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The Perceptions of Success of Latino Nursing Student Graduates in the Appalachian Region of  
the United States

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of the College of Nursing

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing

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by

Barbara Rauscher

May 2017

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Keywords: Latino, Success, Nursing School

## ABSTRACT

The Perceptions of Success of Latino Nursing School Graduates in the Appalachian Region of  
the United States

by

Barbara Maria Rauscher

This qualitative narrative descriptive study focused on nine successful Latino nursing school graduates. Five participants were interviewed twice and four participants were interviewed once for a total of fourteen interviews. Participants and their families immigrated from Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, and Mexico. Participants attended school in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Interviews revealed themes of Familism, Empowerment, and Perseverance. Familism was an overriding theme throughout each of the interviews. Participants described family as being their greatest support. They discussed sacrifices made by their families which assisted them in being successful. In addition, they also shared their willingness to make personal sacrifices in order to honor their family by being successful. Empowerment was also a theme which surfaced.

Participants were empowered to attain their goal of attending college and then succeeding in nursing school. The theme of Empowerment was supported by descriptions of parental sacrifice, parental and family support, and support of faculty. The theme of perseverance was demonstrated through continued goal-attainment. Participants struggled through time-management issues such as balancing family, work, and school commitments. They also worked through the guilt of not providing 100% of their time and attention to any one area of their life, especially family. Perseverance was displayed in multiple ways by participants. One of the most compelling was their need to honor their family. Another area which fueled their perseverance

was faith. Lastly, participants stated that their need to be self-sufficient added to their perseverance. Self-efficacy surfaced as an attribute they all attained.

Familism, perseverance, and empowerment were themes which were consistent with other studies. However, this study is the first study to address the successfulness of Latino nursing school graduates in the Appalachian area of the United States. This study is also unique in that each of the participants attributed their success to family. In addition, seven of the nine families immigrated to the United States for sole purpose of educating their children. This act of sacrifice by families further strengthened the theme of familism.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my father Richard and my mother Barbara. My father inspired me to always have faith and trust in God. My mother was the first nurse I ever knew. Her memory encouraged me to be a compassionate and caring nurse. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to the honor of my step-mother RoAnne who has laughed with me, cried with me, and prayed for me. These three people have had an incredible influence on my life and I thank God for them every day.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have accomplished this venture without the love and unfailing support of the following people.

I would like to first thank God for walking this journey with me. I am certain that there were times that He not only walked along side me, but carried me. I thank my children Nicole, Daniel, David, and Maddie for their constant love and support. They believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. I thank the incredible nursing faculty at Lenoir-Rhyne University. They made me laugh when I didn't think it was possible, encouraged me, and provided unwavering support. I thank my brother and sisters and many other family and friends for cheering me on every step of the way.

I give my thanks and gratitude to my committee for their time and support in this endeavor. I especially thank my Chair and Advisor, Dr. Sharon Loury and Dr. Sally Blowers for their unwavering confidence. They both provided me with constructive criticism, knowledge, and expertise. I consider them mentors and friends in the truest sense of the words.

A special thanks to the School of Graduate Studies for financial support via the Dissertation Scholarship. This scholarship provided one semester of full tuition.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The lack of diversity within the nursing workforce in the United States is an issue which has gained the attention of many within the healthcare arena. The Sullivan Report (2004) was one of the first publications to bring this issue to the attention of nursing leaders. The Sullivan report, *Missing Persons: Minorities in Health Professions, a Report of the Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce* is the product of work funded by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to Duke University School of Medicine. The charge of the commission was to “make policy recommendations to bring about systemic change that will address the scarcity of minorities in our health professions” (Sullivan, 2004, p i). The report, released in 2004, reported that minorities in the United States made up 25% of the population. Concurrently, minorities in healthcare were not keeping pace with the population. The commission reported that minority groups accounted for less than nine percent of nurses, six percent of doctors, and five percent of dentists (Sullivan, 2004). The commission also stated that an Institute of Medicine (IOM) report found that the increase in health disparities was related to the lack of diversity in the healthcare workforce (Sullivan, 2004).

Since that time, leaders within the nursing profession have begun to research why the lack of diversity exists. The population of minorities in the United States has increased and continues to soar. The United States Census Bureau (2012) has projected that minorities will comprise 57% of the population in 2060, an increase from the current percentage of 37%. The Hispanic population is predicted to double (US Department of Commerce, 2012). To meet the healthcare needs of minority people, minority nurses are needed in significantly greater numbers.

*The Changing Landscape: Nursing Student Diversity on the Rise (2014)*, a policy brief from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), highlighted initiatives currently in place to increase diversity in nursing. These statistics highlight the reasons the IOM's seminal report *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, called for an increase in diversity of the nursing workforce. This call to action reflects the belief within the profession that increased diversity will lead to increased sensitivity of care, thus contributing to a better understanding of minority clients and their needs. Recent statistics show an increase in the percentage of baccalaureate minority nursing students from 26.8% in 2010 to 30.1% in 2014 (Fang, Li, Arietti, and Troutman, 2015). Latinos show an increase of 2.4% during this same time frame. Enrollment data during the 2013-2014 academic year points to high numbers of Hispanics enrolling in generic baccalaureate nursing programs (16,267 or 9.2% of enrollment) but only graduating 4,641 or 7.8% (Fang et al., 2015). Data also suggests that although the numbers of minority nurses have been increasing, they remained quite low overall (Fang et al., 2015). The literature provides many indications as to what causes obstacles to success. Latino nursing students have shared issues related to culture, finances, and institutional factors that must be overcome in order to be successful in nursing school.

### **Issues Overcome For Latino Students**

#### **Cultural**

Immigration status is an important cultural concern among Latino nursing students, as nursing students must possess legal documentation in order to apply for financial aid. According to the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO, 2010) an immigrant is defined as “any person who has entered the United States legally or without legal documentation” (p. 1). A native born citizen is defined as “any person who was born in the

United States regardless of the immigration status of their parents” (ASTHO, 2010, p. 1). Latino nursing students frequently fall into the latter category. They are considered first generation college students if they are the first in their family to attend college. Many Latino students, especially first generation college students, have undocumented parents (ASTHO, 2010).

The cultural expectation that Latino students place family above all else has been supported in the research (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Goetz, 2008; Moceri, 2010; Nadeau, 2011; Sheils, 2010). This cultural expectation is known as familism, a major construct in Latino culture. Familism is defined as putting the needs of the family before self, maintaining strong bonds with both immediate and extended family members, and the existence of a strong sense of loyalty to family (Rodriguez, Mira, Paez, & Myers, 2007; Schwartz, 2007). Studies noted that Latino nursing students with a strong sense of familism spent a majority of their extra time with family instead of concentrating on their school work, often leading to an increased inability to complete nursing study successfully (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008).

Communication concerns for those students whose first language was not English are considered barriers as well, even when the students are considered fluent in English. Latino nursing students stated that in addition to mastering English, they also had to learn the technical language of medicine (Goetz, 2008; Sheils, 2010). In both of these cited studies the majority of the Latino students identified as first generation students and as speaking Spanish as their first language. Sheils (2010) also reported that students often translated exams into their native language before answering questions. This translation problem was exacerbated by the lack of adequate or equivalent words in their language (Sheils, 2010). Section 504 of the Individual with Disability Education Act (IDEA) does not include students who use English as a second language (Your Rights, 2006). Therefore, these students may not be given testing

accommodations (Your Rights, 2006). The time consuming task of translation reduces time for addressing the content of the exam and therefore contributed to the failure of some less proficient English-speaking students (Sheils, 2010).

### **Personal**

One of the greatest barriers faced by Latino nursing students is lack of finances. Often Latino students work to assist the family in meeting expenses (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Cason, Bond, Gleason-Wynn, Coggin, Trevino, & Lopez, 2008; Diaz, Sanchez, & Tanguma, 2012; Goetz, 2008; Sheils, 2010; Taxis, 2006). The low socioeconomic status (SES) of Latino families is cited as a large reason a majority of Latino students worked and attended college concurrently (Diaz et al., 2012; Shiels, 2010; Taxis, 2002). Diaz et al. (2012) found that 56% of Latino families were at or below the poverty level, resulting in little money remaining to fund a college education. Lack of financial stability is also a reason a large number of Latino students chose associate degree programs above baccalaureate degree programs, noting that community college programs were less expensive and the programs were shorter in duration (Goetz, 2008; Rivera-Goba & Neito, 2007). The students' need to work and to contribute to family income took them away from important study time. Salamonson and Andrew (2006) reported that students who worked more than 16 hours per week were less successful than those who worked fewer hours. In addition, it was also determined that students who did not work at all had the greatest academic advantage (Salamonson and Andrew, 2006).

Another personal barrier to the success of Latino nursing students is lack of family support. As stated previously, the Latino culture positions family as a priority. Students who perceived that their families did not support their educational endeavors felt their dreams were rejected. This rejection was a significant barrier (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Cason

et al., 2008; Goetz, 2008; Mocerri, 2010; Sheils, 2010). The focus on family support stemmed from the cultural perspective that family needs were to supersede all else. In addition, personal sacrifice for family was and continues to be expected. A choice between studying for an exam and tending to an ailing grandparent resulted in attending to the grandparent; family was always first (Alicea-Planas, 2009). Lastly, personal barriers included inadequate college preparation (Goetz, 2008; Mocerri, 2010), and feelings of discrimination (Mocerri, 2010; Taxis, 2002). Latino students frequently stated that while in high school they were not encouraged to take the college-prep classes or pursue college and therefore, were not academically prepared for college (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Goetz, 2008; Mocerri, 2010; Sheils, 2010; Taxis, 2002).

### **Institutional**

Several sources noted lack of financial assistance as a primary institutional barrier (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Diaz et al., 2012; Goetz, 2008; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Taxis, 2002). The lack of financial assistance as an institutional barrier is reflective of the amount of aid available and or offered to Latino students. Bond et al. (2008) found that the number of scholarships were not as plentiful as many suspected, and those scholarships that were available were extremely competitive. Many Latino students were unaware of their eligibility for financial aid and how to access information related to financial aid (Cason et al., 2008; Sheils, 2010; Taxis, 2002). Lack of adequate academic advising was also an issue contributing to barriers for Latino students. Inadequate advising began at the high school level and continued into college (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Goetz, 2008; Sheils, 2010). Cason et al. (2008) found that many Latino students were unfamiliar with the higher educational system.

According to Federal Student Aid (2014), native born students are eligible for federal financial aid but their undocumented parents are not. Students may submit aid applications using



zeros in the place for their parents' social security numbers. However, the literature indicated that many students feared that this information put their parents at risk of deportation (Federal Student Aid, 2014; USA Today Campus, 2014). This fear, in turn, deterred students from applying for federal aid (Federal Student Aid, 2014; USA Today Campus, 2014). Latino students may apply for financial aid in their state of residence and their academic institution. However, the amount and terms of eligibility for financial assistance from these two sources varies (Federal Student Aid, 2014).

It is unclear in the literature how the above issues faced by Latino nursing students impact their success. It is clear that these are some of the obstacles they must overcome in order to be successful. There is also evidence that Latino nursing students successfully complete nursing programs despite the issues they face and overcome. The AACN reported for the academic year 2013-2014 that 4,641 Latino undergraduate students graduated from generic baccalaureate nursing programs (Fang, 2015).

### **Statement of Problem**

Understanding the reasons for the success of minority nursing students, specifically Latino students, is important because the success of this group will add to the diversity of the nursing workforce. Gonzalez-Guarda and Villarruel (2012) have referred to Latino nursing students and nurses as “untapped resources” (p. 24) in today’s healthcare systems. Lucero and Poghosyan (2012) discussed the need for Latino nursing students and nurses stating that “a more diverse workforce will increase the cultural awareness of other nurses and healthcare providers” (p. 17). This attention to the issue is precisely what the Sullivan Report (2004) called for, that is, connecting increased diversity in healthcare to an improvement in care for our nation at large, and resulting in overall better national health. In addition, Lucero and Poghosyan (2012)

indicated that minority nurses were more likely to practice nursing in under-served and minority communities. Thus, their increased numbers could address healthcare disparities in areas of critical need. Past studies and the current professional climate have pointed to a need for continued research on identifying effective strategies to assist Latino students in successfully completing nursing programs. A clear understanding is needed of what facilitated the success of successful Latino nursing students. Support among nursing faculty and nursing leaders for identifying such attributions is crucial. Latino nursing students must be asked and encouraged to share their success stories, thus providing more role models (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008).

### **Latino Population Statistics**

These trends indicated that the Latino population was growing at an unprecedented pace (The United States Census Bureau, 2012; US Department of Commerce, 2012). Traditionally, the Latino population in the United States has migrated to the western and southern states with the highest populations in California, Texas, New York, Florida, New Jersey, Illinois, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado (Barcus, 2007). However, current population trends have indicated that Latinos are migrating to the Appalachian area of the United States in increasing numbers. The largest Latino population growth in the Appalachian region has been in the states of North Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama (Barcus, 2007).

Furthermore, Barcus (2007) indicated that population growth of minorities in the United States in the decade from 1990-2000 was seven points higher than that of the population as a whole. The increase in Appalachian population growth was 9%. The Latino community within Appalachia increased a significant 239% during that same time frame (Barcus, 2007). The author concluded that due to the fast pace of Latino immigration to this area, which has historically

been poor and white, the area had now become poor Latino. Latino poverty in this area had increased. However, some evidence revealed that over time there have been increasing numbers of Latinos who have completed high school and college (Barcus, 2007).

A recent look at statistics confirmed that the population density of Central Appalachian cities such as Pittsburgh, PA; Winston Salem, NC; Knoxville, TN; Birmingham, AL; and Atlanta, GA was higher than the national average from the years 2008 through 2012 (Pollard and Jacobsen, 2014). Central Appalachia has boasted the fastest growing Latino population. Tennessee, North Carolina, and Kentucky all have doubled their Latino populations between the years 2000 and 2010 (Excelencia, 2012). Tennessee had a Latino population increase of 134%, while North Carolina had a 111% Latino population increase (Excelencia, 2012). Also, Virginia and West Virginia have experienced notable population increases of 92% and 81%, respectively (Excelencia, 2012). Given the above statistics and the information gleaned from the research of Lucero and Poghosyan (2012) regarding minority nursing students returning to low income areas to serve, research is needed to determine how to better support the success of Latino nursing students in the Central Appalachian area.

