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THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE DISSERTATION WRITING PROCESS: DO RELATIONSHIPS MATTER?

By

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ABSTRACT

THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE DISSERTATION WRITING PROCESS: DO RELATIONSHIPS MATTER?

By

Michelle Pride

The dissertation is the one of the final degree requirements for the Ph.D. in counseling psychology. The purpose of this study was to explore women student's lived experiences of the dissertation writing process. This qualitative, exploratory study utilized semi-structured interviews with eight female doctoral students, all enrolled in different Counseling Psychology doctoral programs. Several areas of literature were used to form the conceptual framework for this study, persistence, women's issues and development and self-in-relation theory.

The following research questions were addressed: a) What are student's perceptions of their journeys through the dissertation writing process, b) What are student's perceptions of the relationships (or lack of relationships) they have with faculty, advisors, and mentors? c) What are the implications of students' experiences on their choice of future career paths?

Some of the major themes that evolved out of the analysis of the interviews were: a) the importance of both connections and disconnections to the dissertation process, b) how connections can be enhanced by working through disconnections, c) the need for awareness and evaluation of power dynamics in mentoring and advising relationships, and d) the contribution of resiliency to the process. The women identified a number of facilitating factors along their journeys: a) mutual relationships with advisors, mentors, and committee members, b) relationships with peers, c) built in structure or scaffolding

within the program, and d) personal resiliency. They also addressed barriers to their journeys, including difficulty with advisors and committee members, isolation from their programs, and finding appropriate ways to structure their journeys through the writing process.

These findings give rise to several implications or recommendations for training in counseling psychology. Since connections, or mutual relationships, were identified as facilitating factors and disconnections, or problematic/abusive relationships, were noted as barriers, several of the implications addressed ways Counseling Psychology programs can increase and maintain connection and involvement throughout the dissertation journey.

PROLOGUE

The purpose of this dissertation was to increase understanding of the meaning female graduate students place on the structures and processes of their research-training experiences, specifically the experience of writing their dissertation. The project was qualitative in design and data were gathered through interviews with female graduate students in counseling psychology.

In qualitative research, "the researcher is the research instrument" (Williams, 1997). The biases, assumptions, values, personal history, and identity of the investigator are a meaningful part of the context of the interviews. These factors have an impact on what the investigator chooses to explore and how the dynamic of the discussion evolves between the investigator and the participants. The biases and assumptions also impact what factors or ideas the investigator attends to during the interview, as well as during the process of data analysis (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As such, it has been recommended that the researcher outline her/his qualifications, motivations for exploring this topic, and her/his relationship with the participants (Patton, 1990).

The following sections of the prologue address several content areas. In the first section, I tell my own story. I wrote this initially to facilitate my process of identifying my biases, assumptions, and values about the dissertation process and my own journey before I entered into the process of interviewing the participants. This was an important part of my process as a qualitative researcher because identifying these biases and assumptions allowed me the capacity to monitor them. In the second section, I identify

my biases and assumptions and address my process of monitoring them. In the last section, I address developmental changes in my perception of my own journey.

A Measure of Autobiography

"Education in feminism must include a measure of autobiography, if only to convince younger women that growing up as a woman, while it will never be easy, is possible" (Genovese, 1991, p. 246).

The parallel process of the development of this project with my own development as a researcher is readily apparent. For this reason, I believe the discussion would not be complete without first situating it within a meaningful context. I am a doctoral candidate at Michigan State University and I am currently in the process of writing my dissertation. As I write this, I am all but dissertation (ABD), as I have passed my comprehensive exams, and completed all my coursework and internship. Although it was easy for me to state my status and achievements, explaining how my journey through the dissertation process has evolved and the impact this journey has had on the direction and dynamic of this project is more difficult.

My journey through the dissertation process has not been easy, however as the previous quote suggested, it has been possible. As I thought back on my experiences, I became aware of the significance of maintaining balance and perspective. On the one hand, I am very thankful to the people who have supported and encouraged me and I am interested and invested in my project. On the other hand, I have experienced anger, guilt, resentment, and frustration related to the process of completing my dissertation. My struggle was how to acknowledge and honor these emotions without allowing them to

overpower and undermine the final product. Because my process and this product were so inextricably related, it felt important to address these emotions.

In retrospect, I entered my Ph.D. program naive to the realities of higher education. During my training in my master's program, I completed the obligatory research classes, wrote a thesis, and worked as a research assistant for my advisor. When I applied to Ph.D. programs and they asked me about my research interests, I enthusiastically told them about my current projects and my future interests. The truth, however, was that I was not interested in doing research and I had even abandoned the idea of becoming an academic because the thought of being obligated to do research distressed me. However, I believed that my acceptance to a doctoral program in counseling psychology came with the assurance of support and guidance from faculty. In my naivety, I thought that my assigned advisor would ipso facto be my mentor and would help me get through my research requirements. My misguided belief that someone was going to reach out to me and ask me to be their mentee left me disappointed when it did not happen. I felt ill prepared to negotiate the subtle politics of higher education by myself and I was intimidated by the prospect of asking for help. Although I was successfully completing the necessary academic requirements in terms of coursework, the research requirements ominously loomed in front of me, blocking my progress. As I struggled with my feelings of adequacy and competency, I drifted further away from my program and my advisor. It became increasingly clear that my desire to avoid research was incompatible with my goal of completing my doctorate. During this time, I wrote a paper for a career class that explored factors that contribute to women's career development. I was, in part, motivated to write this paper in an attempt to make sense of

my own process and development. The feedback I received on this paper led to the development of my research apprenticeship project, in which I investigated graduate students' perceptions of their research-training environment. Even though this experience spurred me on and increased my sense of efficacy, I still felt alone and overwhelmed at the prospect of writing a dissertation. Many of the students who participated in my apprenticeship project cited relationships or the lack of relationships with mentors, advisors, committee members, and others as significant factors in their development as researchers (Pride, 2002). I began to view the ideal research process as a dynamic relational exchange of ideas within a community of scholars. This paradigmatic shift in my view of research as isolating and individual to research as relational became the driving force behind this current project.

As I began my initial work on my dissertation, my program went through an incredible transition. Nearly all the full time faculty, including my advisor and dissertation chair, took positions at other universities, leaving my program and my progress in a precarious position. This experience fundamentally impacted the direction of my research because it brought into relief my own relational needs with respect to research experiences. My apprenticeship project had highlighted the importance of relationships on development as a researcher, which I understood at an intuitive level. I had not internalized how these relational experiences specifically impacted me, as a researcher, though, until I experienced the loss of significant relationships with my advisor and other faculty members (Pride, 2002). Further understanding how connections and relationships impact research development became the guiding principle for my research.

Assumptions and Biases

The importance and centrality of relationships, both good and bad, led me to develop a qualitative project that would directly acknowledge the relationship between the researcher and the subject. My motivation for telling my story was to own my experiences and recognize their impact on my research. I recognize that my description of my process and experiences is bound by my subjectivity. The cumulative effects of my history, socialization, and experience affect my perception of the original experiences as well as what I chose to disclose and what I edited from the story. This document is but one construction of my journey through the dissertation process. However, the process of reflecting on my journey helped me to identify assumptions I had about the dissertation process. The assumptions I identified are: (a) the dissertation process is isolating and lonely, (b) the process is difficult and frustrating, (c) completing the dissertation has more to do with individual persistence than with institutional structures that facilitate the process, (d) completing the dissertation is not necessarily about creating a meaningful research project as much as it is about just completing the research, and (e) the research-training environment can be toxic to some individuals.

In addition to the assumptions that I have identified, I also firmly believe that everyone's dissertation experience is unique. My goal was not to let my own experience overwhelm this project, but to allow each individual to give voice to their unique experience and to allow that to emerge out of the interviews to create the larger context of this project. One way I sought to accomplish this was to identify and outline my experiences and biases prior to beginning this study. In addition, I regularly revisited these ideas and reflected on them through journaling and in discussions with colleagues.

By externally checking my own biases and experiences, I was able to focus on truly understanding and documenting the subjective experience of each participant.

A Changing Perspective

At the end of each interview, I asked every woman who participated in this project four questions:

- If your dissertation got dressed, what would it wear?
- If your dissertation could speak, what would it say?
- What does your dissertation remind you of?
- What is special about your dissertation?

The questions began as a way to encourage the women to think about their projects differently and add levity to the process; however, as the interviews progressed, I recognized them as having a substantive contribution to the overall direction of this project. As such, I thought I would end by taking the time to answer the questions myself in order to provide another window into my inner experience of writing a dissertation. The first part of this prologue was written before I completed the process of writing my dissertation. These questions, however, were answered as I neared the end of this project and they provide a different, more confident, less cynical perspective on my experience.

- My dissertation would wear jeans, a T-shirt, and stacked black leather boots. My dissertation is comfortable, not glamorous or showy, with a little bit of attitude.
- My dissertation would say "YES!!!"
- My dissertation reminds me of my cohort of choice, Abby and Camille. My journey through the dissertation process has forever bonded me to these two

incredible and inspiring women. They have provided me with shoulders to cry on when I have been frustrated and overwhelmed, swift kicks to the butt when I have been wallowing too long in my own self pity, and the strength and encouragement to keep going when I was sure that I had reached my limit.

- My dissertation is special because it gives voice to the stories of the women who agreed to participate in my research. My dissertation is special because it opened my eyes to the many possibilities that exist in the way people experience their journey through the dissertation process and it challenged many of my initial assumptions. My dissertation is special because I have grown and changed as a result of my journey through the dissertation process. Although the process may not have gone as smoothly as I would have liked and I was overwhelmed much of the time, I am thankful and proud to have completed the project. My dissertation is special because it allowed me to connect with people about their experiences writing their dissertation, good and bad, tragic and celebratory (many of those stories are not presented in this document because they did not meet the inclusion criteria for participating). I will be forever thankful to everyone who told me their story and to my family and friends for supporting me through this process.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of female doctoral students in Counseling Psychology as they progressed through the dissertation writing process. The following sections address the importance of giving voice to these women's experiences both within the context of a national dialogue on graduate student retention, as well as within the field of counseling psychology. This chapter also sets the context for examining trends in research training and training models in Counseling Psychology and lays out the rationale for utilizing relational theory to examine these issues.

A National Conversation

There is a national conversation evolving among faculty members, administration and others concerned with the state of higher education regarding trends in the educational environment. Changes in higher education from "...downsizing and underfunding to increased corporatization and pervasive labor exploitation, including wholesale reliance on part-time labor and relative declines in graduate student and faculty compensation" (Lovitts & Nelson, 2000, p. 44) have implications for the experiences graduate students are having in their pursuit of an advanced degree. Research during the past several decades indicates that the national attrition rate from Ph.D. programs is about 50%, and women are leaving in higher numbers than men (Lovitts & Nelson, 2000). Although it would be easy to blame attrition rates on the lack of talent or ability on the part of the students who have left, the true explanation may be much more complex

(Lovitts, 1996; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000). Research indicates that students who leave graduate programs and students who complete their degrees are equally qualified (Lovitts, 1996; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000).

There is a positive relationship between the successful completion of the Ph.D. requirements and integration into the academic community of the department (Lovitts & Nelson, 2000). However, oftentimes students are "expected to perform as mature, independent (though fledgling) scholars in an authoritarian social structure where they are in a subordinate and dependent position socially, intellectually, and financially" (Lovitts, 1996, p. 14). Because of this expectation of independence and competence, students may not feel they can ask for help or give voice to issues that are impacting their decisions to leave or stay.

Students learn that "the 'successful' student is 'happy' and compliant" (Lovitts & Nelson, 2000, p.49). However, Nyquist and her colleagues (Nyquist, et al., 1999) found that many students indicate that they are receiving mixed messages from various authority figures within the academy as to what constitutes success. These students report experiencing a "secret model" of graduate training that dictates implicit rules and norms that may contradict the explicit messages they are receiving (Nyquist, et al., 1999). It may be normal to experience some confusion and conflict in the initial stages of professional development in graduate programs. However, these students reported negotiating confusing and ambiguous experiences without the benefit of safety nets, assistance, or guidance from others (Nyquist, et al., 1999). What becomes clear in this confusion is that the academy needs to take a critical look at what is occurring in graduate programs and not allow students' silences to reinforce the belief that nothing is wrong

with the system, only with the students who are leaving the system. Lovitts and Nelson admonish departments to "look to their own practices for answers and solutions to the issue of student attrition" (2000, p. 50)."

Trends in Counseling Psychology

It is time for counseling psychology to take this advice and begin to look inward to increase its understanding of how trends in graduate education are specifically affecting the discipline. A current issue in the field is gaining a clearer understanding of factors that contribute to patterns of research productivity among graduates in counseling psychology. There are several larger socio/political/cultural trends that impact this issue that will be explored in the following pages.

The relationship between the research-training environment (RTE) and the development of students' research interests and competencies is a complex and dynamic issue. The RTE has been conceptualized as "all those forces in graduate training programs (and, more broadly, the departments and universities within which the programs are situated) that reflect attitudes toward research and science" (Gelso, 1993, p. 470). Although research training has always been an important part of training in counseling psychology, it is only in the past 20 years that this issue has become a topic of theory and research (Gelso & Lent, 2000). Much of the debate today centers not on whether the RTE has an impact on the development of students' research interests and competencies, but how or through what mechanisms the RTE influences students' development as researchers. This concern with training has been bolstered by data indicating that students in counseling psychology are ambivalent about the role of

research in their future careers and produce little, if any, research after graduation (Gelso, 1979; Gelso, et al., 1988). Additionally, most students indicate they are more interested in a career in practice than in science (Kahn & Scott, 1997). It may not be realistic, or even worthwhile, to produce students who are all interested in research or to have all students demonstrate the idealized 50/50 split between research and practice (Gelso & Lent, 2000). This does suggest, however, the necessity for counseling psychology to examine its training goals and processes. Counseling psychology has espoused a commitment to the scientist-practitioner training model since its inception; however, there has been little agreement or clarity regarding the meaning of either science or practice or the way these two should be integrated in training or practice (Gelso & Lent, 2000).

There is nothing to indicate that research productivity in counseling psychology is low compared to other disciplines (Gelso & Lent, 2000). A number of studies, though, have been conducted examining ways to increase student interest in research and exploring factors related to research productivity (see Gelso & Lent, 2000 for a review). The underlying belief motivating many of these studies of the research-training environment is that the production of quality, scientific research is critical to the viability of the profession of counseling psychology (Gelso & Lent, 2000; Galassi, 1989; Magoon & Holland, 1984). However, since the majority of counseling psychologists produce no research after graduation, it seems apparent that not everyone shares this belief. A number of authors have made the observation that practitioners do not perceive research as having value to them or their practice (Goldman, 1976, 1977, 1982; Heppner & Anderson, 1985; Hill, 1982; Ross, 1981). Beyond not being interested in conducting

research, these professionals are not even interested in consuming research, or using science to inform their practice. Rather, they are more apt to rely on personal experiences or guidance from colleagues and teachers (Barlow, Hayes, & Nelson, 1984; Kanfer, 1990). This latter finding has implications for the importance of the relationship in training. It appears that professionals in clinical practice are more likely to consult with individuals they have relationships with in order to further their understanding of a particular client issue, rather than consult a scientific journal for that information. This suggests that practitioners value learning through relationships more than learning in isolation.

Scientist Practitioner or Science Versus Practice?

Although graduate training programs may espouse a scientist-practitioner model (or some combination of science and practice), the model for post-graduate activity seems to be scientist or practitioner. Students may receive mentoring for both their clinical and research skills; however, this mentoring does not often come from the same person. When asked, students indicated that they felt a true scientist-practitioner model or mentor, someone who actively engaged in both scientist and practitioner activities, was rare (Aspenson, et al., 1993). This lack of models or mentors who exemplify a combination of these two important roles may contribute to students believing there is no way to combine the roles, therefore, they must choose one or the other.

It is important to understand why so few counseling psychology graduates are engaging in research given the importance of research to the growth and development of the profession. Patton (2000, p. 2) stated, "The role of graduate education is critical

because it forms the intellectual and ideological core that defines who we see ourselves to be...." If this is true, then counseling psychology graduate students are likely influenced to become scientists or practitioners during their training. The connection between research productivity and the research training environment has been the topic of a number of studies (Brown, Lent, Ryan, & McPartland, 1996; Gelso, Mallinckrodt, & Judge, 1996; Kahn & Scott, 1997; Phillips & Russell, 1994). These studies have explored many of the ingredients for an effective research training environment outlined by Gelso (1979). Gelso (1979) proposed that within the research training environment: (a) the faculty itself should model appropriate scientific behavior, (b) research activity among students should be positively reinforced, (c) anxiety should be reduced and motivation enhanced through early and minimally threatening research involvement, (d) the artificial tying of research and statistics needs to be untied, (e) students need to be taught to look inward for research questions and ideas, (f) science needs to be construed as a partly social experience, as well as an isolated intellectual one, (g) students need to be taught that all experiments are flawed and limited, (h) training needs to focus on the varied investigative styles, (i) students need to be shown how science and clinical experience can be wedded, and (j) training needs to focus on how research gets done in an agency. Although this list of factors is quite extensive, nowhere does it address the significance of relationships in the training environment to training outcomes.

Gelso (1979) suggests training in research is more complicated than training in practice and requires students to master a dramatically different skill set. Not only are the skills different, they may be contradictory. Training in science is presented as a highly logical, unambiguous endeavor, where skepticism and emotional control are necessary

and valued, whereas counselors need access to both intellectual and emotional resources in therapy. Additionally, counselors must tolerate ambiguity in the therapeutic process, while at the same time, demonstrating confidence in their theory, skill, and techniques (Gelso, 1979; Strupp, 1981).

The production of research is presented as an individual endeavor that is necessarily isolating. Counseling, on the other hand, provides for "a kind of constant intimacy" (Gelso, 1979, p. 27). Relational factors, including affiliation and nurturance, are significant parts of the counseling process. The importance of the relationship to the therapeutic process has been extensively studied (see Hill & Williams, 2000 for a review). Ultimately, the factor that predicts success in counseling is not theoretical orientation or technique, but the relationship or working alliance between the client and the therapist. Bordin (1979) identified three elements of the working alliance that facilitate the therapeutic process: (a) agreement on goals, (b) agreement on tasks to achieve goals, and (c) development of emotional bonds between the therapist and client. As such, it is important for those individuals who engage in counseling to value the relationship and understand its significance in the therapeutic process.

There are obstacles to applying directly this understanding of the role of relationships in therapy to the RTE. Central to this are systems of tenure and promotion that "reward faculty exclusively for funded research and publications typically at the expense of teaching and mentoring" (Johnson, 2002, p. 90). This reward system within the academy serves to perpetuate the stereotype of the lone researcher by creating an environment where relationships are not legitimized.

Our understanding of research training can be enhanced by furthering our understanding of the role of relationships in research training, i.e., relationships with advisors, committee members, mentors or other significant relationships. The RTE is the primary socialization agent for future professionals within the field of psychology and intellectual and social integration into this environment is important for developing the skills necessary to complete the doctoral program (Tinto, 1993). Although peers are important socializing agents, the faculty advisor relationship has a more significant impact on graduate students' academic development and persistence (Golde, 2000). The literature in Counseling Psychology acknowledges the importance of the advisory and mentoring relationship (Betz, 1997; Gelso, 1979; 1993; 1997; Hill, 1997); however, there have been few studies investigating these relationships (Gelso & Lent, 2000). Despite this gap in our knowledge, the data that exist suggest the importance of both advising and mentoring relationships (Gelso & Lent, 2000). Aspenson and his colleagues (1993) found that relationships with faculty and experiences with role models had a significant impact on students' perceptions of the RTE.

Self- in-Relation Theory

The foundation of self-in-relation theory requires a paradigmatic shift in the way development is conceptualized. Self-in-relation theory provides a framework for this exploration of students' perceptions of research training. This theory is an approach to understanding women's development that is specifically grounded in and gives voice to women's experiences. The theory has evolved over the past 30 years out of the work of a group of feminist researchers at the Stone Center for Developmental Studies and Service at Wellesley College. The researchers have contributed to the development of

this theory included Jean Baker Miller, Judith Jordan, Alexandra Kaplan, Irene Stiver, and Janet Surrey. The theory suggests that understanding and description of women's lives and development have traditionally been forced into "categories that originated in the attempt by men to describe all life (Miller, 1986, p.xviii)." These traditional models have not only overlooked the strengths women possess, but they have "consistently mislabeled women as defective" and pathologized their ways of learning, communicating, and developing (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991, p. v). The theory initially evolved out of the researchers exploration of issues related to the clinical diagnosis and treatment of women (Jordan, et al., 1991). Rather than emphasizing independence and individuation as markers of healthy development, this theory is based on the assumption that all growth and development occurs in connection to or in a relationship with another person (Miller, 1991). Self-in-relation theory diverges from other contemporary theories of development in its emphasis on connection rather than separation as the significant pathway to development (Surrey, 1991). My vision of self-in-relation theory, as it relates to the current study, is highlighted in Figure 1.

Although the theory was designed to explore growth and development specifically as it relates to the therapeutic or clinical treatment of women, I believe this lens is appropriate for exploring women's growth and development at students and as researchers. This figure visually depicts the similarity and overlap in the processes of therapy and learning as conceptualized by self-in-relation theory. Further, it highlights the centrality of relationships in both processes. The therapeutic alliance or relationship is the vehicle through which change occurs in therapy. Clients learn and grow as a result of having positive and successful exchanges within the therapeutic environment. This

process is mirrored in the academic environment where students learn and develop within their relationships with academic faculty. I am interested in looking more specifically at how these relationships impact the way women perceive their experiences during the dissertation writing process. I believe this model has enormous potential for increasing understanding regarding the interrelatedness of the development of research-practitioner activities and identities particularly because I am looking at students in counseling psychology.

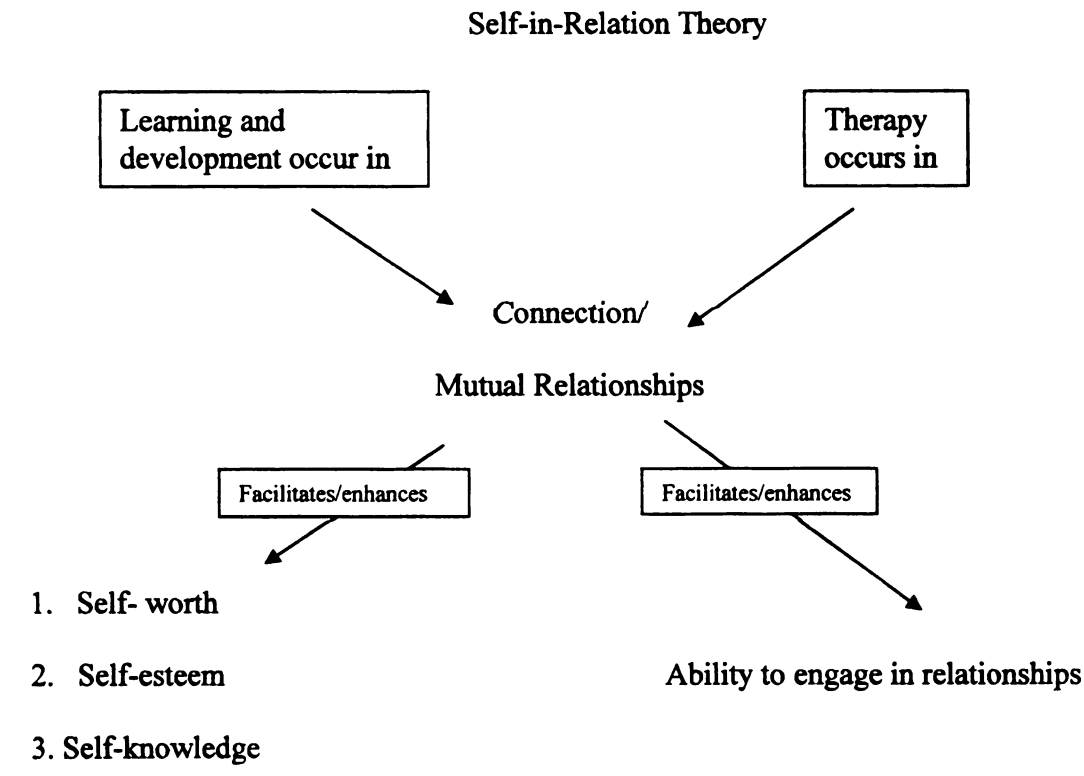

Figure 1. Model of Self-in-Relation theory.

The review of literature that follows in the next chapter contains literature relevant to development of psychology as a field, counseling psychology as a sub-field, and to individual development in order to provide a foundation for the present inquiry. It also explores the political, historical, and social context of research training in counseling psychology. The review will examine the assumption that the production of scientific research is critical to the development of the field of counseling psychology and, consequently, the impact of this assumption on the models utilized to train graduate students in this field. The guiding questions are: (a) how has the emphasis on the production of scientific research limited our conceptualization of graduate training, research productivity, and the integration of science and practice? (b) how has our investigation of these issues been biased by the historical milieu regarding training? and (c) what role do relationships play in enhancing or deterring the research training process?

This was an exploratory study aimed at gaining a more holistic understanding of female graduate students' perceptions of their research training and the role of relationships on the dissertation writing process. A qualitative methodology of in-depth interviewing was utilized for the present inquiry. The naturalistic procedures of in-depth interviewing allowed for the exploration of the subjective experiences of graduate students in the RTE and gave access to richer perspectives than could have been uncovered with survey methodology. The following research questions were addressed:

- What are students' perceptions of their journeys through the dissertation writing process?

- What are students' perceptions of the relationships (or lack of relationships) they have with faculty, advisors, and mentors?
- What are the implications of students' experiences writing their dissertations on their choice of future career paths?

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Introduction

The review of literature that follows will begin by exploring the shift in gender ratios impacting not only the field of psychology, but counseling psychology, more specifically. Over the past 30 years, there has been an increase in participation by women in the field of psychology. This is not to suggest that gender is a causal, or even determining, factor in research training outcomes. In fact, the literature indicates that there is no gender effect related to research attitudes, self-efficacy, or productivity (Bishop & Bieschke, 1998; Gelso, et al., 1996; Kahn & Scott, 1997; Phillips & Russell, 1994). It may be more appropriate to view issues in training in terms of a generational effect, rather than a gender effect. The literature suggests that "trends away from academia and vocational psychology and toward private practice" are strongly reflected in the attitudes of graduates in counseling psychology, with current students being even more practice oriented than their more experienced colleagues (Fitzgerald & Osipow, 1986, 1988). Nevertheless, it would be naïve to overlook the potential implications of the changing gender ratios on the field as a whole and on research training more specifically. Next, the issues of science and research and their impact on the development of psychology, counseling psychology, and the research training models will be addressed. Finally, the review examines the intersection of gender and research training and explores alternatives to the reigning training paradigm.

The Feminization of Psychology

There has been a steady increase in the participation of women in the field of psychology during the past 30 years. This trend is evidenced by the increased number of degrees in psychology granted to women and the number of women accepting academic positions in psychology programs. Between 1970 and 1990, the number of Ph.D.'s awarded to women in psychology more than doubled. In 1970 women received slightly less than a quarter of the Ph.D.'s; however, by the end of the 1980s they were earning more than one-half the doctorates awarded in psychology (Ostertag & McNammara, 1991). Ten years later, by the end of the 1990s, the number of Ph.D.'s received by women had grown to more than two-thirds. (APA, 1999). In 1987 women held 20% of the tenured faculty positions in psychology at four-year colleges and universities (NSF, 1990). A decade later, they hold 35% of these positions (Murray & Williams, 1999). The trend in counseling psychology is similar. Data from a 1998-1999 survey by the American Psychological Association (APA Research Office, 1999) indicate that 25% of the full professor positions and 48.5% of the associate professor positions in counseling psychology are held by women.

Although women appear to be making movement into tenured faculty positions, the higher faculty rank and more prestigious full professor positions are still predominantly held by men (Kite, et al., 2001). This disparity in rank leads to disparity in power, prestige, earning potential, and other resources. "In 1993, the annualized salary of full-time doctoral women psychologists was 84% that of such men" (Kite, et al., 2001, p. 1081). A recent study found that male and female psychologists in clinical practice were engaging in similar work activities, however they were being reimbursed

differentially (Sentell, Pingitore, Scheffler, Schwalm, & Haley, 2001). In fact, the average salary for women employed full time as psychologists was about $20,000 less than that for men (Sentell, et al., 2001).

