FACTORS OF ATTRITION IN COHORT DOCTORAL EDUCATION:

A SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY PERSPECTIVE

by

LINDA ANN GARCIA

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

December 2013

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my parents, Richard and Julie Nelson. The two of you provided me with a new life by bringing me to America, therefore affording me the access to education and to achieve my dreams. Thank you for your love, encouragement, and support that you have given me. I am eternally grateful that I am able to travel this journey with the two of you by my side.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Adrienne Hyle, Dr. James Hardy, and Dr. Ernest Johnson for their support and guidance throughout the dissertation process. I would like to especially thank Dr. Hyle, my advisor, who was unwavering in her support for me to complete the program.

I would like to give a special thank you to Dr. Hardy, who encouraged me to be in the PhD program at the University of Texas at Arlington and remaining my mentor throughout the course of the program.

I would like to thank my cohort members for their encouragement and support. I would especially like to thank my classmate, Dr. Steve Bourgeois for his encouragement and support during the many hours of arduous reading and editing of my proposal.

I would like to thank my children, my dear friends and extended family members who offered their encouragement that I would complete this race. Each one of them walked with me through this process.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Victor, who gave unconditionally his love, time, support, and encouragement for me to pursue my dream. I hope that one day in the future, I will have the opportunity to return the love, time, support, and encouragement that you have given me.

November 25, 2013

Abstract

FACTORS OF ATTRITION IN COHORT DOCTORAL EDUCATION:

A SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY PERSPECTIVE

Linda Ann Garcia, PhD

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2013

Supervising Professor: Adrienne Hyle

Attrition rates, completion rates, and time to degree are the key areas

researchers have sought to examine influencing factors and patterns of behavior

that describe the departure process of students in doctoral study. Through the lens

of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), the purpose of this

phenomenological qualitative study was to examine and describe the intrinsic

motivation experiences of doctoral level education cohort program students, those

who are still in process and those who have completed. Specifically, this study

focuses on investigating the variables of autonomy, competence, and relatedness

in nine doctoral-level education cohort program participants who are in various

stages of their doctoral program. This research revealed that there are many

factors that influence students' progress. The factors includes: selection of topic,

management of time, dealing with the challenges of statics, writing and research,

connection to advisor, connection to cohort, personal life situation, breaks in the

program, continuous feedback from advisor, and professional promotion and

challenges during the program.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

Chapter 1

Design of the Study

According to the National Council of Graduate Education (2007), the
doctoral completion rate is a critical issue in graduate education in the United
States. Research on doctoral completion estimates that the national average for
students who begin their doctoral program and who do not complete all
requirements is approximately 50% (Bauer, 2004; Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992;
Davis & Parker, 1997; Lee, 2003; Lovitts, 2004; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000).
Additionally, a considerable body of research has examined the length of time it
takes students to earn a doctorate, documenting the number of years between
entry to graduate school and the receipt of the PhD (Bair & Hatworth, 1999;
Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Cook & Swanson, 1978; Davis & Parker, 1997;
Emerson, 1998; Golde, 1996; Harley & Fiene, 1995; Long, 1987; Lovitts, 2004;
Lovitts & Nelson, 2000; Lee, 2003; Smith, 1985). These studies note student's
complete coursework, but are not successful in completing the dissertation, the
culminating research project that requires independent, self-directed work
(Ehrenberg, Zukerman, Groen & Brucker, 2009).

The obvious outcome of slow degree completion rates is doctoral student
attrition; students drop out of their programs because they are unable to make
adequate progress or their funding sources diminish (Ehrenberg, Zukerman,

Groen & Brucker, 2009; Hansen, 1992). When this happens, students feel demoralized because of the stigma of not being able to complete the requirements set forth by the institutions (Lovitts, 2001). Students are left with disappointment and a sense of failure when they realize they have invested a lengthy time in a field of study, and do not have a doctoral degree to show for their accomplishment (Hadjioannou, Shelton, & Fu, 2007). The Association of American Universities cites attrition as a waste of student energy, hope, financial resources, and an unproductive drain on faculty time and effort (Hansen, 1992).

Additionally, doctoral attrition is a drain on a university's human capital and financial resources (Ehrenberg, Zukerman, Groen, & Brucker, 2009) including the loss of departmental resources (Cook & Swanson, 1978; Long, 1987), loss of institutional resources from administrative support to advising resources, and the drain on faculty and instructional activities (Tucker, Gottlieb, & Pease, 1964). Time to graduation also results in an additional drain on state and federal funding allocations (California Postsecondary Education Commission [CPEC], 1990; Smith, 1985). When students are no longer in contact, coursework, state allocations, and federal funding support can decrease. The push to graduate students and admit new students continues the revenue stream.

<center>Statement of the Problem</center>

Attrition rates, completion rates, and time to degree are the key areas researchers have sought to examine influencing factors and patterns of behavior

that describe the departure process of students in doctoral study. Many students enter doctoral programs each year, and as many as 50% of doctoral student are classified as non-progressing (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992). Non-completion has profound effects on the students, the faculty, and the institution, and has become a battleground for emotional conflicts for all parties involved (Blum, 2010).

Most of the studies on the departure process of doctoral students have looked at quantitative institutional numbers across a broad set of educational programs or one specific field of study (Gardner, 2008). Much of that research has focus on the characteristics of the education environment that may contribute to the departure process of doctoral students. However, the research provides few reasons why certain students succeed in a program, while others fail. In other words, we know little about why some students are able to complete coursework and the self-directed dissertation, and others cannot, and ultimately withdraw from their program of study.

Deci and Ryan (1985) would explain the differences in those who persist in doctoral programs and those who do not in terms of intrinsic motivation, as described in their theory of self-determination. Their research has examined the roles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the fostering of intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1980). They would argue that intrinsic motivation is an essential component needed to sustain students through their program of study, particularly the self-directed dissertation process. Those who

are not intrinsically motivated, specifically those who lack autonomy, competence and relatedness, would be much less likely to complete the dissertation and ultimately receive their doctoral degree.

Orienting Theoretical Framework

To provide the groundwork for a greater understanding of the issues related to attrition and time to degree in doctoral completion, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) will be used as the orienting framework for this study. Self-determination theory was chosen as the theoretical framework because of its notion that "all individuals have natural innate and constructive tendencies to develop an elaborated and unified sense of self" (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 6). This sense of self is essential for intrinsically motivated individuals.

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation indicates that individuals engage in an activity for the sake of the activity itself, for the satisfaction inherent in performing the activity out of interest and enjoyment. In other words, intrinsic motivation is comprised of activity, and a variety of behaviors that energize, and the primary rewards for performing these behaviors are the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Therefore, intrinsic motivation resides in people's needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness is considered the fuel for action to satisfy one's innate needs (Grolnick, Gurland, Jacob, & Decourcey, 2001).

4

Autonomy is hypothesized to be the foremost human and psychological need among the three components of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) suggest that autonomy comes from a sense of well-being, perceiving the ability to choose one's course of action, and experiencing oneself as the locus of those actions. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), individuals experiencing autonomy are considered to be intrinsically motivated.

Competence is related to a person's sense of accomplishment and a need to feel confident and effective while accomplishing tasks (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) always refers to individuals' perceived competence, which can be different from their actual level of ability. The more competence individuals perceive to have in an activity, the more intrinsically motivated they will be at that activity (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The need for competence translates to a desire to feel confident in one's abilities to successfully complete tasks. To maintain a high level of perceived competence, Ryan and Deci maintain that people will seek challenges that are in accordance with their capacities.

Relatedness is the need for "psychological sense of being with others in secure communion or unity" (Ryan & Deci, 1985, p.7). This conceptualization includes feeling connected and a sense of belonging with other individuals, as well as with one's community. The more individuals feel connected and related to the community, the more intrinsically motivated these people will be.

Purpose of the Study

Through the lens of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), this phenomenological qualitative study examines and described the intrinsic motivation experiences of doctoral-level education cohort program students, those still In-Process, those progressing, and those who have completed. Specifically, this study focused on investigating the variables of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in a sample of doctoral-level education cohort program participants who are in various stages of their doctoral program.

Research Questions

To examine the roles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, intrinsic motivators, in the progress toward degree completion of doctoral-level education cohort program participants, answers to the following research questions guided the study:

1. What were/are the intrinsic motivators (autonomy, competence and relatedness) of doctoral-level education cohort program participants?

2. In what ways does self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) explain their motivation, specifically their autonomy, competence and relatedness?

3. How helpful is self-determination theory in understanding the intrinsic motivation of doctoral-level education cohort program participants?

4. What else emerged as influential in the doctoral completion process?

Methodology

The present study was qualitative, and used a phenomenological approach that matches the worldview, the training, and the attributes of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). The qualitative phenomenological approach builds on the lived experiences and perspectives of study participants to describe and explain the intrinsic motivation of doctoral-level education cohort program students.

Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994) was the most appropriate for this study, because the overarching goal of the research was to understand the collective lived experiences of a sample of completed, progressing, and In-Process doctoral students. Phenomenology describes the meaning of experiences lived by several individuals and seeks to understand the essence of those experiences. Phenomenology has a strong philosophical component that draws heavily on the writings of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and has been used extensively in the social sciences, including sociology, psychology, and education. Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of the participants. In addition, Moustakas focuses on one of Husserl's concepts, epoche (or bracketing), in which the investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination.

The Researcher

According to Creswell (2007), the role of the researcher in qualitative inquiry varies significantly across studies and is based on the data collection and method selected. The interaction between the researcher and a study participant in qualitative research can introduce ethical and personal issues that should be identified and considered as a part of the overall study development (Creswell, 2007). Some of the issues a researcher needs to consider specific to their role in a study include past experiences, potential bias, personal values, and interests in the topic (Creswell, 2007).

I am a female doctoral candidate in an educational leadership program, experiencing the same pathway as the participants in the study. As a full-time employee, working on the PhD program on a part-time basis, I am intimately knowledgeable of the doctoral process. Like the participants of the study, I have also experienced the struggle to complete the doctoral program.

I was employed as an administrator of the largest community college in the nation when I entered the doctoral program. An average student, who has always viewed education as a necessity, my goal for completing the program was to obtain the credential in order to promote to higher level positions within my organization. During the first year of the program, I was motivated to complete the program with the rewards of higher level of responsibility and higher salary level.

Unfortunately, in my second year of the program, my college had a major reorganization and, due to the conflicting leadership styles, I resigned from my position. I struggled with the idea of dropping out of the doctoral program, since I was no longer employed in the education sector. My peers within the cohort program, and my family, motivated me to continue with the coursework. I continued in the program somewhat reluctantly, completing the coursework and comprehensive exam.

At the beginning of my dissertation process, I was not motivated to complete, and once again considered dropping out. I did not have a selected topic that I wanted to study, and I did not see a tangible reward from the credential, since I was no longer in the education arena. I met with my advisor, who suggested that I visit with other students in the program who were struggling like myself, and that this was more common than I thought possible. My advisor further suggested that I look at the doctoral process as a possible topic of study.

This was the beginning of the journey of discovery for me. I learned that I enjoyed the topic of study, and in the process, enjoyed the relationships that I forged with my advisor, other members of the research community who are studying the same topic, and gained confidence that I could complete the dissertation. In the process of conducting research and acquiring new contacts for the topic of study, I discovered the transferability of the research process, and

how it could be prove relevant to other areas outside of the education environment.

The most significant discovery that I learned in the process is that I could completely identify with the research relating to intrinsic motivation and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). I acknowledge that the same experiences that are so valuable in providing insight would serve as a practical guide regarding research design and the interpretation of the findings. Creswell (2007) noted it was challenging, at best, to totally eliminate all bias when conducting qualitative research. But it is important that the researcher identify those biases and consider their implications in all phase of a study. Identification of possible biases early in the process minimized the potential for future distortions or prejudicial statements. I was committed to engage in an ongoing critical self-reflection by way of bracketing, identifying personal experiences, journaling, and engaging in a continual dialogue with advisors and peers.

Data needs

Because the purpose of this study was to describe the doctoral degree program experiences of students at various stages in a program of study, I gathered information about experiences from students who have completed a program of study, those who are making good progress in the program, and those who have or are considering discontinuing their membership in the program. Specifically, I needed to know their perspectives of autonomy, competence, and

relatedness as linked to intrinsic motivation for their progress in the program. I also collected demographic and background information from each participant to build a holistic picture for each segment of the students participating in the interviews.

Data Sources

A purposeful sample of students who have completed a program of study, those who are making good progress in the program, and those who have or are considering discontinuing their membership in the program were selected to reflect an emphasis on information-rich cases that elicit an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The participants in the study were students in a public state university's PhD cohort program. Participants include doctoral students who are in various stages: completers, progressing, and In-Process from the cohort program. *Complete*rs are students who have successfully completed all degree requirements and graduated with their degree. *Progressing* are students who have successfully completed their coursework, passed the comprehensive exam, have submitted their, and received approval to move forward with their research. *In-Process* are students who have successfully completed their coursework and passed the comprehensive exam, but have not submitted a dissertation proposal.

The goal of the study was to have nine participants, three from the completed status, three progressing and three In-Process. This number of

participants supports Polkinghorne's (1989) recommendation to have 5 to 25

participants in a phenomenological study.

Data Collection

This research paradigm approaches data collection through the gathering

of information from individuals who have actually lived with the phenomenon at

the center of the study (Creswell, 2007). The goal of this research was to generate

richness of the information associated with data collected through personal

interviews. Through analysis of the data, I strived to comprehend and report the

essence of the phenomenon.

Data collection for this study was accomplished through a series of semi-

structured interviews, in keeping with Creswell (1998), using open-ended

questions generated from the perspective of self-determination theory (Deci &

Ryan, 1985; see Appendix A for the interview protocol). Semi-structured

interviews were transcribed verbatim from recording and handwritten notes

(Creswell, 1998). Additionally, I provided participants with a blank sheet of

paper so that they expressed their viewpoint in a drawing, to encourage them draw

and to reflect visually their views and perspectives of the doctoral experience

(Ziller, 1990).

Prior to data collection, I obtained approval from the University of Texas

at Arlington Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the proposed research.

Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form that described the

purpose and the risks of the study, the assurance of the confidential and

anonymous nature of data collection, the right to withdraw from participation at

any time without penalty, and the right to contact the researcher and the

University of Arlington office of IRB with questions about the study. I

maintained the confidentially of data at all times. Each of the students

interviewed were assigned a pseudonym to keep anonymity.

To reach participants, I contacted the department chairperson and the

department graduate advisor to distribute the invitation to participate via listserv

to members of cohorts in the program. The e-mail solicitation to participate

requested individuals to contact me if they were willing to participate in the study.

The process continued until nine participants consented to interviews: three each

from the ranks of Completers, Progressing, and In-Process.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological data analysis steps are outlined by Creswell (2007, p.

60-62), including: (1) bracketing the researcher's own experiences in order to take

a fresh approach to the data, (2) becoming generally familiar with the data by

reading the transcripts, (3) identifying significant statements which illustrate the

participants' experience of the phenomenon, (4) developing clusters of meaning,

or themes, from the statements, (5) writing a textural description of what the

participants experienced and a structural description describing how they

13

experienced it, (6) then writing about the essence–-a composite description of the phenomenon, based on the common experiences of the participants.

Specifically in steps (3) and (4) above, I focused on describing experiences of autonomy, competence and relatedness for each of the individuals interviewed, in addition to general perceptions of the phenomenon. Clusters of meaning or themes were also focused on the general phenomenon, as well as autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Additionally, the drawing by the participants served as an ice breaker in the interview process to ease the participants. The pictures assisted in the interpretation of the autonomy, competence, and relatedness of each individual, essential components to understanding their intrinsic motivation in the doctoral process.

Significance of the Study

Findings from this study provided valuable information on intrinsic motivation patterns with students in doctoral programs. It also assists institutions, administrators, advisors, and faculty to better understand the orientation among completers, progressing and In-Process students. Specifically, this study is focused on providing insights in the areas of research, theory and practice.

Research

This qualitative phenomenological study was designed to add to the body of knowledge regarding the experiences students in their doctoral program. It

provided relevant data about motivational factors defined by the students, and

provided better insight on how the students were able to successfully complete

their program. This information will be of interest to administrators, advisors,

faculty, along with current and future students for the overall success of higher

education doctoral programs. The rationale for this study stems from my desire to

learn commonalities of individuals who complete the dissertation and to assist

other students, who may have decided to discontinue their work altogether. This

research will assist future educational program administrators and advisors to

refine their selection procedures.

Theory

Increased understanding of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)

in relation to student intrinsic motivation may help provide strategies and support

for administrators, advisors, faculty in program and curriculum development.

Increased understanding of students' levels of autonomy, competence, and

relatedness within the doctoral program might assist administrators, advisors, and

faculty members to build and structure the program for students to progress and

complete their program.

Practice

Increased understanding of the characteristics of successful completers of

the doctoral program many not only reduce the number of All But Dissertation

students (ABD)'s, but also increase the potential for greater numbers of students

to attain a doctoral degree. A terminal degree may afford the recipients more personal gratification, more career options, and also have the potential to enhance the reputation of the university, , and the national standing of our academic community.

This study adds to the body of knowledge regarding the experiences of recent graduates of their doctoral program. It provides relevant data about factors and characteristics defined by the students, along with insight into how the students were able to successfully complete their program.

Summary

University faculty, staff, and administration are under great pressure to assist and guide their students through the dissertation process. This qualitative study was designed to add to the body of knowledge regarding the experiences of recent graduates and current doctoral students who are progressing and/or experiencing difficulty with the completion of their doctoral program. The study sought to provide relevant information defined by the students and provide better insight into how the students progress through the dissertation process. By examining the issues through the lenses of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), this study offered another insight to administrators, advisors, and faculty to assist their doctoral students to be successful with their education program.

Reporting

Chapter I serve as an introduction, presenting the design of the study and an overview of the research project. Chapter II includes an extensive review of related literature to place the study into the proper context and provide a theoretical framework. The first part of the literature review examines the issues relating to attrition, while the second part focuses specifically on self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) with doctoral education. Chapter III details the methods used to complete the study, the sample selected, and an overview of the data collection method. Chapter IV presents the data and the results of the study. Chapter V provides analysis of the data through the lens of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Chapter VI provides a summary of the study, conclusions, and implications for research, theory and practice, and recommendations for future research. This closing chapter also includes a commentary about the research project in its entirety.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides a discussion of the research of attrition in doctoral education; specifically, the variables of autonomy, competence, and relatedness from the perspective of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) in relation to doctoral completion. Self-determination theory is reviewed, and its three basic innate psychological needs, autonomy, competence and relatedness are explored further with an emphasis on their relation to intrinsic motivation.

Doctoral Education in America

The first PhD was awarded by Yale University in 1861 (Nettles & Millett, 2006). The turn of the twentieth century marked a time when a small group of research universities, including the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard, began conferring PhDs. Doctoral programs increased in America based on the establishment of The First Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862. The Act gave states public lands to establish colleges in the agriculture, mechanical arts, classical studies, and doctoral education. The Second Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890 (NASULGC, 1999) gave southern and border states funding to establish colleges for blacks (USDA, 2003). Private colleges established concurrently: Clark, 1889; Stanford, 1891; Chicago, 1892; John Hopkins, 1876, while others reorganized. Harvard and Columbia increased their emphasis on research-based doctoral education (Geiger, 1986). To increase the value of the doctoral programs in

America, the Association of American Universities founded in 1900 by fourteen leading doctorate-granting institutions (AAU, 2005). By the beginning of the twentieth century, American doctoral education solidified as a general framework including several years of coursework with a language requirement, a final examination, and several years of research culminating in a dissertation (Walters, 1965).

