between ethnic groups, and they used analyses of covariance to study the relationships between family obligations and academic achievement among participants.

Latino and Filipino participants reported a significantly stronger sense of familial duty in regards to current assistance (helping in the family home, caring for siblings, running family errands, spending time with family), respect for family (following parental advice about college and work, making sacrifices for family, doing well for the sake of family), and future support (helping parents financially, spending time with parents, attend college near parents' home). Young women reported stronger beliefs in the importance of current and future support of their families. First-generation citizens reported stronger beliefs related to future family support, and participants from two-parent families reported stronger beliefs in the importance of supporting their families in the future (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002, p. 860).

Fuligni and Pedersen (2002) found that "young adults with a stronger sense of family obligation were more likely to contribute financially to their families and to live with their parents" (p. 861). Regression analyses demonstrated that the sense of familial duty reported by Latino and Filipino participants accounted for "a significant portion of their tendency to financially support their families and to live with their parents more than their peers from East Asian and European backgrounds" (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002, p. 863). There was no association between sense of obligation and the pursuit or completion of a postsecondary degree. However, a sense of family obligation was crucial to the educational persistence of young people who earned modest GPAs during high

school. A stronger sense of familial duty was also positively associated with higher emotional well-being (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002, p. 866).

Fuligni and Pedersen (2002) concluded that the Latino and Filipino participants in their study followed traditional cultural beliefs and behaviors as demonstrated by their sense of familial duty, the financial assistance they provided to their families, and their decisions to live with their families. In this study, the sense of family obligation was associated with higher levels of educational persistence in participants with modest high school GPAs. The researchers acknowledged the complexities of family relationships during young adulthood, and noted that for many of their participants, the sense of familial obligation gave them a sense of identity and purpose.

A recent study by Telzer and Fuligni (2009) examined the effects of daily family obligations on the psychological well-being of Latino, Asian, and European American adolescents. The sample included 752 ninth-grade students from three Los Angeles public schools. The mean age of participants was 14.88 years. The sample was 31% Mexican, 4% other Latino, 23% Chinese, 22% European American, and 51% female. Participants initially completed questionnaires that asked about family cohesion; attitudes toward family obligations; parental education, occupation, and work hours; and demographics related to ethnicity and immigrant status. Participants then completed a three-page daily diary designed to measure the family assistance they provided, their perceptions of personal role fulfillment, their perceptions of family demands, and their psychological well-being. Each participant used an electronic time stamp to document that his or her diary was completed every night for two weeks.

Mexican participants reported spending more time $F(2,508) = 26.97$, $p < .001$, and days $F(2,568) = 24.86$, $p < .001$, providing family assistance than did other participants (Telzer and Fuligni, 2009). In contrast to research that found Latinas to experience more family obligations than other participants (Alexander et al., 2007; González et al., 2004; Sy, 2006; Sy & Brittian, 2008; Sy & Romero, 2008; Zalaquett, 2006), gender did not significantly predict the amount of average assistance time or average number of days on which assistance was provided, and significant interactions between gender and ethnicity related to predicting family assistance were not demonstrated in this study by Telzer and Fuligni.

First-generation Mexican participants reported spending more time assisting their family than did third-generation Mexican participants. Reports of assistance days ($r = .15$), average assistance time ($r = .17$), household assistance ($r = .15$) and assisting siblings ($r = .10$) were all positively correlated with reported happiness at a level of $p < .001$. The only type of family assistance that was positively correlated with distress involved assisting parents with their occupational work ($r = .09$, $p < .05$). Analysis of covariance demonstrated that these relationships did not differ significantly across ethnicities or immigrant generations. Male participants who spent more days assisting their family reported significantly more happiness ($B = 0.62$, $SE = 0.14$, $p < .001$); no significant association arose for the young women ($B = 0.16$, $SE = 0.14$, ns), $F(1,736) = 5.54$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$ (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009, pp. 1182–1183).

Reports of assistance days ($r = .24$), average assistance time ($r = .25$), household assistance ($r = .23$) and assisting siblings ($r = .16$) were all positively correlated with role

fulfillment at a level of $p < .001$. Once again, the only type of family assistance that was positively correlated with a negative feeling, perception of demands, involved assisting parents with their occupational work ($r = .24$, $p < .001$). The researchers also found significant associations between participant reports of role fulfillment and increased happiness ($r = .58$, $p < .001$) and decreased distress ($r = -.24$, $p < .001$). Increased perception of demands was associated with increased distress ($r = .27$, $p < .001$). Mediation analysis determined that role fulfillment contributed significantly to the happiness experienced by participants as a result of helping their families (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009, p. 1183). Additionally, through use of Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM), the researchers determined that participants reported more happiness and more role fulfillment on the days during which they assisted their families and on the days when they spent more time doing so. Finally, the associations between family assistance and reports of psychological well-being did not vary according to gender or ethnicity (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009, pp. 1184–1185).

In summary, Telzer and Fuligni (2009) reported that providing assistance to their families was consistently associated with an increased sense of role fulfillment and with increased feelings of happiness in this culturally diverse group of adolescents. The researchers cautioned that causal relationships could not be assumed, however. As with any study that requires parental consent and student assent, the findings may not accurately portray the students who did not participate. One important consideration is the moderate amount of time spent in family assistance that was reported in Telzer and Fuligni's study. Their participants reported assisting their families on 71% of days, and

they reported helping for an average of .97 hours each day. The findings may not be generalizable to young people who spend significantly greater amounts of time assisting their families.

Telzer and Fuligni (2009) conscientiously described the methods used, lending credibility to the findings. Although participants in this study were still in high school, the findings of Telzer and Fuligni provide an increased understanding about family obligations and psychological well-being of young people. This information may be relevant when working with older students in view of the close family ties and obligations that continue into the college years for Latinas as documented by Fuligni and Pedersen (2002), Sy (2006), Sy and Brittian (2008), and Sy and Romero (2008). The findings of Telzer and Fuligni also lend support to the findings of Cerna et al. (2009), Sánchez et al. (2005), and Zalaquett (2006), who documented the importance of the social support provided by families of Latino students and the positive effects of human capital traits, such as self-efficacy, on Latino academic success.

The importance of family culture and cultural socialization was also documented by Huynh and Fuligni (2008) in a study of 524 Mexican, Chinese, and European American 11th-grade students from public high schools in Los Angeles. The sample in Huynh and Fuligni's study appeared to overlap with the sample studied by Telzer and Fuligni (2009). The researchers examined the relationships between *cultural socialization*, consisting of "generally positive messages about an in-group's culture and history that are often aimed to develop children's ethnic pride" and the academic adjustment of participants (Huynh & Fuligni, 2008, p. 1202). Huynh and Fuligni

conducted meditational analyses to determine the mediating effects of cultural

socialization on participants' academic motivation.

Mexican participants in this study reported significantly higher levels of academic

motivation as measured by intrinsic value of school (.53, $p < .001$) and utility value of

school (.48, $p < .001$) than did European peers. Cultural socialization was found to

contribute significantly to intrinsic value of school ($Z = 2.76$, $p < .01$) and utility value of

school ($Z = 3.10$, $p < .01$) reported by Mexican student participants, thereby mediating

ethnic differences after the researchers controlled for GPA. Huynh and Fuligni (2008)

emphasized that cultural socialization may foster high levels of academic motivation that

help Mexican students to "persist academically and to achieve at levels similar to those of

their peers from European backgrounds" (p. 1207).

Finally, Román, Cuestas, and Fenollar (2008) demonstrated the importance of

family support to academic achievement in a sample of 553 university students in Spain

through the use of structural equation modeling (SEM) designed to determine the

influence of self-esteem, teacher and peer expectations, and family support on academic

achievement. The researchers also looked at the mediating role of learning approaches,

including the deep processing used in a mastery approach as well as the surface learning

used in performance approach, on the effects of self-esteem, expectations, and family

support on academic achievement. Their framework included the work of Hofstede and

the concept of achievement goal orientation, both of which are discussed in this literature

review. Román et al. noted that understanding the role of family support in regards to

academic achievement is particularly important in collectivist cultures.

Family support had positive effects on self-esteem (0.16, $p < .01$), deep

processing (0.10, $p < .10$) and academic effort (0.09, $p < .10$). Self-esteem positively

influenced deep processing (0.60, $p < .01$) and academic effort (0.19, $p < .01$). Effort

positively influenced academic achievement (0.08, $p < .10$), as did deep processing (0.21,

$p < .01$). Román et al. (2008) further reported that "the indirect effects of self-esteem and

family support on academic achievement through deep processing and/or effort were

highly significant (standardized coefficient = .14, t-value = 4.28; standardized coefficient

= .05; t-value = 2.99 respectively)" (p. 133). Therefore, the researchers concluded that

their model "provided empirical support for the key meditational role of learning

approaches in the effects of self-esteem, others' expectations and family support on

achievement" (Román et al., 2008, p. 134). They asserted that their findings supported

achievement goal theory.

Román et al. (2008) proposed and compared a rival model, which did not fit the

data as well, to increase the credibility of their findings. They acknowledged three

limitations: (a) use of self-reported measures for the concepts tested, (b) student

participants all attended the same university in Spain, and most were business majors,

and (c) the design was cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. Although the research was

done in Spain, the findings are relevant to a review of literature that includes research on

Hispanic students with the collectivist cultural roots described by Hofstede (1997) and

Triandis (2001). Additionally, the work of Román et al. influenced me to briefly address

the concept of achievement goal orientation and its relationship to Latina academic help-

seeking and academic achievement in this literature review.

Summary of Findings Related to Latino Students in Higher Education

Although the studies reviewed (Alexander et al., 2007; Cerna et al., 2009; Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Gloria et al., 2005; González et al., 2004; Huynh & Fuligni, 2008; Otero et al., 2007; Román et al., 2008; Sánchez et al., 2005; Sy, 2006; Sy & Brittian, 2008; Sy & Romero, 2008; Telzer & Fuligni, 2009; Zalaquett, 2006) examined a variety of variables and outcomes, a number of similar themes arose across the research. Latina students experienced family obligations (Sy, 2006; Sy & Romero, 2008) to a greater extent than did other students (Sy & Brittian, 2008), and Latino families expressed stress and concerns related to separation during the postsecondary educational experiences of Latinas (Alexander et al. 2007; González et al., 2004; Sy & Romero, 2008).

The importance of familismo, "a cultural value emphasizing family closeness and loyalty" (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 214), was demonstrated across the studies in this section. Latino students verbalized high levels of respect for the family (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Sánchez et al., 2005). Family support was highly related to Latino academic success (Román et al., 2008; Sánchez et al., 2005; Zalaquett, 2006). The Latinas' sense of responsibility to the family, whether as a role model (Sy & Romero, 2008; Zalaquett, 2006), a language broker (Sy, 2006), a caretaker for siblings (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Sy & Romero, 2008), a financial contributor (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009; Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Sy, 2006; Sy & Romero, 2008), or simply to fulfill the family's expectation that they would live at home (Alexander et al., 2007; Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; González et al., 2004), was present in all the studies. Several studies uncovered a sense of tension related to family culture and the Latina transition to higher

education as well (Alexander et al., 2007; González et al., 2004; Sy, 2006; Sy & Romero, 2008; Zalaquett, 2006).

Some authors have questioned the potential negative effects of family obligations on Latina educational success, but the studies above demonstrated positive relationships between Hispanic family culture and Latina success. Female gender predicted college retention (Otero et al., 2007) and degree attainment (Cerna et al., 2009) in Hispanic students. Despite the tension related to family expectations and the Latina transition to adult living, Cerna et al. found that a desire to live near home was positively related to degree attainment in Latinas. Telzer and Fuligni (2009) demonstrated that provision of family assistance was positively related to psychological well-being in adolescents of both genders across Latino, Asian, and European American ethnicities. Additionally, Huynh and Fuligni (2008) demonstrated that cultural socialization was positively associated with academic motivation in Mexican high school students. Although the research of Telzer and Fuligni and that of Huynh and Fuligni was conducted in younger students, both studies demonstrated the positive effects of family obligations and cultural socialization in minority students.

The response of talking over problems with family and friends, as seen in the cultural value of personalismo, was highlighted by Gloria et al. (2005), who found it to be associated with a self-efficacious and proactive approach to problems in Latina college students. Finally, the findings of Sy (2006) demonstrated the complexity of relationships between family obligations and expectations and the educational experiences of Latinas. As Sy noted, a variety of personal characteristics, such as achievement goal orientation

and self-efficacy, play a role in the complex academic experiences of Latina students as well. Cerna et al. (2009) highlighted the importance of self-efficacy to Latino success.

A number of the research studies reviewed above illustrated the complex relationships between family; culture; personal attributes such as achievement goal orientation, self esteem, psychological well-being, and self-efficacy; and academic success (Cerna et al., 2009; Gloria et al., 2005; Huynh & Fuligni, 2008; Román et al., 2008; Sy, 2006; Telzer & Fuligni, 2009). Qualitative studies that specifically explored the responses of Latina postsecondary students to academic challenges within the framework of culture and family were not found, which indicates a possible gap in the literature. The following paragraphs will review research conducted specifically in Latina nursing student populations.

Experiences of Latina Students in Programs of Nursing

Evans (2008) interviewed 12 Hispanic students and two American Indian students at the time of their entry into a nursing program in Washington state. The researcher compared their background stories to those of 18 Anglo students. The groups differed in that the Anglo students had solid secondary educational experiences, including volunteer work and extracurricular participation that prepared them well for the college experience. They also came from more highly educated and affluent families who "provided them with the social, cultural, and financial backgrounds to participate successfully in the culture of power in the academic setting" (Evans, 2008, p. 312). The Hispanic and American Indian students, however, presented with "less adequate education and lower social class as gauged by parental occupation" (Evans, 2008, p. 312). These students had

greater financial need, as many of their parents were agricultural workers who were unable to provide monetary assistance for college. They reported having little opportunity to pursue outside activities during high school other than working to help support their families. Evans noted that mentors, tutors, and cultural brokers are essential in order to level the playing field for diverse students who enter nursing programs at a disadvantage. The following research studies illustrate the barriers and supports experienced by minority students in programs of nursing.

Amaro et al. (2006) used grounded theory to uncover perceptions of educational barriers within an ethnically diverse sample of 17 RNs, 24% of whom self-identified as Latinas, who had completed their education between six months and two years before being interviewed. Four major categories of needs arose from the analysis of participant interviews: (a) personal needs (lack of finances, insufficient time, family responsibilities, language difficulties), (b) academic needs (study workload, need for tutoring, need for study groups), (c) language needs, and (d) cultural needs (communication, assertiveness, lack of ethnic role models; Amaro et al., 2006, pp. 250-251).

Participants' comments regarding cultural needs related to communication and assertiveness in Amaro et al.'s (2006) study reflected Hofstede's (2001) description of cultural dimensions. Hofstede noted that students in high-PDI countries do not question their teachers and are not likely to speak up in class unless invited to do so. Participants in the study by Amaro et al. similarly verbalized that some nursing students did not ask for help when they needed it, as that would have been considered rude or too assertive in their culture.

Although most recently-graduated RNs in this study by Amaro et al. (2006) did not report encountering prejudice and discrimination from nursing faculty members, many experienced it from hospital staff and patients with whom they worked during nursing school. A few reported encountering prejudice and discrimination from fellow students. The four major factors to which participants attributed their success were: (a) self-motivation and determination, (b) teachers, (c) peer support, and (d) ethnic nursing student associations. The researchers noted, "The most significant support described by all of the participants was strong self-motivation and determination to persist and complete their nursing education" (Amaro et al., 2006, p. 253).

Teachers and family members were reported by some participants to be sources of support, while others reported that their relationships with faculty and family members served as barriers. Although a few of the participants mentioned negative experiences with at least one of their faculty members, the majority credited teachers for providing crucial support and encouragement. Notably, faculty support was reported by many to be even more important and instrumental to their success than was family support (Amaro et al., 2006). This finding emphasizes the need for faculty members to be aware of and respond to the needs of ethnically diverse nursing students. Additionally, clinical faculty members need to be vigilant to any discrimination experienced by minority students in patient care settings.

Bond et al. (2008) conducted a qualitative study to determine barriers and supports related to the retention of Hispanic baccalaureate nursing students. The adapted Model of Institutional Support, originally developed by Valverde and Rodriguez (2002)

from their review of the literature and their personal experiences as Latina doctoral

students, served as the framework. Fourteen Mexican American students from two liberal

arts universities in Texas participated in focus groups. Content analysis of the audio taped

transcripts noted barriers and supports related to themes of financial support, advising,

emotional and moral support, mentoring and professional socialization, and technical

support. The additional theme of personal determination emerged from the study, and the

researchers recommended that this construct be considered for inclusion in the model.

Cason et al. (2008) subsequently used the Model of Institutional Support as a

framework to conduct a descriptive qualitative study regarding the barriers and supports

to retention faced by Hispanic students as viewed from the perspective of professionals

who had completed their education. Twenty-nine members of Hispanic professional

healthcare organizations participated in one of three focus groups led by one of the

researchers. Again, the researchers explored barriers and supports related to finances,

advising, emotional and moral support, mentoring and professional socialization, and

technical support.

Participants voiced a need for better counseling regarding options for financing

education. They noted that their parents had often been reluctant to disclose required

financial information on applications, fearing that they would be penalized in some way.

Additionally, participants reported that Hispanic students often work to support their

extended families and then receive less financial assistance because of employment. The

participants stated that academic advisors were frequently uninformed regarding options

for financial assistance, that high school counselors often encouraged students toward

blue collar occupations or trade schools, and that college faculty members were sometimes disconnected from students. The researchers emphasized the need to begin counseling related to career choices in middle school (Cason et al., 2008).

As in the studies by Gloria et al. (2005) and Zalaquett (2006), family emerged as an important source of support for Hispanic nursing students, as did supportive relationships with peers and friends in the study by Cason et al. (2008). Participants reported tension between family obligations and the need to make their education a priority, a finding similar to that reported by Gonzalez et al. (2004) and Alexander et al. (2007). Additionally, participants remarked that non-college-bound Hispanic friends sometimes ridiculed serious students. Participants emphasized a need to include family members in the orientation to college and professional programs, to educate families regarding educational financial assistance, and for the availability of long-term mentors who could serve as role models for students (Cason et al., 2008).

The theme of self-determination emerged from the focus group discussions (Cason et al., 2008), a finding similar to the theme of personal determination, which arose in the research of Bond et al. (2008). Participants in the focus groups conducted by Cason et al. (2008) reported responding to a variety of challenges and achieving success "through a redoubling of effort" (p. 48), even when it placed them at odds with their families, peers, and culture. This reported response echoed the finding of Amaro et al. (2006) that self-motivation and determination were major factors related to academic success in their study of ethnically diverse nursing students, as well as the work of

Rivera-Goba and Campinha-Bacote (2008), who reported that perseverance was essential to the academic success of Latina nursing students.

The findings of Cason et al. (2008) and Bond et al. (2008) in their studies of current and previous Hispanic nursing and health professions student populations were congruent with those of Zalaquett (2006), who studied Hispanic postsecondary students in a variety of majors. The findings related to the importance of family support, the need for professional role models and mentoring, the need for financial advising, the variability of faculty and counselor support, and the need for families of first-generation college students to be more knowledgeable regarding postsecondary education, were consistent across the three studies. The findings and recommendations of Cason et al. also echoed those of Alexander et al. (2007) and Gonzalez et al. (2004), and demonstrated similarities between Latina students in nursing programs and Latinas enrolled in other undergraduate education programs.

Cason et al. (2008) conscientiously described their process of conducting the focus groups, audio taping and simultaneously taking notes, verifying the accuracy of the transcription, and conducting content analysis of the transcripts, which included independent coding of the transcripts by two researchers. They also noted that the findings could not necessarily be generalized to other groups of Hispanic students or other regions of the country. Finally, the researchers questioned whether the Model of Institutional Support, which served as their framework, could potentially be used to understand the barriers and supports experienced by students from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Rivera-Goba and Nieto (2007) used a phenomenological approach to explore the educational experiences of Latina nursing students. The 17 participants were between 19 and 46 years of age and were currently attending or had recently graduated from a variety of nursing programs in the northeastern United States. The participants identified themselves as Puerto Rican, Guatemalan, and Dominican. None of the participants identified themselves as Mexican American. The authors described their findings under the metaphor of the journey toward becoming a registered nurse.

Key findings included the emergence of bridges, or supports, experienced along the nursing school journey. Supports included family, perseverance, and mentors. Barriers were marginalization and socioeconomic status. The positive influence of mentors was highly significant, and the researchers made recommendations regarding mentors for Latina nursing students. The authors included their research questions as well as their interview questions (Riviera-Goba & Nieto, 2007).

Doutrich et al. (2005) also used a phenomenological approach to explore the lived educational experiences of 27 Hispanic nurses practicing in Oregon or Washington. Participants took part in one of seven focus groups, and one participant was interviewed individually. The researchers conducted private follow-up interviews with three participants to validate themes.

Doutrich et al. (2005) reported a number of key findings. Family expectations and leaving home, family perceptions of nursing, and financial issues emerged as themes categorized by the researchers as balancing values. The burden of being expected to be "the voice" for Hispanics, lack of belonging, and discomfort with self-disclosure emerged

as themes categorized under school experiences. Barriers and supports related to academic success emerged as themes categorized under external factors. Notably, participants' discomfort with self-disclosure contributed to a reluctance to seek help from faculty members. The findings of Doutrich et al. are similar to those of Amaro et al. (2006), who discovered that some ethnically diverse nursing students reported that they did not ask for help due to cultural prohibitions against questioning teachers. Their findings can be considered within Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimension of PDI.

Doutrich et al. (2005) included a succinct and helpful description of the use of Heideggerian hermeneutics and discussed their findings and the literature together, which they noted to be common in phenomenology. The study described the experiences of their participants, and the findings may not be generalizable to other Hispanic student populations.

Rivera-Goba and Campinha-Bacote (2008) published three stories that profiled Latina nursing students who participated in Rivera-Goba's phenomenological doctoral study. Perseverance emerged as the key to the student's academic success in each profile. The authors offered Campinha-Bacote's Process of Cultural Competence in the Delivery of Healthcare Services Model as a theoretical framework by which to assist educators to become more culturally competent. The model defines cultural competence as an "ongoing process," that includes the integration of "cultural desire, cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, and cultural encounters" (Rivera-Goba & Campinha-Bacote, 2008, p. 206).

Rivera-Goba and Campinha-Bacote (2008) emphasized that educators must truly desire to understand the stories and life experiences of minority students. They noted that an awareness of one's own culture, biases, prejudices, and assumptions is necessary in order to understand the culture of another. The recommendations of River-Goba and Campinha-Bacote related to the importance of culture, along with the rich findings reported by Doutrich et al. (2005) and by Rivera-Goba and Nieto (2007), led me to consider use of a phenomenological approach in this study of prenursing students.

Summary of Findings Related to Latina Students in Programs of Nursing

Findings in the studies of Latina nursing students reviewed above were similar to those in the studies of Latina students across a variety of majors. The importance of personal determination, self determination, or perseverance emerged in all the studies. Financial issues or socioeconomic status issues emerged across studies as well. The findings of Rivera-Goba and Nieto (2007) and Doutrich et al. (2005) emphasized the importance of family support to Hispanic nursing students, but the participants in the Doutrich et al. study noted that family expectations needed to be balanced during the educational journey. Latina students' reluctance to seek help from faculty members, as illustrated by the findings of Amaro et al. (2006) and Doutrich et al., built on the findings of Gloria et al. (2005) in a population of Latina undergraduate students. A new issue that arose in the work of Amaro et al. was discrimination against nursing students by health care staff and patients in the clinical setting. As mentoring was described as beneficial to Latina students (Bond et al., 2008; Evans, 2008; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007), the review of literature on Hispanics in higher education will conclude with research on mentoring.

Mentoring

Negroni-Rodríguez et al. (2006) described and recommended a "culturally competent advising model*"* (p. 209), in which advisors served as mentors for Latino social work students. The authors reported positive anecdotal results related to use of the model, yet they acknowledged that there was "limited empirical data that show the outcomes of the advising work" other than feedback gleaned from the recruitment and retention data obtained by the admissions office (Negroni-Rodríguez et al., 2006, p. 218). Participants in focus groups conducted by the researchers verbalized the importance of "willingness to help, availability, flexibility, and commitment" on the part of their advisors (Negroni-Rodríguiz et al., 2006, p. 211). As mentioned by Cason et al. (2008) when validating the constructs in the Model for Institutional Support, it is likely that these qualities would be desired by students of all ethnic groups.

Bordes and Arredondo (2005) studied 112 Latino first-year students, 103 of whom were 18 or 19 years old at a large public university in Arizona. Student participants completed a demographic form and questionnaires. The Mentoring Scale measured students' perceptions of whether they had a role model or mentor, the University Environment Scale evaluated participants' concerns and perceptions related to the environment, and the Cultural Congruity Scale measured participants' perceptions of the cultural fit between their values and those of the university.

Regression testing demonstrated that the perception of having a mentor was significantly correlated with a positive perception of the university environment ($r = .21$, $p = .016$). The 80 students who reported actually having a mentor had more "positive

perceptions of the university environment" ($M = 5.32$, $SD = .83$) than those who reported

no mentor ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.03$; Bordes & Arredondo, 2005, p. 126). The researchers

used multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to look for differences between the

two groups. "Hotelling's Trace F was significant, $F(2,105) = 6.37$, $p = .002$. Follow-up

ANOVAs revealed that the significant multivariate difference was primarily due to group

differences in perceptions of the university environment, $F(1, 106) = 9.40$, $p = .003$"

(Bordes & Arredondo, 2005, p. 126), as opposed to differences in cultural congruity.

Having a mentor of Latino background was not significantly related to positive

perceptions of the university environment, however.

Zalaquett and Lopez (2006) analyzed the personal narratives of 13 successful

Latino (Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Venezuelan) undergraduate students enrolled

in a large urban university. Ten of the participants were women; all had GPAs of 3.0 or

higher; all had received a university scholarship; and all had been formally recognized as

successful Latino students. Participants were asked to address the following issues in

their narratives: (a) what motivated them to pursue a college education, (b) challenges

they had to overcome, (c) who and what helped them get to college, (d) personal

strengths and skills important to their success, and (e) their advice to prospective college

students (Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006, pp. 344-345).

Consistent with the findings of Sánchez et al. (2005), the participants in the study

by Zalaquett and Lopez (2006) reported that strong family support enhanced their high

school and college success, even when family members were unfamiliar with the

postsecondary educational system. Only three (23%) reported that their high school

teachers or school counselors served as mentors. None of the participants reported formal assigned mentors. Six participants, however, reported having sponsors who provided financial support and offered networking opportunities. Informal mentoring relationships often arose from within the sponsor relationships or from their interactions with college faculty members. Ten (77%) reported having mentors and sponsors, often with overlapping roles, during college. Support received included: (a) welcoming the student to the university, (b) acquainting the student with the college, and (c) offering advice and moral support.

Zalaquett and Lopez (2006) noted that none of the twelve high schools represented had formal mentoring programs, although they acknowledged that the retrospective narratives were dependent on the participants' memories. The researchers made several recommendations based on the narrative data. They recommended alliances between high schools and community organizations to assist minority students in their quest to attend college. They encouraged creation of multicultural clubs to provide peer support for students, and they recommended the use of formal mentoring programs at the high school and college levels to assist minority students and their families throughout their academic journeys.

In one of the few recent quantitative studies of mentoring in this student population, Torres Campos et al. (2009) researched the benefits of a pilot mentoring program offered to 11 at-risk Latino college freshmen. Students completed surveys during fall quarter to measure their academic motivation, sense of belonging, depressive tendencies, obstacles affecting academic success, stress, self-efficacy, support, and

university motivation. Based on responses, 42 students were noted to be at risk and offered the mentoring program.

The 11 students who agreed to participate were paired with a Latina mentor who was a graduate student. Each participant had telephone, e-mail, or in-person contact with their mentor at least weekly throughout the winter and spring quarters. Mentees reported an average of 3.5 in-person contacts and seven total contacts each month when surveyed at the end of spring quarter (Torres Campos et al., 2009).

The high-risk students were compared in the fall and again in the spring to a group of 22 students deemed to be at low risk based their responses to the same surveys. The researchers employed t tests and chi-squares on all study variables to validate the differences between the two groups. Although significant differences existed between low-risk and high-risk students in the areas of academic and university motivation, symptoms of depression, obstacles, stress, and self-efficacy during the fall administration, there were no significant differences in scores between the two groups at the completion of the mentoring program in the spring (Torres Campos et al., 2009).

According to a one-sample t-test, mentees reported significantly increased university motivation in the spring, $t(10) = 4.64$, $p = .001$. A comparison of changes in university motivation of mentees as compared to low-risk students found that university motivation decreased .07 for low-risk students, while it increased .31 for the mentees, demonstrating a significant difference, $t(32) = -3.68$, $p = .001$. Mentees reported increased academic motivation and self-efficacy, and they reported decreased depressive symptoms, obstacles, and stress although those levels did not reach the $p < .01$ level of

significance. Comparisons between mentees and the low-risk students on these variables also found nonsignificant differences (Torres Campos et al., 2009).

The researchers interviewed the mentees, who reported increases in: (a) awareness of resources, (b) social support, and (c) awareness of required academic skills. Mentees also reported "feeling a sense of school belonging and increased sense of self-confidence, self-efficacy, and motivation" (Torres Campos et al., 2009, pp. 171-172). Participants appreciated the flexibility of the program, which did not require attendance at mandatory events. More than half commented that they wished the program had started earlier in the academic year.

The Torres Campos et al. (2009) study is one of the few to have quantitatively measured the outcomes of a mentoring program. The psychosocial variables measured in the study have been associated with academic success, and the results were positive, but the actual GPAs of the high-risk mentees and the low-risk students were not reported. The researchers acknowledged the limitations of the pilot study, which involved only 11 participants served by the mentoring intervention. Additionally, the intervention and comparison groups were nonequivalent, as the comparison group included only low-risk students. Finally, the 11 students who agreed to participate in the mentoring may not be representative of the other 31 high-risk students who declined.

Participants in qualitative studies have consistently voiced a need for mentoring and have affirmed the positive benefits of mentoring (Amaro et al., 2006; Bond et al., 2008; Cason et al., 2008; Negroni-Rodríguiz et al., 2006; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Zalaquett, 2006). Reyes (Reyes & Ríos, 2005), however, described her experience as a

Latina in higher education in terms of: "(a) low expectations, (b) nurturing of codependency and overreliance on mentors, mostly the overextended Latino faculty, and (c) isolation from mainstream students" (p. 381). Notably, in their study of support persons reviewed earlier in this section, Sánchez, et al. (2005), reported that none of their 10 participants who had been assigned a peer mentor mentioned the mentor as a person who provided important support along their educational journey. It is possible that many of the positive effects of mentoring mentioned by participants in the studies reviewed came from informal mentoring relationships that developed spontaneously rather than from formal mentoring programs.

As acknowledged by Negroni-Rodríguiz et al. (2006), mentoring has rarely been quantitatively studied. Few before and after studies have been completed, and ethical concerns arise when offering mentoring to an intervention group only. The practice of allowing students to self-select mentoring results in control groups which are inherently different from the self-selected intervention group. The lack of quantitative studies demonstrating measurable results related to mentoring in students is similar to the paucity of quantitative data related to the practice of mentoring educators as observed by Wong (2004) who noted, "After more than 20 years of trying mentoring as a means of helping new teachers, there is no substantive research supporting its efficacy" (p. 108). Additional studies, including long-term quantitative studies that follow GPAs and retention in mentored versus nonmentored Hispanic students, are needed.

Concepts Related to Academic Help-Seeking Behavior

The following pages will summarize the theoretical underpinnings as well as the individual and environmental influences on student academic help-seeking behavior. Although a review of all the theories that underlie the phenomenon of academic help-seeking is beyond the scope of this paper, the following paragraphs will address Bandura's (1977, 1986) social learning theory of self-efficacy as well as the theory of goal orientation described by Ames (1992). Both are fundamental to the understanding and promotion of academic help-seeking as described by Nelson-Le Gall (1981). I will also review studies designed to investigate specific faculty practices that influence students' academic help-seeking behaviors.

Instrumental Help-Seeking

Prior to 1980, help-seeking was often viewed negatively in educational contexts, as an activity used by overly dependent students. Nelson-Le Gall (1981) completed much of the early research related to the conceptualization of help-seeking behavior in students and described instrumental help-seeking (p. 224) as a positive problem-solving strategy that successful students use to gain independent mastery of difficult tasks and to decrease their need for future assistance. Nelson-Le Gall's studies found that older elementary students used more instrumental help-seeking directed at future mastery and less unnecessary help-seeking than did younger students (Nelson-Le Gall, 1987; Nelson-Le Gall et al., 1989).

Nelson-Le Gall and Resnick (1998) argued the importance of a social constructivist approach to the study of children's skill acquisition and academic achievement. They used the results of their research and the research of others to describe the relationships between performance goal achievement orientation, mastery goal achievement orientation, and instrumental help-seeking in elementary students. Nelson-Le Gall and Resnick (1998) further described instrumental help-seeking as "intelligent practice," as follows:

> Help-seeking is a general problem-solving strategy that allows learners to cope with academic challenges by keeping them actively involved in learning tasks. The student who seeks and obtains help when needed has engaged in intelligent practice. Help-seeking not only holds the potential for working through an immediate academic difficulty but also contributes to the acquisition of skills and knowledge that can be used later to help one's self or others. (p. 40)

Nelson-Le Gall and Resnick asserted that instrumental help-seeking is an important strategy for all students, particularly minority or low-income students. Their work was significant in changing the perception of academic help-seeking from a negative to a positive entity.

This paper will use the term instrumental help-seeking to refer to the effective and adaptive help-seeking described by Nelson-Le Gall (1981, p. 224), Nelson-Le Gall & Resnick (1998, pp. 40-41), and Newman (2006a, p. 227). Instrumental help-seeking is distinguished from what Nelson-Le Gall (1981) referred to as executive help-seeking (p.

227), and from what Karabenick (2004) referred to as expedient help-seeking, in which students seek quick or easy answers in order to minimize their own personal efforts.

Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1977, 1986) explored human nature from the perspectives of Freud's psychodynamic theory, trait theory, and radical behaviorism. He synthesized a social cognitive theory that explained human psychological functioning in terms of ongoing reciprocal interactions between behaviors, personal and cognitive factors, and environmental factors. Bandura further described self-regulatory mechanisms, cognitive regulators, self-efficacy, observational learning, and social diffusion and innovation. Bandura asserted that human beings possess self-directed capabilities that allow control over thoughts and actions.

Bandura (1986) proposed that self-efficacy is "concerned not with the skills one has but with judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses. . . .Perceived self-efficacy is a judgment of one's capability to accomplish a certain level of performance" (p. 391). An individual's degree of self-efficacy is influenced by "performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states" (Bandura, 1977, p. 195). Competent functioning requires both skills and the self-efficacy to use those skills effectively (Bandura, 1977, 1986).

Persistence is often necessary while trying a variety of actions to attain success in given situations. Bandura (1977) linked efficacy to persistence, and noted that self-efficacy determines "how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. The stronger the perceived self-

efficacy, the more active the efforts" (p. 194). Self-efficacy interacts with one's

achievement goal orientation in determining the response to academic challenges.

Bandura (1977) noted that individuals "who cease their coping efforts prematurely will

retain their self-debilitating expectations and fears for a long time" (p. 194).

Bandura (1986) also maintained that verbal persuasion might have an effect on

self-efficacy. As children with high self-efficacy are able to participate effectively in their

own education and to meet the challenges of becoming a productive adult, he emphasized

that educational practices should focus on strengthening students' beliefs about their

abilities in addition to imparting knowledge and skills. The theorist further correlated

self-efficacy with career development:

> The choices people make during formative periods that influence the direction of
>
> their development shape the course of their lives. Such choices foster different
>
> competencies, interests, and affiliative preferences and set boundaries on the
>
> career options that can be realistically considered. (Bandura, 1986, p. 431)

The belief that self-efficacious individuals will pursue strategies to attain success is

inherent to the study of instrumental help-seeking. Additionally, Bandura's assertion that

verbal persuasion can be used to enhance self-efficacy, serves as a foundation for the use

of encouraging and persuasive faculty behaviors.

Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons (1992) studied a "social cognitive

model of academic self-motivation for subsequent academic achievement" (p. 671) in

102 ninth- and 10th-grade social studies students, 52 of whom were girls, and 23% of

whom were Hispanic. Students completed the self-efficacy for self-regulated learning

scale and the self-efficacy for academic achievement scale (Zimmerman et al., 1992, p. 667). Cronbach alpha levels were .87 and .70 respectively. The model included the self-efficacy scores, prior grades, parent grade goals, and student grade goals. The researchers discovered significant correlations between perceived self-efficacy for academic achievement and: (a) perceived efficacy for self-regulated learning ($r = .51$), (b) grade goals ($r = .41$), and (c) final social studies grades ($r = .39$). Self-efficacy for academic achievement and student grade goals accounted for 31% of the variance in academic achievement as measured by the final course grade. The researchers concluded that "student self-beliefs of efficacy to strategically regulate learning play an important role in academic self-motivation. A significant causal path was found between efficacy for self-regulated learning, efficacy for academic achievement, and academic attainment" (Zimmerman et al., 1992, p. 674).

The model studied by Zimmerman et al. (1992) may not be predictive of academic achievement in college students, particularly as it includes parents' goals for the students' grades. However, it may be reasonable to study the model in college populations, particularly in view of the findings that Hispanic students name their parents as key support individuals (Cason et al., 2008; Sánchez et al., 2005; Zalaquett, 2006) and in consideration of recommendations by a number of researchers to include parents in the college experiences of Latina students (Alexander et al., 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2004; Zalaquett, 2006).

Suarez-McCrink (2002) described her own path to a position in higher education administration as a Cuban-American mother, and noted that for Hispanic women, "The

road to self-efficacy is marked with cobblestones" (p. 246). The educator noted that

Hispanic female community college students are challenged to negotiate two identities,

that of a student and that of a family member required to fulfill a cultural role as expected

by a spouse or family member. Therefore, the role of self-efficacy should be considered

in a study of Latina academic success (Suarez-McCrink, 2002).

Rivera, Chen, Flores, Blumberg, and Ponterotto (2007) conducted a study

designed to examine several variables believed to influence the career self-efficacy and

career choices of Hispanic women. Using a framework of Social Cognitive Career

Theory (SCCT), the researchers studied a sample of 131 Hispanic women attending a

community college in the Eastern United States. Participants ranged from 17 to 54 years

of age, with a mean age of 25 years. Half of the participants reported annual household

incomes of less than $20,000. Although the study was designed to explore ways by which

to encourage Hispanic women to enter male-dominated careers such as engineering, the

results related to self-efficacy and female-oriented career choices, such as nursing, are

relevant to this literature review and will be presented in the following paragraphs.

Participants provided demographic data and completed instruments designed to

measure the variables of career self-efficacy, career considerations, career barriers, both

Hispanic and Anglo acculturation, and role model influence *(*Rivera et al., 2007, pp. 51-

52). The researchers calculated means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations, and

coefficient alphas for all the variables. Female-dominated career self-efficacy was

positively correlated with Anglo acculturation ($r = .23$, $p < .01$), and female-dominated

career consideration was significantly correlated with female-dominated career self-

efficacy ($r = .47$, $p < .01$). Role model influences were not significantly correlated with female-dominated career consideration (Rivera et al., 2007).

Based on their findings, Rivera et al. (2007) emphasized the importance of assessing the self-efficacy of Hispanic women and working with them to increase their self-efficacy in an effort to broaden their career options and considerations. In particular, the researchers noted that:

> When working with Hispanic women who express low levels of self-efficacy in career areas for which they possess academic ability (e.g., science, mathematics), counselors can work with students to recognize their potential and make connections between their abilities and possible academic and career options. (Rivera et al., 2007, p. 56)

The recommendations of Rivera et al. echoed the work of Bandura (1986) who claimed that self-efficacy could be enhanced through verbal persuasion.

Successful completion of a minimum of seven prerequisite courses (24 hours) in science and math is required for admission to the nursing program of interest. Many potential nursing students experience difficulty in these courses. Exploring the self-efficacy beliefs of students who are successful in these math and science courses may help educators to assist previously less successful students.

Rivera et al. (2007) studied students enrolled at a community college rather than at a four-year institution. Additionally, the cultural make-up of the sample differed from the mostly Mexican American population born in the United States enrolled at the institution of interest. Participants in the study by Rivera et al. self-identified as

Dominican, Puerto Rican, Ecuadorian, Colombian, Salvadorian, Cuban, and other Hispanic, and 60.3% reported being born outside the United States. The research is relevant to this review of literature, however, because it is one of the few recent studies to examine the relationships between acculturation, career self-efficacy, and career choices in a group of Hispanic women enrolled in college.

Olive (2008) used phenomenology to explore the lived experience of desire for higher education in three Hispanic first-generation college freshmen at a Hispanic-serving university in Texas. Two structures of constituents emerged; the structure for the male participant differed from the structure described by the two women. However, a number of constituents were similar across the two structures, including self-efficacy based on prior experience and achievement, the lack of role models countered by other supports, a view of higher education as a means to altruistic service, a break with traditional expectations and the resulting tension, and viewing higher education as a means to increased financial security.

Olive (2008) noted that the structure that emerged from the male participant's lived experience differed primarily from that of the women, in that he described external motivation or fulfilling parental wishes. The female participants, however, described going against family expectations in their desire for higher education, echoing the experiences of the Latinas studied by Gonzalez et al. (2004) and Alexander et al. (2007). Olive's study is relevant to the proposed research, in that self-efficacy emerged as not only crucial to academic success but as intertwined in the desire for education as well.

Additional research with a greater number of Latina participants regarding the experience of educational desire is warranted.

Achievement Goal Orientation

Ames (1992) synthesized personal research as well as the work of others to develop the concept of achievement goal orientation. Her work provides a framework for researchers who study the concept of help-seeking from an achievement goal orientation perspective. She adopted the terms mastery goal orientation and performance goal orientation and described them as conceptions of success that affect an individual's approach toward achievement activity (Ames, 1992, p. 262). Ames further compared and contrasted the characteristics of a personal mastery goal orientation with those of a personal performance goal orientation.

Ames (1992) defined a mastery goal orientation as focusing on learning for its own sake. Conversely, a performance goal orientation views an individual's ability and sense of self-worth based on recognition and rewards. According to Ames, individuals with a personal mastery goal orientation are willing to expend effort for long-term understanding and success. Individuals with a personal performance goal orientation approach achievement-oriented activities in pursuit of external recognition or rewards. They are most concerned with their ability to perform in comparison to others or to a normative standard, and they value success over effort and mastery. "Research evidence suggests that it is a mastery goal orientation that promotes a motivational pattern likely to promote long-term and high-quality involvement in learning" (Ames, 1992, p. 263). A review of studies that examined achievement goal orientation follows.

Dekker and Fischer (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of research on academic achievement goal orientations, looking at studies completed with 36,985 students across 13 societies. Although Hispanic societies were not represented in this meta-analysis, the researchers did find significant relationships between culture and achievement goal orientation across the studies reviewed, "highlighting that achievement goals are grounded within a societal context" (Dekker and Fischer, 2008, p. 105). Therefore, a brief review of achievement goal orientation is warranted to provide background for research on Latina academic success.

As noted above, Román et al. (2008) demonstrated the positive influences of family support on the deep processing and effort used by Hispanic students employing a mastery approach achievement goal orientation. The mastery orientation positively influenced academic achievement in their study sample. The following paragraphs review research that examined relationships between self-efficacy, person achievement goal orientation, and academic help-seeking behavior.

Achievement Goal Orientation and Academic Help-Seeking in Middle School

Extensive research has been done on instrumental help-seeking in elementary and middle school students. A study of middle school students by Ryan et al. (1998) is representative of this body of work. Subsequent reviews in this section will focus on research completed in college and nursing student populations. Some of the studies examine the variables affecting instrumental help-seeking, and others investigate the use of interventions designed to promote instrumental help-seeking.

Ryan et al. (1998) studied 516 middle school students in 63 math classrooms taught by 25 teachers to determine the relationship between classroom goal structure, social climate, individual student characteristics, and avoidance of academic help-seeking. Fifty-two percent of participants were female, 48% were White, 44% were African American, 7% were Hispanic, and 1% were Asian. Classroom goal structure was defined by the researchers as a combination of students' perceptions and teachers' approaches to instruction.

The researchers used HLM, a regression-based technique, to examine the student and classroom characteristics related to avoidance of help-seeking. Student participants completed survey questions related to avoidance of help-seeking ($\alpha = .80$) and academic self efficacy ($\alpha = .82$). Students and their teachers completed survey questions related to the classroom goal structure. Cronbach's alpha scores for these scales ranged from .71 to .79. Finally, each teacher completed a five item scale that assessed his or her perception of the teacher's role related to student social-emotional well-being ($\alpha = .69$; Ryan et al., 1998).

Several key findings related to factors predicting avoidance of help-seeking emerged. The individual characteristics that predicted avoidance of help-seeking were students' academic self-efficacy ($Y = -.283$, $p < .001$) and gender ($Y = -.227$, $p < .01$). Male students and those with low self-efficacy were likely to avoid seeking help. The environmental characteristics associated with help avoidance were classroom goal structure and social nurturing. Students were more likely to seek help in classrooms that focused on student understanding and the intrinsic value of learning (mastery goal

orientation) as opposed to classrooms that focused on competition (performance goal orientation). Teachers who demonstrated social nurturing towards students minimized the relationship between self-efficacy and help avoidance, thus empowering low-efficacy students to seek help ($Y = .331$, $p < .01$). Therefore, Ryan et al. (1998) contended that academic help-seeking is promoted, even in low-efficacy students, by classrooms that emphasize self-growth and assessment, and by teachers who nurture students' well being.

Ryan et al. (1998) acknowledged that survey self-reports by the teachers in this study may not have accurately reflected their actual classroom practices. Although the students in this sample were young and only 7% were Hispanic, the study was included as an example of research that documented clear relationships between self-efficacy, classroom achievement goal orientation, and help-seeking behavior. A review of similar studies in college students follows.

Achievement Goal Orientation and Academic Help-Seeking in Older Students

Karabenick (2004) questioned whether the research findings from elementary and middle school populations could be generalized to college students and conducted two studies of more than 800 participants each. The first study looked at 883 students, 51% of whom were female, in six undergraduate chemistry classes at a university in the Midwestern United States to investigate the relationship between personal achievement goal orientation and instrumental help-seeking. The average age of participants was 20.4 years, and the average ACT score was 30. Demographic data regarding ethnic background was not provided. Karabenick hypothesized that a personal mastery-approach goal orientation would positively correlate with instrumental help-seeking, while a

personal performance-approach goal orientation would positively correlate with avoidance of help-seeking and with expedient help-seeking.

Although much of the research completed on this concept during the 1990s used the trichotomous goal orientation model of mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals, Karabenick (2004) used the 2 x 2 achievement goal framework (Elliott & McGregor, 2001, p. 501), which distinguished between approach and avoidance orientations in both mastery and performance goals. Subjects completed a 107-item tool designed to evaluate their personal achievement goal orientation as mastery-approach (desire to master content), mastery-avoid (fear of one's own inability to master content), performance-approach (desire to out-perform peers), or performance-avoid (fear of being perceived as less able). Five scales were embedded into the design, including instrumental help-seeking, expedient help-seeking, formal versus informal help-seeking source (faculty versus peer), help-seeking threat (fear of being perceived as incompetent), and intentions to avoid help-seeking. Cronbach's alpha estimates for the scales ranged from .62 to .94 (Karabenick, 2004, p. 572).

Several key findings related to academic help-seeking emerged. Karabenick (2004) found that subjects who perceived a help-seeking threat were more likely to avoid seeking help (.69, $p < .001$). Those who did seek help were more likely to seek expedient help (.52, $p < .001$) rather than instrumental help (-.26, $p < .001$). This response was defined as the *help-seeking avoidance pattern* (Karabenick, 2004, p. 572). This pattern was not related to the subjects' preferred source of help. Students who sought instrumental help designed to promote mastery, however, were more likely to seek help

from faculty members (.17, $p < .001$). The researcher defined this response as the *help-seeking approach pattern* (Karabenick, 2004, p. 572).

The help-seeking patterns were then correlated with personal achievement goal orientation. Help-seeking approach patterns were positively correlated with mastery-approach goal orientation (.31, $p < .001$), and help avoidance patterns were positively correlated with mastery-avoid (.26, $p < .001$), performance-approach (.31, $p < .001$), and performance-avoid (.50, $p < .001$) achievement goal orientations. Course performance was positively related to help-seeking approach patterns (.14, $p < .001$), but it was inversely related to help avoidance patterns (-.17, $p < .001$). Stated simply, any concern about performance, whether in reference to the self or in comparison to others, contributed to avoidance of help-seeking, and "only mastery-approach was associated with approach help-seeking pattern scores" (Karabenick, 2004, p. 573). Karabenick's (2004) findings were consistent with those of Ryan et al. (1998), as well as with the earlier findings of Karabenick and Knapp (1991) in a college-aged population.

Karabenick's (2004) second study investigated the relationships between help-seeking, personal goal orientation, and students' perceptions of course achievement goal structure. Measurements were made at two points during the semester to determine stability of the patterns. This study involved 852 subjects enrolled in the introductory psychology course at a less-selective university. The average ACT score of participants was 21, as compared to 30 in the first study. The sample was 60% female, 74% Caucasian, and 20% African American.

Karabenick (2004) used HLM in his second study to estimate the effects of perceived classroom goal structure on academic help-seeking. Students completed questionnaires that were essentially the same as those used in Karabenick's first study to measure students' achievement goal orientations and perceptions of the course goal structure. Cronbach's alpha scores ranged from .60 to .88. Results were stable at both measurement points (Weeks 12 and 13) during the semester. The relationship between students' perceptions of the course's goal structure and their willingness to seek help was consistent with the findings of Ryan et al. (1998) in their study of middle school students reviewed above. Again, a perceived course mastery goal structure, which emphasized learning and growth, was associated with student help-seeking approach patterns (.221, p < .001). A perceived course performance-approach (.078, p < .001) or performance-avoid (.230, p < .001) emphasis was associated with student help-seeking avoidance patterns. This association was true even when controlling for personal goal orientations (Karabenick, 2004, p. 577).

In summary, Karabenick (2004) found that students who were confident in their academic and social abilities were more likely to seek instrumental help, as they did not feel threatened that helpers would view them as incompetent for asking. Personal and classroom mastery goal orientations were both positively associated with help-seeking approach patterns. Personal and classroom performance goal orientations were associated with help-seeking avoidance patterns.

Witkow and Fuligni (2007) conducted a study using the 2 x 2 achievement model in 686 tenth-grade students from three public high schools in Los Angeles. Their sample

was 30% Latino (83% of whom were Mexican), and 51% female. Participants completed a modified version of the Achievement Goals Questionnaire (Elliot & McGregor, 2001), they completed a scale that measured their intrinsic value of school, and they self-reported their GPAs. Witkow and Fuligni conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to test the 2 x 2 achievement model for fit and then conducted regression analyses on the four goals (performance approach, performance avoidance, mastery approach, and mastery avoidance) to examine the relationship between goals and both GPA and intrinsic value of school.

Key findings demonstrated significant relationships between mastery-approach goals, performance-approach goals, mastery-avoidance goals, and GPA. Mastery-approach goals were significantly related to students' intrinsic value of school as well. Witkow and Fuligni (2007) determined that both performance-approach goals (β = .24, *p* < .001) and mastery-approach goals (β = .10, *p* < .05) were positively associated with GPA, and mastery-avoidance goals (β = -.14, *p* < .001) were negatively associated with GPA. No significant association arose between performance-avoidance goals and GPA in this study. Additionally, mastery-approach goals were positively associated with intrinsic value of school (β = .40, *p* < .001). The researchers noted that "controlling for ethnicity did not change any of the relationships between achievement goals and GPA" (Witkow & Fuligni, 2007, pp. 590-591). Their findings support use of the 2 x 2 achievement goal model in studies of both high school and college populations as well as with diverse ethnic groups of students.

Witkow and Fuligni's (2007) findings related to relationships between performance-approach and mastery-approach goals and student GPAs echoed those of Cury, Elliot, Da Fonseca, and Moller (2006) and Finney, Pieper, and Barron (2004). Relationships between mastery-avoidance goals and achievement and between performance-avoidance goals and achievement have been less consistent across studies. The large sample size was a strength of Witkow and Fulgni's study, although self-reported GPAs may not be entirely accurate.

Hsieh et al. (2007) studied the differences in self-efficacy and achievement goal orientation between a group of 52 successful college students (GPA > 2.0) and a group of 60 college students who were on academic probation (GPA < 2.0). The sample was 46.4% Hispanic, and 49.5% female. Participants completed two questionnaires with scales designed to measure their perceived academic self-efficacy ($\alpha = .90$) and their achievement goal orientation. This study used the trichotomous model: (a) performance-approach ($\alpha = .83$), (b) performance-avoidance ($\alpha = .72$), and (c) mastery ($\alpha = .77$).

Hsieh et al. (2007) calculated descriptive statistics and correlations among the measures. Their key findings included the relationships between GPA, self-efficacy, and goal orientations. "GPA was positively related to both self-efficacy ($r = .36$, $p < .01$) and mastery-goal orientation ($r = .40$, $p < .01$), but negatively related to performance-avoidance goal orientation ($r = -.35$, $p < .01$)" according to these researchers (Hsieh et al., 2007, p. 462). The research did not demonstrate a significant relationship between GPA and performance-approach, although performance-approach and performance-avoidance were positively correlated ($r = .46$, $p < .01$). Hierarchical regression demonstrated that

self-efficacy was significantly related to GPA, "adjusted $R^2 = .12$, $F(1,94) = 14.15$, $p <$ .001" (Hsieh et al., 2007, p. 463). When goal orientations were added to the regression analysis, students who reported a mastery orientation and who did not report a performance-avoidance orientation were found to have higher GPAs. Report of performance-approach was not significantly predictive of GPA.