The potential for change in the composition of the academy exists. As the current full professors prepare for retirement, there will be a significant number of female junior faculty poised to advance into those positions (Kite, et al., 2001). However, given that this potential has existed for the last 15 years, it is reasonable to wonder whether women actually will be given the opportunity to advance and whether they will take the opportunities if they are made available. Mednick (1991) hypothesized that outcomes in scholarly progress are related to the distribution or arrangement of power relations within the discipline. Although women appear to be entering graduate programs in psychology in increasing numbers, they "are not entering academic settings to the extent necessary for a real change at all levels" (Mednick, 1991, p. 614). Despite the apparent "feminization of psychology," the power structure within the academy continues to be comprised of predominantly Caucasian American men (Bowman, 1997).

Understanding graduate students' perceptions of their research training may ultimately shed light on patterns of career choice and development related to research. Further, understanding female graduate students' perceptions is essential since they constitute a majority of the Ph.D. degree recipients, and they continue to be disproportionately represented in the lowest ranks of the academy. This issue is especially significant if our goal is "not simply to help women succeed in obsolete patriarchal institutions but rather to reconstruct those institutions" (Kite, et al., p. 1080, 2001). Neumann and Peterson (1997) have justified focusing on women's experiences in

the academy by suggesting that research is influenced by individuals' lives and as the lives that comprise a field change, then the field also changes. As these changes occur, how knowledge is conceptualized, constructed, and pursued in that field may also change or be questioned. "Thus studying diverse women's lives as sources of their research epistemologies leads us to consider how a field's previous epistemological weavings may shift and change, or simply come undone, as new and divergent lives come to spin its intellectual core" (Neumann & Peterson, 1997, p. 3). First, however, we must understand how the institution was originally constructed and what the major factors influencing its construction and development were. The next sections will explore the impact of the hard science/soft science debate on the development of psychology and, more specifically, counseling psychology, as well as the centrality of science and research to the identity and training of counseling psychologists. Challenges and alternative perspectives to the reigning research-training paradigm will also be presented.

Psychology as a Science

The Scientific Hierarchy

Science, and the people who conduct it, is given a position of authority and power within our society. "The naming of some claim or line of reasoning or piece of research 'scientific' is done in a way that is intended to imply some kind of merit or special kind of reliability" (Chalmers, 1999, p. xviiii). When advertisers want to sell a product, they substantiate it with scientific research to demonstrate its effectiveness and desirable results. This regard for science and its methods is not just a popular-culture phenomena; it is especially evident in academia. Many disciplines have added "science" to their

description; for example political science, library science, etc, "presumably in an effort to imply that the methods used are as firmly based and as potentially fruitful as in a traditional science such as physics or biology" (Chalmers, 1999, p.xviiii). Although the regard for science is clear, what constitutes science and what methods and knowledge are truly "scientific," are more ambiguous issues. Some have suggested that science is derived from facts (Chalmers, 1999); others believe that science must be replicable and cumulative (Hedges, 1987), while still others think that science should be objective (Durkheim, 1938). The debate regarding the legitimacy of some sciences over other sciences has resulted in the establishment of a hierarchy of "sciences," with physical or hard sciences positioned at the top and social sciences or soft sciences relegated to a lower berth. Admittance to the elite and exclusive society of "real science" is highly sought after and rarely attained. Those who currently hold power in the hierarchy determine what is legitimate science. They define what methods, processes, and outcomes are acceptable. All other research and knowledge is somehow less legitimate because it is not real science. Many people in the social sciences have attempted to model the physical sciences by transferring and applying the scientific method to social questions in order to legitimize the research within their discipline (Chalmers, 1999).

Psychology's Position in the Hierarchy

Psychology has never fit neatly into the physical or social sciences. Even in ancient times, people debated whether issues of the mind belonged to the medical doctors or the philosophers; psychology has variously been associated with medicine, physiology, neurology, and philosophy during its history (Hoethersall, 1995; Solomon, 2001). By the

first century BC both medical science and philosophy had begun to describe psychological phenomena in increasingly similar ways (Solomon, 2001). Psychology, however, has fought against this position between the sciences and has consistently sought to establish itself as a "real" science, even modeling "its standards of scientific rigor on Newtonian physics" (Hoethersall, 1995, p. 54).

The academic tradition within psychology has been heavily influenced by the traditions in mathematics and physics. Psychologists regularly measure complex psychological processes, such as motivation and intelligence, in an attempt to find exact, objective relationships between these processes and numbers (Hoethersall, 1995). The discovery of these relationships would make it possible to establish psychological laws similar to the physical laws of the universe and would allow psychologists to predict behavioral and cognitive processes with the same accuracy as physical phenomena (Hoethersall, 1995). Unlike physics, psychological theories make nonspecific predictions (i.e., that groups will differ) not the specific predictions utilized in the physical sciences (Maxwell & Delaney, 1990). Although early philosophers, such as Comte, argued against the idea of a science of the mind, in the late 19th century, Herman Ebbinghaus demonstrated the possibility of applying rigorous and reliable methods to scientifically study memory (Hoethersall, 1995). This achievement, and others like it, has served to fan the flame of the debate surrounding psychology's tenuous position on the science hierarchy.

World War II and the Veterans Administration (VA) system played pivotal roles in determining the psychology's position on the science hierarchy. Prior to the end of the war, the only 'psychologists' employed in the VA system were baccalaureate and

master's level psychometricians who administered tests to patients (Peterson, 1996). The only psychotherapy that occurred at the VAs was conducted by neuro-psychiatrists (Peterson, 1996). However, the need for mental healthcare workers increased dramatically with the return of 16 million veterans at the end of the war (Peterson, 1996). Even though psychiatrists had no choice but to seek out the assistance of psychologists in administering tests and psychotherapeutic treatment, they were reluctant to grant psychologists any legitimacy in the endeavor (Frank, 1984). In order to free themselves from the tyranny of psychiatry and establish psychology as a legitimate mental health profession independent of the medical field, both the level and type of training required to be a psychologist was revised (Frank, 1984). Frank suggested that this was accomplished by turning to the "traditional training for the Ph.D." and adding a research component to the existing training programs (1984, p. 426).

Legitimizing Counseling Psychology

The tensions between hard and soft sciences and psychology's struggle to legitimize itself are mirrored in a parallel process within the counseling psychology subspecialty. In the last 25 years, the field of psychology has seen an increase in the number of women and a decrease in the number of men participating in, and graduating from, Ph.D. programs. This trend in graduate school is, no doubt, influenced by the changing ratio of male to female undergraduate psychology majors (Keyes & Hogberg, 1990). One reason for this trend is the "popularity of 'nurturant' specialties like clinical, school, and counseling..." (Keyes & Hogberg, 1990, p. 101). Not only are more women

participating in the field of psychology, but certain specialties within psychology have come to be seen as nurturant and soft, as women's fields (Betz & Hackett, 1981).

The perception of counseling psychology as a "nurturant" and, therefore, a feminine specialty, is a challenge to its legitimacy as a rigorous, scientific discipline within the field of psychology. Despite significant similarities between clinical and counseling psychology, clinical historically has been given much more prestige than counseling (Tyler, 1992). Two factors may contribute to the perception of clinical as the more prestigious specialty. Clinical psychology grew out of the mental health movement, and has always been closely linked to medicine, and therefore, legitimate science (Tyler, 1992). In addition, most clinical psychologists complete their graduate work in departments of psychology located in liberal arts colleges, whereas most counseling psychologists come from programs in colleges of education (Tyler, 1992). In 1995, 75% of counseling psychology programs were housed in colleges of education (Norcross, Sayette, Mayne, Karg, & Turkson, 1998). Programs within colleges of education are generally considered professional programs, which carries less prestige than an academic discipline located within an academic department. "Keeping the 'scientist' part of counseling psychology is the central reason for some counselors to have a home in psychology" (Gelso & Fretz, 1992, p.44). Without this "scientific" stamp of legitimacy, there is nothing to distinguish counseling psychology from other soft science fields, and therefore, nothing to enhance its status within this hierarchy.

The Impact of Professionalism on Counseling Psychology

In their 1986 occupational analysis of counseling psychology, Fitzgerald and Osipow concluded that as a field, counseling psychology is becoming "an increasingly applied specialty" (1986, p. 543). They based this observation on data indicating fewer graduates are going on to academic positions. Additionally, they found that those who do pursue academic positions are strongly practice oriented, and fewer academicians are engaging in field, process, or outcome research (Fitzgerald & Osipow, 1986). Concern about the impact of increasing professionalization has been a recurrent theme in the counseling psychology literature. In 1937 Woodworth asserted his fear that professionalization of psychology would undermine and corrupt its scientific legitimacy (Woodworth, 1937). Some 55 years later, Sechrest affirmed this prediction stating, "Our standards have been lowered over the past 20 or 30 years with the proliferation of professional training programs making no more than a bow in the direction of scientific practice, let alone scientific training" (Sechrest, 1992, p. 20). Galassi (1989) has stated that without a unique knowledge base of theory and research that is regularly updated, counseling psychology cannot remain viable. He further suggested that it is unlikely that practitioners will contribute to or develop this knowledge base to any great extent (Galassi, 1989). These statements clearly centralize science, specifically research, in the ongoing debate over the future legitimacy of counseling psychology.

McFall (1996, p.4) asserted that "attributions of value are clearly ordered from left to right" with basic science being the most valued and professional application being the least. Obviously, as the field of counseling psychology becomes more applied, it becomes less valued. Nearly half the counseling psychologists polled in one survey

indicated they would not choose counseling psychology again as their career, in part because they were "dissatisfied with their status vis-à-vis related specialties and its impact on their practice..." (Watkins, Lopez, Campbell, & Himmell, 1986, p. 308). Although these data are more than 15 years old, to date there has been no more recent survey of the division membership regarding this issue, and there is nothing in the current literature to contradict this finding. This observation is significant because it reinforces the observations regarding the challenges to the robustness and viability of the field. It also points to the necessity to look inward at factors within counseling psychology and their impact on the development of the field and on individual counseling psychologists. Central to the viability of the field is the satisfaction of those individuals who have trained as counseling psychologists. However, there are a number of factors within the field that challenge counseling psychology in its attempt to establish viability and legitimacy. The major challenge is related to counseling psychology's lack of unique or distinguishing features.

Psychologists have done much to place psychotherapy on a firm scientific foundation, examining the theoretical base and conducting research on process and outcomes (Peterson, 1996). However, these skills are not counseling psychology's to own or monopolize. Psychiatrists, social workers, nurse practitioners, marriage and family therapists, and counselors of every kind are offering "talk therapies" that are virtually indistinguishable from those provided by counseling psychologists (Peterson, 1996). Although counseling psychologists may believe themselves to be more skilled in providing these services, there is no evidence to support this belief. In fact, outside of the U.S., education for professional or applied psychology is done at the masters' level. "The

United States of America is the only country in the world that has a large, doctoral level profession of psychology" (Peterson, 1996, p. 1).

The Problem of Counseling Psychology's Professional Identity

The lack of distinguishing or unique features is a constant challenge for counseling psychology. Ivey (1980, p. 3) described counseling psychology as "the most broadly based applied specialty of the American Psychological Association." Counseling psychologists engage in the broadest assortment of professional activities, with the greatest variety of client populations, utilizing the broadest array of interventions (Ivey, 1980). However, this wonderfully rich diversity creates problems when attempting to establish a clear professional identity that distinguishes counseling psychology as a unique field (Gelso & Fretz, 1992). Thus, scientific research becomes a central factor in legitimizing the field of counseling psychology. In fact, Goodyear and colleagues (2000) suggested that counseling psychology's distinctiveness is situated in its research and training emphasis. Counseling psychology programs are more likely to be engaged in research on diversity and career related issues than clinical psychology programs (Norcross, et al., 1998).

Practitioner models of training were supported at the Vail Conference as an alternative to the scientist-practitioner model (Korman, 1976). Although clinical psychology readily adopted the practitioner model and has developed doctorate of psychology (Psy.D.) training programs, counseling psychology has resisted change to the scientist-practitioner model (Stoltenberg, et al., 2000). Much like the field of psychology legitimized and distinguished itself from psychiatry by adding a research component to

training, we see counseling psychology attempting to legitimize and distinguish itself through research.

The Scientist-Practitioner Model

> ...on counseling psychologists falls the chief responsibility for conducting the research upon which depends the possibility of more effective counseling. Any applied field needs roots in the basic scientific discipline which lends substance to its work. It is therefore imperative that psychological counseling remain firmly established within the orbit of basic psychological science and the related disciplines, and that counseling psychologists acquire the research skills which make possible the enlargement of knowledge (APA, 1952, p. 176).

This statement, from the first major training conference in counseling psychology, incontrovertibly established both science and practice as essential parts of graduate training models. The scientist-practitioner training model has been used by counseling psychology since its inception and many programs continue to utilize this model of training today (Aspenson, et al., 1993; Gelso, 1979). Despite the historical precedent centralizing the importance of research training in psychology, graduate students in all areas of applied psychology indicate ambivalence about the role of research in their professional lives (Gelso, et al., 1988). In fact, "few counseling psychologists go on to publish research after obtaining their doctoral degree" (Kahn & Scott, 1997, p. 38). Gelso (1993, p. 468) emphasized that it is "during graduate school that students' attitudes toward and investments in research are shaped" and that it is these experiences that ultimately influence the level and extent of involvement students will have with research

during their careers. Understanding the processes that shape and enhance students' attitudes toward research is complicated by a lack of agreement or uniformity in the field as to what is considered legitimate research and how research training should be implemented.

Although the scientist-practitioner model has been widely adopted by graduate training programs, the issue of integrating science and practice in counseling psychology has been a highly controversial and hotly debated topic (Aspenson, et al., 1993). Some critics asserted that the model lacks legitimacy because it fails to account for compatibility of interests and abilities with the roles that students are trained to perform, whereas others believe that the model continues to be an essential part of the discipline (Aspenson, et al., 1993; Belar & Perry, 1992; Frank, 1984). Both of these perspectives, however, assume a fundamental agreement as to what constitutes the scientist-practitioner model. Kanfer highlighted the quiddity of this issue, stating:

> The most common distortion of the Boulder Model has been the focus on science in graduate school and practice in later professional activity. In other words, a successive rather than simultaneous adherence to the scientist-practitioner concept is frequently adopted (Kanfer, 1990, pp. 264-265).

This may be the most common distortion, but it is not the only one. There has been no consistency and little agreement on the integration and implementation of the scientist-practitioner model (Gelso & Lent, 2000). Often science is equated exclusively with research, specifically publishable research. However, there has been some discussion in counseling psychology related to expanding the definition of science to be more inclusive of research that is not necessarily geared toward publication, as well as practitioners who

reflect a "scientific attitude" in their work with clients (Galassi & Brooks, 1992, p. 58). Regardless of the way science is ultimately defined within the profession or what is determined to count as real research, there is no way for counseling psychologists to avoid science or research in their training and professional activities.

The Importance of Research

Research is a salient component of graduate education, careers in practice, and academic careers. In their training materials, doctoral programs in counseling psychology describe their training models (research-practitioner, practitioner-scholar, etc.), along with the relative emphasis of research, practice, and other activities within the program. Applicants are aware of the requirements for degree completion, as well as the emphasis the program has placed on research prior to entering the program. Although specific requirements for degree completion may vary across programs, the dissertation is a universal requirement for Ph.D.s in counseling psychology. Most students indicate they are more interested in a career in practice than in research (Kahn & Scott, 1997). However, acceptance to the program of their choice may depend on the students demonstrating an interest and investment in the research process that fits with the program's training philosophy, regardless of their true feelings about research (Kahn & Scott, 1997).

Despite the initial enthusiasm for research reported during the application process, for many students the dissertation will be the only piece of research they produce. The modal number of publications for members of Division 17 (counseling psychology) of the American Psychological Association (APA) is zero. Further, division members

report devoting only a small percentage (8%) of their work time to research (Watkins, et al., 1986). This last statistic may, in part, be influenced by the fact that a majority of counseling psychology graduates (71%) are initially employed in human service settings, environments that afford few opportunities and little time for research (APA, 1996). This is not to say that research is not an important part of practice. Research does influence practice, even if practitioners are not able to cite specific references, it is almost certain that their training as a practitioner was based in research (Heppner & Anderson, 1985). In order to provide effective, competent, and ethical services, psychologists must stay abreast of the scientific literature.

For those graduates who enter the academy, actively engaging in research is a necessity. Although academic positions carry responsibilities in many areas (teaching, advising, administration, research, etc.), without actively pursuing a program of research and publishing in their field, advancement through the academic ranks is unlikely.

The Role of the Developmental Model on Research Training

In order to understand fully the importance of research within the structure of counseling psychology, it is important to understand the structure itself. Development and developmental models have played a significant role in counseling psychology. One of the central tenets that has defined psychology as a discipline is the focus on development (Gelso & Fretz, 1992). Beyond defining an approach to working with clients, this emphasis on the developmental has influenced the way counseling psychology conceptualizes training and professional identity. In their text, *Counseling Psychology*, Gelso and Fretz (1992) described the development of the profession through

the lens of a broad developmental model. They utilized terms such as *infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and maturity* to describe both the historical development of the profession, and the individual's experience of training within the profession.

The potential hazard in the broad application of developmental theory to counseling training and identity is situated within the limits of the theories being utilized to describe or explain these experiences. Many contemporary developmental theories have grown out of the psychoanalytic tradition and many continue to emphasize an approach to understanding development that is heavily influenced by a traditionally and stereotypically masculine approach. The rigid application of these theories limits our ability to conceptualize growth and development by favoring one lens with which to view training and professional identity; a lens that clearly focuses on separation, individuation, and independence as favorable outcomes. Choosing to observe development through this lens leaves other perspectives out of focus and out of sight. This next section will explore contemporary views and competing perspectives on development.

Developmental Models

In her review of the developmental literature, Surrey (1991) detailed the theme of separation and individuation that pervades many contemporary theories of development.

> Currently, developmental theory stresses the importance of separation from the mother at early stages of childhood development (Mahler, 1975), from the family at adolescence (Erikson, 1963), and from teachers and mentors in adulthood (Levinson, 1978) in order for the individual to form a distinct, separate identity. (Surrey, 1991, p. 52)

These models not only highlight the necessity for individuals to separate to achieve full development of the self, but suggest that the only way to achieve normal development is to separate and individuate. Individuals who fail to separate or individuate risk developing problems and pathologies related to their sense of self.

The three theories identified by Surrey suggested a number of devastating consequences for the individual who is unable to separate and individuate. Mahler (1968) proposed a stage theory related to the development of the self. In the beginning stages, individuals are psychologically fused to the mother figure and they gradually progress to separation as they progress through the stages. She suggested that the inability to separate and individuate the self from others results in pathological developments, including narcissistic and borderline personality disorders. Erikson (1963) believed adolescence was a critical time for resolving the developmental crisis related to the formation of a personal identity. Adolescents must break dependent ties as they struggle to establish and define their unique identity. A failure to achieve a sense of independent identity results in role confusion and consequent difficulty in integrating a system of values and establishing direction in their lives. Levinson (1978) stated that during the first 20 or so years of life, the "highly dependent child grows in complex biological, psychological and social ways to become, in greater or lesser degree, an independent responsible adult" (Levinson, 1978, p.3). During adulthood, Levinson believes people face developmental crises that must be resolved in order to establish the "basis for a relatively satisfactory life structure" (1978, p. 59). He theorized that an important phase during early adulthood is "Becoming One's Own Man." The tasks of this phase are to establish a stronger sense of an independent self and to establish more

authority and seniority within one's world. Levinson associated success in this phase with the masculine, and stated, "It is the feminine in a man that leads him to be soft and dependent" (1978, p. 234). He further stated that if an individual is to grow or develop in important aspects of life (career, relationships, leisure, etc.) he or she "must become more individuated" (Levinson, 1978, p. 243).

The Socio/Cultural/Political Impact of the Developmental Models

The importance of separation and individuation extends beyond developmental theory to social, cultural, and political systems that value the "rugged individualist," that person who is able to forge their own way and to succeed with minimal help from others. These ideals are reflected in the structures and processes of the academy. Development of the academic self, much like the personal self, is a stage-like process involving a series of crises (comprehensive examinations, dissertation, etc.), which are resolved by the individual in a "sequence of allegedly essential separations from others" (Miller, 1991, p. 11). In order to progress through graduate programs in a timely fashion, students must independently complete these requirements and master the requisite skills related to independent research and scholarly scientific study. In writing about the demands of the scientific requirements, Gelso stated, "Certain aspects of the process inevitably entail aloneness, where the scientist (student) must independently think through, formulate, write about, master, etc., the puzzles of his/her domain" (1979, p. 26).

This perspective has not only influenced what is seen as successful development of the academic self, it has also influenced how incompetence, impairment, and failure are conceptualized. Frank (1984) suggested a major flaw in the scientist-practitioner

model is that it approaches the teaching of these two skill domains very differently. Clinical skills are taught through a variety of courses, supervised practical experiences, group discussions, and case conferences. It is expected that it will take years to develop clinical skills. Research skills are generally taught through a year-long statistics sequence and a year-long research design sequence (Frank, 1984). It is expected that students will require extensive supervision of their clinical skills in order to develop competency; this same expectation is often not integrated into research training. Although most research articles have multiple authors, the dissertation remains a requirement individuals must complete on their own. It has become a rite of passage with only limited value for teaching students about research, as most students never complete any research beyond the dissertation (Krumboltz, 2002). Training environments that tend to produce more research "provided more encouragement and supportive services for research, required a research course in counseling more frequently, and were more likely to involve students in a research experience or apprenticeship with a faculty member" (Galassi, Stoltz, Brooks, & Trexler, 1987, p. 43). Peer support and group collaboration have come to be seen as integral parts of the scientific process in other areas, including physics and computer programming (Krumboltz, 2002). Douglas Osheroff, a 1996 Nobel laureate in physics, has questioned the legitimacy of awarding individual prizes since the scientific advances are the product of teams of hundreds of individuals (In print and on the air, 2001). Yet, psychology continues to insist that the benchmark of competence in research, and for the Ph.D., is being able to produce an original, independent piece of research, the dissertation. Many counseling psychology programs are located within large research universities (Meara, et al., 1988). This may be a key factor in

"perpetuating the hegemony of the scientist-practitioner model" (Stoltenberg, et al., 2000, p. 3), as the academy has established "tenure and promotion policies that tend to emphasize faculty competence in research and publication but give little credit for clinical expertise and experience" (Stoltenberg, et al., 2000, p. 3).

The practitioner model for training provides an alternative to the reigning scientist practitioner paradigm within counseling psychology. The answer, however, may not be to wholly discard the model, but to re-examine the way in which we implement the model. Although counseling psychology has historically endorsed developmental models that emphasize separation and individuation as measures of competence and mature achievement, there are other perspectives to consider. Miller (1991) challenged the notion of the necessity of separation to the development of the mature self. Miller suggested that:

> ...the beginnings of the self are not those of a static lone self being ministered to by another, but rather of a self inseparable from dynamic interaction. And the central character of that interaction involves attending to each other's mental states and emotions. (Miller, 1991, p.14)

Miller (1991) contended that all growth and development occur within these dynamic interactions, not separate from them. This self-in-relation theory provides another way of framing the development of the self and potentially offers an alternate way of conceptualizing graduate education. In the previous chapter, I introduced the idea that the similarities and overlap between the processes of therapy and learning facilitated the application of self-in-relation theory to the academic environment.

Self-in-Relation Theory

The idea of the development of the self-in-relation requires a paradigmatic shift in the conceptualization of development. "Lack of cultural investment in relationship as a primary value, however, has led to the neglect of study of this line of development in both males and females" (Jordan, 1991, p. 87). Self-in-relation theory emphasizes relationships as the context for experience, experimentation, and development. Because the self is conceptualized as emerging within the context of relationships, "there is no inherent need to disconnect or to sacrifice relationship for self-development" (Surrey, 1991, p.53). The basic elements of this theory can be summarized as:

> (1) an interest and attention to the other person(s), which form the base for the emotional connection and the ability to empathize with the other(s); (2) the expectation of a mutual empathic process where the sharing of experience leads to a heightened development of self and other; and (3) the expectation of interaction and relationship as a process of mutual sensitivity and mutual responsibility that provides the stimulus for the growth of empowerment and self-knowledge (Surrey, 1991, pp. 58-59).

This mutuality can provide meaning and motivation in people's lives; its absence can negatively impact self-esteem (Jordan, 1991). Miller (1986b) refers to the positive outcomes of connection as "the five good things": zest, increased ability to act, increased sense of self worth, greater clarity regarding self and others, and a desire for more relationships. Disconnections result in the opposite of these five things: less energy, disempowerment, confusion, less self-worth, and turning away from relationships. Disconnections are not necessarily negative things to be avoided, though, as all

relationships ebb and flow through times of connections and disconnections. The strengthening work in relationships occurs during times of reconnection after a disconnection. "Reconnections can be quick and easy, or it can take time, effort and creativity" (Dooley & Fedele, 2004, p.231). The key to transforming these disconnections and remaining open to others is resilience. Understanding relational resilience requires understanding of both the individual factors and the relational dynamics that contribute to adjustment and connection (Jordan, 2004). Relational resilience requires a shift from "individual 'control over' dynamics to a model of supported vulnerability," from a "one-directional need for support from others to mutual empathic involvement," from "power over dynamics to empowerment" from "finding meaning...to creating meaning" (Jordan, 2004, p. 32).

Traditional work and academic settings are generally not designed to promote or foster mutual exchanges, with their emphasis on productivity and competition (Jordan, 1991). Although the original meaning of the word competence was 'to seek together', it shares its root with the word competition. The current understanding of competence reflects this shared root, as competence has come to imply rivalry or competition (Jordan, 2005). "The competition and mastery implicit in most models of competence create conflict for many people" (Jordan, 2005, p.12). This system reinforces marginalization and oppression by valuing competition, dominance, and mastery over "confidence, creativity, and participation in growth fostering relationships" (Jordan, 2005, p. 12).

The hierarchical nature of the academy, which rewards individual achievement with the incentives of tenure and promotion, devalues the existing underlying system of mutuality and interdependence. Mutuality is seen as antithetical to the power over

hierarchy in the academy. Mutual power implies that all participants contribute in order to enhance everyone's personal power, not just the personal power of certain others or oneself (Surrey, 1991). The current rules of the academy do not leave room for mutual exchange. Terminal degrees (e.g. the Ph.D.) and tenure are not awarded based on collaborative or mutual efforts, but individual accomplishments. Mutuality challenges the organization and structure of the environment because it takes the emphasis off just knowing the rules and winning the game (or getting the promotion or tenure) and puts the emphasis on the personal relationships in the environment (Gilligan, 1982). The traditional culture of therapy, much like the traditional culture of the academy, has supported several myths of competence: the therapist or the faculty member is the expert, change is unilateral, and the person with power should not be vulnerable (Jordan, 2004). Self-in-relation theory provides us with a frame for examining these myths and the way they impact methods of training in counseling psychology. Although there have not been any studies utilizing self-in-relation theory to explore research training, there have been several studies on mentoring and advising relationships that indicate the powerful effects relationships have on the training process.

The Impact of Relationships on Training

David Aspenson and his colleagues conducted a combined qualitative and quantitative study on graduate students' perceptions of the scientist-practitioner training model (1993). Students were classified into three groups based on their attitudes regarding the model: Positive, Negative, and Ambivalent. Although there were a number of differences between the groups' perceptions of the training model, consistent across

groups was the indication that mentors, role models, and relationships with faculty had a significant impact on their perception of their research training. In fact, respondents in all three groups indicated concern about faculty not meeting their interpersonal needs and suggested that this interpersonal distance contributed to their perceptions of the training model (Aspenson, et al., 1993).

Hollingsworth and Fassinger (2002), utilizing a quantitative design, investigated counseling psychology graduate students experiences with research mentoring relationships. The results of their study indicate that mentoring experiences were a strong predictor of research productivity. In addition, they found that the mentoring relationship mediated the relationship between the research training environment and research productivity, suggesting that "a research mentoring relationship is the vehicle through which the training environment has greatest impact on individual students' research productivity" (Hollingsworth & Fassinger, 2002, p.327).

This idea that the relationship is the vehicle through which students' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors are impacted is supported by a study on supervisory relationships (Ladany, Ellis, & Friedlander, 1999). Ladany, Ellis, and Friedlander (1999) investigated the relationship between the supervisory working alliance, or the relationship between a supervisor and a counselor trainee, and supervisory outcomes. They found the aspect of the supervisory relationship that was significantly related to satisfaction with supervision was the emotional bond between the counselor trainee and the supervisor. When trainees viewed their emotional bond as strong, they also tended to perceive both their supervisors' and their own performance more positively (Ladany, et al., 1999).