These population trends prompted nursing leaders to seek answers about why such a disparity has appeared in the demographic data on diversity in nursing. With a rise in the Latino population, it would seem logical that increases among Latino nursing students would match the increases of Latinos within the general population. While studies have focused particularly on the Latino population, a majority of these studies were completed in the historically densely populated Latino areas of the country (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Cason, Bond, Gleason-Wynn, Coggin, Trevino, & Lopez, 2008; Diaz, Sanchez, & Tanguma, 2012; Goetz,

2008; Mocerri, 2010; Nadeau, 2011; Rivera-Goba & Neito, 2007; Sheils, 2010; Taxis, 2006).

No studies to date have focused on Latino nursing students in Appalachia.

### **Purpose of Study**

There is a need for additional research to identify and explain reasons for Latino nursing student success. The literature is clear that barriers consisting of cultural (Amaro et al., 2006; Guhde, 2003; Junious et al., 2010), personal (Gardner, 2005; Payton et al., 2013; Zuzelo, 2005), and institutional issues (Ackerman-Barger, 2010; Bond et al., 2008; Gardner, 2005; Guhde, 2003; Junious et al., 2010; Severiens & Wolff, 2008; Yoder, 1996) are prominent in the educational journey of Latino nursing students. What is less clear is how Latino nursing students overcome these barriers. Some authors have found that successful Latino nursing students credit their culture and families for their success (Gardner, 2005; Yang et al., 2009; Zalaquett, 2006). In addition, these students acknowledge nursing faculty, scholarships, and remediation programs for their success (Amaro et al., 2006; Davis et al., 2010; Merritt, 2008; Payton et al., 2013; Zuzelo, 2005). One of the most common reasons cited for success is the individual's personal attributes (Alicia-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Goetz, 2008; Mocerri, 2010; Nadeau, 2011; Nadeau, 2014; Rivera-Goba & Campinha-Bacote, 2008; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Wood et al., 2009), including determination and perseverance. However, it is unclear if there are regional or geographical implications for these attributions.

The NLN has continued this emphasis and recently made diversity in nursing education a research priority. This research is to focus on all aspects of nursing education: faculty, students, and curriculum (NLN Research Priorities, 2015). The purpose of this study is to determine what Latino nursing student graduates in the Appalachian region of the United States perceive as

attributing to their successful completion of a baccalaureate nursing program and successfully completing the NCLEX-RN® Exam.

## **Philosophical Perspective of the Study**

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

For the Latino nursing students who have completed nursing programs successfully, there were paths littered with cultural (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Goetz, 2008; Mocerri, 2010; Nadeau, 2011; Rodriguez et al., 2007; Schwartz, 2007; Sheils, 2010), personal (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Cason et al., 2008; Diaz et al., 2012; Goetz, 2008; Mocerri, 2010; Sheils, 2010; Taxis, 2002, 2006), and institutional challenges (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Cason et al., 2008; Diaz et al., 2012; Goetz, 2008; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Sheils, 2010; Taxis, 2002) challenges. The things that influenced their success can be explained by social cognitive theory. According to social cognitive theory, people are more than the products of their circumstances. People use their lives to assist them in creating who they wish to become. They use the past to be pro-active. They use the past to be self-regulating and make choices (Bandura, 2005).

Social cognitive theory states that people are agents of their own outcomes. There is intentionality to being the agent of one's decision-making. Bandura (2001) explains that intention to complete a task does not make it so. However, it is a commitment on the agent's part to make it happen. The outcome is a consequence of good planning and self-motivating results of the agent. Intention includes forethought, what the end product should be. Bandura (2001) explains that this translates into smaller goals and areas of self-regulation that are achievable. These steps, in turn, move the person or agent toward his or her ultimate goal.

Bandura (2001) states that this quality of self-directedness stems from a person's ability to make decisions and choices, coupled with the ability to put these choices and decisions into action. Bandura (2001) said, "The self-regulation of motivation, affect, and action is governed by a set of self-referent sub-functions. These include self-motivating, performance self-guidance via personal standards, and corrective self-reactions" (p. 8). Bandura (2001) goes on to state that goals derived from the above are also determined by a person's morals and sense of self.

Agents must, from time to time, evaluate their actions. The evaluation process is referred to as self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2001). This phase allows time for the agents to reflect on how and where they are in attaining their goal. The agents should reflect on how they feel about their progress and how others have contributed to their reaching their goal. Agents should take time to determine if they can still attain their goal. Bandura (2001) stated that "efficacy beliefs are the foundation of human agency" (p. 10). One must believe that the goal is attainable in order to proceed. Efficacy beliefs will shape the path traveled. They will have an impact on the activities, people, and places the agents choose to cling to in order to realize their goal.

Self- efficacy is the perception of self, related to one's ability to accomplish a goal (Bandura, 1996). Latino nursing students become human agents of change. They use this self-efficacy, rooted in social cognitive theory, to be instrumental in their goal of successfully completing a nursing program.

## **Conclusion**

### **Aim of the Study**

The Appalachian region of the United States has witnessed its Latino population more than double between the years 2000 and 2010. This growth is nearly triple the national rate. The Latino population per county matched or exceeded the national numbers in more than 300

Appalachian counties and doubled in nearly 150 of them (Pollard & Jacobson, 2011).

Successfully completing a nursing program in areas of the country that are not traditionally Latino raises new challenges for both Latino nursing students and their faculty. It is important for nursing faculty to understand Latino culture. Perhaps more critical is the need for nursing faculty to recognize how Latino culture influences Latino nursing students. Faculty must be aware of what factors Latino nursing students attribute to their success and how these attributions might help the faculty implement strategies to support student success; specifically Latino students in the Appalachian area. It is essential to determine if factors contributing to nursing school success are the same in Central Appalachia as they are in more highly populated Latino areas of the country. Successful Latino nursing students in Central Appalachia provide Latino nurses to this same area. As previously stated Lucero and Poghosyan (2012) indicated the majority of minority nurses will stay close to home and work in their communities. This assists in decreasing healthcare disparity in this region of the country.

We know little about Latino student success, therefore studies are needed that uncover what they attribute to contributing to their success. In order to obtain the best information, we should begin with the student perspective. The qualitative research method of narrative description was chosen to achieve this perspective. This method will allow the researcher to interview the participants and encourage them to tell their story regarding their success.

Social constructivism and interpretivism are the paradigms chosen to inform this research study. Social constructivism encourages participants to “seek understanding” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20) of the world they live in. This will be discussed further with descriptions of data collection. The information gathered will be analyzed and interpreted, looking specifically at the lens through which each participant sees their success.

### **Research Question**

What are the perceptions of success of Latino nursing school graduates in the Appalachian region of the United States?

In Summary, based on the current population trends of the Appalachian region of the United States and the need for diversity in the nursing profession this research study will seek to answer the question, “What are the perceptions of success of Latino nursing school graduates in the Appalachian region of the United States?”. In order to accomplish this, the researcher will conduct one on one interviews with participants using narrative description through the lens of social constructivism. Participants will be encouraged to share their definition of success, their perception of what made them successful, and their overall nursing school experience.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature began with choosing the following key words: Latino, nursing student, minority, success, student perception, Hispanic, and baccalaureate. Multiple combinations of these terms were used when searching the data bases. The search included relevant literature from the last ten years. An exception to this criteria included seminal research such as the Sullivan Report (2004).

Data bases used during the literature review included The Cumulative Computerized Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), PubMed, Psych Info, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), JSTOR, and Cochran System Review. The data bases provided limited research. CINAHL provided 23 articles meeting initial search criteria. As with other searches, these articles were not specific to Latino nursing students. This was an obstacle found throughout the literature search. Once reviewed only three of the original articles from this data base were used for this study. PubMed offered 56 articles initially. Most of these articles were not specific to Latino nursing students. Ten of the 56 were specific to Latino nursing students. Three of the 10 were duplicates from other searches. Psych Info supplied 36 results. The literature, while specific to Latino nursing students, did not address the perceptions of success. The articles reviewed addressed the need for better recruitment and retention of Latino nursing students. The search engine ERIC supplied 31 articles initially with only three articles pertaining to the study. A total of 12 articles formed the foundation for this study. Lack of current literature surrounding this study offers additional reason this subject should be researched.

Once literature was gathered and reviewed it was placed into the following categories: Obstacles and Reasons for Success. Obstacles was further categorized as Cultural, Financial, and Institutional. Reasons for success were also further categorized as Internal and External. The literature search continued throughout the writing of this study as more detailed descriptions of culture and environment were needed.

Often minority nursing students, when asked to explain their success in nursing school, start with barriers. These barriers have appeared prominently in the literature, and are noted as important and relevant to the students' success. Research also determined that minority nursing students felt they had to overcome barriers that Caucasian nursing students did not (Ackerman-Barger, 2010; Amaro, Abriam-Yago, and Yoder, 2006; Bond, Gray, Baxley, Cason, and Denke, 2008; Gardner, 2005; Guhde, 2003; Junious, Malecha, Tart, and Young, 2010; Payton, Howe, Timmons, and Richardson, 2013; Severiens & Wolff, 2008; Yoder, 1996; Zuzelo, 2005).

Additionally, these challenges provided a connection between barriers experienced by these minority nursing students and their perceptions of what made them successful. At least 90% of the current literature discussed barriers and successes of minority nursing students, most often addressing Latino nursing students together with other minority groups. Ten studies noted them specifically within that context. Therefore, literature discussing obstacles and success was presented together. The literature revealed barriers of finances, socioeconomic status (SES), academic stress, family/culture, and feelings of isolation. Moreover, the literature indicated success strategies such as personal attributes, supportive faculty, financial assistance, and supportive families.

## **Latino and Minority Nursing Student Barriers and Success**

Numerous studies (Barcus, 2007; *Excelencia* in Education and Appalachian College Association, 2012; Ma, 2009) have cited the barriers to minority student success as socioeconomic status (SES) and academic stress. Ma (2009) found a relationship between SES and college choice. Ma (2009) examined data collected from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) 1988-1994 which indicated that students from low SES backgrounds were less likely to attend college. Ma (2009) also revealed that the low SES students who did attend college were more likely to take classes in the life/health sciences (Ma, 2009). Additionally, low SES students often chose majors that might provide good job opportunities upon graduation so they could in turn provide income to their families.

Students from the Appalachian region have ranked among the lowest SES in the South and Eastern United States. Data from an environmental scan completed by the *Excelencia* in Education and the Appalachian College Association (2012) reported poverty levels of several metropolitan areas of Central Appalachia (Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia). Poverty levels of the Latino population were the highest and ranged between 34% and 32 % in Asheville, North Carolina and Johnson City, Tennessee respectively and the lowest at 18% in Charleston, West Virginia (*Excelencia* in Education and Appalachian College Association, 2012). Poverty levels for the overall Appalachian population ranged from 19% in the Huntington/Ashland area of West Virginia to 11% in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (*Excelencia* in Education and Appalachian College Association, 2012).

Barcus (2007) provided a brief history of Latinos in the Appalachian region. She stated that their immigration began when the United States introduced programs such as Bracero which brought Mexican immigrants to the US to be used as low skill laborers. Legal immigration of

Mexicans brought low skilled laborers into the US until 1986. In 1986 the Immigration Reform and Control Act was passed, giving 2.3 million migrants amnesty between 1987 and 1990. These workers, who were at one time seasonal, now chose to stay in the US, and specifically Appalachia. They stayed for better wages, existing migrant networks, and better job opportunities. Settlement of the migrant population in Appalachia was dependent on changing economic factors. These migrants moved to where jobs were available (Barcus, 2007). The Appalachian region offers diversity in employment opportunities from “industries such as carpet manufacturers, orchards, and poultry and hog farms...to construction and farming forestry” (Barcus, 2007, p. 301). Three sub regions of Appalachia exist: Northern, Central, and Southern. Recent trends showed a population shift from Central Appalachia to Southern Appalachia. While educational achievement in Southern Appalachia had not changed over the last 20 years, the Northern and Central regions had an increase in children completing high school and college. Although education levels increased, these populations continued to struggle in poverty in all three regions. The Latino population in Appalachia consisted primarily of migrants from Mexico in the Southern and Central regions. Cuban and Puerto-Rican immigrants were also present, but in smaller numbers (Barcus, 2007).

Academic stress was cited as a barrier to minority student education in several research articles. White and Ali-Khan (2013) utilized a case-study approach to observe the academic literacy of first generation minority students at a predominantly white university. This small study included four participants, and the findings among the subjects under study included the following: a lack of academic readiness, a poor understanding of academic literacy, and a lack of familiar cultural codes. The researchers noted a perception among the subjects that they were

expected to act white (White and Ali-Khan, 2013), and the researchers concluded that these factors contributed to heightened academic stress.

Wei, Ku, and Liao (2011) defined minority stress as a type of stress which interfered with minority students' adjustment to college life. This definition was different than that of general stress. One hundred and sixty students (54 Asian, 53 African American, and 53 Latino) participated in this descriptive study. Students completed the Perceived Stress Scale, Minority Stress Scale and the University Environment Scale. Students who had positive experiences and positive perceptions of their campus environment experienced less stress (Wei et al., 2011). The authors found a significant association ( $p < 0.001$ ) between minority stress and college persistence (Wei et al., 2011). Zajacova, Lynch, and Espenshade (2005) discovered that academic self-efficacy and stress were related to students' interactions at school, class performance, performance out of class, and attempts to manage work, school, and family commitments.