Attrition in Doctoral Education

Attrition in doctoral education is a critical issue in graduate education in the United States (CGE, 2007). A considerable body of research has examined the length of time it takes students to earn a doctorate, documenting the number of years between entry to graduate school and the receipt of the PhD (Bair & Hatworth, 1999; Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992; Cook & Swanson, 1978; Davis & Parker, 1997; Emerson, 1998; Golde, 1996; Harley & Fiene, 1995; Long, 1987; Lovitts, 2004; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000; Lee, 2003; Smith, 1985). Over the past thirty years, several national studies and initiatives have attempted to understand the high rates of dropouts in doctoral education.

In 1991, a national study funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, implemented the Graduate Education Initiative (GEI) to understand the problems integral to the high rates of student dropouts in doctoral education (Ehrenberg, Zukerman, Groen & Brucker, 2009). This began ten years of study from 1991-1992 and 2000-2001 that attempted to understand the issues of completion rates

for doctoral students in Humanities and Social Sciences. The GEI project selected ten institutions, based on the criterion that they have attract the largest number of fellowship winners of the Mellon Foundation's portable doctoral dissertation awards. The University of California, Berkeley, the University of Chicago, Columbia University, Cornell University, Harvard University, The University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, Stanford University, and Yale University participated (Ehrenberg, Zukerman, Groen & Brucker, 2009). The study targeted the following areas: attrition rates, completion rates, and time to degree. The study analyzes the PhD program characteristics, the students who left the programs prior to receiving their degrees, the early career job-market of new PhD recipients, graduate school publications, and early career outcomes. The study confirmed that departmental environment and characteristics factor in the determination of student progress (Ehrenberg, Zukerman, Groen & Brucker, 2009).

Another study within the GEI framework confirmed departmental impact on student completion rates. Mathematical Policy Research, Inc. administers The Graduate Education Survey (Ehrenberg, Jakubson, Groen, So & Price, 2007). The survey analyzed more than 200 program characteristics within a smaller number of factors. The GEI survey 13,552 individuals in the following areas: financial, seminar requirements, exam requirements, departmental culture, advising, clarity and summer expectations to solicit the student's experiences with

their doctoral program. The results indicated the GEI impacts remain strongest when the advising department clarify their expectations and encourage their students to complete their dissertations as soon as possible.

Doctoral attrition was a major concern for the Council of Graduate schools (CGS), who in 2004 initiate the PhD Completion Project to examine the high rates of student dropouts in doctoral education in Science, Engineering, Mathematics, Social Sciences and Humanities between 2004-2007. They gathered baseline data from selected institutions that broadly represent doctoral programs. The first phase of the Council of Graduate School, 2004 seven-year studies extracted baseline program completion attrition data from 30 universities, representing 330 programs and 49,113 students, with the focus on the following areas: discipline, broad field, entering cohort size, and institutional type (public or private). Results from the study showed a 57% completion rate within a ten-year time. However, the completion range was broad, from a high of 64% in Engineering to a low of 49% in Humanities (CGS, 2008).

The second phase of the Council of Graduate Schools, 2008 seven year studies, extracts information from 24 major U.S. and Canada universities who gathered attrition data from 1992-1993 through 2003-2004 for cohorts of students entering Ph.D. programs. Each participating institution submitted baseline completion data and demographic characteristics that include gender, citizenship, and race/ethnicity for domestic students. The project focused on completion rates

for minorities and women. The results of the study, when compared across demographic groups, indicated men, international students, and whites completed at higher rates than women, domestic students, and minority groups. However, on further examination of the data, women and underrepresented minorities had higher late completion rates in the later years of the program from year eight through ten than men. The data also highlighted that more women and minority groups completed after year ten than men.

The third phase of the CGS, 2009 seven-year studies, surveyed the factors influencing PhD completers with a broad empirical focus on: selection/admission processes, availability and quality of mentoring and advising, extent and adequacy of financial support, program environment, curricular processes and procedures and research experiences. Fourteen hundred and six surveys were collected from May 2006 through August 2008 from students who had completed their doctoral program. Eighty percent of respondents reported financial support served as a main factor in the completion of their doctoral program. Sixty-five percent of the respondents reported mentoring and advising function as main factors in completion of their doctoral program. Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported familial support as the main factor in completion of their doctoral program, and 40% of the respondents reported social environment and peer group support as factors in assistance with the completion of their doctoral program. The various factors in these 2009 studies served as a broad baseline for doctoral-

granting institutions to measure their own programs, and suggested an opportunity to improve the attrition rates within their institutions.

The fourth phase of the CGS, 2010 seven-year studies had 29 major U.S. and Canadian research universities participating to create intervention strategies that focused on the following attrition characteristics that emerged as a result of their pilot study: 1) selection, 2) mentoring, 3) financial support, 4) program environment, 5) research mode of the field,; and 6) processes and procedures. These intervention strategies are now being implemented with the participating research universities to improve attrition rates.

<div align="center">The Self-Determination Theory</div>

Self-determination is a human quality that involves the experience of choice, supporting the basic human need to have freedom from control (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In 1969, Edward Deci, a Carnegie Mellon University psychology graduate student, was interested in motivation, but suspects a disconnect surrounding the topic. Deci conducted a 16-weeks field experience at a college newspaper office with two staff writers. An experimental group was paid during the fifth through seventh weeks for the headline they write while the control group receives no compensation for their work. Deci measured the writers' intrinsic motivation during the first four weeks of the experience, during the fifth through the seventh weeks, the eight through 10th weeks, and finally during the 15th through 16th weeks. As a result of the experiment, the paid experimental

writer showed a significant decline in the level of intrinsic motivation in the eighth through the 16th weeks. The unpaid writer remained motivated by the engaging tasks, while the paid writer shifted his attention elsewhere. In short, receiving a reward for completing an interesting activity decreased the writer's motivation, implying that tangible monetary rewards functioned not as additives, but to negatively interact with the writer's intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1975). This initial study set Deci on a journey to understand a different way of thinking about humans' internal resources for motivation and led to the development of self-determination theory.

In addition to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, *a-motivation*, represents the state of lacking the intention to act. When individuals are a-motivated, either they do not act at all or they act passively. A-motivation results when individuals feel either that they are unable to achieve desired outcomes because of lack of contingency (Rotter, 1966) or they lack perceived competence (Bandura, 1977; Deci, 1975), or they do not value the activity or the outcome it would yield (Ryan, 1995). In essence, individuals do not see a relationship between their behaviors and the results, so they intentionally do not act to avoid experiencing failure (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Intrinsic motivation indicates that individuals engage in an activity for the sake of the activity itself, for the satisfaction inherent in performing the activity out of interest and enjoyment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Intrinsic motivation often

derives from the person-activity interaction in activities that people find interesting, enjoyable, and not boring. People are motivated by optimally challenging activities (Ryan & Deci, 2002). In other words, intrinsic motivation comprises of activity and a variety of behaviors that energize, with the primary rewards for performing these behaviors being the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Therefore, intrinsic motivation resides in people's need of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Intrinsic motivation serves as the fuel for action to satisfy one's innate needs (Grolnick, Gurland, Jacob & Decourcey, 2001).

D'Andrea's 2002 study surveyed 215 professors from 42 states. It indicated a connection between self-determination and the three constructs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness on doctoral attrition. The study focused on doctoral students' competencies, characteristics, and situations that professors perceive as obstacles to students completing their degree. The four variables of academic competencies, personal characteristics, life situations, and chairperson requirements were analyzed to determine if there was consensus among professors as to the most problematic for students. D'Andrea's (2002) study concluded that many students who failed to complete their dissertation study were inadequately prepared for doctoral level studies, conceptualization, organization, planning skills, and scientific method. Personal characteristics of procrastination, dependency, and unrealistic thinking served as obstacles to completion of doctoral

degree. Life situations, financial issues, demands of outside employment, and stressful relationships also contributed to non-completion rates for students. Finally, the D'Andrea (2002) study reported program structure and chairperson requirements as attributes consistently associated with higher completion rates.

Autonomy

     Autonomy is hypothesized to be the foremost human and psychological need among the three components of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) suggest that autonomy comes from a sense of well-being, perceiving the ability to choose one's course of action, and experiencing oneself as the locus of those actions. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), individuals experiencing autonomy have intrinsic motivation.

     Jacks, Chubin and Connolly (1983) conducted a semi-structured telephone interview with 25 ABD doctoral candidates about the reasons for leaving doctoral studies, impacts of non-completion on life and career, assessment of the value of doctoral degree, and request for suggestions for improvement. They found students valued their employment responsibilities more than completing their dissertation; therefore the dissertation received indefinite delay. Jacks et al. also cited the following reasons students fail to complete their dissertations: lack of financial support, relationship with advisor, problems with family members, promotion and new job, lack of peer support, and problems with the research topic.

Dorn and Papalewis (1985) conducted a survey study with 108 students from eight education administration universities to analyze persistence motivators of doctoral students that included social interaction, peer mentoring, and group cohesiveness. The finding from the study supports the fact that students who belong to a doctoral group have a greater a chance of completion. Another finding of the study was that nurturing support, motivation, and encouragement from within the group is vital to the completion of the program.

Abedi and Benkin (1987) conducted a survey study with 4,255 participants to predict time to doctorate and found that students who support themselves and extended family members take longer to complete their doctorate. The study also discovered the following positive predictors to doctoral completion: postdoctoral plan, small number of dependents, and field of doctorate, sex, and citizenship status.

Huguley (1988) administered a survey questionnaire t 100 doctor of education students from Pepperdine University to measures the effects of age, gender, marital status, and relationship to the chairperson and committee on dissertation completion. Huguley (1998) discovered the greatest obstacles to completing the dissertation were full-time employment, the lack of structure in the dissertation phase, and personal problems. The study recommended doctoral students should begin their dissertation early, establish and maintain a timetable

for completion of dissertation, and select and maintain a good relationship with an advisor.

Wright (1991) studied 28 graduates and 26 ABD doctoral students to determine the barriers students face while working full time and completing their dissertations. The research indicated that the loss of a key advisor leads to problems with completing the dissertation. The study also indicated that decreasing professional workload assists with the completion of the dissertation.

In 2000, Black & Deci studied the effects of autonomy-supportive instruction on students learning at The Workshop Chemistry Project (Gosser et al., 1996) to determine student level of autonomy for entering the course. Their findings showed that students with higher levels of autonomy are more likely to complete. In this same experiment, Black & Deci discovered the students' enjoyment of the course was higher and the level of anxiety lower when paired with an instructor who employed autonomy-supported methods in the education setting.

In 2003, two longitudinal studies by Guay, Mageau, & Vallerand illustrated how autonomy and the sense of well-being relate to student motivation. The study involved 122 college students who evaluate their global and school self-determined motivation (Deci, 2000).

Competence

  Competence relates to a person's sense of accomplishment and a need to feel confident and effective while accomplishing tasks (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) always refers to individuals' perceived competence, which can be different from their actual level of ability. The more competence individuals perceive to have in an activity, the more intrinsically motivated they will be at that activity (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The need for competence translates to a desire to feel confident in one's abilities to successfully complete tasks. To maintain a high level of perceived competence, Ryan and Deci (1985) maintain that people will seek challenges that are in accordance with their capacities.

  Cuetara and LeCapitaine (1991) conducted a study with 192 graduates of doctoral programs in counseling psychology from various universities throughout the United States. Their findings indicated that research courses should help prepare students select a researchable problem for the dissertation. They also indicated that higher education research courses should stimulate research interest and lower student anxiety levels toward the dissertation process.

  Baker (1992) surveyed 604 students in 60 graduate courses in the spring of 1989 at American University to study students' perception of services needed from universities to fulfill their academic and educational needs. Their research

indicated that traditional students have a greater need for services than adult students.

Kluever (1997) conducted a survey study with 239 doctoral students, 142 graduates, and 97 ABD from the college of education at the University of Denver. Kluever found students with strong research experience possess the ability to complete their dissertation sooner. This research also indicated that doctoral graduates express more independence and greater personal responsibility when compared to the ABD doctoral students.

Seagram, Gould, and Pyke (1998) conducted a study with 154 graduates of various doctoral programs at York University to assess the perspectives of doctoral students and their experiences with advisors and financial /enrollment information. They found that the participants who were fasted to complete their doctoral degree shared several common factors, including active involvement with their dissertation advisor, no change in their dissertation advisor, frequent communication with said advisor, collaboration with dissertation supervisor on publication, and no problem with the selection of or minimal changes to topic. Additionally, the research indicated that women encounter more obstacles with their dissertation advisors, leading to delays in dissertation completion.

On a similar note, Barbara Lovitts' (2001) surveyed and interviewed graduated students, faculty members, and graduate advisors to determine reasons for attrition. According to two thirds of the advisors interviewed, the main reason

for student attrition lies in students' lack of preparation to meet the rigor and challenge of conducting research within the graduate school. However, when Lovitts spoke with completed students, 70% cited personal reasons as the cause of attrition, 42% cited academic reasons, and 29% spoke of finances as the reason for departure from the program. Lovitts attributed the attrition to the students, rather than the program or institution.

Relatedness

Relatedness is the need for "psychological sense of being with others in secure communion or unity" (Ryan & Deci, 1985, p.7). This conceptualization includes feeling connected and a sense of belonging with other individuals, as well as with one's community. The more individuals feel connected and related to the community, the more intrinsically motivated these people will be.

Berg and Ferber (1983) conducted a survey with 459 graduate students from 32 academic units at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. They measured the importance of intellectual challenge, satisfaction, intellectual and social contact, and support during graduate education. They found that intellectual challenge proved highly important in choosing a field of study, and also indicated that a student was more likely to develop a strong relationship with two or more faculty members.

Lawson and Fuehrer (1989) conducted a study about stressful situations while in school with 20 first-year graduate students in English, history, and

zoology departments of a Midwestern university. Their findings indicated that social support serves as a main effect of reducing stress and increasing satisfaction with graduate school. Support, organization, and regular feedback is key in doctoral program, as validated in a study by Boyle and Boice (1998), who concluded that it is essential to have regular meetings with students, a structure short-term goals, specific assignments, and provide regular feedback to students.

Campbell (1992) sought to identify the variables that assist with completion of dissertation in 58 students--specifically students who complete the degree and those who remained ABD in the educational leadership program at the University of Delaware. The most important variable for completers and non-completers was relationship with their advisor.

The role of the department and discipline in doctoral education was the focus of Golde's (2005) attempt to understand doctoral attrition. In 58 individual student interviews, five of the six themes that emerge from the study related to the mismatch between the students, the discipline, and the department. Their research showed the major causes of attrition lie in the student's inability to adapt to the social context, their ability to research, their preparation for the research faculty life for which they are being prepared, and the job market for the career. The study concluded that attrition is unnecessary and preventable, recommending that institutions examine departmental practices and implement changes that serve the interest of the students.

Relatedness in doctoral program was supported by Martinsuo and

Turkulaine (2011) in an empirical study with 109 students across five university

programs to increase the understanding the role of various forms of support and

students' commitment in doctoral studies. Their findings showed that

commitment and support have an effect on both progress in coursework and

progress in research for doctoral students (Martinsuo & Turkulaine, 2011). The

results revealed that both commitment from the students themselves and support

from peers and supervisors are needed to foster progress in doctoral programs

(Martinsuo & Turkulaine, 2011).

The importance of staff and student relationship was evaluated by

Derounian (2011) through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires for 14

students and 14 staff members involved in dissertation advising across disciplines.

The research highlighted that importance of staff and student relationship through

all the stages of the dissertation preparation. Furthermore, the research illustrated

five desirable characteristics for student and staff relationships in the dissertation

endeavor: subject knowledge, and grasp of relevant literature, realistic approach

to helping students to determine what is feasible; responsiveness and willingness

to negotiate with supervisee, an ability to nurture and encourage the students, and

expression of enthusiasm for the student's dissertation topic, (Derounian, 2011

p.98).

Relatedness to faculty and institutions for minority students, in particular, Asian and African students in connection to faculty and colleagues was the focus of a Likert-type question study for (Moses, 2007) who surveyed 619 doctoral students from 78 different programs on the various aspects of students' satisfaction and preparedness in doctoral programs. The results suggest that some students of color may not share the same graduate school socialization process as their peers; therefore, awareness of minority students' socialization needs is different from their majority peers.

Summary

The literature review included a synopsis of attrition in doctoral education in the United States. Among the research examined was the comprehensive PhD Completion project, considered a groundbreaking study for doctoral education. Other research related to student attrition and strategies for increasing completion were also presented. This chapter concluded with a summary of studies that aligned with Deci & Ryan (1985). In the next Chapter Three, I explain the methodology of the study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Through the lens of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), this phenomenological study examined and described the intrinsic motivation experiences of doctoral level education cohort program students, those who are still in process, and those who have completed. This chapter describes the study's research methodology and includes the following areas: (a) the design (b) data needs (c) data sources (d) data collection, (e) description of the research sample, (f) demographic questionnaires, (g) analysis and (h) issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations. This chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Design

The phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994) is most appropriate for this study as it allows for better understanding the collective lived experiences of a sample of completed, progressing, and non-progressing doctoral students. Phenomenology is an approach where the researcher describes the meaning of experiences lived by several individuals and seeks to understand the essence of those experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology has a strong philosophical component that draws heavily on the writings of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and is referenced extensively in the social sciences including sociology, psychology and education. Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) focuses less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences

35

of the participants. In addition, Moustakas focuses on one of Husserl's concepts, epoche (or bracketing), in which the investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination.

Data Needs

Because the purpose of this study is to describe the doctoral degree program experiences of students at various stages in a program of study, I required information about experiences from students who have completed a program of study, those making good progress in the program, and those who have already or may consider discontinuing their membership in the program. Specifically, I needed to know their perspectives concerning autonomy, competence, and relatedness as linked to intrinsic motivation for their progress in the program. I also needed the demographic and background information from each participant to build a holistic picture for each segment of the students participating in the interviews. I gathered the demographics of age, occupation, ethnicity, and gender.

Data Sources

A purposeful sample of students who have completed a program of study, those making good progress in the program, and those who have already or may consider discontinuing their membership in the program was drawn to reflect an emphasis on information-rich cases that elicit an in-depth understanding of a

particular phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The participants in the study are students in a public state university's PhD cohort education program. *Complete*rs are students who have successfully completed all degree requirements and graduated with their degree. *Progressing* are students who have successfully completed their coursework, and passed the comprehensive exam, and have submitted their dissertation proposal and received approval to move forward with their research. *In-Process* are students who have successfully completed their coursework and passed the comprehensive exam, but have not submitted a dissertation proposal.

Polkinghorne's (1989) recommends 5 to 25 participants in a phenomenological study. I selected nine participants for the study, three Completers, three Progressing, and three In-Process. Prior to conducting the interviews, I piloted the interview with two cohort-members of my class. As a result of the pilot, I deleted several questions from the interviews to allow time for participants to expand on their experiences. I revised my questions to more closely reflect the theoretical framework. I also revised the questions to focus on intrinsic motivation. Based on the experiences of the pilot, I refined the probes to elicit additional data from the participants. In addition, I learned from the pilot to refrain from speaking and allow time for the quiet pause to let the participants express their thoughts and feelings.