Schlosser and colleagues conducted a qualitative analysis of the graduate advising relationship (Schlosser, Knox, Moskovitz, & Hill, 2003). Their study suggested that students perceived the advising relationship as important to the training environment. They classified students' descriptions of advising relationships into either positive or negative descriptors. The authors suggested that positive advising may have many common characteristics with mentoring. However, they made the distinction that, while mentoring implies a positive exchange between a protégé and a professional, advising relationships can be positive or negative and guidance either be provided or not provided (Schlosser, et al., 2003).

Although all of these studies looked at different relationships in the training environment and at different aspects and outcomes of the relationships and training, fundamentally they all found relationships to be significant to the training experience. The research training environment (RTE) is the primary socialization agent for future professionals within the field of psychology and intellectual and social integration into this environment is important in developing the skills necessary to complete the doctoral program (Tinto, 1993). Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, p.33) define integration as:

> ...the extent to which the individual shares the normative attitudes and values of the peers and faculty in the institution and abides by the formal and informal structural requirements for membership in the community or in the subgroups of which the individual is a part.

Mentors, advisors, and other faculty members can facilitate integration and meaningful connection within the academic community by creating space for students to cultivate their skills and identity (Schramm, 2000). The significance of creating space for

connections and fostering integration into the academic community is highlighted by research that indicates many students who experience negative encounters, marginalization, disconnection, or a lack of integration into the academic or social community withdraw from their programs (Johnson, Goldberg, & Sedlacek, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993).

Tinto suggests that frequent contact or connection with faculty is important to students academic persistence. Although classroom contact is important, "encounters which go beyond the mere formalities of academic work to broader intellectual and social issues and which are seen by students to be warm and rewarding appear to be strongly associated with continued persistence" (1993, p.57). While these relationships have enormous potential for enhancing students' experiences in the academic environment, they also have the potential to do harm. Disconnections or violations in close relationships, especially those that involve dependency, such as between a faculty member and a student, can result in isolation and difficulty expressing vulnerability or reaching out for help (Jordan, 2004).

The previous research, coupled with the self-in-relation theory, seems to indicate that relationships are significant factors in graduate students' academic progress. Since this area of inquiry is in its infancy and the potential applicability of self-in-relation theory to research training has yet to be addressed, I believe this issue is best explored using a qualitative methodology of in-depth interviewing.

The Gender Conundrum

It has been established that both men and women cite relationships with mentors and advisors as significant factors in their training and development (Aspenson, et al.,

1993; Pride, 2002). However, based on the literature in gender studies and communication (Tannen, 1984, 1986, 1990), it is reasonable to assume that men and women may both experience and talk about relationships differently. Currently, there is no existing literature base related to the impact of relationships on research training and research in counseling psychology on mentoring and the RTE is in its infancy. Because of these two factors, the goal of this project is to avoid setting up any one particular style or theme as normal and a standard to use for comparison. It is outside the scope of this project to investigate the differential ways men and women experience and discuss relationships; therefore, this project will focus on women's perceptions of the impact of relationships on their development as researchers. It is hoped that greater understanding of female students' experiences in the RTE will increase awareness of issues in research training and facilitate future development of training models. In addition, it is hoped that by increasing our understanding of the role relationships play in the training process, it will encourage counseling psychology programs to be more deliberate and thoughtful about integrating advising, mentoring, and other relationships into the training experience.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this present study was to develop a better understanding of female counseling psychology graduate students' perceptions of the impact of relational factors on the development of their dissertation. It was believed that understanding graduate students' perceptions of their research training would better inform development and implementation of graduate training programs in counseling psychology. Additionally, it was anticipated that results of this study would ultimately shed light on patterns of career choice and development related to research.

Inquiry into research training and graduate student development is "in its infancy" (Gelso & Lent, 2000, p. 111). As such, a qualitative methodology was appropriate to this study because the goal was to explore how participants understand and make meaning of this process. An interview schedule, based on domains of interest identified from the literature, provided a loose structure for the interviews. Participants' personal and academic histories, salient aspects of identity, current and previous experiences with research, and relationships with faculty, advisors, and mentors were explored as they pertained to the development of their dissertation interests and related skills. Specifically, the research questions to be addressed included:

- What are students' perceptions of their relationships (or lack of relationships) with faculty, advisors, and mentors?

- What are students' perceptions of their journey through the dissertation writing process?
- What are the implications of students' experiences on their choice of future career paths?

Qualitative Methods

The term qualitative methods refers to a range of techniques that are used to "come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (Van Manen, 1979, p.520). In the social context of doctoral education, the dissertation is a naturally occurring phenomenon. Even so, the process of writing the dissertation has not been widely studied from the perspective of students who are engaged in the process. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that qualitative data "are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts." Further, qualitative inquiry is particularly well suited to researching women's issues because quantitative methodologies have typically been designed by men and are subject to inherent patriarchal biases (Miller, 1986a; Williams, 1997). Whereas qualitative methods, with its focus on meaning making, allowed for a kind of knowing to emerge that is sensitive to the meaning conferred on these processes by the participants themselves (Williams, 1997).

The Researcher

A central and unavoidable element of qualitative research is the role of the researcher. Qualitative research is the product of a real person and his/her biases,

assumptions, values, personal history and identity of the investigator are a meaningful part of the context of the work.

In a similar study of female graduate students in counselor education who were all but dissertation (ABD), Williams made the observation that she was both an observer and a participant in the research (Williams, 1997). I identified with this statement. I am currently a doctoral candidate in the process of writing my dissertation; as such, my process is inextricably linked to the product. As one of my participants said, "If you want to find out what somebody's neurosis is, ask them what their research topic is." It is no accident that I am writing my dissertation about women's journey through the dissertation process. Although I moved through my required coursework and counseling practica in a timely manner, the research requirements significantly delayed my progress. Because I did not complete my research apprenticeship project on time, I had to delay my comprehensive examinations, as well as application for internship. The problems I encountered in completing my apprenticeship project left me terrified to do my dissertation. Although this project served as a stepping stone to my dissertation, it also contributed to the development of my assumptions and biases about the dissertation process. My assumptions and biases were: (a) the dissertation process is isolating and lonely, (b) the process is difficult and frustrating, (c) completing the dissertation had more to do with individual persistence than with institutional structures that facilitate the process, (d) completing the dissertation is not necessarily about creating a meaningful research project as much as it is about just completing the research, and (e) the research-training environment can be toxic to some individuals.

I also recognize that because of my experiences writing my proposal and interviewing the participants, I am in a very different place now than I was when I began this process. So even as I identify the biases that impacted me as I began my journey, to chronicle the evolution and change in my attitudes and biases about the process would be an entire paper unto itself. Sufficed to say, what is written here is but one construction of my journey through the dissertation process; however, it is not the only story. I say this to own that my writings before I began the interviews and progressed and reflected on my own journey through the dissertation come from a much different place than what was written after these experiences. The process of hearing other women's stories helped me to put my own story into perspective by forcing me to examine issues of power, control, and ownership in my own story as I examined these issues in the stories of the participants.

Selection of Participants

Both purposeful sampling was initially utilized in selecting participants for this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The process of purposeful sampling has been referred to as "judgmental" sampling because it requires the researcher to use her or his judgment to determine the appropriateness of participants based on the research questions (Fetterman, 1989). The participants in this study were recruited on a voluntary basis through contacts with internship training directors, emails, and letters. An announcement that briefly described the study was sent to training directors at two identified APA-accredited internship sites. The training directors were asked to distribute letters that described the study to female interns at their training site. In addition, a description of the study and request for participation were posted to a list serve for training directors of internship

sites in Colorado. Women who were interested in the study were asked to contact the investigator for more information. Ten women who contacted the investigator met the criteria for inclusion in the study and nine interviews took place. The women who participated came from contacts with three different internship sites in two different states. All of the women who participated had attended different graduate programs.

Participant Criteria

The present study was grounded in the history and development of counseling psychology. The focus of this inquiry was on female graduate students in counseling psychology and their perceptions of relational factors in the RTE. One of the first major hurdles in the dissertation writing process is defending the dissertation proposal. Students who have successfully defended their dissertation proposal have begun the writing process and have established relationships with their advisors and committee members. For these reasons the following criteria were used in selecting participants:

- The participants were to be female doctoral students in counseling psychology
- The participants must have successfully proposed their dissertation
- The participants who had successfully defended their dissertation must have completed this within one year prior to the interview

In summary, the scope of this study was limited to counseling psychology students who were still close to the process of writing their dissertations and at the precipice of beginning their professional careers.

Procedures

Prior to beginning the interview process, participants were asked to sign a consent form. The interview process began with the participants completing a demographic form that asked for general demographic information, including age, year in program, number of presentations or publications, research coursework completed, etc. Forms were labeled with participant numbers rather than names. Students were not asked to identify the names of faculty members or their home universities during the interviews. When information of this nature came out during the course of the interviews it was deleted from the transcriptions in order to protect the identity of the participants. Concerns related to confidentiality will be discussed in the limitations section. Anonymity was not assured in this study because of the nature of face-to-face interviews.

The procedures for qualitative inquiry that were utilized in the present study included three steps, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985): interviewing, data analysis, and writing the case report.

In-depth interviewing

In-depth interviews are intended to be more like conversations between peers than highly structured question and answer sessions (Lincoln &Guba, 1985; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). This does not mean that the interview is completely free of structure. Smith (1995) suggested identifying broad themes to be covered in the interview and designing neutral questions that avoid value-laden or leading language and jargon. He also suggested utilizing open-ended questions in order to encourage the respondent to address the topic with as little prompting as possible. Participants' academic histories, research

preparation, relationships with mentors, advisors, and dissertation committee members, and dissertation research were explored as they pertained to student's perceptions of the development of their dissertation interests/topics and related skills.

Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Analysis was on-going and occurred as the data were collected. This method was utilized with the expectation that domains of interest would become clearer and interviews would become more focused over time as themes developed out of the data.

Interviews were limited to approximately 1hour with each participant. Participants were provided with a brief description of the study and encouraged to think about their research experiences and relationships with mentors, advisors, and committee members prior to their participation in the interview.

Data analysis and coding

Data analysis involved describing and analyzing patterns of relationships that emerged from the participants' responses (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although there is no right way to conduct data analysis, there are two important components to the data analysis process: (a) data reduction or de-contextualization and (b) data interpretation or re-contextualization (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Tesch, 1990).

Coding or identifying themes represents the process during which the collected data is broken down, conceptualized, and re-constructed in a new form (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process allows the researcher to pull out themes from the larger body of collected information in order to create categories of related data. The categories were analyzed for the emergence of patterns or themes. According to Charmaz (1983),

the initial phase of coding involves simply categorizing and sorting the data. These codes allowed the researcher to "label, separate, compile, and organize the data" (Charmaz, 1983, p. 111). The purpose of this design is to create categories that "fit the data rather than forcing the data into codes" (Charmaz, 1983, p. 112). Secondary coding, or focused coding, is a more selective or conceptual process. During this stage, the researcher collapses or condenses the data from the initial coding into more manageable analytic units. Additionally, the researcher is able to develop a more integrated understanding of the local process and interactions by observing the patterns and interconnections that evolve from the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Prior to beginning the coding, my first objective was to gain a holistic sense of the data. To do this, I read through each of the transcripts several times to become familiar with the content of each interview. Next, I began to analyze the transcripts one at a time, line by line. Coding was done by hand; no software programs were utilized to facilitate coding. In the margins to the right of each transcript, I identified categories or topics as they emerged from the interviews. This is similar to "the constant comparative method of analysis" outlined by Glaser and Strauss (cited in Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Although Glaser and Strauss developed this method specifically to derive grounded theory, the stages were helpful in guiding data analysis. The two analytic procedures used were "making of comparisons" and "asking of questions" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 62). During this process, "one's own and other's assumptions about phenomena are questioned or explored" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.62). As I engaged in this initial stage of coding, I also worked on maintaining an awareness of my own assumptions and their impact on this project by journaling my own reactions and responses to the data and the

coding process. Once the data were broken down into meaningful units, they were reanalyzed and put back together by making connections between categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The purpose of this project was to increase the understanding of the meaning that female graduate students' place on the structures and process of the research training, specifically their dissertation experience. In order to maintain the integrity of their experiences and perceptions, I chose to present the findings in a narrative format using quotations to allow their voices to emerge in their own words.

Considerations

There were several limitations to the current study that warrant discussion. First, as noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Miles and Huberman (1994), interpretations that emerged out of the interviews were dependent on and consequences of the interaction between the investigator and the context. As a female graduate student in counseling psychology, I had my own understandings, convictions, and conceptual orientation. It was important for me to explore continually the impact of my biases on the interviews and the results (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Second, the sample for this study was comprised of women who had successfully negotiated (nearly) all of the requirements for the Ph.D. In addition, all of the women self-selected to participate in this study. This particular group was targeted because women constitute a majority of the degree recipients in the field, and students at the internship level should have at least begun the dissertation process. However, the narrow sample may limit the ability to generalize results to students who have not been

successful in negotiating the various degree requirements, to male graduate students, or to students who were not interested in participating in a study like this one.

Finally, all participants were informed that every attempt would be made to protect their confidentiality and that there was a risk that this may not be entirely possible. Identifying information was altered whenever possible in the final document; all of the participants were given pseudonyms and the names of faculty members and institutions were either changed or omitted, as were dates of attendance and graduation. However, given the close-knit nature and relatively small size of the field of counseling psychology, it may be possible for readers to infer the identities of participants. Because internship level students have completed the vast majority of the requirements for their degrees, they may be immune to any potential ramifications on their academic standing due to their participation in this study.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the purpose for this study and presented a rationale for the utilization of a qualitative methodology. Information was provided on participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. A short section was included that reviewed information about the researcher and addressed my assumptions and biases. This section was included as a check in order to reduce the impact of these assumptions and biases on the processes of data collection and analysis. The following chapter will present the results of the analysis of the interviews.

CHAPTER IV

Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

This chapter consists of two major sections. The first section provides information regarding the participants' dissertation journeys, basic demographic information, and contextual information about the participants' perceptions of their journeys. It also addresses commonalities and differences across the women's experiences that will be highlighted as part of the data analysis. The participants will be presented in the order in which the interviews occurred.

Potential participants received information requesting their participation in a qualitative study of women's experiences writing their dissertations. No effort was made to recruit women who had a particularly bad or unusual experience, however many of the following stories address negative, even damaging, experiences and give voice to the accompanying emotional consequences. The group of women who agreed to participate was a self-selected sample comprised of women who had something to say about their experiences writing their dissertations. Although the stories of the participants present a range of experiences, more of the stories seem to fall on the negative end of the spectrum than the positive end. There are a number of possible explanations for this phenomenon, such as more people have negative than positive experiences writing their dissertations, or people who have negative experiences are more motivated to talk than people who have positive experiences. These sources of bias will be more fully explored in the limitations section.

The second section of this chapter will be organized around the women's experiences of their journeys. The themes that evolved out of the interviews will be presented in the context of the women's stories. The participants have been liberally quoted throughout the text in order to allow their stories to emerge in their own voices. The quotes have been edited to maintain the confidentiality of the participants; all of the names of people and places have been changed. The goal of this research project was to explore women's perceptions of their journey through the dissertation process, specifically looking at the impact of relationships on their experiences. The interviews were analyzed by first decontextualizing, or separating the data into meaningful units, and then recontextualizing the data by identifying categories of responses.

The participants were asked questions related to their journey through the dissertation process. The initial part of the interview included questions that were very concrete and direct, for example participants were asked to describe their journey, identify critical incidents, or explain their dissertation research. Each interview ended with four projective questions designed to encourage participants to tap into a different way of talking about their experiences. Participants were asked: 1) If your dissertation got dressed up, what would it wear? 2) If your dissertation could speak, what would it say? 3) What does your dissertation remind you of? and 4) What is special about your dissertation? The analysis of these questions will be presented separately from the other interview questions.

The Participants

Nine women were interviewed for this study, however only 8 of the interviews were used in the final analysis due to recording problems encountered during one

interview. The tape recording of the interview could not be transcribed and therefore could not be coded along with the other interviews. The information presented on the participants refers only to the eight women whose interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Although the participants were at different points in the dissertation writing process, all of them had successfully defended their dissertation proposal (prospectus) at the time of the interview. Five of the participants had successfully defended their dissertations. The participants ranged in age from 24 to 45 years old, with a mean age of 33 years. Five of the participants identified as White or Caucasian, one identified as multiracial, one as Native American and Latina, and one as Asian American. Three of the participants had completed a master's thesis and six of them reported having at least one publication. Each of the participants has been given a pseudonym and all information regarding their academic institutions has been changed to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

Angela

At the time of the interview, Angela was completing her doctoral internship at a university counseling center. She was beginning the job search and indicated she hoped to work as a psychologist in a rural area. She related that for her master's degree, an MSW, she had opted out of completing a thesis, instead she completed comprehensive examinations. She said she was very anxious about having to do a dissertation and found the process to be very frustrating. "I was very lost and everybody else in my program had done a thesis of some sort. I'm the only one feeling like a fish flopping around going, 'I have no idea what I'm doing.'" Angela referred to her experience as "A nightmare, it wasn't even a journey."

Angela identified as Native American and Latina. She related her culture was a significant factor in her decision to attend graduate school. "My advisor is the reason I went to (this) University, because she's Native American." In addition, her dissertation research had a very personal, cultural meaning. Her dissertation was a qualitative study of tribal members' views of mental health and wellness. She said she always wanted to work with Native people and after writing her dissertation she felt she had a much better understanding of her own tribe. The centrality and importance of culture in her experience is best illustrated by her description of what her dissertation would wear.

> It's like 3 rings put together and it's got all the colors of the rainbow, very bright colors. What I see it wearing is this linked belt that's very colorful and is intertwined because that's how Tribal people are, they're very intertwined, you can't separate them out. I see it being this very colorful thing because of the emotion that was expressed during the research, some was sadness and some was excitement.

Angela was married and the mother of a young child. She talked about the challenges she experienced attempting to balance all of her responsibilities at home, work full time at internship, and complete her dissertation. In spite of these challenges, Angela successfully completed and defended her dissertation a couple of months before participating in this project. Angela said completing her dissertation allowed her to view her experience differently. She related that because she was able to work through her struggles with the dissertation successfully, she is now "willing to fight for the fact that I have something to offer.... I am somebody and I have learned something."

Britt

Britt identified as Asian American. She was all but dissertation (ABD) and employed as a staff psychologist at a university counseling center. She was working on completing her dissertation and at the time of the interview, she had just received Internal Review Board (IRB) approval. At the time of the interview, she planned to start her data collection in the next couple of weeks. She described her experience as a "very, very long arduous experience" and related this was actually her second dissertation project. Problems with the university administration system led to a reorganization of her university and eventual merger with a second institution. As a result, she was forced to completely reconstitute her committee with members from the new institution. She also had to adjust her topic to meet the requirements of the new program and receive approval from the new committee members. Her frustration with these setbacks and challenges was apparent in her description of her journey as "very long, anxiety provoking, and arduous, to say the least."

Her dissertation research explores the impact of group interventions on problem solving, self efficacy, and career decision making. She revealed the personal nature of her topic when she was asked what was special about her dissertation.

> If you want to find out what somebody's neurosis is, ask them what their research topic is and for me that's definitely it. I had a very difficult process in terms of my own career decision making process and this is now my way of giving back to others something I never had when I was going through.

Although she had experienced a number of setbacks in her journey, Britt talked about feeling "very optimistic about it. I'm very energized... It's been a long process and since this committee has come together it's renewed my sense of hope and energy."

Carmen

At the time of this interview, Carmen was finishing her last year of coursework and looking forward to going on internship in the fall. She had successfully completed and defended her dissertation a few weeks before participating in this project. She identified her career goals after internship as combining "practice and academia."

Carmen was 24, identified as Caucasian, and in her 4th year of doctoral study. Although she had finished her dissertation before leaving for internship, she described the process as "long" and indicated her experiences had been so bad that she actually "wanted to quit" after completing her master's thesis. When asked about critical incidents along the way which contributed to these feelings, she took a long sigh and stated that with her advisor "every process is an incident." She said she loved research and at one time had considered a future career in a "research one institution", however she no longer felt comfortable or confident in her writing "because it's never been acceptable" and her experience "may keep me from researching because I'm afraid that I wouldn't be able to write it up." She described her experiences as molding versus mentoring.

Carmen related she had chosen her dissertation topic as an extension of her master's thesis work on attitudes toward suicide. Although she had not been especially interested in doing research on suicide, she had decided to come to this particular university to work with her advisor and this was her advisor's area of research. Despite

wanting to work with this particular professor, she described their relationship as "rocky all along."

Deva

Deva was completing her doctoral internship at the time of the interview. She was 27, identified as white, and had recently secured a post-doctoral position at a university counseling center. Deva was finishing up her data collection and related she was feeling some pressure to complete her dissertation before she started her post-doctoral position. She was excited about finishing her project and said she felt she could not "go wrong completely because there isn't necessarily that much out there studying courage." Despite her enthusiasm, Deva indicated that she struggled with a lack of confidence in her abilities and in the project. She said this presented her with a challenge when she was interviewing for post-docs and jobs because she felt she needed to appear confident about the dissertation whether or not she was really feeling that way, "It's like a real dichotomy. You can feel not very confident about it but you have to say something or project something different."

Deva described her journey as "a really collaborative process with my advisor." She said her advisor had been instrumental both in helping her choose a topic for her dissertation as well as determining the overall direction of the project. She talked about her relationship with her advisor as "open", "congenial", and "comfortable."

Ellie

Ellie was completing her doctoral internship at the time of the interview. She identified her career goals as "to be rich and famous," however when we met she was in the process of doing a job search for a clinical position. She had defended her

dissertation before starting her internship and fell just within the one year cut off limit. Ellie was 32 and identified as multiracial.

Ellie had completed a master's thesis and felt like this helped her through the dissertation journey. "I think the start of my dissertation wasn't that hard because I had already gone through my thesis and my dissertation was a continuation of that." She said she learned a lot about negotiating the process indirectly and through "trial and error." Her biggest source of frustration was, "Paperwork. Mountains and mountains of paperwork and the inability of the professors in the psychology department to come to a consensus on what I was supposed to be doing." The one thing that motivated her through all this paperwork and frustration was her "wife", who's "foot reaches just butt high and she kicked me through the program." Ellie felt she did not receive much guidance from her faculty in negotiating the dissertation process, "I didn't find a lot of help in deciding what to do or how to do it or how to schedule my time.... I figured out with my thesis that I was going to have to do it myself."

Ellie has a long history with her dissertation topic dating back to her undergraduate work. She completed an undergraduate research project on social learning and American Indian adolescents and was able to continue this line of research through her master's thesis and dissertation.

Fiona

Fiona was 45, married, and identified as Caucasian. She indicated she would like to work in community mental health after completing her internship. At the time of the interview, she had defended her proposal and completed one IRB application and was in

the process of completing a second. She hoped to start collecting data in a month to six weeks.

Although she had "tried on several dissertations," including a study on spirituality and one that was qualitative in design, Fiona had settled on doing a neuropsychological dissertation on physician competency. She related there were a number of factors that intervened and brought her to this topic, including access to an available data set, personal investment in the topic, and an interest in pursuing a career in neuropsychology.

Fiona revealed she had experienced a number of challenges with her committee during her dissertation journey. She addressed the emotional sequelae of these issues and related that she "got pretty depressed and couldn't work" on her dissertation. She acknowledged, in addition to the external sources of stress, she was her own worst enemy during the process. "Well, my own inertia and my own fear just get in the way. Fear of failure gets in my way." When asked about factors which delayed her in her journey, Fiona identified, "myself" and "psycho committee members."

Gina

Gina was 31 and identified as Caucasian. She was completing her doctoral internship at the time of the interview and had just secured a post-doc position combining both clinical and research responsibilities. She had successfully defended her dissertation on dating violence and attachment a couple of months prior to our meeting.

Gina's interest in this topic started during her master's program and was influenced by her clinical work with teens experiencing dating violence. Gina identified several programmatic strengths that helped her get through her journey. She was required to complete a pre-dissertation project and an oral exam which "consisted of

writing our literature review and defending it." She described the process as being cut up into manageable "little chunks." However, she described her journey as "long," "hard," and "challenging." Despite the scaffolding provided by her program, Gina said there were many times when "I felt like I was kind of out on my own in the process." During her journey, Gina was forced to replace one committee member and deal with her chair going on sabbatical the year she was writing her dissertation. Her chair suggested she replace him with another faculty member. Gina's reaction to this was, "I was so livid. I was like, 'you are not dropping me now, I'm sorry if you are going on sabbatical'...He had gone this far and I felt like, who could I get to help me out with this process?" Her advisor, ultimately, did continue on as her dissertation chair, however Gina felt like "it was kinda like he wasn't really with me that year." She got the most support and guidance in the writing process from her boyfriend, who is also in counseling psychology. After having a kind of "break down" one day, Gina asked her boyfriend for help and he, "just kind of talked to me, asked me questions. We just came up with an outline in about 20 minutes of how I was going to write it."

Hannah

Hannah had successfully defended her dissertation during the fall of her internship year. At the time of our meeting, her plans were to complete internship, secure an adjunct position at a university and work in private practice. Hannah was 28 and identified as White.

Her dissertation was a qualitative study of mentoring relationships of women in Christian academia. Her interest in this topic grew out her participation in a woman oriented research group during her doctoral study. Ironically, she chose to study

mentoring relationships "primarily because I didn't have them." Through this group, she was able to connect with another student who was interested in a similar topic and they were able to collaborate on data collection. She described the research group as "a big support but also a big accountability" because she had to make progress reports at the meetings.

She identified navigating relationships in graduate school as challenging during her journey. After becoming involved in this research group, she changed advisors to one of the faculty members facilitating the group. Hannah said this was an uncomfortable process to undertake. In addition, she had to learn to negotiate her relationship with her new advisor. As she put it, "We're working closely, but we're not friends because you're my dissertation chair and you're a faculty member...so there kind of is that power differential, but we're in this very collegial discussion all the time."

Hannah expressed mixed emotions related to her journey. At one point she described her journey as "definitely a collaborative effort. I did not feel isolated doing this project." She described her experience of the research group as "a very safe place to explore." However, when asked to describe what her dissertation reminded her of, Hannah described being "isolated.... in my little dark cave with the only light coming from my little laptop screen." She said she found the experience "ironic" given that in order to complete this project about relationships she had to "cut myself off to get it done."

Themes

This section presents the themes which emerged from data analysis. The interview questions were designed to explore one or more of the three research questions:

(1) What are students' perceptions of their journey through the dissertation writing process? (2) What are students' perceptions of the relationships (or lack of relationships) they have with faculty, advisors, and mentors? and (3) What are the implications of students' perceptions on their choice of future career paths? The answers to these questions will be analyzed utilizing the lens of self-in-relation theory as discussed in the review of literature.

The organization of this section is driven by the women's descriptions of their journeys through the dissertation process. Some of the women overtly described their journey as positive or negative, whereas others have been placed in a particular category based on phrases or descriptors that connoted a positive or negative experience. This section will begin by presenting the participants who had a positive experience and identifying factors that contributed to their experience. Next it will present women who had a mid-range experiences and identify factors contributing to their experiences. These experiences do not fall neatly into the category of 'neutral,' rather there are two subsets of the mid-range experiences: 1) women who experienced an upswing or positive change over time in their journey, and 2) women who had combination or ambivalent experiences, neither purely positive nor purely negative. Next this section will present women who had negative or damaging experiences during their journey, as well as the factors that contributed to these experiences. Finally, this section will explore the factors that contributed to the unique experiences of each woman, as well as commonalities and differences in these stories as they contribute to creating more positive or more negative experience.

Positive Experiences

"Oh my goodness, I know how to research." –Hannah, 28

Hannah, who completed a qualitative dissertation on mentoring relationships among women in Christian academia, described a mostly positive writing experience. Hannah's response to the question regarding how her journey through the dissertation process influenced the way she felt about research exemplifies the qualities that set her experience apart from that of the other participants. She had this to say,

> I actually had a really overall positive experience. That's one of the reasons I chose this group and why I chose this topic. I had to have something that would capture my attention and that I wouldn't hate when I was done, otherwise I wouldn't have finished it. I had a very good experience and would do it again, maybe not something of that magnitude, but I would be excited to teach other people how to do it. I remember at my oral defense thinking, "Oh my goodness, I know how to do research." You know it was very validating, like all this work has paid off.

At the end of her journey, Hannah articulated feelings of efficacy and validation. In addition, she expressed interest in completing future research projects as well as sharing her experiences with others through teaching. Hannah felt her participation in a research group contributed to her positive experience during her dissertation journey. She related,

> I really attribute my success in getting it done to my research group and my committee members [who lead the research group]. They had done a qualitative project, so they really taught me about qualitative methodology and had me read different things. I learned a lot just from talking to them and then participating in

other projects before I got to mine. I would also bring interview transcripts to the group and we would talk about them and look at themes. A lot of dialogue happened with this project. It was definitely a collaborative effort. I did not feel isolated doing this project, which was good.