Institutional barriers reported were minority students' feelings that faculty members treated them differently than their White peers (Gardner, 2005) and the existence of language barriers within the institution, both verbal and non-verbal (Ackerman-Barger, 2010; Guhde, 2003; Junious et al., 2010). Additional institutional barriers included difficulties with scheduling, finances, (Ackerman-Barger, 2010; Bond, Gray, Baxley, Cason, and Denke, 2008; Severiens & Wolff, 2008), and racism (Junious et al., 2010; Yoder, 1996). A lack of cultural competence on college campuses and among faculty, including nursing faculty, appeared to have contributed significantly to these barriers (Amaro et al., 2006; Davis, S., Davis, D., and Williams, 2010; Gardner, 2005).

## **Latino Nursing Student Concerns and Success**

### **Financial and Institutional Concerns**

A review of literature related specifically to the barriers and success of Latino nursing students yielded 17 articles. The methodology used most frequently in these studies was qualitative. The geographical representation of Latino nursing students examined in many studies was narrow, as the majority of participants attended colleges and universities in Texas (Bond et al., 2008; Diaz et al., 2012; Nadeau, 2011; Nadeau, 2014; Stearns, 2013; Taxis, 2002, Taxis, 2006). However, other studies included Latino students in the North West (Evans, 2007; Moceri, 2010), Mid-West (Goetz, 2008), and North East (Rivera-Goba & Campinha-Bacote, 2008; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007) United States. The literature revealed barriers of financial need, socioeconomic status, academic stress, family/cultural issues, and feelings of isolation. Indicators for success for Latino nursing students included the existence of personal attributes such as perseverance and determination. Indicators of success also included supportive faculty, financial assistance, and supportive family.

Taxis (2002) conducted a meta-analysis hoping to determine emergent patterns within the experiences of Hispanic nursing students. Results of this meta-analysis noted barriers of poverty, financial concerns, and marginalization, as well as a lack of faculty mentors. Students in these studies reported feeling isolated from peers and resented labels such as “at risk”, “disadvantaged”, “minority”, and “nontraditional” (Taxis, 2002). Several years later Taxis (2006) conducted further research and used a qualitative interpretive case study approach to explore the perceived influences of institutional and interpersonal factors on retention and graduation of Mexican Americans. Participants were within one semester of graduation or had graduated nursing school within the last 2 years of the study. The institution chosen for the study

had the largest percentage of undergraduate Hispanic students (14%) in the country. The nine student participants indicated distance from home, being without family and a relentless schedule as barriers to their success (Taxis, 2006). The study also suggested that support received from family, faculty and peers, in addition to financial assistance, were perceived by the participants as having contributed to their success (Taxis, 2006). These studies pointed to perseverance as an attribute of these successful students.

Bond et al. (2008) used the Model of Institutional Support Scale as part of a descriptive study of 14 Mexican American students from two liberal arts universities in Texas. The students conveyed their perceptions of barriers for Hispanic nursing students. Students cited financial concerns such as increasing tuition, lack of scholarships, and/or extremely competitive scholarships as some of the barriers faced (Bond et al., 2008). Additionally, students noted a lack of advising as a barrier. Cultural and personal barriers shared were that women did not go to college and family obligations always took precedence over school (Bond et al., 2008). Results also suggested that financial assistance in the form of scholarships and attentive academic advisors supported the success of these students (Bond et al., 2008). Cason et al. (2008) also indicated financial assistance and academic advisors as important to the success of Latino nursing students. Furthermore, these authors identified family involvement in decision-making, the need for mentors, and self-determination as requirements for success (Cason et al., 2008).

Alicea-Planas (2009) conducted a meta-analysis and synthesis of research which consisted of studies from 12 authors. These studies encompassed several geographical areas (Northeast, Midwest, Deep South, and West US) and involved a number of participants ranging from four to thirty-seven. The majority of data collection took place at one site (Alicea-Planas, 2009). This meta-analysis and synthesis revealed similar results to other studies. Hispanic

students in associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree nursing programs found lack of financial support and family-first attitudes as barriers. Specifically, students claimed lack of financial assistance, the need to work 40 hours per week, and lack of knowledge related to financial aid issues as one barrier. Another barrier identified was poor pre-college preparation. Family obligations also contributed to difficulties for students (Alicea-Planas, 2009). Notably, the author also referenced the following personal attributes as keys to success: self-confidence, determination, perseverance, and ambition (Alicea-Planas, 2009).

### **Success Strategies**

An exploration of strategies used to overcome obstacles was the focus of a descriptive study of 13 Hispanic students from the Pacific Northwest (Moceri, 2010). Participating students attended both associate and baccalaureate degree nursing programs, with the majority coming from associate degree programs. Students in this study shared barriers they faced such as the lack of information from high school guidance counselors and college advisors, the demands of family obligations and expectations, and a lack of financial aid. Additionally, students shared perceptions of racism from college faculty as a barrier and attributed success to financial and faculty support. In addition, students also stated that self-motivation and a desire to give back to their communities and families were motivators. Lastly, students mentioned a strong family connection as important to their success (Moceri, 2010).

Nadeau (2011) described the lived experiences of six Latino nursing students in a Hispanic-serving liberal arts university in Texas. Findings from the semi-structured interviews revealed feelings of anxiety, discouragement and frustration when students perceived they were not performing well. In addition, due to their lack of confidence in their ability to gain support from faculty, they avoided seeking help (Nadeau, 2011). A later study conducted by Nadeau



(2014) of six successful Latina pre-nursing students showed similar results. Seven themes emerged from interviews conducted with these participants. Emergent themes included references to academic challenges, personal responses to challenges, and overcoming academic challenges. Students identified traits of perseverance, self-efficacy, and living out beliefs as elements needed to succeed (Nadeau, 2014).

Seventeen Latina nursing students participated in a qualitative study conducted by Rivera-Goba and Nieto (2007). Through interviews, students related their experiences and feelings toward mentors and their concern over the paucity of mentors for Latinos in nursing. The results of this study indicated, as the Ma (2009) study did, that SES greatly factored into which school the students chose to attend. Moreover, students suggested issues with marginalization that caused stress. This group also mentioned marginalization as a barrier, pointing out feeling as if they lived between two worlds (Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007). Results of the interviews also revealed that these students perceived that family support, their own perseverance, and the existence of mentors were integral in their success (Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007).

Rivera-Goba and Campinha-Bacote (2008) took three of the prior 17 interviews and expanded them for in-depth study. The authors reread the original 17 transcripts to determine which of the stories were the most powerful. The three stories used for this related study once again revealed a desire to persevere and the role of faculty support as important to success. In addition, the authors mentioned cultural awareness and cultural caring on the part of faculty as keys to success (Rivera-Goba & Campinha-Bacote, 2008).

Sheils (2010), using ethnography, interviewed ten Puerto Rican students to identify challenges of BSN Latino nursing students in the Northeast United States. Barriers discovered

were consistent with those previously mentioned in the literature. These students shared challenges such as needing to work, difficulty with ESL, financial need, and a lack of college preparation from high school (Sheils, 2010). Factors related to success included personal persistence, self-motivation, and determination, as well as strong organizational skills, effective time management, and quality prioritization skills. As with other studies, mentors and tutors were viewed as important partners for student success (Sheils, 2010).

Diaz et al. (2012), while identifying predictors of success, uncovered barriers faced by junior nursing students in 2008 and 2009 in a BSN nursing program at the University of Texas, Pan American. These participants cited factors of financial need, family first, and the need to work as barriers. Demographics of these participants revealed that 56% came from families with household income at or below poverty level and 38.5% were first generation college students (Diaz et al., 2012). The study also indicated that success was attributed to support from family, peers, and faculty (Diaz et al., 2012).

Goetz (2008) completed a qualitative grounded theory study of Hispanic students who successfully completed a four year RN program or were in their final semester of that program. The study took place in Northern Illinois. These participants indicated their barriers consisted of time management problems, lack of finances, family and cultural beliefs, and inadequate preparation for nursing school (Goetz, 2008). Financial issues were consistent with other studies showing low socio-economic status (SES) and difficulty obtaining financial aid. Family and cultural issues also fell in line with studies indicating that family was central to all decisions (Goetz, 2008). In addition to academic and financial support, Goetz (2008) found patterns among the data that pointed to an attribution of personal qualities toward success such as feeling valued,

finding voice, and identifying a growth trajectory for themselves as engaging in a process of becoming.

### **Personal Attributes**

Wood et al. (2009) conducted a mixed method study to determine the relationships among perceived locus of control, ethnicity, and academic success. One hundred and six BSN students participated in this study which was conducted at a large metropolitan university. Participants self-identified as Filipino ( $n=35$ ), Hispanic ( $n=12$ ), White ( $n=23$ ), other Asians ( $n=28$ ), and other ( $n=8$ ). The authors discovered that the relationship between a student's internal locus of control and academic success was not statistically significant ( $p=0.43$ ). However, in the qualitative results, students attributed their success to personal traits such as determination, perseverance, diligence, and ambition. Students deemed support from family and friends as important to their success (Wood et al., 2009) and the results indicated that students who claimed to have a strong external locus of control had more difficulty in their medical/surgical courses.

### **Language**

Starr (2009) conducted a meta-analysis and synthesis of ten qualitative studies to describe the challenges of minority nursing students. Findings revealed several obstacles faced by minority nursing students including financial concerns, cultural/family obligations, academic stress, loneliness, isolation, discrimination, lack of faculty support, and language difficulties. Language barriers were cited as one of the primary challenges. Starr (2009) stated in the discussion of the results that diversity is being encouraged in nursing and therefore language diversity should be embraced as well. She challenged readers to change the terminology to English as an additional language (EAL), a term with a more positive connotation signifying a more welcoming stance toward diversity (Starr, 2009).

Language concerns highlighted in Starr's (2009) meta-analysis and synthesis included general problems related to EAL. EAL concerns were found in studies completed by Caputi, Englemann and Stasinopoulos (2006); Gardner (2005); Sanner, Wilson, and Samson (2002); Villarruel, Canales, and Torres (2001); and Yoder (1995). This meta-analysis and synthesis relates several studies which revealed more in-depth information about the relationship between language and the minority nursing student (Starr, 2009). Amaro et al. (2006) attributed language difficulties to interfering with personal needs of nursing students. Additionally, these researchers determined that nursing students lacked skills in reading, writing, and verbal communication (Starr, 2009). Starr (2009) shared that studies completed by Malu and Figlear (1998), Shakya and Horsfall (2000), and Yoder (1996) stated that language difficulties stemmed from poor language development and difficulty interpreting and sending language cues.

Nursing students who identified as EAL were proficient in conversational English, yet lacked more formal academic skills in the language. Studies support the idea that a command of the English language is needed for students to be successful in nursing school and that a higher level of proficiency is required than in some other areas of study (Hansen & Beaver, 2012; Starr, 2009). This proficiency included reading and writing in addition to the spoken language (Hansen & Beaver, 2012). Also, nursing students who were EAL were asked to master medical terminology which is considered another language (Hansen & Beaver, 2012). In addition, nursing EAL students struggled with vocabulary used on exams, especially multiple choice exams, which used technical medical terms and vocabulary specific to the United States (Hansen & Beaver, 2012).

Strategies identified to assist EAL nursing students included the purchase of an English dictionary and Thesaurus. Also students were encouraged to tape classes in order to listen

carefully during class without having to take notes concurrently. Ancillary study aids such as vocabulary books and notecards were useful as well. According to the literature, faculty support was one of the biggest assets these students had (Hansen and Beaver, 2012).

These studies illuminated a pivotal barrier. Communication is a key concept in nursing. Verbal communication between nurses and their clients and nurses and other members of the interdisciplinary healthcare team are critical to assure safe client care and to facilitate positive client outcomes. Written communication provides continuity of care and is the method used to demonstrate competency in nursing school and on the NCLEX®. The need to overcome this language barrier becomes essential and requires students to be determined. Students interviewed in Starr's (2009) study pointed to personal attributes to overcome this barrier. Starr's (2009) study provides considerable baseline data when seeking to determine the use of selected language-related personal attributes of Latino nursing students.

### **Latino Nursing Student Success**

Multiple authors and studies defined minority student success in numerous ways. Bembenutty (2007) equated minority college student success to a passing grade. Minority college student success can be denoted by degree completion within six years of beginning an undergraduate program according to Smyth and McArdle (2004), Flores and Park (2013), and Stewart (2013). Keels (2013) used a six year completion rate as a definition of college success, in addition to using the freshman fall semester GPA as an indicator of success. Jenkins, Harburg, Weissber, and Donnelly (2004) labeled as successful minority students who persisted to at least a third year in college, while Herndon and Hirt (2004) and Palmer, Maramba, and Holmes (2011) recognized success as simply reaching the senior year. In addition to reaching the senior year, Palmer et al. (2011) included an additional qualification of achieving a GPA of 2.5 or greater.

Academic institutions define the success of nursing students as completion of the nursing program of study; this success is marked by successful matriculation through the nursing curriculum and graduation from the institution. Accredited nursing programs across the nation set a standard for nursing graduates. Successful completion of a nursing program is dependent upon matriculation of students to graduation but more importantly successfully passing the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN®). The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) is a non-profit organization consisting of the boards of nursing of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four US Territories. One of the functions of the NCSBN is oversight of the NCLEX-RN®. This exam measures competencies needed by entry-level registered nurses (RN) to perform their duties safely and competently (NCLEX Examinations, 2014). Failure of the exam constitutes failure to obtain licensure. Failure to obtain licensure equates to a lack of success in the students' ability to practice nursing. For the purpose of this study, student success will be defined as successful completion of a BSN program of study and successful completion of the NCLEX-RN® exam. BSN programs were selected for this study because this is the population of students the researcher has worked with and is most familiar.

## **Family**

Parental influence was an indicator of student success in studies conducted by Keels (2013) and Stewart (2013). Keels (2013) examined a cohort of freshmen from 24 predominantly white institutions. The study focused on whether gender, race, or ethnicity combined to impact college outcomes. He also did some in-group comparisons related to education of parents and SES. He found that students whose mothers earned a college degree or higher were more likely to be successful than those whose mothers did not seek higher education (Keels, 2013).