The researchers conducted an ANOVA, using the two groups of students as the independent variables and measuring self-efficacy as the dependent variable. Successful students had significantly higher self-efficacy ($M = 4.41$, $SD = .51$) than did students on academic probation ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .78$), $F(1,99) = 17.92$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .85$ (Hsieh et al., 2007, p. 464). Hsieh et al. (2007) then conducted a 2 x 2 MANOVA, using self-efficacy and GPA as independent variables and the goal orientations as dependent variables. They also conducted follow-up ANOVA with Bonferroni adjustments on each dependent variable. Successful students reported significantly more mastery goal orientation ($M = 4.23$, $SD = .45$) than did students on academic probation ($M = 3.61$, $SD = .71$), $F(1,92) = 13.88$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.04$. Students who reported higher self-efficacy reported significantly more mastery goal orientation (M = 4.13, SD = .49) than did students who reported lower self-efficacy ($M = 3.32$, $SD = .72$), $F(1,92) = 13.16$, $p <$ .001, Cohen's $d = 1.32$ (Hsieh et al., 2007, p. 465).

Successful students who reported high self-efficacy reported less performance-avoidance ($M = 3.02$, $SD = .85$) than did high self-efficacy students on academic probation ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .61$), $F(1,92) = 7.26$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.05$. Students on academic probation who reported higher self-efficacy reported more performance-

avoidance (*M* = 3.80, *SD* = .61) than did students on academic probation who reported low self-efficacy (*M* = 3.17, *SD* = .61), although the level of significance was not reported for this relationship (Hsieh et al., 2007, pp. 466-467). The researchers postulated that high-efficacy students on academic probation may have been embarrassed by their performance and may have adopted a performance-avoidance approach as a result. Based on their findings, Hsieh et al. (2007) cautioned that the relationships between self-efficacy and goal orientation in students on academic probation are complex and noted that further research would be beneficial.

Hsieh et al. (2007) acknowledged that a major weakness of their study was the use of convenience samples. Students in the academic probation group were freshmen from a variety of majors, some of whom were undeclared, who were recruited at a mandatory seminar designed to enhance their academic success in the upcoming semester. Successful students in the study were all enrolled in an educational psychology course, and the sample comprised 6% sophomores, 33% juniors, and 61% seniors. Comparing freshmen on scholastic probation to successful upper-class students, all of whom were education majors, rather than to a successful group of freshmen in a variety of majors was a limitation of the study.

Chung and Hsu (2006) opened a course center where university students enrolled in introductory physics and logic courses could study in close proximity to faculty. Their intention was to welcome individuals or groups of students into a nonthreatening study environment where faculty support was readily available and students could initiate contact as needed. The educators subsequently surveyed 109 respondents out of the 150

students enrolled in either course to determine student use and perceptions of the course center. More than 90% of respondents stated that they were aware of the course center as an option for help. When asked about where and how they preferred to seek help, 40% of students reported the course center, and 19% of students reported traditional office hours as their first choice. More than half of the respondents (59%) reported using the course center, and 79% of respondents indicated that they were more likely to seek help because of the course center.

Students responded that the things they liked most about the course center were the "convenience" of not needing to plan ahead and the availability of "one-on-one help" (Chung & Hsu, 2006, p. 256). Students also appreciated the ability to study and work in groups, the "laid-back" atmosphere, and the "approachable" instructors (Chung & Hsu, 2006, pp. 256-257). Additionally, students who completed the survey reported that it was helpful to overhear other students in the course center working on problems they had encountered themselves. This finding can be viewed within the context of Bandura's (1986) theory, which asserted that watching others persist in the face of difficulty promotes self-efficacy.

The previous paragraphs reviewed research studies that examined relationships between self-efficacy, achievement goal orientation, and help-seeking behavior in secondary and postsecondary students. In general, the research demonstrated positive relationships between high self-efficacy, a personal mastery approach orientation, help-seeking behavior, and academic achievement (Hsieh et al., 2007; Karabenick, 2004; Román et al., 2008; Ryan et al., 1998; Witkow & Fuligni, 2007). A performance

approach orientation within the classroom was related to avoidance of help-seeking (Ryan et al., 1998; Karabenick, 2004). Relationships between personal performance orientations and academic achievement were less consistent across studies (Hsieh et al., 2007; Witkow & Fuligni, 2007). Additionally the relationships between self-efficacy and performance avoidance orientation were complex, depending on the academic achievement of the student (Hsieh et al., 2007). The following paragraphs will review research on achievement goal orientation and help-seeking behavior in nursing students.

Academic Help-Seeking in Nursing Students

Howard-York (2006) used hierarchical regression analysis to investigate the effects of self-efficacy, personal goal orientation, and attributions on help-seeking behaviors in nursing students. The study also asked participants about whom they approached for help and about which faculty behaviors they perceived as most helpful. Participants included 205 students pursuing an ADN in a community college system.

Howard-York (2006) discovered that high academic self-efficacy existed most often with a personal mastery goal orientation. Both high self-efficacy and a mastery goal orientation were positively correlated with instrumental help-seeking and inversely correlated with help avoidance and expedient help-seeking. Low academic self-efficacy and less of a mastery goal orientation were positively correlated with expedient help-seeking. Eighty-nine percent of students reported that they were most likely to seek help from peers, while 65.9% reported they would seek it from faculty, 22.9% from tutors, and 9.3% from others. When asked about the most helpful faculty behaviors they encountered, 81.4% of subjects reported clarifying information, 74.5% reported content

review, 72.1% reported faculty availability, and 43.6% reported study groups (Howard-York, 2006, pp. 59-60).

Shelton (2003) used a conceptual framework of Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy and Tinto's (1993) theory of student retention to study 458 students in nine ADN programs to determine the relationship between faculty support and student retention. Shelton compared student perceptions of functional, psychological, and overall faculty support with academic success and persistence. Subjects completed a 24-item Likert scale questionnaire regarding perceptions of available support. Successful students reported significantly higher perceived levels of functional support than did those who withdrew either voluntarily or non-voluntarily. Additionally, successful students reported a significantly higher perceived level of psychological support and overall faculty support than did the others. The importance of psychological support echoed the findings of Ryan et al. (1998). Shelton therefore recommended that faculty approach students who are struggling, rather than wait for those students to seek help.

Poorman et al. (2002) used Heideggarian hermeneutical analysis to describe the lived experiences of 20 recent graduates who had struggled at some point during their nursing education; an overall pattern of *expecting* emerged in the narratives (p. 126). Students reported being disappointed if teachers did not live up to their expectations. Within the pattern of expecting, the themes of helping and hindering were noted. Students reported being with, reviewing, and approaching as helpful faculty behaviors. "The faculty's presence was repeatedly expressed as the most powerful in promoting student success" (Poorman et al., 2002, p. 127). Subjects reported that being approached

by a faculty member when they were struggling gave them permission to acknowledge their difficulties, to ask for help, and to embark on a plan for success. Approaching also demonstrated to students that the faculty member cared and was willing to be with them.

Hindering behaviors were described as uncaring, owning, hovering, and favoring (Poorman et al., 2002, pp. 128-129). Faculty members who appeared insensitive or disinterested when interacting with students were viewed as uncaring. Students complained that faculty members were controlling in their approach to teaching, and that they failed to share power with students. Hovering, particularly in the clinical setting, made students very nervous. Students felt left out if faculty hovered over other students. Favoring was described as a hindrance, both by students who perceived that they were favored, as well as by those who did not.

Approaching was one of the most prominent themes that emerged. Most subjects reported that they had difficulty asking for help and that being approached by the faculty member was often a turning point. Although students did not want faculty members to hover or to favor, all students reported that a caring faculty presence was critical to their success. Those who reported that they received inadequate faculty attention or support viewed it as detrimental to their success (Poorman et al., 2002). Although the researchers did not use goal orientation theory as their framework, helpful faculty behaviors described by subjects in this qualitative study echoed the recommendations of Ames (1992) in regards to promotion of a course mastery goal orientation.

Peter (2005) reported positive outcomes related to implementation of Learn for Success (LFS), a comprehensive retention program. LFS identified and tracked at-risk

nursing students, and provided study skills workshops, study groups, peer tutors, and one-on-one faculty coaching, which included development of a personalized learning plan. The core components included assistance with learning strategies, motivational strategies, and self-management, known as "skill + will + self-management" (Peter, 2005, p. 160). Multiple learning strategies were taught and reinforced, including the skill of "seeking assistance from others" (Peter, 2005, p. 160). Peter followed outcomes of both at-risk students and non-at-risk students.

Peter (2005) reported that 95% of 40 at-risk students were retained at the end of the semester as compared to 97% of the other 90 non-at-risk students, 93% of them earned course grades of "C" or higher as compared to 99% of the 90 non-at-risk students, and 82% of the at-risk students earned GPAs of 2.5 or above for the semester as compared to 96% of the 90 non-at-risk students. The mean GPA of the 40 at-risk students was 3.18, while the mean GPA of the 90 other students was 3.48. Peter did not report a comparison of these student outcomes during LFS to previous outcomes prior to implementation of LFS in the article. He emphasized the necessity for coaching that extends throughout the nursing program, and noted that 10% of at-risk students who experienced success during the semester of faculty coaching did not successfully complete all courses the following semester without continued coaching.

Achievement Goal Orientation in Nursing Students

I located one quasiexperiment that investigated an intervention designed to promote a mastery goal orientation in nursing students. Gardner (2006) randomized students from one of five ADN programs in a Midwestern state to experimental and

control groups. Prior to randomization, matched pairs of students were created based on their mastery scores on the Comprehensive Goal Orientation Inventory (CGOI), which the researcher developed by modifying the Goal Orientation Inventory (GOI) originally validated by Roedel, Schraw, and Plake (1994). GPAs, age, prior work experience, and prior education were also used for matching.

Following randomization, the experimental group received a weekly 45 minute block of didactic instruction designed to promote mastery goal orientation, which supplemented the problem solving activities and group collaboration instruction received by both groups. This intervention continued for three weeks. Gardner (2006) personally visited each participating school and provided all instruction for both the experimental and control groups. All participants completed the CGOI again at the end of the intervention period, and Gardner compared GOI scores between the matched pairs, using the independent group t test.

Posttest overall mastery orientation scores increased significantly from pretest scores in the experimental group, and a significant difference between posttest mastery scores was reported between the groups (t [df] = 2.07 (56), $p = < 0.05$). The posttest overall performance orientation scores between the two groups did not differ significantly, however (t [df] = -1.40 (56), $p = < 0.05$). The groups differed significantly on one of the five individual items designed to measure mastery and on one of the five items designed to measure performance as well. Experimental group participants scored significantly higher on the mastery item "'I work harder when I don't like a class'" (t [df] = 2.11 (56), $p = < 0.05$), and control group participants scored significantly higher on the

performance item "'I give up too easily when faced with a difficult task'" (t [df] = -2.27

(56), p = < 0.05; Gardner, 2006, p. 346).

Gardner (2006) reported the Cronbach's alpha scores originally cited by Roedel et

al. (1994): 0.78 to 0.86 for mastery items and 0.82 to 0.85 for performance items, but the

article did not report piloting the revised CGOI developed for this study. Gardner noted

that attrition (75 enrolled and 58 completed the study) and the possible sharing of

information between students in the intervention and control groups were major

limitations of the study. Data related to race and ethnicity of the participants was not

provided. Median age of participants was 36, 96.5% were female, and they had an

average of 4.5 years of prior experience in various paraprofessional health care roles.

The convenience sample used students who were willing to volunteer for the study.

The findings may not be generalizable to a population of traditional college-aged

Latina students in a BSN program in Texas or to students who would not volunteer to

participate in research related to learning, but the positive outcomes rendered the concept

of mastery goal orientation worth studying in prenursing students at the university of

interest. Gardner's (2006) findings are also significant, in that they demonstrated that

personal mastery goal orientation can be enhanced as a result of didactic instruction and

encouragement. Additional research that observes students longitudinally following an

intervention designed to promote mastery orientation, including tracking GPAs, would be

helpful.

Relationships Between Individual and Environmental Factors and Help-Seeking

Ames (1992), Howard-York (2006), Karabenick (2004), and Ryan et al. (1998) discovered clear relationships between individual and environmental factors and instrumental help-seeking behavior. The research of Chung and Hsu (2006), Gardner (2006), Howard-York (2006), Peter (2005), Poorman et al. (2002), and Shelton (2003) built on these findings by investigating specific faculty practices that promote or hinder student help-seeking. Their work demonstrated that faculty practices such as providing a course mastery goal orientation, approaching students at the first sign of academic difficulty, and providing emotional and functional support for students do, in fact, promote student instrumental help-seeking behavior.

Gardner (2006) and Peter (2005) conducted quantitative studies to examine the effects of interventions designed to promote help-seeking and a mastery approach in nursing students. Peter (2005) emphasized the importance of continued support in order to change student behaviors and promote academic success, noting that at-risk students did not all experience continued success without the provision of ongoing assistance. Peter emphasized that long-term support is necessary in order to change student behaviors.

Strengths of the Findings Related to Help-Seeking

Findings across the studies reviewed regarding help-seeking were consistent for the most part. Ryan et al. (1998) demonstrated clear relationships between the variables studied. Their findings showed that positive classroom practices and teacher

characteristics empower even students with low self-efficacy to seek help. The results of their study, especially when coupled with those of Karabenick (2004), can be used confidently as evidence to support effective faculty practices in the classroom.

The two studies of college students by Karabenick (2004) used large sample sizes at different institutions in various courses. The researcher took great care to control for extraneous variables that could potentially have affected the findings. While other demographic variables were similar, the two student populations differed in expected ability as measured by ACT score, lending credibility to the findings across student ability levels. The measurements at two different points in the semester during Karabenick's second study also demonstrated stability of the findings for the study population. Karabenick's work supported the idea that the relationships between help-seeking patterns, personal goal orientation, and classroom goal orientation are consistent over time and across a wide range of college student populations.

The study by Shelton (2003) involved 458 students, an acceptable sample size. The researcher clearly described the conceptual framework and research question. The study examined the relationship between perceived faculty support and retention of nursing students. Shelton integrated the theories of Bandura (1986) and Tinto (1993) into the Shelton Model of Student Retention, developed specifically for nursing students. Although this study involved ADN students, the model could be used to study a baccalaureate level population.

Poorman et al. (2002) used three researchers to interpret and analyze student interviews independently. The analysis by multiple researchers, the comparing of results,

and the subsequent return to the tapes to reanalyze interviews based on the similarities and differences of the researchers' interpretations, strengthened the accuracy of their findings. Additionally, this study included subjects from diploma, associate degree, and baccalaureate nursing programs.

Weaknesses of the Findings Related to Help-Seeking

Many of the research studies reviewed above used tools, which were completed by students and faculty members, rather than in-class observations. This approach is necessary in college populations, as help-seeking for these students frequently occurs outside the classroom. Karabenick (2004) pointed out, however, that intentions are not always the same as actual behaviors. Ryan et al. (1998) noted that student and teacher reports might not be consistent or complete. Although teachers know that nurturing behaviors are important and intend to exhibit them, the reality might be different than the teacher's intention or perception. Classroom observations would strengthen the research.

Shelton (2003) acknowledged that a longitudinal design would be a more accurate determinant of student perceptions of support than the cross-sectional design. Perceived support could be measured at the time of withdrawal from the nursing program, rather than allowing a period of time to elapse, as was the case with many of the respondents in this survey. Only 42% of students who had withdrawn voluntarily or failed academically responded to the survey request. It is unlikely that those who responded provided an accurate representation of the other 58%. It is also difficult to obtain an unbiased measure of perceived faculty support from students who have been required to withdraw for

academic failure. Enforced withdrawal is likely to be perceived by a student as a loss of faculty support, regardless of the student's prior perceptions.

Chung and Hsu (2006) and Peter (2005) demonstrated positive results from programs designed to promote academic help-seeking, although Chung and Hsu measured only student perceptions of their course center. Peter reported descriptive statistics including course grades of participants during and after the intervention. Gardner (2006) conducted the only quasiexperiment found in the studies reviewed. Additional quantitative research is needed related to the longitudinal effects of interventions on students' academic success.

Finally, students who agree to participate in educational research may not be representative of the entire group. This concern may be particularly true of research that measures help-seeking and avoidance behaviors in a context of social interaction. Students who avoid asking for help may also avoid participating in educational research studies.

Synthesis of Research Related to Help-Seeking

The research studies reviewed above are similar in that they all explored the phenomenon of student help-seeking, yet they differ in regard to theoretical frameworks, research variables, and study populations. Ryan et al. (1998) and Karabenick (2004) both studied instrumental help-seeking within the theoretical framework of motivational goal orientation, yet Ryan et al. researched a population of middle school students, and Karabenick studied a college-aged population. Nevertheless, findings between the two studies were similar. Both discovered positive correlations between personal and

classroom mastery goal orientations and student instrumental help-seeking behavior. This finding was true across ability levels as demonstrated in the two studies reported by Karabenick.

Witkow and Fuligni (2007) demonstrated positive relationships between personal mastery and performance approach orientations and achievement as measured by GPA. Additionally, they found that the 2 x 2 achievement goal model could be used confidently with Latino students. As noted in the literature review completed by Hsieh et al. (2007), a mastery goal approach has consistently been demonstrated to be positively associated with higher self-efficacy and higher academic achievement.

Ryan et al. (1998) reported a positive correlation between self-efficacy and instrumental help-seeking. Karabenick's (2004) research differed in this regard, because it did not consider self-efficacy. Howard-York's (2006) research incorporated elements from both the work of Ryan et al. and Karabenick, and reported similar findings. Howard-York discovered that high academic self-efficacy existed most often with a mastery goal orientation. Self-efficacy and a personal mastery goal orientation were both positively correlated with instrumental help-seeking according to Howard-York's findings.

Howard-York (2006), Karbenick (2004), and Ryan et al. (1998) took the research a step further to determine faculty practices that promoted instrumental help-seeking. All three researchers found that faculty provision of a course mastery goal orientation correlated positively with student instrumental help-seeking. Additionally, Howard-York and Karabenick investigated whom students approached when seeking help. Karabenick

found that students who sought instrumental help to promote mastery most often asked faculty members for assistance. In contrast, the subjects in Howard-York's study reported seeking help from other students most often. This contrast may be explained, however, by the fact that Karabenick controlled for the type of help-seeking when asking students about their source of help, and Howard-York did not.

Shelton (2003) used Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy as well, yet she was the only researcher to incorporate Tinto's (1993) theory of student retention and the only researcher who developed a model specific to the study of nursing students. In contrast to Ryan et al. (1998) and Howard-York (2006), Shelton did not investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and instrumental help-seeking. Shelton built on previous research of these entities and investigated the relationship between faculty support and student success. Shelton's finding that faculty support is positively correlated with student success is similar to the discovery by Ryan et al. that faculty nurturing fosters instrumental help-seeking.

Like Howard-York (2006), Karabenick (2004), Ryan et al. (1998), and Shelton (2003); Gardner (2006), Peter (2005), and Poorman et al. (2002) attempted to explore faculty practices that promoted success, particularly in students at risk for academic difficulties. Unlike the other researchers, Poorman et al. used a qualitative approach. Notably, both Shelton and Poorman et al. discovered the need for faculty to approach at-risk students rather than waiting for the students to initiate contact. Gardner's work was the only study found that quantitatively investigated the effects of faculty encouragement and instruction on the achievement goal orientations of nursing students. Her findings

echoed the words of Bandura (1977), who asserted that encouragement could enhance the self-efficacy of students.

Chung and Hsu (2006) offered a supplemental course center designed to promote instrumental help-seeking and then surveyed students regarding perceptions of the center. Their findings echoed those of Shelton (2003) and Poorman et al. (2002) in regard to the students' appreciation for approachable faculty and the students' desire for shared ownership of their learning. Although their intervention appears promising, Chung and Hsu used a simple survey and did not employ a formal quantitative or qualitative design, as did the other researchers.

The most important findings were the consistent relationships between individual variables such as self-efficacy and personal goal orientation, environmental variables such as faculty support and classroom goal orientation, and the dependent variable of instrumental help-seeking. Although self-efficacy and personal goal orientation may be difficult to change, Bandura's (1986) theory asserted that faculty members could, in fact, increase student self-efficacy through verbal persuasion and support. Gardner (2006) demonstrated that mastery goal orientation of students could be enhanced by encouragement and didactic instruction. Faculty members also have the capability to orchestrate environmental variables such as course achievement goal orientation to enhance instrumental help-seeking behavior. The work of Ames (1992) and Bandura, along with the research studies reviewed above, serve as the evidence base from which to recommend faculty approaches.

Similarities, Differences, and Gaps in the Literature

When considering the individual factors that influence help-seeking, the most important similarities across the studies include a positive correlation between student self-efficacy and student instrumental help-seeking, and a positive correlation between personal mastery goal orientation and student instrumental help-seeking. In regards to faculty practices designed to promote instrumental help-seeking and success, two important similarities are noted. First, provision of a course mastery goal orientation is positively correlated with student instrumental help-seeking. Secondly, the practice of approaching at-risk students is positively correlated with student success. Significant differences in study findings are not apparent.

As noted above, a number of studies document similar relationships between the three independent variables of personal goal orientation, course goal orientation, and self-efficacy, and the dependent variable of student instrumental help-seeking. Findings have been consistent across student populations. The key differences in the literature are related to the theoretical frameworks and research approaches between studies, rather than to research findings. Some gaps, however, are appreciated.

Chung and Hsu (2006) noted a significant gap: "Much of the existing literature focuses on developing general theoretical models of help-seeking but few offer concrete suggestions for interventions" (p. 254). The studies by Chung and Hsu, Gardner (2006), and Peter (2005) were some of the few reporting results of such interventions. The effect of the course center intervention described by Chung and Hsu needs to be analyzed quantitatively by comparing average course grades before and after the intervention.

Reflections

I did not find a large body of quantitative research related specifically to the relationship between faculty practices and instrumental help-seeking in nursing students. Provision of a course mastery goal orientation and approaching struggling students were the only faculty practices consistently supported by the literature. A limited number of researchers investigated faculty practices related to nursing student help-seeking, retention, and success (Gardner, 2006; Howard-York, 2006; Peter, 2005; Poorman et al., 2002; Shelton, 2003). Literature that discusses at-risk nursing students and how to facilitate their success is available, but the recommendations are frequently drawn from previous research in different student populations.

Gardner's (2006) quasiexperimental research study was the only one found that quantitatively measured the results of an intervention designed to enhance mastery goal orientation. Cerna et al. (2009), found that successful Hispanic students reported higher self-efficacy scores than did successful White students, making self-efficacy an important variable to consider. The relationships between mastery goal orientation, self-efficacy, and academic help-seeking have been established, but additional quantitative studies measuring the effects of interventions on these variables, particularly in Latina nursing student populations would be helpful.

Poorman et al. (2002) were the only researchers who used a qualitative design to explore helpful faculty practices and the phenomenon of instrumental help-seeking behavior from the nursing student perspective. Qualitative studies that describe the student experience of help-seeking during the quest for successful admission to and

completion of nursing school, and on the NCLEX are needed, especially in groups such as the Latina prenursing students at the institution of interest.

The work of Hofstede (1986) that demonstrated the influence of culture on learning, the findings of Alexander et al. (2007) and Gonzalez et al. (2004) that demonstrated the influence of traditional Hispanic family culture on the educational choices of Latinas, the research that uncovered the complex family influences on Latina students (Cerna et al., 2009; Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Huynh & Fuligni, 2008; Román et al., 2008; Sy, 2006; Sy & Brittian, 2008; Sy & Romero, 2008; Telzer & Fuligni, 2009; Zalaquett, 2006), and the findings related to barriers and supports experienced by Latina nursing students (Amaro et al., 2006; Bond et al., 2008; Cason et al., 2008; Doutrich et al., 2005; Evans, 2008; Rivera-Goba & Campinha-Bacote, 2008; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007) all support the need for additional qualitative research that explores the lived experiences of Latina nursing students who encounter challenges and need to seek help from faculty members and tutors. In particular, the findings of Doutrich et al. (2005) and Amaro et al. (2006), who discovered that Latina nursing students hesitated to seek academic help due to their discomfort with self-disclosure, support the need for further qualitative research in this area.

Help-Seeking, Goal Orientation, and the Latina Nursing Student Experience

The overall nursing school experience is highly performance goal oriented. Students compete based on standardized test scores and GPA for both college admission and acceptance to the nursing program. The entire college experience culminates in passing the NCLEX-RN for licensure, during which the student must perform against a

set standard determined to be safe for entry-level practice (National Council of State Boards of Nursing [NCSBN], 2010). Therefore, it is understandable that only a student with a solid personal mastery goal orientation can maintain this perspective despite the performance-oriented pressures inherent to the nursing school experience.

Dekker and Fischer (2008) noted that a mastery goal orientation is clearly related to the need for achievement and a performance-avoidance goal orientation is clearly related to fear of failure. In contrast to mastery goals and performance-avoidance goals, however, "performance approach goals are more complex and are associated with a motivation to both socially demonstrate success and avoid failure" (Dekker & Fischer, 2008, pp. 100-101). Notably, although a mastery approach orientation is ideal for lifelong learning and success, a performance approach orientation may be necessary as well in order for nursing students to successfully pass the standardized exams required for graduation and licensure. A qualitative study that explores student perceptions of learning approaches that facilitate success, student help-seeking, and the faculty behaviors that support or inhibit instrumental help-seeking and academic success at the institution of interest will increase understanding of how to meet students' needs.

Literature Related to Methods

This research study used interpretative phenomenological analysis to address the research question. A review of phenomenology, beginning with the work of Husserl (1913/1962) follows. Husserl wrote, "*Pure or transcendental phenomenology will be established not as a science of facts, but as a science of essential Being* (as *'eidetic'* Science): a science which aims exclusively at establishing 'knowledge of essences'

(*Wesenserkenntnisse*) and *absolutely no 'facts'"* (p. 40). He continued, "*The phenomena of transcendental phenomenology will be characterized as non-real (irreal). . . .*Phenomenology should be a theory of essential Being, dealing not with real, but with transcendentally reduced phenomena" (Husserl, 1913/1962, p. 40)*.* Husserl distinguished between that which we experience and perceive in the world around us, that which exists within us, and that which we can behold in others. Additionally, he spoke of *bracketing,* the process by which a researcher suspends and disconnects from worldly knowledge for a given period of time:

> *This entire natural world therefore* which is continually "there for us," "present to our hand," and will ever remain there, is a "fact-world" of which we continue to be conscious, even though it pleases us to put it in brackets. (Husserl, 1913/1962, pp. 99-100)

The act of bracketing "*renders 'pure' consciousness accessible"* (Husserl, 1913/1962, p. 103). As a novice to phenomenology, I recognized a need to read further to better understand the concepts introduced by Husserl.

I reviewed the work of contemporary experts in phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2009; and Van Manen, 1990) during the planning phase. I considered their work, along with that of Larkin et al. (2006), LeVasseur (2003), Lopez and Willis (2004), and Smith (2007), when finalizing the methodology. A brief review of the work of Moustakas (1994) follows.

According to Moustakas (1994), "The empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide

the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience"

(p. 13). The researcher explores the meaning of a phenomenon with individuals who have

experienced it and are able to describe it, in an effort to learn about the essence of the

experience. A pure transcendental approach incorporates three processes: (a) *epoche,* (b)

transcendental phenomenological reduction, and (c) *imaginative variation* (Moustakas,

1994, p. 33). Epoche involves avoiding all presuppositions and judgments in order to

look at the phenomenon with fresh eyes. The researcher clears his or her mind of

everyday understandings in order to visit the pure phenomenon naively (bracketing), and

considers every quality as of equal value.

Transcendental-phenomenological reduction involves a description of the

phenomenon from all possible vantage points, including the constituents that describe it.

Initially, the researcher conducts *horizonalization*, during which all statements are

considered as having equal value. Next, irrelevant and overlapping statements are set

aside, and only the relevant *horizons* remain. Finally the researcher clusters horizons into

themes to arrive at a complete textural description (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). This is the

objective *noema,* or *that* which is experienced (Moustakas, 1994, p. 69), the *what* of the

experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 78).

Imaginative variation uses intuition and imagination to seek the factors underlying

an experience and to explore the meaning of the experience. This exercise results in a

structural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97-98). This description

is the subjective *noesis,* which involves *how* the noema is perceived and experienced

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 78). According to Moustakas (1994), the textural and structural

essences are then integrated to synthesize a "textural-structural synthesis of meanings and essences" (p. 36) of the phenomenon. He noted that interweaving the noema and the noesis is essential to understanding the experience and described this interweaving as "the appearance and the hidden coming together to create a fullness in understanding the essences of a phenomenon or experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 79).

Moustakas (1994) acknowledged that achieving an entirely pure frame of reference may not be possible, but he emphasized the value of the epoche principle; "It inspires one to examine biases and enhances one's openness even if a perfect and pure state is not achieved" (p. 61). He described the process following bracketing:

> We describe in detail and fully the whole account of an issue, problem, situation, or experience, using qualities and properties from specific contexts or perspectives, so that the events or experiences take on vivid and essential meanings, a clear portrait of what is. We then reflect on these textural portraits to arrive at their essences, in terms of underlying conditions, precipitating factors, structural determinants. We combine the textural and structural meanings to arrive at the essences of an experience. (Moustakas. 1994, p. 60)

A number of researchers have recommended a more interpretive approach, and this section concludes with a brief summary of their writings.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), as described by Smith et al. (2009), tempers the pure transcendental phenomenology of Husserl with the contextualized approaches of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre. Heidegger used a *hermeneutic* lens (Smith et al., 2009, p. 18), and believed that all human experience was

situated within time and within the world surrounding the individual and must be considered in that light. Merleau-Ponty believed in embodiment, through which individuals regarded the world and their experiences in it from their physical bodies looking out at the world rather than being one with the world. Sartre asserted that human experiences are contingent upon relationships with others (Smith et al., 2009, pp. 19-21).

IPA uses the hermeneutic circle, looking at individual elements of data according to their relationships to the whole, and looking at entire data sets according to their relationships to the individual parts. Additionally, the researcher's relationship to the data can be viewed according to the hermeneutic circle. A researcher initially experiences new material against preconceptions, or fore-understandings, and bracketing is necessary. Encountering the new information influences the researcher's fore-understandings, and the researcher is now changed as a result of engagement with the new information (Smith, 2007, pp. 5-6; Smith et al., 2009, pp. 27-28). Therefore, the researcher's "entry into the meaning of a text can be made at a number of different levels, all of which relate to one another, and many of which will offer different perspectives on the part-whole coherence of the text" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28).

Finally, IPA is influenced by idiography, which "is concerned with the particular" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29), and this idiographic influence is apparent in two ways. First, the analysis is completed in a thorough and systemic manner, looking deeply into the details of participants' described experiences. Secondly, IPA explores the experiences of particular people in particular situations and contexts. Individual, or particular, cases are examined in detail prior to making general claims (Smith et al., 2009, p. 32). The three

key principles of IPA include: (a) the study must examine "'the thing itself,' the phenomenological experience of the participant," (b) "intense interpretative engagement with personal verbal material obtained from the participant" must occur, and (c) each case is examined in detail during analysis (Smith et al., 2009, p. 186).

Literature Related to Differing Methodologies

I considered using a quantitative approach to measure the self-efficacy and personal achievement goal orientations of prenursing students and to look for relationships between these characteristics, help-seeking behavior, and academic success in the student population of interest. However, given the lack of research published regarding the experiences of Latinas enrolled in prenursing courses, I decided to first approach the problem qualitatively. Harper (2007) recommended a qualitative approach and offered examples of insights gained through trajectory analyses of 219 high achieving Black men enrolled at 42 colleges across 20 states. He lamented the exclusion of individual stories in favor of aggregate analyses at most institutions and stated:

> Trajectory analyses. . .capture key turning points, make known those influential others, and in some instances offer compelling insights into how students transcended odds and managed to persist. . .some of the most complex educational dilemmas could be untangled simply by enabling students to talk to researchers about their navigational experiences. (Harper, 2007, p. 58)

I expected that listening to students' stories related to the academic challenges of prerequisite nursing courses would offer a fundamental understanding upon which additional quantitative studies could build.

Summary

Section 2 reviewed theory and research related to dimensions of culture and cultural competence when working with Hispanic patient populations. It also explored possible cultural factors influencing the Latina experience in higher education and in the nursing profession. The second part of section 2 reviewed studies of Latina students in higher education and research related to mentoring in this student population. A review of the theoretical literature and research on the concepts of self-efficacy, personal achievement goal orientation, and help-seeking behaviors followed. A number of studies were included that focused specifically on help-seeking and achievement goal orientation in nursing student populations. Section 2 concluded with a brief review of literature regarding the phenomenological approach, which was used to explore the research question. Section 3 will delineate the methodology of the study and the process I used to determine the most appropriate approach.

Section 3: Research Method

This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach within a paradigm of constructivism, guided by the conceptual framework described in section 1 and the review of the literature presented in section 2. Harper (2007) emphasized the importance of qualitative approaches when researching the academic experiences of minority students and asserted:

> College students are arguably best positioned to offer personalized data and perspectives that help shed light on the magnitude of how they were affected by something in their learning environment, participation in a program or activity, or interactions with faculty and student affairs educators. (p. 58)

The description of the qualitative research design, used to explore the experiences of successful Latina students when they encounter academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses, follows.

Research Design

The student experience and response to academic challenges is individual and complex. Although Bandura's (1977, 1986) theory of self-efficacy, the work of Ames (1992) related to personal achievement goal orientation, and the work of Nelson-Le Galle (1981) related to help-seeking behavior served to assist and inform me in the final analysis and discussion of findings, I remained open to multiple and other realities in order to explore the lived experiences of students. The constructivist paradigm guided the research as recommended by Creswell (2007).

Hatch (2002) described the ontological assumptions related to the constructivist paradigm, including: (a) the absence of absolute realities, (b) the presence of multiple realities, and (c) the presence of unique realities that are "constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points" (p. 15). The epistemology related to constructivism involves the participants and researcher working jointly to come to a constructed understanding of a phenomenon. Creswell (2007) and Merriam (2002) emphasized that the constructivist paradigm asserts that individuals socially construct meaning. Meanings "are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). Additionally, "there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time" (Merriam, 2002, pp. 3-4). After reading the work of constructivist experts, I decided to explore students' constructions and interpretations of lived experiences related to academic challenges in prenursing courses.

My decision aligned with the recommendations of others as well. Bond et al. (2008) wrote, "The shortage of Hispanic nurses cannot be addressed effectively without understanding their perspectives on nursing and nursing education" (p. 136). Polkinghorne (2005) noted that questionnaires and surveys offer surface information, which is "inadequate to capture the richness and fullness of an experience" (p. 138). I believed that a qualitative approach would empower students to "share their stories" and would allow me to "hear their voices" as recommended by Creswell (2007, p. 40).

As discussed in section 1, I decided to use a phenomenological approach as a result of reviewing the work of Chism and Banta (2007), Creswell (2007), Green (2007), Harper (2007), Harper and Kuh (2007), and Polkinghorne (2005), all of whom recommended qualitative approaches in addition to quantitative research to increase understanding of how to serve minority student populations. I read the work of Spradley (1979) and considered the use of ethnography, as the Latino culture factors prominently in the conceptual framework of the study. Influenced, however, by the recommendations of Rivera-Goba and Campinha-Bacote (2008), I decided to use phenomenology in order to get to the essence of the student experience of encountering and responding to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses. Additionally, the phenomenological studies published by Doutrich et al. (2005), Olive (2008), Poorman et al. (2002) and Rivera-Goba and Nieto (2007), which were reviewed in section 2, offered some of the richest data regarding the Hispanic student experience and the nursing student experience. I initially planned to use pure transcendental phenomenology, but a number of researchers have recommended a more interpretive approach. A brief review of their perspectives follows.

Lopez and Willis (2004) discussed the use of pure descriptive phenomenology as described by Husserl (1913/1962). They noted, "The belief that essences can be abstracted from lived experiences without a consideration of context is reflective of the values of traditional science and represent Husserl's attempt to make phenomenology a rigorous science within the prevailing tradition" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728). They contrasted Husserl's pure phenomenology with the interpretive approach of Heidegger,

who used *hermeneutics,* which "goes beyond mere description of core concepts and essences to look for meanings embedded in common life practices" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728). Lopez and Willis asserted that phenomenological research often originates from the researcher's review of the literature, and is by nature, interpretive. Although the theories used in hermeneutic research are not used to generate hypotheses and should not be allowed to influence participant narratives, the theories serve to focus the inquiry, to provide a framework for the study, and to guide the interpretation of the data. They cautioned, "The researcher has a responsibility to explain how the framework was used in the interpretation of the data and in generating findings" (Lopez and Willis, 2004, p. 730) when using an interpretive phenomenological approach.

I planned this study following a review of literature regarding concepts of self-efficacy, personal achievement goal orientation, and help-seeking behavior. Additionally, the study was situated within the realm of Latino culture, which has been demonstrated as relevant to the educational journeys of Latina students. Therefore, the phenomenological study was interpretive by nature. Literature regarding theoretical concepts and the framework discussed in section 2 was considered during the final analysis of data, following discovery of themes and superordinate themes.

My decision to use an interpretive approach was further informed by the work of LeVasseur (2003), who recommended reconciliation between bracketing and hermeneutics. LeVasseur suggested that researchers bracket prior assumptions and take on a stance of curiosity, which acknowledges lack of full understanding. He referred to this stance as "bracketing the natural attitude" (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 417), which is

consistent with Husserl's "temporary suspension of our theories and prior knowledge, not a permanent denial of them" (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 417). I approached the data with curiosity and attempted to look beyond current understanding, but the final analysis considered the study findings within the conceptual framework as well. Additionally, I remained aware of the hazards of influencing participants through what is already known or expected (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 143) and encouraged participants to tell their own stories as they understood them.

Following the decision to use an interpretive phenomenological approach, I read the work of Larkin et al. (2006), Smith (2007), and Smith et al. (2009), and I chose interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith et al., 2009, p. 1) as the stance from which to address the research question. IPA examines "how people make sense of their major life experiences" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1). The approach, which was described in section 2, draws from phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. A summary of how I employed IPA to answer the research questions follows.

Research Question

The following question guided the research: What are the lived experiences of successful Latina students as they encounter academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

Subquestions

I generated subquestions following a review of the literature related to Latina postsecondary educational experiences, academic help-seeking, and student success.

Subquestions also arose as a result of informal observations and conversations with students and faculty at the university of interest. The subquestions guided the development of the study:

1. What academic challenges do successful Latina students experience in prerequisite nursing courses?

2. What factors affect successful Latina students' experiences of and responses to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

3. How do successful Latina students respond to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

4. In what ways (if any) do successful Latina students seek help when facing academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

The interview schedule (Appendix A) provides the list of questions asked of participants.

Context of the Study

The research occurred at my place of employment as a nursing faculty member. The institution is a Hispanic-serving liberal arts university in Texas. The participants were enrolled at the institution of interest with a designated major of prenursing. As numerous measures aimed at promoting retention had already been employed in the nursing program, I decided to study the population of students not yet admitted to the program. The study was situated within the framework described in section 1: (a) the need for provision of culturally competent care to the growing Hispanic population in the United States, (b) the Hispanic nursing shortage within the overall nursing shortage, (c) the underachievement of Hispanics in postsecondary education, (d) the cultural

influences on student learning experiences, and (e) the failure of many prenursing students at the Hispanic-serving institution of interest to successfully complete the prerequisite courses for application to the nursing program within four or five semesters of admission to the university.

Concepts of self-efficacy, personal achievement goal orientation, and academic help-seeking behavior, which were reviewed in section 2, helped to provide context for the study. The theoretical writings on culture and culturally competent care, and the prior research on Latina students provided background for the study as well. Smith et al. (2009) noted that questions for IPA research are not generally derived from theory. However, "second-tier research questions may be used to explore theory-driven questions" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 48). Questions such as these were used in the final interpretive stage of analysis. Examples of second-tier research questions included asking whether participants' descriptions of owning knowledge reflected a particular type of academic achievement goal orientation as previously described in the literature, whether participants' descriptions of seeking help were similar to help-seeking behavior patterns described in prior research, whether participants' described academic challenges echoed those discussed by participants in other studies of Latina students, and whether participants' stories reflected any of the Latino cultural values reviewed in section 2.

I also considered the findings within existing theories reviewed. Smith et al. (2009) emphasized that second-tier questions "are not hypotheses–they may engage with a theory, but they do not *test* it" (p. 48). They recommended that researchers and readers "think in terms of theoretical transferability" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 51), in order to make

links between IPA research, personal and professional experiences, and existing

literature. The final analysis and discussion in section 5 of this doctoral study addresses

secondary questions in order to situate the study within the existing literature.

Ethical Protection of Participants

I began data collection after receiving IRB approval from the university where the

research took place and from Walden University. My Walden IRB approval number was

04-07-10-0372022. Additionally, I collected data from and about participants only after

they reviewed and signed the informed consent document (Appendix B). The recruitment

process is described in the Selection of Participants section. Students who responded to

recruitment efforts contacted me for further information.

I met privately on campus with any student who was willing to consider

participation to inform her of the study and of her rights in regards to participation or

declination. I disclosed that I was a nursing faculty member and was conducting the study

for personal doctoral work. Rubin and Rubin (2005) emphasized that "potential

interviewees might need to be reminded that they can refuse to participate in a study and

nothing untoward will happen to them" (p. 102). I informed prospective participants, both

verbally and in writing, that I did not serve on the committee that considers applications

to the nursing program, that they were under no obligation to participate in the research,

that their decision to participate (or not) would not be shared with anyone, that

nonparticipation would not reflect negatively on them in any way, and that they would

not be treated any differently by me or the institution as a result of participation or

nonparticipation in the study. Each student read the entire consent form prior to making

the decision to participate or to decline. I was available to answer any questions the student had about the consent form. Each student who decided that she was willing to participate after reading the consent form and having the information above explained to her by me, signed the form at that time. I kept the original signed consent form and gave a copy to the participant. All students who read the consent form agreed to participate, and all but one was found to be eligible based on subsequent review of her online transcript with me.

I did not expect the interviews to result in any physical or psychological harm to participants. However, in the rare instance that a participant experienced psychological distress related to discussing memories of encountering academic challenges, I planned to assist the participant to access private on-campus counseling that is available at no charge to students enrolled at the university. I offered this option to one participant following disclosure of a traumatic life event during the participant's second interview. The interviewee declined the offer, stating that she had previously sought counseling for the event and was at the point in her healing that talking about it sometimes helped.

I assured the participants of anonymity, meaning that real names and identifying information were stored separately from interview transcriptions, academic transcript data, and the demographic information sheet; real names are not used in this report and will not be used in any other written report of the study. Additionally, I secured the demographic information sheets and the interview transcriptions in a locked file cabinet. The sheets that linked real names and identifying information with fictitious names used on the transcribed interviews and in the report were stored in a safe along with the signed

consent forms. As recommended by Smith et al. (2009, pp. 53-54), I informed

participants that their verbatim quotes may be used in the final published doctoral study,

that they had the right to withdraw up to one month following their interview, and that

they had the right to review the paper prior to publication if desired. I contacted all

participants by e-mail to offer a final member-checking interview. Two participants

responded and completed member-checking. I followed up with voice mail messages to

the other four participants and asked each to call back if she desired to complete member-

checking. The other four participants declined the offer or else did not respond to voice

mail messages.

Role of the Researcher

I am a nursing faculty member. Participants were enrolled in prerequisite nursing

courses, and they were not enrolled in any courses taught by me. It is possible that a

participant may enroll in a class that I teach in the future if the participant applies and is

accepted to the nursing program at the university of interest. As I teach upper division

nursing courses, the potential student-faculty relationship will not occur for at least two

semesters, or one calendar year, after participation (or nonparticipation) in the research

study. As noted above, I informed prospective participants that they would not be treated

differently by anyone as a result of their participation or nonparticipation.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) discussed research roles and social boundaries involved

in recruitment, along with recommendations for encouraging participation and initiating

contact. I crossed a faculty/student boundary as well as an ethnic boundary, as I am not

Latina. However, the participants and I were all of the same gender. Although I disclosed

that I was a faculty member, I informed the potential participants that I was also a doctoral student in hopes of encouraging participation.

I served as the academic faculty advisor for one of the six informants. This student was enrolled in one of the Microbiology sections I visited for recruitment purposes. As it is impossible to erase all memories about a given participant, I needed to be aware of personal thoughts or feelings that could affect the questioning or analysis process for this participant. Additionally, participants may not be entirely forthcoming when responding to a researcher who serves as their faculty advisor or who may be their teacher in the future if they are accepted into the nursing program. It is possible, however, that the advisor relationship benefited the study. One participant knew me and may have been more willing to share information as rapport had already been established. Finally, although Spradley (1979) noted that taping an interview was the best way to create a "verbatim record" (p. 73), he warned that taping "may threaten and inhibit informants" (p. 74). I reconfirmed participants' willingness to be taped at the beginning of each interview.

Polkinghorne (2005) recommended more than one interview with each participant as a way to enhance the quality of the data obtained. He asserted that multiple interviews allow the researcher to build rapport and allow the participant time to reflect on the phenomenon in between interviews. Therefore, I preinterviewed each potential participant immediately after the individual signed the consent form. The preinterview served to determine the participant's suitability and willingness to participate. I then

asked each participant to complete two 60 to 90 minute interviews and possibly a final 30 to 60 minute member-checking interview.

I may have had biases of which I was unaware. Green (2007) emphasized the importance of cultural competence and awareness of personal biases on the part of researchers who study minority student populations. Although not Latina, I have worked with this student population for 7 years and have taught in culturally diverse nursing programs for 14 years. I read the literature on Latina students and Latino culture extensively prior to beginning the study. Additionally, I maintained a journal throughout the interview process, taking care to reflect on any personal biases or assumptions as recommended by Green.

Selection of Participants

My participant selection process was guided by the recommendations of qualitative experts. Polkinghorne (2005) recommended *purposive selection* (p. 140) of participants. He wrote, "Because the goal of qualitative research is enriching the understanding of an experience, it needs to select fertile exemplars of the experience for the study" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140). I compared and contrasted the experiences of six participants, not to find a mean experience, but to "notice essential aspects that appear across the sources and to recognize variations in how the experience appears" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140). The purposive sampling was homogeneous (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 141; Smith et al., 2009, p. 49), as a subgroup of Latina prenursing students at the university of interest was invited to participate. Finally, I used *criterion sampling* (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 141) and recruited only participants who met the criteria of

"successful student," which was defined by a GPA of 3.0 or above and progressing to apply to the nursing program within four or five semesters of admission to the university. This approach satisfied the recommendations of Smith (2007), who recommended recruiting participants "because of their expertise in the phenomenon being explored" (p. 20) when conducting IPA research.

I determined the number of participants based on the recommendations of prominent IPA researchers. According to Larkin et al. (2006), "An IPA study typically involves a highly intensive and detailed analysis of the accounts produced by a comparatively small number of participants" (p. 103). Smith et al. (2009) emphasized that IPA studies "usually benefit from a concentrated focus on a small number of cases," and recommended a sample size of between three and six participants (p. 51). The authors further emphasized that IPA "is an approach which benefits from detailed engagement with a small sample, from accessing the chosen phenomenon from more than one perspective, or at more than one time-point, and from the creative and reflective efforts of participants" (Smith et al., 2009, pp. 56-57). According to these recommendations, I interviewed six successful Latina students enrolled in the prenursing major.

I recruited prospective participants by distributing recruitment flyers (Appendix C) in Biochemistry II and Microbiology classes, as these are some of the last prerequisite courses in science that prenursing students take prior to applying to the nursing major. Additionally, I asked all faculty advisors who served students in the prenursing major to forward the recruitment flyer by e-mail to their advisees. I also provided hard copies to

faculty advisors to distribute if advisees visited their offices. This process allowed me to reach all prenursing students, and it enhanced the response to recruitment. Successful students are likely to open an e-mail from an advisor with whom they have regular contact, but they may not notice a flyer posted on a bulletin board on the campus.

The recruitment flyer described the criteria for participation: (a) Latina student, (b) prenursing major, (c) successful completion of at least two semesters of college work, (d) GPA of 3.0 or higher, (e) making progress to apply to the nursing major by the fourth or fifth semester of college, (f) no prior withdrawals from courses due to academic difficulties, and (g) willingness to discuss academic experiences with me. The flyer stated that participation was entirely voluntary. Students who identified themselves as successful contacted me. The student and I then met to complete the informed consent process as described in the Ethical Protection of Participants section. During the student's consideration of the consent form, I answered any questions she had.

After the student signed the consent form, she and I confirmed her eligibility for participation. I asked the participant to open her online transcript in my presence in order to verify GPA, courses completed, and grades earned. I recorded standardized test scores such as SAT and ACT from the participant's records maintained by the director of the undergraduate program of nursing. I offered each participant the opportunity to be present when I recorded this data as well, although none of the participants chose to do so. The academic transcript information was recorded on the Participant Demographic Data form (Appendix D). This process was transparent to the participant and served to acknowledge her role as a coresearcher. It also opened a productive conversation with

each participant regarding her academic history. I encouraged each participant to think about memorable academic experiences in preparation for the first interview. This conversation served as the brief preinterview recommended by Moustakas (1994, p. 107) to verify suitability and willingness of each participant.

Once eligibility was confirmed, each student completed the Participant Demographic Data form. I offered each participant the opportunity to choose a fictitious name, but participants did not choose this option. Therefore, I labeled the form with the participant's number in order of recruitment. The participant's number was entered on a separate form on which the student recorded her real name, university identification number, e-mail address, and phone number (Appendix E). I secured these forms in a safe, separate from the other data collected, and I explained this process to each participant.

Seven students contacted me to volunteer for participation. Following completion of her informed consent, the first volunteer was found to have a GPA of less than 3. I thanked her for her time and her willingness to participate. As final semester exams were approaching, I encouraged the student to call back if her GPA was above 3 following submission of semester grades to her transcript. The student did not contact me again. Therefore, Volunteers 2 through 7 completed the interviews and will be referred to by their participant number based on order of consenting to participate. From this point forward, the term participants will be used to describe the successful Latina students who agreed to take part in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

I used semistructured interviews as recommended by Larkin et al. (2006) to create verbatim accounts for analysis. I asked each participant to complete two or three private interviews over a one- to three-month period of time. I met each interviewee at a time and place of her choosing. I traveled to one participant's apartment for her second audio taped interview. I met with participants in a conference room in the library for all other interviews. No one else was present during any of the interviews. Janesick (2004) emphasized the importance of logistical preparation in order to conduct the interview smoothly (pp. 73-74). I arrived ahead of time to ensure that the library conference room was configured appropriately and that the recording equipment was working. I took a few minutes to prepare upon arrival at Participant 2's apartment as well.

I began each interview by chatting informally for a few minutes to put the participant at ease as recommended by Moustakas (1994, p. 114). This conversation was followed by a reminder that the interview would be taped, a reminder that the participant had the right to withdraw or decline to answer certain questions, and a request to begin the interview. I thanked the interviewee for participating and reminded her that the purpose of the research was to learn more about how successful Latina students experience and respond to the academic challenges of prenursing courses. Following the recommendations of Rubin and Rubin (2005, pp. 115-116), I reminded the participant that she had valuable information to share based on her experiences as a student who successfully responded to the challenges of prerequisite nursing courses. I also explained that an academic challenge is a situation in which a student encounters new concepts and

information that are not readily or easily understood; such encounters require extra time
and effort on the part of the student in order to achieve long-term understanding and
success.

The introduction included the following description:

I'm interested in learning about how successful students respond to situations in
which they need to learn new and complicated information. As a successful
student, I believe that you have valuable information to share about your success
in prenursing courses. I'm especially interested in knowing about situations in
which you had to learn new and difficult information, possibly situations in which
the study habits that you had used successfully in the past didn't work, or in
which you needed to work harder than usual or ask for help from others.

Following the recommendations of Moustakas (1994, pp. 114-115), I encouraged the
participant to take a few minutes to think about the phenomenon and then to begin
describing the experience. I asked the initial broad question when the participant
indicated that she was ready.

Interview Question

I used the interview schedule (Appendix A) as a general guide for each interaction
and engaged in active listening throughout. Remembering that the participant is the
experiential expert, I did not adhere rigidly to the proposed questions. Each interview
moved in the direction that seemed most appropriate based on the participant's concerns.
Initially, I asked the following broad descriptive question of each interviewee:

I am interested in learning about how successful students experience academic

challenges in prenursing courses. Think of times when you encountered academic

challenges and tell me everything you can about those experiences, about what

feelings you had, what you thought, what you said, what you did and anything

else that is important to you about the experiences.

The use of one guiding question for each interview is congruent with the

recommendations of Creswell (2007, p. 61), Hatch (2002, p. 94), and Van Manen (1990,

p. 42) regarding phenomenological research.

I allowed the participant to speak freely, as long as the conversation related to the

phenomenon of experiencing and responding to academic challenges in prerequisite

nursing courses. Smith et al. (2009) noted that IPA interviews should be participant-led to

a certain extent, with the researcher following up on concerns raised by participants.

They emphasized that "unexpected turns" may bring up concepts that the researcher had

not anticipated needing to know about, and may offer rich data from the experiential

expert, the interviewee, who should be "given much leeway in taking the interview to

'the thing itself'" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 58). I attempted to allow each participant to self-

direct her interviews in the most informative direction.

Additional questions. Smith et al. (2009) noted that between six and 10 open

questions, along with additional probes and prompts will fill between 45 and 90 minutes

of conversation time (p. 60). Therefore, nine additional potential questions were proposed

for the tentative interview schedule, followed by possible probes and prompts. The

additional questions included structural questions, which may have been needed to

encourage the participant to reflect more deeply on the phenomenon. I adapted the nine

structural questions from Smith et al. (2009, p. 190) and from Moustakas (1994, p. 116).