Hannah's comments point to two facilitative factors provided by membership in the research group. The first factor is the relational aspect of the research group and the second factor is the scaffolding or structure provided by the group. Hannah referred to her journey as collaborative and she emphasized the importance of her relationships with her fellow group members as well as the leaders of the research group. She even went so far as to attribute her success to her membership in the group. Her descriptions demonstrated a real investment in and connection to the group. Cook states, "Women experience a sense of empowerment or 'zest' that derives from relational connection and provides energy to act in the world" (Cook, 1993, p. 17).

As discussed previously in the review of literature, feminist perspectives on women's development have offered a new frame for exploring the centrality of connection to development (Gilligan, 1982; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Miller, 1986a). A number of feminist scholars have used the words 'connection' and 'disconnection' to refer to ways of knowing or gaining knowledge (Balenky, Clinchy, Goldberg, and Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986a, 1991; and Jordan, 1991). Balenky and her colleagues (1986) describe connected learning as having an intimacy or relationship between the knower and what is known and suggest that "connected knowers learn through empathy" (p.115). They suggest that in connected-knowing groups members feel free to bring ideas that aren't fully formed to the group

and trust other members to help nurture and grow their ideas (Balenky, et al., 1986). Hannah described a process very similar to this "connected way of knowing." Specifically, Hannah identified having constant feedback from and connection with her committee and her research group as important to her process.

> Having other people read it that were distant from the project was helpful and then talking to my committee members. We talked a lot about the process in the group, in terms of how it as going and what I was feeling about it, what the next step was, all of that. I think just getting some, not even really feedback, but affirmation was very helpful. ... Often I was on the right track and I was doing fine, but I just needed to hear that I was.

Another factor Hannah identified as helpful was the scaffolding or structure provided by her research group and her program. Hannah previously described scaffolding in her research group, where she was first encouraged to listen and read, then to participate on other research projects before finally embarking on her own research project. In addition, her program included a step between the proposal and the oral defense called the "data colloquium." During this meeting, Hannah was able to present her analysis and findings to her committee and get feedback from them which allowed her to "revamp" and "reorganize" in preparation for her oral defense.

> I feel so lucky to have had that structure in place. I didn't have to create it, it was already there and I just had to become a part of it. I think that's what students need. ...The research group was huge. I wouldn't be done, I'm sure, because I don't know that I'm that self motivated to get it done.

At first glance, the subtlety of Hannah's statement about structure being "what students need" belies its incisiveness. Although it seems obvious that breaking a larger task down into smaller more manageable "chunks" would facilitate progress through a project, many of the students who were interviewed for the current project did not have the benefit of an existing structure within their program or the guidance of faculty to provide necessary scaffolding. Hannah's observation becomes that much more significant in contrast to the descriptions of other participants who lacked the structure she credits with facilitating her journey. Many of the descriptions of other participants contain allusions to feeling lost, confused, insecure, or alone.

Hannah described her process as collaborative, however she also acknowledged a feeling of isolation inherent to her process. She addressed the importance of her connections to community in remediating these feelings of isolation. Relational theory posits that "connection involves the respectful negotiation of difference that facilitates growth and the emergence of something new (Walker, 2004, p. 9)." This connection creates a mutually empowering dynamic that facilitates mobilization of energy, resources, and strengths. The relationship is both the motivation and the vehicle for growth and development (Jordan, et al., 1991). In this case, Hannah's relationship with her research group allowed her to overcome her feelings of isolation and insecurity and to develop a sense of efficacy and integration into a community.

> Getting pretty consistent feedback was very helpful on at least my first three chapters....It was so helpful to have my committee say, "Ok, focus here. You don't need to look at all these other extra things." ... I think writing a dissertation can feel so isolating, you know? I'm in my little office, with my little laptop for

> hours with all these papers surrounding me and trying to make sense of all this research that's already been done....So consistent feedback was huge because I felt pretty insecure that I was totally not on the right track. I had no idea what I was doing.

Hannah initially joined her research group because she had a colleague in the group who was having a fun time and this piqued her interest. Additionally, she was unhappy with her assigned advisor and wanted to transfer to a faculty member who was a better match for her. Hannah was assigned to her initial advisor during orientation week. The assignments were made without student input on the process and this was problematic for Hannah. She related,

> I knew going into it I would not do my research under my advisor. That's kind of how it works at my school is that you're assigned to someone but you don't have to stay with that person. Once you pick someone new you transfer advisorship. ...I knew from our initial interaction that this probably was not going to work. And I didn't like being put in the position, as a student....to explain to one advisor this is why I'm switching. That just didn't feel good. It didn't feel like it should have been my responsibility. I should have been able to choose what a good fit was.

Hannah succinctly addressed the paradox many students face; students are often expected to perform tasks as mature and independent professionals even though they are in subordinate and dependent positions (Lovitts, 1996). The issue of negotiating advising relationships is a complex one because of the inherent power dynamics and Hannah was expected to negotiate the subtle politics of these relationships without the benefit of a

safety net, assistance or guidance from others. Female students' educational needs often go unmet when they experience a mismatch in learning or teaching style with a mentor or advisor's teaching style (Leibenluft, Dial, Haviland, & Pincus, 1993). Although a sub-par academic experience is an unappealing prospect, addressing the issue of fit with a faculty member who may continue to be in an evaluative position over the student may seem equally unappealing. Hannah eventually found a good fit with one of the faculty members who led the research group she joined, firmly cementing her membership within an interconnected academic community. Hannah described her relationship with new advisor as inseparable from that of the research group.

> Part of that relationship [with her advisor] is also the relationship with the research group as a whole. They were very open to looking at women's issues and there was a lot of freedom and dialogue in the group. It was a very safe space to explore and my dissertation chair was just so knowledgeable and had so much to offer.

Although Hannah described her advisor/chair as very supportive, respectful, and empowering, she also acknowledged that their relationship was not immediately smooth or well defined.

> It was interesting and kind of difficult at times to try to know how to navigate that relationship because we were working closely, but we're not like friends because you're my dissertation chair and you're a faculty member at my school. So, there is kind of that power differential but we're in this very collegial discussion all the time. We're not friends, but we kind of interact that way. Then as I progressed

through the program and I'm becoming closer and closer to her level, like right now on internship, the relationship looks different again.

Hannah identified that it was not just her relationship with her advisor/chair she had to learn how to negotiate and re-negotiate over time, but her relationship with her research group. Schramm (2000) refers to this as being "betwixt and between," or a kind of marginalization wherein a person experiences a sense of not belonging, or feeling isolated or alienated from the mainstream (p. 5). However, mentors can facilitate a meaningful connection within the academic community by creating a participatory space for students to cultivate their skills and identity (Schramm, 2000). Hannah, was able to move from this place of "betwixt and between" to a place of self-actualization through the guidance of her advisor and participation in her research group.

> When I started, one of my really good friends was in it, so it was nice to have someone to ask, how does this work? What are we doing? And to see her go through the process. ...When I started I was kind of the underdog, just learning. I felt like I was just sitting there observing everything and at the end I really could give my experience to the second years we had coming in to the group.

Hannah began investigating her dissertation research on mentoring, because she had never had a mentor.

> I chose mentoring relationships primarily because I didn't have them, so it really intrigued me. It's something I thought I would have when I started graduate school and it didn't happen. I was a little baffled by that and it kind of piqued my interests. ...I guess I had this ideal that someone would pursue me and say, "Oh, I want you to further this research" or whatever. That didn't happen and I didn't

know what to do. I knew there was this aspect of academic life missing and so I wanted to educate myself about what it looks like. I had ideas about what mentoring looks like, but I definitely learned a lot. So it was a kind of void that it grew out of, this void of something that I didn't have that I wanted.

Although Hannah described a collaborative experience and good relationships with her advisor, her committee and her research group, she was still looking for this 'mentorship' experience that she called a "void" in her journey.

> My hope is that there is a mentor out there for me. I thought about it recently, I know that I can always touch base with my chair and that she will be available, but we live 1000 miles apart now and that makes it a little harder....My confidence is higher than it was a year and half ago and I learned a ton, but I still want some guidance.

Summary

On the one hand, Hannah described a nearly ideal journey through her dissertation. Looking at her journey through the lens of self-in-relation theory, we can see that Hannah experienced "the five good things" Miller (1986b) identified as the positive outcomes associated with connection. She articulated a feeling of energy or zest after her defense, an increased sense of efficacy or ability to act, as well as a better sense of her identity and worth as a researcher and a member of her research group. She enjoyed supportive relationships with faculty members and peers and had regular communication with and feedback from her advisor, other committee members and her research group. In addition, Hannah acknowledged feelings of validation and competency which resulted from the completion of the project. On the other hand,

Hannah gave voice to feelings of isolation, self-doubt, and insecurity. She identified that her own insecurity and lack of motivation might have undermined her ability to complete her project if she had not had the structure and connection of the research group to use as a sounding board, support group, and source of accountability during her journey. Integration is "the extent to which the individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution and abides by the formal and informal structural requirements for membership in the community or in the subgroups of which the individual is a part" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 53). Integration within a community is a result of positive or satisfying experiences. Although Hannah did not get the kind of mentorship that she was looking for during her journey, she did have positive and satisfying experiences and she was able to find connection and integration within the community provided by the research group. This membership enhanced the quality of her journey and presents a contrast to many of the other journeys that will follow.

Mid-Range Experiences

This section will present women who had a mid-range experience and will identify significant contributing factors. These experiences do not fall neatly into the category of 'neutral,' rather there are two subsets of the mid-range experiences: 1) women who experienced an upswing or positive change over time in their journey, and 2) women who had combination or ambivalent experiences, neither purely positive nor purely negative. The categories of positive experiences and negative experiences were identified by analyzing differences between participants' descriptions of their journey, these categories were identified by also analyzing the differences in descriptions that evolved within individual interviews. Whereas the women who fell into the categories at

the extremes of the spectrum expressed fairly consistent positive or negative feelings, the women who fell into the midrange category expressed more equivocal or ambivalent feelings. These women appeared to move from one end of the spectrum to the other, as with the women who were identified as experiencing an upswing, or they jumped back and forth expressing simultaneous positive, negative, or uncertain feelings.

Upswing Experiences

"Since this committee has come together it's kind of renewed my sense of hope and energy" – Britt, 34.

Britt began by describing a fairly traumatizing experience. Problems with the university administration system led to a reorganization of her university and eventual merger with a second institution. As a result, she was forced to completely reconstitute her committee with members from the new institution. Prior to these programmatic changes, Britt had received approval of her dissertation proposal. After the reorganization she was told her original project would not be acceptable under the guidelines of the new institution and she would have to re-conceive her entire project. In her own words, she described this as, "a very, very long, arduous process," "difficult," "frustrating," and "disappointing." The introduction and review of literature enumerated the many ways changes in higher education from "...downsizing and underfunding to increased corporatization" (Lovitts & Nelson, 2000, p. 44) were impacting graduate student's experiences, here Britt related the impact the these events had on her,

> If I had known the kind of financial difficulties and administrative problems that would have occurred, I would have chosen a different university. The first critical incident was the bankruptcy and the turmoil and trickle down effect that it had.

> Even though our department did nothing wrong and our faculty did nothing wrong, our resources were depressed. We couldn't make phone calls and we couldn't get photocopy paper because we ran out of money... to the point where our machines, our computers, would break down and we couldn't call service people to come service them. It had a large trickle down effect and the morale of the staff and faculty was significantly compromised and students who are on the lowest end of the hierarchy got the brunt of it.

Britt's description of the instability in her program and her university is a stark contrast to the order and structure described by Hannah. Not only did Britt not experience integration into an academic community, she witnessed the complete disintegration of her program. At the same time the university was going through this turmoil, Britt's research mentor and advisor left the university. "She pretty much told me I was on my own. That meant I couldn't use any of the data she and I had collected together as part of our research team." Britt explained that it was particularly stressful to lose her research mentor because she had worked with her for four years. In addition, her mentor was part of the reason Britt had chosen to attend this particular university. Britt described her mentor as, "very inviting, very open, very energetic. She was wonderful in what she did, very astute, very knowledgeable." Britt's use of favorable terms to describe her mentor is contradicted by her description of her advisor's behavior towards her and the eventual deterioration of their relationship.

A mentee, by definition, is in a position of less power because mentoring relationships are "inherently unequal and non-reciprocal" (Schramm, 2000, p.5). Therefore entering into a mentoring relationship requires more trust on the part of the

mentee (Schramm, 2000). Mentoring has frequently been identified as a strategy for women to overcome barriers and learn how to negotiate systems, however a closer examination of mentoring brings these assumptions into question. Research indicates that when mentoring relationships are available to women, they may not be as significant or useful as they could be (Egan, 1994; Hansman, Mott, Ellinger, & Guy, 2002). Mentoring is often assumed to be a positive experience and there is some hesitation to explore the damaging consequences of a negative mentoring experience. As alluded to in the review of literature, traditional mentoring relationships tend to be hierarchically structured and this may lead to paternalistic exchanges where the mentor assumes to know better than their mentees and denies or distorts the lived experience of the mentee. Additionally, there may be the implied notion that the mentee will uncritically accept the values and norms modeled for them and become replicas of their mentors (Hansman, et al., 2002). These negative exchanges effectively serve to silence the mentee.

Power issues are inherent to mentoring relationships, however creating an awareness and addressing these dynamics can facilitate the mentoring relationship. Britt described a mentoring experience where these power dynamics were ignored and she was silenced. She related that her advisor "instilled a sense of competitiveness and competition among her students." This competition created conflict and resentment between Britt and the other members of her research group. Britt described working in an unfunded position on the research team, but being expected to commit the same time and energy to the project as her funded counterparts. Britt was clearly marginalized in this research group, however she may have had difficulty voicing her frustration or advocating for herself with someone she held in high esteem or prestige, like her mentor.

Many female students tend to underestimate their actual abilities (Alder, 1976; Ekstrom, Beir, Davis, & Gruenberg, 1981; Hanson, 1992; Hite, 1985). Fear of ridicule and failure may act as barriers keeping women from achieving at their potential within the academy (Conners & Franklin, 1999). Tiny mistakes may be used as evidence of their incompetence and they may fear saying 'no' to a request from faculty because they want to avoid the perception that they are unhelpful or unwilling to participate (Conners & Franklin, 1999). Although she does not identify fears of failure, ridicule, or rejection as motivation for her actions, Britt clearly felt as though she could not say 'no' to her advisor without feeling some negative repercussions. "Many students come to feel inadequate and, therefore, may reify and attribute this inadequacy to themselves instead of the structure of the situation" (Lovitts, 1996).

Although the circumstances are different, this situation bears some resemblance to one that Hannah described. Hannah became frustrated when she was put in the position to negotiate the politics of changing advisorship, however she located her frustration within a dysfunctional system. Britt appeared to have internalized the conflict with her research group because her response was to work twice as hard in order to be seen as good enough.

> Because of the competitiveness of the group, they started feeling that I wasn't pulling my load or wasn't doing what I needed to so they would tell her things. She [Britt's mentor] pretty much took their side of it even though I was getting my work done. Eventually she said, "Well, you just have to put in your time and show up just so other people can see that you're doing work, even if you're doing it at another time." That was the bottom line and I tried to do what I could but it

was difficult because they were getting paid to do what they needed to do and I still had the responsibility to do the work, but I was unpaid. I was expected to be there above and beyond what I was supposed to be doing and that didn't sit well with me. And so, I did less and less work with her and as a result our relationship deteriorated more and more.

Although Britt was able to articulate that she had been treated unfairly by her advisor, she continued to work for her because she had invested time and energy into this research group and she thought she would eventually benefit by being able to use the data from their research. Britt was in a tenuous position. Regardless of whether or not her mentor was treating her fairly, Britt was obliged to go along and become complicit in her own oppression or risk losing access to the research project in which she had already invested several years of her time and energy. Unfortunately, Britt's experience with her advisor was not that unusual. Ervin (1995) found that women graduate students' mentoring experiences were often characterized by "fierce negotiation," infantilization, prejudicial grading, and silencing resulting from mentors lording "their authority over their subjects" (p. 447). Students are socialized in programs that emphasize independence and they are not immune to internalizing messages that they must do things on their own to be seen as competent. Having to ask for help may be perceived as a sign of vulnerability or incompetence and therefore students may not reach out for help. Britt was not able to get the guidance and support she needed from her research mentor and she did not ask for help from other faculty members. Her negative experiences led to a feeling of marginalization within the group and as a result she began to withdraw. In previous chapters, it was asserted that encounters that reduce integration can result in individuals

distancing themselves from the both the academic and social communities of their academic programs (Johnson, et al., 1995). Although Britt did distance herself from her research group and her mentor, she was able to find connection outside of her academic program. Britt related that as her relationship with her research mentor deteriorated, she began to seek out support and mentorship from other people.

> I ended up working in different practicum settings and people understood what was going on with the school, so when I shared some of my frustrations and difficulties with my supervisors, they took me under their wing and provided some extra help and support. They said, "Whatever we can do to help you get through this, we will." And so, they provided me with resources and emotional support that I needed. I developed relationships with the supervisors that I worked with and they kind of served as different types of mentors along the way.

Britt was able to find the "resources and emotional support" she needed from her clinical supervisors during her practica. The significance of these connections to Britt's emotional health as well as her dissertation journey can not be overstated, as her dissertation topic resulted from a connection she made with a practicum supervisor. This should not be seen as a criticism of the academic faculty, rather Britt's experiences may point to another facet for understanding counseling psychology students' journeys. It is important to consider and understand the implications of clinical work and clinical faculty on the direction and quality of students' journeys.

As outlined in the review of literature, the expectations for development of clinical and research skills in counseling psychology graduate programs are vastly different, with more emphasis placed on learning clinical skills (Frank, 1984). Because of

the extensive requirements for supervision of and training in clinical skills, students may have more frequent and in-depth contact with clinical faculty. Therefore clearly understanding the role that clinical faculty have along students' journeys may facilitate our understanding of how to improve their experiences. Britt described how having the support of and connection to the counseling center facilitated her journey developing her research topic.

> At that time, I started branching off and working at the counseling center. Through my work there, I was involved in career exploration workshops, which I really truly like and believe in....I thought this would make a great research topic because as I started looking into the area there was very little research or program evaluations done on career interventions.... I got the support of the director of the counseling center there. We had been running the workshops together, so I knew that I had a base of subjects and I knew that I had administrative support and that's how I came up with the topic.

Although Britt's story began by describing the deleterious effects of deteriorating relationships: the deterioration of her relationships with her university, her program, her dissertation committee, her research mentor, and her research team, she ended the interview on a much more positive or hopeful note. The upswing in her story occurred after the reorganization of her university and it was characterized by a re-integration into the academic community of her new department.

> I actually am very optimistic about it. I'm very energized. Like I said, it's been a long process but since this committee has come together it's kind of renewed my sense of hope and energy. The players are different and the setting is different

and it's just a whole different ballpark and so everything seems like it's moving at warp speed, which makes me feel good.

Britt identified several factors that helped her continue her journey despite the many challenges she encountered.

> I think the main thing is the drive and perseverance to get through... I had an idea that grad school was not going to be an idealistic experience and that it was going to be pretty arduous at times and disillusioning and so I came in with low expectations. I think that helped a lot. It also helped that I really love what I do. I knew that no matter what it took, I was going to get through it one way or another, so the perseverance, the drive was also a major factor. Another thing is that I was resourceful and was able to find people who would be supportive, who had the resources, who would be able to help me. So, utilizing resources and the support of other people was extremely helpful and the support of friends and family. I don't think I could have done it without them.

Summary.

Britt's story epitomized the idea of positive change over time or an upswing in the dissertation journey. Although she ended her journey on a positive note, describing feelings of hope and optimism with her new committee, it does not negate the damaging effects of the chaos caused by her university declaring bankruptcy and her mentor abandoning her. To honor Britt's lived experience and allow her to give voice to her story, both the positive and negative aspects must be addressed as both shaped her journey. Britt's resiliency and perseverance in seeking out relationships highlighted the importance of relationships to her journey. Her story also pointed to the importance of

understanding power dynamics in relationships at the university level. Many students who experience negative encounters, marginalization, disconnection, and a lack of integration into the academic and social community withdraw (Johnson, et al., 1995; Pascarella &Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). The factors that might have contributed to Britt's withdrawal from her program are obvious and numerous, however it is equally important to identify the individual, relational, and systems level factors that contributed to her retention despite her negative experiences. She identified relationships with her clinical supervisors as an important facilitating factor on her journey.

The upswing in Britt's journey did not occur until after the reorganization of her university, when she was able to re-constitute her dissertation committee. When asked to identify factors that facilitated her journey, Britt referred to a number of individual factors: perseverance, resourcefulness, motivation, and networking skills. These descriptors are all related to the umbrella concept of resilience, or the ability to bounce back or recover strength. There is very little doubt that these skills were necessary to persist in a system as chaotic as the one Britt experienced. However, these skills only allowed her to maintain the status quo, it was only when her program was re-constituted under the new university system and she was able to create working relationships with new committee members that Britt was able to move forward on her journey. These individual or person-centered factors necessitate the existence of relational and systems factors to be fully actualized.

The concept of relational resilience may help to shed light on how the individual and relational come together to facilitate transformation of disconnections. Britt had experienced a number of disconnections within important relationships, however she was

able to transform her experiences and re-connect with the members of her new committee to form a strong working alliance. Britt began to identify some of the "five good things," feeling energized and having a sense of movement or action, after her committee was reconstituted (Miller, 1986b). Britt's description of her work with her original mentor highlighted the opposite of these feelings, she described feeling confused, disempowered, and withdrawing from her research group. Britt's journey reinforced the notion that relationships were central to the dissertation process and it highlighted the distinction between the effects of damaging and healing relationships on the process.

"I look at things very differently now." –Angela, 33.

The second participant who falls into this category is Angela. Angela described her journey as "a nightmare, it wasn't even a journey." There were a number of parallels between Angela's and Britt's journeys. Angela also completed two dissertation projects, lost her research mentor and had to replace her dissertation chair. Her description of her journey vacillated between "thoughts of dropping out" and being able to express the benefits of her experience, "I have a lot to offer...this is where my interests are and I feel like I could be a change agent. I think without writing this dissertation I wouldn't feel like I could be a change agent."

In the end, Angela was able to reframe her experience and focus on the positive outcome, however during her journey she described feelings of insecurity, abandonment and isolation that were compounded by her lack of prior research experience. Angela expressed her frustration regarding a perceived lack of guidance on the part of her program and her advisor. She related,

> Just hearing that you had to do a dissertation almost made me not go to graduate school for a second time. When I got my Master's degree, I did the option not to do a thesis because I hate research and so I did comprehensive exams. Then I found out I had to do a dissertation to get my Ph.D. ... Because I hate research, I think I was more scared. ... So, as I started, I just remember being very anxious about having to do a dissertation, asking people what it means, what does a proposal look like? I had absolutely no idea. And it was a little frustrating because not until my third year in the program did we have a research class where someone finally showed me a proposal. I'm sitting here going, "Ok, I'm supposed to be writing what?" So, I have no proposal, no idea ...and I'm like, "And I write what?" So I was very lost. Everybody else in my program had done a thesis of some sort, so I'm the only one feeling like a fish flopping around going, "I have no idea what I'm doing."

Angela's feelings of confusion and insecurity were likely compounded by several factors. In addition to Angela's self-identified fear and hatred of research, her limited previous experience, and the lack of perceived guidance provided by her program, Angela's mentor and advisor left the university as she was getting ready to propose. Angela had initially decided to attend this particular university because of her connection to her advisor. She and her advisor both identified as Native American; however, Angela points out that some of the challenges she experienced in her relationship with her advisor were related to cultural differences.

> My advisor, she was the reason I went to the university, because she's Native American. She is very scattered, very unorganized, and it's tough because there is

> some cultural stuff there, as far as time frames. She often ran on what we call Indian time, which means there was no time. It was tough. I couldn't pin point anything down with her. She never gave me a copy of her own dissertation or her proposal or anything. It was like pulling teeth. At that point, I went to a colleague and said, "Hey, I know that you're done with your proposal, can I see your proposal? Because I don't know what I need to put in there." That's when I realized that my advisor wasn't doing everything she needed to be doing.

Austin (2002) noted that students often receive insufficient feedback and mentoring from faculty related to the fundamental requirements of negotiating their graduate programs, including "rules, processes, and expectations about comprehensive exams, dissertation proposals, and doctoral committees" (pp. 105-106). In the absence of this guidance, students are often forced to rely on their peers for support, as in Angela's situation. After consulting with her colleague, Angela began researching her literature review and writing up her proposal. Angela's relationship with her advisor continued to disintegrate, however, which had a significant impact on her dissertation journey.

> When I actually got a format, I started doing my write up and did all the research on my instruments and did my lit review and figured out my methods. I basically had my first three chapters written and I was ready to propose and I didn't get feedback on the chapters at all. I was still feeling like I was in the dark. At that time, I was sitting down with the boxes of data and I realized there was no standardized testing. They were all done by different people and they were all scored differently. I felt like this wasn't going to work. I went and explained to my advisor what happened and she said, "Oh, I didn't know that." ... The next

week after that happened, I found out she was leaving. The only reason I found out was because I went to her office. There were boxes everywhere and I was like, "What are all these boxes for?" And she said, "Oh, I took a job somewhere else." I said, "Now what do I do?" and her comment was, "Well, I could still be on your committee." I never heard from her again.

This relational disconnection impacted Angela's feelings of self-worth, as well as her progress through her program.

> I didn't know what I was doing with research and knowing that I was depending on her and to have her just walk out on me, I felt totally abandoned. I felt that I wasn't worth the time to sit down and talk to, to even say, "you know I'm having a really hard time here and I need to look for another job and I have a couple of offers, but I hate to leave you." ... It took about six to nine months before I went to another advisor. I was just so burned out and so frustrated. ...I just couldn't go there again. Emotionally I was a wreck. I was taking 18-21 credits as it was, and I said, "I don't want to redo this." I thought about dropping out, I'll just be ABD and I just won't do it. It took me six to nine months before I would even face the tune of having to start all over.

Angela finally approached the training director of the program to discuss her dilemma. Angela initially attributed her struggles in graduate school to internal factors, her lack of prior experience and training in research and low self-efficacy. If she had continued to blame herself and had not recognized the more complex interaction of institutional and individual factors, Angela might not have been able to express her concerns. Lovitts

(1996) found that students who were able to "give voice to their discontent" (p. 11) were more likely to persist in their programs than students who remained silent.

> I felt like I could go to him and be able to say, "I'm really pissed that this happened to me. I need to get through this program. You're the training director, and you know what? You need to help me." I put it more on someone else to help me because I got screwed in this deal. At that point, I think he realized, "Wow. We have someone that's going to be in their fourth year and hasn't done anything." The heat was on. It happened to be an opportune time that we were having this discussion as he'd been working on designing his research that he was going to be doing when he was on sabbatical. Which was a whole 'nother thing, he was going on sabbatical.

Angela's journey to this point was a struggle, she described feeling isolated, abandoned, and frustrated. She felt as though she was the "only one" who was struggling with the research requirements and she lacked guidance from her advisor or any other faculty in the department. Angela not only failed to experience integration into or connection to the academic community of her department, she felt her advisor had rejected her. The literature suggests integration or membership in the academic community is important to persistence and by Angela's own admission, she contemplated dropping out of her program (Lovitts & Nelson, 2000; Tinto, 1993). Angela did persist, though; she was able to positively reframe her initial struggles and give meaning to her experiences. Angela identified several factors which contributed to persistence and eventual success in her journey to complete her dissertation. One factor was connecting with the people who became the co-chairs of her dissertation committee, her training

director, Dr. X, and a Native American faculty member from another department, Dr. Y. Angela related that she relied heavily on Dr. Y during this process because Dr. X was on sabbatical.

> She gave me so much feedback. It usually took about a week, but she was on it as soon as I turned something in. She wrote it all up and sent it back to me with examples....I mean very concrete examples and I think having that encouraged me that I could make this happen....I was very, very tight with Dr. Y. I was her research assistant, so we talked a lot about culture, about deadlines, about how it's hard to figure out how to be respectful to your Native culture and work in a Western world with these deadlines. That was probably the most beneficial thing, having that relationship with her and being able to talk about how my culture doesn't really push me to have certain deadlines, and how to approach my culture from a research perspective....Dr. Y was wonderful. She gave me a lot of help about talking to elders first before I go to the tribal committee. She did a lot of that type of mentoring. There were times when we went to dinner or we would meet for coffee or something. She made herself available to me no matter how busy she was. She would always get back to me. I could call her and I would know I would have a call back within 24 hours, even if it was just her saying "Angela, I'm really busy, I'll give you a call tomorrow." There was something, some sort of contact. That was pivotal.

