

Experience of Hispanics in Nursing Education

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Family Nurse Practitioner

by

Aditaim Lopez

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School of Nursing  
College of Education, Health, and Human Services  
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Abstract  
of  
Experience of Hispanics in Nursing Education  
by  
Aditaim Lopez

*Statement of Problem*

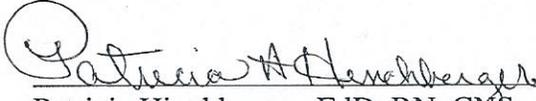
Hispanics make up the fastest-growing and largest minority group in America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Even though Hispanics make up roughly 11% of the U.S. population, they comprise less than 2% of the nursing workforce (National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, 2000). Although some nursing programs are boosting their efforts to recruit Hispanic nursing students they must also focus on retention efforts so nursing students can graduate and become part of the nursing profession (Alicea-Planas, 2009).

*Sources of Data*

A semi-structured interview was used to collect data from a convenience sample of twelve Hispanic students who had recently graduated or were in their last semester of a baccalaureate nursing program. Snowball sampling was used. The model of Nursing Student Retention and Anti-deficit Achievement theory guided the framework of this study to explore the following questions: 1) How do Hispanic nurses describe their lived experience in nursing education? 2) What aids Hispanic BSN students to persist in a nursing education? 3) How does the academic experience of Hispanic BSN students help cultivate graduate studies aspirations?

*Conclusions Reached*

Hispanic nursing students described their academic experience challenging but found support in their peers, family and nursing faculty. They coped with the challenge by compartmentalizing. They chose to persist in nursing education because of the strong commitment to their goal of becoming a nurse. Hispanic nursing students report being encouraged by faculty to pursue graduate studies, and while all want to attend nursing graduate school, they see it as a future goal after they have years of nursing experience.

 Committee Chair  
Patricia Hinghberger, EdD, RN, CNS

4/17/2015  
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I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the students who participated in this study and allowed me to hear their stories.

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## Experience of Hispanics in Nursing Education

**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Hispanics make up the fastest-growing and largest minority group in America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The number of Hispanics residing in the United States is expected to increase to 102.6 million by 2050, and expected to make up 24% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Out of 20 million-plus patients served at health centers across the U.S., almost 6.7 million identified themselves as Hispanic (Health Resources and Services Administration, 2012). Even though Hispanics make up roughly 11% of the U.S. population, they comprise less than 2% of the nursing workforce (National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, 2000).

**Background and Significance**

Lack of diversity in the healthcare workforce has been linked to health disparities (Cason et al., 2008). The Health Resources and Services Administration [HRSA] stated that in order to reduce health disparities and improve quality of care there needs to be a health workforce that is culturally and linguistically diverse and more representative of the nation (2002). Research shows that minority health professionals are more likely to work with underserved communities than their white peers (Smedley, Butler & Bristow, 2004). Also ethnic patients are more likely to report higher satisfaction, preventative care, and needed medical care from health professionals from the same racial background (Saha, Taggart, Komaromy, & Bindman, 2000). Having nurses that speak Spanish and also understand the Hispanic culture is important when caring for the growing Hispanic population (Alicea-Planas, 2009).

The gap between the number of Hispanic patients and Hispanic health care workers directly adds to the persistent national health disparities among racial and ethnic populations (Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Health Workforce, 2004) therefore “nursing schools have a societal mandate and a

moral obligation to recruit and retain, as well as to encourage and support, the success of Hispanics/Latinos into the profession” (Rivera-Goba & Wallen, 2008, p. 171). It is imperative to explore the lived experience of Hispanics in nursing education to understand the factors that affect retention of this group.

### **The Problem**

Nursing schools must change educational systems to reflect national diversity (Rivera-Goba & Wallen, 2008). Hispanic students make up only 5.3% of the nursing student population nationwide (National League for Nursing, 2006). Although some nursing programs are boosting their efforts to recruit nursing students they must also focus on retention efforts so nursing students can graduate and become part of the nursing profession (Shelton, 2003). Even when recruitment efforts are successful, retention and graduation rates have not been as gainful (Doutrich, Wros, Valdez, & Ruiz, 2005). Given the high attrition rate among Hispanic nursing students, the number of Hispanic nurses that is able to enter the work force is limited (Alicea-Planas, 2009). Increasing the number of Hispanic students in nursing should be addressed in all levels of education, from primary to higher education (Rivera-Goba & Wallen, 2008).

Hispanics are less likely to attend postsecondary education than European Americans and Asian Americans (Tierney, 1999). In the year 2000 only 11 percent of Hispanics aged 25 years and older had obtained a bachelor’s degree compared to 28 percent of whites and 44 percent of Asians (Swail et al., 2003). Alicea-Planas (2009) further suggests that Hispanic BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) students should be encouraged to obtain masters and doctorate nursing degrees. In order to increase the number of Hispanics in nursing, more Hispanic BSN students need to be encouraged and supported to so

pursue a higher education and complete graduate studies so that they may serve as faculty and role models to future Hispanic students (Alicea-Planas, 2009).

### **Purpose of the Research**

Multiple studies identify the perceived barriers to academic success for Hispanic nursing students. Many also described their educational experience but there is lack of research regarding the factors that enabled Hispanic students to persist in higher education and achieve their academic goals. There is even less research on the factors that encourage Hispanic baccalaureate nursing students to pursue graduate studies. This paper synthesizes the literature on Hispanics in nursing education as well seeks to add to the understanding of the lived experience of Hispanics in nursing education, their choice to persist and pursue graduate studies. Factors that support the nursing education, academic persistence and pursuit of graduate nursing degree among Hispanics needs to be identified in order to have empirical evidence on how to effectively increase the number of Hispanic registered and advanced practice nurses. This area of study can identify career development interventions that can be applied in institutions with the goal of eliminating barriers and promoting the academic success of Hispanic nursing students.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do Hispanic nurses describe their lived experience in nursing education?
2. What aids Hispanic BSN students to persist in a nursing education?
3. How does the academic experience of Hispanic BSN students help cultivate graduate studies aspirations?

**Assumptions**

The underlying assumptions are as follows:

1. The described experiences are unique to Hispanic nursing students
2. The lived experiences of Hispanic students in nursing education can be identified through conscious recollection.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

The Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), MEDLINE (PubMed), Chochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, and google scholar databases were accessed for this literature review. Keywords included: Hispanic students, Latino students, minority students, nursing, retention, recruitment, higher education, nursing education and minority health professionals. Inclusion criteria included articles written in English, and those that involved issues pertaining to Hispanic nursing students. Letters to the editor and commentaries were excluded from the review. Because research regarding Hispanics nursing students in higher education is limited (Doutrich et al., 2005), scholarly papers on general nursing students, including minority students, are also discussed in the review. Shelton's model of Nursing Student Retention and Harper's Anti-deficit Achievement theory guided the framework of this study.

### Theoretical Framework

**Model of Nursing Student Retention.** Shelton (2012) defines retention as “persistence, or choosing to continue in a nursing program, and successful academic performance, or meeting the necessary academic standards to continue in a nursing program” (p. 1). The Model of Nursing Student Retention (Figure 1) combines elements from Tinto's theory of student retention and Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that one is able to plan and carry out a course of action to reach the wanted results (Shelton, 2012). According to Bandura (1997) expectations of self-efficacy determine if behavior will be started, how much effort will be exerted and for how long. Tinto's (1993) theory of student retention is based on a student's

integration into an educational institution. According to Shelton’s (2012) model of Nursing Student Retention, student retention is dependent on the student choosing to remain in the program and meeting academic standards to remain in the program. A student will not continue in the program if he/she chooses not to continue in it and or he/she fails academically because he/she can’t meet academic standards (Shelton, 2012). The model displays the interaction of the student’s background, internal psychological processes and external environment supports as factors that affect student retention (Shelton, 2012).

Figure 1. Model of Nursing Student Retention. (Shelton, 2012).