A separate study by Stewart (2013) also indicated a significant association between the level of education of the parents and students' success. Stewart (2013) studied the results of the 2000 College Student Survey (CSS). Stewart (2013) had a sampling of 1,637 ethnically diverse students in her study. The students self-identified as Chicano, Black, Puerto-Rican, Asian American, American Indian, and other. Inferential analysis was completed. Stewart (2013) looked specifically at race, education of the mother, and education of the father related to college success. Her study focused on information specific to ethnically diverse students without comparing this information to that of Caucasian students (Stewart, 2013).

### **Recruitment and Retention**

The following review of recruitment and retention literature speaks to the level of institutional support which minority students, and specifically Latino nursing students, link to their success. Nursing education research provided the majority of literature pertaining to the recruitment and retention of minority students. Of the eleven articles reviewed, only two were from other disciplines. A wide array of interventions were attempted to increase recruitment and retention of minority students.

The intervention implemented by the greatest number of institutions was financial assistance. Support financially consisted of stipends (Condon et al., 2013; Melillo, Dowling, Abdallah, Findeisen, and Knight, 2013; Wilson, Sanner, and McAllister, 2010) and general scholarships (Condon et al., 2013; Evans, 2007; Melillo et al., 2013; Olinger, 2011; Swinney & Dobal, 2008; Wilson et al., 2010). Additionally, several programs arranged for and implemented pre-entrance classes. These classes assisted students in study skills, test-taking strategies, and in some cases remedial science and math courses (Condon et al., 2013; Barton & Swider, 2009; Murphy et al., 2010; Olinger, 2011; Wilson et al., 2010).

Additional recruitment and retention efforts found in the literature focused on mentoring and role-modeling. Minority students responded better to and were more comfortable with minority mentors (Barton & Swider, 2009; Escallier & Fullerton, 2009; Farley, 2002; Loftin, Newman, Gilden, Bond, and Dumas, 2013; Wilson et al., 2010). Additionally, tutoring and academic support were found to be of great importance (Evans, 2007; Loftin et al., 2013; Melillo et al., 2013; Murphy et al., 2010; Swinney & Dobal, 2008).

Other interventions common in the literature included: in-depth, personal advising (Condon et al., 2013; Farley, 2002; Olinger, 2011), technology supplements (Condon et al., 2013; Escallier & Fullerton, 2009; Melillo et al., 2013), implementation of recruiting in middle school and early high school (Barton & Swider, 2009; Evans, 2007), faculty workshops on cultural competence (Condon et al., 2013, Escallier & Fullerton, 2009; Olinger, 2011), assisting students with socialization into campus groups/activities (Farley, 2002; Melillo et al., 2013; Swinney & Dobal, 2008), successful community partnerships (Melillo et al., 2013; Swinney & Dobal, 2008) and updating of recruitment and retention brochures (Barton & Swider, 2009). One of the major commonalities among these recruitment and retention programs was the existence of funding through grants. Stipends, scholarships, and gifting of technology would not be possible without funding. These implemented programs described in the literature provided positive results leading to student success.

The Sullivan Commission on Diversity in Healthcare Workforce was established as part of a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The Commission provided, through a series of interviews and testimonies from health educators, religious and business leaders a blueprint for increasing diversity in the health professions (Sullivan, 2004). The study came on the heels of an Institute of Medicine report which recommended increasing the number of minorities in the



health professions as a means to decrease healthcare disparities (Sullivan, 2004).

The report, *Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions* (2004), published by the Sullivan commission, stated that it was a necessity to increase diversity of healthcare workers to match the diversity of the population in the United States in order to assist in decreasing healthcare disparities (Sullivan, 2004). The report indicated by the year 2050, the Hispanic American population would triple in size and the African American population would more than double. The report emphasized that a critical issue facing healthcare delivery was that professional healthcare programs were not seeing similar increases in the number of culturally diverse students. In 2015, AACN released the most current enrollment numbers for the 2014-2015 academic year that indicated an increase in diversity of generic baccalaureate students from 2004, the year the Sullivan Report (2004) was published. Total minority enrollment increased from 19.3% in 2004 to 30.1% in 2014 (AACN, 2014; AACN, 2015). Minority students, specifically Latino nursing students, may have increased in number as a result of successful strategies on the part of nursing students themselves, and also because of changes in the recruitment and retention efforts of universities and schools of nursing. While schools of nursing have begun to determine the most effective strategies used by successful Latino nursing students to assist and support future students, longitudinal results are not yet present in the literature. Graduation rates among diverse students have increased. Total minority graduation rates in 2014 were 27.8% up from 27.4% in 2013 (AACN, 2015). However, white students in generic baccalaureate nursing programs still have comprised 72.2% of graduating students with Latinos lagging behind at 7.8% (AACN, 2015).

The majority of current literature focuses on barriers faced by minority nursing students (Amaro et al., 2006; Davis et al., 2010; Gardner, 2005; Zuzelo, 2005; Crisp & Nora,

2010; O'Brien, Mars, and Eccleston, 2011; Yang, Byers, Salazar, and Salas, 2009; Zalaquett, 2006). Yet, for those who are successful, there is little research that explicates the reasons. Minority nursing students do successfully complete nursing degrees, but the completion numbers are fewer compared to the percentage initially enrolled, and the difference is greater than in other non-Latino minority populations. Gradually, the completion numbers have increased, but to what this positive growth is to be attributed is unclear. The most current national enrollment numbers from the fall of 2014, for Latino, generic, baccalaureate nursing students is 16,267 or 9.2% of the total number of nursing students enrolled (Fang et al., 2015). Graduation rates for the 2014 class documented 4,641 Latino nurses or 7.8% of the total number of nursing graduates (Fang et al., 2015). These numbers from 2014 show an increase in Latino nursing students entering and completing nursing programs. What nursing leaders and nursing faculty need to focus on are what students perceive contributed to their success. Those things which students perceive contributed to their success may be connected to the ways in which these students react to the unique cultural, personal, and institutional issues that for others become barriers.

### **Summary**

Fifteen of the studies cited provide information related to the barriers faced and those things used to facilitate success of Latino nursing students. The Latino nursing students surveyed and interviewed were representatives of schools of nursing in the Northeast, deeper South, Mid-West, and Western United States. A gap appeared in the research relative to Latino nursing students in the Appalachian region of the United States. Given that the Appalachian region has one of the fastest growing Latino populations in the United States, this lack of research is significant. An environmental scan completed by *Excelencia* in Education and the Appalachian College Association (ACA) (2012) revealed Latino population growth of 122% in Kentucky,

111% in North Carolina, 134 % in Tennessee, 81% in West Virginia, and 92% in Virginia between the years 2000 and 2010.

The perception within a number of studies that noted a relationship between personal attributes and success in nursing school point to the need for future research, particularly for the Appalachian region. It is time to look further into the thoughts and feelings of Latino nursing student graduates in the Appalachian region. Specifically, do they attribute their success to the same characteristics? If so, to what do they attribute their self-determination and perseverance?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

#### **Underpinnings**

According to Creswell (2007) and Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is a process that begins with philosophical assumptions of the researcher. Describing philosophical assumptions provide for the reader a set of meanings or beliefs of the researcher, and for the ideas that are being studied. The ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and methodological underpinnings in this study arise from the fact that participants in this study are all graduated Latino nursing students from the Central Appalachian area of the United States.

#### **Ontological**

Ontological assumptions provide the reader with multiple realities; those of the researcher and those of the participants (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Mitchell & Cody, 2013). Mitchell and Cody (2013) describe the idea that participants live their lives continuously and therefore engage in life in temporal, historical and cultural ways. In conjunction with this interaction, qualitative researchers come to know their participants intricately. Ontological assumptions attempt to describe the nature of reality of the participants. In this study, participants will share information which is subjective. Each Latino nursing student graduate will be encouraged to share his or her personal story of success. In doing so, the participants create the meaning of their experiences. The researcher gathers this information and interprets the data within the context of where the participants live, work, and attend school.

#### **Epistemological**

The epistemological and axiological underpinnings in qualitative research allow the researcher to situate him or herself within the study. The researcher in qualitative research

interacts with and collaborates with the participants (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Mitchell and Cody (2013) further define epistemology as the lived experience of the participants. Epistemological assumptions allow for co-participation of the researcher and participant. This affiliation allows the participant to share his or her experience, knowing the researcher will accept it “free of comparison to objective realities or predefined norms” (Mitchell & Cody, 2013, p. 226). Axiological assumptions supply the reader with the values and biases of the researcher, which is known as “positioning oneself” in the research. In addition, the values and biases of the participants are shared and contribute to the research findings.

As background for this study, the researcher worked with minority nursing students in multiple ways. The researcher conducted student success classes for several years working specifically with minority nursing students. In addition, the researcher also worked one on one with minority nursing students as a mentor and tutor. The researcher participated, as a facilitator, in focus groups to examine what nursing students felt were the barriers of being a minority student in a nursing program. Students were also asked to contribute any advantages they felt they had as minority nursing students. All students were in a nursing program when they participated in group discussions.

This study used individual, recorded telephone interviews of participants. These encounters were then interpreted by the researcher. The researcher in this study entered the interviews with extensive information gleaned from this background research and teaching experiences. Therefore, prior knowledge and information from previous focus groups was a lens through which the researcher made interpretational meanings from the findings.

Rhetorical assumptions speak to the way in which a qualitative study is written. The writing is more personal, shaped by the language of the participants, and more literary in form

than that of quantitative research (Creswell, 2007). As such, research was presented in literary form. Findings included quotes from students and voice interpretation from recordings of interviews. In addition, the rhetorical assumption allowed for an informal approach to presentation of data allowing the researcher to use a narrative approach. This narrative approach includes the use of the first-person pronoun allowing the researcher to place him or herself in the data collection and presentation process.

### **Methodological**

The last philosophical assumption which helps shape qualitative research is methodological. Methodological assumptions present the process through which the researcher conducts the research. Qualitative research grants the researcher the opportunity to interact with participants (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, as part of the engaged process, the researcher is continually analyzing information and revising questions. In addition, the researcher begins with the specific and then broadens his or her view or scope of the issue as research progresses (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This research study was inductive; moving from the specific to the general, and examined the success of Latino nursing student graduates in great detail. Throughout the research process and interviews information provided by the participants followed certain patterns or themes. It is the role and responsibility of the researcher to identify these themes and determine if and how they are related to the research and each other. Data analysis was an on-going process. The interview questions changed based on data collected during the interviews and ongoing data analysis.

## **Worldview**

The determination of philosophical assumptions leads the researcher to choose a worldview or paradigm. The paradigm chosen guides the research process (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Social Constructivism and Interpretivism were the paradigms that informed this research study. Social Constructivism encourages participants to “seek understanding” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20) of the world they live in. Participants provide subjective information to the researcher based on a particular situation or issue. The subjective information is individualized, having been formed through the culture, geography, history, and socioeconomic status of each participant. This research study was completed to look at the perception of Latino nursing graduates as to why they were successful. The information gathered was analyzed and interpreted, looking specifically at the lens through which each participant views success. Culture, geography, history and socioeconomic status may inform each participant’s experience. It is the researcher’s role to interpret these experiences and attempt to determine or develop a pattern of meaning. This analysis and discussion are completed with the understanding that the researcher also is a participant and as such brings to the interpretation his or her own thoughts, experiences, and background (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

## **Methods**

The research method used for this study was narrative description. Narrative research is grounded in the humanities, and it seeks to communicate the experiences of the individuals or participants (Creswell, 2007; Sandelowski, 1991). Narrative description is used to interpret the stories of individuals, with the knowledge that the stories are more than words, yet are impacted by the context in which the stories were lived out and the context in which they are told. Sandelowski (1991) emphasizes that narratives are more than words. It is important to note how

the story is told including the experience of the story teller. Analysis of narratives often reveals patterns, themes, and a greater understanding of the story (Creswell, 2007). Keeping this in mind, the researcher conducted audio recorded interviews to be certain each participant's voice intonation and deflections could be studied as well.

There are different approaches to narrative research. Two common approaches to narrative research are descriptive and explanatory. In descriptive narration research the researcher strives to accomplish one of several things. The researcher attempts to describe a life event of an individual or group or how story lines of participants intertwine, compare and contrast each other. A researcher may also try to determine a relationship between stories and the cultural "stock" of stories, and lastly study the realization that certain life episodes serve to inform a person's life (Sandelowski, 1991). Explanation narrative research is simply the researcher exploring, via a narrative, why an event occurred. This study used descriptive narration with a contextual focus and specifically examined the reasons for success of Latino nursing graduates while in a nursing program.

### **Role of Researcher**

Narrative research places the researcher in personal contact with the participants. The researcher is the instrument (Creswell, 2014). I chose to study Latino nursing students based on personal experiences with minority nursing students and their struggles. Having worked one on one with a number of minority nursing students, I noted those who were struggling with academics. The students shared stories related to their struggles and often described why it was important for them to succeed. Listening to their stories brought pleasure, along with the hope and the desire to facilitate their success. These experiences formed and shaped my interpretation and analysis of the data in this study. A pilot study was conducted with minority nursing



students; I acted as the facilitator of a focus group. The information gathered from this pilot study provided me with beginning understandings of what and how the participants may respond in coming interviews. I learned that I must be careful to allow participants to speak in their own words and to not lead the participants' answers. This research study was conducted in the Central Appalachian region of the United States. Since participants must have already passed the NCLEX-RN® in order to participate, current students were not eligible to participate in the study.

Permission to conduct research on human subjects was requested from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of East Tennessee State University and provided on 3/25/2016 (Appendix A). Continued Expedited Review was provided on 2/28/2017 (Appendix B). The rights of the participants were protected through this process.

## **Data Collection**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited via social media (Facebook®) through schools of nursing in the Appalachian region of the United States. Participants were also recruited through affiliations with Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society and the Appalachian College Association. Participants were recruited using a script for participant recruitment (Appendix C). The script directed them to email the researcher if they were interested in participating in the study. Interested participants were emailed an invitation to participate (Appendix D). The invitation indicated the study guidelines which included the following restrictions: Participants must be Latino, over the age of 18, must have lived in and attended a nursing program in the Appalachian region of the United States, successfully completed a baccalaureate degree nursing program within the last five years, and successfully completed the NCLEX-RN® Exam. The

invitation also included a link to a demographic survey located on Survey Monkey® (Appendix E). Informed consent was obtained via this survey. Participants represented the following states in the Appalachian region: North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The research study was approved for up to 15 participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Nine participants provided informed consent. Data saturation was reached after the ninth interview, signaling the end of data collection and analysis, as no new data were emerging. Analysis of the data set from the nine participants continued to yield a set of themes: familism, empowerment, and perseverance.