To reach the nine participants, I contacted the department chairperson to distribute the invitation to participate via Listserv to members of cohorts in the

program. I requested the participants contact me if they felt willing to take part in

the study. Immediately following the e-mail distribution by the department

chairperson, three participants contacted me to participate in the study. After one

week passed, I asked that the invitation to participate be resent; four participants

consented to participate in the study. After two weeks passed, I again contacted

the participants to seek their participation, and then the final two joined the study.

Study participants were diverse in age, ranging from 28 to 60. Four males

and five females participated, representing a diversity of groups, including

Anglos, Hispanics, and African Americans.

Data Collection

Various data collection strategies are needed to provide strength to a study

(Creswell, 2007). The study required different data collection strategies,

demographic questionnaire, interview, and drawings, which I obtained in the

same sitting. In the first part of the data collection process, I asked participants to

complete a demographic questionnaire. In the second, I had them draw a picture

depicting their process to completion of their degree. Following the drawing

activity, I conducted interviews.   I met and interviewed nine individuals over a

three-week period. I left it up to the participants to select their choice of location

for the interviews. Therefore, the interview locations varied among the nine

participants, two were at their homes, five were at their workplace, and two in a

public setting. The times varied from early morning, afternoon, to late evenings, accommodating for their schedules.

At the beginning of each meeting, I reiterated and explained the purpose of the study and gave them an informed consent form to sign. I collected their signatures prior to the start of the interviews. I also explained I would use pseudonyms to protect participants' identities.

Demographic questionnaire. In the first portion of the interview, I collected demographic information from the participants, background information about their professional occupation, their age, and ethnicity. At this time, I also verified their status in the doctoral program.

Drawing. Following the completion of the demographic questionnaire, I distributed a blank piece of paper to the participants with a box of markers. I then asked each participant to draw and provide a visual description of their doctoral journey. Two of the nine participants illustrated and describe their drawings prior to starting the interviews, and the remaining seven elected to complete their drawing at the end of the interviews. After the completion of the drawing, I asked each participant to describe verbally their experiences depicted in the drawings. The drawing gave the participants the opportunity to reflect visually their views and perspectives of the doctoral experience (Ziller, 1990).

Interviews. Each question in the interview was designed to elicit data about the motivations of the participant for enrolling in the doctoral program. The

question, "What was your motivation for entering the program?" along with the follow up question, "Has that motivation changed overtime as you participated in the program?" and "If yes, how has it changed?" were designed to determine the intrinsic and or extrinsic motivation of participants. The following questions were designed to seek the participants' feelings through the lens of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the three variables of autonomy, competency and relatedness:

- Did/Do you feel able to complete the degree? Who/what is driving your program completion?

- What was your research interest? How did you come up with this topic? Has this topic changed? If so, how? Why?

- Who is driving the direction of your work? Why?

- Are you where you want to be today with your doctoral program? What do you think could have helped you in making more progress along the way?

- What skills did you need to be successful? Writing? Research? Statistics? Other? How did you learn those skills? Who helped you learn those skills?

- From whom did you get support to continue in the program? What/who is your (program) community?

Each interview was audio-taped for later transcription. I explained to the participants the reason for the use of the recording device. All the participants felt comfortable with the recording and displayed an eagerness to share their experiences with me, by stating they believed in the importance of this study and that they wanted to learn the results of the study. While the interviews with the participants varied from 45 to 90 minutes, some participants elaborated their perspective more than others. Following the interviews, I had the recording transcribed by a third party transcriptionist. After receiving the transcripts, I reviewed the typed transcripts and listened to the recording to ensure accuracy of data. I made the adjustments and corrections to the transcript to ensure the data remained consistent throughout.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2007, p.60-62) outlines the phenomenological data analysis process in the following steps: (1) bracketing the researcher's own experiences to take a fresh approach to the data, (2) becoming generally familiar with the data by reading the transcripts, (3) identifying significant statements which illustrate the participants' experience of the phenomenon, (4) developing clusters of meaning, or themes, from the statements, (5) writing a textural description of what the participants' experienced and a structural description describing how they experienced it, (6) then writing about the essence of the phenomenon, based on the common experiences of the participants.

In the first stage, I began the analysis by bracketing my own experiences to take a fresh approach to the data. I remained reflective and mindful not to influence the contents of the participants' descriptions. I also remained mindful that I served as the lens to interpret the information participants shared throughout the interview process.

In the second stage, I listened to the transcription while reading the transcript multiple times to familiarize myself with the data, thus ensuring accuracy of the data. I also replayed and reread the interviews, journaling my initial thoughts of each interview in an attempt to process it through the lens of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Once familiar with the transcript materials, I highlighted significant statements from the participants' experiences and placed them into the category of autonomy, competence and relatedness.

In the third stage of analysis, through the lens of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), I coded and sorted data according to topics, themes, and issues important to the study according to procedures recommended by Moustakas (1994). Following the coding process, I developed a cluster of themes from the statements. I developed themes from and reflected on the meaning of what the participants said, using themes that best described and conveyed the feelings of the participants (Creswell, 2007). After verifying the completeness of the transcript, I identified significant statements, coding them in the completer, progressing, and In-Process categories.

In the final stage of analysis, I reviewed the transcripts of the completer, progressing, and In-Process separately; I focused on describing experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness for each of the individuals interviewed in addition to developing clusters of meaning from the statements. Additionally, I included the participants' interpretation of the drawing by the participants and the self-description, which served as an additional illustration of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon.

Research Criteria

Creswell (2007) says there are many perspectives to qualitative research, and that there are many terms used in qualitative validation, Creswell consider validation as a "distinct" strength of qualitative research in that the account made through extensive time spent in the field, the detailed thick description, and the closeness of the researcher to the participants in the study all add to the value or accuracy of the study.

Creswell (2007) suggests the researcher use at least two strategies in any study to validate the accuracy of the findings. I employed three validation strategies for this study: rich-thick description, clarifying biases, and self-description drawing by the participants. Rich-thick descriptions were used within this study to describe data collection, the analysis process, and subsequent findings from the research. From the outset of the study, I clarified my bias by stating my position and past experiences, and as a current PhD student

experiencing the same pathway as the participants, my position, and any assumptions or bias as to my approach of the study were clearly stated. Visual drawing, as suggested by Creswell, described and included rich and thick descriptions of the participants and a detailed account of their experiences to provide a meaningful context for the account of the journey as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Accordingly, I reviewed all written transcripts multiple times to understand the essence of the thoughts and feelings of the participants. With each transcript, I identified significant phrases and sentences and extracted what pertains to the lived experience of completers, progressing and In-Process participants. From these phrases and sentences, I then formulated the meanings from each significant statement according to the theoretical framework of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and through my own lens of understanding.

<center>Ethical Considerations</center>

In any research, ethical issues relating to protection of participants is of the utmost important (Creswell, 2007). The ethical considerations related to this study included IRB approval, data storage, and confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted through the University of Texas at Arlington. I explained the study and obtained signatures from all participants prior to the start of the interviews. I further expanded on the

<center>44</center>

purpose of the study and how the data would be used, and possible risks and benefits associated to all the participants. I gave all the participants pseudonyms to protect their identity and to maintain their confidentiality. I stored the research data in a locked cabinet in my home office and will only be shared with my advisor.

Summary

This chapter included an overview of the phenomenological study design to examine and describe the intrinsic motivation experiences of doctoral level education cohort program students. Major sections included detailed sampling, strategies for data collection and analysis, and a description of techniques to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants. I present the data collected in Chapter Four.

Chapter 4

Presentation of the Data

This chapter presents data collected from nine participants: three have defended their dissertation and completed their doctoral program, three have submitted their proposal and received approval to move forward with their dissertation research, and three are working on their dissertation proposal. In addition to interview data, each participant was asked to create and then interpret their drawing depicting their status in the doctoral program. Through the interview questions, drawings, and self-interpretations, participants share their thoughts and feelings about their experiences in their doctoral program.

Completer students have successfully completed all degree requirements and have graduated with their degree. Progressing students have successfully completed their coursework, passed the comprehensive exam, have submitted their proposal, and received approval to move forward with their research. In-Process students have successfully completed their coursework and passed the comprehensive exam, but have not submitted a dissertation proposal.

To create a cumulative picture of each participant, I identified the respondents by name in keeping with the categories, of completers, progressing, and In-Process participants. I did this to provide an overall context of the personal introductions, drawings, interpretations, and personal statements throughout the process. Each interview began with a description of my study and

the significance of the study. I also explained the purposeful selection process and how I selected each participant for the study. I requested each participant to complete the demographic questionnaire, offer a blank piece of paper and markers to illustrate their experiences in the doctoral program. I gave all participants a choice to complete the drawings before, during, or after the interviews.

<div align="center">Completers</div>

Completers were identified as Carrie, Carl, and Carla in the following paragraphs. Each person expressed their personal thoughts about how the program impacts them. Figure 4.1 includes the drawing of Carrie, followed by her own interpretation. Figure 4.2 includes the drawing of Carl, followed by his own interpretation. Figure 4.3 includes the drawing of Carla, followed by her own interpretation.

Carrie

> Being able to finish, getting that degree and doing the study. One of the things that I think that it did, was gave me more confidence to help those schools, move from point A to point B. Figure 1 shows Carrie's drawing and self-interpretation.

4-1 Carrie's Self-Interpretation

I had this picture in my mind of having my advisor put the drape on me,

and that's what I kind of kept in my mind. It was always just being able to

cross that stage and to have my advisor put the drape on, so that's why

whenever you said draw where you are, that would have been, you know

that's one thing that crossed in my mind because that's the picture I carried

with me during those two years when it was, you know, from 2010 I guess

or when we started the proposal journey, yeah. Just knowing that there

would be a day when I would walk across that stage, so that's why I did

that. So, I am just going to draw one little sunshine over there, because

you know the process is like been in the darkness and out of nowhere,

coming into the light again.

Carrie is a white female in her late fifties. She is a K-12 principal, who started the Ph.D. program in summer of 2007. She passed her comprehensive exam in the spring of 2010, proposed in the fall of 2011, and defended her dissertation in fall of 2012. Carrie took five years to complete her program. After graduating, Carrie received a promotion to move into central administration.

The first one in her family to obtain a doctorate, Carrie describes herself:

I am a good Southern gal and I am the only girl in my family. My dad had nine brothers and sisters, my mother was an only child, but I still had lots of aunts and uncles and so lots of cousins and things like that. But I am the only female that not only has a master's, but a doctorate. Growing up back then, you know none of my friends went onto college, if they did it would to be a teacher or a nurse. And I am not knocking that, I mean those were great careers seriously. I mean, obviously I've done both. But education was not a push for us at the time period, for where I lived and the culture that I grew up in the South.

According to Carrie, her motivation for entering in the doctoral program was for the love of learning and she pronounces this motivation:

I realized after being a teacher for so many years that I loved to affect change and I could only affect so much change in my own classroom. I love anything that has to do with education leadership. You know, tell me more, tell me more, tell me how I can run my school better, tell me

how I can do this instructional method better. And so that was one of the

reason, because I am always learning, always wanted to do it better and I

feel like the more education I have or more experiences that I have, then

the better principal or the better school leader that I would be.

Carrie's path to complete the dissertation came with struggle. During the

final month of completing her dissertation, she faced an overwhelming life crisis.

I think part of it was just what we went through with losing our son, it

took the wind out of me. It happened summer of 2011. And so, that

summer really was difficult. I mean there I was - you talked about a

valley - that was probably it.

For Carrie, the dissertation process mimics the planning of a major life

event. She described it as the process of planning for a wedding:

It's kind of like, you know, a wedding where you plan and plan and plan

and then you have this huge event and then boom, then we all come back

down and now what? That was kind of what it was like. I felt like that for

a long time. Yes, and that's why I said, "Saturdays what do I do with

myself, I mean seriously, what do I do with myself?"

When asked about how she selects her topic for the dissertation, Carrie

became animated about her focus of study and the changes and adjustments she

made throughout the project:

Once I changed that aspect of the study to include more than just self-directed learning, and sometime in spring of 2011 is when I decided to change to include 21st century skills in with self-directed learning, it was smoother. It was still a lot of back and forth, but I'd say it was smoother once the proposal was accepted.

Carrie credited a strong support system as a major contributor to the completion of the doctoral program. She elaborated:

I think my advisor was, my cohort friend, and besides my husband and my older son pushing me, and my mom. I have people that were always praying for me, always call and saying, how are you doing and things like that. But, most of all, my husband who is my biggest supporter, and I used to jokingly say, if I didn't this finish, he would divorce me, and I know that's not true. He loves me. He would never do that. But it's kind of like, it's was his dissertation too.

Carrie developed a congenial relationship with her advisor throughout her dissertation process:

People will say my advisor is a Type A personality, which I needed. "I will bother you," she said. But she was good to email me and say, what do I need to do to light a fire under you? But as far as the school is concerned, my advisor was my biggest support and still is. I consider her a mentor and a friend. For example, she would say, "bring it back." And, I

do that, I send it back and it was like, no, now let's change this, let's

change this. So, for me it was, okay, yes, and I would go home and I

make all these changes. I send it back to her and then she changes it up

again. Now, either she looks at it and says, wait it a minute, in reading this

I see maybe we shouldn't have gone that direction or whatever. I don't

know what the thinking was, but in the end it did worked for me.

Being part of the cohort program proved important to Carrie. She formed

a connection within her cohort and forged a relationship that continues throughout

the dissertation process. Carrie elaborated on their relationship:

I had Paula as a part of my cohort. Paula and I have been on this journey

together, and I am thrilled that she defended her proposal. Paula and I did

our course work together, and we have been on this journey together as far

as keeping each other motivated to stay on course. I think the cohort

model was a great and once you left that cohort, you didn't have that

support system anymore. But, Paula and I have stayed connected and

supported each other through the process.

When asked to share any final thoughts about her experience with the

cohort program, Carrie said:

I appreciate being able to do this, to be a part of this study and to talk

about the journey because I think sometimes when we are in the midst of

it, it's just like being in the forest, you know, you can't see the trees,

because we are so involved in it and you really don't appreciate what you

have accomplished, what you have done-not that it makes me any better

than the next person down the street or whatever, but just being able to

verbalize and tell the story again, helps me to appreciate the process that I

went through and what I have done. And I think maybe just being able a

participate in a study like this that other students can read and connect

with and say, wow, you know what, she had this happened into her life but

she was still able to finish, so can I. People can read somebody else's

journey and say, oh but that's not me, however, these are the journey from

our program and I think that makes a difference.

Carl

Going through the program it really changes you.   My whole life I feel

like people change in every step of the journey and I think for me, it really

changed in a positive way. Figure 4.2 shows Carl's drawing and self-

interpretation.
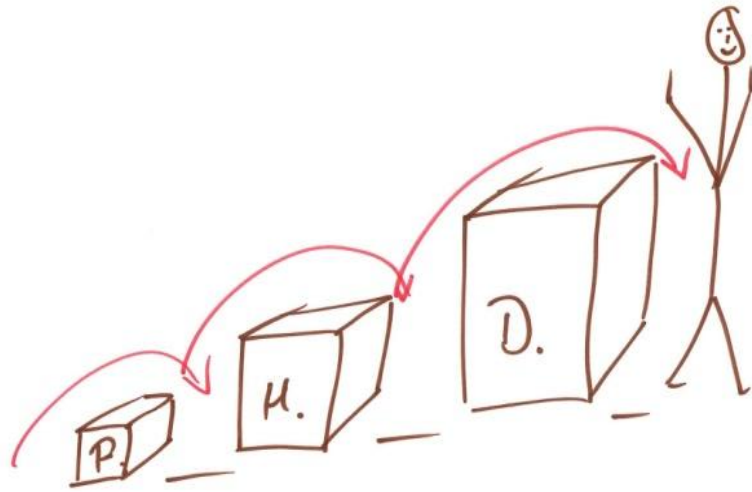
4-2 Carl's Self-Interpretation

This is me overcoming the hurdles of the Ph.D., the Ph.D. like building

blocks that you have to get up and get over and you got your class work

with maybe the small hurdle and you've got a proposal which is the next

hurdle and dissertation is obviously the biggest hurdle. I thought that

getting through all the class work would be the hardest part and then you'd

just kind of write your paper at the end and really the hard work comes

after you defend your proposal. It's not even defending the proposal it's the

hardest part, it is after the year end because it's all on you. The biggest

hurdle is getting the dissertation done and I can see that's so many people

have not reach that point and it's a tough hurdle it really is, but that's why

the picture at the end I've got my arms up and yeah I've finished I'm done and I'm glad that I can share it with other people.

Carl is a white male in his mid-fifties and is currently a middle school Advanced Placement math teacher. Prior to enrolling into the doctoral program, he served as a rural high school principal. Carl made a conscientious decision to resign from his administrative position to concentrate on the doctoral program. He started the program in the summer of 2008, passed his comprehensive exam in the fall of 2010, proposed in the fall of 2011, and defended his dissertation in the summer of 2012. Carl was the second person to graduate from his cohort program, taking a total of four years.

Carl had several reasons for going through the Ph.D. program:

One was to improve myself, I feel like in education you always need to be moving forward or you will get behind and so I wanted to keep moving forward, keep educating myself so that I would stay current. Secondly, I had something to prove to myself, my father had his Ph.D. and so I wanted to see if I could get my Ph.D., I also wanted to be able to be flexible in future job opportunities so that I could possibly teach others to be teachers in the future and so for those three, those were three main reasons why I wanted to do that.

Carl's early life struggles taught him determination, which continued to guide him throughout the program. He explained his background:

Both my parents were alcoholics. My father killed himself when I was 16, and my mother died when I was 32, and we took care of our 90 year-old grandmother for six years. And so I grew up, I knew when I was 21 to stop blaming how I was raised and I told my mother that and so the only one that was going to determined my life is me and so I'm not going to worry about you know if it's raining outside or if it's not, I don't care. I walk down that path, if that's what I have to do.

Life situations confronted Carl during his doctoral program. From a personal illness to illnesses within his family, he described the struggle as a part of the journey:

We had a lot of things that we dealt with in our family, just like everybody does in the five year period of time and it's just a shame to work so hard at something and then quit at that the end. It's like I'm not going to quit, I'm going to get it back. But you know everybody does reach points of frustration but that it just really overwhelming, but you don't quit. You could be frustrated and then let it sit there for a day or two, come back and say, "okay what do I need to do to get it back" and I had moments when it came down to that in the end.

Carl elaborated on the importance of not taking a break in order to keep his focus:

I don't really think I ever took off a period of time where I said I'm not

going to think about it, look at it or anything like that. I'll wait till next

year or whatever. I think I was constantly, but just not, not really 100%.

He attributed his success in completing the program to his ability to

manage his schedule:

I put together a time line of when I wanted to have chapters and stuff

turned into my chair and my dissertation committee and when we did my

proposal, I put together a timeline and I turned it into my advisor and we

did the best of our ability, and stuck to that time line as much we could.

Sometimes I had to give a little, sometimes she gave a little bit, sometimes

I was a little late, sometimes she was, but giving myself that time-line

helped stay on track.

Support systems also functioned as a key contribution to the completion of

his dissertation:

My wife and son, they knew that this was something that I had to get to

the other end of. A lot of people don't make it to other side of it and so

they were supportive of me during the whole process and assisted with

whatever I needed. If I said to my wife, look I need to you to watch and

take care of our son a 100% this weekend so that I can work on this

assignment; this is something that I have to do. She was always been there

for me, and if I said "I've got to have this time," she's always made it possible.