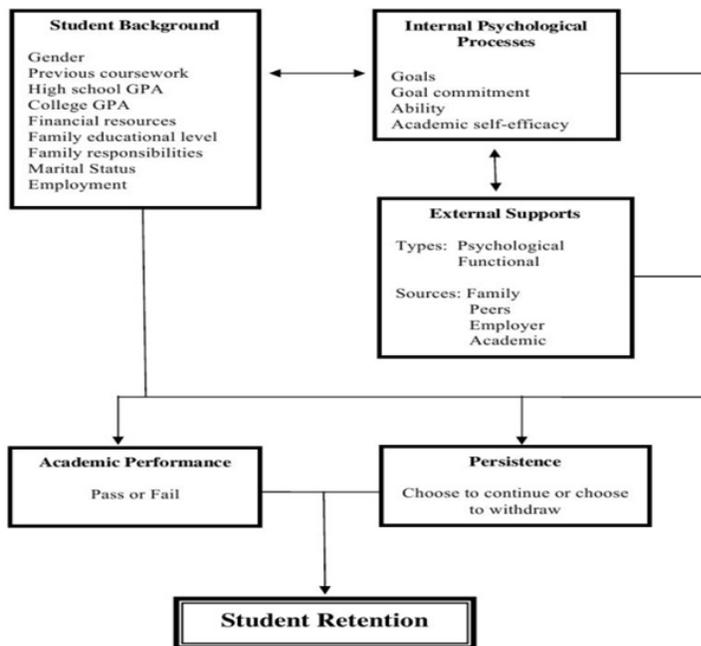


Figure. Model of Nursing Student Retention

**Student background variables.** Student background variables are factors that have affected the academic performance of the student in the past and may still be present in the current environment (Shelton, 2012). Background variables include, but are not limited to age,

gender, previous high school and college coursework, past grade point average, standardized test scores, financial resources, family educational level, family responsibilities, and employment (Shelton, 2012). According to Shelton (2012) these factors are identified in literature and by Tinto as factors that correlated with persistence and academic performance as well as academic risk factors for students, nursing students in particular.

***Internal psychological processes.*** Self-efficacy, goal commitment, academic and career goals are identified as internal psychological processes that affect academic performance and persistence but are not limited to those mentioned (Shelton, 2012). An internal psychological process dictate why a student enters and seeks to succeed in a nursing program and whether a student believes the benefits of persisting in a nursing program outweighs the costs of continuing (Shelton, 2012). According to Shelton (2012) the students who are more likely to persist are those with high academic ability and high goal commitment. Students with higher self-efficacy set more challenging goals and exert more effort in goal achievement than students who have lower-efficacy (Shelton, 2012).

***External supports.*** External support helps the student persist and achieve academic success (Shelton, 2012). Shelton (2012) describes two types of external support, psychological and functional. Encouragement, caring, and promotion of a sense of competence and self-worth make up psychological support (Shelton, 2012). Activities that aid the student to complete tasks and achieve goals make up functional support (Shelton, 2012). Sources of support can be found within the academic institution such as faculty, learning support, counseling and financial aid (Shelton, 2012). Family, peers, and employers are sources of support external to the academic institution (Shelton, 2012).

**Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework.** The anti-deficit Achievement framework focuses on the enablers that contribute to the academic success of minority students in fields where they are underrepresented (Harper, 2010). The framework explores how students of color persist and reach their academic goals (Harper, 2010). This perspective brings light to factors that facilitate the academic success of minorities in higher education (Harper, 2010).

The Anti-Deficit Achievement framework by Harper (2010), is a lens that reframes deficit oriented research regarding students of color in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. Because most research studies focus on minority student failure and deficits instead of achievement, little is known about those students who are successful in college “despite all that we know about what complicates and undermines achievement for their particular racial groups” (Harper, 2010, p. 64). The framework offers a way to research and better comprehend the enablers of minority student achievement in STEM fields. The framework includes a series of possible anti-deficit questions that help researchers identify and understand the factors that enabled students of color succeed in STEM fields (Harper, 2010). Deficit oriented questions like “Why do so few continue on to graduate programs in STEM?” are reframed using an anti-deficit achievement perspective into “What are common aspects of students’ pathways from high school completion through doctoral degree attainment in STEM fields?” (Harper, 2010, p. 69). Harper’s Anti-deficit Achievement framework was used to frame the research questions and guide the interview questions.

### **Academic Preparedness**

Ineffective school advisement and lack of academic preparation for college work are identified as higher education barriers for many Hispanic nursing students (Doutrich et al., 2005). Students stated that they were not enrolled in college preparatory programs in high

school nor had their counselors talked to them about college applications or what was required of them so they could attend college (Doutrich et al., 2005). Hispanic high-school students are often guided by school counselors into vocational schools, or tracked to seek careers in paraprofessional jobs (Cason et al, 2008; Doutrich et al., 2005). Academic advising at the high school and college level are perceived as lacking specific information by Hispanic students seeking upper-division nursing programs (Bond et al., 2008).

### **Financial aid**

Finances are a major obstacle for Hispanic students pursuing a nursing degree (Bond et al., 2008). There is supporting evidence that Hispanic nursing students feel as though the financial aid provided does not address the expenses associated with daily living such as housing, food, transportation (Cason et al., 2008; Bond et al., 2008; Taxis, 2006). Some students attempt to make economic gains by working more hours but in turn it affects their academic performance (Bond et al., 2008). Hispanic students suggested that barriers to obtaining financial aid included the lack of information regarding financial planning, knowledge of how to access scholarships and other sources of financial aid and fear of accruing debt (Cason et al., 2008). Studies also found that families of Hispanic students weren't comfortable seeking financial aid or acquiring debt and that these financial aid issues affect whether a student goes to public versus private school or a 2-year versus 4-year institution (Doutrich et al., 2005; Cason et al., 2008). For example Bond et al. (2008) found that Hispanic students prefer community colleges because they perceived it to be more affordable than a four-year institution (Bond et al., 2008).

### **Educational Goals and Institution Commitment**

Research shows that students with a stronger educational goal and commitment to the institution are more likely to graduate (Tinto, 1993). Hispanic students experience role conflicts and competition between their family duties and their commitment to education (Doutrich et al., 2005). Doutrich et al. (2005) found that Hispanic nursing students, females in particular, expressed an importance in balancing the desire to pursue a higher education with his/her commitment to family and traditional roles (Bond et al., 2005; Doutrich et al., 2005). Some even felt like they needed to leave their family because of the competing obligations (Doutrich et al., 2005).

Hispanic nursing students feel that nursing faculty does not understand their sense of family obligation and how it constantly competes with nursing school demands (Alicea-Planas, 2009). Taxis (2006) found that Hispanic students believed they held different values than most of their peers maintaining respect and connection with their families, valuing hard work and placing little value in material possessions. Another area where family obligations competed with academic aspiration was in the financial aid arena (Cason et al., 2008). Students reported needing to work to help their family financially, sometimes making them ineligible for institutional financial aid (Cason et al., 2008).

### **Social and Academic Integration**

According to Swail et al. (2003) the establishment of peer relationships and the development of role models and mentors have been identified in literature as factors affecting social and academic integration. The lack of role models is listed as a challenge for the recruitment and retention of Hispanics in the nursing profession (Cason et al., 2008). The

chances of finding a Hispanic mentor or role model in academia is very low given the fact that only 3.4% of faculties in educational institutions are Hispanic and only 0.8% is nursing faculty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Students stated that Hispanic faculty served as role models and a reminded that they too could succeed in nursing (Bond et al., 2008).

Students of Hispanic origin who graduated from BSN programs recalled feelings of loneliness and isolation within the institution (Taxis, 2006). Many reported that they felt like they didn't fit in (Doutrich et al., 2005). For example a student recalled people suggesting his bilingual skills were the main reason why he was accepted in to the nursing program which in turn made him question if he belonged there (Bond et al., 2008). Hispanic nursing students recounted that they were concerned that their classmates saw them as less qualified, not as good, and were only allowed in the program due to affirmative action (Doutrich et al., 2005). Students described a feeling of unevenness that made them question if they were in the right place (Bond et al., 2008).

### **Learning Environment**

Evidence shows that learning environment in educational institutions plays a vital role in retention and graduation rates of nursing students (Rivera-Goba & Wallen, 2008). Nursing faculty who made the effort to get to know the students created a more pleasant and enjoyable atmosphere which facilitated student learning (Alicea-Planas, 2009). Hispanic nursing students reported feelings associated with caring, respect, and connectedness when others understood their background and culture (Taxis, 2006). Hispanic nursing students regarded efforts from faculty as positive when they were addressed by name, displayed genuine care, and were given adequate assistance (Taxis, 2006). A factor listed as essential to recruitment and retention of

Hispanic nursing students included having faculty that was helpful, caring, encouraging and respectful (Evans, 2007; Gardner, 2005; Jones, 1992; Snyder & Bunkers, 1994; Taxis, 2006).