Tinto (1993) suggests that frequent contact with faculty is important to student's academic persistence. Although classroom contact is important, "encounters which go beyond the mere formalities of academic work to broader intellectual and social issues

and which are seen by students to be warm and rewarding appear to be strongly associated with continued persistence" (Tinto, 1993, p. 57).

In addition to her relationship with Dr. Y, Angela also identified relationships with other significant people in her environment as critical. Angela related that she became very close with two of her colleagues and they created a safe space where they could all support each other. She also got support from her clinical supervisor during her practicum.

> I had two very, very close colleagues in my cohort. We had a group we called the "Bitch Group" where we could just come together and scream and yell and whatever and talk about, "Ok, this is what I attempted to do and this is how I fell on my face." It was really nice to have somebody else going through the process to get feedback from....My supervisor at the counseling center always checked in, every single week, asking, "How's the dissertation going? How's your research going? How can I be helpful?" ...It was a really supportive environment like that....It all comes back to relationships and it comes back to respect and it was inside my program and outside.

A second factor Angela identified as helpful was creating a structure for herself to guide her journey through the writing process. Unlike Hannah, who was able to utilize the existing structure of her program and research groups, Angela had to create her own structure.

> Once I got the template from my girlfriend, it was pretty much outlined. I went and I looked up some old dissertations from different departments at our university on this style and how they wrote. I was one of the only qualitative ones

> in our department, so I didn't have much to look at from our department. What I did was just kind of mush all that together....I outlined it and then with each article I read, I put them on a 6x9 flashcard and I would write the title, the topics, and how I want to use it in my dissertation. I had things organized by headings and then I would go to my cards and I would find the article that it related to and I just kept writing....I felt very organized in the process. Doing the analysis was very difficult. That was very different because I didn't have a lot of help on the analysis part as far as figuring out how I was going to set it up. While I was on internship I went and talked with somebody who was the qualitative guru and he gave me a copy of one of the dissertations he chaired and sat down with me and talked about how I could make it flow. That was so helpful because from that I got a structure of what I needed to do, so once again I had a template.

Much like Britt's description of her journey from chaos to optimism, we see a vacillation between two extremes with Angela. Unlike Britt, though, Angela was able to give voice to her frustrations and locate some of the responsibility for her problems within the university system. While Britt may have had many reasons to withdraw from her program, Angela actually gave voice to this issue. Her negative experiences, isolation, abandonment, confusion, insecurity, and lack of integration or connection culminated in Angela actively considering dropping out of her program. Half of all doctoral students who leave the university without completing their dissertation do so because of poor relationships with their advisors or another committee member (Jacks, Chubin, Portoer, & Connolly, 1983).

Although she recognized her advisor was not "doing everything she needed to be doing," it was not until her advisor actually left the university and "abandoned" her that Angela began to contemplate leaving. Angela's relationship with her first advisor had been damaging as a result of processes and outcomes that were "power laden, frequently unexamined, and uncritically applied" (Mott, 2002, p. 10). Angela was able to give meaning to her experience and connect with a community, which allowed her to move from a point of fatigue, disempowerment, confusion, low-self worth, and withdrawal to a point of experiencing the "5 good things" (Miller, 1986b).

Angela's resilience enabled her to seek connections with Dr. Y and Dr. X, and connecting with them enabled her to experience feelings of increased energy, productiveness, efficacy, self-worth, and clarity. This distinction can be seen in the contrast between the descriptions Angela gave of her emotional state when she found out her mentor was leaving the university and her emotional state when she was working with Dr. Y. The upswing in Angela's journey is most clearly highlighted in her description of her current view of herself as a researcher.

> I look at things very differently now... I recognize that I have a lot to offer and I didn't realize the knowledge that I had actually gained about research in five years. I realize I have a lot of knowledge that I can give to people...

Summary.

Angela's story of her journey, much like Britt's, centralized the need to examine power dynamics in faculty/student relationships. Both of these women indicated their decision for attending their particular university was influenced by the opportunity to work with their advisor. Clearly these advising relationships carried enormous power

and enormous potential for abuse. Relational theory posits self esteem is related to "the degree of emotional sharing, openness, and shared sense of understanding and regard," and that guilt and shame result from failed mutual relationships (Surrey, 1991, p. 57). These failures in mutual relationships can be re-mediated and re-integrated as "challenges for further relational growth" if women are able to connect with other growth promoting relationships (Surrey, 1991, p. 57). Both Britt and Angela were able to make meaning out of the challenges they experienced during their journeys once they were able to connect with other significant relationships.

In addition, Angela repeatedly articulated a need for structure and guidance. "Many doctoral students find it difficult to make the transition from the structure of the classroom environment to the lack of structure of the dissertation" (Williams, 1997, p. 16). Angela clearly found this transition difficult, however she was dogged in seeking out organizing structures from peers or outside faculty when she could not get what she needed from within her program. This pattern was repeated in Gina's journey, which will be examined next.

"I feel like I could win that award for most improved" – Gina, 31.

Gina is the third, and final, participant who described an upswing in her journey. Gina's dissertation explored the question of why young people who are not married stay in violent relationships. Using longitudinal data, she applied two theoretical perspectives, investment model and attachment theory, to examine her question. When asked to describe her journey though the dissertation process, Gina had this to say,

> It was a hard journey. I mean it was a long journey.... I found the journey to be challenging because, in my program, I felt like my advisor was helpful in a

number of ways and then he wasn't helpful in a number of ways. There were times when I felt like I was kind of out on my own in the process. He was helpful in that we would meet and talk about, where are you going with that, what are your steps, setting goals, that kind of thing.... But I felt like he wasn't available very often to meet with me.

Unlike Angela, Gina did have prior research experience and she compared her journey through the dissertation to experience she had while she was an undergraduate.

> I thought back to my undergrad and I did an undergrad research project and I had an advisor and we met one hour each week. I mean we had a time the whole year, my senior year, and the project went beautifully. She really worked through the process with me and I felt like he was pretty unavailable for that kind of stuff, in terms of thinking through questions, the statistics of it, or how do I analyze this or how do I get through the tougher spots. I felt like I was a little bit out on my own. That made the process challenging but at the same time, in some ways, I think I learned through trial by fire.

The contrast between Gina's perceptions of her undergraduate and graduate research experiences emphasized a nuance of the research training environment that was not explored in the previous participants' stories. Gina's prior research experience did not make it easier for her to do research at the graduate level, rather it seemed to add to her confusion and insecurity. In her study of graduate school attrition, Lovitts (1996, p.2) found that "in all instances" non-completers "indicated that they had closer, warmer, and more personal and intellectually exciting interactions" with their undergraduate faculty. She suggested that undergraduate students who are more integrated into the academic

community may develop the expectation that they will experience the same level of integration at the graduate level and become disillusioned when this does not occur (Lovitts, 1996). Gina expressed this disillusionment and, similar to Angela, she gave voice to feelings of abandonment and isolation. Women value long term relationships and their sense of competence and effectiveness are tied to relational connections (Miller, 1991). Surrey stated this mutuality is a "fundamental aspect of learning" (1991, p.58). This is reflected in Gina's description of her undergraduate experience and Gina made it clear that she considered her relationship with her graduate advisor to be a fundamental aspect of her learning process and dissertation journey. She expressed hurt and frustration when he encouraged her to get a new dissertation chair the year he went on sabbatical. Gina remarked that she felt if she could not depend on him to help her, she did not know who she could turn to for guidance.

> In my second year I kind of started thinking through the idea and in my third year I really started putting it to work, writing up my lit review and all that stuff. I think it was after that year that he [her advisor] was going to go on sabbatical. He sat me down in the office with him and I mean we had gone through the oral paper and all this stuff and he was saying, "I don't know if you'd want to get a different advisor." I was so livid. I was like, "You are not dropping me now, I'm sorry if you are going on sabbatical." He had gone this far and I felt like who could I get to help me out with this process? He stayed with me, but it was kind of like he wasn't with me that year.

Her sense of abandonment and isolation became a central organizing factor in Gina's description of her journey. It was clear that her perceived loss impacted her experience in

a negative way. This encounter reduced her sense of integration in the academic community as she felt disconnected from the one person in the academy whom she relied on to provide her access to resources, support in negotiating challenges, and guidance through the process of writing a dissertation. Additionally, this disconnection sent the message that she was not worth her advisor's investment of time or resources. Women often feel unsupported in their writing and research pursuits and have more difficulty accessing mentoring experiences to prepare them for this work (Nicoloff & Forrest, 1988).

> A significant factor was when my advisor tried to dump me basically. I mean he said, "I don't know, you may want to get someone else." I think at that point I felt I was right in the middle of the process and I felt like I'd lost a lot of support. I felt like I didn't know who I could go to if he wasn't going to be there and I guess it also said to me, he's not that interested, he's not that invested in what I'm doing. That was a frustrating point to me. I felt abandoned.

Recovery from damaging relational experiences requires a connection with someone who can "bear affective witness to earlier wounds, and in so doing, to introduce a potentially new relational outcome in the present" (Rosen, 2004, p. 53). As we saw in Britt and Angela's stories, they were able to heal from their damaging disconnections and reframe their experiences by fostering mutually empathic relationships with other faculty members. This pattern was also evident in Gina's journey. Gina was able to connect with a faculty member from another department who could provide her with guidance and support she did not receive from her advisor.

> The saving grace of this was that a guy on my committee, Dr. A, basically stepped in the summer prior. I told him my advisor was going to be on sabbatical. Dr. A is one of the PI's on the project that I was using their data and I was actually working on the project. He said, "I will step in and take that role for you, of your advisor." Even though he wasn't my advisor and he didn't have to do that. That was probably one of the biggest things in getting me through the process, him stepping in and taking more of a role than my advisor. In some ways I almost think of him as my advisor even though he wasn't.

In part, Gina attributed her success in completing her dissertation to her relationship with Dr. A. Gina's description reinforced the significance of connection to her experience, it also pointed to her personal resiliency. Much like Britt and Angela, when faced with a disconnection from one significant relationship, Gina sought out other people in the academic community to connect with.

Gina clearly identified the structure and scaffolding provided by her program as a facilitating factor. This is similar to the experience described by Hannah, the distinction is that Gina lacked the relational connection to the research group that enhanced Hannah's experience.

> The one thing I think that was an advantage about our program is they almost in some ways, set it up so that you're going to be doing little chunks of it. We have an oral exam or oral defense and what that consists of was writing our literature review and defending it. Presenting it and defending it in front of three members of your committee....Then the next step is the prospectus....You write your proposal, which is basically like some of your introduction and your literature

> review and then your methods and you defend that too. That ends up being what they call a working meeting. So, really, you defend it and they've read it and they kind of say, is this a good plan in terms of data collection and data analysis? And if so, you can go for it and write up your results and discussion.... We had to do a pre-dissertation project....They have you do it, I think, to get a sense of the dissertation and what it's like. Basically you present and you end up with like a 20 page paper that's sort of like a journal article. It's just a brief study and they don't expect the study to be as complex as your dissertation. The ideal is to have it on the same topic, maybe even do a pilot study or something like that.

Although Gina identified the structure of her program as an "advantage" along her journey, she seemed to stall when it came to the actual writing process. Gina's lack of connection and integration into the academic community seemed to have contributed to her inability to access necessary resources or guidance to facilitate her journey. Gina's difficulties along her journey culminated not in thoughts of dropping out, like Angela, but in a "break down." Her breakdown, however, was a pivotal incident that contributed to the upswing in her journey.

> My goal for the summer was to write my literature review. I had done a lot of reading and research over the whole year and it got to be August and I still hadn't started writing. I was busy with other things, through July I was doing a practicum. I was busy and all of a sudden it was August first and I was like "Oh no! I was going to write my oral this summer." I actually wrote it in a month because I finally just had a break down. I was like, I don't know if I can do this.

The enormity of the project seemed to immobilize and overwhelm Gina. She expressed feelings of loneliness, confusion, and despair during this leg of her journey and she was the disconnected from the necessary structures to support her through her journey. This inability to connect with someone to process her experiences left Gina "betwixt and between" (Schramm, 2000, p. 5). She articulated feelings of isolation or alienation from her advisor and academic community during this process. Gina did not have the guidance of a mentor or advisor to facilitate her connection to the academic community or the development of her research skills or identity. However, it was connection with a significant relationship that allowed Gina to overcome her "stuckness" and engage in the writing process. Much like Hannah, Gina expressed a need for validation during this process. This validation may be especially important to female students who often underestimate their actual abilities (Alder, 1976; Ekstrom, et al., 1981; Hanson, 1992; Hite, 1985).

> I just kind of lost it. I felt like, I mean it's like my cohort and I would talk about this, you know, page one line one. You know that sort of phenomenon, like I've got this whole paper to write and I haven't started and you sit with this cursor blinking and you haven't started. I think my summer kind of felt like that.... It's just this big thing sitting there and I felt really stuck, like I couldn't get started. I think I felt like I didn't have a lot of help. I didn't have someone to just sit with me and talk me through it. My advisor was not there for me to process really and that's when I just kind of broke down to my boyfriend. I kinda felt like I need, this is my process, and I need to do this by myself. He just sat down and said would you like me to walk you through or talk you through it? ...Within 20

> minutes we had and outline.... He was like, you had the information, you just needed someone to get you started. That was so critical because it felt like I had support and someone to kind of push me to get started.

Gina identified finding someone with whom she could talk through her process as an critical facilitating factor along her journey. Gina seemed to crave the connected learning environment that was so readily available to Hannah. In the absence of this environment, Gina experienced the opposite of the "5 good things" (Miller, 1986b). Her relationship with her boyfriend, who was also a counseling psychology doctoral student, was the connection that finally allowed Gina to move toward completion of her journey. However, even in this relationship, Gina had difficulty asking for help and expressed the sentiment that because it was her project, she needed to do it by herself.

Students are socialized in programs that emphasize independence and they internalize the message that they must do things on their own to be seen as competent. "Many students come to feel inadequate and, therefore, may reify and attribute this inadequacy to themselves instead of the structure of the situation" (Lovitts, 1996). Gina seemed torn between wanting to connect with someone to talk about her project and feeling obligated to complete the project on her own.

> I actually sat down with my boyfriend, who's actually also in counseling psychology and research is his thing. He loves it and he's so good at it. I just sat down and it's like, I feel like I don't know where to go, what direction and he just talked to me and asked me questions. We came up with an outline in about 20 minutes of how I was going to write it. He was like, you've got all the information, you just needed someone to talk you through. ...Once you have an

outline and know what you're doing, the writing seemed to just come out, almost. I got a lot of help from my boyfriend. I always kind of joke that he's sort of my co-advisor or committee member or something.

Although Gina's journey through her dissertation was not what she had expected given her prior research experience, she was able to put her experiences into perspective.

I think, for me, I've learned a lot in this process. I don't love it (research). I couldn't see my self being a professor, like having research as a part of my job and as a pressure. I think if you have the right support that's an important thing.

Gina's perception of research doesn't set her apart, however her perception of herself as a result of her journey is interesting.

This is going to sound like a weird analogy, but I feel like when I was back in junior high. I went to this volleyball camp and I was no where near the level of most of the other people at the camp. I won the award at the end for most improved. I kind of feel like I could win the award for most improved now because in some ways I started out somewhat naïve when I look back at what information I didn't have and I went through a lot of it kind of alone, more so than a lot of people, I had to figure out a lot of things about myself. So, as a researcher, I feel like I've learned a lot and I've persevered....There were times in the process where I vowed I would never do research again, I will be just perfectly honest. But, then I got to the end, to the defense, and during that process, it was such a positive experience. It was just a great discussion and you realize there are still so many things you're curious about and so by the end, I thought this is something I could do again, but definitely not full time.

Summary.

Much like Angela and Britt, Gina's description of her journey ended on a much more positive note than it began. Gina's defense was a positive and validating experience and seemed to contribute to a change in the way she viewed research as a product and herself as a researcher. This reinforced the importance and significance of validating experiences to women's perceptions of their journeys. Further, Gina's journey supports the central notion of power in advising and mentoring relationships along with the potential for knowingly or unknowingly abusing power in these relationships. Gina related that her advisor telling her she should consider asking someone else to chair her dissertation indicated to her, accurately or not, that her advisor was not interested or invested in her or her project. This event seemed to signify the beginning of Gina's decent toward her "breakdown." The upswing in Gina's journey did not occur until she was able to make a connection with someone who could guide her and facilitate creating a structure for her project.

The women in this section described strong emotions on both ends of the spectrum, from abandonment, isolation, and insecurity at the beginning of their journeys to optimism, validation, and energy at the end of their journeys. This experience is different from the women in the next section who seem to equivocate or express ambivalence throughout their journeys.

Ambivalent Experiences

"I go back and forth between feeling ok about it and then just being tired of it" – Deva, 27.

Deva's dissertation was a repertory grid evaluation of courage. Deva did not express any strong feelings about her dissertation or her process during our interview. Many times she seemed to hesitate or backpedal during her answers. This is most clearly demonstrated when she was asked if she felt the positive psychology concepts she was interested in researching related to her dissertation journey. Deva begins by saying she thinks resiliency and courage might be related to the process but ends by saying she hopes she can "muster up some kind of something" to get herself through. When she is discussing the dissertation as an abstraction, something outside of her own process she is able to use the positive psychology terminology; as soon as she begins talking about herself, however, she drops the references to courage, resiliency or perseverance and just refers to "something."

> Yeah, I think, I guess it takes some, I don't know if it's just like resiliency or perseverance. It could be like one form of courage. I mean I guess it takes some of that. At times, where people talk about people who haven't finished or, you know, who go through everything but don't get their degree because of their dissertation, it's like I've started to understand that. Because it's like, I can see why that would happen. At this point I just don't want it to drag on, so at this point I am trying to will myself to finish it and at this point it's like just really trying to get myself to, I guess that hopefully I'll be able to muster up some kind of something to get myself through this and stick with it.

Part of Deva's ambivalence seemed to emanate from her conflicting experiences between other research projects and her dissertation.

> I think I feel good overall. I think, I wouldn't want, I feel ok about this, I guess, dissertation wise. I mean I think I go back and forth between feeling ok about it and then just being tired of it and not that happy with it. I think that wanting to kind of separate that from any other research I do. It doesn't have to be the same way or the same kind of feeling, you know? I think it was good to have had an experience before this in grad school, like a more positive experience. I feel like I have had good opportunities to work with some of the other students in our program and my advisor and some other people, so, just feeling more positively about it in some other instances. Hopefully there've been a couple things we've done this year that were good and kind of different, but it's good to see how research can help, you know, in a real clinical setting.... So I think I feel good about it, like I would want to continue in some ways when I'm working.

This is similar to Gina's description, in the previous section, of the difference between her undergraduate experience doing research and her experience completing her dissertation. Deva described attempting to compartmentalize her dissertation journey from other research projects she has completed. She identified instances of working with other people, both peers and faculty, on research projects that had been more positive experiences. This reinforced the assertion made in the review of literature that the dissertation has not changed or evolved in the same way research or the scientific process has changed or evolved within the academy and the larger scientific community. Peer support and group collaboration have come to be seen as integral parts of the scientific process in many academic communities (Krumboltz, 2002). In addition, greater research productivity has been evidenced in training environments that "provided more

encouragement and supportive services for research... and were more likely to involve students in a research experience or apprenticeship with a faculty member" (Galassi, et al., 1987, p. 43). The dissertation, however, continues to be conceived of as an individual, necessarily isolating endeavor.

In contrast to her vague and ambivalent description of her dissertation journey, Deva's description of her relationship with her advisor is much more coherent and concrete.

> He probably seemed open, you know, he was willing to take me on and have new ideas for things to go into. I think, too, it made it easy because he's from an area where I come from in the South, so it was kind of like he knows about where I come from and just those kinds of connections were sort of nice. I think overall he was real open and easy going and, you know, fun to be around and work with. You know, it was just kind of fun to work with him. I didn't feel uncomfortable. ...It's good. I think it's real congenial, just like where you get along well and I feel pretty comfortable asking for help or going to him with things. Even outside of dissertation stuff he's been helpful....I feel like he's been real open as far as like when I need something, you know, he makes time for it. Finding the time to talk on the phone or I went back there in March and we got together.

Deva highlighted the importance of connection in her description of her relationship with her advisor. Tinto (1993) has suggested that contact with faculty that goes beyond the formalities of academic work to touch on social issues and is perceived as warm by students contributes to continued persistence. Deva related that her advisor had been

open to helping her with issues outside of the dissertation, like internship and job search, and this contributed to a comfortable, congenial relationship.

> I think it was a real collaborative process with my advisor. We had been working on courage, just in different ways, since like, I think the year that I started the program and so you know we worked on it in different ways and then probably last year, like last fall, I guess early in the fall, we started talking more about dissertation and how could I do something different with courage. Really, he initially had the idea to look into the repertory grid and personal construct psychology. That was his idea initially and he didn't know a lot about it... Based on that suggestion, I kind of went into looking more at that, you know, what does it involve? ...He had a big part in choosing the route, but I guess just the overall topic.

Deva referred to her dissertation journey as a collaborative process with her advisor. She gave her advisor credit for helping her decide on the topic and the direction of the project. However, this support and collaboration did not appear to enhance Deva's sense of efficacy or energy in completing the project. Deva related that she was tired of the project and hoped she could "muster up some kind of something" to get herself through her journey.

Despite her positive description of her connection to her advisor and the academic community, Deva did not manifest any of Miller's (1986b) "five good things." Rather, she described a drop in energy, a lowered sense of self worth and decreased ability to act. Much of Deva's actual writing process, however, occurred while she was on internship,

several states away from her advisor and her academic community. This geographic disconnection may have contributed to Deva's ambivalence about her journey.

Unlike the women in the previous section, Deva never experienced a change or upswing in her perception or feelings about her journey.

> I think it's just been a challenge to find time to devote to it. So in a way that's probably my fault for not making it or dedicating more time to it or making it a higher priority. Maybe I don't treat it like that because, you know, work takes up so much of my time....But it's tough to think about like with internship first and job search again, like as far as how to talk about it with people or especially when you feel like frustrated with it or not confident really and the timing or where it's going to go but then with certain positions you need to have it done by a certain time and you have to kind of project some kind of confidence that it'll be done. It's like a real dichotomy. Like you can feel not very confident about it, but you have to say something or project something different.

Summary.

Gina highlighted a central paradox of her dissertation journey, whether or not she felt confident in her project or her skills, as some situations, like job interviews, required her to demonstrate a certain amount of confidence in her project. As was alluded to earlier, women students often underestimate their actual abilities which may contribute to a diminished sense of self worth and efficacy (Alder, 1976; Ekstrom, et al., 1981; Hanson, 1995; Hite, 1985). Additionally, in their study of mentoring female graduate students, Connors and Franklin found that women students "feel overwhelmed by all that they must accomplish" (1999, p. 12). Gina expressed this sentiment through her

frustration in attempting to balance working on her dissertation with her internship responsibilities and job search process. Gina's geographic distance from her advisor, the pressure of time constraints, and her lack of confidence in her research project served as disconnections and barriers along her journey.

Connors and Franklin (1999) assert that there are four levels of female-culturally-related barriers to research, women feel disconnected: 1) from the research component graduate school, 2) as a result of their perception of faculty bias against women students, 3) due to time constraints, and 4) because of a lack of confidence in their research ability. Through the lens of self-in-relation theory, Deva experienced a mutually empowering relationship with her advisor, however she did not describe experiencing the "five good things" that are potential outcomes of connection along her dissertation journey. It is possible the support and comfort this relationship provided may have been overwhelmed by the other perceived obstacles along Deva's journey, resulting in confusion and ambivalence about the journey. Significantly, unlike the other women who experienced various disconnections in their journeys, Deva did not describe reaching out and connecting with others as a way of remediating or healing her disconnections.

My dissertation wasn't that hard for me because...I went through the crap with my thesis – Ellie, 32.

Ellie is the second and final participant to fall into the category of ambivalent. Ellie's dissertation explored health compromising behaviors in American Indian Adolescents. She attributed her ease in negotiating her journey through the dissertation process to her prior experience with research. In part, her story reflected the feelings of learning through trial by fire that Gina talked about in her journey. Ellie was socialized

to her program's values and expectations through her experience writing her Master's thesis and this taught her that there were implicit rules guiding her graduate experience. One of the rules was that Ellie would be on her own for much of her journey and her faculty would provide only tangential support or guidance. A second rule was that students in the program do not have problems and if they do, they take care of the problems on their own without help from the program. Ellie's perception that these "rules" were operating assumptions of her graduate program significantly impacted her journey.

Ellie simultaneously described experiencing disconnection, anger and frustration and connection, efficacy, and investment over the course of her journey. She often seemed to contradict herself as she told her story. Ellie described her advisor as helpful but then specified that he was helpful with statistics and related numerous occasions when she sought out guidance or resources and did not receive them from her advisor. She described her mentor as family and stated that her advisor created a safe space for her talk. However, Ellie related that her experience in her program was so frustrating and challenging that she contemplated dropping out a number of times and her only source of motivation for getting through the program was her wife.

Ellie described her dissertation journey as "not that hard" but stated she felt inadequate as a researcher at the end of the process. This equivocation, although different from the ambivalence expressed by Deva, is the characteristic that groups her into this category.

> I think the start of my dissertation was not that hard because I had already gone through my thesis and my dissertation was a continuation of that. Starting my

> thesis was a pain in the ass because I didn't know what I was doing. I'd never been in graduate school before and no one in my family had ever been in graduate school before, so that was kind of hard. My professors weren't very helpful in guiding me. They were helpful in nagging me and asking when I was going to have it done. I started getting frustrated because I didn't find a lot of help in deciding what to do or how to do it or how to schedule my time. I'd never written a 200 page paper in my life. I kind of figured out with my thesis that I was going to have to do it by myself and that's part of the reason why for my dissertation I went with the same topic because I already kind of knew what I was doing and it would be very easy to move on. I knew how to do it myself at that point and my chair was helpful. He especially helped with the statistics and he was very good at my defense, at actually defending me and not having it get bigger than it had to be....School is a big game. You have to figure out the rules. You have to figure out who you need to talk to. I always talked to the secretaries....I started to figure out who actually knows stuff and I started to figure out at that time that I didn't have to be perfect. My program kind of implicitly stated that psychologists don't have any problems and if you're having problems, that's your problem and you need to fix it.

Ellie's perception that she should not have any problems or at least not express that she was experiencing difficulty is not uncommon. Mistakes or vulnerabilities may provide faculty or other students with evidence of incompetence that could be used against a student (Connors & Franklin, 1999). Fear of ridicule or failure may prevent women students from pursuing necessary support from their faculty (Connors & Franklin, 1999).

In Ellie's case, she ended up seeking out counseling from another on campus agency. This, however, put her in the uncomfortable position of working with her counselor during her practicum the next year. Ellie expressed frustration because she received no guidance or support within her program to find mental health services.

> None of them ever said anything about, maybe you need to get into counseling yourself, we can refer you out of the department. That was never mentioned in the five years that I was there. So, I had to seek out my own counseling on campus...then the next year I was there and worked with the guy who had been my counselor. But I couldn't afford anything else because I was a student.

Ellie's desire to seek out counseling marginalized her within her program. Not only did she admit to having a problem that she needed help with, but she violated the implicit rules of her program in seeking out help. Ellie was in the tenuous position of choosing between marginalizing herself in her academic community by seeking out help or struggling through her issues without the benefit of outside support and remaining complicit in her own oppression. In previous chapters it was stated that encounters that result in marginalization or reduce integration can result in withdrawal from the academic and social community and may impact persistence (Johnson, et al., 1995; Tinto, 1993). Ellie identified that there were a number of points in her program when she "seriously considered just quitting."

In previous sections, it has been asserted that students are often expected to perform as mature and independent professionals even though they are in subordinate and dependent positions (Lovitts, 1996). Ellie articulated her sense of frustration at being put in that position. Her advisor required her to act as a professional and know what it was

she needed to complete her dissertation despite never having completed a project of that magnitude previously. Ellie appreciated her advisor's straightforward demeanor and described her relationship with him as "casual". However, she appeared to have difficulty getting her needs met in her relationship with her advisor as she was not able to get the support, guidance, or resources from him that she desired.

> I started talking to him about what I needed to do and he thought it was really interesting and so he got a hold of that and he was interested in hearing what I had to say and hearing me out and that kind of thing... [our relationship was] very casual. We would meet at lunch time and he would be eating his lunch in his office and he told me right up front I will do whatever you want me to do, but you need to let me know what that is and you need to do your end of it. I am not going to come after you. I'm not going to push you. I'm not going to nag you. You make the appointments. You get done what you need to get done. You show up for all those and I will work my butt off for you. So he made it clear what was expected of me and I appreciated that.