Carl described his relationship with the cohort and the extended connection that he makes during and after the completion of the coursework:

Is a wonderful cohort, we started with about between 15 and 17 people, and several dropped out. It was a very diverse group. I was the only white male you know after one dropped out. We had male, female, different ethnic groups, different sexual orientation people-any kind of diversity you could think of. We had it and I think the diversity made us stronger, and we all had to accept different points of view with what we were doing. And it helped to bring us together. We were always very supportive when we had to do group projects, and so I think the cohort did help us through.

Carl was candid about his technical ability and how he overcomes the areas of deficiencies:

I've always had some issues with my writing, I am not as confident about my writing as I could be. But I was a philosophy major, so I knew could put forth a good argument and defend my arguments that I made, and so that part was fine. I've always been fairly savvy with computer programs and stuff, so the technical part of doing power points or whatever that came easy to me. But my writing the quality of my academic writing is

where I thought that I might have the hardest time, and that's why for my dissertation committee I chose the chair that I did, because she had a high level of expertise on her writing.

It took many attempts at the proposal process before Carl's proposal was accepted. As Carl explicated, "It took me about 13 or 14 versions of the proposal before I could defend." When asked to share his final thoughts about the program, Carl described his journey in a simile:

> You think of the journey as a marathon being 26 miles and it's the first 20 miles that's hardest of the race but it's actually the last six. And that's what the dissertation is, that last six miles you know. But people don't realize that. People who have not gone through this process think it's going to be a walk in the park. Those people that have completed their proposal they know that's not the case-they have to be passionate and like their topic to sustain them to the end.

Carla

> Somebody with a Ph.D. doesn't know any more necessarily than somebody without one. But it does say to people, you have self-management skills and you are disciplined enough to get through the program." Figure 4.3 shows Carla's drawing and self-interpretation.

Hang Gliding
Jennifer

Doctoral Mountain
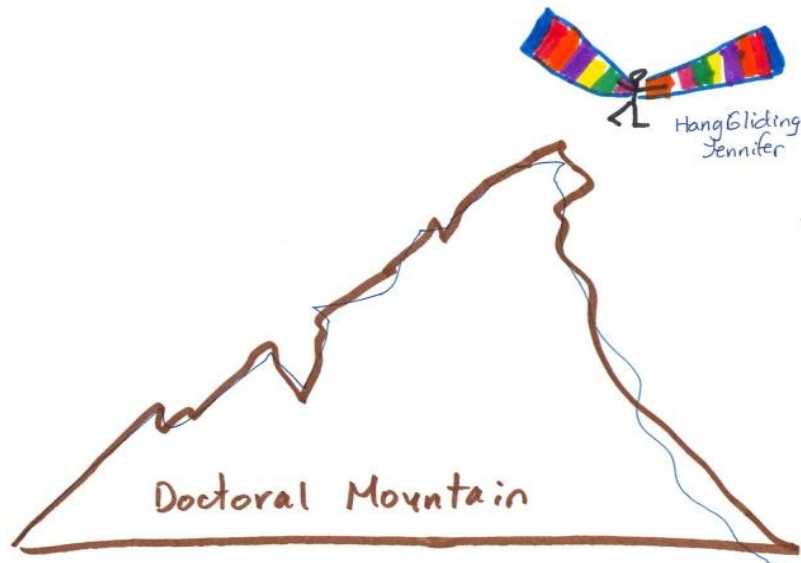
4-3 Carla's Self-Interpretation

The degree has given me the freedom to really say, I am interested in

teaching higher education and I'm kind of moving toward getting some

experience in that area and then consulting with districts that are

developing leadership programs. So it feels just very free, and as friend of

mine said and-she just hit the nail in the head for me, and when she said

that, "I love the work. I don't like the grind." And I thought, I love the

work and I could do this work till' I am 70 years old.

Carla is a White female in her late fifties who retired from her position as

an administrator to devote herself full time to writing her dissertation. She started

the program in the summer of 2007, passes her comprehensive exam in 2010,

proposed in the fall of 2011, and graduated in the fall of 2012. Carla took five

60

years to complete her program. Following her graduation, she started her own consulting business.

According to Carla, education is a part of her family tradition, and was a natural progression for her to obtain her doctorate. She described her path:

It was something I'd always wanted to do. And my mother, both my parents are educators and both my parents got graduate degrees. Education was important to my parents. They valued it and wanted it to be part of providing that for other people. So, I was steeped in that mindset. And I was excited particularly about the aspect of this program. Because I am really interested in the work and want to continue to learn and contribute to make a difference and support people who are right in the middle of the education world.

Carla completed her program in five years, but still wishes that she could have completed it in four. She explained her reason for not completing earlier arose due to career changes during her time in the program, noting "It was probably last year changing jobs. I would have finished more quickly had I not changed jobs and had that year where I was just so focused on work. I really didn't focus on the dissertation."

In reference to her support system, Carla exclaimed that her support came from multiple sources, personally and professionally.

My partner, she has a Ph.D. also and had done qualitative research. She

also taught at the university, the research part, she helped me a lot with,

with the research setting and the various parts of a dissertation and my

team at work because the program is part of a team of five, and they were

good thinking partners. In fact I remember the team with the university as

good thinking partners there too.

Carla designed her dissertation project and purposely selected her advisor

based on her work style. She described her relationship with her advisor:

My advisor was great. We were a perfect fit and I would say that that is

for me a real key piece. And people are so different in terms of what they

need to keep going. But she would give me feedback like, okay, we need

to have a through chapter one to chapter five. In other words, you need an

introduction and a conclusion at every chapter that links everything

together. In terms of grain size, that was just perfect for me because if

somebody had been really, really detailed and given me pages and pages

and pages of notes, I wouldn't have liked it. Now, I think somebody else

wouldn't like very abstract and global, they would think, what that heck

does that mean, right? For me it was perfect.

Carla also shared her technical ability, noting "I am a really good writer

and a really good reader, and so I think that was really important. You know,

writing is something that I enjoyed."

<p style="text-align:center">Progressing</p>

I identified progressing participants as Paula, Patricia and Peter. In the following paragraphs, each person expressed their personal thoughts about how the program impacts them. Figure 4.4 includes the drawing of Paula, followed by her own interpretation. Figure 4.5 includes the drawing of Patricia, followed by her own interpretation. Figure 4.6 includes the drawing of Peter, followed by his own interpretation.

Paula

"There is an internal drive inside of me that says, I'm going to finish this no matter what." Figure 4.4 shows Paula's drawing and self-interpretation.
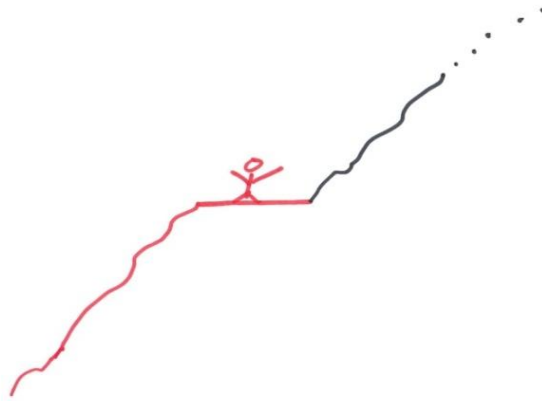
<p style="text-align:center">4-4 Paula's Self-Interpretation</p>

I am going to use the color red, because red is difficult. I am going to make this an easy picture. Here I am, right here, right now, this is the summer where I am preparing myself for the big climb. I don't know

where it's going but I know the top is somewhere up there. I came a long way already. Right now, I am okay. I am taking a deep breath, and then I will start my journey up the hill.

Paula is a White female in her mid-forties. She is a middle school math teacher and part-time higher education math instructor. Paula started her program in the summer of 2007, passed her comprehensive exam in the spring of 2010, and completed her proposal in the spring of 2013. She wants to complete her dissertation and graduate in the spring of 2014. Paula's motivation for entering the program was to learn more about the education system, elaborating "this program interests me, in that I had always been interested in the working of how our systems works but never understood why certain things are structured the way they are in education."

Paula described the life situation she has encounters throughout the course of the program:

> I think the hardest thing is just the life, you know, and trying to make life work along with the program because I can't lock myself in a closet and focus only on the program. I don't want to lose everything, I don't want to lose my marriage, I don't want to lose my children and I don't want to lose my job. But this program was important for me. So I had to learn to balance it all.

Paula described her time schedule and how she must divide her time with her family and her study.

I'm a mother of two children: A 10 year-old and a 14 year-old. And before I started they were both pre-teen. So I think juggling, I think the hardest thing is just life, you know, and trying to make life work along with the program.

Paula characterized her relationship with two professors who provided substantial influence:

I liked the Law professor—he is not here anymore--very intelligent man. He did a good job with the law class. But yeah, and then I love the department chair, she is still here, she the opposite of me and so she balances me-that's why I like her.

Paula described her relationship with her cohort group and her relationship within the cohort:

As for my cohort, for the most part I got along with most of them, I respected them. I just didn't see them a whole lot you know what I'm saying. I saw Carrie a lot more. Carrie was a motivator to me when things were really hard, when I thought, "What am I doing? This is crazy." Carrie was just one of those people, she thinks like I do, I could sound off with her and she would either tell me it sounds crazy or she

agree with me or tweak it, we would discuss things like that because we
went through the same program together.

Paula described how she came to select her topic for her dissertation:

I like working with teachers, because that's technically what I do right
now. I teach math classes to future elementary teachers. And so basically
I'm trying to get them to understand math from the other side, problem-
solving format when they work in groups. I don't lecture. I go around
and ask them questions and try to get them to move forward in their
groups and then they share at the end as we tried to put everything
together. This is where my dissertation idea came from, because I see a
lot of "aha" moments when I work with the teachers.

Patricia

"The reality is, at this point, I can't quit. Because I've invested too much
time and too much money and I'm not going to back out now." Figure 4.5 shows
Patricia drawing and self-interpretation.
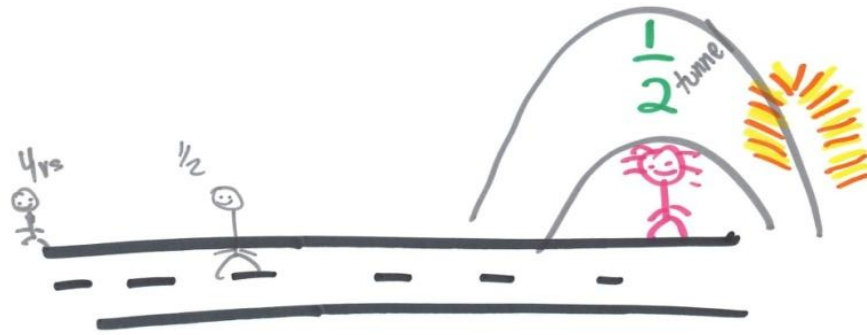
4-5 Patricia's Self-Interpretation

Four years ago we were here. And I couldn't even imagine being at the end of the tunnel because we were thinking about the course work and we already had a topic. Halfway through the program I had a topic, I had a vision, I knew it that time where I was going, and courses were getting done. Now, I feel like I am halfway through the tunnel, because I proposed and defended. I am starting to see the light, because I already have my interviews, I'm starting to transcribe some, so I'm starting to find themes. So now I'm seeing the light. And there is another picture of myself at the end of the tunnel.

Patricia is an Hispanic Female in her early thirties. She started the program as a K-6 teacher and during the course of the program was promoted to a

specialist position in the K-12 system. Patricia began her doctoral program in the summer of 2008, passed her comprehensive exam in the fall of 2010, and completed her proposal in the summer of 2012. She had set a goal of completing her dissertation in the fall of 2013. Patricia was motivated to obtain the additional credential to have a greater impact on her environment. Patricia stated her motivation:

> I realized that I really did like talking to teachers and teaching teachers, so that is when I decided that I wanted to become a Professor. I want to be at the university and be in an education program, and so that motivated me to move forward and pursue a Ph.D.

> Life situation confronted Patricia throughout the program, from changing jobs, to relocation, and as stated, her pregnancy during the program:

> I got pregnant during the program and I was still in the middle of drafts when she was born. As soon as she was born, I got right back on it. I got my final draft for the proposal, fixed it, sent it in and they said it looks good; we are going to approve you to move forward.

> Patricia's life situation caused her to delay her progress, but it does not stop her from moving forward.

> Originally, my plan was to finish at the end of August, but we decided to move so we put the house in the market in the spring and it sold. So that whole process slowed my progress down, but that's okay, I am back now.

Patricia attributed her success with the program from the support that she

has from her advisor, exclaiming:

My advisor, she has been there for me. She has given me a shoulder on.

We would cry together. She has been my support and at the same time she

has given me a shoulder to cry on, she hasn't been soft with me either. I

mean, she has been rough and she has been tough and that's what has

caused the tears. But I think at the same time, I think her help is what

going to really prepare me to be a professional professor and educator,

because she does not allow me to feel sorry for myself, she really pushes

my writing and she is really pushing me in my thought process. So I will

really appreciate working with this professor.

Patricia described her relationship with her cohort as the other aspect of

her other support system during the dissertation process:

There were two cheerleaders. And those two cheer leaders have

graduated. And so they are the one that were sending that emails, okay

guys, you guys can do this and what do we need to do to help you

graduate, let me know if you need anything. And so I stuck with them,

with those two we created a writing group, we will get together, we will

read each other's writing, we read each other's proposal, and we give

feedback to each other. We met at the University. They would meet with

me whenever I needed and read multiple drafts of mine and give me feedback.

Patricia described how she selects her topic for the dissertation:

My topic is about parental support and involvement with low-income families, particularly with Hispanics and Mexican American descent families. So throughout my research I have gather statistics and numbers that made me realize that I am one part of the statistic. The information has given me reasons to move forward and I can't stop learning about the topic. The research is a personal interest for me.

Patricia explained her technical abilities, noting "I felt that the academic writing was really kicking my butt. And I thought I was prepared but once I started writing, I felt that I was not as prepared as I should be."

Prior to getting her proposal accepted, Patricia had to complete multiple revisions, explaining "I send the draft; she sends them back with feedback. And so I go through her comments, I put them together, I rewrite and then I send it back to my advisor and then we start all over again."

In addition to her other comments, Patricia shared this about her journey:

When we started the course work, I loved it. The articles and the reading and the discovery of new materials, I was really into it. But, I could tell others were not. If we look back to the beginning, we don't have the same people. Some have left the program, but other has remained and they are

willing to invest in the time and commitment to complete. Whether it is

four or five years, I am willing to pay as much as I need to in dollars and

time to get to the end.

Peter

A task oriented person, I like to finish things that I start. I am motivated to

finish this part of the journey of my life." Figure 4.6 shows Peter's drawing and

self-interpretation.
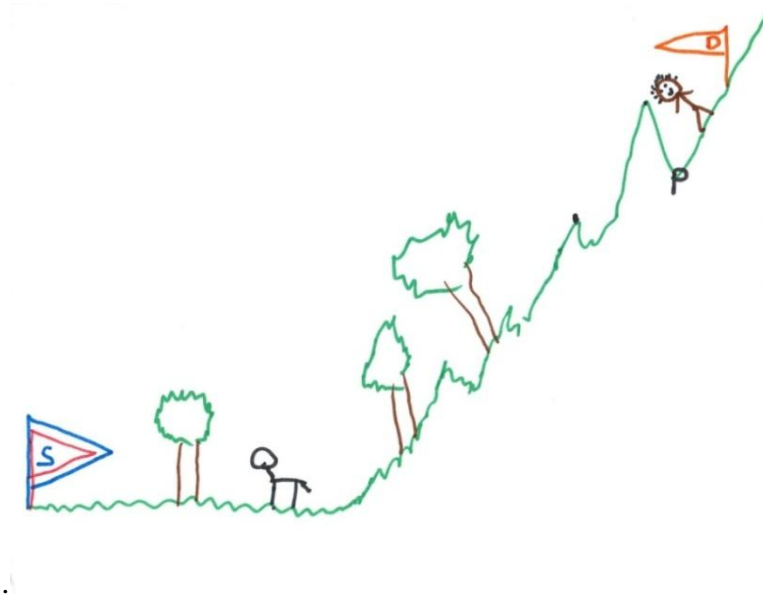
4-6 Peter's Self-Interpretation

The journey started here, these trees are the obstacles and life situations

that got in the way along the journey. I am climbing these hills despite

these obstacles, I am almost there. I can see the end in sight.

Peter is an African-American male in his late thirties. He is K-12

Administrator, who started the doctoral program in the summer of 2008, passed

his comprehensive exam in fall of 2010, and proposed in the summer of 2012. At

the time of the interview, Peter had a goal to defend his dissertation in the summer

of 2013. Peter's states his motivation to complete the program:

> I want to affect change and I could only affect so many as a classroom
>
> teacher, and then as a principal, and now as a central administrator I have
>
> a greater impact, and the credential will give me the additional opportunity
>
> to affect more.

Peter made difficult choices about his professional career opportunities

during the course of the program and had multiple changes that disrupt his

progress. He expounded on those changes:

> I had multiple changes in my professional career during the past four
>
> years, I went from being a high school principal at one school district, to
>
> being a principal at another school district, and then to this position at this
>
> school district.

Peter enjoyed support from more than one faculty member; he worked

with his advisor and also with another faculty member to complete his proposal.

Peter explained the relationships:

My advisor has been what has helped me to get as far as I have with my

statistics; and the other committee member for the review of the methods,

those two would be the two who assisted me the most.

Peter maintained contact with various cohort members following the

completion of the coursework. He elaborated on the relationship, stating "I've

maintain contacts with different individuals from my cohort. We were a close

cohort and I have a personal relationship with a couple members of the cohort to

this day."

Peter was candid about his technical ability and described how he

overcomes this deficiency by explaining, "I've always had some issues with my

writing, I've am not as confident about my writing as I could be. But, I know that

I can get support from others in this area." Peter shared these additional thoughts:

The PhD helps you move faster in your professional goals, and you are

called doctor and those things are great. But it is really the personal

journey and how much I have learned about myself as a person while

going through the program. Having gone through the personal changes,

completing and meeting my goals, there is a sense of personal

accomplishment for the time and efforts that it took. I am looking forward

to being able to have dinner with my wife and family and being in the

moment with them.

In-Process

In-Process participants were identified as Isham, Ian and Ingrid. In the

following paragraphs, each person expresses their personal thoughts about how

the program impacts them. Figure 4.7 includes the drawing of Isham, followed by

his own interpretation. Figure 4.8 includes the drawing of Ian, followed by his

own interpretation. Figure 4.9 includes the drawing of Ingrid, followed by her

own interpretation.

Isham

"I can tell myself I am a smart guy, just because you're smart it doesn't

mean you can complete. I mean, in the context of education and the Ph.D.

program, I'm just saying it's not for everybody." Figure 4.7 shows Isham's

drawing and self-interpretation.
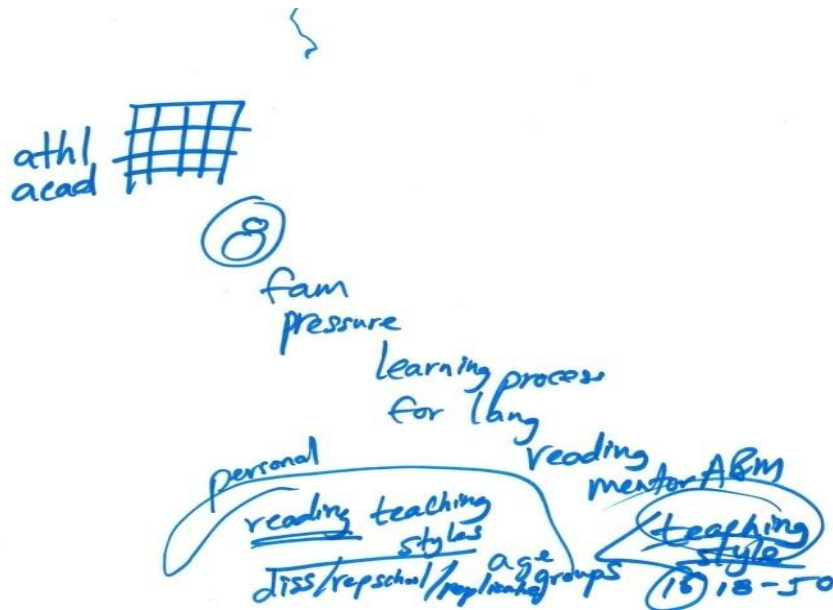
4-7 Isham's Self-Interpretation

So many things happened after the comps. Yeah, my kid and life in
general and I feel like someone who is coming up for air from all the
pressure and I really feel like Fred Flintstone, you know how the
Flintstones are like, rolling in the end, taking off and not getting
anywhere. I feel like I'm him right now.