Shelton (2003) conducted a study to look at the relationship between perceived faculty support and student retention and found that students who decided to stay in the nursing program had higher levels of perceived faculty support than the students who voluntarily withdrew and those who were required to withdraw due to academic failure. “Perceived faculty support was related to both persistence and academic performance, such that students with higher perceived faculty support were more likely to continue in a nursing program until graduation and were more likely to be successful academically” (Shelton, 2012, pg. 1). Taxis (2006) also found a relationship between Hispanic nursing students who engaged in help-seeking behaviors and the perception of being respected and cared for. A metasynthesis established faculty support or the lack thereof, as an external factor that affected the academic success of Hispanic students (Alicea-Planas, 2009).

### **Graduate Nursing Studies**

Research on BSN students choosing to pursue graduate studies in nursing is poorly understood (Plunkett, Iwasiw, & Kerr, 2010). According to Plunkett et al. (2010) nursing baccalaureate students are more likely to pursue nursing graduate studies if they can see the long-term benefits of obtaining a graduate degree. Plunkett et al. (2010) found that BSN students did not have a good understanding of the value of graduate nursing degree. Plunkett et al. (2010) suggest that a students’ deferment of the pursuit of graduate studies until later in their career reduces the time they may have to develop realize long term goals, marking the significance of recruiting students into graduate programs directly upon BScN completion.

**Summary**

Studies examining Hispanic students in nursing education specify lack of support from faculty, sensing discrimination by faculty and peers, insufficient advisement, and limited number of role models and mentors as educational barriers (Goetz, 2007; Jones, 1992; Perez, 2003; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Snyder & Bunkers, 1994; Villarruel et al., 2001). Financial aid, professional socialization, mentoring, technical support, personal determination, and supportive relationships with family, faculty, and classmates are reported as factors that affect the success of Hispanic BSN students (Taxis, 2006; Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008). The literature also shows that learning environment affects retention and graduation rates of nursing students (Rivera-Goba & Wallen, 2008). Very little is known about the choice to pursue nursing graduate studies among BSN students (Plunket et al., 2010).

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

Research surrounding undergraduate nursing students' pursuit of graduate nursing degrees is understudied and not well understood (Plunkett et al., 2010). There is also a gap in literature examining the relationship between experiences in undergraduate studies and the decision to pursue a graduate nursing degree among Hispanic students. The aim of this study was to describe the lived experience of Hispanic students in a BSN nursing program and to explore what aids undergraduate Hispanic students to persist in nursing education. This study also seeks to build a basic understanding of how the academic experience of Hispanic BSN students helps cultivate graduate studies aspirations.

The study is structured as a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological design using semi-structured individual interviews. This chapter addresses: (1) research questions, (3) identification of setting, (4) research design, (5) ethical considerations (6) population and sample, (7) data collection process, (8) coding (9) data analysis, (10) bias, (11) data quality check.

### Research Questions

1. How do Hispanic nurses describe their lived experience in nursing education?
2. What aids Hispanic BSN students to persist in a nursing education?
3. How does the academic experience of Hispanic BSN students help cultivate graduate studies aspirations?

## **Research Design**

This hermeneutic phenomenological study explored the lived experience of being a Hispanic student in nursing education. Phenomenology is the study of the meaning of the human lived experience (Polit & Beck, 2012). This approach questions what the experience is like and attempts to “unfold meanings as they are lived in everyday existence” (Lavery, 2003, p. 4). The study of the phenomenon seeks to return and re-examine the experiences and uncover new or forgotten meanings (Lavery, 2003). The aim of phenomenological studies is to find participants who have lived the phenomenon under study who are willing to talk about it, and who are different from one another to improve richness and uniqueness of the stories of the particular experience (Lavery, 2003). The number of participants for the study can vary because it is dependent on data collected along the way (Lavery, 2003). Participants were asked to describe their experience through a semi-structured interview. The transcripts were coded and analyzed into emerging themes.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Permission was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University San Marcos to ensure that the study adhered to ethical standards (Appendix A). Consent was obtained from the participants before they are interviewed (Appendix B). A pledge of confidentiality was included in the informed consent, defined by Polit and Beck (2012) as “a pledge that any information participants provided will not be publicly reported in a manner that identifies them, and will not be accessible to others” (p. 164). To make sure the confidentiality pledge was not broken the researcher did not collect any identifying information or demographic data. All recorded tapes were destroyed after they were transcribed. Signed informed consent,

and any data that could identify the participants is in the possession of the researcher and locked away in cabinet in a secure location. Participants were informed that they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any point throughout the study and that their decision to withdraw or not participate in the study would not affect them in any way. The research study was approved by the IRB.

### **Population and Sample**

Twelve participants were recruited from three different baccalaureate nursing programs in San Diego County. According to Polit and Beck (2012), “having multiple sites is advantageous in terms of enhancing the generalizability of the study findings, but multisite studies are complex and pose management, financial, and logistic challenges” (p. 183). External validity can be enhanced by selecting representative people and setting (Polit & Beck, 2012). The target population of interest is Hispanic nurses with a baccalaureate nursing degree or Hispanic nursing students in their last semester of a BSN program. The sample was taken from the accessible population, which is a group of people that fit the population criteria and are accessible to study (Polit & Beck, 2012). Eligibility criteria for the study includes the following; have completed a BSN program in the last three years or be currently enrolled in their last semester of a BSN program; identify himself/herself as Hispanic. Exclusion criteria include nurses that obtained their degree in a foreign country given that this study seeks to find participants with similar nursing education experience.

Sample size was twelve participants which was determined “when themes and categories in the data become repetitive and redundant, such that no new information can be gleaned by further data collection,” known as data saturation (Polit & Beck, 2012). Sample size is also

dependent on the content of the data provided by the participants. Polit and Beck (2012) state that sampling in qualitative studies is emergent and builds on early learning to guide future direction. The original sample of Hispanic nurses was asked to volunteer for the study and early informants were asked to refer other study participants, known as snowball sampling. Snowball sampling saves the researcher time because of its practicality and it is also cost-efficient (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Access to the sample was facilitated through the National Association of Hispanic Nurses, and local nursing programs. Flyers were handed to potential participants and were asked to contact the researcher if interested in participating in the study (Appendix C). Volunteers were then be contacted via their preferred method of communication, either via email, phone, and text messages or in person to arrange a meeting for the interview.

### **Identification of the Setting**

The research was conducted in San Diego, a city located in southern California. Participants were interviewed at in quiet, semi-private local coffee shops and one was conducted in the school study room. The interview setting was selected based on location, quietness and privacy.

### **Data Collection Process**

Prior to the collection of data the researcher engaged in the process of phenomenological reduction, also known as bracketing (Laverty, 2003). This process involves setting aside personal biases and halting one's own judgment or presuppositions in order to see the phenomenon more clearly (Laverty, 2003). Klein and Wescott (1994) state that bracketing is a three step process, which includes exemplary intuition, imaginative variation, and synthesis. Exemplary intuition

involves the researcher choosing a phenomenon and holding it in his/her imagination (Klein & Scott, 1994). Exemplary intuition is when the researcher moves to generate examples of like experiences. The last step involves integration of the variations through synthesis (Klein & Scott, 1994). Lavery suggests that bracketing is awareness from the researcher in order to protect the study from being influenced by the assumptions and or biases of the researcher. Awareness of biases and pre-existing opinions of nursing education was explored by the researcher prior to data collection (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Once permission was granted by the institution's IRB and informed consent was signed, data was collected through self-report method. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data from the volunteers in a quiet setting. Polit and Beck (2012) suggest that the researcher allow the volunteer to pick a quiet, semi private setting, where there will be limited interruption and where data can be easily recorded without background noise. Participants were interviewed separately with only the researcher and participant present. The researcher then asked the participants a series of structured open ended questions, developed by the researcher, with subsequent questions only as needed for clarification (Appendix D). Each interview took about one hour to one hour and thirty minutes. Data was recorded using audio recording and the researcher also wrote down notes after each interview. The audiotapes were transcribed by the researcher and each recording was given a code so that the participant could not be identified by anyone else. Transcription of data is an important step to ensure that data is accurately interpreted. Polit and Beck (2012) urge researchers to reduce as much deliberate, accidental and unavoidable alterations of data when transcribing it. Transcription rigor was maintained by transcribing the interview verbatim. The recorded audio was then be transcribed by the researcher and all recorded audio was deleted after transcription was complete.