Although it was not possible to plan the exact probes and prompts ahead of time, I often

simply repeated a participant's previous sentence, asked the participant to tell me a little

more about the topic, or used probing questions such as those recommended by Van

Manen (1990, pp. 67-68) to elicit additional information.

Structural and probing questions are listed in the Interview Schedule (Appendix

A). The order of questions varied in response to information shared by participants. I

sometimes asked additional questions about concepts that arose from the stories shared

by participants. Questions remained focused on the realm of experiences related to

encountering and responding to academic challenges.

Closure. I briefly summarized what had been discussed at the end of each

interview and asked if there was anything that the interviewee would like to add. I set up

the second interview appointment with each interviewee at the end of the first interview.

Finally, I thanked the participant again for her participation.

Subsequent interviews. The second interviews followed up on any issues

discussed during the initial conversation. In most cases I began the second interview by

asking the participant if she had thought of anything more to share since the first

interview. Then I read the opening research question again to offer the participant the

opportunity to share more. I always listened to the recording of the first interview prior to

interviewing a participant for a second time. Questions from the interview schedule that

were not addressed in the first interview were asked during the second interview along

with questions that arose in response to information shared by the participant in the first interview. Every participant brought up her family during the first interview, so I encouraged participants to talk about their families in all second interviews.

I contacted each participant by e-mail in September 2010 to offer the opportunity to participate in a private member-checking interview. Two participants agreed to return for member-checking. The member-checking interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes each. The two participants who met with me for member-checking confirmed that the themes and superordinate themes accurately reflected their lived experiences.

Data Analysis Procedures

Analysis of data began after the first interview. Smith (2007, pp. 5-6) and Smith et al. (2009, p. 64) described the hermeneutic circle as having two dimensions, which include the relationships between the part and the whole, as well as the dynamic between the researcher and the participant. I traveled around the hermeneutic circle from my world to that of the participant during data collection. Initially, I attempted to bracket fore-understandings and enter the world of the interviewee. Following engagement with the interviewee, I traveled back to my own understandings, which were changed as a result of the engagement with the participant. In this way, the bracketing, the data collection, and the analysis occurred simultaneously. The whole of the phenomenon was better understood as a result of looking at the parts, and each part was better understood within the context of the whole.

This continuing process of revisiting data, collecting new data, and conducting ongoing analysis is described by Smith (2007) as an iterative and inductive cycle (p. 6).

Polkinghorne (2005) also recommended using an iterative process when analyzing data, "moving from collection of data to analysis and back until the description is comprehensive" (p. 140). New questions were asked in subsequent interviews as a result of issues raised by participants in earlier interviews. Therefore, I listened to each interview prior to conducting the next interview with a new participant whenever possible as recommended by Smith et al. (2009, p. 66).

I taped each interview using a Sony IC MP3 recorder with a digital voice editing program (ICD-PX720), and I downloaded the interviews to my private laptop, which was secured in my home. I wrote brief notes regarding main points, key phrases, issues to explore further, and participant body language during each interview as recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 111) and Spradley (1979, p. 74). I filled in additional details immediately following the interview. I maintained a journal throughout the process, noting any personal feelings, thoughts, and potential biases. I also kept a list of possible concepts to review in the literature based on issues that arose during the interviews, but I did not return to the literature until the final phase of analysis and discussion.

I began transcribing each interview within 24 hours whenever possible, using the feature that allowed the recording to be played at 50% speed and paused as necessary. I listened to each initial audio taped interview at least once in entirety prior to the second interview with a given participant. At this time, I made notes about issues to readdress in second interviews based on information shared by participants during their first interviews. I spent approximately 10 to 12 hours transcribing each interview, and I listened to each interview two or three times in entirety during the transcription process.

The time spent on each transcription allowed me to engage with the data through each participant's voice. I proofread each transcribed interview against the recording to ensure accuracy. This listening while reading allowed me to become immersed in the data and offered the first opportunity for analysis of data from the transcribed interview.

Analysis Steps for IPA Research

Following transcription, I conducted the interpretative phenomenological analysis according to the recommendations of Smith et al. (2009), following the steps of: (a) reading and rereading, (b) initial noting, (c) developing emergent themes, (d) searching for connections across emergent themes, (e) moving to the next case, and (f) looking for patterns across cases. Hahn (2008) provided guidance for the development of tables and use of tools in order to organize data and complete documentation of the analysis using Microsoft Word.

Reading and rereading. I listened to the audiotapes again during the initial reading of each final typed transcript in order to immerse myself in the spoken words and inflection of each participant. I entered initial thoughts and questions at this time, and I developed a general sense of each interview. Following the initial reading and rereading, I compared the notes taken during the interview to the transcript itself to check for accuracy.

I then reviewed each transcription a second time, making memos in the margins of the working copy. Memos included thoughts and ideas to pursue as well as *notable quotes* found in the transcripts (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 205). I highlighted interesting

words, phrases, and explanations, as well as phrases that occurred on more than one occasion.

      Initial noting. I created tables of each transcription. During the initial noting phase, I made three types of exploratory comments about the text and entered them in a column to the right of the transcript. Descriptive comments highlighted thoughts, feelings, and experiences that were important to the participant. Linguistic comments noted things such as repetition, pauses, hesitancy, ability to articulate thoughts, laughter, changes in tense, metaphors, and use of pronouns. Smith et al. (2009, p. 88) recommended analyzing figures of speech during linguistic analysis, and noted that metaphors may link participant descriptions to deeper concepts. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), repeated metaphors "might reflect important cultural themes" (p. 213). Therefore, I looked closely for metaphors and other figures of speech.

      Following the descriptive and linguistic comments, I entered conceptual comments. As IPA allows the researcher to consider personal and professional experiences during the conceptual commenting step of analysis and interpretation, I traveled along the hermeneutic circle at this point, considering new information within the context of fore-understandings and developing a new understanding of the phenomenon as a result. This part of the commenting was more interrogative and attempted to consider data more abstractly in order to move beyond superficial descriptions. I considered possible conceptual meanings, keeping the participant's words at the forefront of the interpretation. I explored many of the conceptual questions that arose in the initial interviews with the given participant during the second interviews.

Some of the conceptual questions were not answered, but they assisted me to think more deeply about each participant's thoughts and feelings.

I also used *deconstruction* (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 230; Smith et al., 2009, p. 90), a method of taking the words out of the expected context, in order to be open to meanings other than those which are expected during the conceptual commenting step. I read the participant's statements backwards during this process. The process of deconstruction highlighted physical verbs such as "smacked," "pushed," and "threw," which otherwise may not have been noticed.

In most cases, I entered descriptive and linguistic comments simultaneously during reviews of each transcript, as descriptive and linguistic comments often led to conceptual comments and questions. I highlighted descriptive, linguistic, and interpretative comments with different colors to differentiate between them in the column. My exploratory comments became part of the data set.

Developing emergent themes. At this point, I considered the words of the participant and my comments simultaneously, and the description and interpretation came together. According to the hermeneutic circle, each individual piece of data was considered within the whole, and the whole was considered in relation to the individual parts. I used all of the data elements, including my comments, to derive the essential themes of the interview. Smith et al. (2009) noted, "Themes are usually expressed as phrases which speak to the psychological essence of the piece and contain enough particularity to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual" (p. 92). Themes reflected both the thoughts and words of the participant and my interpretations.

Following the initial noting, I coded all sections of text that spoke to the essence of the study. Drawing from the grounded theory writings of Glaser (1978) and Charmaz (2006), Hahn (2008) recommended the use of gerunds in order to stay close to the experiences of participants when coding sections of text that serve to answer the research question. Charmaz warned that coding with nouns turns experiences into topics and stated, "We gain a strong sense of action and sequence with gerunds" (p. 49). Therefore, I used gerunds, or words ending in "ing," when coding, identifying themes, and developing superordinate themes in order to keep the analysis close to the perspectives of the participants.

I organized the data according to the recommendations of Smith et al. (2009) and Hahn (2008) to facilitate the analysis process. I placed each transcribed interview within a table, which included a column for the interview transcription; a column for my exploratory comments, memos, possible notable quotes, and metaphors; a column for level one codes; and a numerical column, which assisted in finding specific areas of the text. I organized level one codes in a table of authorities; I placed possible notable quotes, metaphors, and context memos in a table of contents; and I developed an index of frequently used or notable words and phrases, as recommended by Hahn. An excerpt from a transcribed interview table is provided in Appendix F.

I entered level one codes, along with the portions of text that supported each code, into a Microsoft Access qualitative research form (QR_Database.mdb) accessed at this website: qrtips.com/chapter7. The form was created and described by Hahn (2008). I also typed all level one codes into a Microsoft Word graphic representation that allowed

visualization and sorting to cluster codes into themes. I then entered themes into the

Microsoft Access qualitative research form. I repeatedly referred back to the interview

text throughout this process, changing the wording of themes and reorganizing codes and

themes to achieve the best fit for the data. I carried out the analysis steps described above

with each interview transcript. The two interviews for each participant were analyzed

independently for level one codes and themes and then together for the development of

superordinate themes.

  Searching for connections across emergent themes. I next considered both

transcripts for a given participant simultaneously and organized themes into

superordinate themes. Organization and reorganization of codes, themes, and

superordinate themes continued throughout the process, using the datasheet view of the

Microsoft Access qualitative research form, and the Microsoft Word graphic

representation to visualize similarities and differences. The Microsoft Access datasheet

view proved to be the most helpful for me, as it allowed efficient and rapid sorting by

level one codes, themes, and superordinate themes throughout the analysis. Sorting and

re-sorting allowed me to consider multiple permutations of relationships between level

one codes, themes, and superordinate themes. I completed this process independently for

each of the six participants as recommended by Smith et al. (2009). Using the Microsoft

Access datasheet view also facilitated comparison of data between participants.

  I clustered related themes under a superordinate theme using the process of

abstraction. Polarization joined themes that opposed or contrasted with one another as

recommended by Smith et al. (2009, pp. 96-97). I examined connections between themes

from the context in which they arose as well as their function within the transcript. I

noted the frequency with which a theme occurred within the transcript, although the

number of times it arose did not necessarily reflect its relative importance.

I downloaded the Microsoft Access datasheet to create a table of level one codes,

themes, superordinate themes, and the supporting transcript data for each participant.

Finally, I summarized the findings for a given participant in paragraph form and finalized

the graphic representation as recommended by Smith et al. (2009, p. 99), prior to moving

on to the next participant. I developed both concurrently in order to determine

relationships between themes and superordinate themes using written words and visual

representations. Considering relationships between level one codes, themes, and

superordinate themes through simultaneous use of the graphic representation, the written

description, and the Microsoft Access datasheet increased my awareness of multiple

connections across themes and superordinate themes. In other words, many level one

codes supported more than one theme within more than one superordinate theme. This

final step ensured that each participant was initially considered individually, while

bracketing out information about other participants.

Moving to the next case. Smith et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of

bracketing the information in prior transcripts when considering subsequent transcripts in

order to allow new themes to emerge free of influence from previous ones (p. 100). Once

again I followed the hermeneutic circle: bracketing fore-understandings, engaging with

the new data, and then looking at the parts within the whole and considering the whole in

relationship to the parts. I therefore considered the transcripts for each new participant

independently, following the process described above for developing level one codes and themes prior to entering the data into Microsoft Access and considering it with data from other participants. After entering the data into Microsoft Access, I assessed the themes for a given participant to determine whether they fit appropriately into one of the previously developed superordinate themes.

Looking for patterns across cases. The graphic representations constructed while looking for connections between themes within each individual interview were all placed on a surface. I looked for connections across the interviews, using steps similar to those used when looking for connections within the interviews. Similarly, I looked for the presence of contradictory or discrepant findings between cases. Themes that arose with the highest frequency and from the most salient data across interviews were noted. Finally, I constructed a table of superordinate themes and the themes nested within them.

Methods to Address Trustworthiness

I acknowledged a number of possible limitations in section 1. The findings rest on the ability of participants to access, interpret, and accurately describe their lived experiences to the researcher. Polkinghorne (2005) emphasized that self-reports were not true mirrored reflections:

> Although self-report evidence is necessary and valuable for inquiry about human experience, it is not to be misconstrued as mirrored reflections of experience. People do not have complete access to their experiences. The capacity to be aware of or to recollect one's experiences is intrinsically limited. People do not have a clear window into their inner life. (p. 139)

Additionally, some "information and nuance is lost when oral data are transcribed into written text" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 139). Larkin et al. (2006) echoed this concern, and acknowledged that "the analytic process cannot ever achieve a genuinely first-person account–the account is always constructed by participant and researcher" (p. 104). I encouraged interviewees to provide detailed descriptions and conscientiously followed the steps delineated above in order to offer as accurate an account as possible of each participant's experience. Also, I listened to each recording three or four times to become immersed in the data. As noted above, two of the participants completed a member-checking interview, which enhanced the credibility of the findings.

As noted in section 1, the backyard nature of the research may have threatened the credibility of the findings, translational competence may have limited what the participants felt a need to share with me, and participants may have been contaminated if they shared information with one another. I used a number of the strategies recommended by Creswell (2003) to enhance the credibility of the research. I spent prolonged time in the field (Creswell, 2003, p. 196) by conducting multiple interviews and engaging with the data over several months. I kept a journal and reflected on any biases, interests, or preconceived notions in an ongoing manner, in an effort to promote reflexivity, or self-awareness (Creswell, 2003, p. 182; Creswell, 2007, p. 11). I also compared data between participants. Polkinghorne (2005) noted:

> Multiple participants serve as a kind of triangulation on the experience, locating its core meaning by approaching it through different accounts. Triangulation does not serve to verify a particular account but to allow the researcher to move beyond

a single view of the experience. The use of multiple participants serves to deepen

the understanding of the investigated experience; it is not for the purpose of

making claims about the distribution of the experience in a population. (p. 140)

The use of multiple interviews with each participant offered the opportunity to compare

data between conversations as well.

I used the strategies of presenting negative or discrepant information, and peer

debriefing (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). Participant statements that ran contrary to the overall

themes will be noted in section 4. My chair provided consultation and reviewed and

scrutinized the study with me. Additionally, I attempted to provide a "rich, thick

description" of the lived experiences (Creswell, 2003, p. 196) of the participants, using

verbatim quotes to capture the essence. I conscientiously followed the steps related to

participant protection and IPA as described above.

Finally, I acknowledge that students who agree to participate in multiple

interviews are not necessarily representative of students who do not. This

phenomenological study attempted to provide a detailed understanding of the experiences

of the participants. The findings were placed within the context of culture and the given

setting. Although the resulting report adds to the body of knowledge related to this

student population and may be helpful to faculty members serving Latina prenursing

student populations, the results are not necessarily generalizable to other groups of

students. Rather, the findings may be considered by readers within the context of

theoretical transferability as recommended by Smith et al. (2009, p. 51).

Summary

Section 3 described the methodology for this qualitative research study. The analysis phase described above is followed by a report of the findings in section 4. Larkin et al. (2006) noted, "The second aim of the IPA perspective is to develop a more overtly interpretative analysis, which positions the initial 'description' in relation to a wider social, cultural, and perhaps even theoretical context" (p. 104). In section 5, I will discuss and place the findings from the data within the conceptual framework introduced in section 1. The framework includes culture, the need for provision of culturally competent care to the growing U.S. Hispanic population, the Hispanic nursing shortage within the overall nursing shortage, current research on Latina undergraduate students, and the theoretical literature related to concepts of self-efficacy, personal achievement goal orientation, and academic help-seeking behavior.

Section 4: Results

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of successful Latina students when they encountered the academic challenges of prerequisite nursing courses. The phenomena of interest were responses of successful Latina students to academic challenges. Success was defined as a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, while making progress to complete prerequisite courses in five semesters or less. Section 4 will report the findings of the study.

Generation, Gathering, and Recording of Data

Following receipt of IRB approval from the university of interest and from Walden University, I began recruitment efforts as detailed in section 3. Seven individuals consented to participate in the study. Five prospective participants contacted me in response to having received a recruitment flyer from their faculty advisor, one contacted me in response to hearing about the study in her microbiology class, and one reported that she heard about the study through a friend. Prospective participants contacted me by cell phone, e-mail, or in person. During the initial meetings, each prospective participant completed the consent form and then opened her online transcript and reviewed it with me. One of the prospective participants did not meet the inclusion criteria and did not participate further in the study. The demographic characteristics of participants were described in section 1.

I conducted and audio taped 12 interviews between April 16 and May 25, 2010. Each of the six participants completed two audio taped private interviews with me. One

week elapsed between the first and second interviews for three of the participants. In the other three cases, a period of four, five, and 25 days elapsed between the first and second interviews. In all cases, the participants and I worked around school and work schedules to find a mutually acceptable time to meet. All but one interview took place in a library conference room on the university campus. I conducted the second interview with one of the participants at her apartment. Every participant arrived on time for her interviews as scheduled, despite the fact that many of the interviews occurred a short time before, during, or after final exams for the spring semester. The interviews lasted between 40 and 93 minutes each, for a total audio taped interview time of 13.7 hours. Participants interviewed for a total of 106 to 178 minutes each, divided between their first and second audio taped interviews.

I took brief notes throughout each interview regarding content and participant demeanor. I also wrote brief notes regarding initial thoughts and impressions immediately following each interview. I maintained the personal impressions in a notebook, and did not refer to them until the analysis was completed.

I listened to each initial audio taped interview at least once in entirety prior to the second interview with a given participant. At this time, I made notes about issues to readdress in second interviews based on information shared by participants during their first interviews. In many cases, I began transcribing the first interview prior to conducting the second interview. I spent approximately 10 to 12 hours transcribing each interview, I listened to each interview two or three times in entirety during the transcription process,

and I listened again when beginning analysis of the transcript. The act of listening

allowed me to engage with the data and the participant.

Data Tracking Systems

Following transcription, I conducted the interpretative phenomenological analysis

according to the recommendations of Smith et al. (2009), following the steps of: (a)

reading and rereading, (b) initial noting, (c) developing emergent themes, (d) searching

for connections across emergent themes, (e) moving to the next case, and (f) looking for

patterns across cases. The analysis process was described in section 3. Hahn (2008)

provided guidance for the development of tables and use of tools in order to complete

documentation of the analysis using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Access.

Creation of Transcribed Interview Tables

I created tables of each interview transcription. During the initial noting phase, I

made three types of exploratory comments about the text and entered them in a column to

the right of the transcript. Descriptive comments highlighted thoughts, feelings, and

experiences that were important to the participant. Linguistic comments noted things such

as repetition, pauses, hesitancy, ability to articulate thoughts, laughter, changes in tense,

metaphors, and use of pronouns. Interpretative or conceptual comments often questioned

the meaning of the participant's words within the context of my professional experience

or the theoretical literature. Interpretative comments were made after the initial analysis

in order to allow the participant's lived experience to come through before relating it to

my experience or the theoretical literature. I highlighted descriptive, linguistic, and

interpretative comments with different colors to differentiate between them in the column.

I created two columns to the left of the interview transcription. Level one codes were entered into the column to the immediate left of the transcribed interview next to the data that supported each code. The column at the far left was numbered to allow ease of finding the participant's words in a given transcript. I centralized all level one codes in a table of authorities at the beginning of each individual transcription. Notable quotes and context memos were centralized in a table of contents at the beginning of each transcription. Words used repeatedly by the participant and words of special interest appeared in an index at the beginning of each table. I created tables using the recommendations of Hahn (2008), who offered guidelines for using Microsoft Word during the process of qualitative research. An excerpt from a transcribed interview table is presented in Appendix F.

Use of Microsoft Access and Creation of Graphic Representations

Following creation of the transcribed interview tables, I entered all level one codes into Microsoft Access as recommended by Hahn (2008), along with the data supporting each code. I also entered the codes for each participant into a Microsoft Word table. Creation of this *graphic representation* (Smith et al., 2009, p. 99) for each participant allowed me to visually move codes using abstraction and polarization as described in section 3. This process assisted me to cluster codes into themes. As discussed by Smith et al. (2009), "The themes reflect not only the participant's original words and thoughts but also the analyst's interpretation" (p. 92). Following development

of themes for a given participant, I returned to Microsoft Access and entered themes. I then downloaded the table of findings from Access and typed a summary of the findings for a given participant. I completed this process individually for a given participant's interviews before moving on to coding the next participant's interviews.

Combining the two approaches was effective for me. The process of creating graphic representations for each participant allowed visualization and movement of codes and themes, and the use of Microsoft Access allowed me to efficiently organize, reorganize, and move rapidly between data of one participant to the next. I traveled between the two processes repeatedly during the analysis phase in order to compare data between participants.

I used the same process to organize themes into superordinate themes (Smith et al., 2009, p. 96). I then downloaded tables of codes, themes, and superordinate themes along with the supporting data. I used Access filters to download a table of findings for each individual participant as well as a table of findings that compiled all findings for the six participants. See Appendix G for an example of a graphic representation constructed for an individual participant. See Appendix H for an excerpt of compiled information downloaded from Microsoft Access into a Microsoft Word table.

The analysis process continued throughout the writing of section 4. I continued to look at the whole as a sum of the parts and to consider the parts within in the whole as recommended by Smith et al. (2009). During the process of writing, I occasionally found that individual codes best fit into a different theme or even superordinate theme when considered within the whole. In an effort to remain true to each participant's story, I

moved data only when it appeared clear that the writing process had allowed me to understand more clearly the individual parts within the whole.

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Research Study Findings

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The findings section begins with a brief academic description of the six participants followed by an introduction to the seven superordinate themes that emerged across the interviews. A synopsis of each superordinate theme, which includes supporting data, follows. Section 4 concludes with a summary.

Introduction to Superordinate Themes

All participants had completed between two and four semesters of prenursing courses at the time of participation. Although they were successful, all described academic challenges. Their lived experiences of these challenges went beyond academic course work. Participants shared poignant stories about their parents who did not have the opportunity to pursue higher education, stories of life-threatening illnesses of family members that had influenced the decision to become a nurse, and stories of traumatic life events that they themselves experienced. All described how these life experiences played a role in their educational life and response to academic challenges.

I assigned more than 500 level one codes to items of data that spoke to the overall research question within the 12 transcribed interview tables. Between 72 and 130 level one codes emerged for each participant. The codes formed 37 themes that arose across interviews. Some codes and many themes applied to more than one participant. The themes clustered into seven superordinate themes common to all participants. After I

entered all supporting data into Microsoft Access, the resulting downloaded table of codes, themes, superordinate themes, and supporting data was more than 300 pages and 100,000 words in length.

Seven superordinate themes common to all participants emerged from the data. As noted by Smith et al. (2009), "Different participants may manifest the same superordinate theme in different themes" (p. 107). Consistent with the writings of Smith et al., a given superordinate theme looked different for each participant. However, each participant's words supported each of the superordinate themes. Additionally, I found multiple cross connections across superordinate themes. In other words, superordinate themes were closely related to one another, and in many cases a given theme supported the existence of more than one superordinate theme.

Similarly, a particular code best aligned with one theme in some cases and with another theme in different cases. For example, the code of feeling angry aligned best with experiencing anxiety for three participants, yet it aligned best with experiencing frustration for two other participants. In both cases, however, data coded as feeling angry supported the superordinate theme of recognizing emotional response.

The following pages present each theme within the superordinate theme with which it aligns best, and the most dominant cross connections are addressed. Smith et al. (2009) offered a general guideline that themes significant to 50% or more of the participants in an IPA study be considered as relevant. However, they cautioned that sometimes a theme may be significant despite arising in only one participant's story. In

keeping with that guidance, themes relevant to at least three participants are presented. In a few cases a theme relevant to fewer participants is discussed and noted as such.

Superordinate themes included: (a) facing academic challenges, (b) recognizing emotional response, (c) seeking help, (d) transcending academic challenges, (e) owning knowledge, (f) persevering, and (g) living out values and beliefs. All superordinate themes helped to address the overall research question: What are the lived experiences of successful Latina students as they encounter academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

In an effort to remain true to the participants' lived experiences, the findings are organized and presented within the superordinate themes that arose from the interviews. Each superordinate theme is followed by the research subquestions to which it best speaks. The data most salient to each theme are presented as well. Participants are referred to by their assigned number. For example, Participant 2 is called P2.

Facing Academic Challenges

All participants described facing academic challenges. This superordinate theme served to answer the following subquestions:

1. What academic challenges do successful Latina students experience in prerequisite nursing courses?

2. What factors affect successful Latina students' experiences of and responses to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

3. How do successful Latina students respond to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

Facing academic challenges encompassed five themes that arose from 73 codes. Themes

included: (a) recognizing an academic challenge, (b) experiencing academic awareness,

(c) questioning self, (d) recognizing conflicting obligations, and (e) recognizing

ineffective learning strategies. Themes common to all participants that allowed them to

face academic challenges included recognizing an academic challenge and experiencing

academic awareness. Additionally, all participants experienced one or more of the

following: (a) recognizing ineffective learning strategies, (b) recognizing conflicting

obligations, and (c) questioning self. Individual themes supporting the superordinate

theme are presented in Table 1 and are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

Table 1

Facing Academic Challenges: Supporting Themes

Supporting theme	Number experiencing	Participants
Recognizing an academic challenge	6	All
Experiencing academic awareness	6	All
Recognizing conflicting obligations	5	P2, P4, P5, P6, P7
Recognizing ineffective study strategies	4	P3, P5, P6, P7
Questioning self	4	P2, P3, P4, P7

Biochemistry courses were noted to be an academic challenge by every

participant. Several participants had earned their lowest academic grade in Biochemistry I

or Biochemistry II. Grades in biochemistry courses ranged from A to C+ among

participants. One participant achieved a D+ the first time she took Biochemistry I during

the semester immediately following a traumatic life event. She was working more than 30 hours a week in a management position and was taking three demanding science courses that semester. She repeated the course and received an A, maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.42. All other participants had achieved a C or better in all courses, and no one had withdrawn from a course to maintain her GPA. One participant described her experience in a biochemistry course as follows:

> That has been the only class where I [pause], where I felt it was gonna keep me from getting into nursing school, and that really scared me. And I think, um, I kind of overwhelmed myself with those feelings, of "I can't do it, cuz it's too hard." But um, well apparently I made it, so [laughed] that's good. (P2)

Participants also described nutrition, anatomy & physiology, and statistics courses as challenging. In addition to course work, participants noted challenges related to time management, personal obligations, and study habits that affected their academic experiences.

Recognizing an academic challenge. Several participants recognized an academic challenge when they did poorly on an exam. Others recognized a challenge based on quiz grades that were not what they had expected. In P2's words, "It must have been a little after half way through the semester that I realized, 'Uh oh, I'm still not making as good of grades that I would like on the quizzes.'" Three participants recognized that they had difficulty focusing or didn't fully understand or comprehend course content despite studying. P2 felt challenged by the college classroom environment and recalled:

When I went to Biological Chemistry II, it was a completely different professor, a different way of teaching, and it was just a bigger classroom, less time to ask questions, and [pause] not that he discouraged questions, but he answered your questions with other questions, and that was very difficult for me. . . .I did have to read a lot more on my own, and I still didn't understand a lot of things. (P2)

P5 reported thinking that she understood the biochemistry content but realized she needed to spend more time on it after doing poorly on a couple of quizzes. P4 described her biochemistry challenge as follows:

We'd study together. We'd, you know, do a study session, we did everything we could, and we used all of the material that he presented to us in class, but it just didn't seem like, any of it was working. We'd study for hours and maybe even days and it just did not work. (P4)

P4 also reported experiencing a challenge in Anatomy and Physiology:

I didn't do as well as I wanted on my first anatomy test. I studied, I read the chapter, I looked over my notes, I made flashcards, and I got to the test and I just like blanked out, because there's just so much you have to remember. (P4)

Using physically violent verbs, P3 vividly described her recognized need to overcome test taking fears:

Um, when I got into, my fre-, freshman year here, um, in college, my first exam I took, I got a 60 on it. I got an F on it. And um, went home crying, freaked out, um, and I think at that point it hit me, like, "Oh my God. This is going to be a burden that, that has, you know, been on my shoulders, but is now affecting me,

psychologically, um, emotionally, and of course it's showing in my, you know in my exams. And I think at that time it kind of just smacked me across the face. It was like, "I need ta snap out of it. I need ta find a way ta overcome this, because it's gonna take me down, and it's gonna take me down hard." Just knowing the fact that, um, just knowing the fact that a lot of, of the classes that I was taking, it was only based on exam grades. So if I bombed all the exams, I was just gonna fail the class. And I don't think. . .I could of taken that. So I think that was my motivation to try and, beat it, just to try and, smack it back in the face, and, yeah, and get rid of that fear. (P3)

All participants described recognizing their academic challenges. This recognition was accompanied by a developing sense of academic awareness within each of the participants.

Experiencing academic awareness. Participants described an awareness of the expectations and challenges inherent to the college academic experience. The theme of experiencing academic awareness emerged from their descriptions. All participants recalled that they had expected college to be difficult and that their high school study habits would no longer suffice. Yet this expectation was coupled with surprise at the level of difficulty for three of the participants. The other three participants mentioned that although prior experiences in high school advanced placement, honors, or dual credit courses prepared them, there was still a period of adjustment. P5 described this process as follows:

Another challenge was my studying habits. I had to completely change those. Um, I had already been in some AP classes and dual credit classes before, but again the teacher would give us time in class and then here, I mean, it's college, obviously. You're on your own. (P5)

Participants noted that in college they needed to understand the underlying concepts when working problems or memorizing details as discussed by Participant 7, "The thing with biological chemistry is, it's not only math, it's understanding everything behind it" (P7). P4 came to college expecting that her first semester would not be easy and would require a lot of hard work and dedication. She quickly recognized that her college science courses required the most adjustment on her part:

All the other ones were kinda like basic classes that I kinda still remember, things from high school. But, those are like the main classes that kinda showed me, like; you're not in high school anymore. You really hafta, you know, it's not gonna be, "Oh, if I study for an hour, like I'll get by." (P4)

Participants described developing a functional situational awareness that assisted them to face academic challenges effectively. Using a physically aggressive verb as did P3, Participant 7 recalled this process as follows:

No, because all through high school I, I really didn't study, but I would pull off really good grades. Um, so when I came here it was kind of hard. It kind of hit me in the face. You need to study. You need to focus, because this is a totally different atmosphere. It's not the same thing as high school. (P7)

P4 described development of her academic awareness in Anatomy and

Physiology:

> And then, after that I was just like, determined I wasn't gonna get a bad grade
>
> again, and I didn't. I just studied. More and more I realized that, like just studying
>
> for an hour isn't gonna help, like you have to study constantly, like weeks in
>
> advance if you can. Um, cuz the teachers, they don't really wait for you ta
>
> understand the material, they just kind of, like, move at their own pace. They
>
> don't move at your pace, so you have to keep up. If you can't keep up, it's like
>
> really overwhelming and stressful, cuz that's probably like the main course. . .that
>
> you want to do well in so you can get into nursing school. (P4)

P6 verbalized a developing sense of academic awareness when she did poorly on quizzes

in Biochemistry I. Although each individual quiz had a limited effect on her overall

course performance, she recognized that the quiz grades would add up and also served as

a barometer of her current understanding of course material:

> We took our first, we took a few quizzes and I remember they were pretty easy,
>
> but then I wasn't doing really well on them. And he would drop a few quizzes, so
>
> I remember, I think he dropped three. And I remember that I started getting like
>
> 50s and 40s and, and I was like, "Well those will be dropped." And then I would
>
> study more and then I would only get 70s, and I started getting, like, more than
>
> three low grades and I was kinda like freaking out. (P6)

Participants also described awareness that encountering and responding to the academic challenges was part of their growth process. This awareness was illustrated best by P4:

It was very boring, but in the end I just had to read a lot, and it was not fun at all. But, you have to get used to that. You can't do everything you wanna do. It's gonna take work. It's not gonna be easy. Um, we get frustrated, we get upset, while we're in school, but in the end it'll all pay off, cuz you ended up doing really well in the class even though it annoys you to read and it annoys you to do that paper that you don't want to do. In the end, you'll have your degree, you'll have a job. So it's just one step closer to being more successful. Not just with nursing, but in life, cuz you learn, um, the concept of life that life isn't always gonna be what you want it to be. You just have to, like, deal with it. There's nothing you can do about it, only embrace the fact that you're in school, you're doing something with your life. So, those are like, the biggest things for me, I think. Just my anatomy and chemistry classes are the hardest classes I've ever had to take. (P4)

Participants' descriptions of academic awareness reflected insight into their experiences. Although surprised by the level of challenge, P2 noted that the uncertainty was functional for her. She stated that if she had known what to expect, the experience may not have "had the same effect" on her:

If everyone knew what was gonna happen to them, then we wouldn't, not necessarily not go that extra mile, but if, if you don't, like say you're in a

hardship, and you're doing everything you possibly can to get through it, you're

gonna learn a lot about yourself, and um, you're gonna, um, push your limits in a

way, and know that you can do more than what you thought you could. But if you

knew that. . .that specific certain something was gonna happen, then you wouldn't

go that extra mile. You would never know, like where your limit, your true limit

would be, as they say. And, you just wouldn't learn about yourself, like what you

truly can do, if you truly want. (P2)

All participants expressed awareness that acceptance into the nursing program

was not guaranteed, four participants described grades as important to the selection

process, and four mentioned sensing competition:

Well, I guess, I was scared that I was gonna get a C, I mean I have a, a pretty

good GPA, and I know that, like a C can drop it dramatically, and I felt like I had

worked so hard in my other classes that I deserved a high GPA. (P6)

And just that determination that I have that I have to do, that I have to get, you

know, a good grade in it, cuz I had so much, um, how do you say, I had so much

that it would affect. Because I knew if I didn't do well, my GPA would go down.

And if my GPA would go down, I would have a less chance of getting into

nursing school. So I think that's what my motivation was, and I think that's why

my transcript scores are pretty good, I think. (P3)

If you can handle everything, you will be successful. If you can't then [pause],

I'm not saying you won't be successful, but it will take you longer to finish school

or finish your prerequisites to get into nursing school, cuz I know that it's really

competitive which is something I'm really nervous about, so my second semester

I really wanted to do a lot better in all of my classes because I know how

important, like your grades are, and you know it's really competitive. (P4)

Um, so I started really thinking like, "I can't be getting these Cs. I can't be getting these

Ds, because how am I gonna get into nursing school? How am I gonna graduate? How

am I gonna pass the NCLEX when I get into nursing school?" (P7)

All participants described comparing their performance to that of others and

having a sense of their academic standing and performance in comparison to peers. In

some cases, participants reported that this awareness discouraged them, others reported

that it encouraged them, and in all cases their awareness served to enhance their academic

performance. P4 stated that she had difficulty with comprehension and that it took her

longer to learn things than it did others. P3 became discouraged when comparing herself

to others who she believed studied less and performed better. P2 and P6 described

comparing their performance to that of their friends within the study groups they

organized:

And I, it kinda felt good not to be the one that, that was way at the bottom,

because it did get frustrating at times, when people would ask very simple

questions, and like, "We're halfway through the semester, and you're really gonna

ask that?" But, I mean, we were there to help each other, and so. . . .Um hmm.

And I just didn't want to be that one person holding them back. (P2)

I guess, I know I mentioned that I had a study group, and it wasn't, I guess there

wasn't really competition, but it, you know it always felt nice ta, you know, do

better [smiles]. I remember one time I got, I think I got like the best grade in the class on a test. I don't know if that was on Biochem I or II. And like, I'm not the kind of person to be like, "Oh my God, like I got it. I got a 90!" and. . . .I don't really like to. . .show off. Like I feel bad for people who don't do as good, but I guess it's like. . .competition. . .getting into nursing school. . .so many people applied, but only a certain few get in, so you have to be competitive. (P6)

Recognizing ineffective learning strategies. Four participants described recognizing and changing ineffective learning strategies. These included not reading the textbook, receiving inaccurate information regarding course work from peers, not studying enough, memorizing, cramming, and not studying consistently. This recognition came early in the semester for P5:

I guess when we started getting the unannounced quizzes. And. . .at the beginning I would study after, after dinner, so it was already 8:00, 9:00, 10:00. And I'd study, and I was basically just cramming it all in. And after getting a couple of low grades on quizzes and things like that, I figured I needed to spend more time on my work. (P5)

Other participants recognized their ineffective learning strategies later in the semester. At least two participants did not fully appreciate the impact of ineffective studying strategies until their second semester of challenging courses. Astutely, three participants differentiated between memorizing and truly learning the material:

My first test I took I got a 60, flat. Um, that test I was, um, I studied for, but I think the way that I approached it, didn't make me comfortable with it, with the

material. Um, as well as with other tests, tests that I have taken and also gotten a low score on. Um, it was, I would have to say, it wasn't, was because I really, really wasn't sure of the ma-, really wasn't comfortable, personally, um, with the material. And it didn't necessarily have to be the entire, the entire, um, bulk of what was actually gonna be on the test, but certain parts. (P3)

P3 subsequently described being personally comfortable with material as follows:

At the end of Biochem I, um, I was starting to get, I was starting to understand, uh, what the concept was. I was starting ta, um, understand the material. Um, but I think I was just memorizing it. I think that's, it was kind of a blinded understanding, just that I thought I was getting it, but I really wasn't. And ah, it was proven again when my first exam in Biochem II that I really didn't know what was going on. (P3)

The way I was studying, I was just looking at the notes and reading what was on the notes. I was just scanning what I had written, not really, learning the concept of it, learning why this equaled to this. Or, you know I was just kind of, basically scanning through it and memorizing it, and I thought that if I memorized it I felt comfortable enough to pass, and which wasn't right [laughed], which wasn't true. (P3)

P6 and P7 also recognized that memorizing was ineffective for them. P7 shared her awakening understanding of memorization:

So I would only study those specific things. I wouldn't study, um, the things that would lead up to those specifics. I wouldn't know any of the background

information. And, that's what I did for, before the third exam came along. All I

did was scan. . . .just study those little, those specific things. But even at that. . .I

didn't know too much of it. So, when that third exam came along, I failed it. Um,

I memorized the formulas, but memorizing does not help if you do not know how

to use them. Um, and that's what I realized after the third exam. (P7)

P6 acknowledged that she might resort to memorization as a practical strategy if

pressed for time right before an exam, "I mean if it came down to it, and I didn't study, I

mean I would be like, memorizing" (P6). P4 was similarly honest about memorization:

You don't want to just memorize things, you wanna be able to understand them,

but when it's last minute and you know you don't really understand the material,

you wanna just memorize things. Just memorize things that will help you on the

test, like if you memorize certain letters in the word, then you'll remember it

when you see it on the test. (P4)

Yet both P4 and P6 recognized memorization to be an ineffective strategy for true

learning. P6 acknowledged:

Well, me-, for me memorizing is what happens when you study the night before a

test, or when you wait 'til the night before. That's, memorizing for me is like, I

guess, equivalent to procrastination? (P6)

P7 reported not fully recognizing the importance of studying throughout the

semester until she took a final, as she had always done well with sporadic studying in the

past:

So, when the final came along, I just, I got all of my exams, I did that review, and

um, I studied, but when that final came along, I realized that the final is not to

cram everything in one week or in two days, or in one day. The final, the, the

objective of the final is to see how much you've learned throughout the semester.

It's a review of all the things that you've learned, and I didn't realize that until I

took that final, because that final was cumulative, as most of our finals are. (P7)

Recognizing conflicting obligations. Five participants recognized outside forces

that impacted their academic performance. They reported conflicting obligations related

to family, academic course load, course schedule, work, or social relationships. Their

management of conflicts will be discussed in relationship to the theme of balancing

within the superordinate theme of transcending academic challenges.

Questioning self. Finally, four of the participants reported questioning

themselves as part of their experience of facing academic challenges. P4 questioned her

choice of major, stating, "I felt a little overwhelmed, like I cannot believe, what did I get

myself into? Is this really what I want to do?" Likewise, P7 stated, "And um, after that

class I thought, "Whoa, is nursing really for me? Is this really what I wanna do?" (P7).

The theme of questioning self also took the form of questioning personal learning

strategies, questioning personal learning abilities, wondering what to do, and wondering

if I can do this. P7 summarized her feelings, "Um, when I first took that class, the first

exam I had, it was like, seven pages long. And I was scared. I was like, 'Oh my God.

What did I get myself into?'" P4 verbalized similar thoughts:

I realized it; my first Anatomy test was just like, three weeks into like, into the

semester. Because my cousins, a lot of my cousins, are in nursing, so they're like

two or three years older than me, so they've already taken Anatomy. So they, they

psyched me out. They were like, "Anatomy's gonna be your worst class." You

know, "It's gonna be really hard, cuz you have to memorize everything, and you

know, it's gonna be very detailed." So, it kinda scared me, so I think that made

things a little bit worse for me. So like the first three weeks, it just felt like years

of information. I was like, "Oh, my goodness. What did I get myself into?" Like,

"Can I really do this?" (P4)

P2 questioned herself, thinking that even her professor had given up on her when he

sensed that she was confused in class:

It made me feel even dumber [laughed], because it's like, "Okay you're seeing

that I don't understand and you're not even gonna try and explain it." It's like,

like I felt like he had given up on me. It was just like, "Oh my gosh, I'm this

dumb, that he's gonna give up, cuz he doesn't think I'm gonna make it." (P2)

P3 reported doing poorly on an exam that she had studied for and wondering what

to do next:

I studied for that test and still was not prepared enough to take the test, because

what I thought was important, wasn't. And, so I didn't want, when I started doing

that, I kind of just like, "Well, what do I do now? If I tried so hard studying that

way and it's still not what's on her test, how am I gonna pass these tests?" Um,

and we had, ah, four exams in that class, I believe. Um. . .I did better on that test

that I didn't study for, I did better on that test than I did on the second one, that I

studied hard for. . . .I think that's what kinda surprised me also. (P3)

When her professor admonished her for using flashcards, P2 questioned her long-term study habits and wondered whether she had the ability to study for the class:

He just said that my study habits weren't correct, and that I was gonna get nowhere with the way I was studying, but um, it was working. In a way, and then in another way it wasn't because I was, I still wasn't fully understanding the material, so I thought, "Okay maybe he's right, I'm not studying the right way, so then how should I study? This is the way I've been studying for a semester and a half. Why, why isn't this working?" And then, um, like I wouldn't, I went for awhile thinking that that wasn't the right way to study, so, not that I put my studying aside for that class, but I just dreaded studying for that class. Cuz like, "I'm not, I'm probably not doing it right anyway, so why am I studying?" kind of an attitude, but, it didn't take long to get over it, those feelings. (P2)

Having been encouraged by high school teachers and administrators to attend a community college, P3 questioned her ability to succeed in college:

And ah, and after so many people telling me that I wouldn't be able to do that, that I had to settle for a community college, had to settle for a technical school. . .it kind of got put in my mind, that that was true. That I couldn't do a four-year university, I couldn't get into, you know, the. . .School of Nursing, you know. That I wouldn't be able to do that, that I. . .didn't have the capacity to do that. (P3)

Although the four participants questioned themselves, they did not give up. Questioning emerged as part of their developing academic awareness, but it did not hold them back.

Summary of Facing Academic Challenges

For the participants, themes of recognizing an academic challenge, experiencing academic awareness, recognizing ineffective study strategies, recognizing conflicting obligations, and questioning self were inherent to facing an academic challenge. As illustrated above, facing academic challenges allowed participants to perceive a difference between desired and actual levels of academic achievement. Participants described being able to face academic challenges after becoming aware of the challenges and becoming aware of where they stood in relationship to where they wanted to be academically. In addition to facing academic challenges, all participants described recognition of their emotional responses to the challenges.

Recognizing Emotional Response

Participants recognized and willingly shared the emotions they experienced as a result of the academic challenges. This superordinate theme served to answer the following subquestions:

2. What factors affect successful Latina students' experiences of and responses to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

3. How do successful Latina students respond to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

Experiencing anxiety was an emotional response recognized by every participant. Participants also described feeling discouraged, experiencing frustration, and experiencing disappointment. The four themes that arose from 46 level one codes are

presented in Table 2 and are discussed in the pages that follow.

Table 2

Recognizing Emotional Response: Supporting Themes

Supporting theme	Number experiencing	Participants
Experiencing anxiety	6	All
Feeling discouraged	4	P2, P3, P4, P6
Experiencing frustration	4	P4, P5, P6, P7
Feeling disappointed	3	P3, P5, P7

Experiencing anxiety. The theme of experiencing anxiety was common to all participants. It is presented not as a diagnosis but as an emotion perceived and described by every participant in the study. Participants variously described this experience using words such as "anxiety" (P2), "anxious" (P3, P4), "anxiousness" (P3), "drove me crazy" (P2), "fear" (P3), "freaking out" (P3, P6), "nervous" (P3, P4, P7), "intense" (P4), "scared" (P3, P4, P7), "scary" (P3), "screaming help inside" (P3), "stress" (P2, P5), "stressed" (P2, P4, P5), "stressful" (P4, P5, P7), "stressing" (P3), and "throat in your stomach" (P3). Three participants reported crying (P2, P3, P6), and three described physical symptoms (P3, P4, P7) when describing emotions and experiences related to academic challenges.

Participants described the academic experience as intense. P4 reported that she "didn't realize school could be that stressful," and she discussed physical symptoms in both interviews. She remembered her first semester as "the most stressful semester of

school I've ever had in my entire life," and likened it to being on a roller coaster. She also

recognized the need to manage her emotional response:

So, it was kinda like a roller coaster for me. First I was really stressed out, and

then I'd do really well, so I'd just kind of like, lay back a little bit, and then I got

really nervous again, and then I was okay. So, I mean you really need to find like

a happy medium of being nervous and being okay with how you're doing, cuz if

you're stressed out all the time, you're just gonna make yourself sick. So I think

my first semester was intense, and I think it's all because of my anatomy and

chemistry classes, cuz those were the hardest classes for me. (P4)

Having completed her second semester of college just prior to her interviews, P4

reported that Biochemistry II was the hardest class she had ever taken. She feared what

she would experience the following semester when enrolled in Microbiology:

That was the biggest, that was the one class I was worried about all the time. I'd

get so nervous, I'd have hives and throw up and get so nervous. It was like the

worst class of my life. (P4)

Although the theme of experiencing academic awareness assisted participants to

face academic challenges, the sense of competition that P4 perceived in regards to

applying for the nursing program increased her stress as well. As did other participants,

P4 sometimes used the pronoun "you" rather than "I" when sharing experiences that she

found stressful:

If you can handle everything, you will be successful. If you can't then [pause],

I'm not saying you won't be successful, but it will take you longer to finish school

or finish your prerequisites to get into nursing school, cuz I know that it's really

competitive which is something I'm really nervous about, so my second semester

I really wanted to do a lot better in all of my classes because I know how

important, like your grades are, and you know it's really competitive. (P4)

P5 recalled that the stress she experienced during her first semester was magnified

by being apart from her family for the first time. Although her academic stress increased

when she became the leader of a group project, the resulting new friendships decreased

her stress:

I remember being really stressed out at the beginning of the semester, my um, my

first semester. Um, just with leaving my family and not having, not knowing

anyone here. Um, and then having all the work. I, it was just very stressful. (P5)

P7 recalled feeling as though she might "break" from the stress:

Um, it was very hectic. Um, it got very stressful to the point that I felt like I was

gonna break, but I knew I couldn't, I had to, because um, it was a new semester,

and I just, I felt like I really had to transition myself and focus. (P7)

Um, I was mainly nervous. . . .it was very nerve wracking, going to each exam.

Um [pause], worried [pause], basically worried [laughed]. I was very worried,

about after, after each exam, before each exam, while I was studying for my

exams. I, I couldn't really; I didn't really know what to expect. (P7)

Additionally P7 recalled stress related to balancing her academic challenges with

the other obligations in her life:

It was very stressful. Um [pause], I [pause and sigh and wry laugh], it's just very

stressful, because you have all these people like getting at you if you don't

[pause], if you don't suit the needs of somebody, somebody else gets hurt or

somebody else gets mad, and if I wasn't pleasing my boss, then I wasn't pleasing

my boyfriend, because I was working too many hours. Or, if I wasn't pleasing my

dad, I wasn't um, I wasn't pleasing somebody else. If, and if I wasn't pleasing my

dad, then of course I wasn't doing good in my academics. (P7)

P3 reported that she would "freak out" and become unable to concentrate as a

result of test taking fears that began at an early age and followed her to college:

I wasn't, I-I've never actually been a strong test taker. Standardized test taking

was horrible, um; I would be so stressed out, cry myself to sleep before, the night,

the night before a test, and I think just that fear that I've always had came with

me, and it kinda takes over, and, and, but now, um, um, now that I've gotten, you

know, a chance to take more tests, cuz most, like most of the time classes are just

tests, that's, that's all your grade is based on is exams, um, I think, yeah, that, that

has to be the most challenging part [pause], most scary part. (P3)

P3 experienced additional stress when she realized that Biochemistry II would

build on the material from Biochemistry I. She attributed physical characteristics to the

challenging content, and described it as having a face:

I remember going into the next semester, like that break we had, um, I was glad

that Biochem I was over, not expecting that I was gonna have to see it again right

the first week that I went back to Biochem II [laughing], so I was a little

surprised. I was like, "I thought I was done with this, you know." I thought it was

a completely new thing, which was a rude awakening. . . .just going in and being

thrown with it again, that was a little scary. Um, also um [pause], I guess just

having to take out everything back. I had ta, I had already put Biochem I away

and in a box and just threw it under the bed, and um, metaphorically speaking,

you know. Um [laughed], and ah, yeah, having to just have to go and retrieve it,

take it out again, and, and look at it in its face again and just have to deal with it.

Um, it was upsetting, but something I had to do, so I couldn't say much. (P3)

P3 became distracted and nervous during class, and found herself thinking, "I

need to go back and learn that, or I'm gonna be so behind, or just, just an unsettling

feeling." She continued:

I was screaming help inside. Um [pause], I felt very uncomfortable, and nervous,

um [pause], I, I knew I wasn't starting off the semester good, just because I didn't

have, I didn't, um, know, basically know what she was talking about. I didn't

[pause], um, yeah I didn't have no clue of what I was stepping into, and just the

fact that I started off bad already. Um, it would just make me very unsettled, very

nervous, scared [pause], and anxious. I was just very anxious to what I was gonna

do next. (P3)

P3 recalled that some of her stress may have been self-induced, yet it didn't preclude

success:

Maybe I made it worse, just stressing myself out about it. Um [pause], also what

made it worse was that I was still trying to pile on other things at the same time. I

was still, um, trying to learn different subjects, so that also made it worse. But it

was, I, I was able ta see through it. And it, I mean I, I did a lot better in Biochem

II. A lot better. (P3)

P6 recalled being preoccupied with academic thoughts. "I guess by freaking out I would

kind of ob-, not obsess, but just, be thinking about it constantly, what I could do ta bring

my grade up" (P6)

P2 described feeling unsettled by the unknown during her first year of college:

During that first year it was very confusing, because there was a lot of things that

were going on. I, I never really knew what to expect, and that drove me crazy,

because I want, not need [laughing], to know how everything is gonna go, and I

have everything planned out. And just not knowing drove me crazy. (P2)

P2 recalled her experience following a difficult day in a biochemistry class as

follows, "I went straight home and I just like, I just broke down crying, because it was

just like, 'Oh my gosh. Everything I'm doing is wrong.'" P2's sense of anxiety was

closely related to her fear of failure, which she mentioned several times during the course

of the interviews. P2 set high expectations for herself, and she equated not fulfilling her

self-expectations with failure. P2 described her experience of earning a C in a class for

the first time in her life:

I had never done that poorly in a class, so that was just like, I felt like I was

failing and that's one of my biggest fears is failing, so in a sense I felt like, like I

wasn't living up to what I should be, and um, it was just like crying, anxiety. I

would get angry at little things that I knew I shouldn't, and [pause] I just, it was

overall, a lot of stress, that semester. . . .I set certain expectations for myself, like I

should make certain grades in certain classes. I knew that was a difficult class,

and I knew I was having trouble, but I expected to at least make a B. And then

when I saw that my, when I added all the points and I averaged out and it wasn't

adding up to a B, I knew it was a solid C, but I felt like I was failing. Like a C is

not good enough. A "C" was like a "D" in my eyes. So like, I, I just felt like I was

gonna fail the class– in my eyes. That's what I felt like. (P2)

P2 had completed all her prenursing courses at the time of the interviews, and she

had been accepted to begin the nursing program in the following semester. Yet she still

spoke of anxiety in present tense when recalling previous academic challenges. When

asked for clarification, P2 reported that the anxiety still arose periodically:

I feel like, kind of anxiety, like, "Oh my gosh, this is gonna be a complete, a

horrible paper," or something, and I start feeling anxiety like, "Oh my goodness, I

cannot do this." But um, but, that's pretty much the only place, um, I'm already

past all the biochems. (P2)

For two participants, anxiety was expressed in the form of anger. P5 remembered

feeling angry at her high school for not preparing her well enough:

I remember being really, really angry at my school for, for the, for the

exemptions. I, I was just, I talked to my mother about that a lot and um, being so

angry like, "I can't believe they," arguing that they didn't really prepare us for

that, and cuz I remember some of my older friends that had graduated the year

before me, they had told me the same thing. Like, "_____ doesn't prepare you

for, for finals," and that they were all struggling in their math courses and um, and

then whenever it came around for my exams, my final exams, I understood it. I, I

remember being angry. That added to the stress of the tests. (P5)

I felt, they should of prepared, prepared me for, or better, for college and

especially since I was taking the advanced placement classes, and what not. I felt

that, um. . .it should have been an easier transition, and it wasn't, so I guess that's

why I got angry. (P5)

P2 recalled becoming angry about little things and insightfully recognized that her

anger reflected the stress of academic challenges:

It would just be really dumb things. For example, if my boyfriend at the time

wouldn't take the trash out when I asked him to, it would spark an argument,

when it, usually I'd just be like, "Oh okay whatever, I'll do it later or I'll just give

him more time to do it." And um, like with my parents, I would get really

defensive, and especially when I was stressed around test time. And um. . .when

they would tell me if things that were going on at home, and I would tell them,

"You know, if I can't do anything about it, please don't tell me." And I think if I

wouldn't of been so stressed, I wouldn't of handled it that way, but with that

added stress, it, it changed my reaction to things. (P2)

Both P3 and P4 noted that their parents were stressed by their levels of anxiety as

well. P4 imagined it from the perspective of her parents:

I think when they saw how stressed out I was, I think it made them kind of

stressed out in the beginning. Just because, it's kind of like when you're little,

when you see your kid fall you wanna automatically pick them back up, cuz you

don't want them ta cry, you don't want them ta be in pain. So for them ta see me

go through that and be sick all the time, and be like, nervous and be anxious and

just be really irritable with school, it kinda like, they just kinda wanna be like,

"You know, it's o-, it's okay. Don't worry." You know? (P4)

Feeling discouraged. Anxiety was coupled with discouragement for four of the

participants. P2 reported crying when she didn't feel she could go to a professor for help

and recalled, "I would, I would cry a lot about it, and get so stressed, and just, I couldn't

take it, and I'd just cry." P6 remembered crying when she thought of earning a C for the

first time as well as when she didn't understand content while studying with friends:

I remember toward the end, I had a C in the class, and I have never gotten a C,

like, since I've been in college. And I just was like, really devastated about it. . . .I

just did not want a C. . .and I'd talk to my parents, I remember I cried because I

was really upset that, like I was trying so hard, and I wasn't doing well. (P6)

I felt really helpless. I felt like, and my friends, you know, in my study group, like

there was a certain number of problems, and they just did 'em. And I had

absolutely no idea, and I almost, like, I was I guess a little dramatic. I was like,

"Oh my God, I'm gonna cry, I don't know anything!" And I just felt helpless,

and, and I don't, and, and with me and my friends I don't like, everyone kind of

has an idea of what's going on, and it's not until the very end that you realize like,

"Oh, I got the wrong answer." I had no idea. They were like working mine. (P6)

P6 summarized her discouragement stating, "There's also, I mean, some sadness with it,

when you don't, when you feel like you've done as much work as you've done and, and

you still can't, I guess, achieve the level that you think you should be at" (P6).