Isham is an Hispanic male in his mid-thirties. He is a higher education
instructor who started the program in the summer of 2008 and passed his
comprehensive exam in the fall of 2010. Isham is currently working on a new
topic to research for his dissertation. Isham expressed his motivation to obtain the
credential, stating, "I just always felt pressured from my family to get the next
degree." Isham's family life situation took priority over his focus in the program

following the birth of his child when his priority shifted from education progress to his devotion to raising his child. He explained his choice:

> We had a kid, and I wanted to devote 100% of my time to my kid. We actually tried to get pregnant for about three to four years. I know compared to other people who never had kids or who have the kids, this is nothing. But for us it was important and I wanted to be there with my kid.

Isham was candid about how difficult it had been to focus on the dissertation after taking an extended break in the program, admitting,"I'm going to be honest, because after finishing my course work, I took a little while off, and it's been tough getting back into it."

While Isham appreciates his family support system for his educational progress, he expressed feelings of pressure to complete the degree, noting "My folks and my family, they're very loving and very supportive. I don't think they ever like to, but they did pressure me into the next step, whether I wanted to or was interested in it or not."

Ian forged a relationship with a faculty member through the course of the program and experienced a major loss when the faculty member left the university. Isham described the loss of the relationship:

> I got used to Dr. B. He was very hands-on, and he worked the crap out of me. He would tell me to give him something by next month, in two months, et cetera. He was great for me and my style. As soon as he left, it

was just different. It's kind of like, I don't mean to compare this, but when you get your heart broken, it takes you a while to get back into the scene.

According to Isham, the style of his current advisor is completely different from the original advisor he had selected at the beginning of the program. Because his original advisor is no longer with the university, Isham described his working relationship with his current advisor:

My current advisor, he is very hands-off which is really for me is not my style. But I have not found anyone else within the department that matches my style. I mean, the other advisor left for another university and he was the perfect fit with for my style. He was very hands-on.

Just as Isham had struggled from the loss of his original advisor, he expressed a lack of connection to his cohort following the completion of the coursework program. He explained:

When it comes to cohort members, I haven't been in touch with them since we finished our comps. It's just, there was no need. I mean, I know that they got together like once every so often to see, to catch up with each other, but I didn't feel like it.

Following the completion of his comprehensive exam, Isham has changed his mind about what topics that he would like to focus on for his dissertation:

77

I had to change my topic from athletics and now I am reading about

graduation rates and all that stuff, similar to what you're doing, and it's

like what motivates them to stay at school, don't get out of the school,

graduate, not graduate, you know, some of them might go through, et

cetera, but I actually ran into a bit of a stonewall in that area just because

of the fact that I am still reading and researching what I really like as a

topic.

Ian

"Frustrated really frustrated because you spend all this time and money

and you have this one thing you need to finish and you are not even close."

Figure 4.8 shows Ian's drawing and self-interpretation.
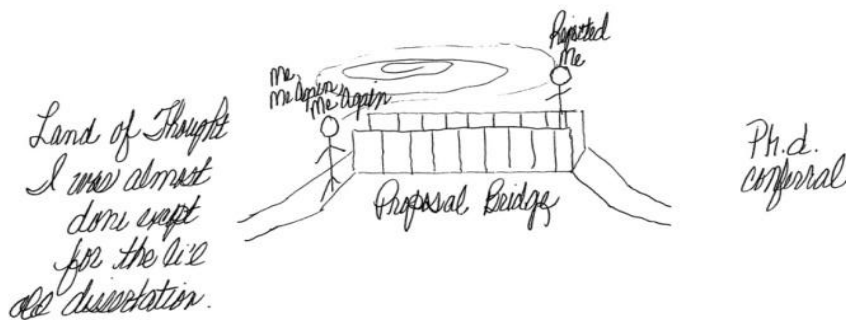
4-8 Ian's Self-Interpretation

That's a proposal bridge. You have to cross the proposal bridge to be able

to get conferred. Okay and let me see I'm going to try and simulate this as

best you can have. It's my brain and where I had to go and I can't get to

here. I don't have my proposal approved yet and then. This is me again.

Both of them, at each part, each stage. This is me and I'm just going

round and circles trying to get there. Rejected me, me again, me again.

Okay. Not that I'm not I'll just say that probably this is the land of no

return, I thought I was done except for the little old dissertation. A little

old dissertation yeah. But that's kind of where I'm at. "The bridge over

troubled water."

Ian is a white male in his early sixties. He is a higher education

administrator, who started his program in the summer of 2007 and passed his

comprehensive exam in the spring of 2010. Ian is currently working on his

proposal for submission. Ian was motivated to obtain the credential to further his

career within his institution, and to expand the opportunities to other

organizations:

I work in a university and the terminal degree which many of the

colleagues that I work with have and I don't. I also thought that with the

credential, when I retire that I would teach at a university. I've taught at

the community college several times but I wanted to teach at a major

university and to do that you really need to have a terminal degree even as an adjunct.

Ian described his normal work schedule and the struggle to balance that with writing the dissertation, stating "I work about 60, 65 hours a week…but I mean you can look at that and see where I spent my time and it's not going to be easy to complete."

He expressed his fear of losing an opportunity to complete his program, noting, "I am 60…that really needed to happen three years ago or two years ago for it to really be able to impact me career-wise."

Ian visited with multiple faculty members to find an advisor with whom he feels comfortable working. But so far, he has not been successful in finding one who matches his working style and he explains:

I met Dr. [] and yes, I worked with her and probably I worked with her more than I did Dr. [] but I really don't know them. I was very much attached and Dr. [] for instance, but he is gone, so I've really been kind of on an island. So the only person to get it done now is me.

Since the departure of a faculty member of the cohort program, Ian has struggled to find a connection with any remaining faculty members. He explained the loss:

I never felt connected to the college in terms of support. I talk to Dr. Green about what I wanted to do and had mapped it all out and then in the

semester I finished the course was when he left. I mean where do you begin, I don't have anybody. I didn't really know anybody and the remaining people had kind of rolled out, I didn't know the other people.

Ian made an attempt at the end of the coursework to maintain contact with his cohort, but has not maintained the contact after they completed their dissertation. Ian elaborated:

Initially there was some working together with the cohort, some of that, but I didn't do well and I saw that they muddled through and they worked hard. They had problems too, it was very labor-intensive for them and was a struggle in the beginning but they persevered and they finished and I didn't.

Ian is confident of his technical ability to complete chapters Four and Five of the dissertation, since the quantitative reporting process is his professional occupation. The difficulty he is encountering is the completion of chapters One and Two for the proposal submission. He elaborated:

For me it has been disheartening to the point of wanting to quit because routinely in my job each day I do chapters three, four, and five. I produce statistics, I turn them over to senior management and we, in-turn, complete the project. But chapter one and two are trying. Incorporating what I wanted to do with the variables is something that I've never encountered

before, and justifying why I am doing the study. I have never been taught how to do that.

Ian has been frustrated with the multiple revisions he has had to complete with his proposal, elaborating, "That's the third proposal I've turned in. The first and they are different, each of the three were different."

Ingrid

"It is not an issue of competency. It really is an issue of sitting down and being able to really concentrate and focus on doing it for an extended period of time." Figure 4.9 shows Ingrid's drawing and self-interpretation.

4-9 Ingrid's Self-Interpretation

This is me and I need some snow shoes. This is mud and these are my snow shoes. And I am wearing snow shoes through the mud, because it's

sort of feels like I'm trying to walk through the mud in snow shoes. Of course, I've the Ph.D. at my back, but I do see light. I'm not in the tunnel though, I don't like tunnels, but I do see light. So I feel that there is hope, but at the same time, I am saying, "oh crap, get me out of here, because holy crap I've got this Ph.D., which really should be a lot bigger". Maybe I just perceive this thing bigger. It's really just small, but I perceive that it's being this big. And my books were backwards, sorry, but I can't draw. So it makes sense. It's really just little bit, but I thought it's this big and I think it's probably chasing me. More than being on my back. But I do feel there is hope. So there is always hope. The mud is comprised of Drake and work. I'm sure; I'll use a different color. And I love work, but it's very stressful. I could work 80 hours a week probably if I wanted to, but I chose not to do that.

Ingrid is a white female in her mid-thirties, who is a higher education administrator. Ingrid began her program in the summer of 2007 and successfully passed her comprehensive exam in the spring of 2010. She is currently working on her proposal for submission. Ingrid described how her life situation took an emotional toll on her ability to focus on the program:

> After trying to have a second child and it didn't work as well, so we thought we would try again. And it ended up, I had him that year, the spring, after my comps I had my baby back in September. So since I

finished comps, I had him and I was like, oh, I'm just going to take a year

off. He is a very high maintenance child. Up until about two months ago,

he would scream from the time I picked him up in the afternoon, until the

time we went to bed. It was constant. I cry just thinking about it. It was a

constant stress. So far, with work and him being a very high maintenance

child, and in addition to other things that have happened along the way

medically, it was just like, "oh my god, how am I ever going to get

through this program?"

Ingrid described how balancing work, family, and beyond the educational

goals proved challenging:

It's just finding the time, because I just don't have the time. I work as an

administrator at the college, I have kids, and I have a cake business on the

side that I do and my husband travels extensively with his job. So it's

really hard to juggle all the priorities.

Ingrid described how she is supported by her husband through the course

of the program:

I have the best husband when it comes to supporting me doing this. I

mean, he is the one who says, "You got to finish, you got to finish, you got

to finish" and I could have said a long time ago, "Oh, to hell with it, I am

so tired". But I know that it's important and he supports it.

Ingrid elaborated on her connection with the cohort throughout the entire program:

> I don't think we were closed to cohort. I mean, we didn't go and hang out all the time. But we would get together; several of us, routinely would get together. It wasn't because we chose that clique, it was whoever showed up. It was organized by one person, and she actually is the first to graduate. But she was cheerleader of the group. I still Facebook with most of the people I went to school with, but that is the extent of my connection with them.

Ingrid expanded on how she still grapples with the selection of a topic that will sustain her through the dissertation process:

> Originally, I was very interested in gender rules in higher education. The whole good old boy, men run the colleges and universities and the women do the work. I was very interested in that, but it was like, well, that really has nothing to do with K-16. So I have lots of things I am very interested in, but nothing that I felt I can love or have a really good grasp of. So I am down to my, what I believe is my last topic.

Summary

Chapter Four introduced the participants in the study and tells their doctoral completion stories, their background, their professional lives, and the self-interpreted drawings. It also included their responses to the array of survey

questions. In the next chapter, I report my analysis of the data presented in this chapter through the lens of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Chapter 5

Analysis

This phenomenological study examines and describes the intrinsic

motivation experiences of doctoral level education cohort program students, those

who have completed, those who are progressing and those who are In-Process.

Specifically, this study focuses on investigating the basic human needs of

autonomy, competence, and relatedness as identified by Deci and Ryan (1985) in

a sample of doctoral-level education cohort program participants in various stages

of their doctoral programs. This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected

in Chapter Four through the lens of self-determination theory (Deci& Ryan,

1985). The analysis focuses on an overview of Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-

determination theory and the variables of autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Self-Determination Theory

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation indicates that

individuals engage in an activity for the sake of the activity itself, for the

satisfaction inherent in performing the activity out of interest and enjoyment. In

other words, intrinsic motivation is comprised of activity and a variety of

behaviors that energize. The primary rewards for performing these behaviors are

the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Deci& Ryan,

1985). Therefore, intrinsic motivation resides in people's needs of autonomy,

competence and relatedness, and is considered the fuel for action to satisfy one's innate needs (Grolnick, Gurland, Jacob &Decourcey, 2001).

Autonomy is hypothesized to be the foremost human and psychological need among the three components of intrinsic motivation (Deci& Ryan, 1985). Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) suggest that autonomy comes from a sense of well-being, perceiving the ability to choose one's course of action, and experiencing oneself as the locus of control of those actions. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), individuals experiencing autonomy are intrinsically motivated.

Competence relates to a person's sense of accomplishment and a need to feel confident and effective while accomplishing tasks (Deci& Ryan, 1985, 2000). Self-determination theory (Deci& Ryan, 1985) refers to individuals' perceived competence, which can be different from their actual level of ability. The more competence individuals perceive to have in an activity, the more intrinsically motivated they will be at that activity (Deci& Ryan, 1985). The need for competence translates to a desire to feel confident in one's abilities to successfully complete tasks. To maintain a high level of perceived competence, Deci and Ryan (1985) maintain that people will seek challenges that are in accordance with their capacities.

Relatedness is the need for "psychological sense of being with others in secure communion or unity" (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p.7). This conceptualization includes feeling connected and a sense of belonging with other individuals as well

as with one's community. The more individuals feel connected and related to the

community, the more intrinsically motivated these people will be.

The analyses of data from the Completers, Progressing, and In-Process

participants who express their experiences from the doctoral program reveal

several emergent themes supporting self-determination theory (Deci& Ryan,

1985). Autonomy, competence and relatedness themes are presented below.

Visual Illustration

When asked to illustrate their current position in the program, Completers

detail a picture of themselves finishing the journey and visualizing the

coursework, proposal, and the dissertation defense as a series of "hurdles" they

have to overcome and "a mountain" they have to climb. Once on top of the

mountain and with their credentials, they are free to start the next chapter of their

lives. One Completer noted that "the process is like being the darkness and out

of nowhere, coming into the light again." Figure 5.1. Drawings of Completers.
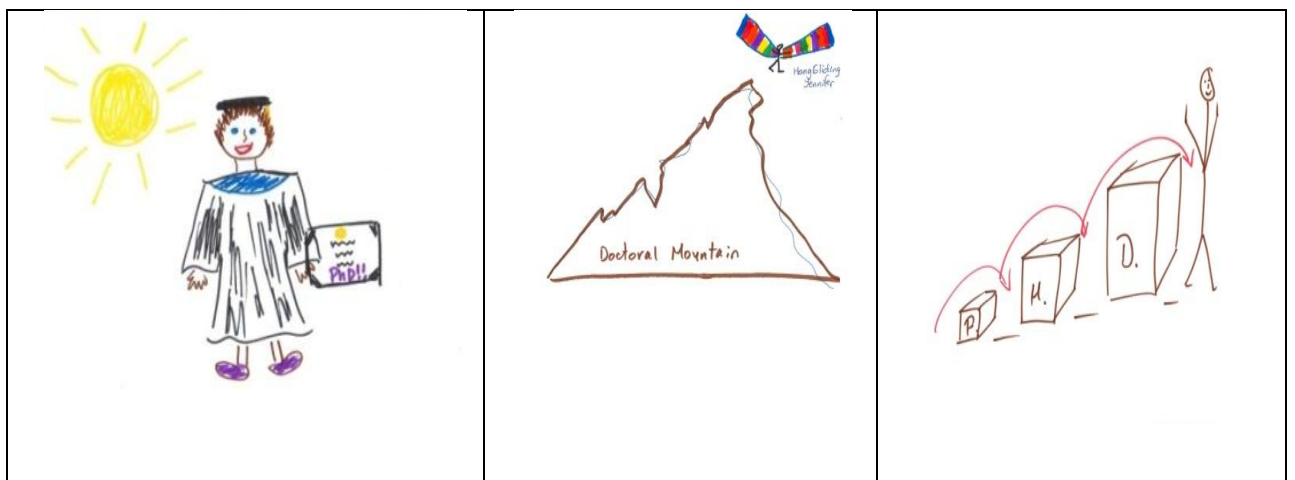
5-1 Drawings of Completers

Progressing participants, who have defended their proposals, saw

themselves as halfway through the journey. One Progressing participant

characterized this attitude, noting "I am preparing myself for the big climb" and

building in the stamina to complete the journey. Another Progressing participant

had similar thoughts as the Completers in that she is "starting to see the light".

All three Progressing participants saw the end, but know they still have a lot of

work to do in order to finish the journey. This statement represents the In-

Process: "I am climbing these hills despite these obstacles, I am almost there. I

can see the end in sight." Figure 5.2. Drawings of Progressing Participants.
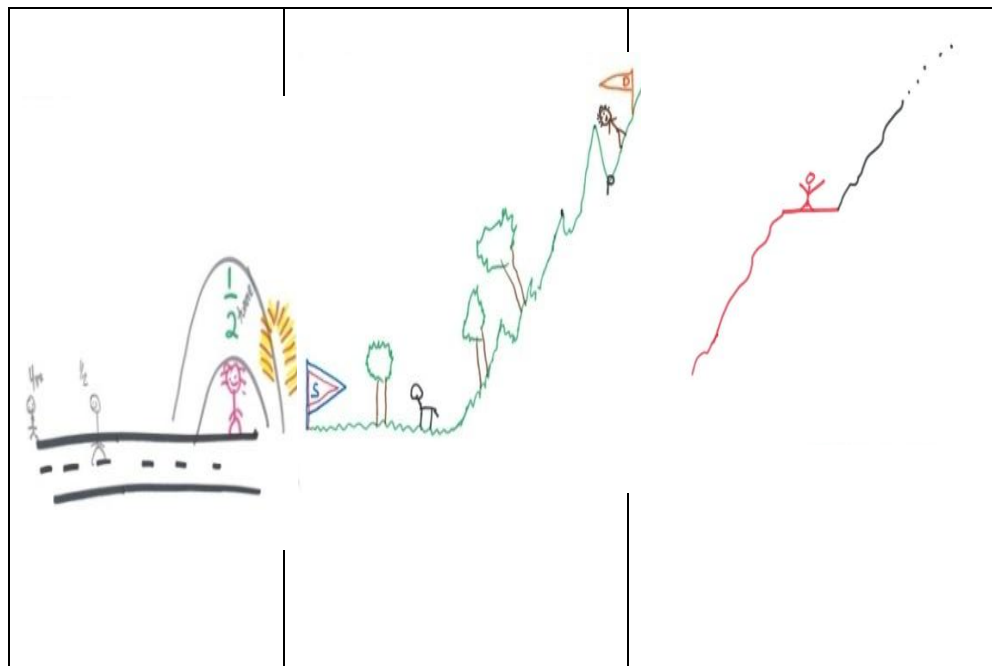
5-2 Drawings of Progressing Participants

In contrast, the In-Process participants expressed external pressures that hinder their progress to completion. One In-Process participant expressed this view, stating, "so many things happened after the comps, I feel like someone who is coming up for air from all the pressure". Another In-Process participant stated "I don't have my proposal approved yet", and currently feels he is "going around in circle trying to get here". In-Process participant saw the dissertation as "maybe I just perceive this thing bigger. It's really just small, but I perceive that it's being this big." Another In-Process stated "I thought I was done except for the little old dissertation--a little old dissertation".