### **Coding and Data Analysis**

Data analysis involves collecting the information acquired through interviews to analyze and interpret them and identify themes and categories (Polit & Beck, 2012). According to Polit and Beck (2012) the purpose of analyzing data is to organize, structure and interpret it to elicit meaning from the data. The organization of data includes reducing data to smaller, more manageable, units of information that can be reviewed (Polit & Beck, 2012). Data was organized into category themes and then coded according to those categories.

According to Polit and Beck(2012) data analysis involves “putting segments together into meaningful conceptual patterns” (p. 562). According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) the purpose of content analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The data was analyzed independently by the researcher using a conventional approach. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) the conventional approach is recommended when there is limited literature and theory on the phenomenon. The researcher immerses in the data and allows novel insights to surface, also known as inductive category development (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The researcher read the data multiple times to reach immersion and a sense of the whole picture, then the researcher went back to read the data, word by word and began coding as recommended by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). The transcripts were analyzed for themes using constant comparative analysis, a process known as thematic analysis. Thematic analysis refers to “the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied or dramatized in the evolving meaning or imagery of the work” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 78). Themes are the structures that make up that experience ( Van Manen, 1990). Theme review was constant, starting with the first interview.

**Bias**

The use of a convenience sample has potential for bias due to the self-selection by the participants. A self-selected sample may not be representative of the target population. The method for data collection also makes it possible for researcher's subjectivity to take place. Researcher's subjectivity defined as misrepresented inferences to reflect the researcher's expectations or induced biased disclosures from the participants resulting from unintentional communication of the researcher's expectations (Polit & Beck, 2012).

To reduce personal bias the researcher engaged in reflexivity. "Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self and of analyzing and making note of personal values that could affect data collection and interpretation" (Polit & Beck, 2012, p. 179). The researcher practiced reflexivity by keeping personal journals throughout the study. Given that the researcher is a Hispanic nurse, she engaged in reflexivity in order to set aside her personal experience in nursing education. These limitations must be acknowledged when interpreting the results (Polit & Beck, 2012).

The participants "lack of candor" should be considered as a possible bias, given that consciously or subconsciously people alter their behavior or statement in order to make themselves look good (Polit & Beck, 2012).

**Data Quality Check**

Quality-enhancement methods were carried out throughout the study to enhance trustworthiness. Prior to the initiation of data collection the researcher engaged in reflexive journaling and continued to do so until the completion of the study. Careful documentation and a decision trail were also performed as recommended by Polit & Beck (2012). According to Polit

and Beck (2012) comprehensive field notes, audiotaping interviews, transcribing interviews verbatim, transcription rigor, data saturation are considered quality-enhancement strategies. The thesis committee aided with debriefing by asking the researcher about methods, meanings and interpretations. Disclosure of the researcher's credentials and background, documentation of reflexivity and disclosure of quality-enhancement strategies were all done in order to improve trustworthiness.

### **Summary**

Exploring the lived experience of Hispanic students in BSN programs can bring light to the factors that help them to persist in nursing education and encourage them to pursue nursing graduate degrees. Interventions can be planned based on the reports of Hispanic nursing students that successfully completed a BSN program. This study seeks to explore this phenomenon and report the findings to academia so institutional support may be guided based on the voices of Hispanic nursing students.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### Introduction

Hispanic nursing students described their lived nursing school experience as challenging. They cited fear of failure, difficulty balancing family commitment, financial worry, unhealthy behaviors and stressful experiences as the major challenges that shaped their experience in nursing school. Hispanic nursing students reported nursing peer relationships as their biggest source of support, followed by family and faculty. Participants recount compartmentalizing as a way of coping with the significant amount of work and commitment required by the nursing program. Hispanic nursing students also describe the reasons that assisted them to persist in nursing education and how their experience in a BSN program helped cultivate graduate studies aspirations.

### Research Question 1

How do Hispanic nurses describe their lived experience in nursing education?

Hispanic students described their experience in nursing education as challenging, for a variety of reasons.

“ It’s been ...it was challenging in many ways” (#3)

The main reasons cited were the fear of failure, difficulty balancing family commitments and worrying about finances. Participants also report the experience being challenging due to the unhealthy behaviors that they engaged in as well as the stress they endured while enrolled in the nursing program.

**Fearful of Failure.** Hispanic nursing students state one major reason why they found nursing school challenging was the academic rigor of the nursing program. Participants reported worrying about academic performance and meeting academic standards. Multiple factors added to the fear of failing. First, participants did not foresee the difficulty of nursing school. Some didn't know what to expect from the nursing program and others expected it to be hard but turned out to be harder than they had thought.

“I knew nothing about nursing. Even when I was taking pre-requisites like you don't really learn about nursing stuff. So that first year of nursing school hit me so hard.” (#11)

Students talk about this experience being unlike anything else they had experienced before. The students who had a previous undergraduate non-nursing degree say that the pursuit of a nursing degree was harder than their previous education experience. Participants concluded that their previous educational experience differed because it did not have a clinical aspect. Hispanic nursing students recount that they had never experienced didactic courses prior to the nursing program. Hispanic students said they found it particularly difficult to be graded on clinical performance in addition to classroom material.

“Lecture, you have to make sure get A's in the classes, but then you have clinical where you have to make care plans and perform skills. I don't think I had ever experienced that type of schooling up until that point. Basically clinical and lecture put together, that was a big change.” (#6)

Hispanic nursing students also worried about passing courses and earning good grades, as the nursing programs had specific requirements as to how many classes the students were allowed to repeat before they were asked to withdraw from the program. This set an academic

performance standard for students and made them worried about failing to meet those standards. The fear of failing sometimes surfaced when a peer or friend in the same cohort failed a class or did not advance in the program because they did not meet the standards.

“There is always that thing in the back of your mind...that you could fail. Every time you get a bad grade on the test, it’s kind of like oh well I am going to fail. And seeing your classmates fail...it’s like oh my gosh, it could happen to anyone.” (#8)

Hispanic nursing students had a previous history of high academic performance which also added pressure to perform well in the nursing program. The majority of the students expected to get A’s at the beginning of the nursing program because they were used to performing well academically so they had anxiety about getting A’s in the more difficult courses. Participants stated that letter grades in the nursing program held different values than other courses that they had taken before, for example a B held the value of an A, and they knew that but still had difficulty accepting lower grades.

“I remember one time I was having a lot of anxiety about getting straight A’s, I went to the floor and I was crying because I wasn’t getting an A.” (#9)

A few changed their goal of getting straight A’s to focusing on just meeting the academic standards set before them, while some participants talked about keeping high academic goals to ensure continuation in the program.

“A lot of my other classmates, they had the whole C’s get degrees attitude, as long as I just get by, as long as I just get by . And I mean there was a point where I did feel like that because it got so hard but I also felt like if you start having that attitude you might

not make that goal. If you reach higher then you have a better chance of staying in the passing rate.” (#11)

**Stressful and Unhealthy.** Participants mention that they have a busy schedule between classroom time, studying, pre-planning, and clinical. Nursing school occupied a majority of the student’s time so much that they report feeling emotionally and physically exhausted.

Participants reported increased stress, lack of sleep, and inadequate nutrition.

“Most of us were completely malnourished from eating crap and eating whatever is easy or not eating...umm drinking too much coffee, not sleeping enough, and it was very challenging time. By then end of it I was just emotionally, mentally and physically just drained.” (#4)

They also recount undergoing periods of stress associated with their nursing school experience. Some students felt like they were experiencing an emotionally stressful period and did not know how to cope with it.

“Half way through the semester I realized I was getting so unhappy and unhealthy.... Just the stress of school was too much. I just didn’t know how to handle it.” (#12)

**Balancing Family Commitments.** Hispanic BSN students found it challenging to balance commitment between their family and nursing school. Students had to find ways to balance family commitments with nursing school activities.

“And to be honest there were times where everyone felt overwhelmed because we would have these really big assignments. There are people who have work, children, families and we have to put time in there too.” (#5)

Hispanic nursing students reported feeling guilty because they were not able to spend time with their family due to school commitments. Hispanic nursing students also expressed negative sentiments when their family members were unable to understand their school commitment. Students talked about trying to balance school commitments and their time with their family. Students who were parents particularly had a hard time.

“it was really difficult because of the fact that I am a mother first , however I feel that I went to school probably the best time in my son’s life...umm where he is old enough to do things for himself and he is old enough to understand that work and homework and assignments are important. He is old enough to understand that I have other responsibilities besides him. And I hope that he never got the we message that school is more important than he is, only that it is important. That is the hardest part to balance.”