For P3, anxiety and discouragement were closely related when she first

encountered college courses:

> I think [pause], coming in my freshman year, um, I was a little hesitant just
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> because I thought I was stepping into something that I could not handle. I just
>
> don't think, I didn't think that, um, I had the knowledge, the, enough knowledge
>
> to be able to survive my first semester, even. And so when I, let's say my first
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> week, week of classes here, I felt [pause] a little overwhelmed, um, but I think,
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> after being reassured that there was gonna be help provided for me, I think I was a
>
> little more settled. Um, but still, felt very overwhelmed and very scared that I
>
> wasn't gonna be able to, to succeed, I guess. . . .Um [pause], first day of school I
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> had Anatomy, my first class at 7:30 in the morning. And um, it was a lot to take
>
> in, first day it's like, "Okay, take out your notes, we're gonna go over the
>
> syllabus, and we're gonna start." That is what kind of caught me off guard, I
>
> think. I was, like, I, I kinda thought to myself, "Is all, are all the classes gonna be
>
> like that?" You know, "Am I gonna have to start right, you know, that first
>
> week?" (P3)

P3's sense of anxiety and discouragement resurfaced when she realized that the

challenge of Biochemistry II would be similar to what she experienced in Biochemistry I:

> Just anxiousness, just this feeling of like, your throat in your stomach. Like, oh,
>
> not wanting to do it. Just a sense of wanting ta give up. Like, how, just that
>
> thought in my mind, "Oh, I have to go through this again. How, if I couldn't do it

the first time, how do they expect me to do it again? To try and do it again?"
P3 also felt discouraged when she compared herself to others, as she believed they
learned the content more quickly:

I would just think, "You know, there's so many people," and I knew so many
people that, that didn't have to study. They would just go in there and just wing it
and still pass! And I, I couldn't understand why I couldn't do that. And I would
get upset with myself, because I, I just felt that I couldn't, no matter how much I,
tried, no matter how hard I studied, it still wouldn't be enough. (P3)

Like P3, P4 and P6 also remembered feeling overwhelmed. P4 recalled, "I would
sit at home, and I would be like, 'I can't do this. It's too much!'" For P2 and P4, their
feelings of discouragement stemmed from interactions with a professor:

One time I actually did go up to that professor and I asked him, I told him, "This
is what I'm doing, these are my study habits, and I'm still not making the grades
that I would like to. What do you recommend I do?" And he told me that I had
poor study habits, and um, he um, basically told me to give up my social life, and
um, he told me that I needed to study like a ridiculous number of hours just for
that class. And um, I just felt like he ridiculed me, and after that I felt like, I
almost felt like he was picking on me. (P2)

I went there once, and I left there, like, I felt really, really crappy. I felt horrible, I
felt, you know he made me feel like I was doing everything wrong, like I didn't
spend, he told me in the beginning, or told the whole class in the beginning of the
semester that on average we should be studying six hours a day on the class. And

that's just completely not realistic, like, we get out of school like six hours; it's time for us to go to bed. I mean we have five maybe six depending on how many classes we're taking. I have five other classes I have to study for. It's just not realistic for me to study six hours for one class a day. And it really frustrated me that how can you be so demanding for a student to study that much for just that class, like you have other classes to study for. And it kinda seemed like if we asked a question, he'd be, like, "How do you not understand this? It's like common sense." Well look, that's common sense for you, you've been teaching it for so long so it's like second nature, but for like us it's completely new material. We've never heard of it before. We've never studied this before, so it's a little harder for us to understand. So he kind of, he kind of gave that impression, that you know, "You guys are ridiculous." Like, "How do you not understand this?" And it was really uncomfortable. (P4)

P4 also recalled her professor telling her that if she paid more attention she would understand the content. Although each reported continuing to attend the class in which she felt discouraged, both tried not to ask questions or call attention to themselves.

Feeling disappointed. Three participants described disappointment as part of their emotional response. In all three cases, they were disappointed in themselves. P3 remembered feeling "unhappy, disappointed, I was very disappointed in myself." P5 recalled socializing with a friend and forgetting to review for an exam:

I was, just, I couldn't believe that, like, I had let myself do that, because I, I'm usually really on top of it, and for some reason I just, had forgotten and I was just

so disappointed, and I didn't know what to do, and um, I was just, so confused, and so I, I just ended up going in there and doing as best I could. (P5)

P7 described her disappointment from the heart:

Well, I hate getting bad grades. My first C was in my Introduction to Psychology class, and that really hurt me, cuz I had never gotten a C before. And that's when I started realizing, "Oh my god. Um, what am I doing? I need to study!" Um, and then I got that D in my biological chemistry class, and that hurt me even more. I felt like my heart was being taken out of me. (P7)

Experiencing frustration. Four participants voiced feelings of frustration related to academic challenges. Frustration arose in response to the heavy workload of college academics (P5), roommates who made it difficult for participants to study or rest (P5, P7), unsatisfying interactions with a professor (P4), and not learning as quickly as expected (P6). P4 stated, "When I'm frustrated, I don't like to, I try not to talk to people, because I don't wanna get them upset."

For P5 and P7 the experience of frustration manifested as anger towards themselves when they failed to fulfill their academic self expectations. P5's disappointment was accompanied by anger after she chatted with a friend and forgot about a test she had later that day:

And after, after that, I was so mad at myself, like walking out of the, um, the classroom. I was kinda mad at him too for some, I mean, I know I shouldn't have, it was my fault, but still, I, I guess I was mad because I saw that I was putting my friends before my school, and I usually don't do that. And so I got really mad and

um, "Okay, I'm gonna let that be the last time that, um, you know, I let them

distract me from something really important like a test." (P5)

P7 expressed anger towards herself after earning a D+ in Biochemistry I as a

result of failing to cut back on work obligations and not seeking help from the professor:

The biggest emotion was anger. I was angry at myself, because like I said, I had

never failed a class before, and seeing that, I was very angry, because I knew that

I should of devoted myself more into that class. I saw that maybe I should of

spoken to my manager and told her, "Okay, well I need, I need some time off. I

need to really, um, commit myself to this." Um, I was also angry because I should

of gone up to my professor and asked all these various questions that I had. Um, it

was just mainly anger. I couldn't, I was, at that point, I was too mad to be sad.

There was no point in me being sad, because it was my fault. (P7)

P4 experienced frustration related to her interactions with a professor:

It wasn't the easiest class in the world. I think the biggest thing was just because

of the teacher, so I've never really had a teacher that I couldn't go to, ta talk to, or

explain it. . . .And it was really very confusing, very frustrating, not being able to

feel comfortable to go talk to that teacher about that class" (P4)

P4 recognized that she couldn't let her frustration with her professor affect her academic

performance, however. Her response fell within the superordinate theme of persevering.

Summary of Recognizing Emotional Response

The superordinate theme, recognizing emotional response, arose from the themes

of experiencing anxiety, feeling disappointed, experiencing frustration, and feeling

discouraged. All participants described a clear understanding of their emotions, the effects of their emotions, and the ways in which their emotional response helped or hindered their ability to overcome academic challenges. The superordinate theme, seeking help, follows.

Seeking Help

The superordinate theme of seeking help arose from the themes of avoiding, hesitating, isolating, isolating: putting up a front, and reaching out. Avoiding, hesitating, and isolating came together through abstraction, and they connected with reaching out through polarization. This superordinate theme served to answer the following subquestions:

2. What factors affect successful Latina students' experiences of and responses to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

3. How do successful Latina students respond to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

4. In what ways (if any) do successful Latina students seek help when facing academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

The five themes that arose from 46 codes to support the superordinate theme are presented in Table 3 and are discussed in the pages that follow.

Table 3

Seeking Help: Supporting Themes

Supporting theme	Number experiencing	Participants
Hesitating	4	P2, P3, P4, P5
Avoiding	3	P2, P6, P7
Isolating	1	P7
Isolating: Putting up a front	1	P3
Reaching out	6	All

Despite their success, all participants described avoiding, hesitating, or isolating prior to reaching out when they experienced academic challenges. Seeking help was crucial to the superordinate themes of transcending academic challenges and owning knowledge. Yet it stands alone, because each participant described a distinct transition from not seeking help to seeking help. Seeking help also bridged the gap between facing and transcending academic challenges. Finally, participants' stories regarding help-seeking were relevant in and of themselves when considered within the literature on help-seeking behavior and culture.

Hesitating. Four of the participants described hesitating prior to asking for help. According to P2, "I still held off, though, a little while on asking for help, because I wasn't quite sure where to go." P3 summarized her initial thoughts as follows, "I was a little hesitant. Um, I was afraid she was gonna get upset, cuz I didn't know what I was doing. But it, um, she was, she was understanding." P3 stated she had an approachable

teacher, while P4 did not. Both initially hesitated to ask questions in class, however:

> She, she didn't, ah, hesitate in answering our questions either. She was always really, "Does anybody need help? Does, do I need to slow down? Do I need to stop?" You know, um, but I think a lot of times you're intimidated during class to ask for help. I know I was like that at the beginning, where I was, "No, I don't want everybody to know." Or, "I don't wanna sound stupid." Or, "I don't want to ask a wrong question." Um, so. . .she let us ask questions. She was willing ta help. (P3)

P3 still hesitated, because she feared looking stupid or asking the wrong question:

> Just that I didn't wanna, everybody to know what I was gonna ask. Like, I, I know there's a lot of times when somebody asks and it answers questions for everybody, cuz everybody's thinking the same thing. But um. . .I didn't wanna seem stupid [smiled]. I didn't wanna [laughed] seem like I was the, I didn't wanna, I didn't want it to happen to me like, I was the only one that was asking and wondering this question. So I was a little intimidated. (P3)

When asked what a "wrong" question would be, P3 clarified as follows:

> Would be, a wrong question would be something that has nothing to do with what we're talking about. Or, I didn't wanna ask something in a way that, like I wasn't, there was times that I, I would catch myself putting two things, two different things together that were similar. . . .And I would have, I would have this question, "Well is this the same as this?" When in reality they were two completely different things. And I was always scared that, "Oh if I ask this, it's

gonna be wrong, like it's gonna be completely not even what we're talking

about." (P3)

In addition to her fear of looking stupid, P3 felt ashamed to request help. "I mean

there has been times that I've had to ask for help, and I feel a little ashamed and I'm like,

'I should know this. I shouldn't be asking for help for this.'" P3 also reported hesitating

to use her textbook at first, as she found the content and vocabulary intimidating and hard

to understand.

After watching her professor admonish another student for asking a question

about material just covered, P4 hesitated to ask for help in class. She was afraid of being

embarrassed:

It felt very, you know, "Should I ask or shouldn't I ask, and if I ask is he gonna

be, you know, upset with me that I asked the question. . .upset that I don't

understand the concept of what he's teaching? And if I don't ask then I'm just not

gonna know, and I'm just not gonna do well on the test because I don't know

what's going on. So. . .it took awhile for me to actually ask a question. It was

scary. . . .I felt proud of myself that I stood up to him and I still asked the question

even though I was afraid to feel stupid and feel like, "Oh my God. What am I

doing? Was I really supposed to ask that question, and is that something he

already went over and I didn't remember that you went over that?" (P4)

Although P5 reported going to professors for help at the time of the interviews,

she recalled that she hadn't always felt that way. "At first, I remember being kind of

scared to, and in high school there was none of that. . .whenever I did try to, they [high

school teachers] were busy with all the other students" (P5).

      Avoiding. Although they did not describe hesitating, P2, P6, and P7 simply avoided going to one or more professors for help after class or during office hours.

      I was [pause] intimidated by the teacher, you could say, so I never really asked questions, I just stayed quiet, and I think that's what made it even harder, was not feeling like I could ask questions. (P2)

      I asked questions after class was done. I never went to his office, but like once everybody left, then I would ask him a question or two, occasionally, but I would still get that same feeling, and so I just, it just came to the point where I just didn't even ask any more. (P2)

      Although P3, P4, and P5 reported initially hesitating to ask for help regardless of their feelings about the professor, P2, P6, and P7 continued to avoid asking nonapproachable professors for help:

      I think [pause and sigh], I probably should have gone to the professor earlier in the semester, but I mean, it shouldn't of mattered when in the semester a student goes to the professor. They should still be willing to help them, if the student wants the help and is willing to meet them halfway, you could say. [Sigh] I just [pause], I don't know, I just felt like he, he really, like, put me down. And that made me, um, like rely more on my peers. And I think that's why we, we had such good study groups, because I wasn't the only the one with that feeling that I couldn't go ask the professor questions (P2).

      P6 reported not being the kind of person to ask for help, particularly from a

teacher she "didn't really like":

> If none of us understood it, then, um [pause], we'd, like I said we'd try and all
>
> figure it out, but if that didn't work, we'd either go to an outside source or one of
>
> us would. . . .we'd kinda, we never really went to him for help, so we'd I guess,
>
> figure it out ourselves or pray it wasn't on the test [laughs], because I mean, it
>
> was, some of the stuff was really difficult to understand. But we'd usually get an
>
> idea from other people or go back. Everything was kinda like in the book, hidden
>
> somewhere, so we could kinda go back and get an idea of what it would be. (P6)
>
> P6 was the lone participant who had not gone to a college professor or a formal

peer tutoring session at some point for academic help. She shared her thoughts in detail:

> I would, but I mean, I just, I would have like, a hard time going. I, it's not that I
>
> don't like talking to the teachers or anything. . . .I just, I felt like, I don't. Like I
>
> should be able to do it by myself, I guess. I mean if it was like a dire situation, I'd
>
> go, and but I guess I really never allotted time to go. I guess that's like, more my
>
> fault. . . .And I was really never, like I'm not the kind of person to go to tutoring. .
>
> . .I guess I'm more just like dependent on myself and learning it myself. Rather
>
> than someone teaching it to me. . . .No, not for biochem and they said it was, they
>
> were really good, and they really helped people, but I mean. . .I don't have time. I
>
> have other things to do, and it'd be, like, it's better if I teach myself than someone
>
> else. I mean, and um, it's, it's a good thing, the PASS [peer assisted study
>
> sessions] sessions, to have people who know, like, how to help you, but I never
>
> did any of that. I never went to any of them. . . .None of my, none of my friends in

my study group ever really went. We'd all just work out, do everything together. So no, we never went to anything like that. (P6)

It's [sighs], I don't know, I just, I mean the teachers here are really nice and if I ever needed help, I knew I'd get the help I needed, but. . .I just don't like the idea of, you know, going in the middle of the day ta the office hours that they have, ta help me with something that. . .if I would of paid attention or. . .if I just looked in the book I could learn by myself at my own dorm room or in the allotted time I have to study for that. If I. . .knew it was something I could teach myself, then. . .I thought it was like, kind of a waste of time to go talk to the teacher. They already taught it, so if, if I didn't understand what they taught, then I just need to go back and teach myself [smiles]. (P6)

As P6 reported positive relationships with her professors, it is possible that she simply hadn't encountered academic content challenging enough to require outside help from professors or from formal tutoring sessions yet:

Yeah, I never felt, like, if I was failing, well maybe I'd be like, "Okay, well I really need to go to a PASS session," but I mean, I was, I was okay with the grades I was getting at the end. And I knew it was because, in the beginning I wasn't really applying myself completely, but in the end I was, so I knew that this was, like, the best I could, I was doing the best I could do. So, I was like, well, I mean, I saw the improvement, so it's like you know, I'm doing a good thing. (P6)

Although this approach is potentially detrimental, P6 expressed confidence that she could learn the academic content on her own or with the help of a self-selected study group.

Additionally, her cumulative GPA of 3.76 reflected that her current strategies were working for her.

P7 stated that although she asked questions in class, she avoided talking to a professor after class or going to a professor's office when she felt intimidated:

> Um hmm, I did ask questions. I made sure of it, ah because he, he would always pause, and he would ask. Some were too scared. I would ask questions, that girl would ask questions, but I would never go up to him after class, or I would never go up to him, um, during his office hours, because I was too scared. I guess, I felt safer with everybody else there. Um, but I never went up to him just alone by myself or anything. (P7)

> Um, right when he was done with something, he would quickly erase the board, and he was, so fast, and um, he was very intimidating, and um, I would, I was always the type to ask questions or go up to a professor to ask a question, but I was too scared to go up to that professor in particular, because he was just too intimidating and I was like, "No I'm gonna feel stupid if I go up to him." Because he would make us feel stupid. I remember one, one professor, well one, one time, one of my, um, peers she had asked, "Well how do I do this on my calculator?" And he was like, "Well, you push this button. You push this button. You should have learned how to use the calculator. . . .You should have read the, you should have read the manual, um, when you purchased the calculator. How to use it." I was like, "Wow!" And then another, another class time, um, someone said something about homework, and he was like, "It's not called homework. You're

supposed to say assignments. This is college. You're not in high school anymore." So, I, we just always felt, I always felt belittled in that class. (P7)

P7 realized too late that not going to the professor for help had been a mistake, and she discussed it extensively in the interviews:

When I asked questions in class, the thing is, that he has such an extensive vocabulary, I couldn't quite understand, and so I would just nod my head and be like, "Okay, I have to read" [laughs]. I, I wouldn't, I wouldn't really comprehend. I would turn around, and I would ask, um, one of my colleagues if they understood what he was saying. And then they would try, but then I realized that what they were, the advice that they were giving me was wrong, because they were just as lost as I was. Um, but I felt, I, I still felt like I didn't understand, and I should have gone to his office or after class gone up to him and asked, and asked, "Well, what exactly did you mean by this?" Um, but I didn't. (P7)

No I didn't, and that was my biggest mistake. I did not, because I was intimidated by that professor. I really was. Um, I felt like if I were to go up to that professor, he would just look at me and be like, "Well, why don't you understand this?" Or, "Why don't you just go to the PASS sessions?" Or, "Why don't you just ask somebody else?" But I should have and I didn't. . . .most students would not, there was just one girl who would and she, she ended up, she was probably the only one, because after I talked um, to many of my peers in that one course, half of the class had failed. Um, she had passed, and that's when I was like, "Man, I should of been the one asking questions. I should of been the one going to his

office and asking him for help, and I didn't when I should have." (P7)

Um, what I should of done that the first time was gone to my professor, because I'm pretty sure that if I would of gone to him he would of helped me out. I mean all the professors here. . .are, are very, um, helpful, and it helps that we're in a small class setting. (P7)

For two participants the hesitating and avoiding progressed to isolating themselves from others when struggling with academic challenges. Although the other four participants didn't describe isolation as part of their experience, it is included because of the potentially detrimental effects to first-year students when it does occur.

Isolating. P7 isolated herself from her family and her significant other, not wanting to tell them that she was struggling with academic challenges:

I didn't really tell them what was, I didn't tell them that I was failing my class. I didn't want to, I felt embarrassed. Um, I just kind of kept it to myself, and I kind of, um, swerved around, like if my boyfriend wanted to do something this day, I was like "Okay, I won't, um I'll leave, I'll leave him during this time so I can study." I wouldn't tell him like, "Oh well I'm failing this class. Like, I really need to study. Is it okay if like, we hang out another day?" (P7)

Isolating: Putting up a front. P3 described "putting up a front" in an effort to make others think that she understood the academic content. Not sure that she fit in at college during her first semester, P3 recalled not developing friendships and connections at school until her second or third semester. "I wasn't really one to socialize here on campus. I was kinda scared. I was, I felt like I didn't fit in." Additionally, P3 cut herself

off from those closest to her, staying in her room with books and studying most of the time:

> I was unhappy at home; I was always busy trying ta catch up. Um, so I was always in my room. And I didn't associate much with anybody here at school or at home. So, I mean, my parents were the first ones to notice it. Just that I was just very stressed out and grumpy all the time, which was not like me. . . .Um, so they weren't too happy about it, because they knew that I wasn't happy. Um, yeah I was just pretty grumpy, so anybody that I pretty much saw, or, I was just very short with them. Just very, "Okay, I gotta go." Like, just not, um, I wasn't very, ah, sociable. . . .And that would just have to be, just like my closest family, my parents, my sister, my niece, and my nephews. . . .My boyfriend also, but he was usually doing what he had to do also, so, and I would just kind of, just, "I'm upset. Just leave me alone." So, yeah, I, I really don't associate much, at that time I hadn't. . . .Now I have more friends on campus. Now I talk to a lot of more people. . . .but at that time it was just pretty much me and my parents. (P3)

Like P7, P3 did not want others to know that she was struggling with academic challenges:

> Um, I really didn't want anybody ta know. The two people that actually helped me with it were the only ones that I. . .told. Um, I kinda gave a front to a lot of, the people. Um, because it seemed like they had a grasp on it, and I didn't want to feel so dumb [laughed]. So, yeah, I really didn't tell. . .people. . .I didn't. And, spoke with my family, and that was pretty much it. Kept it to myself. (P3)

When asked for clarification, P3 elaborated that the front was intended to give the impression that she understood the academic content:

Um, just that I understood what was going on. I didn't wanna seem, like I said, I didn't wanna seem clueless. So I would just be like, "Oh yeah, um hmm, I did that. Or, I know what you're talking about." Of course people would ask me for help, and I'd be like, "Well I, no, I gotta go" [laughed]. And try to get out of there as fast as I can [laughed], because I didn't wanna tell 'em, "Well I can't help you, cuz I don't know what you're talking about!" (P3)

In hindsight P3 realized, "I think I wasn't the only one going through stress," as she recalled that her high school friends were trying to adjust to college life as well. Yet she suspected that they had all been too overwhelmed to share their experiences at the time.

Reaching out. The theme reaching out encompassed participants' efforts to ask for academic help as necessary. Although every participant experienced the hesitating, avoiding, or isolating, all participants eventually reached out to peers, formal tutors, or professors for the help they needed. The amount of data that supported the theme of reaching out far surpassed the amount of data supporting themes of hesitating, avoiding, and isolating for these academically successful participants. The theme was common to all participants, and they shared numerous anecdotes about reaching out for help. Although stories differed, all participants experienced a transition from not seeking help to seeking help. Although the literature reports that individuals from collectivist cultures often hesitate to go to outsiders for help, P2, P3, P4, and P7 received encouragement from their parents to ask others for help. P2 and P7 mentioned letting go of pride as part

of their transition to reaching out. In the two quotes that follow, P2 described the process

of putting her pride aside and asking peers for help even though she didn't know anyone

when she came to the university:

> Um, at first I didn't want to, because I didn't want them to be like, "Oh, well she
>
> doesn't know what she's doing, so why are we gonna ask her for help?" But then
>
> I figured, you know if I don't ask questions I'm never gonna learn. So I just threw
>
> those feelings aside and just went ahead and asked. (P2)
>
> My dad always told me, "If you don't ask questions you're not gonna get
>
> anywhere." And um, it was just, I hated the feeling of not knowing and knowing
>
> that someone else knew it. So it was just like, "Okay, I can't let myself just stay at
>
> the bottom." If, you could say put your pride aside, and go and ask, then you'll
>
> know. Then you'll be kind of like at the same level as them. So, I just, asked
>
> questions and also, um, I didn't know anybody here. . .so it was kind of hard, cuz
>
> I didn't know anybody and um, a lot of my peers already knew each other from
>
> high school or just from around town or whatever. So, that was a little
>
> intimidating and that. But, I just got more comfortable with them and just said,
>
> "What the heck? I'll just ask." (P2)

Significantly, P2 selected the peers for her study group carefully, demonstrating

cross connections between the superordinate themes of facing academic challenges,

seeking help, and transcending academic challenges. As the formation of P2's study

group involved logistical processes beyond seeking help, it will be described under the

superordinate theme of transcending academic challenges.

Having received a C in her second biochemistry course, P2 reported that she no

longer hesitated prior to asking professors for help when faced with academic challenges:

Okay, now I know if I have questions early on and I'm still not understanding, I

should go, okay let's say, before or right after exam one, instead of waiting longer

in the semester, because the earlier you go for help, the more likely you are to do

better. So just do that, and um, talk to professors more, if I'm having a hard time.

Even if they try and discourage me, you know, keep going and asking questions.

Because that way, then they can see that I really want to do well. (P2)

Like P2, P7 also described letting go of her pride and seeking help for academic

challenges:

I'm pretty sure a lot of people think that way. . . .I think I stress myself a lot when

I do that, and sometimes I just need to stop and think about myself more, than

about what others are thinking. And um, that's why the second time around, I let

go of that pride, and that's why I would always go to my professor's office and

ask for help. Um I wouldn't care if people were like, "Oh she's going to go ask

her, her professor." Like, "She doesn't know anything." But it's like, they're the

naïve ones, because they're not the ones asking. You know what I mean? So um,

that's pretty much it. I just need to stop stressing over it and just think of what's

good for me. Not what others think of me. (P7)

P3 vividly spoke at length of her transition from isolating to reaching out:

I've changed from that. I mean, now I'm like, "You know, you know what; I

don't get it, at all. I have no clue." Um, so I, I, I've stopped doing that. It's no

point in me putting up this front and just acting like I know what's going on,

when in reality I don't. Um, I guess I was just scared of being judged. It was so

early in the s-, in the school year that I was just scared of people knowing, you

know, cuz there was a lot a people who were, "Oh I've taken this. Like, I took this

in high school." Or, "I took this subject in middle school." Cuz I met a person that

had taken anatomy in middle school. (P3)

I know my freshman, my first semester I was like, "Um, I know, I know I need

help, but I don't know who to ask, like." But now that I'm a little older, I'm a

little more comfortable, with myself, comfortable with my environment, um; I can

pretty much ask anybody for help. I'm not afraid or ashamed to ask for anybody,

anybody for help, cuz there are so many people that need help [laughed]. I mean,

we all look at each other like, "Oh my God, we need ta find somebody ta help us

with this, cuz this is gonna drive us nuts!" (P3)

P3 initially reached out by talking to her parents. Referring to the academic

challenge as a "monster," she attributed life-like characteristics to it:

Um, just over dinner I basically told, talked to my parents, just told them, usually

they'd ask me of course, "How's your day?" you know, and, "How's school?"

And I'd just look at them, like, "Not very good. I had this horrible day at school."

And technically it was a horrible week, cuz I hadn't told them until the end of the

week that I was just, like, going out of my mind. . . .they already knew that I had

just scratched my way through Biochem I. Um, and I, I just basically told them,

"Look, it's come back again! [Laughed] The monster has come back, and I have

to deal with it again. . . .Um, and, and that's basically all, it, I just [pause] spoke

very upfrontly to them, just told them I was having trouble. Yeah [laughed]. (P3)

I needed to find a way to learn it. I needed to either go ask the teacher for help, I

needed to go ask, um, a friend for help, or um, I tried going to the Learning

Assistance Center just for, you know, tutoring or something. . . .that's basically all

I told them, that I just needed to find somebody to help me. Or just find something

that could help me, which would be the textbook. (P3)

Having received encouragement from her parents to ask others for help, P3

reached out to two peers that she trusted. "Um, so I took it upon myself, asked a couple

of friends to help me, friends that had already taken the class ta kind of assist me and

teach me how ta. . .understand it better."

One of my best friends here that I've met. Um, she was always a year, a, a class

ahead of me, so Biochem I, she was sort of helping me with Biochem I, cuz she

had already taken it. Biochem II, she was helping me, cuz she was already in

Micro. And now that I took Micro, she was, she's already in the nursing program,

so she was kinda helping me with that too. But um, she was one that I was able to

confide in and tell, you know, tell her, "Okay, dude, I don't know what I'm doing.

You need ta help me." And, so I had confidence, she did really well in, in those

classes, so, yeah, um, another friend would be, um, also one, she's got in with me,

ah, this semester, into the nursing program. She's awesome at math and biochem.

. . .she helped me with, just um, kind of the, um, problem solving type of thing,

math-, math-wise. . . .So they, I mean they were close friends, that I really

confided in, and that I know, I knew that, I knew that they knew what they were talking about. So, that put me a little more, um, at ease, with them. And I knew that they wouldn't judge me also, because there were times that they had come to ask me for help. So, I, I knew they wouldn't be like, "Oh, you don't know what you're doing." Like, "hah, hah," you know. So, I knew they weren't gonna do that, and that made me feel good. (P3)

Watching classmates who were older ask for help was part of P3's transition as well:

And, also um, I started having classes with older people, um, and just seeing them, that they were so eager ta ask for help, I, I kinda told myself, "Well if they can ask for help, why can't I ask for help, you know?" Um, so I, I kind of, you know, stopped being ashamed, and I kinda stopped being embarrassed about it. . . .they already have, you know, families, or they were coming, you know, to school part time. Like doing so mu-, like they had so much things on their plate, and they were still going and asking for help. And I was like, "You know, I don't have nothing else on my plate. I, I don't, I'm not married, I don't have kids. I don't, why should I be ashamed? I was like, I'm still, you know, I'm still young, I, I should be able to ask for help. I'm not, I'm never too old enough to ask for help," is basically what it told me. (P3)

Finally, P3 reached out to her professor, "So um, went to my professor and just asked her. I just told her, 'I don't know what I'm doing. You know, can you explain this to me?'" P3 added, "I was a little hesitant. Um, I was afraid she was gonna get upset, cuz I didn't know what I was doing. But it, um, she was, she was understanding." Later, P3

received reassurance from her parents that she had done the right thing:

> They were glad that I was actually asking for help, um, that I wasn't scared to go ask, cuz I, I mean, sometimes I get, or before I would get a little nervous in asking. Or a little shy in asking for help. Um, I, I just think I wasn't comfortable with, what was around me. Um, but I mean I told, I told my parents, "I went and asked, talked to the professor." And they were like, "Okay well that's good. You need to keep going if you need help, go ask the professor. That's the first person that's gonna help you, cuz that's who's teaching you. So, if you need help, I think you should go ta them first." So, I mean, they encouraged the fact that I needed, that I, that I went ta go ask the professor, not just some random person. (P3)

As did P2 and P3, P7 described receiving encouragement from her father to ask for help:

> He had, he was actually the one who pushed me to it. Um, he was the one who was like, um, "If you have a question, if you have a question in your head before leaving a class, then you have to make sure you ask that question." Because I had to remember that after that class, we had an assignment. And if I did bad on the assignment, that affected my grade. So, he would push me a lot to ask questions. He would push me to go to my professor. He would push me to go to any of the sessions that she held. Um, so he was, um, very supportive of it. (P7)

P7 initially felt "dumb" for asking questions in class but realized that others needed help as well:

> Um, at first I felt like, "Oh, okay, I'm dumb." Like, "Nobody, nobody's seeing

this." Or, "Nobody's, um, I guess everybody understands what's going on." But then after awhile I felt like, "Okay, well I'm not only doing myself a favor, I'm doing everybody else a favor, because they also don't understand." Um, so I felt pretty good after awhile. (P7)

P4 connected the importance of seeking help to her future professional role, recognizing that it would be important to ask for help as a nurse:

I'd study, I'd read, I'd ask people for help, um, which is another thing: You really shouldn't be afraid to ask questions. Because, um, when you're a nurse, you don't wanna like, do something wrong, because you were afraid to ask a question. You wanna make sure that everything is perfect, everything is okay, so whoever you're helping gets the best treatment. You don't wanna make a mistake just cuz you didn't ask a question for help. So I think, that's another thing people need to learn in college: Don't be afraid to ask questions, cuz there's people that are in a lot worse position than you and don't understand anything and will not ask a question. Like, they just won't raise their hand, they won't you know, even after class they won't go to the teacher, they won't ask their friends, cuz they don't wanna feel stupid, and that's understandable, but I mean, you're only making yourself more stupid if you don't ask for help. (P4)

P4 went to her professor after hesitating as well, but she didn't return after the professor told her she should have come sooner and should be able to understand the content as it was common sense. Students who did not receive the desired help from the professor (P2, P4, P6, P7) went to others for help. This approach was sometimes but not

always effective:

> I knew from the beginning that the teacher was just not, he wasn't gonna help. It
>
> wasn't, I couldn't go to him. So I had, I had to do it by myself or with people that
>
> I knew. Um, I went back to my. . .teacher in high school and asked her questions.
>
> Which, I mean, that just shows like teacher student communication is like the best
>
> thing. If you build that type of relationship you can go to them with questions,
>
> even when you're out of high school. You know, they'll still help you. They'll
>
> always be there for you. It's like one of the main things that teachers are meant
>
> for. So I went to her and asked her questions, and she explained things to me. And
>
> you know, she'd give me the practice tests that she used in her class, and those
>
> helped me. (P4)
>
> I wanted to fight my own battles, but it's just like what am I supposed to do now,
>
> so that's why I went to my friends, to my high school. . .teacher. . .to the online
>
> tutoring stuff like that, so it was just not comfortable at all. I felt very awkward, I
>
> felt, just very intimidated. (P4)

P4 was comfortable asking peers for help and remembered learning a lot when

she went to study groups or peer tutoring:

> Study groups helped a lot. Especially with my friends who were a lot, you know,
>
> they understood the material a lot better than I did and um, things that I couldn't
>
> understand, they would explain to me in terms that I understood, cuz some
>
> teachers they talk to you like you're, yeah we're adults, but they talk to you like
>
> we've been in school for like ever, and they use words that are like, way out of

our vocabulary. It just goes over our head, so to talk to my friends that are in the class and are doing better than I am, for them to explain things to me was a lot easier for me to understand things. (P4)

P4 and P6 both described reaching out to friends and receiving help from them after missing class due to health reasons:

My friends came and they, you know, came to my house and studied with me and told me what she said. And I was like, "You guys cannot leave until I understand this, because if I don't understand it while you're here, I'm definitely not gonna understand it when I'm by myself." (P4)

And I was, and I wasn't too freaked out about missing a whole week, because my friends, my study group, which I had mentioned last time, they were gonna help, they were gonna be taking notes for me and helping me out, and we had a lot of classes together, so I wasn't too worried about that, and when I got back they, they helped me with so much. They basically retaught me a week of work! (P6)

Importantly, each participant recognized the individual(s) from whom she learned best and asked them for help in the future. Having hesitated to approach professors the first semester, P5 discussed her transition in detail:

Coming in here, um, I noticed that there were a lot more office hours and some of my professors were, were even suggesting that you should always go ta your professor first, and go ta their office, and talk ta them, and um, get to know them. They'll, they can be helpful even after, for um, for letters of recommendation and references and things like that. (P5)

And I remember even one of my professors saying, "You're paying me. You're

um, you're my boss. You should, you should come into my office hours." And so

I thought that was, kinda funny. (P5)

And so at first I was nervous, and then I, I just went one day, and I um. . .after that

one time I wasn't really nervous or scared anymore. . .I noticed that it was really

helpful, as compared to, um, like some study groups, or the PASS sessions,

because with the professor. . .there wasn't any kind of confusion at all. It was just,

um, you know, the question and the answer. And there was no doubt that. . .the

answers I was getting were gonna be wrong, I guess. (P5)

P5's transition occurred after having positive experiences when going to a

professor's office for help. She expressed surprise at "just how easy it was, cuz I was

nervous and I, I guess I wasn't expecting it ta be like that, for, for them ta be that

welcoming or that helpful." P5 stated, "This semester I, I actually go straight to my

professor for like my math, my Intro to Probability and Statistics, I go to her first and that

really helps."

Although their opinions differed, P4 and P7 were both clear as to whom they

should reach out to as well:

And um [pause], I made sure that I did go up to my professor and talk to them if I

had any problems, because the PASS sessions didn't help me, and the only person

that I knew was really going to know how to teach me and um, how to explain

everything to me would be my own professor. (P7)

Um, I went to the PASS sessions, the, those girls, I think it's a lot easier for

people your own age, or people who have already taken the class to talk to you about the class and give you pointers about how to study. . . .She's real helpful. Um, she'd give us practice tests; she'd give us Power Points. She explained everything and anything that we needed to have explained. (P4)

Although P6 didn't reach out to professors or formal tutors, she reached out to her parents and recalled calling home and crying when she did poorly on exams or quizzes. She also reached out to peers for help and support. In addition to the academic help she received from peers, P6 valued the connection that she developed with her study group friends:

I kind of realized that I wasn't the only one who was, like, freaking out about it, that there was other people who were, I guess, going through the same thing I was, in the same classes, who were I guess, going for the same goal of becoming a nurse. (P6)

Summary of Seeking Help

In summary, although all six participants initially hesitated, avoided, or isolated themselves in regards to seeking help for academic challenges, each participant described the process by which she transitioned from those behaviors to reaching out for the needed help. Encouragement from parents to ask for help, letting go of pride, letting go of fears that they would be viewed negatively by peers, watching others ask for help, and feeling welcomed and encouraged by professors to seek help were significant to the transition. Participants who felt uncomfortable, unwelcomed, or belittled by a professor when they asked for help continued to avoid asking the professor for help, and they then reached out

selectively to other teachers, knowledgeable peers, or peer tutors.

The superordinate themes of transcending academic challenges and owning knowledge are presented next. Although the two superordinate themes are closely interrelated and both encompass the ways that participants responded effectively to academic challenges, they manifested as separate entities. Transcending academic challenges arose from themes of logistical courses of action taken by participants and their significant others. Owning knowledge arose from the internal processes by which participants made the new knowledge their own.

Transcending Academic Challenges

All participants described processes by which they transcended academic challenges. Their stories provided 74 level one codes to support the seven themes that formed the superordinate theme of transcending academic challenges. Themes included: (a) balancing, (b) employing strategies for success, (c) maximizing classroom learning, (d) studying effectively, (e) testing wisely, (f) thriving with support, and (g) taking on tests. These themes involved participants' responses to social, family, and personal issues that conflicted with academic obligations, their practices that fostered academic success, and their interactions with the individuals and structures that supported academic success.

The superordinate theme of transcending academic challenges served to answer the following subquestions:

2. What factors affect successful Latina students' experiences of and responses to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

3. How do successful Latina students respond to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

4. In what ways (if any) do successful Latina students seek help when facing academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

Participants varied in the ways by which they described transcending academic challenges. Despite their differences, each recalled responding effectively to her perceived difficulties and challenges. In some cases this response involved testing strategies, for some it involved balancing commitments or family obligations, and for others it involved making the most of class time to maximize learning. For all participants, studying effectively and thriving with support were inherent to transcending academic challenges. The seven themes that arose from 74 codes to support the superordinate theme are presented in Table 4 and are discussed in the pages that follow.

Table 4

Transcending Academic Challenges: Supporting Themes

Supporting theme	Number experiencing	Participants
Studying effectively	6	All
Thriving with support	6	All
Maximizing classroom learning	4	P4, P5, P6, P7
Balancing	4	P2, P4, P5, P7
Employing strategies for success	4	P3, P4, P5, P6
Testing wisely	2	P6, P7
Taking on tests	1	P3

Studying effectively. All participants described studying effectively, most often in response to their recognition of academic challenges or recognition of ineffective study strategies when facing academic challenges. The data that supported this theme often correlated closely with and in some cases overlapped with data that supported internalizing academic content. I separated the data by incorporating logistical strategies within this theme and assigning the more internal processes related to memory and comprehension to the theme of internalizing academic content.

All participants described studying early, consistently, and often. Four participants reported studying every day. P2 recalled her realization that daily studying was necessary:

> One time, I thought I knew the stuff, the material, and then I waited. The test was on a Monday and I waited 'til like Sunday, to study. And that was horrible. There was so much stuff to learn, and, or not to learn but just absorb and remember, and retain. And I just learned that, um, if you just do a little bit every day, it helps you more. And it's not as overwhelming as trying to cram all of that into one day, the day before the exam. (P2)

Similarly, P7 recognized that she had to begin studying at least two weeks prior to difficult exams such as those for Biochemistry I. P7 "kept consistent" by studying for her statistics class every day during a break between classes when she discovered the content posed a challenge for her:

> The one class that, that I thought that I had to really focus on was Statistics, and during that time I had a. . .break between two classes, and um, it was between my

English class and my Statistics class, so I would take that two and a half hour break strictly for Statistics, because. . .Statistics was very complicated for me. So, during that time I, all I would do was study Statistics. I would just be in the little cubicle in the back of the library, and all I would do is redo my assignments, redo them, redo my exams, and I excelled in that class. (P7)

Having scheduled her anatomy and physiology class on the same days as her biochemistry class, P4 learned how to space out her studying so as to be ready if two difficult exams fell on the same day or within the same week:

The main thing with time management, you can't expect to, like if you have a test in Anatomy and you have a test in Chemistry in the same week on different days, you can't expect to study for Anatomy the day before and study for Chemistry the day before. You need ta study, like, two weeks before that test if you know that you have a test. Like, if you don't know you have a test and it's like a week before, that's different. But if you know that on the syllabus it tells you, you know, you're gonna have a test on this day, like you need to be studying from the point you learn something to the day of the test. Because if you don't learn it then you're gonna have a difficult time the night before, cramming everything in at once. (P4)

P6 noted that studying only a few days prior to an exam was inadequate. She started studying at least a week in advance for every exam, and she would study every day. She described frantic studying the night before exams as "a waste" for her:

I don't like to wait 'til the night before tests to start studying or to start writing a paper, because. . .it's like such a waste, what a waste of time! You're not gonna learn anything the night before. I mean, yeah, I guess you could, but I mean, it's kinda late, like it's just like more of a refresher the night before, is like more of a refresher for me. (P6)

Studying in advance and consistently was clearly effective for P6, who met with me for her second interview the day prior to taking three final exams. She was calm and relaxed, noting that she planned to review a few things that evening and go to bed at a reasonable time. She elaborated on her study habits:

I remember last time I mentioned that I'll start studying like really early for a test. And, like, the night before if I don't know it, then like, or like, hours before, I usually don't really look over anything anymore, because I feel that, like, I've retained everything I could retain. And if I start bringing in new material, like, right before a test, and like, freaking out about it, I mean, I'm not, I just feel like I'm not gonna learn it anymore. Like I, you have to do everything before, and if you're trying to cram everything in like, hours before the test, or minutes before the test sometimes, I think you just confuse yourself. And that's what happens when you, I guess, over study, like your mind is tired. I mean, like sometimes, I'm like, "Oh!" I'm like, "My brain is fried." And, I think. . .you just have to space it out between a few days. You can't just do it all at once, because your brain gets really tired, and that's how I feel sometimes, and I don't like to get to that point. (P6)

In addition to allowing enough time for consistent studying, each participant described at least one additional technique that proved effective for her. P6 and P7 frequently sequestered themselves in the library to avoid outside distractions. P5 and P7 used one to two hour time periods between classes to go to the library and study. P5 and P7 reported that it was essential to read the textbook religiously. P5 found it saved time in the long run to take her own notes on the readings:

> I know one time I didn't do my own readings over a chapter, and it was really hard going back and trying to find each term in there and it took me twice as long as it would of if I already had my own notes. (P5)

Additionally, P5 took short breaks during long periods of study as recommended by a professor in order to maintain her focus. P2, P4, P6, and P7 made note cards in anatomy and physiology courses with voluminous amounts of basic information to be memorized. Although some people accused P3 of studying too much, she determined how much was enough:

> So, a lot of people tell me I study too much, because I take the time and, you know, go and rewrite my notes, or retype my study guides, or reword something, or, read it throughout the week, so that's, I think that's where they say that I study too much. And if it's, if they're talking about time-wise, then maybe, yes, but um, I don't think, concept, it, it's not too much. (P3)

All participants reported working with a study group at some point. Five reported that the study groups were effective. Participant 5, however, described peers studying separately while together in a physical space. Finding that the others were not as engaged

as she, P5 blocked them out:

I'll study, you know for a couple, for like about an hour and then I'll take a break.

I'll go right back to it. I was actually in a study group with a bunch of my friends,

and. . .they all had their music on, and it was really loud, and it just kind of

bothered me, so I went and got my headphones and I started listening to some

classical music. I just kind of blocked them out, and then I got up and got a snack

and they were like, "You're done?" "No, I'm taking a break. I've got 10 more

minutes left." And I looked at my clock. And they were like, "You're so

organized. I hate it!" [Laughed] So, yeah. I think that [the classical music] was,

that was another idea of my professor too. (P5)

Among the five participants who found study groups to be effective at some point,

three described specific strategies employed to maximize the productivity of the group.

P4 kept the same study partners, and P7 planned ahead to keep her group focused. Their

methods differed significantly from simply allowing a study group to happen as had been

the case for P5:

I never changed the people that I studied with. It was always the same people. I

think that if I would of studied with different people every time, it would have

been a little bit harder, just because I don't know their study habits, I don't know

what they do to study. Um, so I kept it within the same people every time. (P4)

I thought that was more effective than for us to collaborate and be like, "Okay,

well we're gonna have a study session," but when the study session comes around

we don't know what to study. So, we just made it to where if you have questions

or if you don't quite understand something then we'll get together and we'll, we'll go over it so that we have something instead of just sitting here and talking most of the time. We would actually have something to study. (P7)

P2 selectively chose her study group as part of her process of transcending academic challenges. This theme overlapped with the theme of experiencing academic awareness, as P2 questioned her abilities and compared herself to others during the process. P2's description provided an example of the close connections between facing academic challenges, seeking help, and transcending academic challenges.

In the beginning, oh it was intimidating, like a lot of pressure on me. Like, they're counting on me, and stuff, and like I didn't, I didn't know where, I didn't really know where their level of knowledge in Biochem was, so I was just like, "Oh my gosh. What if they're way above me? Or what if they're way below me? And then, if they're way below me then I'm not gonna get anywhere with these group of people [laughs]; it's just gonna hold me back." And I said, "If they're way above me, I'm not gonna let them study to the full extent that they, that they can and want to, because I'm gonna be holding 'em back with questions." So, it was just, I was a little intimidated of that, but it was good to know that we were all kinda spread out in our knowledge of biochem. (P2)

Thriving with support. The theme of thriving with support was essential to transcending academic challenges for all participants as well. Participants reported staying calm and focused, and being able to maintain their academic priorities as a result of the support and encouragement they received from a variety of people and groups.

Participants reported receiving support from significant others (P2, P4), friends from campus organizations in which they participated (P2, P7), learning communities (P2), peer assisted study sessions (PASS; P2), parents (P2, P3, P5, P6), professors (P3, P4, P5, P7), roommate (P5), sister (P4), and study group friends (P2, P4, P6, P7). This ongoing support that assisted participants to thrive in the daily work of college level academics is distinguished from the encouragement that fostered perseverance.

P3 considered her parents and professors to be her external sources of support when encountering academic challenges:

> I think, um, just having that determination and that help, that support that I got from professors, that I got from [pause] my parents or from myself, um, just helped me to keep, just to stay calm, basically, cuz. . .I'm a person that gets very stressed out. Um, very overwhelmed, and, and I don't, I let it get to me. (P3)
>
> And that's one thing that settles my heart, just that I know that if I, ever, you know, do have trouble, I can call them, or I can find someone to help me. And just, they, they, the professors here, they, bond with you. They actually take the time to know you, take the time to learn your learning style. For instance, my microbiology, he, he took the time ta actually, learn our names. (P3)

All participants reported receiving verbal encouragement, support, and study reminders from family members or significant others. The detailed stories shared by participants, however, most often involved friends on campus or professors, as these individuals provided the majority of concrete assistance and support.

Four participants shared anecdotes about experiences with one or more professors

that remained in their minds long after they occurred. In each case, the encounter served to foster success in the face of academic challenges for the student. In several cases, the interaction occurred after the participant decided to seek help for an academic challenge. These experiences encouraged the participants to seek help from professors as necessary in the future. P3 received the necessary tools to learn from a professor:

Um, she gave me, she just kind of, guided me through my textbook. . . .she just told me, "You know, use all these key points." Um, "Look back on the outlines. Me-, try and learn the meaning of what you're doing. Try and find the, the most important parts and, you know. . .and the subtitles. . .just try and find what screams important to you. And if that's what you think is important and if that's what's on my slides, then work hard and learn that." That was another thing, she had a lot of pow-, she always used a Power Point, um, so that helped me also. She. . .would also put her Power Points on Blackboard, so I was able ta look back at that also, with my book. Along side of me, you know, and just use that as a, as a guide. And, so, so that's basically what she told me. She said, "I can't; only you can teach yourself. I give you what you need to learn it; I give you a way to learn it. If it's not the way you can learn, there's different other ways that you can do this. . . .but I'm just giving you a foot in the door. . .you have to go all the way in on your own." So, basically she was just there for emotional, like, "rahing" [laughed], just like, "Yeah, you can do it." [Pause] Um, but along with that, I mean she gave me the, the, those tools ta, to use. And just, I guess, offered them to me. It was up to me to take them. . .yeah that's, pretty much it. (P3)

P4 acknowledged that she should have asked for help sooner, yet a professor welcomed her nonjudgmentally:

Um, when I went there, she was very open, you know, she welcomed me with open arms, and she sat me down and she's like, "Okay, well, you know, what don't you understand, and we'll go back and look at it. And if you don't understand it now, that doesn't mean you won't understand it later." Which, sometimes it's not really true, but she's just tryin' ta be nice. So um, she's like, "If you need help, like I'll get someone to help you. I'll get you a tutor. Um, you know these are my office hours. You can come in whenever you need to." Just, very like, very sweet, very genuine, I think. For her ta, I mean, you're a professor, I'm sure you have, like, a lot of things to do. Like, making tests and grading things, and going to meetings and whatnot. So for her ta like take time and actually help me as much as I needed help was really, like, welcoming and very, like, it warmed like, my heart, just cuz she was able to have a connection with her student and not be like, "I can't believe you don't understand this." Or, "Why didn't you ask me?" Cuz a lot a teachers, like, they'll get mad at you like, "Why didn't you ask a question in class if you didn't understand it? Why didn't you stop me?" She didn't do that, she was just like, "Okay, well, let's go back and look at it, and let's go back and go into more detail. Maybe then you'll understand it." So, for her actually to take the time to not, she didn't spend all her time getting mad at me or telling me, "You know, you should of came in, you should of did this, you should of done that." She was just like, to her it was kind of like, she knew I

should of done it, but she wasn't gonna make me feel bad about it. So, she just

was really helpful as a teacher. So I, I recommend her. I think everyone should

take her. Her class is hard, but you end up learning a lot. I know there's a lot a

classes that you go to and you don't, and like everything you learn you don't

remember, like, in the next semester, but like I think her class, you remember a

lot, more than you think you do. If someone was to ask you something, I'm sure

you could answer it. But, her, like her role as a teacher played a big amount in my

success in her class. (P4)

P4 felt she could go to this professor for support beyond assistance with challenging

content:

For me, my anatomy teacher, she was very helpful. . . .I knew. . . . I could go to

her if I needed her. . . .when I didn't understand material I'd go to her and. . .you

know, "Okay well let's go back to this point when you started to not understand

it. And we'll go from there." For her to be able to sit down and talk to me and you

know not be frustrated with me and not be, you know, upset that I didn't

understand the material, it meant a lot to be able to have that type of relationship

with your teacher where you didn't have to worry about them, you know, judging

you, being well you know, only if you'd study more, you'd understand it. Well,

sometimes you can study for hours and you'd still not understand it. (P4)

P5 reported positive encounters with more than one professor. She was

particularly impressed when a professor cared enough to ask about her life outside of his

classroom:

I mean she, my teacher, um, she starts at the beginning and you know if we have

any questions and if some of us have never seen it before she'll go back and

explain that. And that's the same one that if I do have questions I go into her

office for. So that helps. (P5)

He, he asked me um, you know, what I was studying and how I was doing and

where I was from, and you know, he shared, um, he even asked me about my

family and then he shared some information about his family, and it was just, um,

you know, really comfortable. (P5)

P7 recalled more than one professor who helped her to transcend academic

challenges within the classroom and during office hours. She found professors who

offered real life examples of theoretical concepts, who provided step by step instructions

for difficult problems, and who allowed time for questions during class to be particularly

helpful:

The good thing with that professor, though, is that she brought, um, real life

situations into her lecture, so that helped a lot. That helped me understand more,

what she was talking about. Um, she would also talk about her personal

experiences, and what she was teaching. So that also made it. . .a bit more

interesting. Um, I really loved the class. (P7)

And she was always very friendly and very inviting. So when we went to her the

first time, um, she um, she welcomed us. And, she was like, "Okay, well what

exactly, um, do you need help in?" And um, we would ask her and she would of

course, like, help us out. And she would explain every, everything to us. Um, she

wouldn't only explain the problem, but she would explain why. Like, she would explain why that is the answer and why that has to be the answer. And that helped me a lot. Um, understand more what we were learning. Um, I felt, I didn't feel intimidated at all. I didn't feel, like, dumb for asking a question. I never felt dumb for asking questions. (P7)

And um, he pretty much explained everything to me, um, many of the questions that I had gotten wrong. And um, the good thing about him was that after each exam, he would post up the answers on Blackboard. He wouldn't just post up the answers. He would also post um, the ex-, the steps ta how he got the answer. So that helped a lot, and that's how I would, I would study. Um, the thing with this professor, is, after that first exam, he saw that many students weren't doing as well as he thought. Um, so, he started giving out reviews before the exam. (P7)

Um, that was very helpful, because he was also very welcoming, and he was willing to teach. Um, so, I really understood what he was saying, because he wasn't speaking to the class as a whole, he was speaking to me, and answering the questions that pertained to me and the problems that I had. Um, I really liked it. (P7)

He was the type of professor who would always have a smile on his face, and he would always, um, make a joke. . .out of something he was trying to teach, um, or he would say something like, "Well, all you have to do is pick up the hood, roll up your sleeves, and get in there and work on it." He would just say some little things and. . .he was very friendly, so I felt like it was okay ta go up to him and ask him

questions, because he was willing to help, and he was there. (P7)

All participants appreciated professors who welcomed them into the classroom and into their space. This concept was even more pronounced within the theme of valuing relationships, which will be discussed under the superordinate theme of living out values and beliefs.