Ellie was able to tap into both formal and informal mentoring networks to get guidance and support along her journey. She related that some of the most important advice she received about the dissertation process was from informal contacts with faculty.

> I did get some advice and I don't think the people who said it even know what it meant to me. One professor said to just get something on paper to start, even if it's just a sentence because if it's all in your head then you're never going to get anywhere. So I started. I got a general idea and then I started doing the lit review and so I just kind of took it one piece at a time. I also got advice from another

professor who said "there are two kinds of dissertations, those with perfect dissertations and those with finished dissertations. That kind of helped me to see that it doesn't have to be that big of a deal.

Ellie's most significant connection to the academic community was with her mentor. Similar to Britt and Angela, Ellie identified that the reason she chose to attend this particular university was because of the opportunity to work with Dr. B. There was also a cultural component to Ellie's interest in working with Dr. B. Ellie identified culturally as multi-racial, White and American Indian, and her mentor was an American Indian woman who directed the American Indian Support Project. Ellie's relationship with her mentor was much more than just a formal academic relationship; Dr. B demonstrated a personal investment in students and created a safe space for them to express themselves.

> My mentor, Dr. B, is the director of the American Indian Support Project. She's the reason I went to this university....She couldn't be my chair because she's a clinical professor and she doesn't really research....but she was on my committee....She was the one that would ask how it was going. And it wasn't in a nagging sort of way, are you done yet? She really wanted to know. She would have all of the members of the support project over to her house. We would meet once a month and talk to each other about how it was going. She was Indian, so she was a real no-nonsense kind of gal. If you were dinking around, she'd call you a jackass and say get it done. But coming from her it was very supportive....She provided us space to talk about "I'm really frustrated with this" if we were having trouble with a professor then she would give us advice on how

to talk to that professor and get moving again....She was more like a family member.

Tinto (1993) suggests that frequent contact with faculty is important to academic persistence; further, encounters that go beyond the formal academic/programmatic exchanges and are perceived as genuine and warm by students are critical to continued persistence. Connors and Franklin (1999, p. 17) found that women students were looking for mentoring relationships that would provide them with "a sense of comfort and support" as they negotiate the challenges of developing their own research projects. They are looking for someone who both challenges them to excel and provides them with support when they make mistakes. Ellie appeared to have found this sense of security within her relationship with her mentor.

When asked about relationships with people other than academic faculty that had a significant impact on her journey, Ellie had this to say:

> My wife. I'm not a very organized person. I gather stacks of research and have stacks all over the place and then stare at them. She helped me get organized enough to be able to make sense of the research. My chair was helpful with the statistics. Those were the hardest things for me, getting started, getting organized, and doing the statistical analysis. I was very, very fortunate and I think everyone in the psych department know that. They would tease me that my wife's foot reaches just butt high and she kicked me through the program. I would get stalled out and I would get frustrated and I didn't want to do it anymore. For the first couple of years in graduate school, each semester I seriously considered just quitting and going back home and finding some type of job with a bachelor's

> degree. It sucked that bad and at a couple of points we were actually looking at moving vans and the cost of moving back home. The only thing that kept me there and kept me going was my family and my son. The reason I went to graduate school in the first place was to have some flexibility and provide a better living for my family, so I had that motivation. All of the motivation to keep going was outside of the department.

Despite Ellie's connection to her mentor, she does not identify this relationship as one of the factors that contributed to her persistence. When she was faced with challenges in her program or in her research, such as finding motivation or getting organized, Ellie did not turn to her advisor or her mentor, rather she relied on her wife to give her the support and help she required. The relationship that empowered her and provided her with necessary resilience to persist through her dissertation journey was with her family. Much like Britt's relationship with her clinical supervisor, Ellie's story highlighted the importance of understanding the impact of significant relationships outside of the student's academic program on their journey and ultimately, on their persistence.

Ellie's frustration with her journey was likely compounded by several factors. First she experienced a mismatch in style with her advisor. Ellie clearly required more guidance and support along her journey than her advisor was willing or able to give. Her advisor put the onus of organizing, pacing, and evaluating her journey on Ellie. Although he asserted that he would support her as long as she progressed in a timely fashion, he expected Ellie to generate the structure and organization of her project, the very factors Ellie identified as blocks along her journey.

In addition, Ellie experienced a mismatch in research philosophy. Ellie would have preferred to have completed a qualitative research dissertation, however her program emphasized quantitative research and discouraged qualitative projects. This mismatch had a significant impact on how Ellie viewed herself as a researcher. At the end of her journey, Ellie described feeling "inadequate" as a researcher.

> My program emphasized quantitative research and poopoo'd qualitative research, which is unfortunate because there's a lot more qualitative research being done with American Indians that's much more helpful than quantitative....I feel inadequate because I don't work in a quantitative way. You can make statistics say whatever the fuck you want them to say. I don't really agree with that. I've done a couple of papers that were qualitative and submitted them for publications and that to me is exciting. I like that. I like doing the lit review, I like learning what other people have done. I like writing. I've always loved to write so that part is fun to me. But I was also taught that quantitative is the way to go and I don't really know about statistics. I don't really like statistics. I don't really like whittling people down to numbers and values and alphas....That's why I say I feel inadequate.

Ellie's self-identified problems with organization were compounded by the paperwork requirements within her program and a lack of consensus in her department regarding the process of completing her dissertation and the accompanying paperwork. Unlike Hannah, the group that Ellie met with at her mentor's home did not provide guidance or structure for completing her project. In addition to issues with personal

organization, Ellie experienced problems negotiating the structure of her academic department because of a lack of organization within her program.

> I would go to one professor and say, "what do I need to do to get this paperwork done? Because I have the rough draft and I'm ready to submit it to the IRB" and he would say, "Well, I don't really know. You need to go talk to someone else." So I would go talk to another professor and they would say you need to do this and this and this and why don't you go double check with the department secretary?...Even once they came to a consensus, they were wrong. That was another are where I had to do it myself. I learned quickly that I just go to the school of graduate studies and ask them what I should be doing.

Summary.

Ellie's frustration with her journey was evident and clearly articulated. Her connection to her wife and sense of responsibility to her family were the motivating forces that allowed her to get beyond the blocks in journey. The story of Ellie's journey echoed many of the negative experiences of the women in the upswing category. Unlike the women in the previous category, though, Ellie never articulated feelings of validation or appreciation of the process. Her frustration with the process remained fairly constant throughout the story of her journey.

Conclusions

All three of the women in the upswing category began by describing experiences they perceived as negative along their dissertation journeys, from Britt's university declaring bankruptcy, to Angela's discovery that her archival data was useless and her mentor was leaving the university, to Gina's advisor going on sabbatical the year she was

writing her dissertation. The actual incidents, however, matter less than the women's perceptions of how these incidents impacted them. The women used words like "frustrating", "isolating", and "arduous" to describe these incidents along their journeys. Although these three incidents are very different from one another, at the core they each involved a disconnection from a significant person in the academic community and each of these incidents was experienced as a hindrance to the dissertation journey.

Self-in-relation theory suggests there are five outcomes to disconnection, less energy, disempowerment, confusion, lowered self worth, and withdrawing from relationships (Dooley & Fedele, 2004; Miller, 1986b). In addressing these disconnections, each of the women gave voice to feelings of isolation and abandonment and talked about withdrawing, to a greater or lesser extent, from relationships in their academic community. Angela related that it took her six months before she could approach another faculty member about her experiences and during that time she considered dropping out. After Gina was "abandoned" by her advisor, she felt she had to complete the project on her own and so she isolated herself and it was not until she experienced a "break down" that she reached out to someone for help. Britt described withdrawing from her research group as her relationship with her mentor began to deteriorate while her university was experiencing bankruptcy. This pattern is born out in the literature which suggests that experiences that reduce integration into the academic community may result in students distancing themselves from the academic or social community of their academic program (Johnson, et al., 1995; Tinto, 1993).

The factor that allowed each of these women to move out of disconnection was a connection with someone else. Women are able to find the power to move out of

disconnections and into mutual relationships when they are able to share their experience of disconnection with another (Fedele, 2004). Each of these women experienced an upswing in their journey after they were able to re-connect with their academic community in some way.

Both of the women the ambivalent category expressed positive and negative feelings related to their dissertation journeys. In many ways, Ellie and Devas' stories resembled those of the women in the upswing category, with one major distinction, neither of these women articulated a sense of validation, optimism, or purpose as a result of their journey. Although Britt, Gina, and Angela all initially reported struggles along their journeys, they ended their descriptions of their journeys describing a change in their feelings. Britt felt optimistic and energized about working with her new committee, Angela felt she could be a change agent as a result of her dissertation journey, and Gina felt that her experience at her dissertation defense was positive and validating. At the end of their journeys, Deva hoped she could "must up some kind of something" to get herself through and Ellie stated she still felt inadequate even after successfully defending her dissertation.

Although both Ellie and Deva reported having good relationships with their advisors and access to formal or informal channels for mentoring, these relationships did not facilitate development of their sense of self along their journeys. This points to a need to critically examine what qualities of advising and mentoring relationships foster growth and development and contribute to student's sense of self-worth, self-efficacy, and resiliency.

In addition, although Deva and Ellie did not experience obvious disconnections, like their mentors or advisors leaving the university or going on sabbatical, they both, none the less, experienced disconnections. Deva was geographically disconnected from her advisor and academic program during her internship year, which was experience very different from her experience preparing for her proposal. Deva attributed her topic and the direction of her project to her advisor and their collaborative working relationship, however during her writing process her contact with him was much more limited.

Ellie was disconnected from her program because of the implicit rules around being perfect and doing things on your own. She stated that all her motivation for finishing came from outside of her department and she attributed much of her success in completing her project to her wife. Although relationships within the academic community appear to be important to persistence, growth, and development of students, they do not appear to be sufficient to create a positive, validating experience.

Individual and relational resilience were important factors in the women's journeys. Deva said she was not sure if completing the dissertation journey took "resiliency or perseverance," but she thought it could be a "form of courage." Unlike Angela, Gina, and Ellie who had finished their journeys and successfully defended their dissertations, Deva hoped she would be able to "muster up" whatever it was she needed to get through. Several of the women gave voice to feelings of doubt and thoughts of dropping out of their programs; Deva alluded to understanding why people never finish their degrees and remain all but dissertation (ABD). Regardless of the various challenges each of these women faced on their journeys, they were all able to "muster up" the self-

confidence, energy, action, or resourcefulness necessary to carry them along forward in their journeys.

The common facilitating factors across both of these categories were connection/integration, structure/organization, safe places/people, and individual/relational resilience. Although none of these factors was present in every journey, each factor was alluded to in at least several of the stories. The common factors that caused blocks or contributed to hindering the women's journeys were: disconnection, abuses of power, lack of structure/organization, and self-doubt. In the introduction, I introduced the model of self-in-relation theory (Jordan, et al., 1991; Jordan, et al., 2004; Miller, 1986a, 1991) that centralized the importance of relational connection to growth and learning. These women's stories challenged the conception of this model by highlighting the significance of disconnection.

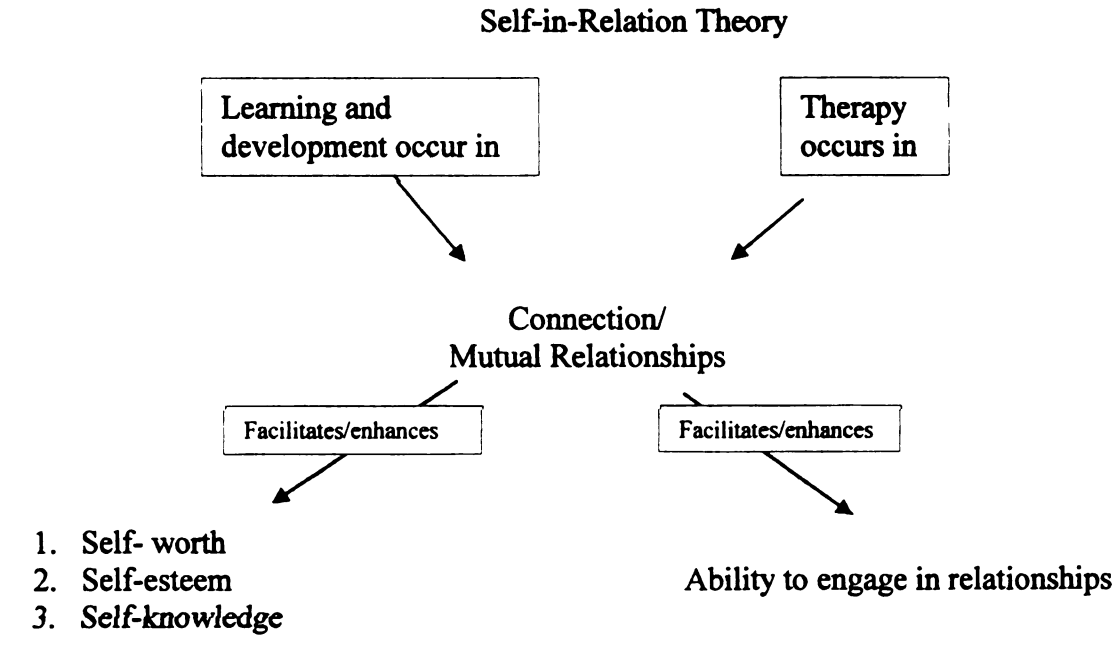

Figure 2. Model of Self-in-Relation theory.

Miller's (1986b) "five good things" which was referred to in the review of literature and previously in the analysis does a better job of addressing the reciprocal relationship of connection and disconnection on growth and development. As indicated in previous sections, when connection is mutual and authentic, it contributed to positive outcomes in relationships. Miller called these positive outcomes the five good things: zest, a better sense of self and others, increased self-worth, increased efficacy or energy to act, and a yearning for more connection. She also acknowledged the flip side of connection, disconnection, and its consequences on growth and development. When someone feels cut-off or disconnected, they experience less energy, confusion, decreased self-worth, disempowerment, and withdrawal from relationships.

Disconnections should not be viewed as inherently negative as they are part of the ebb and flow of all relationships. The stories in this section presented the natural movement of relationships, from connection to disconnection, to new connection (Dooley & Fedele, 2004). Several of the stories illustrated how relationships can be enhanced when people are able to work through disconnections (ex. Angela and Britt). This enhanced understanding of the centrality of both connections and disconnections will become even more significant as the next section on negative or damaging experiences is presented.

Negative/Damaging Experiences

Much like the category of positive experiences, this group requires little by way of introduction. The two women who will be presented in this section described negative, even damaging, experiences along their journeys. They used words and phrases

like, "disempowering," "I just gave up," "uncomfortable," "no confidence," "a political thing," "eternal," "hellacious," and "depressed" to describe their journeys.

"Every process is an incident" -Carmen, 24

Carmen's dissertation was an extension of her Master's thesis, in which she explored attitudes of college students toward a peer who was engaging in suicidal behavior because they are gay. She expressed that her journey through graduate school and particularly through the dissertation impacted her long term career goals. Carmen initially went to grad school with the intention of going into academia, however, as a result of both discovering an interest in therapy and her traumatizing experiences writing her dissertation she no longer considered this an option. She related,

> I love research, I did a research assistantship and now it's the furthest thing from what I want....Part of it was me growing and changing and finding I love therapy, but part of it is not feeling like I can do it. I have no confidence that I could do this without my advisor...I relied on her and that's the way she made it. My identity as a researcher is much worse off than it was when I got here.

As alluded to in the review of literature and previously in the analysis, the hierarchical structure of traditional mentoring relationships may lead to paternalistic exchanges where the mentor assumes their perspective is better than their mentees' and denies or distorts their mentees' experiences. Additionally, there may be the implicit understanding that the mentee will internalize the values and norms modeled for them and become replicas of their mentors (Hansman, et al., 2002). In the story of her journey, Carmen referred to her experience with her advisor as molding versus mentoring and stated that she "hardly recognized" her project because her writing became "hers [her

advisor's] instead of mine." These negative exchanges effectively served to silence Carmen (Hansman, et al., 2002).

She related that she had difficulty reaching out to others for help because of the "element of shame" she felt related to her perception that she was complicit in creating her own negative experience because she had chosen to stay with her advisor through her dissertation against the advise of other faculty members. Power issues are inherent to mentoring relationships, however creating an awareness and addressing these dynamics can facilitate the mentoring relationship. Carmen described a mentoring experience where these power dynamics were ignored and she was silenced.

A mentee, by definition, is in a position of less power because mentoring relationships are "inherently unequal and non-reciprocal" (Schramm, 2000, p.5). Therefore entering into a mentoring relationship requires more trust on the part of the mentee (Schramm, 2000). Carmen, in fact, related that she was drawn to work with her advisor because of the prestige this woman enjoyed within the larger professional community of counseling psychology. Carmen trusted that she would be able to complete her dissertation with her advisor, despite the knowledge that "her legacy at school" was that she treated students badly and other faculty were reluctant to work with her.

> I thought that my advisor, which was why I came to this university, for my advisor, I thought she just knew her stuff and she did amazing work....I came here because of C....My relationship with her was rocky all along. After my Master's I wanted to quit, but I didn't. I am her first doctoral student in a really long time because people tend to not stick with Sandra after their Master's, they

quit. I decided to stick with her because I thought my dissertation would be easy. It was going off my thesis, I thought it would be easy, so I did it. It got more and more strained as we went for publications. There were things she wouldn't do. She wouldn't put that I had a Master's degree. She made it like I had a Bachelor's in my publications, which I didn't. She wouldn't let me include that it was part of my thesis, which is required by APA, or by our school at least. It was really bumpy already and I was just really pissed off by the time it came to the final version.

As discussed previously, mentoring and advising relationships are frequently power laden and unless the dynamics are critically examined and addressed, the relationships can be damaging (Mott, 2002). Carmen described a clear pattern of abuse of power and position on the part of her advisor, however addressing these issues with her advisor or seeking help from another faculty member was complicated by the dynamics within her academic program. Carmen's advisor was well respected within the larger community of counseling psychology and Carmen was going to benefit professionally from working with her advisor through the number of publications they co-authored; however within her own department, Carmen's advisor had a reputation of being a difficult person with whom to work. This dynamic put Carmen in the tenuous position of negotiating the complicated relational dynamics within her department without any guidance.

The way it worked was the first two chapters were accepted by my committee. I guess that was the first hurdle, having the committee accept it. Then, with C, every process is an incident. There's nothing that goes easy. It isn't like you go

> back and forth, like with most advisors. Everything is huge, everything is a fiasco, it's so dramatic....She told me this was the last draft and asked me to change a couple of things really, really small things and then she wouldn't respond to my email. She wouldn't get that last draft back to me so I could send it to my committee. She held it up for five months. I thought I was done writing, you know, I was ready to go and then she didn't read it....When she finally wrote to me after five months it was only because I had to talk to the chair of the department and cc her on the emails so that C knew who was reading them. I'd send her really nasty emails saying if she didn't get me back my final draft in a week, I was switching advisors. It's the only way I got it read in the end....It was scary because I look up to her. If you go anywhere else than here, she's very respected.

Carmen described being caught betwixt and between (Schramm, 2000). Carmen chose to stay with her advisor, despite being encouraged to find someone new to direct her dissertation, which marginalized her within her academic program. None of the other faculty within her program would participate on her dissertation committee and Carmen had to have an exception made through the grad school so that she could go outside of her academic program for her remaining committee members. When she finally approached her training director about the difficulties she was having with her advisor, Carmen's training director said to her "I hate to tell you this, but I told you so." Carmen identified that one of the factors that held her back from seeking help was the "element of shame" she experienced because she had chosen to continue to work with her advisor. Her training director's response communicated judgment and a lack of empathy and

reinforced Carmen's sense of shame. Carmen was marginalized both within her relationship with her advisor and within her larger academic program, caught in a dynamic she did not have the power to change. Not only did this "element of shame" contribute to Carmen feeling disempowered to act on her own behalf, it also affected her perceptions of her competence and ability to write.

> My writing process with her [C] is a little bit different than with most because of this electronic thing she does. She changes it all, so when it comes back to you it doesn't look like anything you've ever written. So everything I write becomes hers instead of mine. I hardly recognized what I wrote. Like at my defense, I had to read my paper several, many times, because I didn't recognize it. It's not what I've written. This is a complaint she's gotten over and over and over again, that she changes student's work. What that did to me is, when she would say 'fix this,' I would give a half-ass attempt because I knew she was going to change it anyway. It was very disempowering because she would just change it, so why should I even work on it? ...In the end, honestly, I gave up. I realized it's not my dissertation, it's hers. It is mine, but she's in charge of it and I just kind of gave up and that's what got me through, I no longer cared what the product was as long as it was a product that was signed off by my committee. I didn't care anymore. It's kind of a crappy way to get through something, but it's what happened.

Carmen's description of her experience writing her dissertation fits with the classic notion of learned helplessness, or a feeling that one is not able to effect change within the environment or on one's circumstances (Seligman, 1972). This sense of inability to act or effect change can contribute to a feeling of incompetence (Seligman, 1972). Although

the original meaning of the word competence was to seek together, the understanding of this word has changed to imply rivalry or competition (Jordan, 2004). "The competition and mastery implicit in most models of competence create conflict for many people" (Jordan, 2004, p. 12). Frequently, conflict or problems are situated within the individual who has been marginalized or oppressed. The system that emphasizes competition, dominance, and mastery over "confidence, creativity, and participation in growth-fostering relationships" reinforces marginalization and oppression (Jordan, 2004, p. 12).

As discussed in the introduction and the review of literature, current training models tend to emphasize the qualities of independence, mastery, and dominance, potentially at the risk of devaluing the relational aspects of training. This dynamic clearly existed within Carmen's program. Within her relationship with her advisor, development of Carmen's sense of confidence or efficacy was overshadowed by the needs of her advisor. Her advisor paid little to no attention to developing a collaborative, empowering relationship. Carmen was forced to accommodate her writing style and sacrifice the development of her identity in order to successfully complete her project. Within her program, Carmen did not receive guidance or support in resolving her problems with her advisor, rather she was derided for making a choice that existed only because the dysfunctional system of her program allowed it to exist. The dysfunctional system continued to employ someone they knew was unethical and abused her position as an advisor and they continued to allow her to take on advisees. However, they put the onus for affecting change, or switching advisors, on students, who have the least power in the system. Carmen identified that she just "gave up" and "no longer cared" about the process or her final product as long as she could just get through her dissertation journey

successfully. This represents a significant change from her description of herself as someone who entered graduate school "loving research."

Through the lens of self-in-relation theory, we see the opposite of the 'five good things" described by Miller (1986b). Carmen acknowledged a decrease in the energy she put into her project, a decreased sense of self-worth, disempowerment, confusion about her identity as a researcher, and withdrawal from connections within her program.

> I like research. I like the research part of it. I like finding things out, but like I said earlier, I feel very disempowered to write. I feel like the mentoring process didn't happen, instead I got kind of molded into how she wanted me to write. I feel really uncomfortable with how things happened. I don't feel I know how to write because it's never been acceptable. That may keep me from researching because I'm afraid that I wouldn't be able to write it up....I would have wanted someone who helped me develop my style, not their style. Someone who let it be ok that I was going to write a little bit differently and maybe a little more concisely....I would have wanted to become an individual and instead I became a C-clone. ...I also would have liked to leave here feeling more confident.

Summary

Although Carmen had successfully defended her dissertation prior to participating in this interview, she ended her journey feeling less competent and less confident in her skills as a researcher. The dissertation project is designed to be the culminating experience of the doctoral degree process; this is an opportunity for students to showcase their research interests and skills as they have developed during their years in graduate school. It is not beneficial or desirable for students to complete this process feeling more

negatively about the research process and their identity as a researcher than when they began.

Carmen's story pointed to several factors that contributed to her decline in self-efficacy and self-esteem related to research, including her advisor's abuse of power, the complicated dynamics of the departmental politics, and her own feelings of shame. The story of her journey reflects few of the facilitating factors that have been addressed in the previous stories. Carmen did not have a mutual, empathic relationship or connection with another faculty member or fellow student to provide her with support or guidance through the process. Although her partner supported her journey to get her degree, he "did not support my decision to stay with her [C]. He was very strongly against me working with her because he saw how difficult it was and how horrendous this whole process was."

The factors that most strongly contributed to Carmen's ability to persevere and complete her journey were her individual persistence and resilience. In her own words, Carmen related, "I think it was my worldview or whatever you want to call it...Part of it was my pride. I did not want to give up because I had told so many people that I would make it." Despite the negative, even damaging experiences Carmen described, she did not give up and she did successfully defend her project. Fiona, the final participant to be presented in this category, also described negative experiences with committee members and departmental politics, however she had not yet defended her dissertation.

"All of a sudden, it blew up." – Fiona, 45.

Fiona's dissertation looked at the neuropsychological differences between physicians who have never been referred for a competency evaluation and those have

been referred for a competency evaluation. Fiona chose this topic for several reasons, she had access to an available data set, completing a neuropsychology dissertation would allow greater flexibility and more options in her future career, and a personal interest in the issue of physician competency. Despite her motivation for choosing this path, Fiona's experiences along her journey have left her questioning her choice. She used words like "eternal," "hellacious," "political," and "nasty" to describe her experiences along her journey.

> I just thought it was kind of a really neat opportunity and I didn't know if I was up to it. I still don't....I would say the blow up in the proposal was very critical. It took about a month to get over that and then there was the blow up about the IRB. After that I got pretty depressed and I couldn't work on my dissertation. Just recently, for some reason, I got over the depression. I'm not quite sure how it worked, I guess by talking to people and finally deciding I'm going to go forward with this. I'm going to give it my best shot at getting it done. It might look impossible. It might be impossible. I kind of almost have a willingness to accept failure so that I can go forward. Also, a kind of resignation to just do the next step, don't think too far ahead, just do what's in your face....I don't know that I would have done it now, on this side. I think I would have picked something really easy to do.... I'm sad. I feel like it's really a process that if I had been supported through, instead of having all these psycho people going weird on me, it could have been a really neat experience. I don't mind the struggle, my own internal struggle with myself that I've had to go through. The added stress that

folks have put on me, that makes me sad. I'm pretty sad and I'm kind of fried. I kind of went away from the program, I mean it's just a very different relationship.

Fiona expressed regret about the direction her journey through the dissertation took after her proposal meeting. Although Fiona's own process was full of conflict, she was still able to acknowledge that the potential for a different dissertation experience. Fiona identified that ideally she would have like to have been supported by her committee, rather than undermined and attacked. The "blow ups" that occurred during her proposal meeting and her IRB application seemed to catalyze the change in Fiona's experience of her journey from "a neat opportunity" to "eternal" and "hellacious".

Fiona very concretely connected the negative things she experienced to her withdrawal from her academic program. Encounters that reduce integration in the academic or social community can result in students distancing themselves from their academic programs (Johnson, et al., 1995). Despite her initial interest in and motivation for completing her project, the "blow ups," left her feeling immobilized and depressed. These events also precipitated the deterioration of Fiona's relationship with her advisor, other committee members, and her program. One of her committee members, whom Fiona refers to as "Stats guy," was particularly contentious during her proposal meeting. Similar to Carmen's experience with her advisor, Fiona had heard rumors that Stats guy had a reputation for making the dissertation process difficult on students but she thought her experience with him would be different.

> I had heard a rumor that he had gotten pretty nasty at some other defenses and proposals, I mean really not nice and really inappropriate with several. I didn't want that to happen to me. I have a good relationship with this guy. I'm going to

meet with this guy ahead of time and give him my chapter three and have him edit it. I'll have him give me feedback, so that when I'm working on my proposal, he and I are on the same page and we can bring everyone else along. I did that and that was not helpful....When it came to my proposal everything was going swimmingly and everybody had good feedback and ideas and then all of a sudden it blew up. The meeting ended up being two and half hours and it was hellacious. There was a misunderstanding with Stats guy. When I said physicians who'd been referred for competency evaluations, I didn't realize that he thought that therefore these folks had cognitive impairments. In the medical world you can be referred for a competency evaluation for being drunk when you treat a patient, you don't have to have a cognitive impairment....For whatever reason that just made everybody crazy....Stats guy started yelling, "This is totally meaningless. All your hypotheses are meaningless. This makes no sense. This is useless." My chair, D, finally shut everybody up, because it was just getting worse and they were all exploding. I don't know how, but in the meeting she convinced them to give me a conditional pass as long as I made all the changes they wanted done.