(#4)

**Worrying About Finances.** Finances were described as a challenge for Hispanic nursing students. While grants and loans afforded their tuition, participants cited that daily expenses such as gas and food were not covered by federal financial aid. Students who were completing the program as their second degree reported greater difficulty obtaining federal financial aid. Hispanic nursing students received federal financial aid, and the majority also had scholarships. All but one nursing student worked while in the BSN program. None of them worked full time, most worked per-diem and a few part time status.

“Financially it was stressful too, but I got lucky...I was lucky because I was living at home. So it was so nice but I still had to work because I still had to contribute to the house bills and family...so it wasn’t umm...I still had to work. I worked part time.” (#2)

The majority of the participants stated the need to work due to financial need. Most of Hispanic nursing students said they felt like they did not have a choice but to work. Some even chose a program that allowed them to work versus one that had a history of not allowing students to be employed while in the program.

“That is why I chose (blank school) over a state school because the wait list at the state schools is really long. I also heard that (blank school) didn’t want you to work at all, and I couldn’t do that. That was not an option for me. I had to work. I have been working the whole time while at (blank) University.” (#5)

Some did not work at the beginning of nursing school because they did not know what to expect and had heard that they should not work, either from other students or from the nursing program. But as the program advanced some of them realized that they could work and sought employment.

Some Hispanic students felt limited in their nursing school experience due to financial constraints. One student recounts wanting to go on a nursing student international experience but was unable to do so due to financial reasons. Another student also recounts feeling like she missed out on social and studying opportunities due to lack of money.

“Sometimes my (nursing) friends wanted to study at a café but then that involves gas, and that involves money, stuff that I don’t always have, because I grew up on a strict budget. So not only am I losing the whole studying with them, I’m also losing the social opportunity I guess, to even like get to know them.” (#9)

**Question Two**

What aids Hispanic BSN students to persist in a nursing education?

Hispanic BSN students say peers, family and faculty were sources of support while they completed the nursing program. They cite financial assistance essential to their academic success. Participants also recount internal motivators as being influential in their decision to persist in nursing education. Participants also say compartmentalizing helped them overcome the overbearing challenge of nursing school.

**Peer Support.** Because Hispanic students believed that the challenging experience of nursing school was a universal theme shared by all nursing students they viewed their fellow classmates as their biggest source of support. Hispanic students felt that they could rely on their peers for support because they understood what it was like to be a nursing student and they could relate to their experience. Hispanic nursing students did not feel as though anybody could understand the nursing school experience unless the person had been in a nursing program themselves.

“Emotionally, definitely they were the pillars there for me, again just because it’s not the same. People really don’t understand unless they have been through a nursing program, nobody will understand, nobody gets it. So we had each other.” (#10)

Hispanic nursing students say that they felt supported by their family members but they felt a greater source of support from their fellow peers because they could talk to other students about their experience and they shared a mutual understanding. Hispanic students cited that often they could not talk to their family members about nursing school experiences because often their family members had not attended college or had gone through nursing school.

“...I have the support from my family and my fiancé but they don’t really understand, because they are not going through it. So I think that’s where my peers...the fact that we are going through this together, their support means a lot. They really get it.” (#7)

Understanding the hardships of being a nursing student made Hispanic students feel like they were a part of a group and added cohesiveness with their peers. Sharing the experience with their peers made Hispanic students feel like they were not alone on their journey.

“But also I think every group, whether it’s like parents or newlyweds...every group has their certain something or somethings, the challenges or obstacles or milestones, whatever you want to call it ...they have that certain something that they all experience, that is very universal to that group. And so that just adds to the bonding and the feeling of belonging, I don’t think that I really felt like a nursing student until I walked through some of those more difficult courses.” (#4)

The relationships formed with fellow classmates were significant to the experience of Hispanic nursing students, so much so that some said they couldn’t have “made it” without their peers. Hispanic students considered their nursing peers as friends and even family and often Hispanic students used the term gift or luck to describe the friendship with their nursing classmates. Nursing peers are significantly important because they shared similar emotions and frustrations and could talk to one another about it. Students stated that when they were stressed and in need of moral support they turned to their peers for support.

“We both say we would not have made it without each other. We would always like dump feelings and emotions like being frustrated or being tired and being grumpy. So find yourself a friend that you can do that with because that will make a difference.” (#6)

Participants maintained that they also learned from their peers and relied on each other for moral, academic and networking support. They supported each other academically by reminding each other of assignments, splitting study guides, forming study groups and offering other helpful tips. Hispanic nursing students talk about recognizing the different strengths and learning styles among the group of nursing students and they view this as beneficial because they were able to learn different things from one another. Often students recall networking amongst each other. For example a student recalls finding out about a scholarship through her nursing peer and then being referred for a job by one of her fellow classmates.

“We know how to support one another. It hasn’t been so overwhelming; I know I will be able to get some feedback and guidance from one of my classmates. We can bounce things off each other.” (#4)

Hispanic nursing students recalled believing that their peers wanted them to succeed, that everyone wanted everyone to succeed. They shared a common goal, to succeed in the nursing program, and they also wanted others reach their goal.

“...and having reassurance from them, hearing their stories. Like...it’s not just me and my experience. We are all going through the same thing and we are all working towards a common goal and we want each other to succeed badly.” (#8)

**Family Support.** Hispanic nursing students say their family was morally supportive throughout their nursing school experience. Hispanic students state that they would receive words of encouragement from their family members and they were told by their family how proud they were of them for pursuing nursing studies. Most of the support that was cited was moral support and some financial support.

“My family has been really supportive, even financially. My parents are extremely proud of me, they just want me to succeed.” (#12)

Hispanic baccalaureate students felt supported when their family understood that they were unable to spend time with them or complete family responsibilities due to school commitment. Hispanic nursing students reported feeling supported by their family when they understood that school required much of their time as well as understanding that the student was unable to fulfill their previous family responsibilities thus allowing them additional time to focus on academic activities.

“My family also was supportive and understanding the times that I couldn’t be at family events or go to places. It was nice to know that they were very supportive of me that I had to take the time to study...that I had to take the time to focus on nursing. So that was very big for me.” (#2)

Hispanic students state that their family also valued education and encouraged them to pursue higher education. Many participants asserted that they were the first in the family to attend college and therefore did not have academic guidance from their family but had their moral support. Hispanic BSN students also state they felt supported by their family because they allowed them to pursue their career of choice.

“So I mean I’m the first one in my like entire like extended family and everything that went to college. So no one really gets it. So they have been supportive but they just or they haven’t been negative ...I don’t know how to explain that but they just don’t know how... they just don’t know what’s really going on, they just let me do my thing” (#1)

**Faculty Support.** Hispanic nursing students reported support from nursing faculty when it involved personal interactions. Students also cited moral support from instructors as very important in their success.

“I had another clinical instructor really related to a lot of the things that I had gone through personally and how she was successful, just the way she kind of encouraged me and talked to me. That was really ...it really helped me out. She gave me the encouragement and the little push that I needed to not feel like down on myself...or feel like I couldn't keep going. So she emotionally helped me succeed.” (#6)

Hispanic nursing students stated that they felt like they were supported by nursing faculty when instructors would share their personal story. Hearing faculty's stories made them feel more empowered and also reminded them that instructors too were once students just like them.

“She heard me out, she gave me an opportunity and then she shared her own experience. And it was a very personal encounter and that was huge to me.” (#4)

**Financial Assistance.** Having a part-time job also offered financial relief by allowing students to pay for minor expenses such as gas and food. Students reported having employers who understood their commitment to school and were flexible with their schedule and supportive by allowing the student take time off as needed. Flexibility was particularly helpful due to the demanding nursing school schedule. Students also felt supported by their employer when they asked for time away from work, especially in the hardest semesters. Some students had to take time off from work but were allowed to return to work after.

“Yes the owner of the facility, she is a nurse herself. She was definitely very supportive with our schedule and with everything. She was very flexible and that really helped and that is why I stayed in that job.” (#2)

Working part-time allowed the student to have enough time to study and succeed academically. A student states that having a part-time job allowed her to have time to focus on her studies and graduate with honors.

“I needed to have good grades and not only because of that but just to make sure that I was going to pass, I wanted to have the grades to pass. So I think that not having a full time job allowed me to achieve a magna cum laude graduation GPA and allowed me to focus on my schooling and be fully there.” (#10)

Having federal financial assistance and scholarships also relived financial worry because it allowed the student to work part time which in turn allowed him/her more time to dedicate to studies.