Initially, four participants responded to the survey. Through snowballing, three additional participants were enrolled in the study. The last two participants were interviewed several months after the initial interviews, for a total of nine participants. Interviews began in late May 2016 with the last interview taking place in January, 2017. All interviews were recorded telephone interviews using NoNotes.com©, a recording and transcription service. Participants were asked to share what made them successful in nursing school.

Participants were all female and all self-identified as Hispanic/Latino. Participants graduated from nursing school within five years of being interviewed; the most recent being May, 2016. Participants attended nursing school in North Carolina, Tennessee, and South Carolina. Seven of the participants were married, one single, and one divorced/separated. In addition, six of the nine participants had children. All of the participants' families immigrated to the United States. Some of the participants immigrated as small children; others were born in the United States. Additional demographic data can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

Participants	Country of Origin	Year of immigration	Age	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation College	Hours per week worked in school
AB	Mexico	unknown	18-25	Yes	11-20
CD	Brazil	unknown	26-40	Yes	>20
EF	Mexico	1991	18-25	Yes	0-10
GH	Mexico	1993	26-40	No	11-20
IJ	Costa Rica	1990	26-40	No	11-20
KL	Mexico	2001	26-40	Yes	0
MN	Costa Rica	1981	26-40	Yes	0-10
OP	Cuba	1962	41-50	Yes	0
QR	Mexico	1983	26-40	Yes	0-10

*Note.* “unknown”: Participants AB and CD declined to answer.

All but two of the participants were first generation college students. However, the two participants who indicated that they were not the first to attend college, were in fact, the first in their families to attend college in the United States. Both participants indicated that their parents received degrees in their home countries. Unfortunately, upon arrival to the United States, their degrees were not valid. This information, in addition to other demographic data of all participants will be important to recall when reading the stories of these participants. The story of their family and their past is a thread that intertwines their entire nursing school experience and to what they credit their success.

**Data Collection**

Following approval from the ETSU campus IRB (Appendix A) participants were recruited. Initial contact with participants was through social media (Facebook®) inviting Latino nursing school graduates from baccalaureate nursing programs in the Appalachian region of the United States to participate in a research study examining perceptions of success in nursing school. An email address was provided for initial contact with the researcher. Interested participants were

emailed a description of the study and a link to a brief demographic survey via Survey Monkey® (Appendix D). The survey collected demographic information and permission to conduct a one on one interview with the participant. The information gathered assisted the researcher in narrowing the candidates to be interviewed based on geographical data, ethnicity, and time since graduation. It is the assumption of the researcher that the longer a student has been out of school, the more difficult it will be to remember his or her experiences.

### **Memory Accuracy**

A brief review of the literature related to accuracy of memory over time revealed that happy moods led to enhanced memories, while angry or sad emotions led to remembering only goals and outcomes of the event remembered. In other words, central details are remembered most often in these circumstances (Berntsen, 2002; Talarico, Berntsen, and Rubin, 2009). Happy memories elicited recall of peripheral details (Talarico et al., 2009). Berntsen (2002) also stated that there was a positive correlation between what is remembered and how often the event is discussed. Levine and Pizarro (2004) stated that memory changes over time and this memory is influenced by post-event experiences. Some memories are used to inform the future. Levine and Pizarro (2004) further indicated that emotional events are better remembered because they are “novel, distinctive, and intense” (p. 535). Based on this information there is no clear way to know the precision with which participants will remember their experiences in nursing school. Therefore, participants who were within five years of graduation and successful completion of the NCLEX-RN® were eligible to participate.

### **Interview Security**

The interview began with two very broad open-ended questions: 1) How do you define success? and 2) What do you feel made you successful in nursing school? (Appendix F). It was

the hope of the researcher that the participants were candid in revealing and sharing their lived experience. Individual telephone interviews were conducted and recorded using NoNotes.com©, a recording and transcription service. Nonotes.com© uses 128bitSSL encryption. All employees are required to sign a confidentiality agreement and activate a non-disclosure agreement with all transcriptions. The company also states that servers “are located in a class-A facility with climate control, retinal scan access, and around the clock security” (NoNotes.com©, 2016). Immediately following the end of the recorded call the recorded call is downloaded and emailed to the email provided to the company. All digital data was sent to an email address used expressly for this study. The data was then stored in an encrypted, password –protected file on the researcher’s computer. Written notes were entered into the computer via Word© documents and also password –protected as well. Paper copies of investigator notes were shredded once entered.

### **Participant Protection**

Participants were given the option to remove themselves from the study. This opportunity was made evident at the beginning of each interview and in the signed consent form obtained prior to the first interview. In addition, participants were instructed of the confidentiality of their information. The researcher was aware that participants may reveal sensitive family issues. The researcher assured the participants that at no time would participants’ names be revealed. Participants were also instructed to refrain from using any names when referring to family members. Instead, participants were encouraged to refer to family members as “mother”, “father”.

### **Informed Consent**

Interviews were conducted with each of the participants via telephone. Verbal consent for recording the interview was obtained before each interview began. This was done in addition to

consent obtained via the survey completed by each participant. Verbal consent was also obtained at the end of each interview to contact the participant if further information was needed. A total of 14 interviews were conducted. Initial interviews with the first seven participants provided a wealth of information. However, as analysis and coding of each of the interviews took place, it was clear that additional information would be needed. The initial codes and themes that surfaced were superficial and required more depth.

## **Interviews**

The first seven participants were contacted and a second interview was requested. Five of the seven agreed to a second interview. The other two participants did not respond to the request for a second interview. Information gleaned from the initial interviews allowed for more in-depth conversation during the second interviews. Participants shared volumes of information with very little prompting. They were proud and excited to tell the stories of their families and ultimately how their families contributed to their success as nurses.

The second interviews contributed to and supported themes that began to surface during the initial interviews. Participants shared stories of sacrifices made by their parents. They shared their difficulties with balancing school, family, and work. They explored the reasons for their success often times realizing that the reason for their success was so much more than they ever considered. The second interviews provided great insight and added depth to the themes and categories that began to surface during the initial interviews.

The last two interviews took place several months after the other interviews. The experience of the second interviews allowed for more in depth interviewing of the last two participants. While they were asked the same initial question, they were also encouraged to tell

their story. They were encouraged to tell the story of their family. The last two interviews provided clarity to the themes and categories that were established by the other interviews.

The very last interview conducted was with a participant who had heard of the study and wanted to tell her story. She had graduated from a community college and was currently working on her BSN. Her interview was incredible. It solidified and supported codes and themes that had been established. While her education level did not meet the inclusion criteria, her story was not unlike any of the others. The last two interviews provided saturation of data. Their stories, along with the stories of the other participants, could be everyone's story; could be one story.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was a continuous process, and interpretation of interviews was ongoing. NVivo, an on-line Qualitative Data Analysis software package, assisted the researcher in organizing data collected. Interviews were transcribed by Nonotes.com© and placed into NVivo. All data was kept on the researcher's personal computer in a password protected file. A copy of the file was kept on a thumb drive and an external hard drive which was locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's home. Interviews were analyzed as they occurred. The researcher took the specific text and through the analytic process, moved to the more general formation of categories and themes. Creswell (2014) suggests the steps that follow the organization of the interviews allow the researcher an opportunity to get an overall impression of the information. Concurrently, the researcher recorded notes on the general essence of the interviews. The data was then categorized or grouped into like text to determine common overriding themes (Creswell, 2014).

## **Verification**

The use of rich, thick description (Creswell, 2014) was one of the strategies used to add to the validity of this research. Such vivid description allowed the researcher to provide the reader with detailed accounts of the lived experiences of the participants in such a way that the reader feels that he or she is part of the study, or can follow participants' experiences based on the descriptions. In addition, the researcher's lens regarding the research was revealed throughout the process of analysis. Lastly, the researcher sought to use member checking as the primary tool for qualitative validation. Member checking allows the participants the opportunity to review the product at various stages. Participants are asked to verify that the researcher has maintained the essence of their lived experience (Creswell, 2014). This was done mid-way through data collection (Creswell, 2014).

Truth value, attributed to Guba (1981) is another way to determine the rigor of a qualitative study. Truth value is the confidence the researcher has with the findings. Participants in this study stated repeatedly how excited they were to tell their story. In addition, participants had to contact the researcher in order to participate and be interviewed. Consistency is also needed to provide rigor in qualitative research. Consistency was maintained by conducting all interviews in a similar fashion. All interviews began with the same leading question: "What do you feel made you successful in nursing school?" As qualitative research allows, participants were permitted and encouraged to lead the conversation. (Krefting et al., 1981).

## **Findings**

A narrative approach was used to conduct this study under the paradigm of constructive socialism. Therefore findings were presented in a format which highlighted the major themes gleaned from successful Latino nursing students of the Central Appalachian region of the United



States. Findings included quotes from participants to give the study findings breadth and depth, and to allow the reader to experience the essence of these experiences. It is believed that the results of this study may assist educators in understanding the successful experiences of Latino nursing students, and that this new understanding will assist in developing educational approaches and best practices to support and assist Latino nursing students toward success.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### **Introduction**

Data analysis began after the first interview. The researcher read and re-read the transcripts of the first interview searching for key words and phrases which supported the question: What made you successful in nursing school? This process continued with each subsequent interview. Line by line coding with memoing began with the first interview and continued throughout data analysis. Codes and themes were assigned colors and individual transcripts were highlighted based on those colors. A Word© document was then created pulling quotes which supported codes and themes from individual transcripts. The first attempt at analysis revealed some very broad categories: communication, determination, family, feelings of difference, feelings related to graduation, nursing faculty, reasons for success, and advice for other Latino students. It was clear that further reading and analysis was necessary to further define and narrow themes.

Interviews were reread for words and phrases that appeared to be threads throughout all interviews. Themes that surfaced with further analysis were family, balance, drive, and guilt and sacrifice. It was also noted that these themes are all intertwined and could not be separated one from the other. The question, “What made you successful in nursing school” was repeated as the researcher continued to sift through interviews. Family was central to the lives of these students. Based on interviews and analysis it became clear that immigrant family was an overriding theme throughout all interviews. It also became clear that this theme needed further exploration. It was at this time that a request was made for second interviews.

Five of the seven participants agreed to a second interview. These second interviews added depth and breadth to the themes that had surfaced in the initial interviews. Participants were asked to share their families' story and how it affected their success in nursing school. Participants shared their stories with excitement and pride. Many of them became emotional while sharing the sacrifices made by their parents in order for them to have an education. This was consistent throughout. It is the immigrant family that surfaced as a theme as the researcher analyzed the new interviews line by line. It was also evident that the themes of drive, sacrifice, guilt, and balance continued to appear. However, they transformed as further analysis of family continued. They appeared to have a negative connotation in early interviews. Second interviews suggested these themes were positive influences on the participants.

Five of the seven participants indicated that their families immigrated to the United States specifically to educate their children. The other two participants realized the importance of education after immigrating to the United States and wanting more for themselves and their families. In all cases, it was immigrant families that became the central theme. It is from the theme of immigrant family that other themes became apparent. The themes recognized earlier easily folded into the following themes: Feelings of empowerment and commitment or perseverance. These feelings of empowerment and commitment were further defined by subthemes of sacrifices made by parents, emotional support, the need to do better than their parents, family first, and honor and commitment to family.

All of these themes and subthemes were supported by the last two interviews. The researcher was aware that saturation was obtained because no new categories or themes were identified. These two interviews further supported the themes of immigrant family, empowerment, commitment, emotional support, sacrifice, and family first.

## **Analysis**

This narrative descriptive study sought to answer the question, “What are the perceptions of success of Latino nursing school graduates in the Appalachian area of the United States?” Through 14 one on one interviews with the nine participants multiple themes were identified. One overriding theme was that of family, specifically immigrant families. Family is central to everything. This dedication to family is also known as familism. Familism is defined as putting the needs of the family before self, maintaining strong bonds with both immediate and extended family members, and the existence of a strong sense of loyalty to family (Rodriguez, Mira, Paez, & Myers, 2007, p. 62); Schwartz, 2007, p. 101). *Familism* was central to all other themes and subthemes. Specifically, immigrant familism was the central theme. Themes of *empowerment*, *perseverance*, and *commitment* stemmed from *familism*. Further analysis of feelings of *empowerment* revealed themes of *sacrifice* made by families and graduates. In addition, themes of *emotional support* also surfaced from feelings of *empowerment*. Feelings of *commitment* and *perseverance* uncovered the need for Latino nursing school graduates to *do better than their parents*. *Honoring family* also became a subtheme of feelings of *commitment* and *perseverance*.

### **Empowerment**

*Empowerment* is defined by the Cambridge University Dictionary (2017) as “the process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you.” The participants of this study shared many stories of empowerment. It also became evident throughout the interviews that sacrifices made by their parents and by the participants fueled this empowerment. Empowerment was also fed by emotional support supplied from multiple areas.

## **Sacrifice**

Sacrifice was a theme that appeared over and over again in all of the interviews. Sacrifices were made by the families of the participants. In all but two instances, families immigrated so their children could be educated in the United States. The sacrifices made by parents included leaving family and businesses. Five parents had college degrees and three had high school diplomas in their home countries. Some families realized that an education in the United States would be more prestigious than in their own countries. These families wanted more for their children. Participants were quick to mention the sacrifices of their parents before any other sacrifice made.

Although the participants indicated that many sacrifices were made, they did not feel that these sacrifices were detrimental to their studies. On the contrary, these sacrifices empowered them to do the very best they could.