After her disastrous experience during her proposal meeting, Fiona attempted to re-establish a healthy working relationship with her committee members by seeking clarification of their concerns regarding her proposal. Fiona articulated an understanding of the dynamics and politics of her program. She understood that there were subtleties, or unspoken rules, in relationships that needed to be negotiated and she looked to her chair for guidance in this process. As noted earlier, students often receive insufficient guidance or mentoring related to negotiating the rules and expectations of negotiating the

various aspects of the dissertation journey, including relationships with doctoral committees (Austin, 2002). They are also expected to perform as a mature and independent professional while they are still students and in subordinate and dependent roles (Lovitts, 1996). Although Fiona sought out her chair's advice and tried to "politically do it right," she was ultimately left alone to make sense of her experiences and her understanding of the power dynamics in her program.

> I called each committee member and I asked, "Could you explain this to me? What does this mean? Is my dissertation blown?" Stats guy said it wasn't blown, he just didn't think it was as interesting. I thought...just let me know if I can do it or not. I've spent a large portion of my life on this so far and I need to know if I need to trash it. He said I could go ahead and go forward with the project. That was helpful. I figured we re-established whatever. I made the changes and I asked by committee chair, D, if I've made the changes they wanted, do I need to check with them before I do my IRB? She said, "No, we all agreed that I would be the one to hold you responsible." I sent copies of the changes I made to everybody and got no feedback.... "I thought, ok, I've double-checked with everyone and nobody has sent me feedback, if they were concerned enough they would have looked." I should have called every single committee member, even though that's not what my committee chair told me to do. I sent my IRB in and I get a call from my chair and she says she wants to warn me that E, who is my advisor, and Stats guy are really angry with me. I'm thinking, what did I do now? She says E, my advisor, raked her over the coals because I'd sent my IRB in

without her approval first.... So, I say to my chair, "Does this blow my dissertation?" and she says, "I don't know."

Fiona was told that her advisor, E, and Stats guy would both be contacting her regarding the conflict over her IRB application. Fiona, however, was never contacted and this lack of follow through created confusion and frustration. Her confusion was compounded by the fact that prior to her dissertation proposal meeting she had been on good terms with all of her faculty and had been thought of as a "conscientious student" within the program.

After her proposal meeting and the IRB conflict, though, Fiona described her committee members and her relationship with them as "...They're insane. They have lost their minds and I refuse to deal with crazy people." She did, however, still recognize the need to play by their rules and she contacted her committee members again and attempted to smooth the IRB conflict. She "got a very nice note from Stats guy, 'Thank you very much, I appreciate it.'" Fiona took this as a sign that she would be able to continue with her project and indicated that "we're just going to go with nice. I don't care. As long as I can keep going forward, I don't care how crazy you are." Fiona was clear, though, that her committee and the challenges she experienced during her proposal and IRB application were not the only factors that made her journey difficult.

In addition to the external factors she struggled with, she also experienced an internal struggle with her own fears related to issues of competency and failure. Many female students underestimate their actual abilities (Alder, 1976; Ekstrom, et al., 1981; Hanson, 1992; Hite, 1985). Fear of ridicule and failure may act as barriers keeping women from achieving at their potential within the academy (Conners & Franklin 1999).

Tiny mistakes may be used as evidence of their incompetence and they may fear contributing to the perception that they are unhelpful or unwilling to participate in the process (Conners & Franklin, 1999). Fiona's fears of failure and ridicule were likely compounded by her experiences with Stats guy during her committee meeting.

Although Fiona owned her fears and emotional responses and acknowledged their impact on her journey, she located the dysfunction of her experience not within herself, but within an unhealthy and chaotic system. Much like Carmen, Fiona's program emphasized individualism and competition over collaboration and mutual relationships. Traditional models of development in psychology emphasize the separate self, in which competition is inevitable. However, self esteem tends to be lower in competitive systems than in cooperative systems (Deutsch, 1985). Although being individualistic, mastering tasks, and beating others contributes to being viewed as competent, it appears to contribute little to feelings of efficacy or esteem in the long run (Jordan, 2004).

Efficacy and esteem develop out of the ability to effect change or make meaning of circumstances which necessitate "being in a context that is responsive to one's voice and actions" (Jordan, 2004, p. 16). The environment or context of Fiona's academic program was not responsive to her voice or actions. Despite her early attempts to work with Stats guy and make sure they were "on the same page" he "blew up" during her proposal meeting. This confusion and miscommunication continued through her IRB application process. From Fiona's perspective, her voice was devalued and ignored. Although she made attempts to contact her committee members by phone, none of them responded to her and she did not receive feedback on the revised version of her proposal that she sent electronically to her committee members. Non-responsiveness sets up a

power-over dynamic by creating a situation where one person refuses to be influenced by the other (Jordan, 2004). In this dynamic, one person is set up as expert and change or influence is unidirectional. The only feedback Fiona received was from Stats guy when he told her that although she could continue with her project it was not longer interesting or meaningful. Although this was Fiona's project and she believed in the intrinsic value of the project, Stats guy implied that her investment mattered less than his own. This reinforced the existing power-over dynamic. Despite the disconnections, confusion, and miscommunications, Fiona was able to find personal meaning in her actions and in her project and by her own description this contributed to her ability to persevere.

Like several of the other participants, Fiona indicated that structure and organization were a challenge for her along her journey. She seemed to really struggle with the writing process, especially in the absence of any faculty to provide her with guidance or support through the project.

> My own inertia and my own, sometimes fear gets in your way. Fear of failure gets in my way, got in my way several times. Just I can't do this, you've got to be kidding. This is huge. The idea of it being a gigantic project that... And you know you do a paper and you can do most of the research in a weekend and write it the next weekend. Well, that's easy, I can think that far ahead. The organization of this drove me nuts. When I was writing chapter two, I would stop and reorganize every two weeks, which would take time to do....I don't write good....writing was horrible. It was, oh god, I would probably rather be where I am now, goofing with IRB, though I still have to do writing for IRB. It was excruciating, excruciating. I finally talked myself into throwing up on paper,

which is what I do. It's sort of like I give myself permission to write like crap and so once I gave myself permission to throw up on paper and I would also set goals of I'll write two pages today. I'm just going to throw up on two pages of paper today and I'll throw up on two pages of paper tomorrow. That got me through. Then I'd go back and edit and switch and then I got tired of that. I got to the point where every time I read my stuff, my stomach churned and I felt sick and I couldn't tell you what was right or wrong with it. It was too close to me.

Fiona's inability to gain perspective on her project echoes the sentiments Hannah expressed about feeling insecure and unsure whether she was on the right track or doing the right thing. Hannah, however, had the luxury of working with her research group to check her perceptions and experiences. Fiona lacked a built in support system to provide her with the scaffolding and validation Hannah received. Fiona did not have a close relationship with a mentor or her advisor and she did not seek out connection with other faculty after her experiences during her proposal and IRB; she did, however, seek out support from other students in her program who could understand her experiences.

One is friendships of people, of other students who are doing their dissertations, other students who are having difficulties. I've developed a very close friendship with another person who has Stats guy on her committee and has had horrible things happen to her too. There's about two people that I can turn to and they're not my advisor and they're not on my committee, god knows, but they're students and I can call and get support from them and that's huge. I don't know if it's a critical incident, but that support makes all the difference in the world when I get low and it gets hard.

Fiona identified personality characteristics that contributed to her struggle along her journey, like fear of failure and feelings of inadequacy, she also disclosed how her personality contributed to her persistence through the chaos. She identified that her investment, perseverance, and resilience were the factors contributed to being able to work through her depression and find meaning in her project.

> My husband, he'd like me to just quit sometimes. There is something in me that won't quit come hell or high water, I will find a way to get this done. So there is a pretty strong drive and sometimes it's stronger than others, but if I, even if I'm depressed for a couple of months and can't touch it, I know that in a couple months I'm gonna kick back in. So there's my obligation to my sister-in-law and to my advisor, I feel like I've made a commitment to them. I'll keep my commitment and I'll give it my best shot. I can't live with myself unless I do that. Some of that is me, some of that is I believe in honoring my commitments. The only thing I think you need to do in this program is persevere. You don't need brains, you really don't. You can study hard enough to catch up with things, but you just have to be dogged.

When the previous participant, Carmen, was faced with a difficult relationship with her advisor and complicated political dynamics within in academic program her strategy was to just give up in order to successfully negotiate the process. Fiona, on the other hand, expressed nearly the opposite sentiment, she described herself as "dogged." Despite feeling sad and depressed about her experiences, Fiona was not ready to give up or give in so that she could complete her journey. This individual perseverance provided a central organizing theme for understanding Fiona's perception of her journey.

Although she does not talk about her journey as lonely or isolating, terms that other participants have used, Fiona's description of her journey lacks the supportive relational connections salient to many of the stories. She does briefly mention the importance of connections with peers from her program who have had similar experiences along their journey, however the comment was more like an aside to the story of her journey, she gave no details or context, just stated friendships were important. The relationships she spent time developing in the story of her journey were the negative relationships with her committee and the essential quality that defines her ability to persist in her journey and negotiate the negative relationships is her own resilience and perseverance.

> I will always check internally, you know, like when there was the misunderstanding in the proposal meeting. I thought, ok, that would make it clearer, I'm not writing clear enough for psychologists. If psychologists are going to read my paper, I need to make it clear what a competency evaluation is and how you get referred for one and who is evaluated. I'll take that feedback but when they start acting unprofessional and they loose it, I kind of step back. I've learned to step back and talk to friends, do reality checks with friends and then kind of ignore their behavior. I think frustration kind of turns my head around. I think when I get frustrated enough and I feel like I'm being placed in a type of victim role, and people are being silly, there is something in me that will take it to a point and be kind of quiet and sad and then something kicks in and I won't do it anymore. I hold in the back of my mind, if you give me much more grief, I'm hiring a lawyer. You have a commitment to me and you're not following through

with the commitment. I'm not going to do that unless my defense comes along and they, you know, they're going to fail me and it's not for reasonable stuff. I've learned that no matter where you go, you kind of have to stand up for yourself and protect yourself and you can be in with like the committee you thought would be really supportive of you and they get into their own issues and their own goofiness and at some point you have to take a stand and say no more.

Women's identities often become organized around maintaining connections or affiliations with others and the threat of disruption in a connection can create a disruption in a women's sense of self (Miller, 1986a). Self-in-relation theory posits that connection is affected by emotional factors; people can be drawn to connection or withdraw from connection as a result of their emotional states (Jordan, 2004). For example, depression tends to create confusion and move people out of connection, where as, sadness can create connection if people are able to reach out for support and comfort (Stiver & Miller, 1988). Anger can also lead to connection if people are able to express their hurt and get a caring response from whoever is causing them pain (Miller, 1983). People may utilize anger as a strategy for participating in relationships that limit connection (Fedele, 2004).

Fiona clearly demonstrated anger as a reaction to disconnection from relationships within which she had worked to foster connection. Fiona made several attempts to reach out to her various committee members, before and after the "blow ups" at her proposal defense and during the IRB process. Although Fiona did attempt to foster connections and rebuild relationships with her committee members, she also talked about it being necessary to protect herself from these same people. In the wake of her traumatizing experience during her proposal meeting, it was unlikely that Fiona would be able to re-

establish mutual, growth fostering relationships with her committee members without some acknowledgement of issues of power and vulnerability on the part of her committee members.

Selecting committee members, much like selecting a mentor, requires more trust on the part of the student because of the inherent power issues (Schramm, 2000). Fiona was in a position of relatively less power and she chose her committee members because she thought they would be supportive of her during her journey. Unfortunately, when it became clear that Fiona's expectations of support were not going to met and, beyond that, she was going to have to deal with conflict with several of her members she had few options for remediating the issue within her department. Two of her committee members also sat on the IRB committee and she needed their approval to be able to move forward with her project, regardless of whether they remained on her committee.

Rather than fostering a growth producing relationship, Fiona's experiences with her committee seemed to generate a streak of anger and self-preservation. This can most explicitly be seen in Fiona's comments that she had contemplated contacting a lawyer if she incurred more trouble along her journey as a result of her committee members not following through on their commitment to facilitating her journey. Although Fiona acknowledged her experiences contributed to her withdrawal from her academic community and generated feelings of depression, she also addressed how her experiences contributed to her growth and development as a researcher.

> I think I feel better. I went through a period where I got really depressed after the meeting and the nasty things that happened. I guess I feel like, you know, I got through that. I'm applying for IRB, I'm going to apply for a certificate of

> confidentiality, and it's like I am doing stuff that researchers do, you know like working with government agencies and all that other stuff. So for now, I feel kinda ok. I don't know how I'll feel if I don't get my data, but right now I feel like I've learned a lot and I'll continue to learn a lot. I think my confidence has grown a little bit.

Fiona's sense of efficacy and esteem came from completing activities that "researchers do." She was able to identify her own learning and growth as a researcher despite the challenges she had experienced along the way. This sense of validation was generated internally and was related to Fiona's resilience and perseverance and it did not mitigate her sense of indignation or resentment related to her own journey. She had this to say about the dissertation journey,

> It's unfair. And the unfair that I'm talking about is, I know people in my program who have gotten through with really crappy dissertations and I know people who are being scrutinized and I don't know why. It's extremely unfair. How it's done is unfair. The support is not there and the evaluation or the consistency of my program and who goes through and gets what done, it's really not fair. I mean I can deal with it, but some students get data given to them. And so, oh my god, if I had all my data given to me, I'd be in heaven. And the idea that it has to be rough. You're learning to collect data, is that the way? I've done projects where I've collected data, who cares? I've known students who get their data before they ever go to the IRB, I know students whose dissertations I've seen and I can't believe they got through.

Summary

Fiona's final comments call into question the structure and purpose of the dissertation project and bring us back to similar questions that were posited in the review of literature related to the current structure of requirements within Ph.D. programs in counseling psychology. Although most research articles have multiple authors, the dissertation remains a requirement individuals must complete on their own. Krumboltz (2002) referred to the dissertation as a rite of passage with only limited value for teaching students about research. Fiona asked what made the dissertation special or different from other research projects that she had completed prior to the dissertation. The answer to her question may lie in one of her own comments, what distinguishes the dissertation journey from other projects is the implicit assumption that it has to be "rough." Although the dissertation is held up as the benchmark of competence for the Ph. D., there is no evidence to suggest that the project enhances research skills or identity as most students never complete any research beyond their dissertation.

Conclusions

Much like the women in the upswing category, Carmen and Fiona began their stories by describing experiences they perceived as negative along their journey. Both women expressed significant psychological effects as a result of their experiences, including learned helplessness, depression, and anger. Additionally, both expressed resentment and disappointment that things were not different on their journeys and a longing for support that would have facilitated journey.

The stories of their journeys were distinct from the women in the upswing category, though, because neither Carmen nor Fiona experienced a change in their

external circumstances or their internal perceptions of their experiences. In addition, both of their journeys were void of descriptions of significant relationships with faculty or other people with power. Neither woman had a mentor or advisor who facilitated their integration into their academic programs or helped them to negotiate the complicated political dynamics of these programs. Their stories stood apart from the women in the ambivalent category because Carmen and Fiona were both resolute in their expressions of disappointment, anger, resentment, and frustration; there was no equivocation or contradiction in their descriptions.

Although neither woman described a significant positive relationship that facilitated their journey, relationships were, none the less, a salient factor in both the quality and direction of their journeys. Both of these women experienced relational disconnections from significant people in their academic programs. Carmen described her struggle with an unethical advisor who attempted to mold rather than mentor. Fiona described serious conflict on several occasions with both her advisor and another member of her committee that caused her to question whether or not she would be able to continue her journey. Although the women each responded to the relational disconnections differently, one by giving up and one by getting powerful, their responses both point to individual resilience as a significant factor in their persistence.

The Dissertation Dialogues

At the end of each interview, each woman was asked four projective questions: 1) If your dissertation got dressed up, what would it wear? 2) If your dissertation could speak, what would it say? 3) What does your dissertation remind you of? and 4) What is special about your dissertation? These questions were designed to encourage the

participants to think and talk about their dissertations differently than the standard interview questions. Participants were required to make a paradigmatic shift in the way they talked about their dissertation journey because the questions were framed to challenge the standard vocabulary used to talk about the dissertation. The absurdity of these questions overtly gave participants permission to talk about their projects and their journeys in more free and creative ways than is normally dictated by the formality of a research interview. This "permission" created a space that allowed a new voice and a new perspective to emerge. Many of the women's answers to these questions echo their responses to the earlier questions, however what emerged as significant was the difference in the way they talked about their process, their product, and themselves.

If your dissertation got dressed, what would it wear?

The images evoked by the women's descriptions of what their dissertations would wear give insight into the most salient and significant aspects of their journeys. Their descriptions reflected their confidence, motivation, identity, and resilience. The style, color, and relative comfort or utility of the clothing were telling signs of each woman's relationship to her dissertation.

Some of the descriptions of clothing were related to the women's sense of what they currently needed on their journey. Hannah seemed to want to draw attention to her accomplishment, whereas Deva seemed to know that she needed to get down to work, and Britt expressed a need for security or protection.

Hannah's positive feelings about her experience are clearly reflected in her description of what her dissertation would wear, "It would wear something that's kind of flashy, like I'm a big deal and I got done. Something red and then it would have a train

that's a computer cord." Hannah was obviously proud of her accomplishments and felt that she deserved recognition. She dressed her dissertation in something flashy or noticeable, something that emphasized that it was a "big deal." The glamour of Hannah's description was contrasted by the functional, no-frills image evoked by Deva's description. Deva had expressed ambivalence about her journey and this theme continued in her choice of clothing for her dissertation, "I would say jeans and a t-shirt. It's just really a work in progress and it's taken some hard work and it's not going to be the most wonderful or glamorous thing, but it'll be something." Deva's description was the opposite of Hannah's in terms of form, fashion, and function. Her dissertation was not glamorous or flashy, it was utilitarian and comfortable, it still had work to do. Britt's answer most clearly highlighted the significance of resilience and perseverance. "It would probably want to wear a NASA suit so that it's waterproof, fireproof, insulated, and puncture resistant." Her answer also alluded to a sense of vulnerability in the process and a need for protection from the outside elements.

Carmen clearly tied her identity as a researcher to this image. During her interview she related that she felt as though she had been molded instead of mentored, that she had become a clone of her advisor. This image was continued in her choice of dress, "It would wear clothes from Yugoslavia because that's where C is from." Carmen expressed a lack of ownership over her final product. She stated she hardly recognized what she wrote at her defense. Her lack of choice or ownership in the process was reflected in how her dissertation would dress, she continued to allow Sandra to impose her style on the dissertation.

Ellie and Angela both identified that cultural factors influenced their choice of advisors and dissertation topics and this theme carried over into their descriptions of what their dissertations would wear. Ellie said, "It would wear a ribbon shirt and a feather headdress." Angela's dissertation would wear, "A linked belt that's very colorful, that is intertwined in a sense, because that's how tribal people are, you can't separate them out."

If your dissertation could speak, what would it say?

The answers that evolved out of this question differed from the answers to the previous question. The participant's choice of dress was related to issues such as, identity, motivation, and resilience. The answers to this question demonstrated anger, relief and gratitude, and made requests for help. Speaking implies the existence of a relationship between the speaker and an audience, someone who will listen to the message. The three participants who had not yet defended their dissertations were obviously hoping someone was listening as their dissertations spoke because all made requests for assistance. Deva's dissertation said, "Help me!" Britt's demanded, "Get me out of here! Let me be done!" And Fiona's expressed a desire for, "Help! Help me help me help me. It'd say help..."

The women who had defended prior to their participation expressed a wider range of responses. Carmen's anger over her experience came through strongly in her dissertation's response, "Fuck you!" Angela's relief at completing her long, frustrating journey was evident in her dissertations' exuberant, "Hallelujah, I'm done!" Gina's did not have this level of energy for emotional expression but it was still optimistic. Her

dissertation said, "I'm tired. I've been worked over so many times and I need a break, but I feel like I've got a little bit of a message to give."

Both Ellie and Hannah's dissertations expressed gratitude. Ellie's said, "Ha Ho, an intertribal word for thank you" and Hannah's said, "I think my dissertation does speak because it's qualitative and those women's stories, their voices are in my dissertation. Hopefully it would say thank you."

Although some of these sentiments may have been alluded to or implied in the women's answers to the initial interview questions, their responses to the dissertation dialogue questions were much more open, direct, and unedited. Neither Britt, Fiona, nor Deva directly stated that they wanted or needed assistance in their journey during the initial part of the interview. However, this message was explicit and consistent when asked what their dissertations would say if they could speak. In previous sections it has been presented that women students may be afraid of being perceived as incompetent or failures and this may affect their help seeking behaviors (Connor and Franklin, 1999; Lovitts, 1996). When presented with the opportunity, though, to distance themselves from the request by allowing their dissertation to voice a desire for assistance, each of these participants asked for help. Additionally, Angela's sense of relief and Carmen's anger were not expressed as strongly or candidly during the initial part of the interview. When they were able to attribute the emotions to their dissertations, however, these women expressed strong feelings about their journeys that were not diluted by the more formal, professional language of the initial part of the interview.

What does your dissertation remind you of?

The 'dissertation dialogue' questions were different from the initial interview questions in both structure and intent. As explained earlier, the 'dissertation dialogue' questions were less formal and direct and more projective in nature than the initial questions. They required the participants to think and talk about their dissertations differently than the initial questions. Additionally, these questions referred specifically to the dissertation and not the dissertation journey, which may have opened up space to make a distinction between the journey and the document.

The current question and the next required the participants to make a slight shift from the previous two questions. Instead of answering as though they were the dissertation, the women were asked to talk directly about their dissertations. When asked to reflect on what their dissertations reminded them of, many of the participants, had negative associations.

> It reminds me of frustration. Waiting by the phone, checking my email like I'm some messed up lover. Checking it every five minutes to see if she's written. Frustrating. – Carmen, 24
>
> Every time I think about it I get a headache. – Ellie, 32
>
> Hell? It's so different from anything I've ever done ... but maybe a never ending thing that continues to grow and get bigger, like the blob. – Fiona, 45
>
> It's like a thing all unto itself, you know? It's like when I think about it, I've done research before but it doesn't take all this time and energy. – Deva, 27
>
> It sounds terrible, but the bible. Something that's big and thick and we hate to keep opening. – Angela, 33

Some of these descriptions are consistent with the participants' descriptions of their journeys. Carmen and Fiona both described fairly negative and traumatizing journeys and their dissertations clearly reminded them of the challenges and frustrations they had faced. However, this was not true for all of the participants. Hannah, who had described her journey as validating and collaborative, was reminded of some of the less appealing aspects of her journey, issues she had not really addressed during the initial interview.

> I had a friend who said, I think pretty perfectly, "Oh you're out of your cave" when I was finished. To get this done, I isolated and I was in my dark little cave with only the light from my little laptop screen. – Hannah, 28

Britt and Gina, who both experienced upswings in their journeys, made analogies to developmental issues when asked this question. Their answers reflect the upswing they experienced along their journeys.

> The struggles in life. There are good moments and bad moments. It makes me think of that phrase, that which doesn't kill me makes me stronger. – Britt, 34
>
> A student who starts out with some ideals and a possible direction, but pretty naïve and ends up in a different place, but having learned a lot. – Gina, 31

What is special about your dissertation?

The women who participated in these interviews expressed a wide range of experiences on their journeys, from the validating to the traumatizing. However, what was most significant was despite the differences in their experiences, all of them were able find something positive to say when asked what was special about their dissertation.

When the women were asked about their journeys they addressed a mixture of positive and negative aspects and when they were asked what their dissertation reminded them of, many of them described negative associations. However when asked what was special about their dissertation, the women focused on issues like their accomplishments, the personal meaning their project had for them, or the contributions their project could make to the field. None of them referred to the challenges or difficulties they faced during their journey when they identified what was special.

The other issue to note is the difference in the way the questions were phrased. In the initial part of the interview, women were asked to describe their journeys and identify factors that facilitated or hindered the process, without any direction, limits, or qualifiers to frame their answers. Based on some of the women's answers to the initial part of the interview and even to the previous three 'dissertation dialogue' questions, it would be easy to infer that they had no positive feelings. However, when directed to focus on what was special about their dissertation, each of them was able to find something on which to comment. Hannah, Angela, and Gina focused on the personal significance or meaning their project held for them.

> It's the longest thing I've ever written. I feel like it's a piece of me in a lot of ways. It's such a huge accomplishment, so I think that my dissertation is just special to me. – Hannah, 28
>
> What's special is my dissertation has stories that I'm honored that I heard. It has their life in there....I don't think another book has that kind of connection. – Angela, 33

I don't' know how special this is in terms of being unique, but I feel like I stuck to something that I really cared deeply about and that I wanted to do. I truly wanted to find the answer. – Gina, 31

Although Hannah made reference to this sense of accomplishment when asked what her dissertation would wear, this is the first time some of the other participants gave voice to these feelings. Both Angela and Gina had identified positive aspects of their journey during the initial part of the interview, however neither of them had so candidly addressed the personal meaning of their dissertation. While these three women focused on the personal meaning of their projects, the other participants addressed the professional or practical implications of their dissertations.

It has genuine, real applications for practice. It really could make a difference in the way that people learn how to make career decisions and somebody once said to me if you want to find out what somebody's neurosis is, ask them what their research topic is and for me that's definitely it. – Britt, 34

What it found is important for helping in the field of suicidology. – Carmen, 24

It has never been done before. – Ellie, 32

It challenges a profession that doesn't like to be challenged. – Fiona, 45

I can't go wrong completely because there isn't necessarily that much out there studying courage. It's kind of special just because it's adding to that. – Deva, 27

The value in the 'dissertation dialogue' questions was in allowing women to construct and talk about their experiences and memories of their dissertations and their journeys differently than they had in the past. As a result of these questions, some of the women were able to tap into deeper emotional responses or discuss the personal value or meaning

of their project. Other participants were able to frame their experiences differently, or identify and describe aspects of their journey they had not thought to include during the initial part of the interview. Regardless of how the women's descriptions of their journeys began, all of them were able to end their stories and the interview with a positive image.

Conclusions

This chapter presented the eight women who participated in the current project. The stories of their journeys were analyzed by first decontextualizing, or separating the data into meaningful units, and then recontextualizing the data by identifying categories of responses. The participants' stories were separated into four different response categories (positive, negative, ambivalent, and upswing) based on the description of the overall quality of their journey. Additionally, themes of persistence, resilience, connection, disconnection, integration into the academic community, and structure were addressed as they pertained to each of the participants.

The dissertation is one of the final requirements for the Ph.D. in counseling psychology. For years researchers have acknowledged that students at the dissertation stage are at risk of never completing the doctoral degree (e.g. Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Golde, 1994, 2000; Lovitts, 1996). Many students who drop out do so after completing all of the requirements of their degree but the dissertation (Golde, 1994). One factor that connects the women who participated in this study together is persistence. Although this was not a study of persistence, the issue evolved as a central theme as a number of the women alluded to thoughts of dropping out or not completing their

dissertations. However, five of the eight women had successfully defended their dissertations at the time of the interview and the three women who were still involved in the process of completing their dissertations all talked about their journeys in terms of finishing their projects. At the same time, many of these women expressed feelings of self-doubt, ambivalence, disappointment, frustration, and inadequacy. The fact that these women continued to persist on their projects despite negative perceptions of themselves, others, or their projects creates a common path among the participants; at the same time, this persistence may distinguish them from some of their peers. Although this poses a significant limitation to the generalizability of the results of this study, it does not detract from the significance of the conclusions as they contribute to a growing understanding of the process of completing the doctoral degree requirement.

When this project was originally conceived, it emphasized relationships in terms of positive and negative or present and absent. As the project evolved, though, it became increasingly clear that these constructs did not adequately capture what the participants were describing along their journeys. Shifting the paradigm of relational experiences to include both connection and disconnection and exploring the positive and negative aspects of each status facilitated a more inclusive understanding of the participants' stories. This recognition of the dialectic inherent in relationships led to a clearer understanding of healthy mentoring and advising relationships compared to those that involved abuses of power, as well as the acknowledgement of the benefits of working through disconnections in relationships.

The next chapter will present the conclusions related to the analysis and examine the implications for the findings related to resiliency, persistence, connection,

disconnection, integration into the academic community, and structure. Chapter five will also address the limitations of the current study and make suggestions for areas of future inquiry that build on the current project.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation was to increase understanding of the meaning female graduate students place on the structures and processes of their research-training experiences, specifically the participants' experiences of writing their dissertations. This chapter will present the conclusions related to the analysis and examine the implications for the findings related to resiliency, connection, disconnection, and structure. It will also address the limitations of the current study and make suggestions for areas of future inquiry that build on the current project.