“Well before I started college I applied for FAFSA, thank God for FAFSA, because it would have been really hard.” (#2)

Family financial assistance also relieved financial stress and students found this very helpful. Family financial assistance was mainly provided by allowing the student to live at home free of rent. An additional source of family financial support came from childcare provided by family members.

“Even financially they have helped a lot too. I live at home, I don’t pay rent. Once I started school I stopped paying rent. I just handle my bills and that’s a lot of help. I don’t know how I would have made it without that.” (#1)

**Compartmentalizing.** Hispanic BSN students recall coping with overbearing stress of nursing school by compartmentalizing it into more manageable tasks. They mention focusing on a weekly, daily, assignment or class at a time. Thinking about everything that needed to be done seemed overwhelming so they changed their perspective and focused on breaking it down into more accomplishable tasks.

“For me I am one of those people who...when I put that sort of pressure on myself I become...it over consumes me...umm so I had to learn how to find a happy balance and what my happy balance was just looking at what I needed to succeed that week” (#4)

Compartmentalizing allowed them to focus on the goal at hand and also prioritize.

“I’m focusing on school right now so focus on school, I’m focusing on this right now, focus on that. So that helped me just compartmentalize everything to make sure that I gave my attention fully at the right place at the right time. If it wasn’t for that I probably wouldn’t have gotten through.” (#13)

Part of compartmentalizing included keeping a separate time for play and school. One student called it “being present.” Participants found it helpful to focus on spending time with family and not feeling guilty about using that time for school purposes. Hispanic BSN students suggested they coped with the stress of school by allowing themselves not to feel guilty when spending time with their family or not spending time with family because they needed to study.

“Give yourself permission to be present, if you are going to be present in a celebration don’t bring your school books, just be present and then when you are with your school books, that is where you need to be, don’t worry about the celebration where you want to be at, if you made a choice stick with your choice.” (#12)

**Rite of Passage into Nursing.** Although Hispanic BSN students affirmed their experience in nursing education as challenging they recognized it as an essential part of being a nursing student. Participants cite the challenges as a rite of passage to becoming a nursing student. Participants recognize the challenge as being a universal theme in nursing education. Students recall talking to other students from different nursing programs and finding out that they shared similar challenges. One student retells his conversation with a student from another nursing program.

“I was like wait...you guys are going through the same things we are going through. It’s just the challenges. It’s going through one challenge after another, one after another, after another. That seems to be universal. Like you are not a nursing student until you have struggled and know the challenge.” (#1)

Although Hispanic nursing students described their experience as a challenging, they were compelled to persist in nursing education because they associated the challenge with becoming a nurse. As they were challenged they reminded themselves why they had chosen to enter a nursing program.

“It’s hard work but one has to make sacrifices...I believe it takes time and it takes sacrifice and it’s just reminding yourself why you are doing it.” (#7)

The reasons why they chose nursing vary but the most common reasons declared were the financial stability, career versatility and the emotional fulfillment associated with a nursing career. Many regarded the nursing profession as highly respected and a profession which was important because it impacts lives. Hispanic students recall reminding themselves that their time in the nursing program was temporary and after the challenge they would be able to reap the rewards of their hard work.

“sometimes I wonder what I signed up for...we both kind of have to trust the process that this right now, this will pass and this is something part of something bigger that we can't even appreciate yet...you know... but trust me, when we get there we will be amazed that we walked through this together.” (#4)

They understood that the challenge was part of the process, and that this was a step towards their ultimate goal of becoming a nurse and all the rewards associated with this role. Knowing that there was an end to the experience offered them some consolation for enduring the challenges they faced in the nursing program.

**Academic and Career Goals.** Although Hispanic BSN students view nursing school as a temporary situation they view nursing as a profession that requires constant learning and use that to justify their desire to pursue graduate studies.

“Nurses should be life-long learners; we should always continue to better ourselves. We should always be about evidence-based practice. We should always maintain growth as a nurse. I think that there is a value in that. Pursuing a master's or doctorate ...furthering your education further solidifies what our profession is about. Growing as professionals, establishing ourselves because a lot of people think, oh you are just a nurse, but they

don't know how much responsibility we have and how much education goes into taking care of a patient. Going and pursuing that I think it further solidifies our goal of what we do and how we do it. I think for me there's where I see the value in pursuing that." (#7)

Hispanic students agree that nursing is a life learning career and also value learning through formal education. Participants also stated that they felt like they are able to make a bigger impact on people's lives with a higher degree.

"I am worth the investment to grow, so I can impact people's lives, I can make a bigger impact in people's lives with the knowledge base of an advanced degree than I can without. We all can touch people and touch their spirits, and encourage them just because we are humans but to be able to back that up with knowledge and education, I can expand that to a broader audience and that is worth it, that is worth all of this, all the tears and the missed hours of sleep." (#4)

### **Question Three**

How does the academic experience of Hispanic BSN students help cultivate graduate studies aspirations?

All Hispanic baccalaureate nursing students wanted to pursue nursing graduate studies but they see it years away and are unsure of what specialty they want to pursue. Some BSN students knew they wanted to pursue graduate studies but did not know what to specialize in because they did not know enough about the role of advanced practice nurses.

“I really want to advance my education, but I haven’t really selected a school. I have looked at some of the pre-requisites, I know most schools require one year of practice, I am not sure. I need to look more into that.” (#10)

Two of the common reasons disclosed for postponing graduate studies included being tired of school and the desire to start working. Another reason often cited by nursing students was the need to gain experience as a registered nurse before returning to graduate school.

“Right now I just feel like I have been in school for so long that I am just ready to just work. But I mean school is always there, it is something that I can pursue later in life if I want to.” (#7)

Students say that their nursing instructors encouraged them to pursue a nursing graduate studies and this theme seemed to be resonant in all the nursing programs as reported by Hispanic nursing students.

“CRNA is something I want to do and help me in those areas and once you get into nursing school you realize that the emphasis is on higher education... so all the reiterations of that have really been like ok...I really should keep pursuing something better.” (#1)

Although students stated that they got a clear message from their instructors to continue their formal education, instructors did not provide more information regarding how to get there.

“I mean the instructors promote it but they don’t give you a whole lot of information. I think just because we are still trying to get our bachelors. I think they don’t want to information overload us, so they just don’t give much information.” (#6)

Most of information that Hispanic BSN students gathered came from online sources and their own exploration about the subject, which they cited as minimal. Some students were aware that their instructors held advanced nursing degrees but were unsure of their roles or functions as advanced practice nurses. Overall Hispanic nursing students were encouraged by their instructors to pursue graduate studies.

### **Summary**

Hispanic BSN students describe their experience in nursing education as challenging due to the academic rigor, balancing commitments, financial constraints, stressful experiences and unhealthy behaviors. Despite challenges Hispanic nursing students embraced this difficulty of the experience because it made them feel like they belonged to the nursing profession and they saw it as an essential part of becoming a nurse. Hispanic nurses cited their peers and the main source of psychological and structural support, followed by family. Hispanic nursing students describe the enablers that allowed them to complete the BSN nursing program and how their experience help cultivate graduate studies aspirations. All of the participants wished to remain in nursing education and pursue nursing graduate studies but saw it as a future goal after they completed years of experience as a registered nurse.

## CHAPTER 5: DISSCUSSION

### Introduction

Twelve Hispanic students were interviewed for this study with the aim of hearing about their experience and choice to persist in nursing education, as well as how their experience contributed to graduate studies aspirations. Major findings of the study, limitations, generalizability, implications, and recommendations for future research will be discussed in this chapter.

### Major Findings by Research Question

**Experience.** This study adds to the existent body of qualitative research surrounding the experiences of Hispanic students in nursing education. Results from this project suggest that Hispanic nursing students found their experience in nursing education challenging because they tried to balance school, family commitments, as well as worried about finances and meeting academic standards. The study findings support Shelton's model of Nursing Student Retention. Financial resources, family educational level, family responsibilities, and employment were among the most evident background variables identified affecting Hispanic nursing students. According to Shelton (2012) background variables are identified as risk factors for college nursing students and students in general. Hispanic students reported family responsibilities, employment commitment, and financial stressors as part of their nursing education experience. But despite the presence of these risk factors, the students interviewed were successful and completed the baccalaureate nursing program, which speaks to the collective effects of the student's background, internal psychological process, and external supports that impact student retention. "The student's background determines risk for attrition, but at-risk students may still

persist and achieve academic success if they have the internal resources that drive them to persist and they make use of adequate external support” (Shelton, 2012, p. 5). The participants in the study displayed strong internal psychological processes, self- efficacy, goal commitment, academic and career goals, factors that Shelton states affect persistence and academic performance (2012). Hispanic nursing students cited having significant external functional and psychological support from their peers. They also cite their family as a major source of psychological support, as well as some functional support. Hispanic students reported that personal interactions and moral support from faculty as most helpful to their academic success.