One In-Process explained her decision to focus on family and professional obligations, stating "I could work 80 hours a week probably if I wanted to, but I chose not to do that." Another In-Process participant exemplified this attitude, stating "I do feel there is hope, so there is always hope". Figure 5.3. Drawings of In-Process Participants.
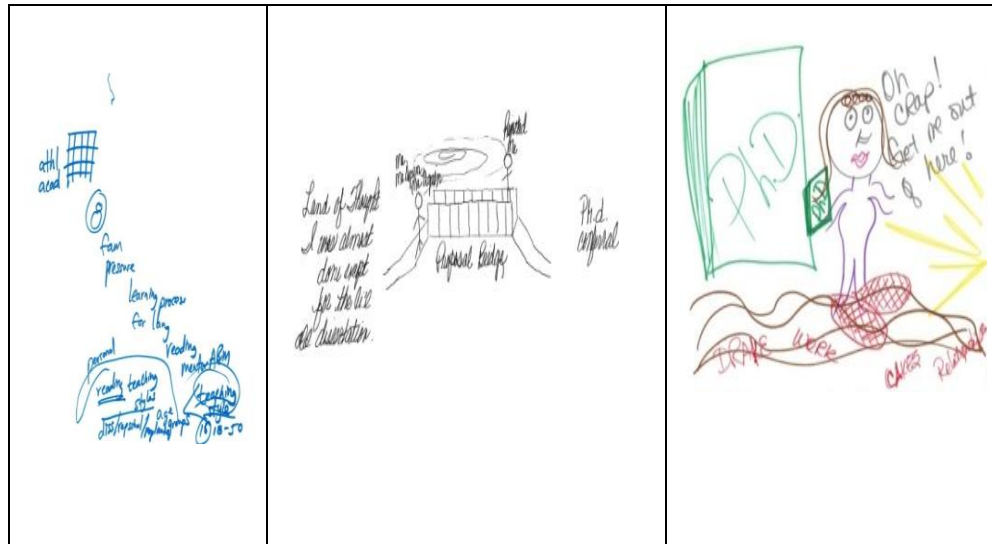
5-3 Drawings of In-Process Participants

Autonomy

Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) suggest that autonomy comes from a sense of well-being, perceiving the ability to choose one's course of action, and experiencing oneself as the locus of those actions. I found three themes that aligned with these suggestions in the interview with the participants: 1) Selection of topic, and 2) Management of time, 3) Personal life situations.

Selection of Topic. In the present study, all students struggled with their dissertation topic in different ways. The Completers and Progressing participants began the program with an idea a dissertation topic; however, they adjusted and make modifications based on the coursework and readings. Part of the choice about the selection of topics arose from the ability to modify the topic as they discover and learn more. This statement represents the experiences of the Completers:

Once I changed that aspect of the study to include more than just self-directed learning, and sometime in spring of 2011 is when I decided to change to include 21st century skills in with self- directed learning, it was smoother. It was still a lot of back and forth, but I'd say it was smoother once the proposal was accepted.

Alternatively, In-Process participants indicated they experienced a hard time finding a topic that would sustain their interest, therefore limiting their options of topics and making it difficult for them to settle on a topic. One In-Process participant reported he changed his original topic of interest because he "actually ran into a bit of a stonewall . . . ." He lamented the shift and begins reading and researching different topics of interest.

One important aspect of completing the doctoral program concerns the self-selection of a research topic that graduate students find personally interesting. This aligns with Jacks, Chubin, and Connolly (1983), who found that a lack of problems with research topic is an important factor in dissertation completion. One In-Process participant exclaimed this about her struggle:

Originally, I was very interested in gender rules in higher education. The whole good old boy, men run the colleges and universities and the women do the work. I was very interested in that, but it was like, well, that really has nothing to do with K-16. So I have lots of things I am very interested

in, but nothing that I felt I can love or have a really good grasp off. So I

am down to my, what I believe is my last topic.

Management of Time. The Completers identified organization and

structure as defining steps to assist with the completion of the program. The

demand on their professional workload is validated by Wright's (1991) study,

indicating that decreasing professional workload assists with the completion of

the dissertation. In accordance with Wright, Completers and Progressing

participants concurred on management of time as a key factor to the completion

of their dissertation.

In the present study, Completers elaborated about their time management

schedules and how they mapped out the plan for completing their dissertation.

Progressing participants also describe how they incorporated their personal,

school, and work schedules to build in time for writing research, and completing

their dissertation. Completers and Progressing managed their time schedule and

professed it served as an essential aspect of the dissertation process. One

Completer elaborate on his timeline:

I put together a time line of when I wanted to have chapters and stuff

turned into my chair and my dissertation committee and when we did my

proposal, I put together a timeline and I turned it into my advisor and we

did the best of our ability, and stuck to that time line as much we could.

Sometimes I had to give a little, sometimes she gave a little bit, sometimes

I was a little late, sometimes she was, but giving myself that time-line helped stay on track.

In contrast, In-Process participants expressed their difficulty with finding the time to complete their dissertation in light of the demands of their current work schedule, family, and extracurricular activities. One In-Process student described the demands of their schedules:

It's just finding the time, because I just don't have the time. I work as an administrator at the college, I have kids, and I have a cake business on the side that I do and my husband travels extensively with his job. So it's really hard to juggle all the priorities.

Scheduling and time management was examined by Huguley (1988), who recommended that students establish and maintain a timetable for completion of dissertation, since the most difficult aspect of the dissertation process is the lack of structure, which requiring students to map out their timeline and manage their schedules.

Break from Program. Completers and Progressing participants described how they needed to walk away from the materials for a couple days, or even take a week of vacation to not think about the study. One Completer expressed a contrary view, noting, "I don't really think I ever took off a period of time where I said I'm not going to think about it." One Progressing participant experienced

several breaks in the program, due to her pregnancy. After giving birth to her child, she resumed her dissertation progress. She described her experience:

> I got pregnant during the program and I was still in the middle of drafts when she was born. As soon as she was born, I got right back on it. I got my final draft for the proposal, fixed it, sent it in and they said it looks good; we are going to approve you to move forward.

In-Process participants, however, took complete breaks from the programs to devote more time to their families, and realize the time off made it difficult for them to continue the program. An In-Process participant expressed this view, stating, "I'm going to be honest, because after finishing my course work, I took a little while off and it's been tough getting back into it D'Andrea (2002) noted that life situations, demand of outside employment, and stressful relationships function as factors that contribute to non-completion rate for students.

Personal Life Situations. All participants experienced personal life situations that took a toll throughout the course of the program. Each participant encountered life situations that placed their participation in the program in jeopardy.

A range of life situations, from a death of a family member, birth of a child, family illness, personal illness, separation from employment, promotion within their organizations, and even separation from their chosen career paths, placed continuation in the degree program in at risk. The participants faced

96

challenges throughout the program; none were immune from the challenges. Some possessed the ability to push through the challenges, while others found themselves unable to overcome the obstacles. In fact, a few still struggle with the challenges. Lovitts (2001) cited personal reasons as the cause for student attrition in doctoral programs, and attributed the attrition to the students who leave, rather than to the program or the institution.

Completers described their challenges and acknowledged them as something they needed to overcome. Completers all had life challenges they had to address during their time in the doctoral program. Progressing participants experienced similar life challenges. One Completer expressed the attitude of the whole group, stating "It's just a shame to work so hard and to let life challenges to get in the way of progress. Everybody does reach points of frustration, but that it just really overwhelming, but you don't quit."

In-Process participants had a tougher time dealing with life situations. An In-Process participant acknowledged that life situations took time from the goals and objectives of his educational process. Another In-Process participant described the struggle and the hard choices and decisions she had to make to focus on her family instead of completing the program. She clarified her thinking on this situation, noting "So it's like, how do you do it, how do you concentrate on the program?"

The life situations and obstacles of In-Process participants fall in alignment with the research findings of Jacks, Chubin, and Connolly (1983), who cited life situations as the most difficult obstacles hindering completion of the doctoral program.

Competence

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), the need for competence translates to a desire to feel confident in one's abilities to successfully complete tasks. I found two themes that relate to this finding: 1) Dealing with the challenges of writing, 2) Dealing with the challenges of statistical research.

Dealing with the Challenges of Writing. The Completers, Progressing, and In-Process participants stated multiple views about their writing. Some expressed that they excel at certain aspects, while others felt challenged by their writing abilities. One Completer expressed confidence in her writing ability, stating "I am a really good writer and a really good reader, and so I think that was really important. You know, writing is something that I enjoyed." Another Completer elaborated about his writing abilities and the steps he took to overcome his technical deficiencies:

> I've always had some issues with my writing, I am not as confident about
> my writing as I could be. But I was a philosophy major, so I knew I could
> put forth a good argument and defend my arguments that I made, and so
> that part was fine. I've always been fairly savvy with computer programs

and stuff, so the technical part of doing power points or whatever that came easy to me. But my writing and the quality of my academic writing is where I thought that I might have the hardest time, and that's why for my dissertation committee I chose the chair that I did, because she had a high level of expertise on her writing.

A Progressing participant, however, expressed a different view about his writing abilities, stating "I've always had some issues with my writing, I've am not as confident about my writing as I could be." This attitude was common in the Progressing participants. One expressed the view of the whole group, noting "I felt that the academic writing was really kicking my butt. And I thought I was prepared. But once I started writing, I felt that I was not as prepared as I should be." Part of this perspective is likely linked to their progressing status; they are working right now on writing the dissertation.

In-Process participants did not feel prepared for the dissertation and expressed surprise with the difficulty of writing. They also expressed the expectation that this should appear as an aspect of the coursework.

For me it has been disheartening to the point of wanting to quit because routinely in my job each day I do chapters three, four, and five. I produce statistics, I turn them over to senior management and we in turn complete the project. But chapter one and two are trying. Incorporating what I wanted to do with the variables is something that I've never encountered

before, and justifying why I am doing the study. I have never been taught how to do that.

The majority of participants mentioned the writing rigor. Completers and Progressing participants acknowledged the difficulty of the process, but found assistance from their faculty advisor, cohort members, and external sources. In-Process participants are still trying to determine what assistance they need.

Dealing with the Challenges of Research. Two of the three Completers seemed comfortable with the research process, and the one Progressing participant actually excelled in this aspect of the program. A Completer describes the research process as something she had always wanted:

> It was something I'd always wanted to do. And my mother, both my parents are educators and both my parents got graduate degrees. Education was important to my parents. They valued it and wanted it to be part of providing that for other people. So, I was steeped in that mindset. And I was excited particularly about the aspect of this program. Because I am really interested in the work and want to continue to learn and contribute to make a difference and support people who are right in the middle of the education world.

Progressing participants also shared an appreciation for the research process. One Progressing participants expressed a vested interest in learning about the research:

My topic is about parental support and involvement with low-income

families, particularly with Hispanics and Mexican American descent

families. So throughout my research I have gather statistics and numbers

that made me realize that I am one part of the statistic. The information

has given me reasons to move forward and I can't stop learning about the

topic. The research is a personal interest for me.

In-Process participants, however, experienced a difficult time with the

research and locating an area of personal interest. One In-Process participant

characterized this attitude:

I had to change my topic from athletics and now I am reading about

graduation rates and all that stuff, similar to what you're doing, and it's

like what motivates them to stay at school, don't get out of the school,

graduate, not graduate, you know, some of them might go through, et

cetera, but I actually ran into a bit of a stonewall in that area just because

of the fact that I am still reading and researching what I really like as a

topic.

In-Process experiences are supported by Cuetarra and LeCapitaine (1991),

who found that research preparation courses help to reduce the anxiety level that

students suffer toward the dissertation. This aligns with the finding by Hatley and

Fiene (1995), who discovered that students who complete additional seminar

requirements pertaining to their dissertation preparation have a better chance of completing.

Professional Promotion and Challenges. During the program, both Completers and Progressing participants experienced challenges during the program with the changes in their professional career, and had to make difficult choices to either turn down job opportunities or accept promotion opportunities to complete the program.

Completers described their experiences and the choices they make during the program as a locus of their action. They made purposeful choices about their career aspirations, understanding that this might delay completion of the program. One Completer characterized this attitude, noting "It was probably last year changing jobs. I would have finished more quickly had I not changed jobs and had that year where I was just so focused on work. I really didn't focus on the dissertation."

In-Process students did not experience job changes. However, their professional organizations changed significantly, and some experienced frustration in not completing the program, thereby limiting their choice for career and professional movement.

Relatedness

Relatedness is the need for "psychological sense of being with others in secure communion or unity" (Ryan &Deci, 1985, p.7). This conceptualization

includes feeling connected and a sense of belonging with other individuals as well as with one's community. I found two themes that parallel with relatedness: 1) Connection to advisor, and 2) Connection to cohort.

Connection to Advisor. In this theme, Completers and Progressing participants had strong connections to their advisors; In-Process participants did not. One Progressing participant even sought out an advisor from another department to assist with the dissertation. Completers and Progressing participants selected their advisor, based on their learning styles, their research interests, and their personalities.

One Completer exemplified this connection to an advisor, noting "We were a perfect fit and I would say that that is for me a real key piece." The importance of advisor and student relationship was highlighted by Derounian (2011) who evaluated the importance of staff and student relationships through all stages of the dissertation preparation.

In-Process participants, however, had difficulty finding the right advisor with whom to connect. One In-Process participant commented on this mentioned, explaining "My current advisor, he is very hands-off which is really for me not my style, but I have not found anyone else within the department that matches my style." In-Process participants did not have established relationships with their advisors. The importance of an advising relationship and the interaction with students is also suggested by Tinto (1993). He noted that students remain

stimulated and persist due to the personal and intellectual relationships with faculty members. Seagram, Gould, and Pyke (1998) supported this advising relationship as their study revealed that participants who complete their degree the fastest have frequent communication with the advisor and collaborate with their dissertation supervisor on publications. Completers and Progressing participants also mentioned continuous feedback from advisors as the key to success. Deci and Ryan (1985) affirm that informational feedback is motivational, while controlling feedback is a de-motivating.

Because of the continuing dialogue between students and their advisors, some took longer to complete their dissertation than others. Completers illustrated their experiences by stating, "It took me about 13 or 14 versions of the proposal before I could defend." Progressing participants reported similar experiences with their advisors, and expanded on how they work with their advisor. This statement represents the experiences of the progressing participants with their advisors:

> I send the draft; she sends them back with feedback. And so I go through her comments, I put them together, I rewrite and then I send it back to my advisor and then we will start all over again. This process went on and on for over a long period of time.

In-Process participants however, expressed surprise by the continuous back and forth with the advisor between selection of the topics and the submission

of the proposal. The continuous feedback with advisors functioned as a de-motivating factor for In-Process participant who did not feel comfortable with the level of in the student/advisor relationship. One In-Process participant expressed this view, exclaiming "That's the third proposal I've turned in. The first and they are different, each of the three were different."

Connection to the Cohort. In the present study, Completers and Progressing participants connected with their cohort during the coursework phase of the program. The cohort relationship was exemplified by this Completer:

It is a wonderful cohort, we started with about between 15 and 17 people, and several dropped out. It was a very diverse group. I was the only white male you know after one dropped out. We had male, female, different ethnic groups, different sexual orientation people-any kind of diversity you could think of. We had it and I think the diversity made us stronger, and we all had to accept different points of view with what we were doing. And it helped to bring us together. We were always very supportive when we had to do group projects, and so I think the cohort did help us through.

They continued the cohort within the cohort relationships following the submission of their proposals to the completion of their dissertation. One Completer elaborated on her relationship with her cohort member:

I had Paula as a part of my cohort. Paula and I have been on this journey together, and I am thrilled that she defended her proposal. Paula and I did our course work together, and we have been on this journey together as far as keeping each other motivated to stay on course. I think the cohort model was a great and once you left that cohort, you didn't have that support system anymore. But, Paula and I have stayed connected and supported each other through the process.

Progressing participants explained their relationships with their cohort and described how they leverage the relationship to not only to connect with each other for assistance, but also to mentor and complement each other's strengths and weaknesses. A Progressing participant described the relationship:

There were two cheerleaders. And those two cheer leaders have graduated. And so they are the ones that were sending . . . emails, "okay guys, you guys can do this and what do we need to do to help you graduate, let me know if you need anything." And so I stuck with them, with those two. We created a writing group, we will get together, we will read each other's writing, we read each other's proposal, and we give feedback to each other. We met at the University. They would meet with me whenever I needed and read multiple drafts of mine and give me feedback.

This Progressing participant detailed a similar experience:

As for my cohort, for the most part I got along with most of them, I respected them. I just didn't see them a whole lot you know what I'm saying. I saw Carrie a lot more. Carrie was a motivator to me when things were really hard, when I thought, what am I doing? This is crazy. Carrie was just one of those people, she thinks like I do, I could sound off with her and she would either tell me it sounds crazy or she agree with me or tweak it, we would discuss things like that because we went through the same program together.

The Completers and In-Progress participants' activities with the cohort and the relationships align with Martinsuo and Turkulaine (2011), who found that relationships with peers had a positive effect on the progress of coursework. They also found that progress in the development of the dissertation is necessary to successfully complete the doctoral program (Martinsuo &Turkulaine,2011). Connections to the cohort were examined in a study by Grasso (2004), supporting the fact that students who belong to a doctoral cohort group have a greater a chance of completion.

In contrast, In-Process participants described how they enjoyed being a part of the cohort during the coursework; but following their comprehensive exam and the beginning of the proposal process, other than communication through the social media, none of them had any contact with their cohort members.

I don't think we were closed to cohort. I mean, we didn't go and hang out all the time. But we would get together; several of us, routinely would get together. It wasn't because we chose that click, it was whoever showed up. It was organized by one person, and she actually is the first to graduate. But she was cheerleader of the group. I still Facebook with most of the people I went to school with, but that is the extent of my connection with them.

One In-Process participant explains the cohort relationship, stating "When it comes to cohort members, I haven't been in touch with them since we finished our comps. It's just, there was no need." They do not see the value in maintaining the relationship.

Family Support System. Participants described the strong family and extended support system they had throughout the program. From spousal support to support from parents, children, and extended family members, to work families, all had some form of support. Some support was more technical in nature, offering financial and most of all, emotional backing. All participants expressed similar support structures.

Completers and Progressing participants stated they had to remind their family members on many occasions what challenges remained. One reiterated the conversation, stating "They knew that this was something that I had to get to the

other end of." Therefore, participants continually prepared and reminded their support systems of the tenuous nature of completing the dissertation.

In-Process participants also had a strong extended family support system. However it served more as a pressure than a support system. One participant described this phenomenon with respect to his family, noting "I don't think they ever like to, but they did pressure me into the next step, whether I wanted to or was interested in it or not."

<center>Summary</center>

This chapter presented an analysis of the collected data, using the lens of self-determination theory (Deci& Ryan, 1985). In the final chapter, I provide a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations, and discuss future research areas that will serve to aid higher education administrators, faculty, and students with their doctoral programs. I follow this with a final reflection of the study.

Chapter 6

Summary of the Study, Study Implications, Conclusions, Recommendation, and

Final Thoughts

In this concluding chapter, I present a summary of the study and identify

implications for theory, research and practice. I also make recommendations for

future studies, based upon my findings. To complete the chapter, I add some final

thoughts and discuss lessons learned.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the roles of autonomy,

competence, and relatedness, intrinsic motivators, in the progress toward degree

completion of doctoral-level education cohort program participants. This research

expanded the scope of previous research on doctoral attrition by including

drawings created and interpreted by the participants, along with interviews of

their experiences in cohort program.