**Parent sacrifice.** Participants often shared their parents' immigration story when asked what made them successful in nursing school. All but two participants indicated that their families immigrated to the US for the sole purpose of providing an education for their children. KL's family immigrated from Mexico. KL stated, "...the primary reason they decided to move was because of education for my brother and I." MN stated, "But, all the sacrifices that they did for me and my brothers. They kind of gave me that initiative to show them...everything they gave up to come here was not taken for granted." Another participant, GH, shared this, "...they just thought that maybe, you know, we might have a better chance here so they kind of always made it seem like 'don't mess up, that's why we're here [education]'. It was a bit of pressure!" One participant shared that her parents were educators in their home country. Therefore, education was, as she put it, "expected." "It's pretty much the most important thing for any Costa

Rican person. And it's something that they [parents] teach you from the time you are very little, the world can take everything from you, but they can't take your education." Participant EF stated, "...my family always wanted me to get a college education and I also knew that I was going to get a college education no matter what." "Having that pressure, and not so much just pressure but that motivation, that family support and motivation really pushed me to study harder, thrive harder to make sure that I graduated..." "Because we have that—your parents came here from a different country to give you the best and for you to get out here and make something of yourself because our parents gave up everything for that."

Two participants had a different experience. While both of their families immigrated to the US from other Latino countries for a better life, they were expected to work once in the US. They realized the value of education and wanted to provide a good example for their children. OP stated, "I always wanted to be a college graduate...in the long run it was for the betterment of my whole family." She continued, "...for me it was a struggle because being Hispanic in our culture the mother is the one that takes care of everything, the mother is the one that does everything...for me to relinquish a lot of that was a huge sacrifice." The participant QR was empowered by her mother's lack of education and the difficulties she endured due to this lack of education. QR stated, "...I really do admire my mum...I saw a lot of mistreatment towards her because she didn't speak the language...life kicked her hard...that was not going to be me. I wanted to be independent and I didn't want people to take advantage of me."

**Student sacrifice.** Sacrifices were also made by the students. Students indicated that time away from their immediate and extended family was a sacrifice. Other participants shared the sacrifice of time away from husbands and children. They also spoke of the sacrifices made by their husbands and children so that they could pursue their nursing degree. CD tells the story of

coming to the US with her husband, leaving her family behind. She was encouraged, by her family, especially her mother, to immigrate with her husband to obtain an education. CD stated, “I was reminded all the time that I was not from around here.” GH, a wife and mother while she was in nursing school stated, “...you miss out on your family because you’re having to divide time between being a wife and mother.” “I definitely feel like I missed out on some of the time my child grew up.” She also stated, “Its hard being a mother and a wife, having to prepare meals and take care of the kids after coming home from school but it’s definitely possible.” GH also shared that her husband was willing to work two jobs to help support the family while she was in nursing school. OP, also a mother, shared, “It was hard for them, my family to adjust at the beginning we struggled a lot because of the change in the dynamic of the family.” Regarding sacrifice related to family QR stated, “I always have some guilt issues with my decision...I just wanted to find that balance of being a good wife, being a good provider, being a good student, being a good mother.” “I didn’t want to fail school, I didn’t want to fail my family.”

## **Support**

Support for these participants took on many forms. The most common form of support offered by the students was that coming from their families. In addition to family, participants indicated support came from faculty and co-workers as well. The support received from all of these places was instrumental in their success.

**Family.** Support provided by family came in many forms. Some families offered emotional support, others financial, and still others showed support by watching children. Regardless of the type of support offered, it assisted with the successfulness of these participants.

IJ stated the following regarding parental support, “...both of my parents were very supportive throughout my college degree...that’s what made the difference.” Another participant

AB stated, "...I will say that the main supporter in like giving me time is my mom. Like I can go to her house and she will like watch my kids and will lock myself in a room and try and get some homework done." The encouragement and support of the mothers surfaced over and over again. KL stated, "...I spent most of my childhood with my mother... I remember growing up it was [mother] you have to be successful, you have to do well in school if you want to accomplish your goals." "Both of my parents were very supportive." CD also indicated that her mother was a source of support for her. "She was always supportive and she always worked hard so we could get the education she couldn't." She shared that her father was not nearly as supportive and did not believe in education for women. MN shared that her success stemmed heavily from support from her parents. She stated, "...the number one thing that made me successful was my parents." "Your parents came here in order for you to become successful, to be able to rise in life. To me, that's the number one thing, that's what allowed me to be successful." GH stated, "They [parents] are very supportive...don't worry about us and we will take care of the kids you just get your work done." IJ spent time away from home for two years prior to attending a local college. "One of the biggest things was family support."

**Friends, coworkers, and faculty.** Several of the participants indicated in their interviews that support from faculty members, advisors, and other school personnel encouraged them to seek their dream of becoming a nurse and power through even the difficult times. KL stated that "Academic and social experience in college really fostered my success as an undergrad...And interacting with college and nursing faculty." "And participating in extracurricular activities." KL emphasized throughout her interview that support from all of these entities were influential in empowering her to succeed. CD also shared the following, "The amount of support I got from people in the college it was huge...I got extreme or really good support. Since the beginning I



had people who believed in me even if my English was really broke.” One participant, EF, included her high school principal as a main source of support, sharing that he pointed her in the right direction. QR indicated that openness and availability of college professors contributed to the support that allowed her to be successful.

### **Perseverance/Committed**

Perseverance was evident from the first interview and carried through to the last interview. Perseverance, as defined by Cambridge University dictionary (2017) is “continued effort and determination.” Determination is defined as “the ability to continue trying to do something, even if it is difficult” (Cambridge University dictionary, 2017). Each of the participants exhibits these characteristics. In addition to perseverance and determination, they are also committed to their dream of becoming nurses. Cambridge University dictionary (2017) defines committed as “loyal and willing to give your time and energy to something that you believe in.” Participants attributed their perseverance and commitment to wanting to do better than their families. The desire to honor their family and the sacrifices made by their parents also contributes to participants’ perseverance. Familism is an overriding theme but it is also influential in the perseverance exhibited by these participants. One other theme that surfaced for some of the participants was faith.

### **Aspire for More**

Aspiring for more or doing better than their parents was a theme that was prevalent throughout the interviews. This desire was not only that of the participants, but was also the desire of the parents. The majority of these immigrant Latino families came to the US for the sole purpose of an education and better life for their children. Out of loyalty to their parents and families the participants in this study were determined to fulfill this dream for their parents and

themselves. AB spoke of her mother who never attended school, “She wants better for us.” Another participant, KL stated, “...I have to be successful because I was half done [college courses] and I can’t fail them [parents].” MN spoke of her parents and the poverty they suffered when they first immigrated to the US. She had this to say regarding her perseverance and commitment, “They [parents] kind of gave me that initiative to show them that they’re, you know, everything they gave to us to come here was not, not taken for granted.” OP, who attended college later in life, stated, “...with every generation you try to be better than the last and you try to provide a better life for your family...” One of the other less traditional students stated, “I didn’t want to fail anybody. I didn’t want to fail school. I didn’t want to fail my family. I didn’t want to fail my household.” CD spoke of her mother and the influence she had on her continuing her education, “...so every single day in your life you have to study so that you don’t go through what I go through.”

### **Honor Family**

Participants were excited to tell stories related to their accomplishments. Over and over again these Latino nursing school graduates put their success in the context of pleasing their parents and families; very rarely did they discuss their success as only for themselves. Their success was a tribute to their parents and families. KL shared that she was the first in her immediate and extended family to attend college. She also stated that some of her perseverance came from her mother, “...my mom, since I was a little girl, she emphasized that failure was not an option.” Discussing her accomplishments KL also stated, “...I serve as a model for them to follow [other family members].” MN shared that often in the clinical setting she was asked where she came from. When asked how she overcame this MN replied, “I guess what drove me to keep going is the fact that no matter where you’re from, that’s not going to define you.” Later

in the interview MN also had this to say about finishing nursing school, “Once I take that route, I have to finish. You know, there was, there was that push that you have to finish, because I was going to be the first one to graduate from college.” “...you have to show...that the reason your parents came here, to come here is for you guys [her and her brother] to become better...to fulfill that dream.”

GH shared this statement, “So I guess my motivation was just I always, I kind of did it for my parents too.” She went on to admit that while her nursing school success was a personal achievement it was something she did for her family as well; her younger siblings. As we spoke about the importance of education GH voiced her concern about Latinos in today’s society. “I’ve always tried to remind them [her brothers] that education is the key, especially nowadays, all the racial things going on and you know the best way to beat any of that is to get an education and help others.” She is hoping to be that role model for her brothers and her sons.

OP discussed the difficulty of being a mom attending school and the challenges it creates. However, she was quick to admit that “...it’s for a short period of time and your children and your family will respect you in the long run for having completed your goal.” Along these same lines, QR shared her story of being the first in her family to obtain a college degree and the difficulties it created. Her perseverance came from wanting to rise above. She stated, “...she [mother] made me the strong woman I am today...I was going to make her proud and not have to worry about me.”

### **Family First**

Family first, familism is a foundation of love, sacrifice, commitment, and gratitude for the participants in this study. Participants were excited to share about family. They were proud of the fact that family is the most important thing in their life. Family is not something they have to

do, but something they love to do, long for. KL shared that she lived on campus while in school and her parents understood she could not come home every weekend, but did try to get home every two weeks or so. Her family support came in understanding that school was a priority. KL did share that when she went home, especially at holidays, it was like a big family reunion. This was the exception rather than the rule however. CD laments over the fact that she is in the US and the majority of her family remains in Brazil. She shared that she didn't think she really understood the impact that being away from family would have. "It was very difficult [leaving Brazil] and it still is at times." "The good times I miss them too like the birthdays, family gatherings, holidays." CD shared she felt this was her journey, to come to the US for an education. She also shared that she talks with her mother almost every day, which is a constant source of support.

MN describes the difficulty in balancing school and family, a pressure most of the participants shared. "...I have to make sure I was spending time with my family because the way I grew up, family is number one no matter what." She went on to explain that this time might merely be translating something for her parents or could be a big family gathering. Her tone was not one of disgust or frustration. Nor was it for any of the participants. It was one of pride and love. She went on to tell the story of her grandfather who was dying in Costa Rica. She took time off of school to go and be with him. I asked her what her parents thought of her decision to take time off of school. She replied, "...they knew that family would come first. Like, they were sure that I would always be there for them no matter what...they knew I would make that decision."

IJ lived at home during nursing school. She also indicated the difficulty in balancing school, work, and family. However, her parents required family night at least once per week. When asked about this IJ replied, "...just to make sure we know where we came from and we

spend time with the family and remember what was important and how we got where we are and the support of our family.” “...just to make sure that regardless of how hectic our lives were we still take time for our family.” Once again, she was not angry about carving out time for the family. At times it was just an hour, other times it may be a day trip. At any rate, this time was valued by the participant.

OP admitted that relinquishing control of some of her responsibilities as a Latino mother was difficult. It was insinuated in our conversation that while she was not always in charge of family functions, she still took part in them. OP also stated that her family and especially her children share in her success. For OP family first came in the form of her family and children allowing her to take a back seat at times. QR shared many of the same feelings with regards to being a Latino mom. She too had to overcome a lot of guilt when the pressures of school took precedence over family. However, she was quick to admit that the children were always first priority over everything.

I believe that AB summed it up best for many of the participants. “...mom is first and most, like there is the strongest there is...the head of the family...the heart of the family.” “She makes sure everyone is taken care of...” We went on to discuss the importance of family. AB stated that her family gathered every weekend. She stated, “I couldn’t imagine not being a part of that.” She affirmed that this is her time to refuel. This family time allows for reassurance, love, and support. I got the sense from all of the participants that this family time was their way of honoring the sacrifices made by their parents, spouses, and children. It was the least they could do.

## **Faith**

Faith, an attribute shared by several participants, was influential in their perseverance.

Faith or prayer was most frequently taught by the mothers. MN stated that, "...whatever it may be, pray about it...she [mother] always told us...you can't do things without God by our side." RB shared that she found herself praying about everything. GH spoke about her faith and the impact it had on her during nursing school, "...it gave me hope to continue with school even though I had a family. It gave me hope in actually getting into school and you know...praying that I make it through all my classes." IJ shared similar feelings related to her faith experience. "My faith gave me strength to continue and so, you know, when I was discouraged I knew that there is a reason that everything was happening." "I think that got to be a major reason for the success I have reached thus far in my career and then finishing nursing school."

### **Necessity**

The participants in this study were the children of immigrant parents who did not know English. Many of the participants learned English as a second language, becoming proficient during the educational process. There were still times when the English language was a challenge to be overcome in order to be successful. These participants did just that.

Application to college and maneuvering the financial aid system can be a daunting task for those familiar with it. These students often had to navigate through these processes alone. Here are some of the stories shared with regards to language and institutional hurdles that speak to the perseverance and determination of these participants.

KL shared that before going to nursing school she became a CNA. While working in a nursing home, the LPNs there took an interest in her and were instrumental in encouraging her to go to nursing school. She also stated that while in nursing school she purchased on-line writing advisors to assist her with her writing. She stated, "My second semester as a nursing student was probably the hardest semester that I had ever...it wasn't a concept. It was actually...it probably

have to do with my English...my communication skills, my writing, especially my grammar...” KL went on to share that this is still something she continues to work on. She also stated that it was important for her to become involved on campus both academically and socially.

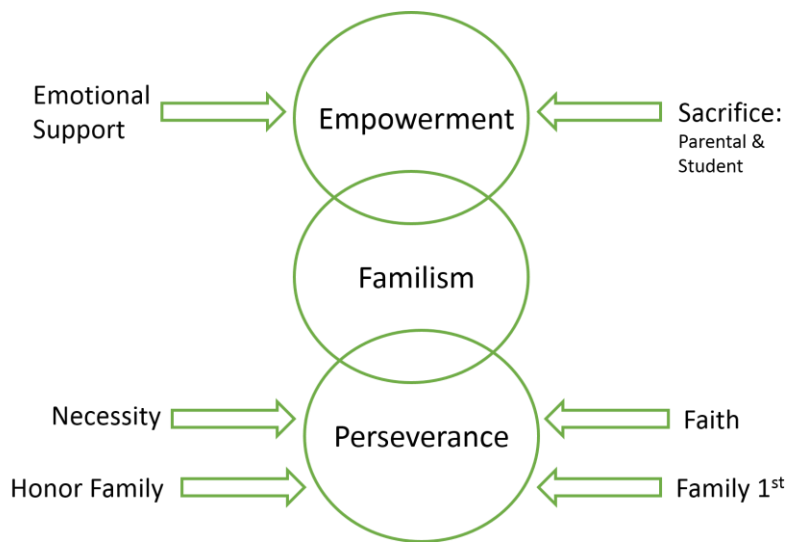
AB obtained her CNA while in high school, which she said put her in contact with a counselor who was instrumental in guiding her through the application process. Her parents did not speak English, so it was imperative that AB have an understanding of all of the admission and financial aid procedures. “I actually met May in person because she talked at our school...she was one of the ones that made sure I had everything like that...”