Harpers Anti-Deficit framework helped frame the research questions and helped identify enablers of Hispanic student achievement in nursing education. Although the research questions were framed in a way to bring light to the enablers of Hispanic student achievement, because their experience was challenging they felt compelled to talk about the barriers and the difficulties experienced in nursing school. Despite the hardships the participants were able to provide rich data of the factors that helped them persist in nursing education and how their experience helped cultivate graduate study aspirations.

**Persisting in Nursing Education.** Although Hispanic nursing students described their experience as a challenging one, they were compelled to persist in nursing education because they associated the challenge with becoming a nurse; this is described by Shelton as career goal. The study revealed that goal commitment was the main reason why Hispanic BSN students chose to remain in nursing education. Their ultimate goal of joining a respectable profession that offers economic stability, job versatility, and emotional fulfillment compelled Hispanic nursing students to stay in the program despite all the challenges they faced. They understood that the challenge was an essential part of the process, and that this was a step towards their ultimate goal

of becoming a nurse and all the rewards associated with this role. Although they view nursing school as a temporary challenge, they view nursing as a life learning profession and use that to justify their desire to pursue graduate studies. Hispanic nursing students were sure about pursuing a graduate degree in nursing but did not have a clear professional plan at the time that the interview took place.

**Graduate Studies Aspirations.** Students say that their nursing instructors encouraged them to pursue a nursing graduate degree, a message that was resonant in all nursing programs. Nursing faculty is motivating Hispanic Nursing students to continue their education beyond the baccalaureate level; however the message is not clear on how to pursue that path. Participants did not know the role of advanced practice nurses and wanted more information about graduate school. Most of information obtained by Hispanic nursing students came from online sources and personal exploration about the subject, which they cited as minimal. Most students wanted to start working as a registered nurse and gain years of nursing experience before pursuing graduate studies.

### **Limitations**

This is a small study with limitations. A limitation of the study was the use of structured interview, which allowed for lived experiences to be captured from a limited number of Hispanic nurses. Structured interviews allow for the possibility that participants may not have remembered their experiences accurately. An additional limitation about self-report is that the researcher must presume that the participants have been honest and that their responses are truthful (Polit & Beck, 2012). A limitation about this type of collection method is the tendency for people to want to represent themselves as in a positive manner which can contest with the

truth (Polit & Beck, 2012). Because the researcher wanted to gather an accurate recollection from the participants, the researcher decided to interview students who were in their last semester of nursing school or recently graduated. Many of the Hispanic nursing students interviewed were preoccupied with graduation or finding employment and this could have affected the description of their experience in nursing education. Students could have been engaged in their current state that they may not have been as prone or ready to discuss the pursuit of a graduate degree, since most reported that to be a future goal. The use of one researcher to conduct data analysis and coding should also be considered as a limitation due to the lack of inter-rater reliability.

### **Generalizability**

It is not possible to generalize the findings due to the small sample size. Only students who had recently graduated or were close to graduating from a BSN program were interviewed. The experiences of those students who did not meet the academic standards of the nursing programs or who chose to withdraw from nursing education were not studied. An additional limitation that impacts generalizability was the setting. The use of Hispanic students from San Diego County allows study findings to be applied only to similar settings. The perceptions of the participants in this study may not reflect those of a more demographic sample.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Future Research**

**Strengthening Self-Efficacy.** The findings about the experience of Hispanics in nursing education have implications for policy makers, nursing organizations, university administrators, nursing faculty, future Hispanic students and their families. The high standards set forth by the nursing schools are seen as essential to the nursing school experience but also is associated with

fear of not passing. Some Hispanic nursing students expressed difficulty accepting lower academic grades; which could have a deteriorating effect on their self-efficacy. It is necessary for nursing faculty to recognize that although Hispanic nursing are meeting academic standards they may have decreased self-efficacy because of lower academic performance or because of their fear of failure. As Doutrich et al. (2005) found, Hispanic nursing students are less comfortable seeking help from nursing instructors, so faculty may have the greatest impact on retaining Hispanic students when instructors reach out to them first. Reaching out to Hispanic nursing students may help those who are struggling academically before they fail the program or choose to withdraw. Nursing faculty can also increase personal interactions with Hispanic nursing students, as this was reported to be helpful to their academic success.

**Preparing Students and Family.** Hispanic nursing students lacked information about the nursing program which created anxiety and misconceptions. Students' lack of information regarding the nursing program can prompt nursing programs to provide a more detailed nursing orientation. At orientation nursing faculty may be able to provide specific examples of what nursing students should expect while in the program. It would be beneficial to have nursing alumni talk to newly admitted nursing students about their experience in the program. This can help students set realistic expectations and in turn reduce their anxiety.

It may also be beneficial to include parents in the orientation process so they may know what nursing school entails and what that means for the student. One of the reasons why Hispanic families were unable to provide substantial functional support is because they do not have the educational experience and may not know what it takes to support the student through the nursing program. Through orientation parents can gain a better perspective of what the student is going through which can lead to increased communication and understanding. If

families of Hispanic nursing students knew how much is required of the student, maybe their understanding of the student's academic commitment would increase and students would feel a greater sense of support from family. Future studies could interview families of Hispanic nursing students and find out their perceptions of nursing school.

**Physical and Mental Health.** Busy schedules coupled with the stress can have a big impact on the health and psychological well-being of nursing students. According to Edwards, Burnard, Bennett, and Hebden (2010) students perceive nursing school as a stressful experience, as supported by the experience of Hispanic nursing students. Clark and Pelicci (2011) recommend that self-care and stress management courses be integrated into nursing curriculum in order to support nursing students to manage stress “and create life-balance in order to learn to care for others and create sustainable nursing practices” (p. 20). It is important for nursing students to be provided with psychological help through student health services or through peer counseling. Future studies could learn more about the effects of nursing school on the mental health of nursing students.

Hispanic nursing students reported coping with the challenge of completing nursing school by compartmentalizing. Students described focusing on daily tasks, particular classes or certain projects at a time. Compartmentalizing seemed to reduce the stress, allowed greater focus, and helped set realistic and accomplishable goals. This is also a technique that future Hispanic nursing students can use to balance school and family commitment. Future qualitative studies can look at the ways that Hispanic students cope with the stress of nursing school, compartmentalizing in particular.

Nursing student peer relationships are important for Hispanic nursing students because they provide what Shelton describes as functional and psychological support. Keeping students in a cohort can provide additional benefits to Hispanic nursing students. Consistent with these findings an additional study of ethnically diverse nursing students also cited peers as a major source of support (Amaro, Abriam-Yago & Yoder, 2006). It could be beneficial for students to belong to the same group of students throughout their nursing education because they can bond more and give and receive the functional and psychological support of their fellow classmates. This also speaks to the importance of peer counseling and peer mentorship.

**Financial Assistance.** Hispanics have lower family incomes and resources for college tuition than White students and find rising tuition costs constraining (Swail, Cabrera & Lee, 2004). As tuition costs continue to rise, the effect on the experience of Hispanic nursing students should be considered. Hispanic nursing students rely heavily on federal financial aid and as education costs rise they may be less likely to pursue higher education. Nursing schools as well as healthcare organizations should consider increasing student financial aid if they want to recruit and retain Hispanic nursing students.

As participants described in this study, lack of finances restricted their learning and social opportunities. Having federal financial assistance relieved financial worry and it also allowed the student to work part time which in turn allowed him/her more time to dedicate to studies. Without sufficient financial aid, Hispanic students may not be able to afford college attendance or need to work more hours and risk academic failure. These findings also have implications for future Hispanic nursing students, employers and nursing faculty. Hispanic nursing students stated the necessity to work while attending school, therefore nursing programs could be more receptive and supportive of their decision to be employed while attending nursing school.