Participants credited friends for keeping them on track and assisting them to transcend academic challenges as well. Friends often were members of an informal study group or a formal campus group with the given participant. Stating that she was "putting my 110% into all my classes," P2 credited her friends from campus ministry for keeping her on track and encouraging her academically:

The people that definitely helped me cope, and um, get my priorities straight, were my friends from campus ministry. . .They, I had never been a spiritual person before that, and that really, like, really humbled me. It was a humbling experience to have those type of friends. . . .they. . .let me see life in a different way. And um, they really helped me with those challenges of biochemistry and life. . .it was just nice to have supportive friends. . . .nice to have the friends in Biochem that I could go to for Biochem and then it was really nice having my campus ministry friends, to go to talk to, and just for them to be there for me. (P2)

P7 became a leader in a student organization, and described the support she received from those friends. "The friends I've made here so far, um, actually um, exceed that expectation of mine. They are there for me. They do give me advice. . .it's like another family for me" (P7).

P5 and her roommate kept one another on track regarding academics:

I would tell her that um, my, like some of my grades were slipping, and after that she'd, whenever she'd come in and I was watching TV, she'd just look at me, and all she had to do was look at me [laughs], and I'm like, "Okay. I'll study." And I'd turn the TV off, and you know, she'd just laugh and whatever, and then we'd both do our work and sometimes I'll do that with her when she's on the phone, and, "Have you finished your paper yet?" "No. Okay." Things like that. (P5)

After she missed a week of school due to illness, P6's friends helped her to catch up on content:

Oh my gosh! I mean, I mean in some of the, like for stats, it, cuz I had stats last semester, and it wasn't until the final that, I was like, "Oh my gosh, there's a whole bunch of information that I don't know at all!" And I was like, "What am I gonna?" I was like, "I don't know it!" I'm like, I was freakin' out. . . .And they're like, "No, okay, we're gonna help you." And they really sat down with me and explained to me, like, what I had missed. And some stuff I got online, um, like for Nutrition. She has, like Power Points on line that I looked at. But, for Stats, no my study group, they taught me. They retaught it to me, cuz I had no idea. And I was, and they knew I was so sick. And they, and I was like, "Oh, I'm gonna miss so much school!" They're like, "Don't worry about it! When you get back, we'll help you. Like, we're going to class too. We're gonna learn." And they helped me. For sure. (P6)

Well first of all they're like, "Don't worry." I mean, I remember them telling me

like, "It's fine. Don't worry about it. We're, we're gonna help you, and [pause]

basically we went, we would get the little study rooms as well, with the dry erase

boards, or we'd get in our study rooms in the dorms. They have like these little

windows that you can write on. So we'd, I mean they'd work it out. They were

graph-like problems. And usually like, they'll do one, and then I'll go. Then we'll

go to the next one, and the next problem. Then we'll work, and I'll work it out

with them together, and then I'd go back later and like, redo 'em, see if I could, or

I'd do the next one by myself, and see if I could do that. (P6)

The importance of relationships is threaded throughout multiple superordinate

themes. Although it will factor most prominently within the superordinate theme of living

out values and beliefs, it arose repeatedly throughout the theme of thriving with support.

Several participants reported that relationships in which they helped one another were

crucial to transcending academic challenges. P6 described the importance of peer

relationships clearly:

I have two friends that were really, they, they went with me, like last semester and

the semester before, especially my friend. . .we got kind of close, and we had so

many classes together and she was also gonna be a nursing major, and, um, we

studied together, and we were able to really focus and we got about the same

grades every time. So we really helped each other out and when we, when we

helped each other, we both, I guess, became successful, and like, we were able to

relate to each other really well. And then some other, another girl joined the

group, and we would study together and that helped me a lot. (P6)

Maximizing classroom learning. Four participants described specific strategies by which they got the most out of each classroom experience. Although the strategies are well known to teachers, they may not be intuitive to all students. These successful students, however, rapidly adopted them in order to transcend academic challenges.

Participants variously described getting enough sleep to be alert in class, arriving in time for class, studying just prior to class, listening and taking good notes during class, paying close attention to the professor, and engaging with the professor. P6 summarized a number of these strategies:

> You have to start paying attention in class, like, you can't be falling asleep. And I remember when I was in Biochem I used ta go ta sleep, like I'm like the night owl. I go to sleep like at 3 o'clock in the morning most days, but I'd kind of, I'd go to sleep early and I'd get up and get my 8 hours, so I could concentrate in class. Cuz it was, I mean in high school, like I wouldn't go to sleep and I mean, some classes, I'm like, "Oh, I don't even want to go. I'm not gonna go. I'm gonna miss today." But um, if it's something that's difficult, you really, I know that I have ta really apply myself and actually prepared for whatever was gonna be taught that day. So, I guess instead of just going to class, just to show up and get attendance, you have to, I guess be a part of the class. . . .And I realized that there's certain things that, certain classes and, that you have ta, you know, be there ready to learn and like in class is really important. I mean, just as important as studying the night before a test. . . .that was something I realized when I was here. (P6)

Well, of course we'd take notes in class, and I mean, that's a class like y-, I never, I never missed that class once, ever. Um, because. . .I couldn't deal with the fact of having to go and relearn a whole class, cuz it's like. . .every day progressed on the day before, so I was like, "Man, I'm gonna, basically I'm gonna miss like two classes," because I'm gonna be trying to catch up, and I just didn't want to have to do that. (P6)

Importantly, P7 never left class without ensuring that she understood what the professor had covered. She asked for clarification as needed prior to leaving:

Um, I would, I would go up to him and I would ask him questions. Or he would ask, um, before we left if we understood everything, and I would be usually the one who raised my hand and be like, "Well, I didn't understand what this meant." Or, "Can you explain this a little bit more for me?" And, um, other students would leave, but I would make sure I, I understood what he said before I took off, because after I took off, um, I would forget. I didn't wanna forget. . . .So I would write down what he was saying, and I would, um, make a note, "Okay, well I need to study this the next, um, the next time around. And that's pretty much what I would do. (P7)

Balancing. Four participants engaged in balancing in order to transcend academic challenges. Participants reported balancing academics with campus activities, significant others, friends, family commitments, rest, and work. In order to balance all their demands, P4, P5, and P7 found small blocks of time to study in the library between classes, thus using time that would have otherwise been wasted.

P2 found herself in the position of hearing about problems that her parents faced with her younger sister even though she had moved far from home to attend college. After performing poorly on an exam for which she had abandoned her studies to deal with a family problem, P2 set boundaries with her parents in order to be faithful to her academic endeavors:

But one of the things was, was that um, how do I say it, like, "Not that I don't care what's going on at home, it's just, some things you shouldn't tell me, because that's an added stressor and it's just like, you just tell me things that I have no control over, and it's just an added stress, and I have a lot of stress as it is right now with school" and um, [pause] like, I tried contacting my sister and I couldn't and like, I texted all her friends, and at that point, like, I stopped studying, and I started worrying about that, and then um, at that moment, I'm like, I was just furious and I told my parents, like, "You know what, when certain things happen, can you, can you just please wait or ask what's going on in my life before you just flat out tell me?" And um, I, I feel bad for the things that I said to my mom, but. . .I had a really big exam the next morning, and I don't think I performed as well as I should of on the exam, because that was in the back of my mind. (P2)

And it's just like, "Okay mom, some of those things should stay between my dad and you. . . .you guys need to keep that between yourselves." And um, I think that was very hard. And a lot, a lot of times I felt myself being the parent to my parents. (P2)

P4 noted that time management was one of her most significant challenges during her second semester. Having scheduled Anatomy and Physiology, Chemistry, and Public Speaking on the same days, she occasionally had to take two challenging exams and give a speech on the same day. Although she became proficient at planning and preparing ahead, she noted that she would be more careful when scheduling classes in the future. Additionally, she was aware that time to herself was essential to her success:

> And in between find time to, you know, relax. You need time to yourself. You can't just study, study, study all the time and be okay. You need to find time to sleep, cuz you'll stay up and study for hours in the night, and I've had times where I've studied 'til like 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning, and I'd have class, like, at 7:30. And that's just cuz I'd study, like, weeks in advance, I'd still study the day before really late. So, you hafta find time ta sleep. You hafta sometimes find time ta eat, which sounds really silly, but when you're in school, like, and you're constantly, "Oh, I have this class, and I have this class, and I have ta study, and I have ta go do my research paper." Like, you don't have time ta eat, even if it is like a grab and go type thing. Like, you're constantly doing something. (P4)

P4 offered advice regarding time management to all freshmen:

> It was really time management, and I think that's one thing that everybody needs to learn when they come to college, cuz if you think that you have time ta study for an hour, go out, go be with your friends, do anything but school, you're very wrong [laughs]. You're very, like you, if you wanna get by with just, like, a C, then you know, more power to you, but I mean, if you're paying all this money to

be in school, you should take full advantage of all the time that you have, like during your breaks, after school, before school, on the weekends, cuz people think, "Oh, it's the weekend. I don't have to study, really." You can have a test on Monday, and you have to study all weekend, it's not fun, so I think learning to manage your time. (P4)

P4 and P7 described the most significant time management challenges. Both lived at home. P4 did not work, but she provided a significant amount of assistance to her family and engaged in weekly volunteer work in addition to taking 16 or 17 credit hours each semester. P7 worked more than 30 hours each week in a management position in addition to her full time course load and described the balancing necessary to raise a D+ in a course to an A:

Yeah, after I got this D, um I spoke ta, ta my boyfriend, I spoke to my boss, I spoke to my dad. Um, because my dad, he's not the type to yell at you if you do something wrong or if um, you don't exceed his expectations. He'll sit you down, and he'll give you this really long lecture. Um [laughs], so, so I spoke to him about it, and I told him about my decisions and what would, what would happen. I spoke to my boss, and I let her know that there's gonna be days where I'm gonna have to take off for this specific class. I told my boyfriend that there might be days where we won't be able to spend time together, because I really needed to dedicate myself to this class. . . .I just told them. . . ."You know what, like, I really need to. . .do something about this. I really need to stop and study." And, they were all okay with it, which is surprising, cuz like, I, I tend to assume things, and

I was just assuming the first time around when I should of just spoken to everybody and told everybody everything. (P7)

P4 and P7 described the most highly structured approaches to balancing competing demands:

I know like when I got my schedule for the spring semester, um, when I got it, I automatically started, like, writing things in on that schedule, you know, from this time to this time I have class, so from this time to this time I'll find some time to eat, and then I'll find time to do my homework. And then from this time to this time, you know, I'll go to sleep, or you know, you also have to help your parents if you live at home. So, I have to pick up my sister, or I would have to go to the grocery store, so, oh and I volunteer with the Red Cross on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so I have to fit that in, so I had to write everything out. I had to, you know, set a time for everything, and I followed it, and it worked really well for me. Cuz if it's kinda like, you don't kinda have a plan for what you're gonna do during the day, you waste so much time. Like, "Oh, I can do that later. Oh, I can do that later. Let me just do this right now." Like, later comes, and you're like, "Oh my goodness, like, I'm so tired. I don't wanna stay up to do this." So if you do it all, like when you say you're gonna do it and you follow your own schedule, then you'll get a lot of things done. (P4)

At the time of her interviews, P7 had outlined her projected schedule for the following fall, which was three months away. She carved out time for studying and employment prior to accepting a leadership position in a campus organization.

Employing strategies for success. Four participants described engaging in a variety of general strategies that allowed them to transcend academic challenges. Strategies included staying ahead in course work (P4, P6), figuring out a given professor's expectations and remaining with the same professor in a subsequent course if possible (P3, P4), taking better notes both in and out of the classroom (P3), using material in one class to improve performance in other classes (P4, P5), drawing from advanced placement and dual credit experience gained in high school (P5), focusing on current manageable issues (P4), deciding to live alone to minimize distractions (P5), and working harder because of a sense of competition (P5, P6).

P3 and P6 described always staying ahead of course work during their first year of college in order to manage their stress and avert academic difficulties whenever possible:

So that, that kind of scared me, um, um but I think just continuing on through that first semester, I was a little more, um, calm as it went, because I kind of test, I guess you could say I tested what I was supposed to do. I tried ta stay on time, and me, I would, I would think to myself, "Okay well maybe if I start a week ahead, you know." If I start a week ahead I'll have it done, and I'll be able to go and ask for help. And if it's wrong I can have enough time to fix it. . . .I think I stressed myself out a little, trying ta, get things done all at one time. . . .Like I had months to do one assignment, and I was trying to do it at that exact time with all the other assignments that I was tryin' to do. So I think you know, um, doing that kind of stressed me out, but in a way it was good, because it taught me how ta, manage my time, how ta. . .be like, "Okay, well I have, this is my deadline for, for this

assignment, so I'll, I'll do this assignment first, and let's see how much time it

takes me to do this one, and then start on the next one, start on the next one." I

learned not to. . .get ahead of myself, so um, that kind of calmed the stress down

also. And it took away that, that fear of not being able to handle things. I think

um, in doing so, the next semester was a little bit more easier. (P3)

Because I don't like being, I'm really big on not procrastinating, like, especially

in college, I do not, I do not like the feeling of having one day to do everything so

usually in all my classes I'm never, I'm always a little bit early or I have just like

a little bit to do before it's time to turn everything in. (P6)

P4 described reaping benefits beyond what she had expected from her public

speaking class, which she initially feared. She was able to use what she learned to

transcend challenges in other courses:

I know how to do a perfect outline and make sure that everything is the way it's

supposed to be, so I think it helped me with my other classes, because he showed

us ways, you know, "This how you're supposed to pay attention to how people

talk to you. They're doing it in a specific format, so in the end you'll understand

what they're saying. They're not gonna go all over the place, they do it for a

reason. You may not think they're doing it for a reason. You're just like, 'What

are they talking about?' But in the end if you go back and reflect on what they're

saying, you know, 'That's why they did it this way,' or 'I understand now what he

was talking about.'" So my speech teacher helped me a lot with my other classes,

especially when I had to give presentations. I just pictured him in my mind, cuz

he would tell us how to format everything, how to talk to people, how to reflect

your voice, your body language, how everything affects the way your audience

will respond. . . .it helped me a lot. I think that was my favorite class out of all my

classes and that was the class I was most afraid of. (P4)

Insightfully, P4 described breaking the overwhelming whole of her educational

experience into manageable parts:

I think, like, one of the biggest things I learned from that is that you can't just

focus so much on the future, because if you do that, you're gonna be too obsessed

with, "What if this happens? What if that happens?" It's not about that. It's about,

"What can I do now?" And, "What does it mean now?" And what, "How

important is it to me right now?" Because if I focus in the long run, then I'm

gonna be too obsessed with that, and I'm gonna be tryin' to do everything to make

everything better in the future. So I have to just focus on, you know, making

grades for this semester and getting the highest GPA I can this semester, so it will

go towards what happens in the future, cuz I don't know what's gonna happen in

the future, so I think that was one of the biggest things I learned. (P4)

A sense of competition, which arose within the superordinate themes of facing

academic challenges and recognizing emotional response, resurfaced within the theme of

employing strategies for success. Two participants noted that a sense of competition was

functional to their transcendence of academic challenges:

Um, I guess it, it, it drives me to do a little better, because I know that there is a

little competition, um, and, you know, that I am gonna be competing for a spot, so

that, that kinda drives me ta, to do better, and I know I hafta, you know, get a

good, ah, score or a good grade in this course. (P5)

So, that was another thing with, the study group, we, we wouldn't really compete

against each other, but you know we, like at the end of the day we'd be like

"Well, like I got this," and "I got this," and we'd be like "Oh, con-," we were

never like, "Ha, ha, ha." We were more like, "Congratulations!" you know, but it

was kinda like, you know, you don't want to get the worst grade out of everyone!

So, I guess competition's kind of a good thing when it comes ta getting stuff

done. So I guess that's, being in a study group was pretty, it helped me a lot, with

that. (P6)

Testing wisely. Although test taking factored significantly within the

superordinate theme of facing academic challenges, themes related to effective test taking

strategies arose in only three participants' stories. Testing wisely best described

approaches used by two participants. P7 described looking through tests quickly at the

beginning to strategize how to best take them. P6 described thinking about how a

professor might test the concepts as she was learning them.

Taking on tests. P3's approach to effective testing was best described as taking

on tests. Having suffered from testing fears for years, P3 recounted her two-year journey

from failing her first college exam to performing well on a high stakes standardized exam

and being accepted into the nursing program. P3 began to prepare for exams in advance,

recalling that as soon as she took an exam in any given course she would begin preparing

for the next one. P3 viewed her performance on the standardized nursing school entrance exam as a turning point for her.

Although only described by one participant, taking on tests is included because it was highly significant to P3's academic success. Additionally, testing is an integral component of nursing school admission and progression, as well as nursing licensure. Taking on tests could possibly be relevant for other prenursing students with similar test-taking fears.

> And um, I think that's how I kind of started getting back at my fear, cuz I was like, "No, I'm tryin ta find loopholes around this." Like, I'm tryin ta, I started making it a point to be like, to tell myself, "No, I'm gonna get through this. There has ta be a way that I can show myself to, show myself how to take on this class, or take on this test." And I think it was just, having that, those failures, those little obstacles in the previous classes and just learning from them, but I had to actually, like, admit that, no, I wasn't doing something right. I wasn't approaching it the way I was supposed to, or the way that it was expected. Mmm [pause], and, I think that's pretty much it [pause]. I mean it's helped me so far. I was pretty surprised when I took the HESI that I was stressed out about it, but I just kinda went with the flow. I asked around, um, asked professors for help, um, mainly in anatomy. I went to my old professor and asked him, I was like, "Do you have any study guides that. . .I can copy? Or, "Do you have any suggestions of how I can take on this test?" Cuz um, I had heard horror stories about the anatomy part of the HESI. So, I just went back and, and just ut-, utilized my professors. Um,

especially in anatomy, and I did really good in anatomy in the HESI. . .I wasn't as

stressed out about the HESI as I was for just like, individual, exams, which

surprised me. And I think when I took it, I, and I realized that I wasn't scared, um,

I think that's, that was my turning point, I was like, "Whoa, this is a very

important exam for me, and I'm not freaking out, I'm not crying myself to sleep,

over it." I went ta, you know I studied all day long, scanned through some things,

went to bed at an appropriate time, slept all night and was ready for the test. And

I think that's when I just kinda realized; I was like, "Hmm." I was pretty proud of

myself that I wasn't freaked out, so I guess just having all those falls before, I

guess just made everything easier. (P3)

And um, during the test I was pretty calm. I went with the harder subjects first,

cuz I knew I was more alert. I did my sciences first. Um, I did anatomy first, and I

did chemistry, and then I went to, um, the grammar. And I noticed once I was

reading so many things I started getting lazy. Um, and started getting tired and

just distracted. Like, people were moving, like they had rolling chairs, and just the

minor, smallest squeak of the chair would just like throw me off, like, I was just

starting to be very, I guess I started getting real disoriented, just kind of, not

comfortable, and so I kinda stopped for a little bit, kinda stared at the screen for

awhile, and then, um, after I calmed down, um, I went back, I was still a little

tired, but afterwards I was just like, "No, I need ta finish this test, and I need ta do

my best." I just kept telling myself, "I need ta do my best no matter what it takes."

And then I started getting a little confident, more confident, just telling myself

that I was gonna do okay. Um, I was kind of up and down throughout the whole
test. Didn't take me as long as I thought it would, and afterward I was very
relieved. I kinda felt like a weight off my shoulders. Just like, okay I did it
already. Got my scores and I did better than I had anticipated. Yeah, and, I was
really happy afterwards. (P3)

Summary of Transcending Academic Challenges

Participants transcended academic challenges by studying effectively, thriving
with support, balancing, maximizing classroom learning, employing strategies for
success, testing wisely, and taking on tests. According to participants' stories,
transcending academic challenges was closely related to but separate from owning
knowledge. Owning knowledge emerged from themes related to personal habits,
attitudes, and practices of participants that fostered long-term ownership of new
knowledge. Owning knowledge follows.

Owning Knowledge

The superordinate theme of owning knowledge was common to all participants.
Three themes inherent to the superordinate theme arose from participants' interviews.
Themes included: (a) internalizing academic content, (b) assuming ownership of learning,
and (c) connecting information. The superordinate theme of owning knowledge helped to
answer the following subquestions:

3. How do successful Latina students respond to academic challenges in
prerequisite nursing courses?

4. In what ways (if any) do successful Latina students seek help when facing

academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

The three themes that arose from 62 level one codes to support the superordinate theme

are presented in Table 5 and are discussed in the pages that follow.

Table 5

Owning Knowledge: Supporting Themes

Supporting theme	Number experiencing	Participants
Internalizing academic content	6	All
Assuming ownership of learning	4	P2, P4, P6, P7
Connecting information	1	P5

Internalizing academic content. All participants described detailed processes by

which they internalized new academic content. P3 described strategies that helped

information "actually get into my head," which led to use of the terminology internalizing

academic content to describe this theme. P3's description of understanding and being

able to explain a complex concept "on my own" and being personally comfortable with

it, assisted with development of the terminology owning knowledge to describe the

superordinate theme:

Just being able to explain it on my own without having to go back and read about

it. Like if. . .for example, if somebody were to ask me about a certain thing, if I

was really comforta-, comfortable with it, I would be able to tell them right then

and there, "Oh, it's this". . . .I think I know when I'm comfortable with something

when I don't have to stress out about it, when I don't have to go back and review.

And like, in Micro, my final, I really didn't have to go back and review many

things, because I was comfortable with what was going on. And it reflected in my

grade, because in my final I got a 94. I only missed four questions out of 50, and

like, we, we would leave a test for example, and my friends would be like, "Oh

my God, that was so hard. What was the answer to this?" And I would be able to

tell 'em right, right then and there what it was, but I think it was just because that

previous test I got a 90, I got an A on the third test also, the test before the final.

And I was just comfortable with. . .what they were asking of me. Ah, and I didn't

have to stress out about it, I scanned through the material, but I didn't have to be

there. . .tryin' ta memorize every single thing. So I think that's what. . .I would,

you know, define me being as personally comfortable with something, just

something that I didn't have to go back on. (P3)

Participants introspectively considered how they learned new material. All

recognized the importance of understanding the foundational concepts upon which new

information built. P2 succinctly described the importance of breaking complex

information into manageable parts:

Instead of looking at, looking at it as a whole, I, I can um, just look at it in little

parts. Okay, let's break it down. And it's easier to get through a problem if you

break it down than if you look at the whole thing. Sometimes that works. (P2)

P3 and P7 verbalized their need to understand foundational concepts in detail:

I've noticed a trend, um, for example, in science, in Biochem, Biochem I,

Biochem II, and in Microbiology, that what I've learned at the beginning is going

to keep following and it's going to keep devel-, developing, so if I didn't really

grasp it at the beginning, it's gonna affect me at the end. . . .which I felt I learned

the hard way, because um, Biochem I, I did horribly in, got a C in it, um, but

when I entered Biochem II, the first part of it was a review of Biochem I. First

exam that I got in Biochem II wasn't that high. Therefore, I can put two and two

together and say, "Okay, well, since I didn't, I didn't do very well in Biochem I,

it's gonna show, if we're reviewing it in Biochem II." So um, what I had to do

was just basically go and review. (P3)

I didn't realize that I had to understand many vo-, vocabulary, like um, London

forces or, just anything that, in that class, everything builds up. When, when you

know one little thing, it builds up. That's how you, that's how you know the

second thing, because of the first thing, and I didn't realize that. Um, so when the

final came, I didn't realize that in order to know how to do um, one problem, you

needed to know how to do all of the little problems. Um, and that was just my,

my, my biggest thing, and that's how I learned it in the second, the second time I

took it. Because the first time, I didn't realize, and I do remember the first, that

first class, he had told us, "You're either gonna drop or you're gonna excel,

because in this class it's all about, um, keeping up. Because if you don't keep up,

you're gonna fail." Because right here, it's, it's like a, it's like a ladder. You have

to go one step at a time, because in order to get to the second step, you have to

know how to get to the first step. And [pause] I, I had never had a professor like

that or a class like that, so it was just really hard for me. Um, and, that's why the second time I took it, I made sure that before I got to, the, the second part of something, I knew for sure the first part or the first section of the book. (P7)

Um [cleared throat], well I find it that not only in that class, but in any class. . .you end up finding out that your finals are a review of everything you've learned. And, especially in your science courses and in your math courses, it's, you have to learn everything from the very beginning before you can move on. Because if you don't know everything from the very beginning, then it's hard to catch up, it's hard. . .to really learn what's coming next. . . .if you really want to get that A in your final. . .you really have to know your material. And, I found that in my, in that Biochem class, um, that's how I got that A on my final, is because I knew from the very beginning, I started focusing myself from the very beginning. (P7)

Labeling the first day she encountered new information as the most important day in her learning process, P4 also emphasized the need to understand new material from the very beginning:

You have to make sure you understand what's going on, cuz if you don't understand it that day, then you're not gonna understand it later on. . . .the first time you learn something is probably the most important day in your learning process, because if you don't understand it from the start it's gonna be really hard to understand it later on. (P4)

When you first learn something, that day you wanna go back and read through your notes, read through your book, or at least read through that section of what

she was talking about, so you understand. . .at least a little bit about what she's

talking about. Cuz if you don't understand and then you try to understand it. . .the

day before the test. . .that's not gonna work. . . .So the day the teacher taught it,

you go back and you read, you go and take notes, you look over your notes, so

that day is the day that you start studying, because you looked over it, and you

remember it. So then when the test comes, you already know it. (P4)

P2 echoed this thought:

Well because. . .you're supposed to be learning it as you're going to class, so if

you try and learn it at the last minute, you're not gonna understand it at the, at the

level that you would be able to if you were, per se, learning it when the class was

going on. (P2)

P7 and P3 recognized that an understanding of all vocabulary was essential to

learning new concepts:

Um, also um, the vocabulary, I for-, it kinda took me forever to realize, but if I

didn't know what each word was, or what I was tryin ta learn was really meant, it

wasn't gonna help me at all. So I would learn vocabulary [pause]. . . . it was, ti-,

time consuming, but I think just, me just taking the time to read it, read through

the textbook and read through notes, that helped me. (P3)

And then I would, I would do them [statistics problems] probably three times, and

then I would. . .read them over and make sure I understood, because that class

also had vocabulary in it, so we had to understand some of the vocabulary in it.

(P7)

P6 described breaking problems into parts and solving them step by step in order

to understand them:

We'd go through all of our notes, and the notes were just not enough, and he, he'd

give us some review, so I mean we'd do every single review question. I mean,

work it out step by step. Me and my study group, and worked it out on the board,

worked it out together, and then we'd do that, and we'd kind of all separate from

that point and then come back and, or, and like by ourselves, I would do it again.

Pr-, I'd probably do it once and then, you know, go through the book, and take

notes on stuff, you know, that I thought was important that I should know. (P6)

P2, P3, P4, and P7 emphasized the importance of reviewing new and complex

information from the beginning and continuing every day in order to make it their own:

I study a little bit, like every day, every day, every day. And then I just keep going

and going over it. I'm like, a lot of times I notice, if I'm watching TV, and like

something will remind me of something, so then I'll repeat it. Or if, or like, repeat

the information, like um, I forgot what movie we were watching and it said

potassium chloride, and I just said, like, the, the molecular formula of it. And my

boyfriend was like, "You're such a dork." And I was like, "Well that helps me

remember!" (P2)

Um, each day read through a chapter, just of the study guide. I would type out the

study guides myself, word it the way I could poss-, best possibly understand it.

Um, and each day just look over it. . . .Ah, and do that for a whole week, even if

it's for. . .30 minutes, just looking over it, or just walking to a next, to another

class, just reading over it. Or any spare time that I had, just to read over it, just to

glance at it. (P3)

Maybe not for a long period of time. There was times that I would just read over

things in between classes, just like walking to class, or waiting for class to start, or

while I was eating lunch. Just like maybe 30 minutes, 15 minutes, just reading

through. Um, but I pretty much looked at everything every day. (P3)

Because many students and I know myself, from the very beginning, um, even as

a freshman. . .I didn't start focusing myself until probably, midterm, midterm

came along, and I started getting all nervous, because, "Oh my god, the

semester's halfway done. I need to really focus." It's, no. . .I need to start

focusing at the very beginning, so that I can get that A at the end of, at the end of

the course, and that's pretty much what I started doing last semester. (P7)

You know in Anatomy, when you're learning things, you kind of wanna process it

as you're learning it, because if you're like, "Oh she said that, but I'll go back

later and read it," you know, you're probably not gonna understand everything

that she just told you unless you actually pay attention to what she's saying. . .

.Um, if you remember it little by little, every day if you remember things, in the

end you'll remember a whole lot, because you've already, you know you've

already read about it, you've already studied it. So, the day before the test should

really just be a review of what you've already learned, cuz you'll just go back in

your book and be like, "Oh yeah, I remember that." Or, "Oh yeah, that's

something I probably need ta refresh on." (P4)

P4 and P5 reviewed new content presented in class and compared it to the textbook as soon as possible after class:

> After class it really helps to just take what they're saying and read through the chapter and try and understand, you know, "Oh, that's what they were talking about," or "Oh, this is where that came from." (P4)

P5 started going to the library immediately after class to review what she had just learned:

> Um, it's usually, actually one of my professors had suggested that. . . .my biochem, cuz he always talks about how he used to study and how he didn't have a TV in his room and how that helped him and how instead of going straight to lunch right after class he would go back up and go back up to his room and look over his notes and, um, fix some of the things he'd written in his notes and how, how it helped him, and um, so I, I tried that one day and it really did help, cuz I, I noticed that I remembered things more, once I went over what we just covered in class. (P5)

> I go over, like for my, my anatomy class, it's, he does, um, basically like an outline, and he goes over the, the chapter in class, and afterwards I'll go back and, go over what we've covered in class. I'll just, you know I'll fill in some of the blanks, and I'll fix some of the drawings and figures that he's done. (P5)

P5 faithfully took her own notes on course readings and then compared them to the notes she took from the professor during class. She was confident that she understood the material when her own notes were very similar to those provided by the professor. "I

look at his notes and I look at mine, and then I study those, and um, for my biochem, and my, my psychologies, I look at my, at both of them, whenever, you know, it's time for a test" (P5).

Participants described a variety of other methods by which they made difficult knowledge their own. P3 followed along with the textbook and the study guide during class; P4, P5, and P7 read the book and practiced doing problems; and P6 reviewed previous quizzes and answered review questions. P7 explained, "I saw. . .that reading is. . .very important in any class that you take. Um, it is probably. . .the most essential part. . .in any class, because. . .that's where you gain most of your knowledge."

Although some of the participants appreciated teachers who told stories in class to illustrate concepts, P4 recognized that she needed to create her own stories and draw her own pictures when studying new concepts alone or in a group. P4 used online resources posted for the course as well. P7 elaborated that she read the book immediately before class and started with the hardest problems first. P3 would go backwards in the text until she came to the part that she didn't understand and go from there. P3 and P6 would retype or rewrite their notes as they studied. P5 went to the student tutors to maximize her understanding of difficult material:

> I wasn't understanding some of the material and they walked me through and they
> went at a slower pace than the professor did. And that really helped. And after. .
> .that. . .I was caught up, and I understood what was going on in class. (P5)

P3, P4, P6, and P7 all mentioned that memorization was necessary, but they distinguished pure memorization from understanding and comprehension. P4 recognized

that she needed to understand concepts from more than one perspective. P3 realized, "I had ta understand the concept of it, I had ta understand how it worked inside of, you know, the material." P6 referred to this approach as going outside the actual concept to learn:

> And like, even though he'd give us, like, a review question; like everything on the review wasn't on the test and everything on the test wasn't on the review, if that makes sense. So, you know, you'd have to get, get a concept and kind of like, go outside of it, and not just know that concept. You had to know, like, everything about it and everything that related to it as well. (P6)

> P5 thoughtfully differentiated between recognizing and knowing. She referred to recognition as, "I know it but I don't."

> Um, actually knowing it, I can, I can go home and pick up a problem and do it all by myself, whereas sort of knowing it, I would have to go back to look at my notes or go back and ask the professor how. And now I don't have to do that. I, I can do it and get the right answer on my own, because I actually do know the material. (P5)

> As opposed to just recognizing it, I, like on a piece of paper, it, I could say, "Oh yeah, I've done that before in the past." But I wouldn't tell you what it is, I wouldn't be able ta tell you what it is or how to do it, or what else you can find using that problem, um, as opposed to actually knowing it, I could tell you what it is and what it's used for, how ta work with it, and um, things like that. (P5)

P5 also referred to this knowing as understanding information in "another way."

I sort of remember this in high school. . .it was in the book, um, but it didn't really

explain it or I was confused about it and so, that's why I went to the professor and

asked and they explained it, "Well, here's another way of thinking about it," and

um, that really helped. And then I did know it. (P5)

Several participants reported that they learned best by teaching. P2 set up a study

group for Biochemistry II and realized she learned best when she explained challenging

content to others:

Because you really have to know it. You have to really know the materials,

because if they ask you a question, like a really basic question, you can't just be

like, "Well I don't know. It just works that way." You have to be able to explain it

so that they understand it. (P2)

When taking Biochemistry II from a teacher who "was all about group work," P7

also discovered that she understood difficult material best if she taught it to someone else:

Um, I'm more of a self-learner. . .like someone else teaching me or me teaching

that person, because I found. . .when I was teaching somebody else how to do it, it

helped me more understand what I was talking about. (P7)

And everybody else was still like, "I still don't get it," and I'd be like, "Okay,

well this is how you do it." And I would just, while I was teaching them, I was

also teaching myself. So, I, that helped me a lot. (P7)

It mostly occurred during class and if they needed help outside of class, um,

before an exam or something, then we would meet, um, here at the library, and we

would study, and I would, I would teach them and then they would teach me of

course. (P7)

Similarly, P6 and her group members taught statistics to one another in the library study rooms:

And, sometimes we didn't know, we'd work it out together, we'd figure out the answer, cuz some, like in, in prob-, in probability, I didn't know, none of us would know how to do a problem, but okay, we'd be like, "Okay you do it this way, you do it this way, everyone, let's separate, see what we can figure out and if, whoever gets the right answer, we'll go back and try another problem and see if it works out for that one and then okay," and then that's how we learned it. We'd teach each other that. (P6)

It was like a step by step, teach, like on the board, showing me then we'd do another one the next one together, and then the next one. . .when we were doing our stats review. . .we'd do number one, and okay, you know, do this, do this, do this. Did everyone get this answer? Okay. Well then the next one, okay well we kinda know how to do this, so it'd be, like, we'd work on it by ourselves. . . .And then, "Did you get this answer?" "Yeah, I got this answer." "Okay, the next one." And, "Oh, I don't know how to do number three, so let's work on it together." So, "You do this, you do this, and then." That's basically how it was, if that makes sense. (P6).

As the lone participant who had not gone to a professor for help outside of class, P6 asserted that she often learned best by teaching herself:

And I love, like, like, hearing lectures, and like hearing something from their

point of view and taking notes on that. But when it comes down to it, like I had to

go back and. . .I guess teach myself, like look at it and learn it I guess, my own

way. (P6)

P4 reported needing to talk and interact with others in order to learn. She and her

group drew pictures and quizzed one another, while P6 and her group solved problems

together on a board. P3 and her study group peers also quizzed one another prior to

exams.

Although the other participants studied best in silence or with soft background

music, P4 reported learning while listening to songs with words or listening to television

when she studied alone. Interestingly, she had one particular song that she preferred to

learn to and would have it in her head while testing:

If I'm reading something at the moment, and I'm listening to the TV, on the test if

I look at the question and I know the answer, I think of what's on the TV, and it

helps me remember what I was reading. . . .When I'm listening to a song, if I hear

certain words in the song it makes me remember what I was studying. . . .for all

my tests, and that song just helps me through everything. So I don't know how I

do it, I just do. It's very, a unique way of studying, I guess. I don't know. It helps

me a lot, but I have a TV, music, people, it's just really different from the way

other people study. (P4)

She elaborated, "It's kinda like a cue. . . .I'd see a question. I'd think, "Oh, that's that one

part on the show" (P4). Additionally, P4 had to write in blue pen as it helped her to

remember.

In conclusion, all participants verbalized the importance of understanding foundational content as well as the need to understand material from the beginning in order to internalize academic content and make it their own. The ways by which they reported building on foundational content varied, but all participants reported individual as well as group activities by which they taught themselves while teaching others. Additionally, all participants reported reviewing challenging material on a regular basis, often daily, until they became confident with their level of understanding.

Assuming ownership of learning. Four of the six participants verbalized assuming ownership of learning in addition to internalizing academic content as inherent to their owning knowledge. Two described intensifying study habits, while one accepted the need to teach herself. P4, P6, and P7 discussed accepting personal responsibility for their learning:

> You are paying to go to school. You wanna go to school. You wouldn't pay this much money if you didn't wanna go to school. Um, you're trying to better yourself. The teachers are there to just guide you. It's up to you to take the time to understand the material. It's up to you to go to class. It's up to you to read the chapters, do the homework, make sure you understand it, get whatever help you need to get, go to tutoring, go to online PASS sessions, go to online tutoring. Do anything you need to do to be able to get an A or go to your, or get your ultimate goal in the class. The teachers, they help you, you know, they're there ta be there if you need them, but ultimately it's up to you to take the time to do well in the class. . . .the teacher isn't the one taking the test for you, and the teacher's not the

one studying, and they're not the one doing your homework. You're the one that's

doing it, so if you don't put, your like full effort towards the class, like if you fail

then it's just on you. It's not on anybody else. So, that's why I say it's not on the

teacher. So, school's a big deal to me, so I wanna try my hardest, and I wanna

blame it on the teacher, but it's not his fault. It's my fault. (P4)

Well, to me it's. . .like for a test. I mean, if I'm prepared enough, if I did

everything that I should of done, that the teacher told us to do, if I reviewed

enough, if I studied enough, then, it should come out in my favor, I guess, if, I

mean if I didn't, if I do bad, then maybe I didn't do something right, and that's

how I see it. (P6)

It was nobody else's fault. . . .It was my own. And um, I think that's the only

[pause] feeling I had during that time, just anger towards me. (P7)

Connecting information. Although P5 didn't talk about the importance of

assuming ownership for her learning, she was the sole participant who described

recognizing connections between classes and connecting information between courses as

inherent to her ownership of knowledge:

I remember at one point all of my classes kind of ran together. Like my

dimensions of wellness, my anatomy, my biochem, and my psychology class. At

one point we were talking about the same thing every single class. . . .I thought it

was kind of a good thing. . .in high school that would of never happened. (P5)

I was taking Dimensions of Wellness, um, Biological Chemistry, and Anatomy

and Physiology, and at a couple different points we were all taking about, like,

lipids and carbohydrates, and they were all the same thing, but in different ways.

Like in Dimensions of Wellness we were talking about how lipids happen for the

body and how to limit some of those things, and then in Biological Chemistry,

um, we were learning the actual make-up, and then in Anatomy and Physiology,

where it was found in the body. . . .And it really helped me when I had quizzes. . .

in each of those three classes, because I really did know the material. (P5)

Summary of Owning Knowledge

All participants described working to internalize academic content. Five

participants portrayed at least one theme in addition to internalizing academic content

that led to owning knowledge. Four described accepting personal responsibility for their

learning. Although coded items in support of accepting personal responsibility did not

arise from the interview transcripts of P2 and P5, both demonstrated independence in the

way they internalized academic content. P5 was the sole participant to discuss connecting

information as inherent to her ownership of knowledge. Several participants discussed

working together with study group partners in their quest to own knowledge. The

participants' experiences of learning within relationships will be presented under the

superordinate theme of living out values and beliefs.

Persevering

The sixth superordinate theme common to all participants was persevering. A

total of 75 level one codes formed seven themes that came together in the superordinate

theme of persevering. Themes were: (a) feeling accomplished, (b) having personal

determination, (c) receiving discouragement, (d) receiving encouragement, (e) refocusing, (f) regaining confidence, and (g) recognizing personal strength. This superordinate theme helped to answer the following two subquestions:

2. What factors affect successful Latina students' experiences of and responses to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

3. How do successful Latina students respond to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

The seven themes that arose from 75 level one codes to support the superordinate theme are presented in Table 6 and are discussed in the pages that follow.

Table 6

Persevering: Supporting Themes

Supporting theme	Number experiencing	Participants
Receiving encouragement	6	All
Receiving discouragement	5	P2, P3, P4, P6, P7
Having personal determination	4	P2, P4, P6, P7
Feeling accomplished	4	P2, P4, P5, P6
Refocusing	3	P2, P6, P7
Recognizing personal strength	2	P2, P3
Regaining confidence	1	P2

All participants described persevering when faced with academic challenges. Although participants recalled that their self confidence initially dropped when they were

no longer able to master course content using previous methods, each emerged confident in her ability to adjust to a higher level of academic expectations. Receiving encouragement and receiving discouragement will be presented first, as nearly all participants experienced both. The two themes came together through polarization within the superordinate theme.

  Receiving discouragement. All participants but P5 recalled receiving discouragement regarding their abilities or priorities from individuals along their academic journey. Two (P3, P7) recalled receiving discouragement from college friends who told them they studied too much and encouraged them to socialize instead. Three participants (P2, P3, P4) recalled that relatives, such as aunts and cousins discouraged them by verbally doubting their abilities, telling them how hard nursing school would be, or telling them that they studied too hard. P2 reported that her mother doubted her ability to succeed at first, yet the doubts subsided after P2 established a pattern of academic success:

> That has changed. Her attitude about me has changed, because she, she didn't think I'd be able ta handle the move all the way over here, being away from everyone, and getting through college. And, I've been doing fine; I've successfully made it through my first two, two years of college. So, she sees that I do have the willpower to make it, and I am gonna make it. (P2)

P3 reported being bullied by high school peers for studying too much. She also remembered being discouraged by high school teachers who doubted her abilities and pushed her towards community college rather than a four-year university. Although this

bullying had happened in the past, she referred to it on several occasions when talking about her academic challenges in college, specifically when verbalizing anxiety about her ability to succeed at a university. After a recent trip back to her high school with peers, she reported:

> And they just cannot believe it. They cannot believe that we were able to actually come into a four-year university and, and take you know, and even pass. It's just amazing to them that we were able to do that, because ta them, we weren't smart enough. (P3)

P2, P4, P6, and P7 reported receiving discouragement from a college professor. P7 and P2 described a professor who put down their study habits. P2, P4, P6, and P7 recalled a professor suggesting that they spend the majority of their waking hours studying for a given course in order to achieve success in the course. In all cases, the discouragement participants remembered receiving from others was offset by their innate personal determination or by the encouragement they received from others. Receiving encouragement was significant to the superordinate theme of persevering for all participants, and this theme is discussed next.

Receiving encouragement. All participants reported receiving encouragement regarding academic perseverance from parents, with all but one noting that they received encouragement from both parents. P2 and P7 named their fathers as their greatest source of academic encouragement. P3 and P5 spoke at length about maternal encouragement, while P6 spoke of her father's encouragement the most. P4 spoke equally of both parents encouraging her.

Parental encouragement that led to persevering took the form of believing in me for all six participants. P5 recalled her parents saying, "You know, it's whatever you want, and we believe in you, and um, we believe you'll make the right decision, and it's, it's up to you and it's your life." The centrality of encouragement to academic success was echoed by all the other participants:

> I think (pause), to me, it's having supporters. Um, it's having people who, I guess, believe that I can do it. And, my parents are great at doing that. Um, they're great at telling me, um, "You're going to do good." Or, "Don't worry about it. You always say that." Um, "You always end up coming, coming out okay." (P7)
>
> And I'm like, "Oh, it's so hard, like I spent hours studying, and it's not enough." And they're like, "Well we, you know, we know you can do it. We know you'll do, you'll pull out; you'll be okay." And I was like, "Yeah, I think so too, I'm like I'll be okay." My family's really good about supporting me with everything. . .they're like, "In the end you know, yeah it's hard, but you can do it. . . .You'll be fine in the end." (P6)
>
> I was always like really stressed out in my first month, dealing with the hives, cuz I was really nervous about like, Anatomy and Chemistry, they'd tell me like, "Don't worry about it." Like, "It's just a test." Like, "If you know you studied and you know that, you know you put your full effort towards studying and listening in class, then you should be fine, cuz if you, you need a certain amount of fear, and you know, that will still make you, you know, be cautious about what you're doing, but at the same time, it's enough to give you that adrenaline to like, do

well. But if you psych yourself out too much, you're gonna get a bad grade. So don't worry about it. You'll be fine. You know, we know you studied, cuz we've seen you study, and you know, we know that you're gonna, you're gonna do well." (P4)

My parents encouraged me just to not be discouraged. Just ta go along with what I was doing, just to try my best and that would be enough. Just that if I would try, you know, um, I could do it. (P3)

He [her father] said, um, it was like, "Failure is not an option." Like, not in his exact words, but he would always like, say the same message, like, "Failure is not an option, and if you put your mind to anything, you can achieve anything you want, and you can get through anything, if you really want to." (P2)

In addition to sensing that their parents believed in them, all participants reported that their parents had high expectations of them in regards to academic performance, which began long before the participants attended college. P5 reported her parents saying, "We believe in you. We know you can, and that's why we're pushing you." Other participants described their parents as "driving" or "pushing" as well:

Okay, cuz um, it was just when I was little, my dad always told me, um, "You have to be the best at what you do." (P2)

They were always pushing me, they were always. . .on my back. (P3)

My parents are really hard on me about school; they want me to do really well. . . .every parent wants their kid to do really well. It's just their instincts. (P4)

Well, my parents have always, um, raised high standards on me. They've always wanted the best out of me, because I am the oldest, so they wanted me to set a good example for my siblings. So, they've always pushed me to do good in school. . . .and if I ever wanted to join anything, they would support me. . . .but at the same time, they would ask me about my academics, before anything. (P7)

Um, my parents are very pushy. Um, they're very, um, strict. . . .they're also the type who will ask you every single day, "Well, how did your day go? How was, how is your school going? How is that biological chemistry class going?" (P7)

My dad, he would always push me. Like, "Well you have to study. You have to do this. You have to do that". . . .Um, he was my biggest supporter, he would always tell me like, "Well, you always say that you're gonna do bad, and you always come out doing good." And I was like, "Well yeah, Dad, but that's not, this, this is, this is totally different, this is a totally different class. You don't know this professor, and you don't know that." He was just very positive. He's the one that makes me positive, so he is the one that pushed me. . . .I think my biggest supporter was my dad. (P7)

I grew up with my parents always telling me, "You have to work hard." And, "You're not just gonna stay in this town. You're gonna have a career, and you're gonna work." Um, "You know, you're not gonna be like the rest of us." And things like that. And so from the very beginning I remember always having ta work really hard academically ta be able ta, you know, get, get into a good college, and um, things like that. And um, they were just always really

encouraging of me, and if I ever needed help or anything like that they were there, and when I would do really good in school they would, you know, they would reward me. (P5)

P3 recalled her mother pushing her from a young age:

A lot of people. . .tell my, my mom. . . ."You push her too hard." Or, "You expect too much out of her. She's just a kid, let her be a kid." You know, "She needs to mess up." And my mom was like, "No! I know my daughter." You know, "I know my daughter. I know she's capable of doing better, so she's gonna do her best. No matter what, she needs to be able to learn how to do her best at whatever cost." (P3)

P3 recalled, "It didn't bother me, because I had done it since I was smaller, like even when I wasn't even in school" (P3).

Participants reported feeling grateful for their parents' expectations and encouragement. Four participants described how they had taken on expectations received from their parents and developed personal determination that helped them to persevere. Again, P5 and P7 used a form of the word "drive," and P5 used the verb "push."

I feel driven to want to do good, because my parents have, they've always grown up, um, without supporters, and I feel that I'm lucky to have them be the way they are. So, I think it just makes me feel good. . . .I believe that if my parents didn't push me, I probably wouldn't be doing as good as I'm doing now. I probably wouldn't even be in college, because nobody in my, in my family ever went to college, and if they did, they only went for a semester or two. I don't think I

would of felt, um, like I had to, be someone great in life. So I'm really grateful for it. I'm not pressured at all, because I know that even if I do fall, they'll be there to help me. (P7)

I think, um, a large part of it is my parents, always driving me ta do better and ta work hard, and um, and then you know they've kind of, they haven't as much now, because I think now it's just me on my own. (P5)

Now, I'm, I'm glad. I'm really glad. Um, because now I, I'm here, and in this pre-, really good prenursing, or this um, program, and um, I'm, I'm just really glad that they did push me, cuz. . .it was sort of a shock but not as much, especially not as bad as it was ta some of my other friends, who, who, um, didn't have it as tough as me, I guess you'd say. (P5)

So, I mean they've always been like that, and even though I don't think I'm gonna do that well, they, I know that they think I'm gonna do well. So just ta know that like, like I said, I'm my worst critic, like I, I'm always on myself about, "What can I do better?" Like, "You know, I could do so much better on this if I did this." (P4)

Receiving encouragement and having personal determination were closely related for several participants. As noted above, parental expectations and encouragement often fostered a sense of personal determination, and the two themes worked together to maximize perseverance. The theme having personal determination is presented next.

Having personal determination. Four participants reported having a sense of personal determination that led to persevering in the face of academic challenges. Using a

variety of words, P2, P4, P6, and P7 recalled their academic experiences that required, and in some cases increased, personal determination. P2 described "sticking through" her most difficult class:

> Thankfully, I stuck through it; there was a lot of times that I wanted to give up. That's the one time, the one class that I didn't look forward to going to, and I did want to give up a lot, but I just had to keep reminding myself that, "I have to stick through it." (P2)

P6 spoke of the importance of "seeing things through," and recalled slowly bringing her grade up quiz by quiz after it had slipped in a course. During an illness that forced her to miss a week of school, P6 recalled studying in bed every day. Although she enjoyed going out and having fun, P6 stated, "When it comes down to something really important, like I will focus on it as much as I can." She remembered locking herself away from friends to study and avoiding romantic relationships when taking difficult classes:

> I guess you just have to realize that everyone's kind of in it for themselves right now, and you have to worry about what you're doing. And distractions kind of bring you down. And you have to kind of think about if it's really worth, it in the end. And it hasn't been worth it so far! I mean. . .I feel better if I make good grades rather. . .than if he calls me later. . . .that's how I feel about that. . . .the only guys I can trust in my life are my grandpa and my dad! And I'm really like, I guess, adamant about that. . . .You just gotta be, I guess, committed to yourself and what you're doing. . . .you can't be self-centered of course, but you have to just have your own goals and your ways of achieving those goals. (P6)

P2, P4, and P7 reported not wanting to let their parents down as important to their sense of self determination:

Okay, cuz um, it was just when I was little, my dad always told me, um, "You have to be the best at what you do." And, not in a bad way, but failure is not an option. Like, if you put your mind to it, you can get it. You can do anything you want and get through anything. So, it was, it, it's almost like a sense of, if, "If I fail, like, I'm failing my dad, and I can't do that." Like I can't let him down, in a way. And that's, um, that's what a lot of time keeps me going, is like I can't fail. . .I have to keep going, cuz like my dad, is using his retirement fund to pay for my school. . . .it's not only for me, it's not only for my future kids, it's for my dad too. It's like, he's sacrificed a lot, like I have to do, I have to make it, to help him. (P2)

I'm very, I like to be with my friends, so they didn't think I could handle, like, it as a whole. But. . .I didn't wanna let my parents down and I didn't wanna let myself down, which is probably the most important thing to me, cuz I set really high goals for myself and I wanted to meet those goals. I didn't wanna give up. (P4)

I felt like. . .I wasn't only letting myself down, I was letting my parents down as well, because they put such high expectations on me. They expect so much, that, seeing that D felt like I was, I was hurting them. Um, [pause] so I just, that's why I, I know that from now on I'm really gonna push myself. . . .I'm going to do the best I can. I mean, that's all I could do. (P7)

Several participants reported that their personal determination increased as a result of facing academic challenges. P4 recalled, "So, I think my first semester, it made us a lot stronger, just because that's when I realized, I have to do this by myself." When faced with a teacher she found to be difficult, P4 enrolled in a second course with him the following semester:

> You can't help how the teacher will be. You just have to deal with the situation, and I could of switched teachers my second semester, but I don't like to give up very easily. I'm very, like persistent, I'm very, you know, I'm gonna dominate this class. I'm not gonna let him get the best of me. I'm gonna do well in this class. And I ended up doing well, cuz I stuck to it, and. . .I figured, I already know how he teaches, I already know how his tests are gonna be. Why would I put myself in a position to learn that all over again? So, I just stuck with him. Drove me crazy, so glad that class is over, but it was a good learning experience overall. (P4)

P7 reported having more personal determination as a result of having to retake a class. She recalled, "I decided to reenroll because [pause] I know I have the potential, um, I know that if I really try, if I really dedicate myself into something, um, I will excel with anything I do" (P7). She recalled how having personal determination helped her to subsequently earn an A in the course:

> I, I made sure, and before I stepped into the first exam I said, "Okay, I'm going to get an A in this class," and I got an A in all of my exams, except for one of them. I got a B, but it was a high B, and um, that B was the section that he had skipped.