CD had to rely on admission counselors at her first school to assist her in navigating the system. “The amount of support I got from the people in the college was huge.” She also described conversations with advisors and deans who helped in guiding her through the curriculum and prerequisites. The point is that she had to seek them out in order to pursue this dream of nursing school. In addition to being unfamiliar with the educational system, CD was not completely fluent in English. In order to pass her anatomy class she translated notes every night. The lengths that these students go through to be successful are unbelievable.

GH and EF had similar experiences. They were both proficient in English but had to determine how to apply for college and financial aid on their own. They did not have the assistance of their parents. They both indicated that while their parents were a vital part of the entire process, it was up to them to provide their parents with the information necessary to make a decision. GH shared, “I think they got me to a point where they thought, okay, you’re independent, you need to take care of that yourself.” “They would ask about it and say, ‘have you done it’”? She also indicated that they made visits with her as well. EF shared “I really didn’t know what I needed.” She stated that she had to do this on her own because her parents

did not know the process either. "...I would reach out to people...ask them about the different process, call the school, a lot of researching...just asking questions."

These are just some of the stories and feelings shared by these Latino nursing school graduates. These are the things they feel empowered them to continue on in nursing school and push them to be successful. These stories point to family, faith, and necessity as reasons for perseverance. This perseverance and commitment are attributes which also enabled them to be successful.



*Figure 1. Models of Themes and subthemes of Perceptions of Success of Latino Nursing School Graduates*

Family is central to everything these participants do. Almost all the participants' parents immigrated to the US solely for their children to have the benefit of an education. Two participants are more mature and while their parents immigrated to the US, they chose to attend college later in life in order to be good role models for their children. These sacrifices empower the participants to remain focused and continue their education regardless of the obstacles they encounter. Participants are also fueled by the emotional support provided by their families, and in most cases their biggest supporters were their mothers. These participants indicated that they



were committed to being successful because they needed to prove to their parents that they could make it; fulfill the dreams their parents had for them. They are as self-less as their parents before them. They persevere in order to honor their parents and family. They persevere because family IS first, not in spite of it. Family first is the fuel that kept these participants focused and energized. Family is the largest reason for their success.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine what Latino nursing school graduates in the Appalachian region of the United States perceived as attributing to their successful completion of a baccalaureate nursing program and successfully completing the NCLEX-RN® Exam. Fourteen interviews were conducted for this narrative descriptive study. Through these interviews the overall theme of familism surfaced. Empowerment, commitment, and perseverance were themes which appeared throughout the interviews and supported the overall theme of familism. These themes are similar to findings in other studies conducted in other areas of the country, however, these interviews also revealed sub-themes unique to these participants.

Social cognitive theory guided this narrative descriptive study. Social Cognitive theory states that people are more than their circumstances (Bandura, 2005). The participants in this study used their past and the past of their families to inform and create their future. They became agents of change in their own lives, developing self-efficacy. This self-efficacy was instrumental in their success as nursing students.

A discussion of the findings will include a brief description of the challenges faced by the participants. The educational achievements of their parents will also be examined. These two issues assisted in shaping the success of these participants. The role of familism along with feelings of empowerment, perseverance, and commitment will be discussed as well.

#### **Similarity to Other Findings**

Several of the themes revealed in this study are themes which have been discovered in many other research studies involving Latino students. It is important to know if Latino nursing students in this region of the country share similar experiences with Latino nursing students in

California, Texas, New York, and Florida. Research by Nadeau (2014), Rivera-Goba & Nieto (2007), and Sheils (2010) support the findings of perseverance found in these Latino nursing school graduates. Supportive faculty was also mentioned in other research (Rivera-Goba & Campinha-Bacote, 2008; Sheils, 2010; and Goetz, 2008) as needed for success in nursing school. Family first or familism is a term that appeared repeatedly. Familism was often mentioned as a positive and negative influence by Latino students in other studies (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Goetz, 2008; Moceris, 2010; Nadeau, 2011; Rodriguez et al., 2007; Schwartz, 2007; Sheils, 2010). Familism in this study provided positive motivation for success was the context for the other themes.

### **Challenges**

The participants in this study faced multiple challenges while in nursing school. The challenges they indicated were language, institutional, and time management. Language was not a challenge faced by all participants even though all participants spoke English as a second language. Medical terminology also caused a challenge for these ESL participants. English as a second language and difficulty with medical terminology were also supported by prior research done by Goetz (2008) and Sheils (2010). A finding which was unique to this study was the use of Southern slang or euphemisms. This presented unique challenges to at least one participant, especially in the clinical setting. Students stated that they did not allow these challenges to overcome them. Instead, they used them as a learning experience. In order to be successful participants enlisted the use of Spanish/English dictionaries, on-line resources, and writing centers.

Institutional challenges were faced by several of the participants. Institutional challenges were related to ignorance in how to research information about nursing schools and financial aid.

Similar results were found in previous studies (Ackerman-Barger, 2010; Bond et al., 2008; Cason et al., 2008; Severiens & Wolff, 2008; Sheils, 2010; Taxis, 2002). In multiple cases parents did not speak English and participants were the first in their families to attend college in the United States. Therefore, students had no assistance at home. Once again, these participants sought help. They reached out to guidance counselors in high school, telephoned universities, and contacted schools of nursing requesting information on application and financial aid processes. Participants shared that while parents were unable to assist with the initial process, they did contribute thoughts and feelings to the conversation when actually choosing a school. Many of these challenges and solutions were found in other studies as well (Ackerman-Barger, 2010; Bond et al., 2008; Cason et al., 2008; Severiens & Wolff, 2008; Sheils, 2010; Taxis, 2002).

The last challenge was one mentioned by all participants. Each participant struggled with time management. This struggle was driven by the participants' desire to balance family and school obligations. The demands of nursing school are rigorous and require a dedicated commitment. Time is not only needed for classes and studying, but also for clinical education. Adding these requirements to those of family obligations can be overwhelming for Latino students. They shared feelings of frustration because they never felt they were giving either area enough of their time. In a culture that many of them indicated was matriarchal, these participants felt they were failing their families. This relates back to the concept and theme of familism. However, if one area had to suffer more than the other, family always took precedence over school.

These were challenges participants shared during interviews. It is important to point out that while they mentioned these challenges, they were not the focus of any of the interviews.

They do, nonetheless, fuel the empowerment, perseverance, and commitment demonstrated by these individuals.

### **Educational Background of Parents**

The level of education of the parents of the participants in this study appeared to have implications for their children's success which supports previous research conducted by Keels (2013), Linares (2008), and Stewart (2013). Seven of the nine participants shared the educational backgrounds of their parents. The fact that many of the parents attended school and some college in their home countries was a source of pride and inspiration for the participants. Four of the participants' parents immigrated from Mexico. The educational system in Mexico is set up as pre-school, primary (grades 1-6), Lower secondary (7-9), and Upper secondary (10-12). Upper secondary offers four separate tracks for students including a vocational track and college. Of the parents who immigrated from Mexico, two mothers had no education, one mother had attended elementary school, one mother attended college, one father attended sixth grade, and one father attended college (Foreign Credits, Inc., 2012). Unfortunately, upon arrival to the United States, the teaching degrees obtained by several parents were deemed useless.

Two of the participants were immigrants from Costa Rica. Education is valued in Costa Rica. This is supported by the fact that they have one of the highest adult literacy rates in South America. Costa Rica, like Mexico, has a three-tier system which includes Primary, Primary graduate and secondary education which leads to college and graduate school (Foreign Credits, Inc., 2012). One set of immigrant parents were educators in Costa Rica (college degree). The other set of parents were both professionals (high school education). The parents with teaching degrees were able to continue teaching in a private school in the US. The second couple came to

this country with \$35 to their name and started a new life. They currently own their own home and business.

One participant immigrated to the US from Brazil, first to follow her husband but second to continue her education. The educational system in Brazil is also a three-tier system. Tertiary education requires a good high school recommendation and a competitive vestibular exam (Foreign Credits Inc., 2012). Her father had a high school education, but her mother was uneducated. Her mother was expected to stay at home and raise the children. The participant attended school in Brazil and began college to receive a literature degree. None of the work done in Brazil transferred to the US. As a matter of fact, she could not attend college for a year once she arrived due to her immigration status and related paperwork.

One participant's family immigrated from Cuba. This student's family did this when she was a young girl. She waited until she was an adult to attend nursing school, feeling it was important to work for a while. She did not disclose what type of education she or her parents had prior to coming to the US. Cuba has the highest literacy rate in the world. They boast a very competitive educational system. This educational structure is also a three-tier system (Foreign Credits, Inc., 2012).

Many of the participants come from a rich heritage of education. Perhaps it is this heritage which inspired them to persevere in nursing school. This may be one of the reasons others do not succeed. The parents of the participants realized the value of an education. The majority of participants shared that their parents immigrated to the US for the sole purpose of providing them a better education in the US. This is a unique finding to these participants. Educated Latino parents are rarely documented in the literature. However, other research does indicate that Mexican immigrants encourage their children to get an education (Linares, 2008).

The amount of education obtained by the parents of participants in this study varied. It did not appear that the level of education of education had any influence on the parents' desire for a better education for their children. The parents of these participants immigrated to the US to provide an opportunity for a better education for their children.

## **Empowerment**

### **Family and Student Sacrifice**

These participants were empowered by the sacrifices made by their parents. Parents left their home countries in order for their children to have an opportunity for a better education. Parents sacrificed their own education in many circumstances for their children. This is unique to this study. There were no studies found which supported this finding. Participants realize the sacrifices made by their parents. Knowing the price their parents paid for them to be educated inspired and empowered these students to endure and be successful. Participants share that they want to “pay them back”, “make them proud”. “I want to do it for them” many of the participants shared. “They gave up so much for me...” Perhaps this is what distinguishes these Latino nursing students from others who are not successful. Familism is a cultural phenomenon; but families' risking everything to provide an education for their children has not been documented in the literature.

Due to the sacrifices made by their parents, these students were willing to sacrifice also. They spoke of sacrificing time with their husbands and children. While reminiscing about the sacrifices they made during nursing school, they would inevitably state, “but it was all worth it!” They would share how proud their parents were for their success. Bandura (2001) states that in social cognitive theory one must evaluate and self-reflect. The participants, on their way to achieving their goals and self-efficacy spent much time reflecting on the path that led them to

their success as nurses. These findings exceed experiences shared in other research. Participants spoke frequently about sacrifices they chose to make, not only for their parents but for themselves. This group of participants seemed to see the bigger picture. They realized and commented that by completing their education they were honoring their parents, achieving a personal goal, and setting a great example for their siblings and children.

## **Support**

**Family support.** Support was a form of empowerment for participants. Support came in several forms. Family support was frequently mentioned during interviews. Participants shared stories of parents, especially mothers, watching children so they could study. Families also provided meals at times. Husbands and children of the participants took on added responsibilities in the home. This support was very important to all of the participants and yet it was the moral support that often assisted them the most. Several of the participants shared stories of family “just being there”, family calling to say “You can do this!” or “Don’t give up”. Family support was central to success for these participants. These students attributed all success back to their family. These feelings were reiterated throughout the interviews. Again, this is unique to this study. Family support is contentious in other studies (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Goetz, 2008; Mocerri, 2010; Nadeau, 2011; Rodriguez et al., 2007; Schwartz, 2007; Sheils, 2010).

**Faculty and friend support.** Additionally, participants often cited faculty as being supportive while in nursing school. Participants suggested that nursing faculty wanted them to succeed. Several of the students commented that faculty often went above and beyond what was customary. Nursing faculty members often provided tutors, recommended study tools, and were mentors. Furthermore the participants indicated that at no time were they made to feel “different”



than the other students. They did not experience discrimination in any way. Faculty support is also mentioned in earlier studies (Amaro et al., 2006; Davis et al., 2010; Merritt, 2008; Payton et al., 2013; Zuzelo, 2005). Interviews also revealed the use of study groups or study partners. Participants often stated that “it was nice to have someone going through the same thing, they understand”. The assistance received from family, friends, and faculty empowered these participants to continue their educational journey.

### **Perseverance**

Perseverance is the innate need to continue trying, continue putting forth the effort to achieve a goal. It is sheer determination. Perseverance was exhibited in these participants through honoring their families, family-first, faith, and necessity. The participants in this study exhibited perseverance. They set a goal, becoming a nurse, and let nothing get in their way. They were very adamant about keeping the goal in site and doing whatever needed to be done in order to accomplish this goal. Perseverance is supported in the literature. Multiple studies have identified perseverance as an attribute of successful nursing students (Nadeau, 2011; Rivera – Goba & Campinha-Bacote, 2008; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Sheils, 2010). Perseverance in these studies tended to be attributed to personal success, for self. Perseverance in this study is unique. These participants persevere for their parents. Of course, there is personal gain, but they repeatedly indicated that passing nursing school and becoming a nurse was as much for their parents as it was for themselves. As stated previously, they persevere to make the sacrifices made by their parents worthwhile.

### **Honoring family**

Interviews revealed perseverance of participants. Achieving a nursing degree was their way to honor not only their parents but other family members. Participants stated they wished to

be role models for younger siblings and other family. They want to make it known that higher education is possible if one is determined and perseveres.