Orienting Theoretical Framework

To provide the groundwork for a greater understanding of the issues

related to attrition and time to degree in doctoral completion, self-determination

theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) was used as the orienting theoretical framework for

this study. I chose self-determination theory as the framework because of its

notion that "all individuals have natural innate and constructive tendencies to develop an elaborated and unified sense of self" (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 6).

Method

The present study was qualitative, and uses a phenomenological approach that matches the worldview, the training, and the attributes of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological approach (Moustakas,1994) was the most appropriate for this study because the overarching goal of the research was to understand the collective lived experiences of a sample of Completer, Progressing, and In-Process doctoral students. Phenomenology describes the meaning of experiences lived by several individuals and seeks to understand the essence of those experiences. Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of the participants. In addition, Moustakas (1994) focuses on one of Husserl's concepts, epoche (or bracketing), in which the investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data needed for this study centered on the thick, rich descriptions of nine participants going through the doctoral program: completers, progressing and In-Process students. In addition to interview data, each participant created and interpreted a drawing depicting their status in the doctoral program. Through the

interview questions, drawings, and self-interpretations, participants shared their thoughts and feelings about their experiences in their doctoral program. A broad review of the literature concerning factors of success and attrition in doctoral programs gave insight into the myriad issues that surround completion of the doctoral process.

<div align="center">Summary of the Findings</div>

This study was done to provide information on intrinsic motivation patterns with students in doctoral program. Answers to the four research questions guiding this study follow. As an organizational feature, I compare the comments of Completers, Progressing, and In-Process participants on the identified themes. Where appropriate, I also analyze the data through the lens of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Below are the four research questions and their answers: Research Question Number One: What were/are the intrinsic motivators (autonomy, competence and relatedness) of doctoral-level education cohort program participants?

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation indicates that individuals engage in an activity for the sake of the activity itself, for the satisfaction inherent in performing the activity out of interest and enjoyment. Intrinsic motivation is comprised of activity and a variety of behaviors that energize, and the primary rewards for performing these behaviors are the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Autonomy. Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) suggest that autonomy comes from a sense of well-being, perceiving the ability to choose one's course of action, and experiencing oneself as the locus of those actions. Accordingly, individuals experiencing autonomy are considered to be intrinsically motivated. The intrinsic motivators that I found with the participants in the area of autonomy include the selection of dissertation topic and their management of time.

Completers and Progressing participant's exercised autonomy in the selection of dissertation research topics which helped them maintain interest to the conclusion of the study. The selection of research topic was their choice and, therefore, they were able to sustain and maintain their interest over a lengthy period of time required to complete the dissertation.

In-Process participants, however, have not selected their topic, or have been unsuccessful in designing and presenting a proposal for their dissertation research. The In-Process participants selected a topic that they thought would get them through, however it was not something that could sustain their interest. They do not feel the same level of autonomy as the Completers and Progressing participants.

Autonomy was also experienced by Completers in the way they exercised control and choice about their time schedules, and how they mapped out a schedule to complete their dissertation. Progressing participants also described how they incorporated their personal, school and work schedules to build in time

for writing, research, and completing their dissertation. Completers and

Progressing participants managed their time schedule, which served as an

essential aspect of the dissertation process.

In contrast, In-Process participants expressed their difficulty in finding the

time to complete their dissertation in light of the demands of their current work

schedule, family, and extracurricular activities. For In-Process participants,

external pressures limited their ability to choose their course of action in the

management of their dissertation process. In-Process participants were also

pressured by the limited timeline to complete their dissertation; therefore, the

choice to select a topic was laden with the impending time schedule to complete

the doctoral program.

Competence. Competence is related to a person's sense of

accomplishment and a need to feel confident and effective while accomplishing

tasks (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). The more competence individuals perceive to

have in an activity, the more intrinsically motivated they will be at that activity

(Deci & Ryan, 1985). The intrinsic motivators that I found with the participants in

the area of competence include dealing with the challenges of writing and

research.

Completers, Progressing, and In-Process participants experienced the

challenges of writing and research. However, the Completers and Progressing

participants were confident in their ability to accomplish the tasks and did not

hesitate to find the instructional support from the university and extended faculty members. In-Process participants also perceived themselves as competent and capable of tackling the challenges of statics, writing and research, but it proved a matter of completing the task.

Completers and Progressing participants expressed interested in their selected research topic, and they were eager to further explore their interest. They also expressed high levels of perceived competence in the areas of writing and research. In this area, they did not hesitate to ask for assistance from experts in the field. In contrast, In-Process participants had a difficult time focusing on the areas that would be of interest to them

Relatedness. Relatedness is the need for "psychological sense of being with others in secure communion or unity" (Ryan & Deci, 1985, p.7). The more individuals feel connected and related to the community, the more intrinsically motivated they will be. The intrinsic motivators that I found with the participants in the area of relatedness include the connection to advisor; connection to cohort; and continuous feedback from advisor.

Completers and Progressing participants all experienced connections with their advisors. Several even went outside the department to find an advisor that they felt connected to for the completion of their dissertation. In-contrast, In-Process participants are having a difficult time connecting with the advisor that they are with and some have even made several changes since the selection of the

115

original adviser. Completers and Progressing participants received continuous feedback from their advisor and even pushed through 13 or 14 revisions of their proposals before receiving acceptance. While the continuous back and forth was frustrating for all, Completers and Progressing participants understood that this was necessary for them to complete the dissertation. In contrast, In-Process participants seemed surprised and frustrated with the continuous feedback and did not adjust to the continuous feedback from their advisor well, therefore hindering their progress toward completion.

Relatedness can also be seen through the connection to cohort. Completers and Progressing participants connected with their cohort members and maintained contact with cohort members following the completion of their coursework and throughout the development of their proposal and completion of their dissertation. In contrast, In-Process participants did not see a need for the contact with cohort members following the completion of their coursework.

Research Question Number Two: In what ways does self-determination theory (Deci& Ryan, 1985) explain their motivation, specifically their autonomy, competence and relatedness?

Intrinsic motivation is comprised of activity, and a variety of behaviors that energize, and the primary rewards for performing these behaviors are the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Therefore, intrinsic motivation resides in people's needs of autonomy,

116

competence and relatedness and is considered the fuel for action to satisfy one's innate needs (Grolnick, Gurland, Jacob, & Decourcey, 2001).

In the area of autonomy, Completers and Progressing participants revealed that by selecting the topic they considered personally and professionally interesting, their decision would sustain their interests; therefore engaging their interest to complete the program. Also, in the area of time- management, Completers and Progressing participant exercise the choice to manage their timeline, instead of letting the other outside obligations manage their progress toward completion.

In the area of relatedness, Completers, Progressing participants formed external relationships with their advisors and cohort members. Whereas, In-Process participants did not have the connections with the advisors and their cohort members beyond the coursework phase. Therefore, the relatedness factors were strong for the Completers and Progressing participants, while the In-Process participants lost the momentum that they might have gained from the coursework process and through the completion of the qualifying exam. Those with components of autonomy, competence, and relatedness persisted through the dissertation process, while those lacking in one of the variables of self-determination had difficulty completing their program.

Research Question Number Three: How helpful is self-determination theory in understanding the intrinsic motivation of doctoral-level education cohort program participants?

Self-determination theory helps to provide a framework for understanding student program completion. Participants who were Completers and Progressing possessed autonomy, competence and relatedness experiences linked to the completion of their doctoral programs of study. Their realities associated with program success support well the notions of self-determination theory as described by Deci and Ryan (1985). In-Process students did not describe their doctoral experiences in the same ways that their completer and progressing colleagues did. They appeared to lack aspects of autonomy, competence and relatedness described and experienced by others who were more successful in navigating the doctoral program toward completion. They described feeling less autonomy, limited relatedness and general competence. At the same time, they were challenged by time, and seemed unable to make decisions that helped them progress through to program completion.

Research Question Number Four: What else emerged as influential in the doctoral completion process?

Other factors emerged from the study as motivators for completion of the program. Personal situations and circumstances placed their student participation in the program in jeopardy.

Family life challenges. Completers, Progressing, and In-Process participants had personal life situations and challenges that they had to face during their time in the program. Completers and Progressing participants were able to deal with the personal life situations and maintain their progress through the program. In-Process participants, however, seemed less able to bounce back and return to their studies. And, the longer away from their studies, they seemed to experience less autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Professional Opportunities/Challenges. All Completers and Progressing participants received promotions and had professional challenges during the program. During the development of their dissertation, two of the three completers received promotional opportunities, and due to their commitment to complete their dissertation, they declined the offers of professional advancement. All of the Progressing participants accepted promotional opportunities, and one Progressing participant had three changes during his time with the program. The professional challenges experienced by the progressing participants caused a delay, but did not alter their progress toward completion of the program. In-contrast, none of the In-Process participants had any changes within their professional career.

Personal Life Situations. Completers did not take a break from the program following the completion of their coursework. Only one Progressing participant took a small break from the program for the birth of her child. Once

she was well, she continued her progress in the program. Two of the three In-Process participants took complete breaks from the program and had a difficult time getting back in the program. Completers illustrated and described themselves as finishing a major hurdle, reaching their goals and having the choice to decide what they will do next after completing the degree. The relief they described was exhibited through the smiles they wore and the joy that emanated from their drawings. Progressing participants described themselves as being half-way through the process, and felt optimistic about the next portion of the journey. They knew the steps that they needed to take to complete the journey.

It is through intrinsic motivation that the Completers and Progressing participants were able to overcome the major obstacles with their life situation to complete their dissertation. In-Process participants were exhausted and were not as confident as the Completers and Progressing participants about the next step. The prospect of working on the proposal and getting the approval to move to the next step felt daunting to them. The family and professional obligations continued to drain their energy levels. All had a difficult time finding the reserve to move toward completing their program.

Conclusions

Self-determination theory (1985) and the variables of autonomy, competence, and relatedness provide important insight into the factors of attrition or success in this doctoral program. This research adds to the body of knowledge

concerning factors associated with attrition. This study revealed the following conclusions about the Completers, Progressing, and In-Process participants in the areas of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Participants should manage their time schedule and manage the multiple aspects of their daily life to incorporate the rigorous aspect of developing the proposal and writing the dissertation. Autonomy comes from a sense of well-being, perceiving the ability to choose one's course of action, and experiencing oneself as the locus of those actions (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). Participants should select their dissertation topic according to their areas of interest to sustain them through the course of writing the dissertation. Completers and Progressing participants are autonomous in the selection of their topics and in the management of their time, and therefore have a higher level of intrinsic motivation to complete their program. In-Process participants perceive that they are not as autonomous with their selection of topics and management of time as the Completers and progressing participants.

Competence is related to a person's sense of accomplishment and a need to feel confident and effective while accomplishing tasks (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). Students should develop their writing and research skills as soon as possible in the program. Attend additional courses and seminars as needed for the areas that they are deficient in with the completion of the dissertation. Completers, Progressing, and In-Process participants all felt confident and effective in their ability to accomplish the tasks associated with completion of

121

their dissertation and doctoral program of study. However, Completers and Progressing participants did not hesitate to seek help from external resources to accomplish their goals; In-Process participants did not see a need to solicit help from external sources.

Relatedness is the need for "psychological sense of being with others in secure communion or unity" (Ryan & Deci, 1985, p.7). Students should form and maintain relationships with the faculty and their advisor throughout the duration of the program, from coursework phase to the completion of the dissertation. Completers and Progressing participants forged relationships with their advisors and maintained the communication and relationship throughout the program. In-Process participants, however, did not possess the ability to find an advisor with whom they could relate or who matched their style for the dissertation process.

Students should establish and maintain relationships with members of the cohort throughout the coursework phase. It is equally important to maintain the relationship during the dissertation. Completers and Progressing participants formed a "cohort within a cohort" and established and maintained relationships with the members of their cohort during the coursework and extended it beyond the completion of their coursework to the completion of their dissertation. In-Process participants, however, connected with their cohort members during coursework, but did not maintain the relationship following the completion of their coursework.

Study Implications and Future Research Recommendations

Findings from this study provided valuable information on intrinsic motivation patterns with students in doctoral programs. These findings can be of assistance to institutions, administrators, advisors, and faculty in their efforts to better understand the motivational orientation among Completers, Progressing and In-Process students. Specifically, this study focused on providing insights in the areas of research, theory and practice. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the variables of autonomy, competence and relatedness accentuate important issues for all students in the K-16 education system. The extent to which students are self-determined has direct effect upon learning, which spans all grade levels.

Research

This qualitative phenomenological study was designed to add to the body of knowledge regarding the experiences of students in their doctoral program. It provided relevant data about motivational factors defined by the students and provided better insight into how the students were able to navigate their program. This information will be of interest to administrators, advisors, faculty and current and future students, and contribute to the overall success of doctoral programs in education. The rationale for this study stems from my desire to learn commonalities among individuals who completed the dissertation, and to assist other students who have decided to discontinue their work altogether. This

research assists future educational program administrators and advisors to refine their advising procedures.

This study was completed with one university and with a new cohort delivery model. I recommend consideration for further research in the area of program characteristics, characteristics of students and the characteristics of the faculty as follow:

Studies relating to doctoral programs:

1. Based on the limit data of the current study, a study with an established cohort model to understand its impact on student completion.

2. A comparative case study, comparing of students who are working full-time while completing their dissertation, and students who are working on their dissertation full-time.

3. A study through the conceptual framework of Goal setting theory, Locke & Latham (1990) in the context of doctoral completion.

Studies relating to doctoral students:

4. A study with a non-cohort model program to determine if students will form their own peer support group.

5. The generational differences of the students who persist

   through doctoral programs and the effect and evolution of

   technology upon older students.

Studies relating to faculty in doctoral programs:

6. The impact on students when committee members accept

   positions elsewhere and are no longer with the university.

7. The relationship between the advisor and students and the

   assessment and evaluation process for student success.

Theory

Increased understanding of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)

in relation to student intrinsic motivation may help provide strategies and support

for administrators, advisors, and faculty in the program in the area of curriculum

development. Faculty can increase their knowledge level of the students with

increased understanding of students' levels of autonomy, competence, and

relatedness within the doctoral program. This understanding can assist

administrators, advisors, and faculty members to build and structure the program

for students to progress and complete their program. Faculty members and

advisor can encourage interaction among cohort members and encourage them to

maintain the relationship.

Practice

This phenomenological study provides a detailed description of experiences from one doctoral cohort model. The qualitative finding highlighted the importance of selection of topic, the relationship with the advisor, and the relationship with cohort members. Increased understanding of the characteristics of successful completers of the doctoral program many not only reduce the number of ABD's, but also increase the potential for greater numbers of students to attain a doctoral degree. A terminal degree may afford the recipients more personal gratification and more career options, and also has the potential to enhance the reputation of the university, community, and the national standing of the academic community.

This study adds to the body of knowledge regarding the experiences of recent graduates from doctoral programs. It provides relevant data about factors and characteristics defined by the students, along with insight into how the students were able to successfully complete their program. This information will help administrators, advisors, faculty, and current and future students build and join successful higher education doctoral programs.

Final Thoughts

The study could not have been completed without the candid perspectives provided by the participants. Their time, attention, and focus on sharing their experiences provided the relevant baseline for the study. Going through the

program and interviewing the participants who had either completed their program, were progressing, or In-Process was an enlightening journey for me. As a researcher, I could identify with all of the participants--their success in completing the program along with the life struggles along the way. My study ended with more questions than answers. The success of the Completers was not necessarily unexpected; however, I was surprised that I was able to identify with all three groups and their struggles.

As a result of the research, I found myself identifying with the In-Process participants and their struggles to identify a topic that would sustain them through the duration of the dissertation process. Early in the program and throughout the coursework, I had a different topic selected and changed that selection based on the changes I experienced in my professional career. I believed that the relationships that the Completers had with their advisors contributed to their success, and, like them, I had a supportive advisor and faculty mentor who motivated me to complete the program.

The most significant findings from the Completers and Progressing participants were the sustaining relationships they had with the members of their respective cohorts. I have and will maintain the relationships that I formed with my cohort. This finding, I hope, will be viewed by other cohort participants as a tool to be used by them and all future cohort participants. As a Progressing student, I plan to be a Completer and continue to explore future research in this

area and add the significance of what I learned to enrich future students on their

doctoral journey.

Appendix A Protocol

Demographic Data Sheet

1. Gender   _____Male   _____Female

2. Age   _____23-27 _____28-38 _____39-49 _____50+

3. Race/ethnicity
   a._____   White
   b._____   African American
   c. _____   Asian
   d._____   Hispanic
   e. _____   Native American

4. What is your current occupation?

5. Please create a drawing to illustrate where you are currently in your PhD program.

6. Please explain what this drawing tells me about you in the program?

7. Can you tell me more about your program?
   .

Appendix B Interview Questions

1. What was your motivation for entering the program?

a. Has that motivation changed overtime as you participated in the program? If yes, how has it changed?

Autonomy

2) Do you feel able to complete the degree?

a. Who/what is driving your program completion?

3) What was your research interest?

a. How did you come up with this topic?

b. Has this topic changed? If so, how? Why?

4) Who is driving the direction of your work? Why?

5) Are you where you want to be today with your doctoral program?

a. What do you think could have helped you in making more progress along the way?

Competence

6) What skills did you need to be successful? Writing? Research? Statistics?

Other?

a. How did you learn those skills? Who helped you learn those skills?

Relatedness

7) From whom did you get support to continue in the program?

a. What/who is your (program) community?

b. Describe the support you received from the cohort?

c. Describe the support you received from the faculty?

d. Describe the support you received from others?

Other

      e. Is there anything additional information related to your doctoral studies that you would like to share?

.

References

Abedi, J., & Benkin, E. (1987). The effects of students' academic, financial, and

    demographic variables on time to the doctorate. *Research in Higher*

    Education, 27, 3-14.

American College Testing (ACT). (2012). *National collegiate retention and*

    persistence to degree rates Washington, DC: Author.

    http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/retain_2012.pdf.

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2006). *Paying double: Inadequate high schools*

    and community college remediation. Washington, DC: Author.

Amrein-Beardsley, A., Zambo, D., Moore, D. W., Buss, R. R., Perry, N. J.,

    Painter, S. R., Puckett, K. S. (2012). Graduates respond to an innovative

    educational doctorate program. *Journal of Research on Leadership*

    Education, 7(1), 98-122.

Association of American University. (2003). The letter of invitation to the

    founding conference of AAU. http://www.aau.edu/aau/invit.html.

Astin, A. (1997). How "good" is your institution's retention rate? *Research in*

    Higher Education, 38, 647-658.

Austin, A. E. (2002). Preparing the next generation of faculty: Graduate school as

    socialization to the academic career. *Journal of Higher Education, 73*, 94-

    122.

Baird, L.L. (1993). Studying graduate retention and degree attainment: Resource

    for Researchers. *New direction for institutional research, pp.81-91*. San

    Francisco: Josey Bass.

Baker, H.K. (1992). Service needs of traditional age and adult graduate students.

    NASPA Journal, *30*, 20-29.

Baker, B. D., Wolf-Wendel, L., & Twombly, S. (2007). Exploring the faculty

    pipeline in educational administration: Evidence from the survey of earned

    doctorates, 1999 to 2000. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*(2),

    189-220.

Bandura, A. (1978). The self-system in reciprocal determinism. *American*

    Psychologist, 33(4), 344-358.

Berelson, S. (1960).*Graduate education in the United States.* New York:

McGraw-Hill.