Um, I, I made sure to read that part because that section that he did skip was actually very essential. Not only that, but it was also very difficult and complicated. Um, I also took part in many of the extra credit assignments that she assigned. Um, I stayed positive, I really did. Um, and many of the people that I studied with, um, they knew it, because I would always say, "Okay, we're gonna get an A. We're gonna get an A. No matter what, we're gonna get an A on this exam. We're gonna get an A in this class." (P7)

Again, two participants used the verb "push" within the theme of having personal determination:

I didn't give up, and I just kept going, like, like in that Biochem II. I studied, and I studied, and I studied. And, I did everything I possibly could to pass that class. And um, I really did push myself to the limit, like, "I am not gonna give up." I kept going and going. And I think, if I knew I was, that I would pass that class, then I don't think I would have tried as hard. Because I already knew I was gonna pass it, why try so hard? So it was just like, I just kept going and going, and then, um, in other classes too. When I was taking 18 hours and working, like um, I'd be exhausted. I only worked 10 hours a week, but still that would take time from my study time, and the way I work, there comes a certain point in the night that if I haven't start my homework, I can't get my brain to keep going. It just starts turning itself off. So sometimes, they would ask me to work even later, and I'd hit that point, but I knew I had assignments to do, or um, just, over viewing to do on my own, not necessarily homework assignments, so I had ta push myself, "Okay,

it's not time for bed yet. I have to keep studying." And there was times, like,

when I had to pull all nighters, and I was, I don't like to, there's only so much you

can learn in one night, but I had to push myself to do that. (P2)

I think of, like, my parents, um, because they're the ones. . .telling me, "Oh, it's

okay. You don't have to if you don't want to. You can if you want to." Um, and I

think that's what pushed me more, because I saw that they wanted me to, but they

weren't pushing me, and I felt like I had ta be the one to push myself, this time.

(P7)

For P2, having personal determination increased in response to receiving

discouragement. As the first member of her immediate family to attend college, P2

reported that her personal determination increased as a result of watching her parents

struggle without the benefit of higher education:

I didn't wanna become a statistic like my mom. She was married at 15. At 19, she

had two kids already. It's like, I'm not gonna become her, and I have to do better,

and she didn't believe in me in the beginning. And she would always tell me like,

"You're wasting your dad's money going over there." And I'd be like, "No, I'm

not [laughs]." And it's just like every time she would tell me I couldn't do it, it

made me feel stronger, and get, um, like made me want to succeed more. So, it's

like, every time somebody told me I couldn't do it, I'd be like, "Thank you." So,

it'd like, strengthen me, and make me be able to do it. (P2)

Um, part of that is learning how to take people's, ah, criticism and using them

productively even if they didn't, those weren't their intentions. For example, like

my family, when they tell me, "You can't do it." Just using that to, to motivate me

more, to tell myself, you know I can do it. I'm gonna prove 'em wrong. Um, just

having faith, and know that I can do this, with the help of God, and like, those that

He puts around me. I think that's it. (P2)

Finally, P4 described the importance of having personal determination when she

shared what she would tell prospective prenursing students about academic success:

Just don't give up. . . .because it's your first year and you don't know what to

expect, don't give up and don't slack off, cuz those two things will just defeat you

in the end. It may be hard, you may not get everything like you did in high

school, but it's still a part of growing up. You have to try things, you have to, like

give it your all. (P4)

Recognizing personal strength. For two participants, experiencing academic

challenges helped them to recognize their personal strength, which led to persevering.

Although this theme arose in the interviews of only two participants, both spoke of it at

length. P2 recalled that experiencing academic challenges made her a stronger and more

independent person:

It's made me stronger, because I know that, I can, I can get through anything. It's,

it might be hard, and I might have to shed some tears, and it might take longer

than expected, but I'm gonna, I'm gonna get through stuff. (P2)

Okay, um, like for example. . .when I would get overwhelmed with the classes

and then feel like I couldn't do it, I would get to a point where like, so low where

I was pretty sure I was gonna give up. . . .But now, um, like I look at it differently.

Like, "Okay, like let's be realistic here. Um, this one little problem, it's not gonna

make me completely fail, so I'm not gonna freak out." And then it helps me like,

almost, um, clear out my mind and be able to say, "Okay, here are some different

ways of looking at a situation. How can I work through it?" And, are, are those,

those ways of getting through that problem gonna work for me?. . .Um [pause], I

don't give up, that easily. And, before I used to think. . .because I had my parents

right there, I would just be like, "Oh, I can't do it." And just kinda let them do it.

But now it's just, I'm on my own. Okay, I can. I don't give up easily. I can make

it through anything. Um, no matter how much people tell you, you can't do

something, like, I know I can do it if I really want to. (P2)

P2 also talked of empowering herself:

Umm, after, you could say freaking out about Biochem; I've learned to control

my anxiety, my test anxiety. And um, just, center myself when I'm in a situation

where I feel like I'm out of control but I'm not, to center myself and be able to

say, "I can do this." Be able to empower myself more. (P2)

Likewise, P3 described that her test taking fears helped her to recognize her

personal strength. Additionally, seeing and hearing about difficulties faced by others

allowed her to place her challenges into perspective:

I think when I hit an obstacle, I would kind of freeze, and when I would hit that

obstacle, I would stop and freak out [laughed], literally. Um, but that's when I

was younger. . . .Now that I'm able to understand those hardships, um, it makes

the obstacles seem much smaller than they really appear. And I think in seeing it

that way, it helps me to push past them, because those things are very small compared to other obstacles that are out there. And even just having a problem with a test or just having a problem with the material, that's, that's something that I could work at and that's something that I can get help for, and be able to proceed with what, you know I can go past it. Because I know that there're much worse things out there. . . .an academic, you know, challenge, like tests, these test-taking, you know, fears that I have are much more smaller than other things out there. . . .the fear that I have taking tests is something that I can manage; that it can't control me anymore. I've learned that I can, I can control it and I can tell it, "I'm not gonna have you as a fear no more. You know, I can, I'm stronger than you are." You know, I'm stronger than that fear, because now I have that help. I have somebody to go to. I have um, things, I have a textbook that I can go back to review. I can, I have, sur-, people that surround me that can help me. So it doesn't seem as such a humongous problem anymore. Just because. . .it's smaller than a lot of things. . . .Cuz I can, I can personally be like, "Oh my God, this is a humongous deal." Like I had thought for so many years with the tests, testing. I thought it was a humongous cross that I had to bear for the rest of my life. And, once I learned, you know how to manipulate it; it's kinda just something that just kinda blew away. I think, I mean I think it's still there, I think it'll come back if I get stressed out enough, but it's not a huge deal no more. (P3)

I'm more confident in myself. . .I'm more determined now to defeat the fear. I'm more sure of myself, and I'm able to tell myself, "You know, I can do this." Like,

it's not gonna hold me back anymore, because I know I can do this. If I really try, and if I dedicate myself, it's not gonna hold me back. So I have that confidence, I have that determination, and that persistence to just not let it get me every time it comes. Because it's not just one time that it, it comes into my life. It's throughout the whole year, you know, throughout the whole semester that it comes, and like, comes to agitate me and I just have to, you know, I'm, I'm more calm and confident that I can just be like, "No, you're not gonna get in my way." You know. And I have the tools ta help me get past it. (P3)

Feeling accomplished. Participants 2, 4, 5, and 6 reported feeling accomplished as inherent to their persevering. This theme was named using the words of P4 and P5 as they described their academic challenges in science classes:

Because [pause], you feel accomplished at the end. You feel like, you know, other people gave up, other people switched out. Other people got out of the class, but you stuck it out. You tried your hardest. You studied. You did everything you could to get the grade that you got, and if it's an A or a B, you're really excited. Um, so it's just like a big accomplishment, for you to have tried so hard to do something so well and in the end it's just, you feel very relieved. . .you feel, just really happy that you, you know, stuck it out, and you didn't give up. Cuz nobody wants to be a quitter. (P4)

Everyone wants to be the hero. Everybody wants to be the person that didn't give up and got the good grade. But in the end, a lot of people just give up, and it's sad. . .I've had a lot of friends drop out of class. . . .that was my best learning

experience, because I, I deserved the grade that I got, and I tried my hardest, and I

felt so accomplished at the end of the class. So, I was very proud of myself when I

was done. If I, if I had failed, I would of felt really uneasy, I would of felt really

depressed, really disappointed in myself, not in anybody else, but I didn't, and I

was extremely filled with joy when that class was over with. (P4)

I remember, in, in my science classes, feeling accomplished with the, with how ta

take notes, cuz um, some of the other people in my classes would ask me, "Well,

how do you, how are you taking notes?". . . .cuz I mentioned that the notes I was

taking were similar to the lecture notes that the professor was giving, and um,

that's the one thing that I did like from my high school, or that I brought from my

high school, um just, with being able ta take good notes and being able ta keep up.

Um, it made me feel accomplished and I guess with, um, with the tests, being able

ta study for those right. (P5)

P2 reported a sense of accomplishment after doing well on a final exam in a

course in which she had struggled. As a result of the academic challenges she

experienced in Biochemistry II, P6 believed that she could accomplish difficult things in

the future:

Well, like, it was really hard, and, and it took a lot of time out of my life, but now

that it's over and I was able to bring my grade up so much, like it's just another

achievement. . . .I mean, that class was so hard and man, I wish I could of just not

have ever taken it, but now that I did it, like I know. . .it can be like that for other

harder things, like if it's, just because it's really hard doesn't mean, you know,

you, you're gonna fail in it. You can still work. And maybe it's gonna be a lot of work, but I mean it's worth it in the end, I guess. It's worth it. (P6)

Refocusing. Three participants described refocusing through a variety of methods in order to continue persevering. P7 reported that she read and did yoga to focus and relax when stressed by academic challenges, and P2 played the flute or listened to classical music. P2 and P6 both prayed in response to academic challenges:

> Another thing that really helped me was, praying. I really discovered the power of prayer as they say, and that really helped me, just calm down and just pray about whatever was going on and, I wouldn't say, not, give my worries to God, as they call it, but not necessarily just whatever, here they are and that's it. No, like, here it is, please help me, and I just prayed. (P2)

P2 mentioned praying several times during the interviews, yet she clarified that she prayed for wisdom to respond as best she could to academic challenges and family obligations. Additionally, she prayed for the ability to be patient with and help others:

> By that, like um, praying for the wisdom. . .for me to make the, the correct choices. . . .like in the case of, when my parents call me with problems at home, for me ta, say the right things to them. Or um, just, ta help me know, not necessarily understand why things are happening. . .but just know that it's happening for a greater good. . . .When I felt like giving up, I just really prayed about it. . .like, "Just please, please help me. . .have the wisdom to be able to know what, how to study." And if what I'm doing is correct, or like, if I need to go to others for help, give me the courage to go to others to get help and um, like

when I said I didn't wanna be the one holding people back, um, just [pause] um,

just letting me not get frustrated with those who do have more questions than,

than I, and be able to help them, so that they can get the courage to go and ask

more, cuz I didn't want to discourage other people from asking questions. (P2)

Similarly, P6 reported that she turned to prayer for assistance with, not release

from, her academic challenges and family obligations:

I kinda realized I was by myself now here, and you know, stuff happens in

college, and you don't understand why it happens, and my family's not here to

you know, support me. I mean. . .they support me, but they're not here. . .so I've

found that sometimes, like, if I just pray, it's been helping me a lot in my college

years, so, I try to make it to church on Sunday. . .and I just, whenever I come out,

you know, I, I feel a lot better. . .I'm glad I went to church, you know. And with

everything that's happened to my family, like my dad being ill, I mean, I guess all

you can do is pray. That's how I feel. Just gotta pray about it, and hopefully it'll

come out for the best, but like, when I pray, I'm not, you know, "Give me this,

and give me that." I'm just kind of like; you know just, "Help me." (P6)

Regaining confidence. Only one participant offered data that supported the

theme of regaining confidence. P2's confidence was shaken when she received low

grades in Biochemistry II. Yet she regained confidence in her ability to study for exams

and subsequently passed the course. It is possible that others experienced this

phenomenon as well but it was not reflected due to the open nature of the interviews.

Summary of Persevering

In summary, the themes of receiving discouragement, receiving encouragement, having personal determination, recognizing personal strength, feeling accomplished, and refocusing were inherent to the superordinate theme of persevering. All participants described receiving encouragement that fostered their perseverance in the face of academic challenges. Each participant described one or more additional themes as well. The final superordinate theme, living out values and beliefs, follows.

Living Out Values and Beliefs

Living out values and beliefs arose from the following themes: (a) adjusting relationships, (b) becoming the person I am meant to be, (c) envisioning life as a professional, (d) fulfilling a sense of purpose, (e) valuing family, and (f) valuing relationships, which came together through the process of abstraction. The six themes were supported by 122 level one codes, making this superordinate theme the one most talked about by participants in their interviews.

The superordinate theme served to answer the following subquestions:

2. What factors affect successful Latina students' experiences of and responses to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

3. How do successful Latina students respond to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses?

The six themes are presented in Table 7, and they are discussed in the following pages.

Table 7

Living Out Values and Beliefs: Supporting Themes

Supporting theme	Number experiencing	Participants
Valuing family	6	All
Valuing relationships	6	All
Adjusting relationships	5	P2, P4, P5, P6, P7
Fulfilling a sense of purpose	4	P4, P5, P6, P7
Becoming the person I am meant to be	4	P2, P3, P4, P6
Envisioning life as a professional	3	P4, P6, P7

All participants illustrated the themes of valuing family and valuing relationships in their interviews. Five of six reported adjusting relationships during the course of their first year in college. Additionally, all participants described one or more of the following themes that affected their response to academic challenges: (a) fulfilling a sense of purpose, (b) becoming the person I am meant to be, and (c) envisioning life as a professional. Themes inherent to living out values and beliefs are now presented with supporting data.

Valuing family. All participants talked about the importance of their families at length. This theme was closely connected to the themes of receiving encouragement and having personal determination, establishing deep connections between the superordinate themes of persevering and living out values and beliefs. Participants reported persevering

in order to fulfill the dreams and expectations of their parents because they valued their families so highly.

Participants shared many stories of feeling loved by and caring deeply for their families. Participants reported missing family members (P5, P6, P7), being missed by family members (P2, P5, P6), family members worrying about them (P5, P6), worrying about family members (P5, P6), wanting to help their families (P2, P4, P6), wanting not to burden their families (P4, P7), wanting to set an example for siblings (P4, P7), and worrying about siblings (P2, P3, P4). All verbalized appreciating their families for the various types of academic support they provided. P3 described this appreciation in detail:

Mmm, my parents are a very big part, of. . .not only my life, but my academics also. Um, I'd have to say my mom more. My dad, um, I mean, my dad has always supported me, helped me study or helped me do, I guess just helped me in, in little ways, but he was, the majority of the time, he was at work. Um, but if I ever needed him. . .he would help me. But my mom, ever since I was in prekinder, she was always at school with me. She was, um, always volunteering at my school. Think she stopped my sophomore year in high school, that she stopped being at school the entire time. . . .But um, my mom was always there. . .just ta push me, just to; if I ever needed anything, she was always there. . . .And she's worked so hard to get me, to make me who I am, you know, and to guide me. Not really make me, cuz I make, you know [laughed], I'm gonna end up doing, you know, what I feel is right, but if I hadn't of had her guidance or her suggestions or her advice, I don't think I would be who I am now. I think I would have been lazy, or

I would of not cared. . . .And so my par-, my family has always been a really good

support. If I ever had trouble, they would find a way ta help me. Or just being,

just them telling me, "You know, everything's gonna be okay." Like, "You'll be

able ta get through this." Or, just even a simple, like, "good, that's great," or

"good job," or something. I mean, even though it's just a small phrase, it means a

lot. And, I don't think I could of gotten this far without the support of my family,

because there have been times that I wanted to give up, because it's gotten too

hard. Or just because I was, I just didn't think that I could do it. And like, just

even coming here. . .I was really hesitant. I was just gonna go to community

college. And, um, if it wasn't for them, I would of probably still gone ta

community college. And I wouldn't of even tried to get into the nursing school

here. So, I mean they make a huge difference in my academic success. (P3)

Participants also appreciated that their parents often offered educational support

that they themselves had not received (P2, P3, P7). Chronicling her parents' upbringing,

P7 surmised, "I think that they probably learned from that, and they want better for their

kids. That's why I'm so grateful for them and how they are, because I could have been in

their shoes." P2 recognized that her parents lived a difficult life without the benefit of

education:

Um, they didn't really understand me, you could say, because my, my parents

lived a hard life, like they didn't have an education, and um, so they had to work

hard for everything. And, I won't say that I don't have to work for things. I do

have to work for my things, but I guess compared to them it seems like I get

everything handed to me. And they don't, they didn't think I appreciated it. But at that time I don't think, I didn't know how to express my gratitude to them. So that was a little hard. (P2)

Two of the three participants who lived far away from their families recognized the generosity of their parents, who allowed them to go away for college despite wanting them close to home. P5 recalled being told by other family members that her mother struggled with sadness after she left home, yet her mother never shared that with her. P6 said having the entire family together was the most important thing to her father. Yet she only heard of her parents' sadness from her sister:

> My, when they dropped me off, you know my mom; they were just like, "Bye." Apparently my mom cried the whole way home. . . .my parents never really let on that they were really upset, and that they were sad that I left. They were more, I guess, proud of me, but my sister would call me and tell me, you know, that my dad would. . .just be sitting on the couch, like, and quiet, and she'd be like, "What's wrong, Dad?" He's like, "I just miss your sister." (P6)
> So he, he's never told me, like, "Come home." Like, "I'd rather have you at home." My dad has never said that to me. And I know he wants me home, but he has never told me to come home or you know, that I'd do better. . . .But, my dad would, no, my dad is glad I'm here, and he's never, he would never tell me to come home. (P6)

Most importantly, participants described wanting to succeed academically for their parents. This desire often manifested as one of the other themes within living out values and beliefs.

Valuing relationships. All participants saw themselves as part of a group, such as a study group and described the group as inherent to their academic success. Most participated in at least one nonacademic group on campus. Participants described learning within relationships, and five participants offered data within their interviews that included expecting and appreciating the relationships that supported their learning. Likewise, they expressed disappointment when the desired supportive relationships did not materialize.

P4 summarized the importance of relationships to learning, and P3 voiced a willingness to help others through academic challenges similar to those she experienced:

I think people play a big impact on how you learn things, because you can't just learn by yourself. It takes a lot of people to get you to learn the material, get you to understand the material. Cuz sometimes you can't, you just can't do everything by yourself. It takes people to help you. (P4)

Well, I mean if I'm able to help anybody, I'll do it, because I know how it feels ta need, I know how it feels ta need that assistance. So I mean, if I'm able to help them, I'll be glad to help them. (P3)

Participants named relationships with professors, friends, family members, and significant others as important to their response to academic challenges. P2 credited three "heroes" for offering her the opportunity to experience the academic challenges of

college. Her high school counselor encouraged and assisted her to apply to college. Her cousin modeled academic persistence and offered financial assistance, while her father financed her education.

P2, P3, P5, and P7 reported that they appreciated being on a campus where students and professors developed relationships, where multiple support opportunities were available, and where people cared about them. P5 noted, "I really think. . .the size of this school, and. . .how approachable the professors are, and the different, um, you know, you've got the, the LAC, and the PASS sessions." She continued, "The students here too, are really approachable ta, ta get help from. And um, you know I've seen through my friend that it, it isn't like that everywhere else." P3 and P7 echoed P5's sentiments:

> They actually give you that vibe, just; they want you to do good. They're gonna do whatever they have to do to help you to succeed in their class. And some of them tell you, some of them tell you, "I know my class is hard. I know my tests are hard, but it should motivate you to try harder. And it should motivate you to come to me to ask, to help you. Come ask me for help, and I'll help you." These are my, and they're, and they're always willing, the office hours, they're always willing ta, to be like, "Okay, well if you can't come in my office hours, tell me when you're able to come, and I'll come." Or, "Call me. Here's my cell phone number. Call me at home or call me here and I'll help you over the phone." Any, any possible way that they're…able to help you, they will help you. (P3)
>
> And here, I just feel like I'm able to talk to the professor and interact more so than I did over there. Um, I did have my study groups over there. . .the thing is, over

there, I, I rarely talked to any of my professors. Whereas here I find myself

talking to them on a daily basis while I'm in class. Um, I even find myself saying

hi to them, um, out on campus, and they know who I am, and I just, it feels good,

um, to be, like, this environment makes me feel good, and I like it. (P7)

P7 felt inspired to excel academically as a result of relationships she developed

with others on campus as well:

Um. . .I started meeting people that were, um, very hard-working, people that

wanted to excel, that were doing positive things for themselves. For example,

there was, um, a girl who worked with us. . .she had passed her LSAT, and she

had gotten a really good grade on it. . .so she's going to be starting, um, law

school. . .pretty soon. Um. . .people like that inspire you to do really good for

yourself, um, to want to do better for yourself. . . .I know they'll be there for,

there for me, because they're my friends." (P7)

P7 realized that the people who cared about her would support her learning, and

P3 described the importance having friends to support her through academic challenges:

We're able ta laugh about our stress and being able to just use each other for

comfort, use each other for understanding or just ta talk ta somebody. . . .the

people I hang around with here. . .most of them are nursing majors. . . .we are all

going through the same thing. Going through the same stress and going through

the same problems with certain material, just, and we kind of, uh, you know,

utilize our, each other, for, for just that comfort and that helps. And I think it's,

the stress has made friendships even stronger, cuz you're able to count on them to

help, or they're able to count on you to help. And, study groups have made lots

more friends, cuz people bring from other places too, so, um, you meet your

friends' friends. So, yeah, I think, just the hard times and even the, just plain old

good times, it, it just makes things, makes a person more social. . . .But um

[pause], now I, I think just opening yourself up, and just. . . finding things to

compare yourself with other people. (P3)

Similar to P3 and P7, P2 drew inspiration for her academic endeavors from her

friends:

It was a humbling experience to have those type of friends. And. . .they just really

let me see life in a different way. . .just being there to listen was the biggest help.

And getting me involved around campus, in positive things, and keeping me away

from not so productive things that I wouldn't necessarily have gone out of my

way to do, but maybe been involved somewhat. (P2)

P2, P3, and P4 expressed gratitude for the science professors who supported them

through academic challenges:

He [her Biochem I professor] just always told us like, no matter how many

questions one person had, he would not, um, he would not stop until he was sure

they understood. And he had that feeling about all of us, not just certain people.

Like sometimes professors have favorites, and um, he wasn't like that at all. He

treated us all equally, and um, he told us, um, "There's never any dumb

questions." Nothing like that. And it's just the way he treated us, with respect, and

um, just let us know that he was there to help us. (P2)

But he, my microbiology teacher, he, he got, he, he noticed how we all were; he noticed if we did good, he noticed if we did bad, he noticed if we, um, just improved. And I think he adjusted, I noticed he adjusted his teaching, his teaching, um, method. He noticed that we weren't catching on, cuz he was at, kind of at a quick pace at the beginning, and he noticed that we were kinda faltering, that we were kinda staying behind, and um, so he, he altered that, and it helped everybody. Cuz we were able ta stay on track with him. Also he did a lot of, um, I like also; a lot of the professors kinda compare things with real life scenarios. Um, or try ta find fun facts that we, um, you know, that our generation kind of knows about. Um, even though it's pretty much the same generation as the professors, but [laughed], but just things that we would be able ta, oh, just say, "Oh, okay, um, I know what he's talking about. Let me think of it this way." Just new ways of thinking of things. And in the end it ends up helping. It ends up helping, and it ends up making you feel more, "Okay, well my professor understands me." And it's not always, that stereotypical, like, "Ah, he's always out to get me," or "She's always out to get me." If I don't, you know, if I do something wrong or I, I'm rude to him or her, you know, they're gonna fail me. It's not like that. You have this very, like, close bond with the professors here. (P3)

I would have to say my professor in Biochem II also. Um, she noticed, she noticed that some of us were having trouble, and she went back and, and went and

clarified a few things. So, she helped, she helped a lot also. Just in, I guess

understanding that we did-, we were feeling a little behind. (P3)

Um, so for me to be able to go to her [the anatomy & physiology professor] and

ask her questions and ask her you know to explain different concepts that I didn't

really understand in school when I was in class, it was a big deal. Like I thank her

so much for her, you know, she's really dedicated. . .she's very sweet for to be

able to just talk to you and not judge you and not, um, question you and not think

well like, "Why didn't you didn't you tell me this in the beginning? Why didn't

you bring it up in class?" You know, sometimes people are just scared to talk in

class. Sometimes you just don't want to feel stupid, like, "Oh my God, I'm the

only one that doesn't understand this." So, you go to her and she'll talk to you.

(P4)

P4 contrasted unsupportive relationships with supportive ones:

I think you learn better, I think you. . .just adapt to the whole situation a lot better

if the person is very. . .sociable, very talkative with the person. You know, my. .

.teacher welcomed people with open arms, and my. . .teacher didn't. And if I'm

afraid of the class or if I'm afraid of the teacher, then I'm gonna be afraid of the

class. And if I'm afraid of the class, then I'm not gonna do very well. (P4)

Additionally, P4 expressed gratitude for those who offered support to her while

she experienced academic challenges:

A lot of people, a lot of my friends, you know, they had best friends that didn't go

to school, or they had boyfriends, or you know, they were married, and the people

in their lives couldn't adapt to the way that they were living and the way that they had to always be at school, and they were always studying. And it was difficult to see my friends go through that, and I'm so grateful that I didn't have people like that, to like discourage me, or you know, interfere with my learning. Um, I have really supportive people. You know, my parents, my family, my friends, so it was a, it made it a lot easier. I didn't have people trying to discourage me or trying to get me to, you know, skip class, just this one time. Cuz you skip one class and then the next time you'll skip again, and before you know it, you're getting dropped from the class, cuz you skipped too many times. So, it's just not worth it if people aren't willing ta support you, then they're just not meant to be in your life, because if they were meant to be in your life, they'd support you no matter what. They'd be behind you a hundred percent, even if it meant you know, I can't go to the mall today or I can't, I can't go to the movies or I can't hang out today, maybe another time. So, I'm very thankful that I have family and friends that understand that I'm very driven, I'm very dedicated to my school. (P4)

Adjusting relationships. Along with the high value placed on relationships, five participants recognized the need to adjust relationships as they encountered academic challenges. The theme presented in various ways between participants. For those who moved away from home, this transition involved a geographical as well as an emotional adjustment. P2 moved away from her parents for the first time. She spoke of breaking away from them, growing closer to God, and recognizing her true friends as she experienced academic challenges:

My dad still doesn't understand why I came out of state. He still tells me, "Will you come home? Come home." And it's just like, "This is my home." [Laughs]. That's what I tell him. (P2)

And then as the day got nearer to my orientation date I started packing my stuff, and everything, and my mom was like, "You're really going?" And I was like, "I really am." And I had boxes in the living room of my stuff, and she was just like, like she couldn't believe it, that I was really going. (P2)

When I first came out here, I was. . .materialistic. . .I believed in God, but I didn't really seek Him, you could say. And I thought I could do anything by myself, just me. And then when I met them, they um, they really helped me see that. . .you can only get so far by yourself, and if you believe in Him, and go to Him, that um, you can get a lot further in life. And um, also, in coping with the stress, like I know I had mentioned prayer. (P2)

P2 recalled that her relationships with friends and her ex-boyfriend changed as a result of her emphasis on academics and her growing spirituality as well:

I think as I started becoming closer, as I was able to, um, to handle my academic life, and when I discovered my spiritual life, I became closer to certain friends, lost other friends because of it, but then the way I think about it is if they were really my friends I wouldn't of lost them, in a way. (P2)

I think that was one of the main things that drove me and my boyfriend at the time apart, was that I would make sure all my academic work was done, and then I would stay for extracurricular stuff. . .and he would be upset that I'd be at school

so late, or that I would go out of my way, I would wake up early on Sunday

mornings to come to mass. . .I understand if I was like, going out clubbing with

my friends or something. . .but it's, it's something for my own good. And I think

that of, that made us more friends than boyfriend and girlfriend. (P2)

Like P2, P5 and P6 moved away from home to attend college. Both reported

sharing most everything with their families in the past. P6 recalled extreme homesickness

at the beginning of her freshman year, yet she noted that as time progressed she went

home less and missed college when she did:

I mean my first year in college, I was so homesick, and I would cry and I would

just think about what my family was doing, and, and I had a hard time here, like, a

few, not really bad experiences, but just things that I knew I wouldn't have to deal

with if I was home. (P6)

But, oh, but then I'd go home and I'd be like, "Oh, I need to get back". . . .Like, I

guess I'd get my little fill of home. Every, I guess, Thursday evening, I'd be like,

"Oh my God, thank God I'm home." My mom would cook, and every Sunday I'd

be like, "It's time to go, as soon as possible." I'm like, "We need to meet up and

leave." (P6)

As an only child, P5 was very close to her mother, yet she began sharing less after

moving away, particularly when she experienced academic challenges. She considered

telling her parents after she forgot to study for a test, but she decided against it:

I remember thinking about telling my, my parents, but I played out the

conversation in my head and them telling me that they were disappointed and, you

know, "Let that be the last time you do that." And, "You see what happens?"

And just things like that, I, so I didn't. (P5)

P5 expressed relief that her mother returned to school herself after P5 went away to college, as she worried that her mom was missing her.

Away from home for the first time, P2 and P6 reported opening up more to others while experiencing academic challenges. P6 shared, "I found that I, you have to kind of open yourself up. I mean, yeah, it's good to be, like, focused on your schoolwork, but you also have to, I guess, have a social life."

I wasn't used to talking to other people about what I felt. About my own things and then about how I felt about other people. So that was a big challenge, like, I would think about what I was going to say, and think about the words I would use before I would say it. But I think the more I talked to my. . .friends the more that I just, like, I wouldn't say didn't censor it, but just said what I truly felt, and then got their input, and then went from there. (P2)

Like P2, P7 described breaking away from certain friends and gravitating toward other friends who shared similar goals and values in the face of academic challenges. She noted the importance of connecting with people, "that are up there, um, with you, and not pushing you down, or pulling you down" (P7). Stating that she wanted to be a leader, she expressed the need to have friends with similar goals:

Well, people who have goals, who see themselves, um, being someone good in life. Um, not people who don't really care about school, who don't really care about being, or having, a career in the future, who just want to live by the day.

You don't want people like that. You want people who want to set out, um,

standards, who have standards for themselves, and who want to be, just good role

models. (P7)

P7 described growing apart from a friend:

And um, things didn't work out. . .because once I started. . .school, and we were

roommates, um, I started to see that we both hung out with totally different groups

of people. I hung out mostly with the nursing students, um, people who actually

liked to study, you know, and she hung out mostly with the laid back type of

people. (P7)

Although she did not move geographically away from her family, P4 described

breaking away from her parents when dealing with academic challenges, as she

recognized the need to become independent. She realized it involved an adjustment for

her parents as well:

But it can't always be like that, like you have to let me go through that, so I can

learn. So for them, I think it made them stronger, just because they know that they

can't always pick me up when I'm falling. . . .And they realized that too. They

can't do my homework, they can't go to class, they can't, you know, talk to my

teachers if I need them to. Like, I have to do it by myself, so for them to watch me

do that, it's kind of like watching your kid grow up, but all in one semester. (P4)

This adjustment included not allowing her mother to intervene when P4

experienced difficulty with a professor:

And she [P4's mother] wanted to talk to him [P4's professor], but I was like, "I'm

not gonna let you talk to him." Like, "I'm in college now. I have to do this on my

own. Like, just cuz he doesn't believe me, like, it doesn't have anything to do

with you. Like, it's all on me." (P4)

I wanna be able ta know that I can do things for myself. I don't wanna always

have ta depend on everybody ta do things for me. Like, if I can't do it, and. .

.that's the last resort, then I will go ta my parents. . . .It's the same thing with my

parents. They've taught me well. I have a good head on my shoulders, so I don't

really need to go to them unless it's like absolutely necessary, unless it's like car

trouble, like I'll go to them for that [both laughed]. Cuz I'm not good at that. But

when it comes ta school and, like, managing things by myself and. . .scholarships

and school and getting a job, like, I can do that by myself. (P4)

Fulfilling a sense of purpose. Four participants described fulfilling a sense of

purpose as relevant to the way in which they responded to academic challenges. In all

four cases, fulfilling a sense of purpose was closely related to the theme of valuing family

as well as to themes of having personal determination and receiving encouragement

within the superordinate theme of persevering. P4, P5, P6, and P7 all talked about

fulfilling the role of "student" within their families. P4, P5, and P6 enjoyed making their

parents proud by earning good grades. P6 summarized it clearly:

I guess, like, for me, this is like what I'm supposed to do. And like this is what I

wanna do and this is I guess, my. . .happy moment. Or like my time to shine was

when I do good in school, that's when I guess my family, when they show how

proud they are of me. It's just like, it's the greatest thing for me, I guess. (P6)

As the first member of her family who would earn a college degree, P7 felt a need to serve as a role model for her younger siblings, and she wanted others to view her in that way as well:

> Um, well the thing is that all through high school, all through mi-, since elementary, um, I was all, I was always the um, the good girl, the one who gets like, the good grades. And, I didn't want that to change in college. I didn't want people to be like, "Oh, she's lazy. Like, she doesn't, she doesn't care about school. She doesn't wanna be anybody in life." So that was just always my biggest thing, like um, I don't want people to think that about me. I want them to think like, "Oh. . .she's very hard-working. She's gonna be somebody in life. She's gonna do something good with herself." (P7)

Stating that she wanted to become a leader, P7 reported that she joined a campus leadership organization but emphasized that her academics came first. P7 shared her sense of purpose:

> I want to better myself. I want to help other people, um, cuz it's always good to help out. And I believe leaders pretty much set off, um, people wanting to, to do good for themselves and to do good for others. (P7)

P6 described knowing exactly what she wanted to do and how to go about it:

> And it's something I really wanted to do in high school, it's like, "I'm gonna be a nurse, I'm gonna go to school to be a nurse," and I mean, it's always stuck with me, so it's really important for me to do that. To say that I accomplished that, to be an RN. (P6)

As P6 felt guilty about "taking" from her family as a student, she approached her academics with a purpose-driven sense of needing to give back to her family and to others in the future:

> I guess school is my own responsibility right now. And my sister's kinda like you know, "You went away, so you know, you don't know what's going on here" and this and that. . . .But my parents have never, you know. And I do feel like this is what I'm supposed to be doing, and I guess that's why I dedicate so much to it, because this is my only real responsibility is ta, I guess, succeed in school. So that's what, that's why I do, I guess, what I do here. (P6)

> I have to help myself before I can help anyone else. Because I mean, in the end, it's I guess where you've gone and what you have to give back ta everyone. Like right now I guess I'm taking away. I'm not, I'm not there to help, and you know, money is kind of being fed to me, cuz I don't work, but I feel like in the end I'll be able to give back, like, four times over what I guess I've taken. And, I'm sad of course that I can't help my family more now cuz they really need me, but like I feel like, later on, I'm gonna be really proud of what I did here. And I'll be able to give back more than, like I ever thought I'd be, like have the resources to do. (P6)

Like P7, P6 talked of becoming a leader and of being the student in the family. She stated that one of her favorite things was telling her family members about her academic achievements. She viewed fulfilling the roles of student and leader as current purposes in life:

> Well [pause], my dad, he would always tell me, "You know, you don't need to be,

you need to be a leader, you don't need to be a follower. And, it's all about

leading, and you know. . ."I know you're strong; you're different from your sister,

and you need ta, you know, lead the way. . .doing your own thing." (P6)

Similarly, P4 talked of her purpose to fulfill the role of student, set an example for

her younger sister, and please her parents:

Like, I don't wanna disappoint them [P4's parents] just because, oh, I don't

wanna wake up today, or oh like, I don't wanna go ta class. . . .I guess it's just the

type of relationship where I don't wanna let them down, and I don't wanna

disappoint them, so I'm always pushing myself ta do better and just make them

more proud of me. (P4)

As the first member of her family to attend college, P5 felt a sense of

accomplishment and purpose. She described the transition from feeling burdened by her

parents' expectations and the competition she experienced in high school to knowing

what she needed to do in college and feeling a sense of self fulfillment when she

succeeded academically:

It's still kind of a little competition with getting in the program, but um, now I'm,

like, before, seeing a B on my paper would, I would get this feeling of

disappointment or this, you know, this sad feeling, cuz I knew I was going to

disappoint my parents, and now it's not so much about them. It's, it's me. Um, so

I, I think it's, it's, has ta do with, my parents and, and my own personal, you

know, goal to get into the program, because it's something I really, I really do

want. (P5)

I guess, feeling good about myself, feeling, um, you know, knowing that, I had,

um; it's not my parents that are pushing me anymore. I mean they're, they're still

there, but not like it used to be, and um, I'll push, so now it's, it's um, it is just

me, I guess [smiled and sighed]. (P5)

Um, I know some things that [laughed], that aren't contributing, like um, like

sometimes I, I get distracted really easily and. . .or, I procrastinate sometimes, um,

but. . .once I do get started on something and I really focus, I get it done really

well, or really, really quickly. Um, and, just that. . .I do know what I want, and I, I

know what I have to do to get it. (P5)

When asked to clarify what she had to do, P5 promptly stated, "Work really hard and you

know study a lot, and um, get good grades" (P5).

Becoming the person I am meant to be. P2, P3, P4, and P6 experienced

academic challenges within the theme of becoming the person I am meant to be. Again,

this theme presented in various ways for each of the four participants. Their stories were

some of the most powerful to come out of the interviews, and offered insight into why

these participants were willing to work so diligently in the face of academic challenges.

As the first member of her immediate family to attend college, P2 was determined

to "become someone" as an adult:

Um, this might sound bad, but I've always wanted to be better than my parents.

Like get a college education. They weren't able to, for various reasons, and thank

God I have the opportunity to, but that's just always been my motivation, like,

become someone, and, be able to do what my parents didn't get to do. So, I guess,

dropping out of college is not an option. It's not an option, actually. I'm gonna

make it [smiles]. And that's what helped me and keeps helping me is that I'm

gonna do it. (P2)

Thoughts of future responsibilities guided P2's response to current academic challenges:

I see a lot of my friends, I'm just thinking about them now. And they don't, I

know it's gonna be years until I have kids, but still you have to think about it.

Well at least I do, I have to always, like, plan ahead. And um, I just feel like some

of the decisions they're making, it's like, "Are you really sure that's what's best?"

"Are you, like, for the long run, are you really sure that's what's best?" And I'm

not in a position to say that to them, but um, I just think we all, or all people my

age should, be thinking of the future, to an extent, and so that really does help me.

I decide to approach my academics differently than what my peers do. (P2)

Like P2, P3 was the first member of her immediate family to attend college. P3

grew up hearing her mother's stories of longing to go to college. Having watched her

older sister fail to continue her education and regret it later, P3 recognized her good

fortune to have opportunities that her mother didn't have. She emphasized that making

the most of her academic opportunities was significant to becoming the person she was

meant to be:

You know, my, like for example, my gramma would tell her [P3's mother], "You

know, you need to go to school. You need to graduate. You, you can go to college

if you want." You know, was always pushing her, but of course of at that time, the

male was always superior, you know, when my mom was younger, so my

grandfather would tell her, "No. Girls aren't supposed to go to school. You're supposed to stay home and you're supposed to, you know, have kids and get married or whatever." And he wouldn't sign off for her ta go ta school. And like she, like I like listening to her stories. Like, I like listening about how it was when she was younger. . .I see how much more advantage, like how much more opportunities that I have. And, she was always telling me, "You know, you need to take advantage of these things, because there's a lot of people that don't get this opportunity. And there's a lot of people that wish they could have what you have, and they can't, so if it's offered to you, take it in a golden platter, and take it, you know, and run with it." And, I think that's always stuck in my mind. Just, you know, if it's given to me, and if, if I'm in reach of having and, and fulfilling a goal, um, I need to take it. Cuz if not, you know, I'm putting myself to waste. (P3)

P3 repeated one of her mother's stories during her second interview. In the story, P3's grandfather became angry and refused to attend her mother's high school graduation in response to her persistent desire to attend college. P3 subsequently shared her reaction to the story:

And that story's always just resonated with me, just like, you know, how times have changed now. Like. . .I couldn't imagine how I would, if I would have been in her [P3's mother] shoes, like how I could of done that. And like, basically discouraged her, like from that moment on, she was just like, "No, then maybe this isn't for me," you know? And basically discouraged her from just going on and still going to college. So I mean, and I think, like, stories like that she shared

with me or other stories also, just kind of like hit me. . .I think sometimes that

life's really, really hard for me. When like, before [laughed], like if it was like

that at this time, I would be completely lost and be a nobody, you know? So. . .it

shows me that I should take advantage. . .I should take more advantage of what I

have. And I think that's what I've basically learned from her. . . . just how hard it

was for her ta. . .do what she wanted to do, just to succeed and go to school. And

how hard it was for her ta, even just try ta do that. And. . .I think that's why she

pushes me so hard, cuz she. . .doesn't wanna see me suffer. And she doesn't want

me ta have ta depend on somebody, the way that my grandmother did with my

grandfather, just ta depend on him to survive. And that's basically just been what

she's told me, "You know, you need to be able to support yourself. You need to

be able to be successful as your own self, not be successful as in somebody's

shadow." Just ta not have ta depend on anybody but myself. (P3)

P3 described a deep connection with her mother in which her academic struggles

often coincided in time with her mother's regrets about unfulfilled dreams. P3 spoke

poignantly of the desire to fulfill her mother's dreams:

I don't know, maybe it's just coincidence from somebody upstairs, you know, cuz

whenever that happens, I'm having a hard time, you know, I'm having a hard time

in school, and so she's like, you know, and there have been times, like, recently

that I've been tryin' ta deal with it on my own. Just kind of like, not saying

anything, just kind of dealing with my struggles on my own, and tryin' not to

worry her about it. And tryin' ta fake it even though I can't fake it, because she

knows when something's wrong. And, you know, and she'll be like, "What's

wrong?" Like, "What's happened?" Or, "Is there something that you're having

trouble with?" And, and it's usually for some odd coincidence around the same

time that she's having these, just thoughts. And so like, it always happens that she

is always, you know, "You need to take advantage of what you have." And,

because, you know, "Don't let this go by and don't mess up." And you know, and

like it always happens when I don't tell her. Like when I don't tell her there's

something wrong, and there really is something wrong, and it's just like, "Hmm."

Like, "Well why is she telling me that?" Like, "Does she know?" [Laughed].

Like, "How could she be telling me this at this exact point in time when I'm

having trouble?" And, so I mean, I guess just, it makes her str-, she's stronger and

she makes me stronger because of it. . . .And I just think everything happens for a

reason. I just think, you know, maybe my mom went through what she went

through, so that way she can help me, you know, be who I am now. And you

know, and if I'm able to make her, you know, happy or to make her proud, you

know I think that gives her that satisfaction that she didn't have, so like whenever,

like, I let her down or whatever, I just do something wrong, I just feel horrible,

cuz like, you know, she expects so much out of me. And, like I just think things

happen for a reason. I think I was just blessed with somebody like that in my life

that, you know, would help me, and just make me a more successful person

overall. I mean not just in school, but I feel like I've accomplished so many things

that, that have helped me in school. Just made me, I guess, a well-rounded kind of

person that I can just take on, I'll try everything, even though I think I'll be

horrible at it, like my painting class [laughed]. But I mean I try everything, and

just because you never know what else is, you're gonna be good at. I mean, you

don't know what else you might enjoy. And, I think she's just taught me to be like

that, just not to settle for something small or settle for something easy, or just to

take the easy way out. Just taught me ta just wanna be challenged. And I think I

was just blessed like that. That was just, that plan, you know. (P3)

When asked to clarify regarding "somebody upstairs," P3 confirmed:

The big man upstairs. Yes. And ah, I have, me personally, I have a lot of faith,

and I think that's kind of what gets me going. It keeps me, you know, just

knowing that, I just have that faith that I wouldn't be where I am, because of my

mom, and He blessed me with a mother like that. (P3)

P4 and P6 both valued the money being invested in their education, and they tried

to make the most of it. P4 stated, "Cuz you're paying all this money ta go ta school. And

you're just basically throwing away, throwing it all away in the end, cuz you're not going

ta class and then you fail." Recognizing that her parents made sacrifices to send her to

college, P4 remembered their conversations when faced with academic challenges:

"So, you know, we're trusting you to go to class, and you know, just like, make us

proud." And so that always like stays in my head. Like, my parents are paying for

me to come here. . . .I'm constantly, like, always telling myself, you know,

"What's the right thing to do? Go to class or sleep and miss all this information

just cuz you wanted like an extra hour of sleep?" (P4)

Having taken out student loans, P6 reported needing to make the most of it for herself. "And it's, you know it costs a lot of money to come here, so, since I'm investing so much in it, you know this is what, I guess, my main focus needs to be." Although she considered transferring to a college near home to help her parents out with medical issues, P6's father reassured her that she was where she belonged and doing what she needed to do:

> And I really, like I'm really happy with my decision, and my dad tells me all the time, he's like, you know, "That's where you're supposed to be," and like, "Don't ever think that you need to come home and take care of us, because you're doing what you need to be doing, and we're so proud of you," and like, "Just knowing that you're. . .getting an education, is all we, like that's all we need to know about you, we don't worry about, we don't". . . .Like my dad tells me. . ."I never have to worry about you, because I know that you're doing what you need to be doing." And, so that's, that's fine, like I, I am, I guess I am the student. That's what everyone, even my whole, my entire family, they're like, "You know, _____'s so smart, and you know she's going to nursing school." And they always know what I'm doing, they always, every time I come home someone's telling me, you know, "We heard about this. We heard about that." And I'm like, "Thank you." And, so that's what they expect from me, pretty much. (P6)

As did P3, P6 felt a responsibility to fulfill the dreams of a parent:

> And, my dad kind of talked to me and said, "You know, you just need to, your responsibility I guess, is to do good in school, because we, you've come so far

already, and we see, like, a lot of potential in what you can do." And like a lot of

people, like my teachers would tell me that, and my dad really like ingrained in

me that my responsibility is to be here at school, and that's why my dad tells me,

you know, he doesn't want me to work. He just wants me to focus on my school

work, because he's like, "You know that's your job, your school is your job, your

school is your only responsibility right now, because you know, you moved

away." (P6)

My only job is school, according to him. I just need to focus on school, cuz. .

.he's like. . . ."I'm so proud of you. Like you're making me really happy, like

you're fulfilling my dream by being over there and doing what you're doing, like,

getting the grades you're getting, like, that's my dream for you." So, he's like,

"Stay over there and do what you have to do." But I know, like, he's like, "Oh, I

want her home so bad!" That's what my sister tells me. (P6)

Envisioning life as a professional. Finally, three participants envisioned life as a

professional when they encountered academic challenges. P4, P6, and P7 verbalized a

need to do well in prenursing courses, so that they would become effective nurses. When

faced with academic challenges, they worried that they may have difficulty serving future

patients unless they overcame those challenges:

Specifically with my anatomy class, it's a lot of information and she goes into,

like, great detail about everything, and it seems like everything she says like you

have to remember because it's like the human body and when you take care of

people, and like you wanna make sure you know what's going on. (P4)

Like, you wanna do well, cuz those are like the main classes that the nursing

people will probably look at. Cuz you're dealing with, like, live people. It's not

like dolls. You hafta know things. . . .I think that scared me even more, like,

"How am I supposed to remember all of this and become a nurse?" And, "How

am I supposed ta, um, be able to know what everything, like, everything that's

going on in your body? How am I supposed to remember that?" (P4)

Stating that she wanted to "have a career that, that I can, you know, be proud of,

and grow in," P6 recognized that she needed to acquire long-term understanding of

academic content in order to serve her future patients well:

It's not something you can just forget. . .like my friends that are in nursing school.

. .they said that you can't memorize everything, you have to learn it, cuz this is

your job, and like, people's lives are on the line. You can't just. . .memorize stuff.

You have to know it. . . .memorizing isn't really gonna help me. I have to know

stuff or I'm not gonna do well, later on. (P6)

Looking ahead to being a professional, P4 worked to keep a balance between

responding to academic challenges independently and asking for help appropriately:

I wanna try and do things by myself, cuz in nursing, like, you're gonna have ta

ask people things, but sooner or later. . .it has ta be like second nature to you. So,

if you're constantly asking people like, "How do you do this? How do you do

that?" Like, "What should I do?" Like, you're not gonna be independent as a

nurse, you're gonna be someone that's like shadowing somebody all the time, and

I don't wanna be like that. . . .I wanna be the person that people can come to and

ask for help, and my help will make them more independent, and they'll know, you know, "This is what I have ta do, so next time I have ta do it, I already know how." (P4)

P7 worried when her grades dropped, as her performance in a nursing career would depend on her knowledge base:

I can't be getting grades like this, because my grades depend on my career later on in the future. Um, it depends on how good of a nurse I want to be later on in the future. So, it just, getting an A is very rewarding, and it makes me feel like I going, I'm doing good for myself, and I'm doing good for my future, and I'm doing good as wanting to be that good nurse, that great nurse. (P7)

Additionally, P7 envisioned potential problems that she may encounter in the future:

But, to me that's what being a great nurse is, knowing what I'm doing, um, not just going into the field and being confused. Well, "How do I do this?" Or, "What if the lights go out or something goes out in the hospital? How am I gonna know how to measure, um, the type of dosage that a certain patient needs?" Or, "How am I?" Just different little, little things, um, that technology does for nurses now. Well, what if we didn't have that technology? I believe through these different classes, like Biological Chemistry, um, I believe that if something goes down at a hospital. . .I still know what to do. Um, I just think that by getting these good grades, it'll just make me a better nurse later on in the future. (P7)

Summary of Living Out Values and Beliefs

Living out values and beliefs was the superordinate theme about which

participants spoke the most. It was formed by the themes of valuing relationships and valuing family for all participants. Five of six participants described adjusting relationships when faced with the academic challenges of college. Additionally, living out values and beliefs was expressed through one or more of the following themes for each participant: (a) fulfilling a sense of purpose, (b) becoming the person I am meant to be, and (c) envisioning live as a professional.

Throughout the process of experiencing academic changes, participants questioned themselves and their abilities, and these explorations led to an awakening sense of what was important to each as an adult. Some participants reported setting personal and professional goals that required living each day of their academic lives with an eye to the future and the responsibilities that it would hold. Again, participants described their families as highly valuable in their lives, and participants' responses to academic challenges were influenced by family values and desires. Their stories illustrated connections between two superordinate themes: (a) living out values and beliefs, and (b) persevering. Valuing family and having a purpose in life supported participants' perseverance to succeed academically.

Discrepant Cases and Nonconfirming Data

I did not find discrepancies within the data. Three elements of data arose in only one interview each, however. P6 alone reported never seeking help from peer tutors or professors, and P3 was the only participant to recall receiving discouragement from high school teachers and administrators that affected her confidence when responding to academic challenges in college. P2 was the solitary participant who described the process

of regaining confidence after it was shaken within the superordinate theme of persevering. Although other participants did not corroborate these findings, I reported them as each was significant to the experience of the given participant who reported it. These elements of data did not contradict any of the other findings that emerged.

Evidence of Quality

I conducted all phases of this study according to the approved proposal and the IRB application. Participants' real names and other identifying information are secured in a safe and will remain there separately from all other collected data for 5 years. Raw data will remain in a locked file cabinet for 5 years. All raw data and identifying documents will be shredded or securely discarded in 5 years. I did not inform anyone of the participants. I listened to each recording at least two or three times during the transcription process and again at the beginning of the analysis of each transcribed interview in order to ensure accuracy of the data. I typed a summary of each participant's experience before moving to the analysis of data for the next participant to ensure that each participant's story was considered individually.

Using Microsoft Access and Microsoft Word documents, I moved along the hermeneutic circle and engaged with the data for extensive periods of time, considering multiple relationships between codes, themes, and superordinate themes to uncover the most authentic relationships between the data of individual participants and to compare data between participants. The analysis extended through the writing of section 4. Two participants completed private member-checking interviews with me, and they both

confirmed that the findings accurately reflected their lived experiences. Discrepant findings did not emerge.

Summary

I used IPA to analyze the data gathered in this qualitative study. I traveled along the hermeneutic circle throughout the process of listening to, transcribing, and analyzing the interviews. Microsoft Word tables and Microsoft Access assisted me to track the data throughout the analysis.

Section 4 presented the seven superordinate themes that emerged as inherent to the participants' lived experiences of encountering academic challenges in prenursing courses. Although the seven superordinate themes applied to all participants, the participants varied as to how they demonstrated or expressed each superordinate theme. A summary of the findings organized within the research study questions, connections between superordinate themes and the literature, and recommendations for practice follow in section 5.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

I conducted this qualitative study to develop a better understanding of the lived experiences of successful Latina students as they encounter academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses. The following question guided the research: What are the lived experiences of successful Latina students as they encounter academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses? I privately interviewed six participants on three occasions. I audio taped and transcribed the second and third interviews with each participant. I subsequently analyzed the data from the transcribed interviews using interpretative phenomenological analysis, and I presented the findings along with supporting data in section 4.