### **Family-First**

Perseverance was fueled in several ways. It was not surprising that participants attributed their perseverance mostly to their families. They stated that while balancing family and school was difficult at times, it was what fueled them. They needed family time to “remember who they were”, to “remember where we came from”. Family time reminded them of why the goal was important. This is not frequently seen as an attribute in other studies. This unique perspective may stem from the fact that their parents had some education and immigrated to the US for the participants to obtain an education.

### **Faith**

Faith also played a significant role in perseverance for some of these participants. One participant stated her faith gave her hope. She needed that hope to know she could make it. Another stated that her faith kept her going when she wanted to give up, it provided refreshment. Others told stories of parents praying endlessly for them and their goals. While faith was mentioned in other studies it was not a major construct.

### **Necessity**

Many of the participants persevered out of sheer necessity. They refused to give up or give in. They were faced with the daunting task of navigating college applications, financial aid applications, and nursing school searches on their own. Many of the parents are still not fluent in English. While they were educated in their own countries, the educational system in the US is very different and much more complex. As previously stated parents were very much involved in final decisions regarding schools but were unable to assist in the initial process.

The question remains. Why are these students successful and other are not? This research study is unique in several ways. It is the first study to determine perceptions of success of Latino nursing school graduates in Appalachia. It is also unique in that seven of the nine families immigrated specifically to provide their children with better educational opportunities than their own countries could offer. This immigration story was shared with participants from the time they were small. "Education is not an option, it is an expectation" stated one of the participants. This was the sentiment of all of the participants. There is strong evidence that these participants are successful because of familism. Familism has given them a strong sense of self. It has enabled them to set goals and encouraged them to pursue and reach those goals. These families in particular have provided the tools necessary for these students to achieve self-efficacy. It is through this self-efficacy that they are empowered and persevere to the end. Success for these participants was more than graduating from nursing school. Success meant they helped to fulfill their parents' dreams for them. They helped their parents realize their own dreams.

Familism was seen through all of the themes and subthemes. Familism was seen in the sacrifices made by parents and students which in turn empowered them to be successful. Familism was seen in the emotional support offered by family members. While there were other forms of emotional support (faculty, friends, co-workers) family had the most significant impact on the participants. Sacrifice and support fueled by familism empowered these participants to succeed.

Familism was also seen in the way participants honored their family. They honored their parents' sacrifices by being successful in nursing school and accomplishing their goals. Familism was seen when participants repeatedly put family first. Family-first encouraged, fueled, and energized these participants. This energy assisted participants to be successful. Familism was

present in their faith. Faith was most often shared by their mothers. It was integral to the success of several of the participants. It was faith that assisted them in succeeding. Familism was also seen in necessity. Participants succeeded out of necessity. Their parents relied on them to be self-sufficient. Their parents knew they would find a way to overcome institutional challenges in order to get into nursing school. Familism is instrumental in honoring family, family-first, faith, and necessity. All of these attributes assisted participants in persevering. Perseverance allowed them to be successful in nursing school. Empowerment and perseverance would not be possible without familism.

### **Recommendations for Nurse Educators**

Recommendations for nurse educators stem from the interviews of these nine participants. They spoke eloquently about the support they received from their families and its importance. Every Latino student does not enjoy this same level of support. Nursing faculty need to be aware of the obligations of students which compete for the time and energy of our students. Perhaps the creation of learning modules focusing on time management, study techniques and test taking strategies would assist our Latino students in their success. Participants indicated that supportive faculty was instrumental in their success. It is imperative that nursing faculty make a concerted effort to support Latino nursing students. Educators can do this by providing nursing advisors early in the curriculum. Participants also mentioned the need for mentors. Nurse educators should seek out former successful Latino students to mentor and tutor current students. Participants also indicated that study groups were useful. It may be helpful for nurse educators to encourage formation of study groups.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Recommendations for future research include a repeat of this study using a qualitative survey. This approach may increase the number of participants and reach a larger geographical area. Additionally, research should be done in the Appalachian region focusing on the effect of parental educational status on Latino nursing school graduates. This type of study may assist in determining if success in nursing school is reflective of parental education. Research examining the relationship between immigration to the US from Latino countries and education of children would be a study of interest. A study of this nature may assist in determining if the results of this study were a phenomenon to only these participants. Research probing deeper into familism is needed. A comparison study examining changes in degree of familism between parents who are educated and parents who are uneducated may help explain the findings in this study. It may also reveal why many students indicate familism as a barrier. Research further exploring the themes of empowerment and perseverance and the subthemes of sacrifice, emotional support, honoring family, family-first, faith, and necessity and their relationship to familism may give additional insight into academic successfulness of Latino students. A study comparing Latino nursing students of educated parents and uneducated parents may assist in confirming findings which relate success of nursing school to educated parents. Lastly, research comparing familism in Latino and non-Latino nursing students may provide insight into the extent to which this phenomenon interferes with or enhances the rigorous requirements of nursing school. Another interesting study would be to look at the relationship between students who were unsuccessful and the role of familism in their lives.

## **Limitations**

The limitations of this study included a small geographical area which covered only three states: North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Participants from the Appalachian states of Virginia, Kentucky, Georgia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania would have added to the depth and breadth of this study. North Carolina had the greatest number of participants. Lack of access to Latino nursing school graduates willing to share their story was also a limitation.

## **Conclusion**

Themes of perseverance and commitment were supported by stories related to honoring family, maintaining balance, familism, and faith. Familism, empowerment, and perseverance combined to create in these students a sense of self-efficacy which allowed them to be successful in nursing school.

There is a dichotomy related to familism in other studies. Some nursing students state that their families are supportive (Gardner, 2005; Yang et al., 2009; Zalaquett, 2006) while others state that their families do not understand the need for an education (Alicea-Planas, 2009; Bond et al., 2008; Cason et al., 2008; Goetz, 2008; Mocerri, 2010; Sheils, 2010). Families in other studies did not immigrate to the US specifically for their children to obtain an education. Education was an afterthought. These findings suggest that students who have parents who immigrated to the United States specifically for an education for their children value education and are willing to support their children in whatever means possible. These findings also suggest that these participants do not appear to ascribe to the selfish, self-centeredness of the “millennial” generation (Stein, 2013). These participants and the familism to which they do ascribe are willing to make sacrifices for their parents.

Results of this study indicated that Latino nursing students attributed familism first and foremost to their success. Latino nursing students also shared stories of empowerment. Empowerment was derived from sacrifices made by family and by emotional support received. They also shared stories of perseverance and commitment. This research study was instrumental in providing a glimpse into the reasons for success of Latino nursing school graduates in Appalachia.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### IRB Approval



EAST TENNESSEE STATE  
UNIVERSITY

Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707  
Phone: (423) 439-6053 Fax: (423) 439-6060

#### IRB APPROVAL – Initial Expedited Review

April 21, 2016

Barbara Rauscher

**Re:** The Perceptions of Success of Latino Nursing School Graduates in the Appalachian Region of the United States

**IRB#:** 0316.21sd

**ORSPA #:**

The following items were reviewed and approved by an expedited process:

- New protocol submission xform, CV of PI, \*ICD version 3/11/16, Script for Participant Recruitment, Fully executed IRB Authorization Agreement with Lenoir-Rhyne University, Script for Email and Survey Link, Survey Questions, Interview Questions

The item(s) with an asterisk(\*) above noted changes requested by the expedited reviewers.

On **April 21, 2016**, a final approval was granted for a period not to exceed 12 months and will expire on **April 20, 2017**. The expedited approval of the study *and* requested changes will be reported to the convened board on the next agenda.

The following **enclosed stamped, approved Informed Consent Documents** have been stamped with the approval and expiration date and these documents must be copied and provided to each participant prior to participant enrollment:

- Informed Consent Document (ICD version 4.20.2016 stamped approved 4.21.2016)

Federal regulations require that the original copy of the participant's consent be maintained in the principal investigator's files and that a copy is given to the subject at the time of consent.

#### **Waiver of written documentation**

Study has been granted a Waiver of requirement for written documentation of Informed Consent by George Youngberg, M.D, Chair, ETSU/VA IRB, under category: 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2)

The research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants as it is a survey and interview (with AR) and the study has an appropriate protocol. The research involved no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context as it is a survey and interview



Accredited Since December 2005

(with AR) and the study has an appropriate protocol. The investigator has provided a script of the consent discussion that meets the requirements for the consent process and includes all required and appropriate additional elements of disclosure. The IRB has considered whether the investigator is to provide written information to the participant that includes all required and appropriate additional elements of the disclosure.

**Projects involving Mountain States Health Alliance must also be approved by MSHA following IRB approval prior to initiating the study.**

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others must be reported to the IRB (and VA R&D if applicable) within 10 working days.

Proposed changes in approved research cannot be initiated without IRB review and approval. The only exception to this rule is that a change can be made prior to IRB approval when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research subjects [21 CFR 56.108 (a)(4)]. In such a case, the IRB must be promptly informed of the change following its implementation (within 10 working days) on Form 109 ([www.etsu.edu/irb](http://www.etsu.edu/irb)). The IRB will review the change to determine that it is consistent with ensuring the subject's continued welfare.

Sincerely,  
George Youngberg, M.D., Chair  
ETSU/VA Medical IRB

cc: Dr. Loury

## Appendix B

### IRB Continuation Approval



EAST TENNESSEE STATE  
UNIVERSITY

Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707  
Phone: (423) 439-6053 Fax: (423) 439-6060

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#### IRB APPROVAL – Continuing Expedited Review

February 28, 2017

Barbara Rauscher

Re: The Perceptions of Success of Latino Nursing School Graduates in the Appalachian Region of the United States  
IRB#: 0316.21sd  
ORSPA#:

The following items were reviewed and approved by an expedited process:

- xfrom 107, currently approved ICD version 4.20.2016 stamped approved 4.21.2016 (and clean copy), previously waiver determinations, Narrative portion of NPS, Advertisement Script for Participant Recruitment stamped approved 4.21.2016 (and clean copy)

On February 28, 2017, a final approval was granted for a period not to exceed 12 months and will expire on February 27, 2018. The expedited approval of the study will be reported to the convened board on the next agenda.

The following **enclosed stamped, approved ICD** has been stamped with the approval and expiration date and this document must be copied and provided to each participant prior to participant enrollment:

- Informed Consent Document (ICD version 4.20.2016 stamped approved 2.28.2017)

Federal regulations require that the original copy of the participant's consent be maintained in the principal investigator's files and that a copy is given to the subject at the time of consent.

Waiver of written documentation

Study has been granted a Waiver of requirement for written documentation of Informed Consent by George Youngberg, M.D, Chair, ETSU/VA IRB, under category: 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2)

The research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants as it is a survey and interview (with AR) and the study has an appropriate protocol. The research involved no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context as it is a survey and interview



Accredited Since December 2005

(with AR) and the study has an appropriate protocol. The investigator has provided a script of the consent discussion that meets the requirements for the consent process and includes all required and appropriate additional elements of disclosure. The IRB has considered whether the investigator is to provide written information to the participant that includes all required and appropriate additional elements of the disclosure.

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others must be reported to the IRB (and VA R&D if applicable) within 10 working days.

Proposed changes in approved research cannot be initiated without IRB review and approval. The only exception to this rule is that a change can be made prior to IRB approval when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research subjects [21 CFR 56.108 (a)(4)]. In such a case, the IRB must be promptly informed of the change following its implementation (within 10 working days) on Form 109 ([www.etsu.edu/irb](http://www.etsu.edu/irb)). The IRB will review the change to determine that it is consistent with ensuring the subject's continued welfare.

Sincerely,  
George Youngberg, M.D., Chair  
ETSU/VA Medical IRB

## Appendix C

### Participant Recruitment Script

My name is Barbara Rauscher RN, MSN, PhDc. I am a nursing doctoral student at East Tennessee State University. I am currently seeking Latino nursing school graduates from Baccalaureate nursing programs in the Appalachian region of the United States who have successfully completed the NCLEX-RN®. My dissertation research is a study of the perceptions of success of Latino nursing students in the Appalachian region of the United States. In other words, what made you successful in nursing school? Interested participants will be sent a survey via Survey Monkey® for demographic information and permission to contact you for a phone interview. If you are interested, please contact me at [Rauscher@goldmail.etsu.edu](mailto:Rauscher@goldmail.etsu.edu). Thank you for your consideration.



## Appendix D

### Invitation to Participate Script

Thank you for expressing interest in participating in my research. As stated in my recruitment ad, I am currently seeking Latino nursing school graduates from Baccalaureate nursing programs in the Appalachian region of the United States who have successfully completed the NCLEX-RN®. My dissertation research is a study of the perceptions of success of Latino nursing students in the Appalachian region of the United States. In other words, what made you successful in nursing school?

Please complete the following demographic survey as the next step in participation in my research. Completion of the survey should only take 10-15 minutes. I will contact you regarding your participation once I have received your completed survey. Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Barbara Rauscher

Link to Survey on Survey Monkey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QF3N7GC>

## Appendix E

### Demographic Survey Questions

Please complete the following survey. This survey will be used to conduct a qualitative research study as part of a doctoral dissertation. All information will be kept confidential and is for the sole use of the researcher.

1. Name
2. Age
3. Marital status
4. Children
5. Do you have any siblings?
  - a. If yes, how many?
6. Ethnicity
7. Where do you live?
8. What school of nursing did you graduate from?
9. Where is this school located?
10. When did you graduate (month and year)?
11. Has anyone in your family, other than you, graduated from college?
12. Did your family immigrate to the United States? If so when?
13. Did you work while in school?
14. Are you willing to be interviewed as part of the next step of this research?
  - a. If yes, please provide the following: email address where the researcher may contact you.

## Appendix F

### Interview Questions

1. What does success mean to you?
2. Describe your nursing school experience?
3. What do you feel made you successful in nursing school?

VITA

BARBARA M. RAUSCHER

- Education: Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 1987
- Master of Science in Nursing Education, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, North Carolina, 2005
- PhD in Nursing, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2017
- Professional Experience: Professor of Nursing, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, North Carolina, 2006-present
- CCU RN, Catawba Valley Medical Center, Hickory, North Carolina, 2016- present
- Honors and Awards: Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society
- Golden Key Award