Although this study did not focus on issues of retention or attrition, these issues were evident and important in the stories the participants told. Several of the participants made reference to wanting to quit, or feeling stalled in their journey. Because they did not quit and they were able to gain momentum on their journeys, we can look to their stories to increase our understanding of the factors that may contribute to persistence.

In the previous chapter, I acknowledged that the original model I proposed in the introduction did not sufficiently explain the dissertation journey experiences disclosed by the participants. The original model focused on connection to the exclusion of disconnection, reconnection, or resiliency in women's journeys. As my analysis evolved, it became apparent that it would be necessary to change the model in order to more accurately reflect the centrality of these concepts. The changes to the model will serve as the organizing principles for the conclusions. See figure two for a visual explanation.

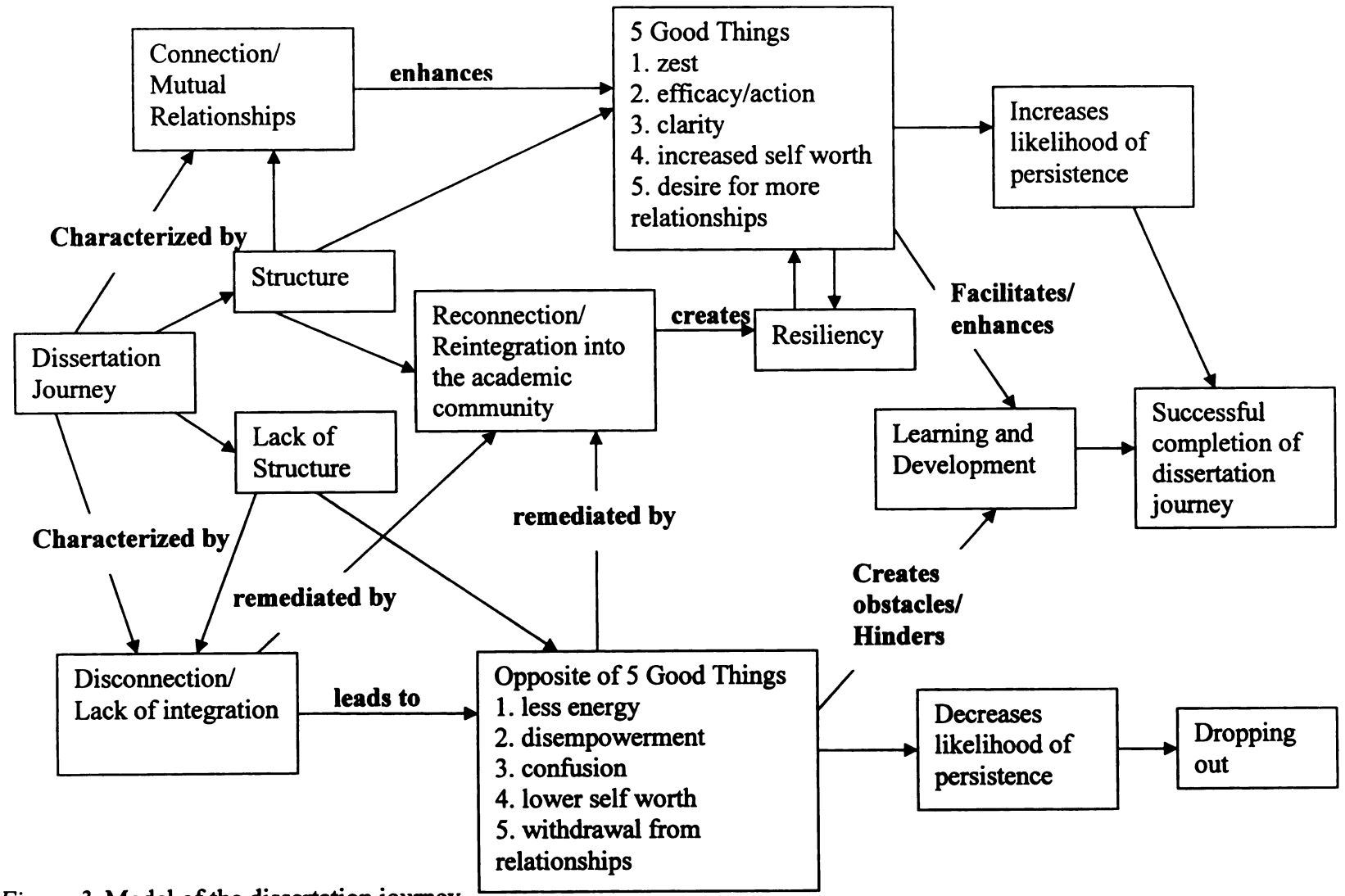

Figure 3. Model of the dissertation journey.

Self-in-Relation Theory

Self-in-relation theory was the lens utilized to analyze the participants' responses. This theory emphasizes relationships as the context for experience, experimentation, and development. The self is conceptualized as emerging within the context of relationships. This view of development challenges the reigning paradigm that emphasizes individuation and separation as measurements of successful development. Rather, Miller (1991) contends that all growth and development occur within dynamic interactions, not separate from them. Mutual relationships can provide meaning and motivation in peoples' lives; their absence can negatively impact self esteem. The review of literature outlines the positive outcomes of connection that Miller (1986b) refers to as "the five good things": zest, increased ability to act, increased sense of self worth, greater clarity regarding self and others, and a desire for more relationships. Disconnections may result in the opposite of the five good things: less energy, disempowerment, confusion, less self-worth, and withdrawal from relationships.

Although disconnections may contribute to less satisfying dissertation journeys and may create barriers or hindrances to the writing process, they are not necessarily negative things that should be avoided. All relationships ebb and flow through times of connection and disconnection. The strengthening work in relationships occurs during times of reconnection after disconnection. The key to transforming these disconnections and remaining open to others is resilience (Jordan, 2004).

Discussion of Themes

Connection and disconnection

Relationships have been identified as a key factor in the literature on women's development (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Jordan, 1991; Miller, 1986a, 1991; & Surrey, 1991). Additionally, as referred to in the review of literature, research in counseling psychology has emphasized the importance of advisory, supervisory, and mentoring relationships. In this study, relationships also emerged as significant aspects of the women's journeys through the dissertation process. The women in this study all identified their relationships with advisors or dissertation chairs as an important factor in their journey. Some of the women described growing and learning in a collaborative, mutual relationship with their advisor or chair. However, some of the women described damaging relationships that actually acted as a barrier to their journey.

There are not two neat, dichotomous groups of participants: those who experienced connection and those who experienced disconnection. Several of the women who identified relationships as having a facilitating effect on their journey also experienced disconnections in significant relationships. The participants who were able to work through their disconnections and develop mutual, supportive relationships with other people tended to characterize their journey as connected. Those participants who experienced disconnection but were unable to either work through the disconnection or foster new connections with other faculty tended to describe journeys characterized by disconnection.

The participants who identified relationships as having a significant positive or facilitating effect on their journey talked about their experiences differently than those who had journeys characterized by disconnection or a lack of integration into their academic community. They described experiencing more of the "five good things" identified by Miller (1986b) as the positive outcomes of connection. The increases in empowerment, clarity, efficacy, self-worth, and desire for future connection could be seen both in the way the women talked about their process and in the way they talked about their experience of the process. These women used words like "validating," "empowering," "energized," "encouraged," and "positive" to describe their experiences.

The participants who experienced journeys characterized by disconnection used very different words to describe their experiences. They used words and phrases like, "unfair," "victim," "molded," "half-ass," and "I just gave up" to describe their writing process. These phrases are consistent with Miller's (1986b) description of the opposite of the "five good things." Whether or not disconnections affected the ultimate completion of the dissertation project, they obviously impacted the quality of the journey.

Although mutual relationships may be a necessary factor for creating a more positive or satisfying experiences, they are not necessarily sufficient. The women who related the most positive dissertation journeys not only described a significant relationship, they also talked about their own resiliency and perseverance. In addition, mutual relationships are not a necessary factor for successful completion of the dissertation project. Several of the students who experienced significant disconnections or an overall lack of integration into their academic community had successfully defended their dissertations at the time of their participation in this project. However, the

presence of a mutual, growth fostering relationship that promotes Millers' (1986b) "five good things" may have ramifications on how students view the research process and themselves as researchers.

Integration and Isolation

Even the women who described their journeys as collaborative acknowledged a sense of isolation inherent to the dissertation writing process. Integration is "the extent to which the individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution and abides by the formal and informal structural requirements for membership in the community or in the subgroups of which the individual is a part" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p.53). The women who were integrated into their academic communities appeared to be able to work through or work with this sense of isolation because they knew they could periodically re-connect with others when they needed support. This integration or connection to a community seemed to result in more positive or satisfying experiences despite their sense of isolation. "Joining others in mutually supporting and meaningful relationships most clearly allows us to move out of isolation and powerlessness" (Jordan, 2004, p. 42).

Women who did not experience connection or integration within a community where they could re-energize, re-focus, or re-group during their journey described less satisfying, even damaging experiences. They identified these experiences as factors that hindered their writing process and impacted their self-esteem. Karen Laing stated, "Isolation is the glue that holds oppression in place" (1998, as cited in Jordan, Walker, & Hartling, 2004). When students lack a safe place within which to give voice to their fears

and frustrations about the process, they are not only isolated, but silenced. In this way, problems within the student's academic program or with faculty, advisors, or committee members go unexamined and unaddressed. This creates the potential for a cycle in which the dysfunctional pattern occurs repeatedly across generations of students in a program.

The literature suggests integration or membership in the academic community is important to persistence (Lovitts & Nelson, 2000; Tinto, 1993). The role of the academic advisor is central to creating integration and may have a greater impact on student persistence than their relationship with peers (Golde, 2000). Students who experience negative encounters, marginalization, disconnections, or a lack of integration may withdraw from the academic community (Johnson, et al., 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1994; Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) suggests that successful completion of the dissertation project reflects not only the individual abilities of students, but also the role of the faculty advisor. He asserts that "persistence at this stage may be highly idiosyncratic in that it may hinge largely if not entirely upon the behavior of a specific faculty member" (Tinto, 1993, p. 237).

The current study supports both the importance and the power of the advisory relationship in shaping the women's dissertation journeys, both positively and negatively. Several of the students described significant abuses of power by their advisors, from being asked to work in an unfunded research position or risk losing access to data to ignoring advisees and stalling their dissertation process for an extended period of time. Others described pervasive feelings of abandonment, real or perceived, that impacted the direction and time to completion of their journey. Some of the participants had to replace their advisors after the individual left for another university or went on sabbatical.

Several of the women who had negative or marginalizing experiences with their advisors talked about dropping out or breaking down during their journey.

The power of the advising relationship is not just in the damage it could do, though. Some of the participants identified the advising relationship as a safe place to explore their ideas, vent their frustrations, and develop their research projects. They described mutual, empowering relationships that enhanced their sense of efficacy and ability to create meaning out of their process.

Structure

The dissertation is one of the final requirements for the Ph.D. in counseling psychology. For years researchers have acknowledged that students at the dissertation stage are at risk of dropping out and not completing the degree (e.g. Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Golde, 1994, 2000; Lovitts, 1996). The lack of structure during the dissertation is an obstacle for many doctoral students (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Cone & Foster, 1993; Mauch & Birch, 1989). The expectations and requirements for course work have clearly defined parameters and there are limits on time to completion. This is not the case with the dissertation and many doctoral students experience difficulty making the transition from the classroom to the dissertation (Williams, 1997).

The results of the current study are consistent with this trend in the literature. Those students who had more structure along their journeys (e.g. Hannah and Gina) identified the scaffolding provided by their academic programs as a facilitating factor. They indicated that it was helpful to get timely feedback on their projects throughout their journeys. Creating more steps between the dissertation proposal meeting and the

defense allowed more opportunities for the student to connect with their committee members, receive feedback on their project, and give voice to their thoughts or concerns about the process.

Students who lacked this programmatic level of structure described variously seeking out structure from peers, advisors, or mentors or attempting to create their own structure. These students used words like "lost," "confused," "frustrated," "scared," and "alone" to describe their feelings about their process of finding or creating structure for their projects. This lack of structure seemed to intensify feelings of isolation and confusion. It has been noted in previous sections that women students tend to underestimate their actual abilities (Alder, 1976; Ekstrom, et al., 1981; Hanson, 1992; Hite, 1985). Fear of ridicule and failure may act as a barrier to success in their academic programs (Conners & Franklin, 1999). Students may not feel as though they can ask for help without being seen as a failure and yet it is realistic that they may not have the skills to take on a project of this magnitude without guidance. The absence of a programmatic structure that facilitates time management, project development, and connection with the academic community may unwittingly contribute to students' sense of isolation by implicitly reinforcing the notion that students should be able to do things on their own.

Resilience

Individual resiliency is the ability to bounce back after experiencing a challenge. This concept has become a hot topic recently in the positive psychology literature. It also emerged as significant in the current study. Traditionally resiliency has been viewed as an individual endeavor (Jordan, 2004). However, through the lens of self-in-relation

theory, the emphasis is on relational resilience or the ability to transform disconnections. This requires a shift from "individual 'control over' dynamics to a model of supported vulnerability," from a "one directional need for support from others to mutual empathic involvement," from power over dynamics to empowerment" from "finding meaning... to creating meaning" (Jordan, 2004, p. 32). For students to be able to transform disconnections, they must be in a context that is open and responsive to their voice. Many of the participants in this study were not able to reconnect with the individual with whom they experienced the disconnection, and for some of them the disconnection may have been healthy because of the nature of the relationship. However, those students who were able to reconnect with their program by fostering a healthy relationship with another member in the academic community described a reduction in stress and isolation.

Transforming a disconnection is not about "doing, fixing, changing, or controlling," rather it is about dealing with the fear that contributes to separation and isolation (Jordan, 2004, p.56). Power issues are inherent to mentoring and advising relationships. Students are, by definition, in positions of less power and disconnections in a significant relationship may result in feelings of "what's wrong with me?" Students' feelings of inadequacy may lead them to attribute problems within mentoring and advising relationships to themselves rather than the situation (Lovitts, 1996). Because of the emphasis on independence and individual achievement within academic programs, students may view asking for help as a sign of vulnerability or incompetence. This may inhibit them from reaching out to either the person they have experienced the disconnection with or other members of the academic community. Several of the participants in the current study were clearly able to deal with their fears and reach out to

someone for help. It is less clear how they dealt with their fears or what contributed to their ultimate decision to ask for help. Exploring the intersection of relational resiliency with individual resiliency may shed light on this quandary.

Considerations

The purpose of this project was to increase understanding of the meaning female graduate students place on the structures and process of their research training. Specifically, this project explored the participants' perceptions of their experience writing their dissertations. The study was qualitative in design and although the design was appropriate to the questions asked, it does present several limitations to the current study.

The sample for this study was comprised of a small group of women who had successfully negotiated (nearly) all of the requirements for the Ph.D. in counseling psychology. In addition, all of these women self-selected to take part in the study. These are not the only factors the participants had in common, as nearly all of them expressed some negative experience or perception related to their journey. Many of the participants described significant problems with advisors, dissertation chairs, or other committee members. Only one of the participants described an overall positive and validating experience.

This lack of balance in the sample may be explained in several ways. It is possible that more students have negative experiences along their dissertation journeys and the sample was actually representative of women's experiences in counseling psychology. It would be necessary to do a much larger scale project, likely quantitative, to assess the frequency of positive and negative dissertation writing experiences in order

to make any kind of conclusive statement regarding the current sample. Another explanation may be that people who have negative experiences have a greater need to tell their story and were, therefore, more likely to volunteer to participate in a study of this nature. It is also possible that because students were allowed to anonymously tell their story without any fear of retribution from their academic program they felt more comfortable relating both negative and positive experiences. Whereas, within their academic programs there may be a certain amount of pressure to present a more positive spin on their experience so that they are seen as competent and a team player by faculty who are in a position to evaluate them. The stories were purely self-report, retrospective memories of the participants' perceptions of their experiences. No effort was made to corroborate the stories. Because the interviews involved retrospective memories, the recollections may have included some distortions.

Implications

This study has implications for doctoral programs in counseling psychology, advisors and committee members, and female doctoral students. The implications will be organized around two factors, relational issues and structural issues.

Relational Issues

The presence of a mutual, growth fostering relationship that promotes Millers' (1986b) "five good things" may have ramifications on how students view the research process and themselves as researchers. This is an important implication for the way graduate training, advising, and the dissertation process is structured. It is not enough to just graduate students from programs in counseling psychology if there is no

understanding of the factors that contribute to the quality of their experience conducting research and the development of their identities as researchers. If mutual relationships that foster the "five good things" produce graduates who feel more positively about conducting research and more confident in their own research skills, then it is necessary to understand how faculty can promote these kinds of relationships with their students. "Simply because a faculty member has written his or her own dissertation does not mean that he or she knows how to facilitate the process for others" (Williams, 1997, p. 190).

Mentoring and advising relationships are complex and, as evidenced by the participants in this project, have enormous influence on students and their perceptions of the dissertation process. In order to avoid abuses of power, intentional or unintentional, there must be space in the relationship for an ongoing dialogue about the relational dynamics. Providing faculty with training regarding these issues may enhance faculty and students' ability to work through the inherent challenges of the dissertation process.

Although mentoring has received a lot of attention in the literature of various disciplines, including engineering, counseling psychology, and education (Conners & Franklin, 1999; Johnson, et al., 1995; Hollingsworth & Fassinger, 2002; Schramm, 2000) mentoring relationships did not emerge as significant from or more important than other relationships in the current study. Advising relationships, though, were identified by all of the participants as having a significant impact on their dissertation journey. It is possible this is because not all of the women who participated experienced a mentoring relationship, however all of them had an advisor. This also points to a gap in our understanding of mentoring and advising relationships. Although the literature has drawn a distinction between the two concepts (Gelso & Lent, 2000; Hollingsworth & Fassinger,

2002; Schlosser, et al., 2003). The utility of this distinction may have been lost on this project. When allowed to talk freely, without being prompted to use one word or another, the participants used mentor and advisor interchangeably. They referred to mentoring and advising relationships both as positive and negative. The strength or power of both of these relationships was evident in that relationships that were perceived as positive by participants and described as positive were associated with more positive outcomes. The reverse was also true. Relationships that were perceived as negative and described in negative terms were associated with more negative outcomes. Because of the importance of the advising relationship, programs may want to review their policies regarding assigning students to an advisor. The way an advisor is assigned may impact the relationship between the advisor and the advisee, it also "communicates the program's position with regard to the students having a voice" (Schlosser, et al., 2003, p. 187).

Structural Issues

Research supports the need for students to begin working on their dissertations early in their doctoral training (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Hanson, 1992) and the current study echoes this idea. The fourth or fifth year of many programs is considered the dissertation year. However, participants who described programs that provided more structure for the dissertation process, also identified starting their dissertation journey earlier in their academic program. Providing students with steps before the dissertation proposal and between the proposal and the defense that facilitate project management and time management skills and allow more opportunities for feedback from faculty may streamline the process. This step-wise approach to the dissertation allows students to

gain mastery over a certain skill set before moving on to the next. This generates more opportunities for students to have successes along the process which in turn may enhance their sense of esteem and efficacy regarding research.

This more collaborative approach to the dissertation process is consistent with Gelso's (1979, 1993, 1997) theory of the RTE. Research that has examined differences in training programs has found that programs rated higher on (a) faculty modeling, (b) positive reinforcement, (c) early involvement in research, and (d) science as partly social have a greater impact on students' attitudes toward research (Gelso, et al., 1996). These interpersonal factors identified by Gelso (1979, 1993, 1997) point to a model for the dissertation that is more structured and provides students with scaffolding for acquiring the necessary research skills. This more collaborative, relationally oriented approach may challenge the existing research training models that emphasize independence and individual achievement. In addition, many academic programs, faculty, and students may be resistant to changes that appear to involve more work on their part. It will be important to examine ways to integrate these concepts into already existing programmatic structures in ways that are consistent with their training philosophies.

Conclusions

The reality is doing research is hard work, writing a dissertation is not an easy process, and graduate training may be less than ideal. Many students who participated in this project gave voice to a sense of naivety about graduate school in general and, more specifically, the dissertation writing process. These students indicated that they thought their experiences would be different, easier, more fair, and less lonely or isolated. They

thought they would have more help or that they would be automatically mentored. The responsibility for addressing these misconceptions is shared mutually by the institution, the faculty and the student. The journey should be challenging not impossible, difficult not traumatic and this is possible if institutions, faculty, and students work together to create a more realistic understanding of the doctoral education process. Students in this study identified both relational and structural factors as significant influences on their perception of their journeys. Although this study may contribute to increasing our understanding of relational factors and the doctoral training process, it presents a challenge in terms of making recommendations for change. The quality of relationships can not be legislated or mandated, however institutions have control over the way academic programs are structured or organized. It is at the structural level that programs may be able to make changes and impact the process of graduate training. Although the responsibility for improving the dissertation writing process should ideally be shared by the institution, the faculty, and the student, the reality is that institutional change is often slow. There are factors that students can be empowered to address on their own:

1. Monitoring self talk regarding self-concept, achievement, hardship, etc.
2. Consulting with peers, advisors, others to create structure
3. Reading other people's proposals and dissertations
4. Establishing social support outside of academic programs
5. Anticipating down times and periods of isolation
6. Investigating reputations of committee members and committee chair
7. Educating self about politics of the department

8. Anticipating and planning for sabbaticals and other faculty responsibilities that might impact the dissertation journey
9. Establishing clear expectations with advisors and mentors
10. Know your own strengths and limits and anticipate how they will impact the dissertation journey (ex. organizations skills, writing skills, ability to meet deadlines)

In addition, there are several things that faculty can do to facilitate this process:

1. Include definitions of and expectations for mentoring and advising in program handbook
2. Implement programmatic evaluations of student's experiences with advising and mentoring
3. Provide training and support for faculty in their roles as mentors and advisors
4. Establish minimal acceptable standards for advising and mentoring in terms of time commitments, responsibility for disseminating pertinent programmatic information, etc.
5. Develop programmatic philosophy of mentoring and advising
6. Facilitate students' self-assessment of needs and expectations for advising and mentoring
7. Give students feedback on their progress

Recommendations for Future Research

The intent and design of this study were exploratory in nature, as such, the current project likely stimulated more questions than it answered. This section will make recommendations for future inquiry.

The current study focused solely on the perceptions of graduate students regarding their dissertation writing process. This project provided female graduate students in counseling psychology the opportunity to share the story of their journey in their own voice. Future research could examine the process from the perspective of the student, as well as the advisor or dissertation chair. This would enhance the current project by allowing the researcher to check intentions and perceptions by both the advisor and the student. Because only the student was interviewed for the current project, there was no way to check the validity of their perceptions and so their perceptions became their story.

Additionally, this project interviewed participants at one discreet point in their journey, as such the data was mostly retrospective. It is difficult to estimate how this approach may have impacted the quality of the data that was collected. For example, students who had successfully completed their journey may have looked back on their experiences more favorably because the struggles or challenges of the process were no longer relevant. It would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study, following several women over the course of their entire dissertation journey. This approach would give more insight into variations and changes in students' perspectives at various points in their journeys. It would also control for problems with retrospective memory.

The current study did not explore the impact of cultural factors, although this emerged as a significant point in several of the interviews. Future research could more fully explore the impact of culture on the dissertation journey. This research could explore culture as it contributes to the development of the dissertation topic, its relationship to research philosophy, and as it impacts the advising relationship.

Five of the eight participants in the current study had successfully defended their dissertations at the time of their interview and the other three participants all spoke about their journeys as though they would complete them. These women all showed resiliency and perseverance. Both of these concepts need to be more fully examined as they relate to persistence through the dissertation journey. Additionally, women who decide not to complete the dissertation and remain all but dissertation (ABD) need to be asked about their experience and the factors that contributed to their decision not to continue to degree completion.

Relationships of all kinds, advisory, mentoring, peer, and family emerged as significant to the dissertation journey. Women who experienced mutual, growth fostering relationships with a member of their academic community described more positive experiences along their journeys. These relationships seemed to promote the experience of Miller's (1986b) "five good things." Understanding why certain relationships facilitate empowerment, efficacy, clarity, self-worth, and desire for more connection could contribute to developing better mentor/advisor training for faculty. In addition, exploring some of the other relationships that women identified as significant along their journeys, like clinical supervisors or other non-academic faculty contacts,

may enhance our understanding of the dissertation process for women in counseling psychology.

Personal Reflections

The four major themes addressed in this section correspond with key points in the model that emerged out of my understanding of the participants' stories of their dissertation journeys. Throughout the interview process, and as my own dissertation journey evolved, I became increasingly aware of the complexity of the dissertation process. Although everyone's dissertation journey is unique, there are common challenges or experiences that are universal to the process. My goal was to present the stories of the participants so that both their uniqueness and their commonalities could be recognized. Because of my closeness to the research, I struggled not to overwhelm the project with my voice and I attempted to allow the participants' stories to emerge in their own voices. I recognize that it is impossible to be "value free" and I acknowledge that my fears about overwhelming the project may have lead me to be more conservative with my own observations and perspectives.

I went into this process believing that the dissertation was about learning and growth as they contributed to moving from a trainee to a professional. I still believe this is true, but I also believe there is a component of discovery. Not simply the discovery of concepts or ideas as a result of analyzing the data, but discovery about the self and relationships. Williams (1997) observed that the process of writing a dissertation is as much about what happens within the individual as it is about the product of the dissertation. I would expand on that observation to add that the process is as much about

what happens within the individual and their relationships as it is about the product of the dissertation.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Statement of Informed Consent

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project about graduate research training. This research is being conducted under the direction of Michelle Pride, a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology at Michigan State University. The purpose of this study is to learn more about counseling psychology graduate students' perceptions of their research training. Participation in this study will involve completing a demographic sheet and an in-depth interview with the primary investigator. The interview will explore your perceptions of your experiences in your graduate training program, your relationships with faculty, mentors, and committee members, and the evolution of your dissertation research ideas and skills. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer demographic or interview questions and may withdraw your consent and discontinue the interview process at any time with no penalty. The entire process should take approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours.

Your identity and all information that is provided will be kept confidential and protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Interviews will be taped and the tapes will be kept in a secure place until they are transcribed, after which they will be erased. Each participant will be identified by a code. No names will appear on any of the written material (demographic sheets or transcribed interviews) and no identifying information will be connected to any research findings. Your consent form will be kept separate from any interview materials.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. If you have any questions or concerns related to this study, please contact Michelle Pride (970-472-9163 Michellepride@aol.com) You can also contact the chairperson of Michigan State University's research review board if you have any questions about your rights as a human subject of research.

_____ _____

signature date

Appendix B: Sample recruitment letter

Dear Graduate Student,

Would you give a little time to participate in my research to increase knowledge of research training? I am a graduate student in the Counseling Psychology program at Michigan State University. I am currently on internship at Colorado State University and I am in the process of completing my dissertation research. I am interested in understanding how students' relationships with their faculty (advisors, mentors, committee members) impact the development of their dissertation ideas and skills.

If you agree to participate, you would complete an in-depth interview with me, which should take approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours. I hope that the results of this research will increase our understanding and awareness of the impact of relationships on the research training process.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please contact Michelle Pride at (970) 472-9163 or Michellepride@aol.com. **Please leave your name and contact** information and I will contact you to set up time to complete the interview.

Thank you!!

Appendix C: Demographic Sheet

1. What is your age? _____
2. How do you identify racially/ethnically? _____
3. What year are you in your program? _____
4. How large was your cohort? _____
5. Highest degree earned: _____
6. Year degree was earned: _____
7. Have you completed any of the following?
    a. Master's thesis ___NO ___YES

       Date of completion_____ Topic_____

    b. Apprenticeship project ___NO ___YES

       Date of completion _____ Topic _____

    c. Other research projects ___NO ___YES

       Date of completion _____ Topic _____

5. Do you have any publications? ___NO ___YES number of publications _____
6. Have you made any presentations? ___NO ___YES number of presentations _____
7. How many required courses in statistics/research methodology have you taken? _____
8. How many elective courses in statistics/research methodology have you taken? _____
9. What are your career plans after graduation? _____

_____

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

1. Tell me about your dissertation research
    a. Where are you in the process?
2. Tell me about the journey you've taken in completing your dissertation thus far.
    a. How did you decide on a topic?
    b. How did you become interested in your topic?
    c. What has your writing process been like?
3. What are some critical incidents that exemplify your journey?
4. What helped you along on your journey?
5. Was there anything that got in the way of your journey or delayed your progress?
6. Is there anything you would like to add?

The dissertation dialogue questions:

7. If your dissertation got dressed, what would it wear?
8. If your dissertation could speak, what would it say?
9. What does your dissertation remind you of?
10. What is special about your dissertation?

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