Berg, H. M., & Ferber, M. A. (1983). Men and women graduate students: Who

    succeeds and why? *Journal of Higher Education, 54*, 629-648.

Berry, M. D. (1993). *Perceptions of educational administration professors about*

    factors which affect doctoral attrition. Unpublished doctoral dissertation,

    New Mexico State University, Las Cruces.

Blum, L. D. (2010). The "All-but-the-dissertation" student and the psychology of

    the doctoral dissertation. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy,*

    24(2), 74-85.

Bowen, W. G., & Rudenstine, N. L. (1992). *In pursuit of the Ph.D.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Boyle, P., & Boice, B. (1998). Best practices for enculturation: Collegiality, mentoring, and structure. *New Directions for Higher Education, 101*, 87-94.

Bridge, J., & Osborn, J.J. (1973). *The paper chase* [Film]. Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox.

Bridgmon, K. D. (2007). All but dissertation stress among counseling and clinical psychology students. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, *68*(3), AAT 3257723.

Bye, D., Pushkar, D., & Conway, M. (2007). Motivation, interest, and positive affect in traditional and nontraditional undergraduate students. *Adult Education Quarterly, 57*(2), 141-158.

Campbell, R. (1992). *A study of completion and non-completion of the doctor of education degree in educational leadership at the University of Delaware. Unpublished doctoral dissertation.* University of Delaware, Newark.

Carey, K. (2006). *Hot air: How states inflate their educational progress under NCLB*. Washington, DC: Education Sector.

Chirkov, V. I. (2009). A cross-cultural analysis of autonomy in education: A self-determination theory perspective. *Theory and Research in Education, 7*(2), 253-262.

Chronicle of Higher Education (2011). Almanac of Higher Education 2011-12. Vol LVIII, No.1.

Cook, M. M., & Swanson, A. (1978). The interaction of student and program variables for the purpose of developing a model for predicting graduation from graduate programs over a 10-year period. *Journal of Psychology, 129,* 677-688.

Council of Graduate Schools (2004). *CGS Ph.D. completion project*. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.

Council of Graduate Schools (2005). CGS /GRE *survey of graduate enrollment*. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.

Council of Graduate Schools (2008). *Ph.D. completion and attrition: Analysis of baseline program data from the Ph.D. completion project*. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.

Council of Graduate Schools (2009). *Ph.D. completion and attrition: Findings from exit surveys of Ph.D. completers*. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.

Council of Graduate Schools (2010). *Ph.D. Completion and attrition: Policies and practices to promote student success*. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

Cuetara, J., & LeCapitaine, J. (1991). The relationship between dissertation writing experiences and doctoral training environments. *Education*, 112, 233-241.

D'Andrea, L. M. (2002). Obstacles to completion of the doctoral degree in colleges of education: The professors' perspective. *Educational Research Quarterly, 25*, 42-58.

Davis, G.B., & Parker, C.A. (1997). *Writing the doctoral dissertation: A systematic approach* (2nd. Ed.). New York: Barron's Educational Series.

Deci, E. L. (2009). Large-scale school reform as viewed from the self-determination theory perspective. *Theory and Research in Education, 7*(2), 244-252.

DeCharms, R. (1968).*Personal causation: The internal affective determinants of behavior*. New York: Academic Press.

Deci, E. (1975). *Intrinsic motivation*. New York: Plenum Press.

Deci, E., Koestner, R., & Ryan, R. (1999). A meta-analytic review of experiments examining the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *125*(6), 627-668.

Deci, E., & Ryan, R. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.

Deci, E., Vallerand, R., Pelletier, L., & Ryan, R. (1991). Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective. *Educational Psychologist*, *26*, 325-246.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln Y.S. (1994).Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). (2003). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Derounian, J. (2011). Shall we dance? The importance of staff-student relationships to undergraduate dissertation preparation. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 12*(2), 91-100.

Dorn, S.M., & Papalewis, R. (1995). Educators earning their doctorates: Doctoral student perceptions regarding cohesiveness and persistence. *Education, 116,* 305-314.

Dorn, S.M., & Papalewis, R. (1997, March). *Improving doctoral student retention*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Dupont, J. P., Carlier, G., Gérard, P., & Delens, C. (2009). Teacher-student negotiations and its relation to physical education students' motivational

processes: An approach based on self-determination theory. *European Physical Education Review, 15*(1), 21-46.

Ehrenberg, R. G., Jakubson, G. H., Groen, J. A., So, E., & Price, J. (2007). Inside the black box of doctoral education: What program characteristics influence doctoral students' attrition and graduation probabilities? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 29*(2), 134-150.

Ehrenberg, R. G., & Mavros, P. G. (1995). Do doctoral students' financial support patterns affect their times-to-degree and completion probabilities? *Journal of Human Resources, 30*, 581-609.

Ehrenberg, R. G., Zuckerman, H., Groen, J. A., & Brucker, S. M. (2007).*The education of scholars:The effectiveness and quality of doctoral programs in the humanities*. Unpublished manuscript.

ESEA (2010). A blue print for reform:The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Fernet, C., Senécal, C., Guay, F., Marsh, H., & Dowson, M. (2008).The work tasks motivation scale for teachers (WTMST). *Journal of Career Assessment, 16*(2), 256-279.

Gardner, S. (2009). Student and faculty attributions of attrition in high and low-completing doctoral programs in the United States.[Article]. *Higher Education, 58*(1), 97-112.

Geiger, R. I. (1986). *To advance knowledge: The growth of American Research Universities, 1900-1940*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gilliam, J. C., & Kritsonis, W. A. (2006). National implications: The hidden nature of doctoral student attrition. *National Journal for Publishing and Mentoring Doctoral Student Research, 3*(1), 1-7.

Gillingham, L., Seneca, J. J., & Taussig, M. K. (1991).The determinants of progress to the doctoral degree. *Research in Higher Education, 32*, 449-468.

Glatthorn, A. A., & Joyner, R. L. (2005).*Writing the winning thesis of dissertation: A step-by-step guide* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Globetti, E., Globetti, G., & Smith, R. E. (1991). An assessment of goals and perceived needs of graduate students: Some implications. *College Student Affairs Journal,10*(3), 41-53.

Golde, C. M. (1994, November).*Student descriptions of the doctoral student attrition process.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Tucson, AZ.

Golde, C. M. (1996).*How departmental contextual factors shape doctoral student attrition*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.

Golde, C. M. (1998). Beginning graduate school: Explaining first-year doctoral attrition. *New Directions for Higher Education, 101,* 55-64.

Golde, C. M. (2000). Should I stay or should I go? Student descriptions of the doctoral attrition process. *Review of Higher Education, 23*, 199-227.

Golde, C. M. (2005). The role of the department and discipline on doctoral student attrition: Lessons from four departments. *Journal of Higher Education, 76*, 669-700.

Golde, C. M., & Dore,T. M. (2001). *At cross purposes: What the experiences of today's doctoral students reveal about doctoral education*. Philadelphia: Pew Charitable Trusts.

Goldberger, M. L., Maher, B. A., & Flattau, P. E. (Eds.). (1995). *Research doctorate programs in the United States: Continuity and change*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Gravois, J. (2007). In humanities, 10 years may not be enough to get a Ph.D--but overall rates for finishing doctorates may be better than thought, new data show. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 53*(47), A1.

Green, K. E. (1995, March). *Academic procrastination and perfectionism: A comparison of graduates and ABDs*. Paper presented to the Annual American Educational Research Association Conference, San Francisco.

Green, K. E., & Kluever, R. C. (1997, March). *The dissertation barriers scale*. Paper presented to the Annual American Educational Research Association Conference, Chicago.

Grolnick, W., Deci, E., & Ryan, R. (1997). Between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: Examination of reasons for academic study based on the theory of internalization. *Japanese Psychological Research*, *39*, 98-108.

Guay, F., Mageau, G. A., & Vallerand, R. J. (2003). On the hierarchical structure of self-determined motivation: A test of top-down, bottom-up, reciprocal, and horizontal effects. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*(8), 992-1004.

Hadjioannou, X., Shelton, N. R., & Fu, D. (2007). The road to a doctoral degree: Co travelers through a perilous passage. *College Student Journal, 41*, 160-177.

Hahs, D. L. (1998, November). *Creating "good" graduate students: A model for success*. Paper presented to the Annual Mid-South Educational Research Association Conference, New Orleans.

Hanson, T. L. (1992). *The all but dissertation phenomenon: The "at risk" population in higher education and the field of communication*. Paper presented to the Annual Speech Communication Association Conference, Chicago.

Harris, R. N., & Snyder, C. R. (1986).The role of uncertain self-esteem in self

    handicapping. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 451-

    458.

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany:

    State University of New York.

Hatley, R. V., & Fiene, J. R. (1995, April*). Enhancing doctoral student progress*

    and improving dissertation quality: *A success scenario*. Paper presented

    at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association,

    San Francisco.

Hollingsworth, M. A., & Fassinger, R. E. (2002). The role of faculty mentors in

    the research training of counseling psychology doctoral students. *Journal*

    of Counseling Psychology, 49, 324-330.

Huguley, S. (1988). *An investigation of obstacles to completion of the*

    dissertation and of doctoral student attitudes toward the dissertation

    experience. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University,

    Malibu, CA.

Jacks, P., Chubin, D. E., Porter, A. L., & Connolly, T. (1983). The ABCs of

    ABDs: A study of in complete doctorates. *Improving College and*

    University Teaching. 31(2), 74-83.

Jones, L. V., Lindzey, G, Coggeshall, P. E., & Conference Board of the

    Associated Research Councils. (1982). Committee on an Assessment of

Quality-Related Characteristics of Research-Doctorate Programs in the

United, S. (1982). An assessment of research-doctorate programs in the

United States--social and behavioral sciences [computer file] (pp. xii, 249

p.). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, T. (2006).*Negotiating the complexities of

qualitative research in higher education: Fundamental elements & issues*.

New York: Routledge.

Johnson, E. M., Green, K. E., & Kluever, R. C. (2000). Psychometric

characteristics of the revised procrastination inventory. *Research in

Higher Education, 41*, 269-279.

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2008). The failure of dissertation advice books:

Toward alternative pedagogies for doctoral writing. *Educational

Researcher, 37*(8), 507-514.

Katz, E. L. (1997). Key players in the dissertation process. *New Directions for

Higher Education, 99*, 5-16.

Kittell-Limerick, P. (2005). *Perceived barriers to completion of the academic

doctorate: A Delphi study*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Texas

A&M University-Commerce.

Kluever, R. C. (1997). Students' attitudes towards the responsibilities and barriers

in doctoral study. *New Directions for Higher Education, 99*, 47-56.

Kluever, R. C., & Green, K. E. (1995, March). *The responsibility scale*. Paper

    presented to the American Educational Research Association Conference,

    New York City.

Kluever, R. C., & Green, K. E. (1998). The responsibility scale: A research note

    on dissertation completion. *Educational and Psychological Measurement,*

    58, 520-531.

Kluever, R. C., Green, K. E., & Katz, E. (1997). Students' attitudes toward the

    responsibilities and barriers in doctoral study. *New Directions for Higher*

    Education, 99, 47-56.

Knox, S., Burkard, A. W., Janecek, J., Pruitt, N. T., Fuller, S. L., & Hill, C. E.

    (2011). Positive and problematic dissertation experiences: The faculty

    perspective. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly, 24*(1), 55-69.

Lawson, T.J., & Fuehrer, A. (1989). The role of social support in moderating the

    stress that first-year graduate students experience. *Education*, *110*, 186-

    193.

Lee, B. (2003). *Factors affecting non-completion of doctoral degrees as*

    evidenced by students labeled all but the dissertation (ABD). Unpublished

    doctoral dissertation, Tennessee State University, Nashville.

Lenz, K. S. (1997). Nontraditional-aged women and the dissertation: A case study

    approach. *New Directions for Higher Education, 99*, 65-74.

Liechty, J. M., Liao, M., & Schull, C. P. (2009).Facilitating dissertation

    completion and success among doctoral students in social work. *Journal*

    of Social Work Education, 45(3), 481-497.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA:

    Sage.

Locke, E.A. & Latham, G.P. (1990*). A theory of goal setting & task performance*.

    Englewood Cliffs, NJ, US: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Lovitts, B. E. (2001). *Leaving the ivory tower: The causes and consequences of*

    departure from doctoral study. New York: Rowman & Littlefield

    Publishers.

Lovitts, B. E. (2004). Research on the structure and process of graduate

    education. In D.H. Wulff & A. E. Austin (Eds.), *Paths to the*

    professoriate: Strategies for entering the preparation of future faculty (pp.

    115-136). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Malone, B. G., Nelson, J. S., & Van, C. (2001, October). *An analysis of the*

    factors contributing to the completion and attrition rates of doctoral

    students in educational administration. Paper presented to the Mid-

    Western Educational Research Association, Chicago.

Martinsuo, M., & Turkulainen, V. (2011). Personal commitment, support and

    progress in doctoral studies.[Article]. *Studies in Higher Education, 36*(1),

    103-120.

McEvoy, G. M. (2011). Increasing intrinsic motivation to learn in organizational behavior classes. *Journal of Management Education, 35*(4), 468-503.

Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* San Fancisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mertler, C. A., & Charles, C. M. (2005). *Introduction to educational research* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Millett, C. M., & Nettles, M. T. (2006). Expanding and cultivating the Hispanic STEM doctoral workforce. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 5*(3), 258-287.

Murakami-Ramalho, E., Piert, J., & Militello, M. (2008).The wanderer, the chameleon, and the warrior. *Qualitative Inquiry, 14*(5), 806-834.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Myers, L. H. (1999). *Barriers to completion of the doctoral degree in educational administration*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg.

National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. (1999). *The land-grant tradition.*

http://www.nasulgc.org/publications/Land_Grant_Main.htm.

NCES (2011).The Condition of Education, 2011. National Center for Education Statistics, 2011-033.

Nelson, C., & Lovitts, B. E. (2001).Ten ways to keep graduate students from

    quitting. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 47*, 20-21.

Niemiec, C. P., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in

    the classroom: Applying self-determination theory to educational practice.

    Theory and Research in Education, 7(2), 133-144.

Owler, K. (2010). A problem to be managed? *Arts and Humanities in Higher*

    Education, 9(3), 289-304.

Padgett, D. K. (1998). *Qualitative methods in social work research: Challenges*

    and rewards. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Padgett, D. K. (Ed.). (2004). *The qualitative research experience*. Belmont, CA:

    Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Patrick, H., & Williams, G. C. (2009). Self-determination in medical education:

    Encouraging medical educators to be more like blues artists and poets.

    Theory and Research in Education, 7(2), 184-193.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Q*ualitative research and evaluation methods (3[rd]ed.).*

    Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pauley, R. (1998). *A study of factors relating to the attrition from West Virginia*

    University-Marshall University-West Virginia Graduate College

    Cooperative Doctoral Program administered by the West Virginia Board

    of Trustees. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, West Virginia University,

    Morgantown.

Pavey, L., Greitemeyer, T., & Sparks, P. (2011). Highlighting relatedness promotes prosocial motives and behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 37*(7), 905-917.

Pinkus, Lyndsay. (2006). *Who's counted? Who's counting? Understanding high school graduation rates.* Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Pion, G. M., Smith, D. D., & Tyler, N. C. (2003).Career choices of recent doctorates in special education: Their implications for addressing faculty shortages. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children, 26*(3), 182-193.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1983). Methodology for the human sciences: *Systems of inquiry.* Albany: State of New York University Press.

Reeve, J., & Halusic, M. (2009). How K-12 teachers can put self-determination theory principles into practice. *Theory and Research in Education, 7*(2), 145-154.

Savage Jr, W. W. (2003).'Times ain't now nothin' like they used to be'. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing, 34*(3), 146.

Schomburg, H. (2007). The professional success of higher education graduates. *European Journal of Education, 42*(1), 35-57.

Seagram, B.C., Gould, J., & Pyke, S.W. (1998). An investigation of gender and

    other variables on time to completion of doctoral degree. *Research in*

    Higher Education, 39, 319-335.

Seidman, A. (Ed.). (2005). *College student retention: Formula for student*

    success. Washington, DC: American Council on Education and Praeger

    Publishers.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for*

    researchers in education and social sciences (3rded). New York: Teachers

    College Press.

Sheridan, P. M., & Pyke, S. W. (1994). Predictors of time to completion of

    graduate degrees. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 24*(2), 68-88.

Shogren, K. A., Palmer, S. B., Wehmeyer, M. L., Williams-Diehm, K., & Little,

    T. D. (2012).Effect of intervention with the self-determined learning

    model of instruction on access and goal attainment. *Remedial and Special*

    Education, 33(5), 320-330.

Shulman, L. S., Golde, C. M., Bueschel, A. C., & Garabedian, K. J. (2006).

    Reclaiming education's doctorates: A critique and a proposal.

    Educational Researcher, 35(3), 25-32.

Smith, R. L., Maroney, K., Nelson, K. W., & Abel, A. L. (2006). Doctoral

    programs: Changing high rates of attrition. *Journal of Humanistic*

    Counseling, Education and Development, 45, 17-31.

Sonstrom, W. J. (2009). Paradigm devolution: The twilight of traditional doctoral education. *Adult Learning, 20*(3-4), 35-37.

Sternberg, D. (1981). How to complete and survive a doctoral dissertation. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Stock, W. A., Finegan, T. A., & Siegfried, J. J. (2009). Can you earn a Ph.D. in economics in five years? *Economics of Education Review*, 28(5): 523–37.

Stock, W. A., Siegfried, J. J., & Finegan, T. A. (2011). Completion rates and time-to-degree in economics PhD programs. *American Economic Review, 101*(3), 176-187.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research, 46*, 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *Journal of Higher Education, 68*, 599-623.

Townsend, R. B. (2007). History doctoral degree 10-year completion rates remain low. *Perspectives, 55*, 11-12.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2003). *1890 land grant universities*. http://www.reeusda.gov/1890.

Walters, E. (1965). *The rise of graduate education*. In E. Walters, Ed., Graduation

    Education Today, pp.1-29. Washington DC: American Council on

    Education.

Wasburn-Moses, L. (2007). Minority students' perceptions of their doctoral

    programs in special education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 58*(5), 456-

    469.

West, I. J. Y., Gokalp, G., Pe, Nmacr, A, E. V., Fischer, L., & Gupton, J.

    (2011).Exploring effective support practices for doctoral students' degree

    completion. *College Student Journal, 45*(2), 310-323.

Wick, J. W., & Dirkes, C. (1973).Characteristics of current doctoral dissertations

    in education. *Educational Researcher, 2*(7), 20.

Wright, L. M. (1991). Full-time teaching and the ABD phenomenon. *ACA*

Bulletin, 76, 49-55.

Wynn, R. E. (2003). *Derailment in doctoral students in educational leadership*

    programs: A study of high-risk doctoral dissertation pitfalls. Unpublished

    doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina at Greensboro,

    Greensboro.

Ziller, R. C. (1990). *Photographing the self: Methods for observing personal*

    orientations. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Biographical Information

Prior to completing a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Texas at Arlington, Linda Ann Garcia completed the Master of Education from Texas Woman's University and a Bachelor of Business Administration from Dallas Baptist University. Her research interests include women and leadership, workforce education, generational differences, and educational leadership. She has worked toward improving instructional delivery methods in workforce education and adult education during her 20 years as a community college administrator, and most recently in her capacity as Director of Special Projects with the Center for Innovation, designing and developing emerging curriculum for the molecular economy. She plans to remain involved with the education sector by assisting K-16 education leaders to advance the educational pipeline for students of all ages.