Seven superordinate themes emerged from the participants' stories of their lived experiences: (a) facing academic challenges, (b) recognizing emotional response, (c) seeking help, (d) transcending academic challenges, (e) owning knowledge, (f) persevering, and (g) living out values and beliefs. The superordinate themes will be discussed within the four subquestions that they addressed in the pages that follow. Findings will be connected to the literature, followed by consideration of implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for future research. Section 5 will conclude with my reflections and a final summary.

Interpretation of Findings

The following pages summarize the most significant findings detailed in section 4. Findings are highlighted within the research subquestions to which they spoke. The implications for practice are addressed briefly within each subquestion, and detailed recommendations for action follow.

Subquestion 1

Subquestion 1 asked: What academic challenges do successful Latina students experience in prerequisite nursing courses?

Facing academic challenges. This question was best addressed within the superordinate theme of facing academic challenges. Facing academic challenges allowed participants to perceive a difference between desired and actual levels of academic achievement. Participants were able to face academic challenges after recognizing the challenges and becoming aware of where they stood in relationship to where they wanted to be academically.

Participants mentioned biochemistry, anatomy and physiology, nutrition, and statistics courses as the most challenging. They described recognizing academic challenges such as not fully understanding content and encountering new learning environments. Specifically, they mentioned the volumes of material to be learned in science courses, the need to understand complex foundational concepts before memorizing superficial details, encountering professors who answered their questions by

asking them more questions, and facing academic issues while separated from their families and high school friends for the first time.

All participants recalled struggling with tests or quizzes at some point. They became aware of personal strengths and weaknesses, ineffective learning strategies, and conflicting obligations that impacted their academic performance. As they experienced a growing academic awareness, participants became cognizant of college expectations and how they needed to adapt in order to meet them. For some, the experience of earning lower grades than in high school was perceived as a challenge to which they needed to adjust as well.

Practice applications. Practice applications relate to the provision of additional support in courses described as the most challenging. Continuation of programs such as the PASS, offering individual and group tutoring sessions, and the use of learning communities is important. Classroom professors can orient incoming freshmen to the classroom environment by explaining that student questions may be answered by asking more questions in an effort to encourage thinking that extends beyond superficial answers. Significantly, support should be available for all students, including those who are outwardly academically successful.

Subquestion 2

Subquestion 2 asked: What factors affect successful Latina students' experiences of and responses to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses? Answers to this question emerged within six superordinate themes.

Facing academic challenges. The ability of these students to recognize a challenge in a timely fashion coupled with their developing academic awareness allowed them to keep their performance on track. For example, students realized that although each quiz in a biochemistry course carried little individual significance, a sequence of quiz scores accumulated weight and offered a snapshot of their understanding of the content. This awareness allowed the participants to recognize and address deficiencies by altering their approaches to learning. Additionally, their recognition of nonacademic issues that affected course performance was essential. Family, work, and social obligations impacted the time and energy that participants could devote to their studies. Finally, participants were keenly aware of the requirements for acceptance to a nursing program and the finite number of spaces available within programs. Although the sense of competition increased their stress, participants acknowledged that it served to motivate them to do their best.

Recognizing emotional response. Participants' ability to recognize and deal with their emotions affected their experiences of and responses to academic challenges. Participants' recognition allowed them to keep emotions in perspective in order to learn academic content. P4 offered a salient example, "I had ta put all of that behind me. I couldn't let my feeling toward the teacher keep me from actually doing well in the class. But, I tried my best, and I think I ended up with a B."

Seeking help. Parental encouragement to seek help from professors influenced four of the participants to transition from not seeking help to requesting the help they needed. Importantly, the classroom teacher and environment had a significant impact on

participants' experiences of and responses to academic challenges. Although all initially

hesitated or avoided seeking help when they encountered challenges, this behavior

persisted in classrooms in which participants feared being embarrassed by a professor in

front of their peers. Participants who felt uncomfortable when they sought help from a

professor after class or during office hours responded emotionally and rarely returned for

help. All participants emphasized the importance of professors who welcomed,

encouraged, and responded nonjudgmentally to their questions.

Transcending academic challenges. The presence of supportive families,

friends, significant others, professors, and campus organizations influenced participants'

experiences of and responses to academic challenges. While the support of parents was

invaluable, participants noted that support from professors and peers best assisted them to

address the challenges. Learning within a supportive college environment was noted by

all participants to enhance learning and to keep their stress levels in check. P3 described

the importance of a supportive college environment:

> And that's one thing that settles my heart, just that I know that if I, ever, you
>
> know, do have trouble, I can call them, or I can find someone to help me. And
>
> just, they, they, the professors here, they, bond with you. They actually take the
>
> time to know you, take the time to learn your learning style. (P3)

Simply put, all participants reported thriving in the academic environment due in large

part to the support they received.

Persevering. Participants' ability to persevere in the face of difficulty hugely

impacted their response to academic challenges. The encouragement they received,

especially from parents, was highly significant to their perseverance. All participants had received encouragement from parents that began long before they entered college. Every participant sensed that her parents believed in her, and in all cases this unwavering belief was coupled with high academic expectations and aggressive academic encouragement. Participants described their parents as "driving" (P5, P7), "pushing" (P3, P5, P6, P7), "hard on me" (P4), "on my back" (P3), having "high standards" (P7), stating "failure is not an option" (P2), and saying "you need to be a leader" (P6). This encouragement offset the discouragement that all but one had received at some point from other relatives, friends, professors, and in one case, high school teachers and administrators. In the face of such encouragement, even discouragement and challenges served to heighten participants' personal determination, personal strength, and confidence.

Living out values and beliefs. This superordinate theme was tightly interwoven with the superordinate theme of persevering, and the two influenced every aspect of participants' experience of and response to academic challenges. As noted in section 4, the most powerful and poignant stories clustered within the superordinate theme of living out values and beliefs. All participants described experiencing and responding to academic challenges according to their values and beliefs. Participants' responses to academic challenges, especially in regards to perseverance, arose from deeply ingrained values and beliefs as to who they were, who they needed to become, the purposes they were to fulfill, and what was important in life.

The high value that participants placed on relationships influenced their expectations of the academic environment and how they learned. Participants expected

and appreciated relationships with professors and peers, and all shared stories of learning that was situated within relationships. Additionally, participants felt and expressed bitter disappointment when the expected relationships with professors failed to materialize.

The high value placed on family by every participant had perhaps the most significant impact on participants' experiences of and responses to academic challenges. Each participant talked about her family during the first interview, although none of the initial questions asked about family. Expecting to be the first in their immediate families to earn a college degree, four participants arrived at college determined not to squander this highly valued opportunity (P2, P3, P5, P7); three appreciated that their parents offered educational support that they had not received themselves (P2, P3, P7); two recognized the generosity of parents who missed them deeply, yet allowed them to leave home to reach their academic potential (P5, P6); two described the desire to fulfill their parents' dreams (P3, P6); and three voiced a desire to reap the benefits of the economic investment in their education (P2, P4, P6). P3 recalled her mother encouraging her to make the most of this opportunity:

> "And there's a lot of people that wish they could have what you have, and they can't, so if it's offered to you, take it in a golden platter, and take it, you know, and run with it." And, I think that's always stuck in my mind. Just, you know, if it's given to me, and if, if I'm in reach of having and, and fulfilling a goal, um, I need to take it. Cuz if not, you know, I'm putting myself to waste. (P3)

The theme of valuing family was integrally related to becoming the person I am meant to be (P2, P3, P4, P6) and/or fulfilling a purpose in life (P4, P5, P6, P7) for each

participant as she experienced and responded to academic challenges. Three participants (P4, P6, P7) also approached their academic challenges with an awareness of the knowledge they would need as a professional nurse. Additionally, five participants described persevering in the face of academic challenges as their role in the family, illustrating the close relationship between the superordinate themes of persevering and living out values and beliefs.

In summary, six of the seven superordinate themes addressed Subquestion 2. Participants' abilities and desires to face academic challenges, recognize and manage their emotions, seek help, transcend academic challenges, persevere, and live out their values and beliefs influenced their experiences and responses to academic challenges. In particular, values and beliefs were deeply connected to persevering, and together they were highly significant to academic experiences and responses as described by participants.

Practice applications. The participants in this study described the expectations of their families as important to their perseverance and academic success. Faculty advisors should be aware of the importance of family to this group of students. Not all students may have this type of family support, however. It is important for college professors and advisors to provide encouragement to all college students and to ask students about the family support they receive. Programs within the secondary education system can inform parents of the importance of support and encouragement for college bound students. Additionally, educators can assist parents to provide the appropriate support, particularly for first-generation college students.

Subquestion 3

Subquestion 3 asked: How do successful Latina students respond to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses? All seven superordinate themes served to address this question.

Facing academic challenges. As described above, each participant concurrently recognized academic challenges and became increasingly aware of the college environment and expectations during her first semester. This recognition and awareness allowed participants to take steps to transcend the challenges. This recognition was accompanied by participants questioning themselves, their abilities, and their choice of major.

Recognizing emotional response. Participants responded emotionally to academic challenges. All participants described an intense response, using terms such as "anxiety" (P2), "anxious" (P3, P4), "anxiousness" (P3), "drove me crazy" (P2), "fear" (P3), "freaking out" (P3, P6), "nervous" (P3, P4, P7), "intense" (P4), "scared" (P3, P4, P7), "scary" (P3), "stress" (P2, P5), "stressed" (P2, P4, P5), "stressful" (P4, P5, P7), and "stressing" (P3).

Three participants reported crying (P2, P3, P6), and three described visceral responses such as "being on a roller coaster" (P4), breaking out in hives and throwing up (P4), and "your throat in your stomach" (P3). P7 recalled a nerve wracking semester during which, "I thought I was gonna break." The intensity of the experience was described most vividly with the use of physically violent verbs by P3:

Um, when I got into, my fre-, freshman year here, um, in college, my first exam I

took, I got a 60 on it. I got an F on it. And um, went home crying, freaked out,

um, and I think at that point it hit me, like, "Oh my God. This is going to be a

burden that, that has, you know, been on my shoulders, but is now affecting me,

psychologically, um, emotionally, and of course it's showing in my, you know,

in my exams." And I think at that time it kind of just smacked me across the

face. It was like, "I need ta snap out of it. I need ta find a way ta overcome this,

because it's gonna take me down, and it's gonna take me down hard." Just

knowing the fact that, um, just knowing the fact that a lot of, of the classes that I

was taking, it was only based on exam grades. So if I bombed all the exams, I

was just gonna fail the class. And I don't think I could take that, I could of taken

that. So I think that was my motivation to try and, beat it, just to try and, smack it

back in the face, and, yeah, and get rid of that fear. (P3)

In addition to experiencing anxiety, all participants described feeling discouraged,

feeling disappointed, or experiencing frustration in response to academic challenges. P7

expressed her disappointment after doing poorly in a class, stating, "I felt like my heart

was being taken out of me." Despite the intensity of their emotional responses, all

participants described recognizing and managing emotions in ways that allowed them to

respond effectively to academic challenges.

Seeking help. Every participant described a transition from initially hesitating or

avoiding in regards to asking for help, to reaching out for help in response to academic

challenges. All participants described not wanting to feel embarrassed or appear stupid as

a reason for their initial hesitation and avoidance. For two participants, this response progressed to isolating themselves from family and friends. Participants cited receiving parental encouragement to ask professors for help (P2, P3, P4, P7), receiving encouragement from professors to ask for help (P3, P5), letting go of their pride (P2, P7), and realizing they should have asked for help sooner (P7) as key to their transition to asking professors for help.

All but one participant reached out to one or more professors for help at some point. Participants who were received with a welcoming and nonjudgmental attitude engaged in more help-seeking, while those who felt unwelcomed by professors went to others for help. Additionally, all participants reached out to friends and peers in the same classes for help. The five participants who reported learning with friends had reached out to peers selectively. Seeking help overlapped with transcending academic challenges at this point, as participants described specific characteristics they looked for in student group partners as well as actions they took to enhance the effectiveness of their study groups.

Transcending academic challenges. Participants described a variety of ways by which they responded to academic challenges in order to transcend them. Studying effectively was mentioned by all participants and was variously described as studying early, consistently, and often. Additionally, participants balanced family, work, and social commitments in order to allow adequate time for studying, employed strategies that maximized their learning during class, and worked to improve their test taking abilities.

Owning knowledge. When they experienced academic challenges, all participants recognized the difference between superficial recognition and a deeper understanding of concepts. They responded by striving to internalize new academic content and make it their own. This process was described by P3 as helping information to "actually get into my head." P5 thoughtfully differentiated between recognizing and knowing. She referred to recognition as, "I know it but I don't," and contrasted superficial knowledge with knowing information well enough that she would be able to consider it "in another way." P3 reported being "personally comfortable" with knowledge and being able to explain it "on my own."

Participants worked to understand foundational content and described breaking complex content into manageable parts. P2, P3, P4, and P7 reviewed new information from the beginning and continued every day in order to make it their own. P2 and P7 kept up with learning throughout the semester, and P4 and P5 reviewed content as soon as possible after its introduction during class. P7 described building upon prior knowledge, and likened it to climbing a ladder "one step at a time." P3, P4, P6, and P7 all mentioned that memorization was necessary, but they distinguished pure memorization from understanding and comprehension. P6 described "going outside of" a concept to learn everything about it with her study group, while P3 explained that in order to understand a complex concept she had to "understand how it worked inside of, you know, the material."

Demonstrating connections between the superordinate themes of owning knowledge and living out values and beliefs, participants reported internalizing academic

content by teaching and being taught by others within their study groups. Similarly, connections between the superordinate themes of owning knowledge and persevering were illustrated by participants who reported religiously reviewing new information every day in order to make it their own.

Persevering. The superordinate theme of persevering also helped to answer how participants responded to academic challenges. After initially becoming discouraged or having their confidence shaken, all participants persevered in response to academic challenges. Although five of six reported coming to college with a sense of personal strength or personal determination, all participants reported that the experience of encountering academic challenges served to further increase their personal determination (P2, P4, P6, P7), or helped them to recognize their personal strength (P2, P3). Four (P2, P4, P5, P6) felt a sense of accomplishment as a result of their experiences. P2 mentioned "sticking through it," P6 described "seeing things through," and P4 noted that she was her own worst critic, always wondering how she could do better. Additionally, P2, P6, and P7 described refocusing through prayer, yoga, reading, or music to enhance their perseverance when faced with academic challenges. Notably, three (P2, P5, P7) reported a transition from being pushed by their parents to driving or pushing themselves

Living out values and beliefs. Within the superordinate theme of living out values and beliefs, participants sought out new relationships and adjusted prior relationships as part of their response to academic challenges. All but one participant (P6) described responding to academic challenges within a relationship with a professor that extended beyond the classroom. Likewise, all but one participant (P5) described

responding to academic challenges within a study group on a regular basis. As mentioned under the superordinate theme of owning knowledge, participants learned within relationships that they valued highly.

Additionally, participants adjusted their relationships with others as they responded to academic challenges, growing away from people who didn't support their academic endeavors and gravitating towards people who did. Participants also described adjusting their relationships with their families as a result of encounters with academic challenges. Participants remained emotionally close to parents, yet they took on the responsibility of responding to academic challenges as self-sufficient and independent adults.

Practice applications. Some of the participants in this study developed strategies by which to learn challenging academic content on their own, and others initially used strategies as a result of recommendations received from a professor or tutor. College faculty members and academic support service personnel need to guide all students in the use of strategies by which to make knowledge their own. Continuation of the PASS and tutoring sessions is essential. Professors should provide opportunities in class for students to elaborate on and process new information with one another when learning complex concepts. Provision of support by teachers, advisors, first-year engagement personnel, peers, and counselors is essential, as the freshman experience is stressful as described by the participants in this study.

Subquestion 4

Subquestion 4 asked: In what ways (if any) do successful Latina students seek help when facing academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses? The superordinate themes of seeking help, transcending academic challenges, and owning knowledge addressed this question.

Seeking help. The superordinate theme of seeking help offered the most information in regards to Subquestion 4. Following their initial hesitation, participants sought help from a variety of sources including textbooks, online resources, the PASS, tutors in the learning assistance center, and peers. The source about whom they spoke the most, however, was professors. Participants asked questions of professors during class, after class, and during office hours. The reactions they received from professors played an important part in their experience of and response to academic challenges. Significantly, participants who did not receive the requested help from professors reached out to other sources such as peers or in the case of one participant, a high school teacher, to request the help needed.

Transcending academic challenges. Participants selectively reached out to trusted peers whom they felt could contribute to their learning within the superordinate theme of transcending academic challenges. Participants expected to not only to receive help from peers but to offer help with academic challenges in return. Selectively choosing peers and planning effective study sessions was closely connected with the processes by which participants became the owners of new knowledge.

Owning knowledge. Participants sought help from study group peers in the quest to own new knowledge. Notably, two participants sought and received help from friends after missing classes due to health related issues. They acquired knowledge by teaching and learning from peers during structured study group sessions and short encounters such as walks or shuttle rides across campus. The learning that occurred with purposive selection and planning of study group sessions contrasted with the productivity of sessions that just happened, in which participants ended up chatting or doing their own thing independently.

Practice applications. The successful participants in this study all transitioned from not seeking help to seeking help. Poorman et al. (2002) discovered that being approached by a professor was often the turning point for students who were struggling in nursing classes. Similarly, the prenursing students in this study transitioned to confidently seeking help when a professor or a family member encouraged them to do so, especially after being welcomed by the professor. Faculty members need to be available and need to reach out to all students, particularly students who do not ask for help despite experiencing difficulty.

Summary. In summary, participants responded to academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses within seven superordinate themes: (a) facing academic challenges, (b) recognizing emotional response, (c) seeking help, (d) transcending academic challenges, (e) owning knowledge, (f) persevering, and (g) living out values and beliefs. Their responses are of interest within the concepts of Hispanic culture, self-

efficacy, academic help-seeking, and achievement goal orientation. Relationships between the findings and the published literature are explored in the following pages.

Connections to the Literature

A number of connections to the literature emerged from study findings. Participants in the study described themselves as Mexican, Mexican American, or Hispanic. Therefore, the following paragraphs review the findings within Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimensions.

Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimensions

Power distance index. Hofstede (1983) compared student behavior in countries with higher power distance index (PDI) scores such as Mexico (81) to student behavior in low-PDI countries such as the United States (40; p. 52). He found that students in high-PDI countries do not question their teachers, are more dependent on their teachers, and are unlikely to talk in class unless invited to speak (Hofstede, 2001, pp. 100-101).

The Latina participants in this study verbalized an initial hesitation or avoidance of asking questions of their teachers during or outside of class. However, they verbalized not wanting to be embarrassed in front of peers or to appear "dumb" to professors as the reason for their hesitation. Importantly, all transitioned to seeking help from professors as they let go of pride and reached out. Four participants sought help from professors in response to encouragement from their Hispanic parents to do so. Therefore, it does not seem likely that their initial hesitation or avoidance can be explained as traditional cultural behavior related to PDI.

Individualism versus collectivism. Hofstede (2001) found that within the educational setting, students from collectivist cultures such as Mexico view themselves as part of a group and rarely speak out. Additionally, they strive to maintain harmony and avoid confrontation so individuals and their in-groups do not "lose face." The combination of collectivism (low IDV) and high power distance (high PDI) result in classrooms that are teacher-centered, with little two-way communication (Hofstede, 2001, p. 235).

Participants in this study viewed themselves as part of a group. The high value placed on relationships was evident across multiple superordinate themes. All participants but one emphasized the importance of interactions with members of their study groups. P2 illustrated the centrality of relationships to learning in her first interview when she stated, "We did really well on the final." When questioned, P2 clarified that "we" referred to her study group peers:

> That was the, um; it was like a group of like, three or four, um, of my peers that
> we would just get together and study. And um, like we really, we really hit the
> books and really studied. And all of us collectively did very well. (P2)

Viewing themselves as part of the group did not preclude participants from speaking up if the professor was approachable, however. Participants did not speak up when the professor intimidated them or made students feel "stupid" for asking questions during class. This response was not necessarily related to their culture, however, as similar findings might be expected across cultures.

Uncertainty avoidance index. According to Hofstede (2001), students from high-UAI countries such as Mexico may hesitate to disagree with professors, as they prefer highly structured classroom environments and view teachers to be experts. Evidence of this trait did not surface within the interviews. I asked about academic challenges, so participants recalled situations in which they did not understand information and saw professors as experts. Participants who did not question professors said they refrained from doing so because they did not understand the information well enough to know what to ask. Again, this hesitation may be seen across cultures.

Summary. The participants in this study valued learning within relationships and demonstrated high levels of collectivist behavior as described by Hofstede (1983). Although they all voiced an initial hesitation to approach professors, this response was not entirely explained by uncertainty avoidance, power distance index, or collectivism. The concept of collectivism came through strongly for this group of participants, yet they overcame any initial hesitation to speak out, and each transitioned to seeking academic help appropriately when faculty members created a welcoming educational environment. This response may be true for students from all cultures.

Cultural Values of Latino Families

Ginorio et al. (1995) noted that the cultural values of respeto, personalismo, familiarismo, and marianismo have relevance in Latino families. They stated, "Although the strength and form of these values will vary across different Latino groups as well as across social class, acculturation, and generation, most Latinas hold these values in some

form" (Ginorio et al., 1995, p. 256). Consideration of these values within participants' stories follows.

Familiarismo. The cultural value of familiarismo "places the extended family at the center of one's experience" (Ginorio et al., 1995, p. 256). A sense of familiarismo emerged from within every participant's story and was embedded across multiple superordinate themes for each participant. Importantly, the sense of familiarismo did not come between participants and their academic endeavors. Rather, it fostered their academic success. The high value placed on family influenced participants' experiences of and responses to academic challenges, as evidenced by the support received from families that was significant to transcending challenges, by the family values that led to persevering in the face of challenges, and by the values and beliefs within which participants overcame challenges in order to fulfill parental dreams and expectations.

Although participants and their parents valued family togetherness, some gave up geographic proximity and all loosened emotional ties in order to fulfill academic dreams. This process was initiated by the participants in some cases, and by their parents in others. P2 had to break away from her family to attend an out of state college. "I just felt like I needed to get away and get to know myself and experience as much as I could that my parents didn't as far as like education-wise and traveling and stuff like that," she remembered. Although her father still begged her to come home, P2 would respond, "This is my home." Notably, her father offered and used his retirement fund to pay for her college.

Although P4 still lived at home and verbalized being very close to her family, she described breaking away and becoming more independent as well. When her mother wanted to talk to a professor with whom P4 had difficulty, she declined the offer:

> And she [P4's mother] wanted to talk to him [P4's professor], but I was like, "I'm not gonna let you talk to him." Like, "I'm in college now. I have to do this on my own. Like, just cuz he doesn't believe me, like, it doesn't have anything to do with you. . . .it's all on me." (P4)

P5 reported that her parents encouraged her to move away. "I grew up with my parents always telling me, 'You have to work hard.' And, 'You're not just gonna stay in this town. You're gonna have a career, and you're gonna work.'" P6 was similarly encouraged by her father. Yet, P5 and P6 later discovered that their parents had hidden their sadness from them when they moved away to college.

Despite the geographic separation of P2, P5, and P6 from their parents, P2 reported calling her dad nearly every day, P5 said she called her mom nearly every day, and P6 said she told her parents "everything." Additionally, when P6 became seriously ill, she traveled several hours to get home. When questioned about this trip, she replied:

> I knew my, I mean; if you understood my parents, they would not have let me stay there. . .by myself. They would not. I mean, [pause] I just, they would of flown in, they would of driven in, they would of rented a hotel for a week. (P6)

Although her family had paid for a traditional quinceañera and debutante party for her older sister, P6 needed to take out loans for college due to medical bills her family incurred. She accepted responsibility to fulfill the role of student in the family:

They always tell me, you know, "M'ija, you, like we believe you have something

else, like you're gonna be living a good life. You know your sister got a lot of

nice things, but you have the education, and you have the, I guess the, drive to do

something with your life." (P6)

Similarly, although participants wanted and felt an obligation to help their

families, they were not expected to fulfill family obligations at the expense of their

academic success. The findings in this study supported Ginorio et al's. (1995) assertion

that Latinas hold the cultural value of familiarismo but that it varies in form and strength.

Familiarismo took a form that supported academic success for each of the participants in

this study.

Personalismo. As defined in section 1, personalismo "represents a way of staying

connected to one's world and involves highlighting the personal aspects of interactions"

(Ginorio et al., 1995, p. 256). According to a review of literature by Ginorio et al. (1995),

Latina women may value relationships over achievement (p. 246), and they may hesitate

to seek help from someone not known to their family because of personalismo (p. 256).

The cultural value of personalismo emerged across multiple superordinate themes

in the stories of all participants in the current study. All participants initially hesitated or

avoided asking others for help. This finding was similar to that reported by Amaro et al.

(2006), who found that some ethnically diverse students didn't ask for help due to

cultural prohibitions against questioning teachers and to those of Doutrich et al. (2005),

who discovered that Hispanic nurses' discomfort with self-disclosure had contributed to a

reluctance to seek help from faculty members during their education.

Although this finding may have been culturally mediated through a sense of personalismo, the participants reported that they didn't want to be embarrassed or made to look stupid for not knowing information. It is possible that students from most cultures would hesitate if they feared being embarrassed in front of their peers. Two participants mentioned that their parents would like to have helped them more with academic endeavors but realized they didn't have the skills to do so. Notably, four participants received encouragement from their Hispanic parents to ask professors for help. Most importantly, all six overcame their initial hesitation or avoidance and sought the help they needed to succeed academically.

The value of personalismo came through strongly regarding participants' desires and expectations of professors, peers, and university environment. Every participant reported learning that occurred with relationships, either with peers or professors. They desired and expected to have a warm relationship with their professors, and they expressed disappointment when the expected relationship failed to materialize. The relationships within which students learned also reflected the value of familiarismo, with the study group peers and caring members of the university community serving as an extended family while away from home.

Simpático. Simpático describes a personal trait found within the cultural social script *simpátia*, in which individuals value, expect, and engage in harmonius interpersonal relationships and avoid negative interpersonal interactions (Triandis et al., 1984). An expectation and desire for relationships characterized by simpático arose alongside personalismo across participants and superordinate themes. Participants

repeatedly used the word "welcomed" or "welcoming" when referring to professors who helped them. Professors who did not welcome them were described as cold or intimidating, and the students in this study usually did not return to see them. Participants expressed special appreciation and gratitude for professors who got to know them as individuals, for a campus community that cared, and for peers who saw them through academic challenges. Three participants talked about their hearts, with two using the term to express appreciation:

> For her ta like take time and actually help me as much as I needed help was really, like welcoming and. . .it warmed. . .my heart, just cuz she was able to have a connection with her student and not be like, "I can't believe you don't understand this." (P4)

> And that's one thing that settles my heart, just that I know that if I, ever, you know, do have trouble, I can call them, or I can find someone to help me. And just, they, they, the professors here, they, bond with you. They actually take the time to know you, take the time to learn your learning style. (P3)

Marianismo. As noted in the Definition of Terms section, the cultural value of marianismo "demands that women model themselves after the Virgin Mary and so see themselves as spiritually superior to men and as capable of enduring great suffering" (Ginorio et al., 1995, pp. 256-257). Some women interpret marianismo as "placing one's children's needs before one's own" (Ginorio et al., 1995, p. 257).

None of the participants used this term during the interviews, nor did evidence of this value surface within their stories as currently relevant to their lives. P3 described her

mother's life as having been formed within this value system, but she noted that her mother ensured it would not carry forth into P3's life. Similarly, P7 mentioned having a "machismo type" of grandpa, but noted that her parents were very liberal and divided everything "fifty-fifty. . . .Um, my grandparents don't really approve of it, but my parents really don't care at this point."

Ginorio et al. (1995) acknowledged that the validity and relevance of marianismo is a source of debate among scholars. Marianismo surfaced as historically relevant in the stories of two participants. The parents of P3 and P7 aggressively encouraged them to become educated, intentionally breaking away from the tradition of marianismo. Although the other four participants did not share similar stories, it is possible that a family history embedded in the value of marianismo may have influenced their parents to push them academically as well.

Respeto. Respeto, the form of respect that defines one's place in the societal hierarchy, particularly in regards to women's subordination to men, did not surface as currently relevant in participants' stories. Again, P3 and P7 described this value as being part of their parents' experience but not of their own. Although participants initially hesitated to approach teachers, this hesitation occurred with female professors as well as with males. Additionally, one participant described standing up to a male professor with whom she had difficulty and recalled, "I don't like to give up very easily. I'm very, like persistent. . . .I'm gonna dominate this class. I'm not gonna let him get the best of me. I'm gonna do well in this class" (P4).

Summary. In summary, the Hispanic cultural values of familiarismo, personalismo, and simpático factored prominently within the lived experiences of study participants. Importantly, the presence of familiarismo enhanced their academic achievement. These findings agreed with those of Huynh and Fuligni (2008), who demonstrated that cultural socialization was positively associated with academic motivation in Mexican high school students. Additionally, as did Gloria et al. (2005), I found the practice of talking over problems with family and friends, as supported by cultural values of personalismo and familiarismo, to be associated with a self-efficacious and proactive approach to academic challenges among participants. As did parents in the study by Sánchez et al. (2005), parents of the successful Latina students in this study encouraged their daughters to seek help from others to foster their academic success.

> My dad always told me, "If you don't ask questions you're not gonna get
> anywhere." (P2)
>
> Um, so I took it upon myself, asked a couple of friends to help me, friends that
> had already taken the class ta kind of assist me and teach me how ta find a way ta,
> ta understand it better. (P3)
>
> They [P3's parents] were glad that I was actually asking for help, um, that I
> wasn't scared to go ask, cuz I, I mean, sometimes I get, or before I would get a
> little nervous in asking. Or a little shy in asking for help. Um, I, I just think I
> wasn't comfortable with, what was around me. Um, but I mean I told, I told my
> parents; "I went and asked, talked to the professor." And they were like, "Okay
> well that's good. You need to keep going if you need help, go ask the professor.

That's the first person that's gonna help you, cuz that's who's teaching you. So, if you need help, I think you should go ta them first." So, I mean, they encouraged the fact that I needed, that I, that I went ta go ask the professor, not just some random person. (P3)

My friends came and they, you know, came to my house and studied with me and told me what she said. And I was like, "You guys cannot leave until I understand this, because if I don't understand it while you're here, I'm definitely not gonna understand it when I'm by myself." (P4)

He [P7's father] had, he was actually the one who pushed me to it. Um, he was the one who was like, um, "If you have a question, if you have a question in your head before leaving a class, then you have to make sure you ask that question." So, he would push me a lot to ask questions. He would push me to go to my professor. He would push me to go to any of the sessions that she held. Um, so he was, um, very supportive of it. (P7)

I did suggest ta my other friends, that, you know they [professors] are, they are helpful, and they are ta help you, and that they should go there first if they have any questions or like even e-mailing them, they shouldn't be scared to. (P5)

Although marianismo and respeto were historically relevant in the stories of two participants, they did not embrace these values in their daily lives.

Cultural Competence

The findings in this study strongly support the recommendations of Warda (2008), who emphasized the importance of collectivism in the provision of health care to

Hispanics, and who challenged nursing education programs to integrate the values of simpátia and personalismo across the curriculum. The Latinas in this study not only espoused these values, but they expected and desired learning environments characterized by these values. Additionally, participants' values poise them to deliver and role model culturally competent care to the Hispanic population in their future roles as professional nurses.

Hispanic Student Experience

Study findings echoed those of Zalaquett (2006) who emphasized that even successful Hispanic students encounter barriers. Notably, the importance of familismo was present across participants' stories in both studies. Zalaquett's participants verbalized that the high value they placed on education, their sense of responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment was key to their academic success, and the participants in this study reported the same. As in the Zalaquett study, supportive friendships with peers were crucial to the participants in this study. Participants also described the importance of family support to their academic achievement, as was discovered by Gloria et al. (2005), Román et al. (2008), and Zalaquett.

Similarly, the findings of this study resembled those of Sánchez et al. (2005), who discovered the importance of parental support, parents talking about the burdens of limited education, and parental assistance and encouragement to the academic success of Hispanic students. Within the superordinate theme of living out values and beliefs, students in the current study demonstrated a desire to honor their parents and to make the most of the sacrifices made by parents in order to contribute to their education. The desire

by participants to honor their parents was previously reported by Sánchez et al. and by

Fuligni and Pedersen (2002).

As did participants in the study by Gloria et al. (2005), participants in this study

believed they could overcome any challenges that stood between them and degree

attainment. Additionally these participants described breaking away and changing their

relationships with their families. This transition was accompanied by some sadness and

guilt, particularly for those geographically separated from their families. Findings echoed

those reported by Gonzalez et al. (2004). A participant living with her parents described

her family's transition:

> I think when they [P4's parents] saw how stressed out I was, I think it made them
>
> kind of stressed out in the beginning. Just because, it's kind of like when you're
>
> little, when you see your kid fall you wanna automatically pick them back up, cuz
>
> you don't want them ta cry, you don't want them ta be in pain. So for them ta see
>
> me go through that and be sick all the time, and be like, nervous and be anxious
>
> and just be really irritable with school, it kinda like, they just kinda wanna be like,
>
> "You know, it's o-, it's okay. Don't worry." You know? But it can't always be
>
> like that, like you have to let me go through that, so I can learn. So for them, I
>
> think it made them stronger, just because they know that they can't always pick
>
> me up when I'm falling. So, I think my first semester, it made us a lot stronger,
>
> just because that's when I realized, I have to do this by myself. And they realized
>
> that too. They can't do my homework, they can't go to class, they can't. . .talk to
>
> my teachers if I need them to. Like, I have to do it by myself, so for them to watch

me do that, it's kind of like watching your kid grow up, but all in one semester.

(P4)

Like the participants in Sy and Romero's (2008) study, three of the current participants mentioned wanting to become self sufficient to ease the burden on their families. None, however, described serving as a surrogate parent for younger siblings. Unlike the findings by Sy and Brittian (2008), participants in this study did not report high levels of family obligations. One, in fact, recalled her father telling her not to worry about the family because school was her job.

Telzer and Fuligni (2009) reported that providing assistance to their families was consistently associated with an increased sense of role fulfillment and with increased feelings of happiness in a culturally diverse group of adolescents. The students in this study reported positive feelings in regard to time spent with their families, as did those studied by Telzer and Fuligni. As in the study by Telzer and Fuligni, none of the participants in this study reported spending great amounts of time on family obligations.

Hispanic Nursing Student Experience

Some of the most significant connections to the recent literature arose in regards to the importance of personal determination and persevering. The theme of personal determination emerged in the work of Bond et al. (2008), and the theme of self determination arose in the work of Cason et al. (2008) in their studies of Hispanic nursing students. Amaro et al. (2006) had previously reported the importance of self-motivation and determination to the academic success of ethnically diverse nursing students; Rivera-

Goba and Campinha-Bacote (2008) and Rivera-Goba and Nieto (2007) had reported that perseverance was essential to the academic success of Latina nursing students.

Although the current study did not specifically ask about these concepts, the superordinate theme of persevering arose in the interviews of all six prenursing students. Persevering was characterized by a theme of personal determination for four participants, and by the theme of recognizing personal strength for two. In the words of the participants:

I can't fail, I have to, I have to keep going. (P2)

I did want to give up a lot, but I just had to keep reminding myself that "I have to stick through it." (P2)

I don't like to give up very easily. I'm very, like persistent. (P4)

I set really high goals for myself and I wanted to meet those goals. I didn't wanna give up. (P4)

Just don't give up. . . .don't give up and don't slack off, cuz those two things will just defeat you in the end. It may be hard, you may not get everything like you did in high school, but it's still a part of growing up. You have to try things, you have to, like give it your all. (P4)

I feel I go in a test feeling like I did everything I could do. (P6)

It wasn't about, I guess, getting an A, it was just about knowing that I did everything I could of done. (P6)

When it comes down to something really important, like I will focus on it as much as I can. (P6)

I think it's really important to, I guess, see things through. (P6)

I'm very stubborn, and I have to find a way. (P7)

Three reported driving or pushing themselves (P2, P5, P7), and P3 talked of

pushing past her test taking fears:

I'm more confident in myself. I'm more; um, I'm more determined now to defeat

the fear. I'm more sure of myself, and I'm able to tell myself, "You know, I can

do this." Like, it's not gonna hold me back anymore, because I know I can do this.

If I really try, and if I dedicate myself, it's not gonna hold me back. So I have that

confidence, I have that determination, and that persistence to just not let it get me

every time it comes. (P3)

Importantly, two participants reported that when relatives doubted their abilities

to be academically successful, they became more determined to succeed:

It just made me more determined. (P4)

And it's just like every time she would tell me I couldn't do it, it made me feel

stronger, and get, um, like made me want to succeed more. So, it's like, every

time somebody told me I couldn't do it, I'd be like, "Thank you." So, it'd like,

strengthen me, and make me be able to do it. (P2)

Finally, P2 described pushing her limits:

Um. . .when I didn't give up, and I just kept going, like, like in that Biochem II. I

studied, and I studied, and I studied. And, I did everything I possibly could to pass

that class. And um, I really did push myself to the limit, like, "I am not gonna

give up." I kept going and going. (P2)

Although it is possible that I was influenced by reading about previous findings prior to completing the study, the literature review was written 10 months prior to analyzing the data and was not revisited until after completion of the analysis. The prenursing students in this study independently described the personal determination and persevering found to be important to academic success in nursing students by previous researchers.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy helped to frame this research study. Bandura (1977) linked efficacy to persistence, and he noted that self-efficacy determines "how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the more active the efforts" (p. 194). Self-efficacy interacts with one's achievement goal orientation in determining the response to academic challenges.

As theorized by Bandura (1977), participants' stories in this study illustrated close connections between persevering and self-efficacy. Having been aggressively encouraged by parents who believed in them, participants' stories also exemplified Bandura's (1986) assertion that verbal persuasion could affect self-efficacy. Notably, several described a transition from being pushed or driven by parents to pushing or driving themselves academically:

> He [P2's father] said, um, it was like, "Failure is not an option." Like, not in his exact words, but he would always like, say the same message, like, "Failure is not

an option, and if you put your mind to anything, you can achieve anything you want, and you can get through anything, if you really want to." (P2)

Um [pause], it um, what my dad says? Um [pause], no matter how hard it is, I'm gonna make it. It's just, I can't give up. Like, I might feel like I want to at times, but I'm not gonna give up. So no matter how hard classes get, I, I'm gonna make it. And I was just talking to one of my friends today, and she's like, "You know nursing school's gonna get really, really hard." And like, "Are you sure you're ready for the stress?" And it's like, and I told her, "You know, other people have done it. I know I can do it too." So it's just like; I know I can do it. (P2)

I can make it through anything. Um, no matter how much people tell you, you can't do something, like, I know I can do it if I really want to. (P2)

It's made me stronger, because I know that, I can, I can get through anything. It's, it might be hard, and I might have to shed some tears, and it might take longer than expected, but I'm gonna, I'm gonna get through stuff. (P2)

I know that if I really try, if I really dedicate myself into something, um, I will excel with anything I do. (P7)

I think, um, a large part of it is my parents, always driving me ta do better and ta work hard, and um, and then you know they've kind of, they haven't as much now, because I think now it's just me on my own. (P5)

Ryan et al. (1998) reported a positive correlation between self-efficacy and instrumental help-seeking. Therefore, participants' stories of help-seeking are considered next.

Help-Seeking Behavior

Nelson-Le Gall (1981) described instrumental help-seeking (p. 224) as a positive problem-solving strategy that successful students use to gain independent mastery of difficult tasks and to decrease their need for future assistance. Participants' stories in this study provided numerous examples of the effective and adaptive help-seeking described by Nelson-Le Gall, Nelson-Le Gall & Resnick (1998, pp. 40-41), and Newman (2006a, p. 227). Interestingly, none offered examples of executive help-seeking, in which students seek easy answers in order to minimize their own personal efforts (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, p. 227). Participants described effective and adaptive help-seeking when they sought help from peers, professors, and even when praying to God. P7 offered a striking example in which she determined that one visit to a professor's office was enough to meet her needs:

> After that first time we met, I really didn't see myself needing ta go back to him, because I would also ask questions in class. Um, and I found that the questions that I asked, other students also had, but they didn't ask, so that was very helpful. (P7)

Clearly, P7 had transitioned from hesitating to confidently engaging in instrumental help-seeking that decreased her need for future assistance.

Achievement Goal Orientation

Ames (1992) contrasted a personal mastery goal orientation, through which individuals are willing to expend effort for long-term understanding and success, with that of a performance goal orientation, in which individuals approach achievement-

oriented activities in pursuit of external recognition or rewards. Students exhibiting a performance goal orientation are most concerned with their ability to perform in comparison to others or to a normative standard, and they value success over effort and mastery.

Participants in the current study described many lived experiences that were consistent with prior quantitative research findings in other college student populations. Initially, participants in this study all described hesitating to seek help, and most reported not wanting others to know that they didn't understand content as the reason. Their reservations about help-seeking echoed the findings of Karabenick (2004), who discovered that subjects who perceived a help-seeking threat (fear of being perceived as incompetent) were more likely to avoid seeking help. Those who did seek help were more likely to seek expedient help to fulfill their immediate needs rather than instrumental help to foster their long-term understanding. This behavior was defined as the help-seeking avoidance pattern (Karabenick, 2004, p. 572).

Karabenick (2004) reported that students who sought instrumental help designed to promote mastery were more likely to seek help from faculty members. This response was defined as the help-seeking approach pattern (Karabenick, 2004, p. 572). A help-seeking approach pattern was positively related to a mastery goal orientation as well as to course performance in Karabenick's research. Although the participants in the current study initially avoided help-seeking, they all described transitioning to a help-seeking approach pattern in which they sought necessary help from professors or carefully

selected peers and achieved success in their courses. One even mentioned that seeking
help appropriately would be necessary in her role as an RN.

Ames (1992) asserted that a mastery goal orientation "promotes a motivational
pattern likely to promote long-term and high-quality involvement in learning" (p. 263).
Participants in the current study told numerous stories that described a mastery goal
orientation, including three who described their learning in terms of the knowledge they
would need in the future as professional nurses. These stories formed the substance of the
theme internalizing academic content within the superordinate theme of owning
knowledge. Participants' stories of parental encouragement throughout the quest to own
knowledge echoed the findings of Román et al. (2008), who demonstrated the positive
influences of family support on the deep processing and effort used by Hispanic students
employing a mastery approach achievement goal orientation. The mastery orientation
positively influenced academic achievement in Román et al's. study.

All participants in the current study described having a mastery goal orientation,
yet some also verbalized a performance goal orientation, with three using the word
competition in reference to applying for the nursing program. For these participants, a
combination of mastery and performance achievement goal orientation was inherent to
their academic success:

> Um, I guess it, it, it drives me to do a little better, because I know that there is a
> little competition, um, and, you know, that I am gonna be competing for a spot, so
> that, that kinda drives me ta, to do better, and I know I hafta, you know, get a
> good, ah, score or a good grade in this course. (P5)

> So, that was another thing with, the study group, we, we wouldn't really compete against each other, but you know we, like at the end of the day we'd be like "Well, like I got this," and "I got this," and we'd be like "Oh, con-," we were never like, "Ha, ha, ha." We were more like, "Congratulations!" you know, but it was kinda like, you know, you don't want to get the worst grade out of everyone! So, I guess competition's kind of a good thing when it comes ta getting stuff done. So I guess that's, being in a study group was pretty, it helped me a lot, with that. (P6)

Participants' descriptions of a performance goal orientation in addition to mastery goal orientation echoed the findings of Witkow and Fuligni (2007), who determined that both performance-approach goals and mastery-approach goals were positively associated with GPA.

Building on prior quantitative findings, the phenomenological approach in this study allowed participants to describe the actual transition from avoiding to reaching out in regards to help-seeking. Participants initially questioned themselves and hesitated to ask for help, demonstrating both a mastery-avoid orientation (fear of one's own inability to master content) and a performance-avoid orientation (fear of being perceived as less able). As a result of parental encouragement, encouragement from friends, or invitations from professors, all six described a transition to reaching out for help and working to own knowledge, demonstrating a mastery-approach orientation (desire to master content).

Four participants concurrently described a performance-approach orientation (desire to out-perform peers) to some extent, acknowledging that they felt a sense of

competition for a finite number of spaces in a nursing program. This perception did not, however, translate into not helping others. Rather, they described wanting all members of their study groups to succeed, again illustrating the cultural value of collectivism.

Dekker and Fischer (2008) stated that performance approach goals are more complex than are a mastery goal orientation or a performance-avoidance goal orientation. Performance approach goals "are associated with a motivation to both socially demonstrate success and avoid failure" (Dekker & Fischer, 2008, pp. 100-101). As noted in the literature review, the entire nursing school experience is performance goal oriented. Students' SAT scores are considered for college admission; GPAs and standardized entrance exam scores are considered for admission to nursing programs; course exam scores are considered for progression and retention; standardized exit exam scores are considered for graduation; and finally, NCLEX scores determine licensure and entry to professional practice. Whether such an approach is ideal for the fostering of lifelong learning in nursing is beyond the scope of this study, but it is worthy of consideration.

Importantly, students in this study maintained both performance and mastery goal orientation approaches, and this response served them well. In an environment that fosters a performance approach, nursing faculty members must encourage mastery approaches for all students. Guided learning experiences that encourage the elaboration and processing necessary for long-term understanding are beneficial for prenursing as well as for nursing students.

Summary

The previous section considered connections between the findings in this study to those in the published literature. The importance of personalismo and familiarismo to the academic success of Latina prenursing students was similar to that already described in other Hispanic college student populations. Additionally, relationships between parental encouragement, persevering, self-efficacy, achievement goal orientation, and help-seeking were similar to those uncovered by previous research. One finding emerged that I had not discovered during the review of literature. Although previous quantitative studies demonstrated relationships between achievement goal orientation and help-seeking behavior at fixed points in time, all six participants in this qualitative study described their actual transition from avoiding to reaching out in regards to help-seeking. Whether this transition occurs in many students and if so, how to ensure the transition, is a question worth considering in future studies.

Implications for Social Change

The research findings will enhance faculty understanding of the lived experiences of successful Latina students when they encounter academic challenges in prenursing courses. Awareness of the emotional intensity of the experience and provision of faculty development to address it can improve the support provided to all students. Provision of support that increases the retention, progression, and graduation rates of Latinas will allow them to enjoy the economic and professional benefits of their education sooner.

Economic prosperity among more individuals also increases the tax base from which society draws to provide for the less fortunate.

Promoting the academic success of students in the prenursing program will enhance their readiness for acceptance and success in the nursing program. Improved retention, graduation, and licensure rates in the nursing program will increase the number of professional nurses available to serve the community and society, meeting the mission of the school of nursing. Increasing the number of Latina RNs in particular will contribute to a professional nurse workforce that mirrors the U.S. population and better serves the growing Hispanic population.

Nurse educators are called to prepare a professional nurse workforce that meets the obligations set forth in the United Nations' *Declaration of Human Rights,* the World Health Organization's *Declaration of Alma Alta,* and the American Nurses Association's *Code of Ethics* (Douglas et al., 2009)*.* Douglas et al. (2009) emphasized, "Every individual and group is entitled to fair and equal rights and participation in social, educational, economic, and. . .healthcare opportunities" (p. 257). Fostering the success of Latina students may ultimately result in improved health care for members of underserved Hispanic populations. Recommendations for action to promote social change in this way follow.

Recommendations for Action

The following pages discuss practical applications of the research findings. Recommendations are related to university support services, faculty approaches, family involvement, targeting students, and community outreach. The recommendations may

benefit the institution of interest as well as universities serving an increasing number of Hispanic students. A plan to disseminate the findings follows.

University Approaches

Despite their academic success, the participants in this study described an extremely intense experience characterized by feelings of anxiety during their first semesters of prenursing courses. Although it is tempting for busy faculty members and advisors to focus time and energy on students who are visibly struggling, the stories of these participants illustrate that even successful students may experience difficulty with the academic challenges inherent to the college transition.

The participants highly valued relationships and repeatedly expressed gratitude for faculty and other members of the campus community who cared for them. Therefore, faculty members and advisors need to reach out frequently to all students, including those who are ostensibly achieving in the classroom and who hold great promise when they receive effective support. Additionally, faculty development that prepares educators to meet the needs of this specific student population will promote the provision of culturally competent advising as recommended by Negroni-Rodríguez et al. (2006).

Support services. All participants in the current study reported highly valuing and learning within relationships. Each described at least one individual or group of individuals that helped her. Participants named professors, peers, tutors at the learning assistance center, the PASS, assignment to a formal learning community, and members of campus organizations as critical to their academic success. Initiation or continuation of these support programs by institutions is vital to the retention and success of prenursing

students. In particular, the provision of learning communities and peer assisted study opportunities such as those credited by study participants are recommended.

Faculty approaches. Participants in this study most often mentioned professors as the people who gave them the most accurate help and guidance in courses in which they struggled. Most significantly, every participant in this study described a transition from avoiding help-seeking to reaching out for the necessary help and assistance. In several cases, reaching out occurred in response to an invitation from a faculty member to do so. Moreover, being welcomed by the faculty member when reaching out was an important factor regarding future help-seeking, confidence, and follow up for each participant. The importance of faculty actions echoed the findings of Poorman et al. (2002) and Shelton (2003), who discovered the need for faculty to approach at-risk nursing students rather than waiting for the students to initiate contact.

Bearing in mind that faculty support was reported by many participants in the research of Amaro et al. (2006) to be even more important and instrumental to their success than was family support, faculty members need to be aware of the heavy responsibility that we bear in the academic success of prenursing students. The responsibility to reach out, to help, and to welcome students cannot be abdicated. Additional learning support services need to be viewed as supplementary rather than as substitutions for faculty support outside the classroom. Using valuable class time or office hours to engage and learn more about the students may be worth the investment for this student population. Providing course centers, such as the one described by Chung

and Hsu (2006), where prenursing students could study with peers in close proximity to faculty may be helpful.

Gardner's (2006) quasiexperimental study demonstrated that students could be taught to approach learning with a mastery achievement goal orientation and that their approaches to problem solving and learning through collaborative group processes could be enhanced. The successful students in the current study engaged in these practices independently, yet such behaviors may not be intuitive to all students. Additionally, several participants in this study engaged in practices that fostered long-term understanding of content as a result of conditions set up by the professor or in response to study recommendations received from a professor. Faculty members can and should foster this type of learning both within and outside of the classrooms through the use of group work and creative approaches during class time as was reported by P5 and P7; by recommending that students selectively form study groups as was described by P2, P3, P4, P6, and P7; and by offering specific guidance regarding study strategies as reported by P5. Such approaches are necessary to balance the performance goal orientation of the overall nursing school experience.

Faculty development that encourages the use of collaborative group approaches to learning rather than standard lecture format is already offered at the university of interest. A faculty member from the School of Education coordinates workshops about creative approaches to teaching and learning several times each semester. Faculty members should be highly encouraged and expected to participate in professional development

activities and to use a variety of approaches within their classrooms to meet the needs of diverse learners.

The prenursing biochemistry courses at the university of interest were developed through collaboration between the undergraduate nursing program director, the undergraduate curriculum committee, and the chemistry faculty to meet the needs of prenursing students. Faculty collaboration should continue between the departments to plan effective approaches to learning for this specific student population. Finally, nursing faculty advisors assigned to prenursing students when they begin college should stay in close contact with these advisees, particularly during prerequisite courses in order to offer ongoing support and guidance.

Family involvement. All participants highly valued family, and all mentioned family support as crucial to their academic success. Most participants reported that one or both of their parents recognized that school should be their primary focus. Although one participant who lived at home reported helping her parents with household tasks during the semester, she did not report being overly burdened. The student who worked during the semester noted that she had to change her work hours to be academically successful. Importantly, four participants received encouragement from their parents to transition to reaching out for necessary academic help.

Many students do not experience the high level of family support enjoyed by these participants, and families may need education regarding how to best support their students. The findings remind faculty members and first-year engagement staff of the importance of including families in orientation and retention programs for this student

body. These recommendations align with those of Alexander et al. (2007), Cason et al. (2008), and Gonzalez et al. (2004).

As expected in a Hispanic-serving institution, the university of interest currently involves parents in campus visit programs offered by the admissions office. Additionally, staff members in the office of first-year engagement work with students and parents within the guidelines of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Institutions not already doing so can offer services to assist families with their children's transition to college. Faculty members and advisors should be oriented to the importance of working with families to include: (a) providing anticipatory guidance to families regarding the tensions inherent to changing family dynamics during the college transition, (b) emphasizing that the student should take primary responsibility for learning and interacting with professors, and (c) informing family members of the importance of encouraging the student to persevere and to reach out for help. A willingness by faculty members and advisors to continue to work with the families of this student population throughout the first 2 years of college is necessary.

Targeting students. These successful students all reported persevering as well as transitioning to a mastery approach orientation with regards to help-seeking. The university of interest considers high school GPA and standardized test scores when targeting students who may need additional help or limited hours of enrollment during the transition to college. Additionally, it may be useful for programs to measure achievement goal orientations of incoming freshmen prenursing students in order to target students who need extra assistance and encouragement in this area. As persevering

was crucial to the success of these participants, programs may also consider using tools that measure persistence or persevering in order to determine which prenursing students are most likely to be successful and to target students who need additional help and encouragement.

Outreach. Although this study focused on the lived experiences of college students, all participants reported being heavily influenced by academic encouragement from their parents that began long before they started college. Several students mentioned challenging high school courses, and three mentioned high school teachers or counselors who enhanced their ability to succeed academically. Sadly, two students reported that their high school experiences impeded their ability to respond to academic challenges in prenursing courses, and a third spoke of attending a high school at which one college counselor served approximately 3,100 students. One participant believed that her high school did not adequately prepare her in math, and a second participant talked at length of a high school at which she and her peers were discouraged from applying to a four-year university. She applied, only because her parents and one teacher highly encouraged her. However, she began college doubting her ability to succeed.