The need to work might have also affected the participants' decision to post-pone graduate studies. The majority of students expressed an eagerness to start working as a registered nurse and gain some experience before applying for graduate school. Asking about their graduate school plans might be further explored with Hispanic nurses who have spent some years in practice and compare their answers to recently graduated nursing students. This area of research could be further explored by organizations that have a sincere commitment to increasing the number of Hispanic advanced practice nurses.

### **Summary**

All of the study participants graduated from an accredited BSN program. Overall these Hispanic nursing students possessed the necessary personal determination, academic competencies, and supportive family and peer networks for completing their nursing baccalaureate degree. They succeeded in the nursing program despite the fact that many had to divide their time among school, work and family responsibilities and at the expense of their health and well-being. Overall these students demonstrated their goal commitment and academic ability not only by completing their degrees but also adhering to the high academic standards set forth by nursing programs.

## Appendix A



California State University  
SAN MARCOS

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) California State University San Marcos  
Tel: 760-750-4029 irb@csusm.edu www.csusm.edu/irb

### Human Subjects Research Approval Form

IRB #: 2014-093

To: Patricia Hinchberger  
Aditaim Lopez

Project Title: Experiences of Hispanics in Nursing Education

This letter certifies that the above referenced project was reviewed and approved by the University's Institutional Review Board in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Federal Regulations on Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46), including its relevant subparts.

#### Continuing Review

This approval is valid through the expiration date shown below. If this research project will extend beyond that date, a continuing review application must be submitted at least 30 days before this expiration using the Continuing Review form available on the IRB website. ([www.csusm.edu/irb](http://www.csusm.edu/irb))

#### Modifications to Research Protocol

Changes to this protocol (procedures, populations, locations, personnel, etc.) must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation using the Minor Modification Form available on the IRB website.

#### Unanticipated Outcomes/Events

The CSU San Marcos IRB must be notified immediately of any injuries or adverse conditions.

*Approved Information Sheet or Consent Form(s) are attached. Only approved consent forms may be used to obtain participant consent.*

Approval Date: 8/7/2014

Expiration Date: 8/6/2015

Susan Thompson  
IRB Chair

#### The California State University

Bakersfield • Channel Islands • Chico • Dominguez Hills • East Bay • Fresno • Fullerton • Humboldt • Long Beach • Los Angeles • Maritime Academy • Monterey Bay  
• Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • San Bernardino • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus

## Appendix B



California State University  
SAN MARCOS

### **Consent Form: Experiences of Hispanics in Nursing Education**

**Invitation:** You are being invited to participate in this research study. The information provided in this form is to help you decide whether you want to participate or not. If you have any questions, you may ask them at any time.

**Why you are being asked in this research study:** You are being asked to be in this study because you identify yourself as Hispanic and have an experience in a baccalaureate nursing program in the United States.

**What is the reason for doing this research study?** To learn more about the experiences of Hispanics in nursing education and to gain a better understanding of the things that affect their decision to pursue a graduate degree in nursing.

#### **What will happen during this study?**

1. You will be asked a series of questions from a prepared questionnaire during an interview with the researcher.
2. No identifying information will be collected as part of the interview.
3. The researcher will take notes during the interview.
4. The interview will be tape-recorded.
5. The audio recordings will be transcribed (transferred from audio to written form).
6. The audio recordings will be destroyed after they are transcribed.
7. The transcriptions will then be analyzed.
8. The transcriptions will be destroyed at the end of the study.
9. The results will be shared with you, as well as with the department of nursing at CSUSM. All material from the study will be kept confidential. However, this information may be used in nursing publications or presentations.

#### **What are the possible risks of being in the study?**

- Loss of time (the interview should take anything between 1-2 hours)
- Physical boredom

#### **What are the possible benefits of being in the study?**

- You will be contributing to the body of knowledge regarding Hispanic nursing students.
- The results from the study will be shared with you.
- You will receive a \$15 gift card for your participation in the study (at least one hour of interviewing).

**What are the possible benefits to others?** The information gathered from this study will help others gain a better understanding of the experiences and perceptions of Hispanics in nursing education. Therefore it can help nursing schools, educators and Hispanics pursuing or planning to pursue a nursing education.



California State University  
SAN MARCOS

**What are the alternatives to participating in this study?** You may choose not to participate in this study and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

**What will happen if you decide not to participate in this research study or decide to stop participation once you start?** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to not be in the study or withdraw at any point of the study. Your decision to not participate or withdraw will not affect your relationship with the researcher and you will be continued to be treated in the usual and customary fashion.

**How will information about you be protected?** Signed informed consent will be kept in a locked drawer only available to the researcher. No identifying information will be linked to audiotapes, notes or transcribed material. A numerical code (instead of a name) will be assigned to all materials. Fake names will be used in the written report instead of your real name.

**What are your rights as a research participant?** Your rights are explained in this form but if you have any questions you may contact the researcher: Aditaim Lopez at (760) 845-0363 or via email at [lopez298@cougars.csusm.edu](mailto:lopez298@cougars.csusm.edu)

If you need to you may also contact the CSUSM School of Nursing at (760) 750-7550 or my nursing faculty advisor, Dr. Hinchberger at [phinchbe@csusm.edu](mailto:phinchbe@csusm.edu)

**How long do I have to make my decision to participate in the study?** You have up to one week to consider your participation in this study.

**Documentation of informed consent:** By signing this consent form you agree that 1) you are freely choosing to participate in this study 2) you have read and understood this consent form 3) you had the consent form explained to you 4) You had all my questions were answered 5) you will be given a copy of the consent form.

X

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Participant

Date:

X

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Researcher

Date:

## Appendix C

### Are you or were you a Hispanic BSN student?

If so you are invited to participate in a research study to better understand the educational experiences of Hispanic nursing students.

#### What does it involve?

- Participation in an interview that lasts approximately 1-2 hours.
- Receive a \$15 Target gift card

**You may be eligible if:** you are currently in your last semester of a BSN program or have graduated in the last three years.

**Will your identity be protected?** Yes, if you decide to participate your identity will remain confidential.

**Who is conducting this study?** Aditaim Lopez a Cal State San Marcos graduate nursing student is conducting one-to-one interviews as part of her master's studies.

#### Why is this study being done?

To gain a better understanding of the academic nursing experience of Hispanics and experiences that affect their decision to pursue a graduate nursing degree.



**You will receive a \$15 Target gift card upon completion of the interview**

**To participate:** contact Adi Lopez at (760) 845-0363 or [aditaimlopez@yahoo.com](mailto:aditaimlopez@yahoo.com) to determine eligibility and review the consent document.

Aditaim Lopez' advisor, Patricia Dr. Hinchberger can be contacted at (760) 750-7550 or at [phinchbe@csusm.edu](mailto:phinchbe@csusm.edu) with further comments or questions.

Start Date: 8/7/14  
Expiration date: 8/6/15

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

#### A. Experience

1. Tell me about your experience in nursing school?
2. How would you describe your experience in nursing school?

#### B. Student background

1. Gender: How did being a female/male help you in nursing school?
2. How did previous coursework help you throughout nursing school?
3. How did your high school GPA help you succeed in nursing school?
4. How did your college GPA help you succeed nursing school?
5. How did your financial resources help you stay in the nursing program?
6. Family educational level: How much schooling did your mother complete? How much schooling did your father complete? How did your parents educational level help you complete nursing school?
7. Family Responsibilities: Did you have family responsibilities while attending nursing school?
8. Marital Status: How did being single/married help you while you were in the nursing program?
9. Employment: How did your job help you through the nursing program?

#### C. Internal Psychological Process

1. Goals: Did you have any goals while you were in the nursing program and what were they?
2. Goal commitment: Did that change as you continued to the nursing program? How committed were you to your goal? Tell me about a time when your goal was challenged? And how did you manage to persist?

3. Ability: What abilities or skills did you possess that helped you throughout nursing school?
4. Academic self-efficacy: While in the program did you feel like you could succeed academically? How do you think this allowed you to stay in the program?

D. External supports

1. Sources

- a. Family: How did you family encourage you to continue nursing school? How did they show they cared about your academic success?  
What kind of support did they display?
- b. Peers: How did your peers encourage you to continue nursing school? What type of help did you receive from them?
- c. Employers: How did your employers encourage you to continue nursing school?
- d. Faculty: How did your nursing school instructors encourage you to continue nursing school?
- e. Academic: What academic services did you find helpful while you were in nursing school?

E. Graduate School Enrollment

- a. How did your experience in the BSN program help encourage you to pursue nursing graduate studies?

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