Based on these findings, nursing programs should reach out to middle schools and high schools in hopes of reaching prospective nursing students and their families early. Developing relationships with prospective students and their families may enhance students' future academic success and may encourage promising students to apply. Additionally, developing relationships with high schools that serve Hispanic students may assist them to provide appropriate college preparatory experiences. Finally, high

schools should provide academic and logistical support to prepare Latina students for academic experiences leading to a baccalaureate degree or higher.

Summary of Recommendations for Action

In summary, universities serving or desiring to serve Latina prenursing students can facilitate academic success using a multifaceted approach. Providing academic support, employing effective faculty approaches, engaging families, targeting students, and offering outreach can be used to support all students, target students who may need additional assistance during the prenursing program, and attract promising students. Universities should provide education for faculty members new to serving this student population to orient them to the special needs of Latina prenursing students. Although the findings of the current study may not be generalizable, Smith et al. (2009) pointed out that such findings can be considered to have theoretical transferability, in which "the reader makes links between the analysis in an IPA study, their own personal and professional experience, and the claims in the extant literature" (p. 51). Therefore, faculty members at institutions that serve Latina prenursing students may find the findings and recommendations arising from this study to be helpful.

Dissemination of Findings

I plan to share the findings of the study at a research day sponsored annually by the institution of interest. Recommendations for academic success based on findings will be shared with students and their families during orientation and in the prenursing seminars offered at the institution of interest. Additionally, outcomes will be shared at a

local nursing research symposium. The research findings may be of particular interest to programs that are currently becoming more diverse and in which the number of Hispanic students is growing. I plan to publish the findings and recommendations in a nursing education journal, and I will apply to present the findings at a national nursing education conference.

Recommendations for Further Study

A number of needs for further research emerged from the study. Currently, the university and program of interest use GPA and standardized test scores to measure the need for additional support or capping of registered hours for students. This study looked at highly successful prenursing students with SAT scores between 850 and 1070 on the combined math and verbal sections. Their success in view of modest to average scores demonstrates that additional factors contributed to the academic success for these Latina students. Further research of the themes that emerged from the study is warranted.

Achievement Goal Orientation and Help-Seeking

The successful participants in this study all described a transition from a help-seeking avoidance pattern to a help-seeking approach pattern as described by Karabenick (2004, p. 572) in order to achieve academic success in prenursing courses. When reaching out, they described the use of instrumental help-seeking as originally defined by Nelson-Le Gall (1981). Additionally, participants described approaching academic challenges from both a mastery goal orientation and a performance goal orientation as defined by Ames (1992, p. 263). This finding differed somewhat from Karabenick's

finding that a mastery goal orientation was more often associated with help-seeking approach and academic success.

This qualitative study involved participants looking back and describing their experiences over at least two semesters, and it cannot necessarily be compared to a quantitative study such as Karabenick's (2004). A follow-up mixed methods study would offer additional information regarding the transition. As did Karabenick, the program of interest could quantitatively measure achievement goal orientation and help-seeking behavior at more than one point during the prenursing program using the 2 x 2 achievement goal framework (Elliott & McGregor, 2001, p. 501). The addition of qualitative interviews would give faculty members more information about any changes measured by the quantitative tool.

Persevering

Persevering emerged as highly significant to academic success in the stories of these participants. Further research using tools to quantitatively measure persistence, self-determination, or persevering would allow faculty members to learn more about the students they serve. Correlating quantitative measures of persistence with college GPA in prenursing courses may offer assistance in recognizing the students most likely to succeed and targeting the students who would benefit from extra academic support.

Latina Families

The importance of family was embedded throughout the superordinate themes that emerged from this study. Additional research about the lived experiences of family

members of Latina students would help to shed further light on the making of a successful first-generation Latina college student. A phenomenological study that explores the lived experiences of parents of this student population would build on the findings of the current study.

High School Experience

Although it did not necessarily address the research questions of this study, three participants spoke of high school experiences that discouraged them or made the transition to college difficult for a first-generation college student. Their stories echoed findings of researchers such as Alexander et al. (2007), who discovered that unfamiliarity with the transition to higher education and inadequate academic preparation had a negative impact. One spoke of two secondary school teachers whose encouragement made a difference, and another credited her high school counselor, calling her a hero. Similar to participants in Zalaquett's (2006) study, participants in the current study remembered a few teachers as influential, yet they verbalized needs for additional support related to the college transition during high school. Additional research that investigates the high school experiences of Latina students and the effects of outreach programs designed to support their college transition is warranted.

Cason et al. (2008) reported that Latino nursing students were sometimes subjected to ridicule by their non-college-bound Hispanic friends. Two participants in the current study reported that they had friends or family members who discouraged them from studying, and one recounted that she had been bullied throughout her elementary and secondary educational experiences for being a serious student with a mother who was

supportive of her education. Further research on the middle and high school experiences of Latina students may offer valuable information related to bullying and academic endeavors.

Academically Less Successful Students

The findings from the current study tell only part of the story for the prenursing program of interest. A similar qualitative study selecting participants who have struggled in the prenursing program would shed light on their lived experiences. Those findings and the findings of this study could be viewed together to assist educators to better meet the needs of all students.

Additionally, Gardner (2006) conducted the only quasiexperiment found in the studies reviewed. The question remains as to whether the skills that these students engaged in naturally to own knowledge can be taught. Quantitative research that investigates the academic outcomes of students provided with support through course centers, learning communities, and other approaches designed to promote long-term mastery of complex content at the institution of interest is warranted.

Reflections

I became a full time nurse educator in 2006, following many years of work as a staff nurse and adjunct faculty member. Having taught at three universities over the past 15 years, I have been privileged to work with students from cultures much more diverse than what I experienced in my undergraduate nursing program in the upper Midwest 30 years ago. I began this study in an effort to learn more about successful Latina prenursing

students at the institution of interest. Suspecting that successful and less successful students experienced some of the same challenges related to academics, work, and family obligations, I wanted to know more about how successful students transcended the challenges. I also feared that the acculturation inherent to success within the system of higher education may inhibit academically successful students from providing culturally competent care to aging Hispanic patients. Believing that factors beyond standardized test scores and GPA influenced academic success, yet not knowing which factors to quantitatively measure, led me to a qualitative approach.

One of my suspicions was confirmed, the other dispelled. The participants in this study came to college with modest to average SAT scores, yet they excelled in prenursing courses. This finding supported the belief that standardized test scores do not give the full story regarding academic potential for these students. Rather, these students succeeded by learning within relationships with peers and professors, and they persevered as a result of personal determination and strength instilled by their parents throughout their lives. Additionally they transitioned from a pattern of being afraid to seek help to reaching out for the necessary help, and they engaged in the intense processing that results in long-term ownership of knowledge.

My fear that academic acculturation may lead to a less culturally competent Latina nurse was unfounded according to the stories of these participants. Although participants described how they and their parents had grown away from cultural values that might hold them back academically, a strong sense of personalismo and familiarismo was threaded throughout every participant's story. Participants shared heart-warming

stories infused with a sense of personalismo, familiarismo, and simpático. I believe that the cultural values and beliefs espoused by these participants will enhance their ability to provide culturally competent care as described by the American Academy of Nursing and the World Health Organization (Douglas et al., 2009). Moreover, the high value that participants placed on relationships and the effort they invested in relationships will assist them to provide culturally competent care to all patients.

One finding that stood out for me was the strong presence of a performance achievement goal orientation that accompanied the mastery goal orientation as described by these participants. Although previous research has demonstrated the importance of a mastery goal orientation to long-term understanding and academic success, the stories of these students reflected a performance goal orientation as well. Participants described the sense of competition as stressful but helpful to their academic success. The strong performance goal orientation described by the participants is not surprising in a field in which their entry into programs of study and into professional practice is controlled by standardized exams.

For me, the emergence of a performance goal orientation among participants raises additional questions. Is the presence of a performance goal orientation positive? Is the current system of undergraduate nursing education, which emphasizes the importance of numerical scores prior to, throughout, and at the end of programs the best way to measure performance and control safe entry to the profession? Although these questions are beyond the scope of this study, they are worthy of consideration.

Nurse educators and nursing students currently invest a tremendous amount of time and energy developing test-taking skills that will enhance performance on the NCLEX-RN. Benner et al. (2010) noted that "how learning is assessed sends a powerful message about what the profession believes to be important" (p. 221). Following their Carnegie study of professional nursing education in the United States, these researchers voiced concern that programs place too much emphasis on "strategies to answer multiple-choice questions on exams, such as the NCLEX-RN" and recommended that educators "vary the means of assessing student performance" (Benner et al., 2010, p. 221). Discussions regarding how to best measure performance and determine safe entry into professional practice need to be at the forefront of conversations within nursing programs and within the nursing education community at large.

Throughout this research study I attempted to enter into the worlds of the participants, and I spent many hours actively engaged with the data in order to conduct a rigorous analysis of their lived experiences in the face of academic challenges. Although Smith et al. (2009) emphasized that "the truth claims of an IPA analysis are always tentative and analysis is subjective" (p. 80), I diligently attempted to travel to each participant's place on the hermeneutic circle without allowing my previous ways of thinking or my biases to unduly influence me. Finally, throughout the writing of sections 4 and 5, I tried to remain true to the lived experiences of the participants.

As a result of this study, I have been humbled by the responsibility of teaching. Again and again, participants emphasized the importance of faculty members to their academic success. I will keep their stories in mind when engaging with students in the

future. Additionally, I have learned to appreciate the countless hours of time and effort invested in published research studies, even those of modest size such as this one. Finally, I am filled with gratitude for the generosity of the participants, and I hope to do justice to their stories as I share the findings.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of Latina students when they encounter academic challenges in prenursing courses. I purposively interviewed six successful Latina prenursing students. The participants' stories painted a picture of intense experiences during the prenursing program of study.

Seven superordinate themes emerged from their stories: (a) facing academic challenges, (b) recognizing emotional response, (c) seeking help, (d) transcending academic challenges, (e) owning knowledge, (f) persevering, and (g) living out values and beliefs. Highlights of the findings included a heavy emphasis by participants on learning that occurred within relationships with peers and faculty members. Participants valued family, and this value was threaded throughout their stories as well as the findings. Parents were highly influential in assisting participants to develop personal determination and to recognize the personal strength that allowed them to persevere in the face of challenges. Finally, participants responded to academic challenges from with their system of values and beliefs.

Educators and institutions can enhance the academic success of Latina prenursing students such as these, and perhaps the performance of previously less successful students, by taking time to learn about and share with students, by inviting students to ask

questions and come to office hours for help, and by welcoming students when they do. Engaging the family in order to ease the transition to college may be beneficial as well. Institutions that serve or desire to serve similar student populations should provide ample faculty development opportunities to enhance the abilities of teachers and advisors to engage with Latina students and their families in a culturally competent manner. Additionally, educators should be expected to use a variety of creative and group approaches within college classrooms to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Institutions can consider the findings of this study as they attempt to reach and admit promising students to prenursing programs, support all students, and target students who may benefit from additional help. Programs of nursing should continue to discuss how to best assess and evaluate learning in undergraduate students. The nursing profession needs to engage in conversations about how to best educate, evaluate, and control entry into professional practice.

Finally, this study was conducted within a framework of the Hispanic culture. Participants described life experiences in which they and their parents disregarded cultural values not helpful to their academic success and embraced those that enhanced it. Their stories illustrated the synergy and complementarity between contrasting values that Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2006) described as essential to members' ability to survive and flourish within a culture. Although these participants flourished within the culture of higher education, many students do not. As noted by Hofstede (1986), "The burden of adaptation in cross-cultural learning situations should be primarily on the teachers" (p. 301). Therefore, nurse educators need to know their students.

The work of cultural and organizational experts can be used to inform our engagement with prenursing students as they transition to the world of higher education. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2006) recommended the use of a "'through'" process which "takes the existing culture to be reconciled with the new culture" (p. 362) in order to preserve the best of the current organizational culture as change occurs. The academically successful students in this study navigated the "through" process with the support of faculty, peers, and parents. The burden remains with nurse educators to learn more about our students, both those who achieve success and those who do not, through continued research. We must develop and investigate strategies that help all students to embrace values that help them to achieve success within the culture of academia while retaining the cultural values that will help them to provide culturally competent care as professional nurses.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Broad Descriptive Question

I am interested in learning about how successful students experience academic challenges in prenursing courses. Think of times when you encountered academic challenges and tell me everything you can about those experiences, about what feelings you had, what you thought, what you said, what you did and anything else that is important to you about the experiences.

Structural Questions (may be used)

Structural questions may be needed to encourage the participant to reflect more deeply on the phenomenon. The following questions, adapted from Smith et al. (2009, p. 190), may be used as necessary:

1. Take me through the process of your experience with the academic challenge. At what point did you become aware of it as a challenge or problem and what specifically was it that led you to start worrying about it?

2. What form did your worries take?

3. Thinking about the academic challenge, what emotions are associated with the experience?

The following structural questions, or similar questions, may be asked as recommended by Moustakas (1994) if necessary to tap the participant's knowledge of the phenomenon:

1. What dimensions, incidents and people intimately connected with the experience stand out for you?

2. How did the experience affect you? What changes do you associate with the experience?

3. How did the experience affect significant others in your life?

4. What feelings were generated by the experience?

5. What thoughts stood out for you?

6. What bodily changes or states were you aware of at the time?

7. Have you shared all that is significant with reference to the experience? (p. 116)

Probes (may be used)

Although it is not possible to plan the exact probing questions ahead of time, I may simply repeat a participant's previous sentence or may use probes such as the following based on recommendations of Van Manen (1990, pp. 67-68) to elicit additional information when needed:

1. In what way?

2. What did it feel like?

3. How did you become aware of it?

4. Did you talk with others? If so, what was it like to tell others?

5. How did you talk about it?

6. Who said what?

7. Can you give an example?

8. Did you ever expect to encounter challenges or difficulty?

9. Did you go to anyone for help? If so, what was that like?

10. What was the reaction of your family to your asking for help?

The 10 probing questions were adapted from Van Manen (1990, pp. 67–68).

It is possible that additional or other questions may be asked as a result of concepts that arise from the stories shared by participants. Questions will remain focused on the realm of experiences related to encountering and responding to academic challenges. The second interview may use questions above that were not discussed during the first interview. Additional questions that arose from the first interview or from a different participant's interview may be added. All questions will focus on the topic of encountering academic challenges.

Appendix B: Participant Consent

You are invited to take part in a research study about how successful Latina students experience and respond to academic challenges in prenursing courses. You were chosen for the study because you are a Latina student who has successfully completed at least two semesters of prerequisite nursing courses with a grade point average of 3.0 or higher and the researcher believes that you have valuable information to share. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Julie Nadeau, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. Julie Nadeau is also a nursing faculty member at _____. Julie Nadeau does not serve on the committee that reviews applications for admission to the nursing program.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to learn about your experiences with academic challenges in prerequisite nursing courses. The researcher hopes to learn more about how successful students, like you, respond to academic challenges while taking courses in preparation for application and admission to nursing school.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Allow the researcher to review your academic transcript to ensure that you meet the criteria for participation (GPA of 3.0 or higher; completing prerequisite courses to apply to the nursing program by your fourth or fifth semester at the university). You may be present for this if desired.
- Allow the researcher to review your advising folder maintained by the director of the undergraduate nursing program to access your high school data such as high school GPA, SAT scores, ACT scores, and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores. You may be present for this if desired.
- Complete a demographic data sheet that asks questions about you and your family.
- Participate in Interview 1 (60 to 90 minutes) during which you will respond to one or more questions by sharing your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This interview will be audio taped.
- Participate in Interview 2 (60 to 90 minutes) during which you will respond to one or more questions by sharing your thoughts, feelings, and experiences in order to expand on the information discussed in Interview 1. This interview will be audio taped.
- Possibly participate in a third and final interview (30 to 60 minutes) during which the researcher will review the study findings with you. You will have the

opportunity to let the researcher know whether the findings accurately describe your experience or not during this interview (not audio taped).

- The two audio taped interviews will take place over a period of two to four weeks and will occur at times and places that are convenient for you. If you agree to do the final interview during which you will have the opportunity to review the findings, that interview will occur between three and twelve months following your first two interviews.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at _____ will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study, and the researcher will not inform anyone of your participation or nonparticipation. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed during any of the interviews, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal, either on the demographic data sheet or during the interviews. If you change your mind after having completed the interviews, you may withdraw up to one month following the second interview. There is no penalty for changing your mind. You have the right to request the opportunity to review the researcher's manuscript prior to submission for the final doctoral study.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There is the minimal risk of psychological stress during the interviews. If you feel stressed during an interview, you may stop at any time. If you feel that you need to talk with a counselor as a result of the given interview, the researcher will coordinate a visit with a university counselor. There are no tangible benefits to you from participating in this interview, although you will gain the experience of taking part in the process of research in nursing education. The interviewer and other nurse educators may develop an increased understanding of how to promote academic success among prospective nursing students as a result of this interview, and future students may benefit from your participation.

Compensation:
There is no monetary compensation for participating in this research study.

Confidentiality:
Any personal identifying information that you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. Parts of your interviews, including direct quotes, may be printed in the manuscript, but your real name and personal identifying data will not be printed. Your demographic data may be used along with that of other participants in order to describe the research sample, but once again, it will not be connected to your real name in any way. The researcher will ask you to choose a fictional

name for use in the research report. You will record this name along with your real name and contact information on a form that the researcher will secure separately from all the other data. This will allow you and the researcher to find your taped interviews in case you decide to withdraw from the study.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via julie.nadeau@waldenu.edu or 210-387-2644. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 04-07-10-0372022 and it expires on April 6, 2011.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information, I have had the opportunity to ask and receive answers to my questions about the study, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent   _____

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature

Researcher's Written or Electronic* Signature   _____

                                                             _____

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix C: Participant Recruitment Flyer

Research Study Opportunity

Students are needed to participate in an important research study about the responses of successful Latina Students to academic challenges of prenursing courses. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about research in nursing education. Students must meet the following criteria to participate:

- **Latina (Hispanic female)**

- **Prenursing major**

- **GPA of 3.0 or higher**

- **Successful completion of at least 2 semesters of college**

- **On track to apply to the nursing major within 5 semesters of beginning college (no withdrawals from courses due to academic issues)**

- **Willing to talk about your academic experiences**

- **18 years of age or older**

If you meet the criteria, please contact Julie Nadeau at _____ or at _____.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and contacting the researcher to learn more does not

obligate you to participate. Participation would require approximately 4 or 5 hours of your

time. The researcher will meet you at a time and place that is convenient for you. No

monetary compensation will be provided, but you may benefit from the learning experience.

Appendix D: Participant Demographic Data

Age _____ High school _____ Year of high school graduation _____

The term I use to describe myself in regards to my ethnic and cultural identity is:

Hispanic _____ Latina _____ Mexican _____ Mexican American _____

Other _____ (please state).

I am a citizen of _____ (please write in country of citizenship).

I was born in _____ (please write in country of birth).

My mother was born in _____ (please write in country of birth).

My father was born in _____ (please write in country of birth).

My maternal grandmother was born in _____ (please write in country of birth).

My maternal grandfather was born in _____ (please write in country of birth).

My paternal grandmother was born in _____ (please write in country of birth).

My paternal grandfather was born in _____ (please write in country of birth).

Family Data Related to Language and Education

My primary language is: English _____ Spanish _____ Other _____ (please state).

I speak the following fluently: English _____ Spanish _____ Other _____ (please state).

The language primarily spoken in my home when I was growing up was

_____.

I have _____ brothers (please state how many).

The ages of my brothers are _____ (please list ages of any brothers).

I have _____ sisters (please state how many).

The ages of my sisters are _____ (please list ages of any sisters).

I currently live: in a dorm on campus _____   at home with my parent(s) _____

with other family members _____ (please state which family

members)

other living arrangements _____ (please describe)

The highest level of education completed by my brothers and sisters is:

Some high school _____   High school graduate _____   Some college _____

2-year College Graduate _____   4-year College Graduate _____

Graduate School _____   Other (please describe) _____

The highest level of education completed by my mother is:

Some high school _____   High school graduate _____   Some college _____

2-year College Graduate _____   4-year College Graduate _____

Graduate School _____   Other (please describe) _____

The highest level of education completed by my father is:

Some high school _____   High school graduate _____   Some college _____

2-year College Graduate _____   4-year College Graduate _____

Graduate School _____   Other (please describe) _____

The highest level of education completed by my grandparents is:

Some high school _____   High school graduate _____   Some college _____

2-year College Graduate _____   4-year College Graduate _____

Graduate School _____   Other (please describe) _____

Please circle the correct response:

I am the first person in my family to attend a four-year college.   True   False

I will be the first person in my family to earn a four-year college degree.   True   False

Family Income and Work Data

I currently work approximately _____ hours a week (please give number of hours worked).

I currently work: On Campus _____ Off Campus _____ Both on and off campus _____

I currently help out family members for approximately _____ hours a week.

My family's approximate annual income is:

< $20,000/year ___ $20,000 to $40,000/year _____ $40,001 to $60,000/year _____

$60,001 to $100,000/year _____ > $100,000/year _____

I don't know _____ I prefer not to answer _____

I currently receive the following grants and scholarships: _____

_____ (please list)

My family pays approximately _____ dollars out of pocket for my education each year.

This is paid by (Please check all that apply):

   Student Loans _____   Me _____   My parent(s) _____

   Other _____ (please state)

Please circle the correct response:

   I contribute a portion of what I earn at my job to support my family.

        True   False   N/A (I don't work for pay)

Academic Records Data (to be completed by the researcher and the participant together from their review of the participant's records)

High school data (if available): GPA _____ SAT 3-part total score _____

ACT composite score _____ TAKS Math _____ TAKS Reading _____

Qualified for bridge courses when admitted to the university:

    Math: Yes ____ No ____

    English: Yes ____ No ____

If yes, the participant took:

    Math Bridge ____ (grade achieved)

    English Bridge ____ (grade achieved)

Current semester of enrollment at the university: _____ (third, fourth, fifth)

Current GPA at the university: _____

Courses completed to date:

Appendix E: Participant Identifying Information

Research Study Name_____

Real Name_____

Student ID number _____

Telephone number _____

E-mail address _____

Appendix F: Transcribed Interview Table Excerpt

#s	Codes, Memos, Metaphors and Possible Notable Quotes	Participant 2; Interview 1	Researcher's Exploratory Comments **DC** = Descriptive **LC** = Linguistic **CC** = Conceptual
1.		JN: Okay, um, this is, oh, I forgot to ask, do you want to go by an alias? By a name or anything or?	
2.		P2: No [smiles]	
3.		JN: You'll just be Participant Number 2, right?	
4.		P2: Mm hmm	
5.		JN: Okay, so this is Participant Number 2, um, and interview number one for her and it is April 16th at 3 p.m., and we're in a library conference room. So, I'm interested in learning about the experiences about how successful students respond to situations in which they need to learn to learn new and complicated information. And as a	

		successful student, I feel that you have valuable information to share about your success in prenursing courses. I'm especially interested in learning about situations where you had to learn new or difficult things, possibly situations in which the study habits you used in the past didn't work	
6.		P2: Mm hmm	
7.		JN: Or where you needed to work harder than usual or ask for help from others. Um, many people face significant barriers to achieving a college education, a lot of students actually give up, while others manage to overcome the barriers, so I'm interested in learning about how successful students, like you, experience academic challenges in prenursing courses.	
8.		JN: Think of times when you encountered academic challenges and	

		tell me everything you can about those experiences, about the feelings you had, what you thought, what you said, what you did, and anything else that's important to you about the experiences. [Pause]	
	Appreciating teachers	P2: *Okay, so my biggest [pause] challenge was Biological Chemistry II. My Biological Chemistry I teacher was great. He, I loved the way he, um, lectured, the way he did notes, and his tests. Everything was very similar, so I was able to do that.* **And I was also in a learning community so that really helped me.** And, um, *when I went to Biological Chemistry II, it was a completely different professor, a different way of teaching, and it was just a bigger classroom, less time to ask questions, and [pause] not that he discouraged questions, but he answered your questions with other*	**(DC)** Biochem II was her first major academic challenge.
	Appreciating university resources		(DC) P2 found it difficult to learn from the professor. **(CC)** His techniques of answering questions with questions may have been problematic for her, but it may actually help the learning process for many? Could she adapt?
	Encountering new learning environments		
	Context Memo: Initial significant academic challenge was in Biochem II; professor answered questions with questions		**(DC)** Stayed quiet and

		questions, and that was very difficult for me. And, I did have to read a lot more on my own, and I still didn't understand a lot of things. I, **that class is actually the first class that I set up study groups for,** *and that did help me somewhat because I had to explain to the others. So that helped me.* And then, **my boyfriend at the time, he actually, umm, was able to help me a lot as well. He could just get the textbook, read it, and be able to explain it to me without even knowing anything about it. So that was great. He was a lot of help, a lot, a lot of help.** Um, *I was [pause] intimidated by the teacher, you could say, so I never really asked questions, I just stayed quiet, and I think that's what made it even harder, was not feeling like I could ask questions,* and I went to a couple of PASS sessions, but	didn't feel as though she could ask questions
	Setting up study groups		(DC) Set up study groups for the first time–understood material better when she had to explain it to others.
			(CC) In order to teach others, P2 would need to internalize or "own" the content. Also, if she teaches others, she will internalize the content more effectively. Demonstrates self directed learning by setting up study groups.
	Explaining academic content to others		
	Receiving help from significant others		(DC) Boyfriend at the time helped her.
			(LC) "He was a lot of help, a lot, a lot of help." Repetition here–giving credit to him. Why?
			(DC) Attended a couple of PASS sessions
	Not asking the professor for help		(LC) Some hesitancy when discussing

| | | um, they were somewhat helpful, but they were somewhat conflicting with my schedule, so that was, that was, um, [pause] that would have been a great help if I could have been able to work it in my schedule. **Um. . . .one method that really helped me to learn the materials was using flash cards, and that professor highly discouraged it. So, I was, I knew that that helped me, but with him constantly saying that that's a bad learning strategy, I kind of second-guessed myself. And, I think the way his tests were formatted was very difficult, because he'd say, "Pay attention to the bold" and everything was in bold, so it was like "Oh my goodness" [smiling and laughing]. So, it was overwhelming, and um, but** *thankfully, I stuck through it, there was a lot of times that I wanted to give up. That's the one time, the one* | PASS–"um"–perhaps mixed feelings or perhaps guilt r/t not attending? **(DC)** Questioned her use of flashcards when professor discouraged this technique **(CC)** Questioning self and ability to learn? **(LC)** Once again, uses "um"–uncertainty regarding these experiences? Perhaps still not certain as to how she feels about it? |
| | Context Memo: Attended PASS sessions, but they conflicted with her schedule; would have been helpful otherwise

Context Memo: Professor discouraged P2's use of flashcards, saying it was a bad learning strategy They had helped her before; she eventually used them anyway

Questioning personal learning strategies

Sticking through it | | **(CC)** P2 "stuck through it" although she wanted to give up. What does "stick through it" mean to P2? **(CC)** Demonstrates persistence and perseverance even |

		class that I didn't look forward to going to, and [clears throat], **I did want to give up a lot,** *but I just had to keep reminding myself that "I have to stick through it."*	though she wanted to give up.
	Possible notable quote: *"I have to stick through it."*		
9.		JN: Mm hmm.	
10.	*Sticking through it* Context Memo: Living with boyfriend at the time, so she had household obligations; No longer together as a couple; remain friends **Experiencing conflicting personal obligations** *Receiving help from significant others* Context Memo: Significant others who helped included boyfriend and friends	P2: *It's only going to get harder, so if I give up now, like, it's almost like I wasted a semester, so I just stuck through it, and it was hard.* [Pause] Also, one thing that was sort of difficult was, **I was living with my boyfriend at the time, so it was just, I was not only a student, but like, I had to do stuff at home, and then worry about budget stuff and all that, so that was an added stress,** but um. . . .*I had some great friends that really helped me, really helped me study,* and ***I did really, really well on the last, on the last exam and on the final. We** did really well, and that's*	**(LC)** P2 shifts from ***"I"*** to ***"we"*** at this point when she says "we did really well" on the last exam and on the final. Significant pronoun change here-I need to ask about this next time. Who is we?? Seeing self as part of a group? Emphasis added by

	Doing well on exams	**what helped me.**	stating "really, really."
11.		JN: Okay. So when you talk about the help you got, it was from your boyfriend	
12.		P2: Mm hmm. It was mainly from him.	
13.		JN: And from your friends	
14.		P2: And then my friends. Mm hmm.	
15.		JN: And then you mentioned the PASS classes. Tell me a little bit about that. You said that didn't fit into your schedule, but tell me what that was.	
16.		P2: The PASS sessions?	
17.		JN: Mm hmm.	
18.	University sources of support: PASS and professors *Appreciating university resources* Context Memo: PASS (peer assisted study sessions) are student-led study groups. Professors select students who have successfully completed the course previously to	P2: *It's led by students who successfully took the class and passed it, and they were recommended by the professor to teach, it's like a study group, led by the students, and the student has, umm, contact with the, certain professor, so each professor and section had their own PASS*	**(DC)** PASS tutor helped her to weed out that which is insignificant–a skill. Will this show up with others?

	facilitate the groups.	*session, well at least for Biological Chemistry II. So, she really helped me to weed out the things I did not need to study so much on and what I needed emphasis on.*	
19.		JN: Okay. So you did go to some.	
20.		P2: Mm Hmm.	
21.		JN: Okay.	
22.	**Experiencing transportation issues** Context Memo: P2 doesn't drive, and has to take the bus. States it is a pain.	P2: I was able to make it to some. At that time, like I said, **I wasn't living on campus, so I had to commute, and I still don't drive, so I had to take the bus.**	
23.		JN: Mm. Hmm.	
24.		P2: **And that was, that was a pain** [laughing]. [Pause]	**(LC)** P2 is extremely positive and good natured throughout the interview despite challenges–smiles a lot and laughs periodically.

25.		JN: Okay [pause). When you talk about this, um, Biochemistry II, how that was your biggest challenge, and I think, um, when we looked through your transcript, although your transcript is very good, that was one of the most difficult ones that you pointed out for me. Umm, at what point did you become aware that it was a challenge or problem and what specifically led you to start worrying about it?	**(DC)** I am referring to her academic transcript here–not a previous interview transcript. This was the very first interview that I conducted.
26.	*Recognizing an academic challenge* Context Memo: P2 initially noticed academic problems a little after half way through the semester.	P2: It was [pause] *it must have been a little after half way through the semester that I realized, uh oh, I'm still not making as good of grades that I would like on the quizzes.*	
27.		JN: Um hmm.	
28.	**Holding off on asking for academic help**	P2: *And on the exams*. And, **um, I still held off, though, a little while on asking for help, because I wasn't**	**(LC)** P2 hesitated a little bit here–"um" – regarding her reticence and uncertainty

	Not asking questions of the professor **Crying** Possible Notable Quote: "I couldn't take it."	**quite sure where to go. Because** *like I said I wasn't comfortable asking questions to the professor,* so um, **I would, I would cry a lot about it, and get so stressed, and just, I couldn't take it, and I'd just cry** and *then, um, my, my boyfriend at that time, actually, um, he, he knew about the PASS sessions. He didn't attend this school here, but I told him, like, I would tell him everything about the school.*	regarding requesting help for a recognized academic challenge and regarding her response of crying. **(CC)** This student seems so calm and squared away during the interview–I'm surprised to learn that she cried in response to this experience. **(LC)** "I couldn't take it"–a notable quote? Ask next time
29.		JN: Um hmm	
30.	*Receiving encouragement and advice from significant others*	P2: *So he said "Oh you mentioned those PASS sessions, why don't you try going?" So I tried, I went, and um, I went back for like one or two more sessions.*	
31.		JN: Mm hmm	
32.	**Returning to tried and true methods with confidence**	P2: **And then um, I just went back to the flashcards, and I said, "You know what, this really; I know this is what's really helping me." So**	**(LC)** Using the word "just" for emphasis (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 93).

		regardless of what he, of what the professor says, it works for me so that's what I'm gonna do.	**(CC)** Restored confidence in self?
33.		JN: Okay.	
34.		[Pause]	
35.		JN: It must have been difficult.	
36.		P2: Very. [smiles]	
37.		JN: Crying.	
38.		P2: Yeah	

Appendix G: Graphic Representation (P4)

Superordinate themes				*Themes*	Level 1 codes
Facing Academic Challenges				**Seeking Help**	
Recognizing an academic challenge	*Experiencing academic awareness*	*Questioning self*	*Recognizing conflicting obligations*	*Hesitating*	*Reaching out*
Recognizing it's hard for me to focus	Recognizing the need to study more in college	Questioning choice of major	Experiencing difficulty with balancing family, social life, work, and academics	Feeling uncomfortable around the professor	Recognizing the need to ask for help
Studying but not understanding	Recognizing the need to study differently in college	Wondering if I can do this		Feeling intimidated to ask questions of the professor	Going to the professor for help
Experiencing difficulty comprehending what I read	Recognizing the class schedule that works best for me				Asking a professor for advice
Doing poorly on a test	Recognizing the need to adapt to new learning situations				Asking high school teacher for help
	Recognizing importance of grades				Going to PASS sessions for help
	Recognizing that college will be hard work				Going to others for help
	Realizing college is different than high school				Receiving encouragement from parents to ask for help
	Comparing self to others				Asking friends for help

Recognizing Emotional Response			Owning Knowledge	
Experiencing anxiety	*Feeling discouraged*	*Experiencing frustration*	*Assuming ownership of learning*	*Internalizing academic content*
Feeling scared	Feeling put down	Feeling frustrated by the professor	Accepting personal responsibility for learning	Using music to focus
Feeling stressed	Feeling overwhelmed by college academics	Feeling frustrated by inconsistent lab schedule	Taking on academic burdens independently	Recognizing I learn best to music or TV
Feeling nervous		Feeling frustrated with when professor questioned my integrity		Learning to my special song
Parents worrying about me	Feeling confused by professor's approach to content		Becoming aware of responsibility that comes with independence	Reviewing content in multiple ways
Feeling like I'm on a roller coaster		Acknowledging that some students lie to professors		Comprehending rather than memorizing
Feeling stressed after missing class		Feeling frustrated by professor's late response to e-mail		Recognizing the need to understand concepts from the beginning
Worrying about being accepted into the nursing program		Asking professor why he didn't respond		Working to understand content the day I first encounter it
		Not wanting to take school frustrations out on family		Thinking up stories to illustrate academic concepts
				Connecting lecture material to textbook
				Learning more when I interact
				Creating a memory path
				Using blue or pink pen to help me remember
				Reading the book and practicing problems
				Memorizing
				Creating a memory path
				Writing, quizzing,

				drawing, and talking with study group
				Drawing pictures of academic content
				Making examples of academic content
				Recognizing I need my own stories to learn
				Processing information along the way
				Recognizing I am a visual learner

Transcending Academic Challenges

Studying effectively	*Maximizing classroom learning*	*Balancing*	*Employing strategies for success*	*Thriving with support*
Staying with same study partners	Getting up early to get to class on time	Balancing all my classes	Figuring out what works	Relaxing as a result of sister's encouragement
Studying every day	Paying attention to the professor in class	Making a schedule and following it	Using material learned in one class to help in others	Professor welcoming me
Studying ahead		Finding time for food and sleep	Figuring out the professor	Helping each other
		Learning to manage time wisely	Focusing on current manageable issues	Receiving nonjudgmental help from professor

Living Out Values and Beliefs

Envisioning life as a professional	*Adjusting relationships*	*Valuing relationships*	*Becoming the person I am meant to be*	*Valuing family*	*Fulfilling a sense of purpose*
Looking forward to finishing school	Solving my own problems	Valuing the student teacher relationship	Parents trusting me	Setting an example for sister	Volunteering
Developing behaviors that I will use as a nurse	Taking responsibility for relationship with professor	Appreciating helpful professors	Parents paying for my education	Feeling close to my family	Wanting to make my parents proud
Appreciating importance of academic content to nursing	Mom wanting to protect me	Realizing I need people to help me learn	Doing the right thing	Helping my sister	
	Doing things for	Engaging	Valuing money spent on tuition	Feeling grateful	

| Wondering if I can become a good nurse | myself

Becoming frustrated by parents wanting to help too much

Breaking away from parents and becoming independent

Asking grandparents for advice

Parents recognizing I have to do this on my own | positively with teachers

Making time for important people in my life

Feeling grateful for friends and family who support my academics | | for parents' support

Feeling an obligation to help my family

Easing the burden on my parents | |

Persevering					
Receiving discouragement	*Receiving encouragement*	*Feeling accomplished*	*Having personal determination*		
Receiving lack of encouragement from relatives Feeling unwelcome in professor's office	Parents wanting me to do well in school Receiving support and encouragement from boyfriend, sister, and friends Receiving encouragement from parents	Feeling accomplished at the end Feeling overwhelmed with happiness Feeling proud of myself	Expecting high achievement from myself Sticking with it despite the professor Moving past frustrations with professor Not giving up Serving as my own worst critic Becoming stronger as a result of academic challenges Not wanting to let myself or my parents down Becoming more determined when others doubt me Working harder because of encouragement from boyfriend, sister, and friends		

Appendix H: Excerpt of Data Downloaded from Microsoft Access

Source of the data	Level 1 codes	Themes	Superordinate themes	Supporting data from transcripts
P3I1R78, P3I1R84; P6I1R98; P6I2R24; P7I1R14; P7I1R39	Memorizing rather than learning	Recognizing ineffective learning strategies	Facing academic challenges	P3I1R78: at the end of Biochem I, um, I was starting to get, I was starting to understand, uh, what the concept was. I was starting ta, um, understand the material. Um, but I think I was just memorizing it. I think that's, it was kind of a blinded understanding, just that I thought I was getting it, but I really wasn't. And ah, it was proven again when my first exam in Biochem II that I really didn't know what was going on.

P3I1R84: The way I was studying, I was just looking at the notes and reading what was on the notes. I was just scanning what I had written, not really, learning the concept of it, learning why this equaled to this. Or, you know I was just kind of, basically scanning through it and memorizing it, and I thought that if I memorized it I felt comfortable enough to pass, and which wasn't right [laughed], which wasn't true. |

| | | | | P6I1R98: Well, me-, for me memorizing is what happens when you study the night before a test, or when you wait 'til the night before. That's, memorizing for me is like, I guess, equivalent to procrastination?

P6I2R24: I guess, memorizing it, and I don't think that's good, because, it's like you just have to like pull that out during the test. It's not something that oh, that just kind of flows out. You have to like, "Oh crap, this is that one thing I didn't remember!" And I hate it in a test when you're like, "I remember looking at this question, and I remember saying, 'Okay, I'm gonna come back to it,' or um, like, you know, 'Oh, that won't be on the test!'" And I can't stand the feeling when it's there, and you're like, "Oh my gosh! Like, I remember the question, and I didn't even, I didn't care about it, and here it is on the test!" [Laughs]. Like, I hate that feeling

P7I1R14: So, before the third exam came along, um, after, after that second exam, I got a C on that second exam, and |
|---|---|---|---|---|

				that, that's what hit me. I was like okay, "I need to really focus on, in this class." And at that time I was also struggling with Stats. So, um, I tried to balance it a little bit, but obviously I didn't balance it too much. Um, what I found myself doing was scanning through the pages instead of reading. Um, he told us specific things that we had to know. So I would only study those specific things. I wouldn't study, um, the things that would lead up to those specifics. I wouldn't know any of the background information. And, that's what I did for, before the third exam came along. All I did was scan. All I did was, um; just study those little, those specific things. But even at that, it wasn't, I didn't know too much of it. So, when that third exam came along, I failed it. Um, I memorized the formulas, but memorizing does not help if you do not know how to use them. Um, and that's what I realized after the third exam. P7I1R39: Okay, um, for example, there was, um, we had to know how to use, um [pause], I forgot the name, the, the name of

it, but it was, I knew it as PERVNERT [laughed]. And that's um, it was basically um, knowing um, your moles, you had to know conversions, you had to know um, well, conversions is specifically conversions, you had to know how to convert um, from Celsius to um, to Fahrenheit and so on. And then you had to know how to convert um, liters to milliliters or grams to nanograms and so forth. And that specific equation, you had to know everything from the very beginning to know how to do that specific equation. Yes, I could of memorized the equation, and I still know it to this day, but knowing that equation didn't help me, because, well, memorizing the equation, um, didn't help me, because I needed to know what P meant. I needed to know what N meant, I needed to know what R and T meant, um, and V. And, yes I memorized what; the equation, but I didn't know exactly what those specific variables meant. Um, so the first time I took it, um, I was confused, because, yes I knew that in this specific problem I needed to know this equation. I needed to

				memorize this equation, but I didn't know how to use it. And that's where the knowing and memorization comes in, because the second time I took it, um, I made sure that I knew everything from the very beginning, from conversions to molarity to um, knowing the background information, um such as like the basic knowledge, um, of it, um like what a mole is or what types of pressure there are or um, the type of volume I need to use. Um, um, I needed to know what R meant, because um, R was probably the most confusing part of that equation, because you had to know, um, the units for it. Um, yes you could memorize the number, um the 0.00821, but you needed to also know well, what are the units that come along with it? And when you know the units, you also need to know, "Okay, well if you have this specific unit, this cancels out, and this cancels out. Well, what is left over? And is this; is this what the question is asking?" And that's pretty much, um, how I failed in that, that first time I took it the first time around. I didn't realize that.

P7I1R10	Not knowing how to study for biochemistry	Recognizing an academic challenge	Facing academic challenges	P7I1R10: Um, but I think that was my greatest academic challenge, was that chemistry class, and trying to study, finding a way to actually study and be consistent with my studying. Because that first class, I wasn't consistent with it, because I, I wasn't quite sure what he expected, or I wasn't quite sure what was going to be expected of me when the exam came. But I think that was the only thing I, I could think about would be studying-wise.
P3I2R42, P3I1R108; P4I1R5; P6I1R9; P6I1R94; P6I1R106; P7I2R11	Reviewing content in multiple ways	Internalizing academic content	Owning knowledge	P3I2R42: And I would, um, save all, all the study guides onto my desktop and while he was going through the power point, I would write in the answers, cuz all the study guides were off of the power point. Some things I had to look in the book, but very, very rarely, ah, did I have to, go back to the textbook. Um, and so I would do the study guides in class while he was talking about them, and he would answer, like he would go over and it was like one answer for one of the questions and he'd talk, he'd say the answer, I'd type it in, and then he would explain, so then I'd stop. So I kind of followed him. So after the

| | | | | fourth exam, the, the study guide for the final was already on there, so I walked to class and started doing the same thing. I did the study guides during class, and I found that in doing so, that things were kind of sticking more in my mind. Um, I was kind of, I guess, it was processing while I was learning and while I was typing it, and I think, I've found that if I rewrite or retype something, after I've read it or seen it, it helps me learn it better. So I mean, the fourth exam was I think maybe two weeks before the final?

P3I1R108: So what I would do, I would go a little further back in the textbook, go a little, um, further back in the chapter. Try and read there and read back to where I first started, and see if I would understand it better. Or um, I would also use the outlines and the textbook. That would help also.

P4I1R5: I took advantage of the online study guides, the online practice tests, the workbook that was given, um, and the book was really helpful too. |
|---|---|---|---|---|

				P6I1R9: I'm really big on going back and redoing quizzes and I always do the reviews at least once and sometimes twice if it was really like a difficult thing. P6I1R94: we'd go through all of our notes, and the notes were just not enough, and he, he'd give us some review, so I mean we'd do every single review question. I mean, work it out step by step. Me and my study group, and worked it out on the board, worked it out together, and then we'd do that, and we'd kind of all separate from that point and then come back and, or, and like by ourselves, I would do it again. Pr-, I'd probably do it once and then, you know, go through the book, and take notes on stuff, you know, that I thought was important that I should know. P6I1R106: It's, there's, like I'd have the question, like what I needed to know. And I would just go back and either read or, or solve the problem. I'd go, I, or I'd go, like, to another problem that's similar to it, and I'd see how they did it, and so I'd apply it to this problem.

| | | | | And, or I'd just, like, read in the book and find to where it is and like, separating it from all the other information, writing it on the review.

P7I2R11: And I started studying off of the reviews. But I didn't just study them. I would stay in the library, and I would do, I would do the problems over and over again until I knew I understood exactly what I was doing. Um, because there was many steps just ta answer one question. So um, I would do that, and I would also, um, I would also do my homework, cuz he assigned assignments. So I would do my homework over and over again, and I would also do my quizzes over and over again, just until I understood exactly what I had to do. And I wouldn't leave the library until I knew that I was okay with myself and that I knew that with, when the next quiz or test came around, I would um, I would be prepared for it. Um, after that, the second quiz I got a B, and then the last two, the last two exams, I got As. So, I improved a lot. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| P7I1R14 | Hearing from the professor | Receiving discouragement | Persevering | P7I1R14: So when my final came along, because |

	that we weren't excelling			we only had three exams and then the final, um because he had told us that we weren't excelling in that class, so he would, I guess, slow down and he, that's where he skipped two sections of the um, of the course.
P5I2R100; P5I2R113	Parents telling me from a young age that I needed to work hard and have a career	Receiving encouragement	Persevering	P5I2R100: I grew up with my parents always telling me, "You have to work hard." And, "You're not just gonna stay in this town. You're gonna have a career, and you're gonna work." Um, "You know, you're not gonna be like the rest of us." And things like that. And so from the very beginning I remember always having ta work really hard academically ta be able ta, you know, get, get into a good college, and um, things like that. And um, they were just always really encouraging of me, and if I ever needed help or anything like that they were there, and when I would do really good in school they would, you know, they would reward me. P5I2R113: I'm gonna be the first ta be goin' ta college out of my, my

				parents and out of my entire family. Um, I've got a couple aunts and uncles and still only even out of them, only um, a couple of my older cousins, two of my older cousins and my, and my uncle out of this huge family are the only ones that have gone ta college and actually, you know, gotten a bachelor's degree in something. So um, I guess he meant that, you know, I was, was going to have a career and um, get paid good, I guess, not having to search from job to job and from this to that. I was gonna have a definite, um, steady job.
P4I1R25, P4I1R27, P4I1R28	Feeling accomplished at the end	Feeling accomplished	Persevering	P4I1R27: Because [pause], you feel accomplished at the end. You feel like, you know, other people gave up, other people switched out. Other people got out of the class, but you stuck it out. You tried your hardest. You studied. You did everything you could to get the grade that you got, and if it's an A or a B, you're really excited. Um, so it's just like a big accomplishment, for you to have tried so hard to do something so well and in the end it's just, you feel very relieved, you feel reluctant, you feel, just really happy that you, you

				know, stuck it out, and you didn't give up. Cuz nobody wants to be a quitter. P4I1R28: You all wanna; everyone wants to be the hero. Everybody wants to be the person that didn't give up and got the good grade. But in the end, a lot of people just give up, and it's sad to see cuz I've had a lot of friends drop out of class. And a lot of my other friends were like, "No, stay in. You can do it. We'll help you. You're gonna hafta take the class again anyway, if you drop out." And, these are people that had, like, Cs and they just weren't happy with that grade. And, I mean a C is better than having to take a class all over again. So, it just, that was my best learning experience, because I, I deserved the grade that I got, and I tried my hardest, and I felt so accomplished at the end of the class. So, I was very proud of myself when I was done. If I, if I had failed, I would of felt really uneasy, I would of felt really depressed, really disappointed in myself, not in anybody else, but I didn't, and I

				was extremely filled with joy when that class was over with.
P4I1R30	Feeling overwhelmed with happiness	Feeling accomplished	Persevering	P4I1R30: And the teacher just acted like nothing was wrong. And other people would be in the same position as me, and I felt bad, cuz some people got to the point where they just couldn't take it anymore and they got out. And it's just, it's really sad to see people that you studied with, or you tried to help, and they get out of the class, so for me I was really overwhelmed that, you know, I was able to get over all that stress and just finish the class and do the best that I could. So I don't know if I was really reluctant, I think I was more overwhelmed with happiness.
P4I1R114	Feeling unwelcome in professor's office	Receiving discouragement	Persevering	P4I1R114: I went, and it didn't last long at all. It lasted maybe 5 minutes, cuz I was just kinda, I felt really unwanted; I felt very not welcomed. Um [pause], because when you go in to, when you're going to someone about something you don't understand you're afraid of what they'll think of you, what they'll, you know, what their perception of you, you know, "Why didn't you

				study more? Why didn't you come earlier? Why didn't you do everything I told you to do?"
P5I2R197	Parents "driving" me to work hard and do better	Receiving encouragement	Persevering	P5I2R197: I think, um, a large part of it is my parents, always driving me ta do better and ta work hard, and um, and then you know they've kind of, they haven't as much now, because I think now it's just me on my own.
P5I2R111	Being glad my parents pushed me	Receiving encouragement	Persevering	P5I2R111: Now, I'm, I'm glad. I'm really glad. Um, because now I, I'm here, and in this pre-, really good prenursing, or this um, program, and um, I'm, I'm just really glad that they did push me, cuz um, it was, it was sort of a shock but not as much, especially not as bad as it was ta some of my other friends, who, who, um, didn't have it as tough as me, I guess you'd say.
P5I2R109; P3I1R38; P7I1R69; P7I2R155; P2I2R168; P6I1R45	Parents pushing me	Receiving encouragement	Persevering	P3I1R38: They were always pushing me, they were always, um, you know, on my back. P5I2R109: "We believe in you. We know you can, and that's why we're pushing you." P6I1R45: I guess that's why my dad kinda. . .I guess he would want me

				to come home, and my family would, like they do need my help. Well, I mean when I get home, like I'm, like, as soon as I walk in the door, I'm doing something, like, I'm, my dad can't drive, he's not allowed to drive anymore. So I'm driving, I'm running errands, I'm helping with the, the baby, taking her to school, and you know, doing stuff around the house as soon as I walk in, but my parents never, you know, they never let on that, you know they really do need me at home. They, they really push me to stay here and do what I have to do here,
				P7I1R69: Um, during that first time [pause], mmm, I think it would be my parents. Um, my parents are very pushy. Um, they're very, um, strict. They'll, they're also the type who will ask you every single day, "Well, how did your day go? How was, how is your school going? How is that biological chemistry class going?"
				P7I1R69: My dad, he would always push me. Like, "Well you have to study. You have to do this. You have to do that." Um, "You need." I don't

				know, my um, my dad, he's, he's up there [laughs]. Um, he was my biggest supporter, he would always tell me like, "Well, you always say that you're gonna do bad, and you always come out doing good." And I was like, "Well yeah, Dad, but that's not, this, this is, this is totally different, this is a totally different class. You don't know this professor, and you don't know that." He was just very positive. He's the one that makes me positive, so he is the one that pushed me. . . .I think my biggest supporter was my dad. P7I2R155: I think, um, I don't feel pressured. I feel driven to want to do good, because my parents have, they've always grown up, um, without supporters, and I feel that I'm lucky to have them be the way they are. So, I think it just makes me feel good. It doesn't, I believe that if my parents didn't push me, I probably wouldn't be doing as good as I'm doing now. I probably wouldn't even be in college, because nobody in my, in my family ever went to college, and if they did, they only went for a semester or two. I

				don't think I would of felt, um, like I had to, be someone great in life. So I'm really grateful for it. I'm not pressured at all, because I know that even if I do fall, they'll be there to help me. P2I2R168: Okay, cuz um, it was just when I was little, my dad always told me, um, "You have to be the best at what you do." And, not in a bad way, but failure is not an option. Like, if you put your mind to it, you can get it. You can do anything you want and get through anything. So, it was, it, it's almost like a sense of, if, "If I fail, like, I'm failing my dad, and I can't do that."

Curriculum Vitae

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Registered Nurse Licensure

- Texas (since 2001)
- Minnesota (since 1981)

Professional Education

- Doctorate of Education, 2011
  Specialization in Teacher Leadership
  Walden University, Minneapolis, MN

- Master of Science in Nursing, 1996
  California State University, Sacramento

- Bachelor of Arts Degree in Nursing, 1981
  Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN

Professional Certification

- Certified Nurse Educator, 2008
  National League for Nursing

Academic Employment Experience

- **August 2006–Current**
  Instructor of Nursing
  Name Withheld for Anonymity of Institution

- **September 2002–August 2006**
  Adjunct Faculty
  Name Withheld for Anonymity of Institution

- **September 2000–May 2001**
  Adjunct Faculty
  Nursing Fundamentals & Skills
  George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

- **September 1996–May 1998**
  Adjunct Faculty
  Maternal Child Nursing
  Hawaii Pacific University, Kaneohe, HI

Clinical Employment Experience

- **February 2005–September 2006**
  Early Discharge RN
  LifeSpan Home Health
  San Antonio, Texas

- **January 1999–April 2001**
  Staff RN
  Inova Fairfax Family Centered Care Unit
  Falls Church, VA

- **March 1996–January 1997**   T
  Testing Skills Evaluator/Proctor
  American Red Cross, Honolulu, HI

- **April 1994–July 1995**
  Project Coordinator
  Chronic Care Coordination Program
  NorthBay Health at Home, Fairfield, CA

- **September 1987–July 1990**
  Assistant Nurse Manager, OB/GYN Unit
  475th Medical Group, Yokota AFB, Japan

- **February 1987–August 1987**
  Assistant Nurse Manager, OB/GYN Unit
  USAF Hospital Tinker, Tinker AFB, OK

- **July 1985–January 1987**
  Clinical Nurse, Multiservice Unit
  Nurse Manager, Surgery Clinic
  Clinical Nurse, Recovery Room
  USAF Hospital Tinker, Tinker AFB, OK

- **February 1982–July 1985**
  Clinical Nurse, Medicine & ICU
  USAF Regional Hospital, Carswell AFB

- **August 1981–February 1982**
  Nurse Intern, Wilford Hall Medical Center
  Lackland AFB, TX

Professional Association Memberships

- Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
- Sigma Theta Tau
- Texas Nurses Association/American Nurses Association

Publications

- Nadeau, J. (2012). The postpartum family: Needs and care. In Davidson, London, & Ladewig (Eds.), *Olds' maternal-newborn nursing & women's health across the lifespan* (9th ed.), (pp. 1019-1053). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

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