



Volume 17, 2022

FOSTERING THE SUCCESS OF WORKING-CLASS LATINA DOCTORAL STUDENTS AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

Loni Crumb

East Carolina University, Greenville,
NC, USA

Crumb15@ecu.edu

ABSTRACT

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Aim/Purpose | Latina doctoral students' educational experiences are often mediated by their social class status, race, and gender. Latinas have sustained an increasing presence in doctoral programs at various colleges and universities across the United States; yet, they are continually underrepresented in doctoral programs at predominantly White institutions. The author identifies evidence-supported, personal and institutional factors that may contribute to working-class Latina doctoral students' successful persistence at predominantly White institutions. |
| Background | The tension between personal identities versus academic capability can make the doctoral education experience academically, socially, emotionally, and financially challenging for Latinas from low-income backgrounds. Latina/Latino Critical Race Theory and Multiracial Feminist Theory are introduced as lenses to examine aspects of the doctoral education experience that may impede or support Latina students' retention. |
| Methodology | As a conceptual article, this paper is an examination of research regarding the experiences of doctoral students of color at predominantly White institutions in the United States and summarizes how Latina doctoral students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds can succeed in these environments. |
| Contribution | This article outlines evidence-supported strategies that may influence working-class Latina doctoral students' successful persistence at predominantly White institutions. |
| Findings | The research highlighted in this article emphasizes how factors such as embracing familismo, increasing faculty diversity, establishing peer networks, and creating inclusive class-conscious academic programs and new student orientations, may contribute to the doctoral persistence of Latinas from economically disadvantaged backgrounds attending predominantly White institutions. |

Accepting Editor Robin S Minthorn | Received: May 1, 2020 | Revised: September 25, October 21, 2020 | Accepted: November 30, 2021.

Cite as: Crumb, L. (2022). Fostering the success of working-class Latina doctoral students at predominantly White institutions. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 17, 25-38. <https://doi.org/10.28945/4886>

(CC BY-NC 4.0) This article is licensed to you under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/). When you copy and redistribute this paper in full or in part, you need to provide proper attribution to it to ensure that others can later locate this work (and to ensure that others do not accuse you of plagiarism). You may (and we encourage you to) adapt, remix, transform, and build upon the material for any non-commercial purposes. This license does not permit you to use this material for commercial purposes.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Recommendations for Practitioners | Personal and institutional factors are recommended for faculty and student affairs professionals to support the doctoral persistence of Latina students such as embracing personal agency and academic efficacy, embracing familismo, recognizing the myth of meritocracy, establishing peer support networks, creating inclusive academic environments, establishing formal faculty mentorships, and fostering class conscious faculty. |
| Recommendations for Researchers | The literature presented in this paper provides ideas for future research opportunities that could further examine how supportive relationships and inclusiveness promote Latina doctoral students' educational success. |
| Impact on Society | Latinas experience overlapping forms of privilege and subordination depending on their race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and academic setting. |
| Future Research | Further development of transformative research on this topic may improve inclusive educational practices and potentially increase access to doctoral-level education for Latinas and other economically disadvantaged students of color. |
| Keywords | Latinas, doctoral education, persistence, social class, Latcrit, Multiracial Feminist Theory, equity, economic disadvantage |

INTRODUCTION

Latinas have sustained an increasing presence in doctoral programs at various colleges and universities across the United States (U.S.) within the last decade. Approximately 8% of doctoral degrees were conferred to Latinas in the 2017-2018 academic year, compared to 6.1% conferred to this group in 2010-2011 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The rise of Latinas completing doctoral education is laudable; yet, Latinas are continually underrepresented in doctoral programs at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Ramirez, 2017). Doctoral education is denoted as a predominantly White environment that disseminates White middle-class cultural values in which students learn customs through peer and faculty interactions, mentoring relationships, and engaging in research, teaching, and service activities (Hernández, 2015; Turner & Thompson, 1993). The hegemonic culture of doctoral education at PWIs has a direct impact on the academic and social integration of Latina students (Ramirez, 2017) as their journey to graduation is often complicated by classism, racism, and sexism inherent in the social and academic environment at PWIs (Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Gutiérrez et al., 2019).

The tension between personal identities versus institutional culture at PWIs can make the doctoral education experience academically, socially, and emotionally challenging for Latinas from low-income backgrounds (Franklin et al., 2014; Pecero, 2016; Vasil & McCall, 2018). As such, Latina scholars Espino et al. (2010) used testimonios (e.g., first-person accounts of socially significant experiences) to highlight how the institutional cultures in doctoral programs “collided” with factors related to their multiple strands of identities (e.g., social class status, motherhood, first-generation status, spousal status, parent’s education level, and immigration status) which impacted their doctoral education experiences and career transitions.

The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of how social class status influences the educational experiences of Latina doctoral students from low-income backgrounds attending PWIs and factors that influence their doctoral persistence. First, I provide definitions of key terms, as complications in definitions have led to the paucity of research related to socioeconomic status and related constructs (Liu, 2011; Walpole, 2007). In the next section, I provide a review of the literature regarding the culture of doctoral education and challenges to working-class Latinas’ doctoral persistence. I propose Latina/Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and Multiracial Feminism to conceptualize the importance of recognizing systemic barriers that may impede doctoral persistence at PWIs and

acknowledge the unique assets of Latina students. Last, I discuss evidence-supported strategies that foster successful doctoral persistence for Latinas at PWIs and suggest areas of future research.

The construct *working-class* is operationalized to encompass the labels of “poor, under, and lower-class” given the pejorative nature of these terms and to move toward collective agency of the socially stratified group (Arena, 2011). The concept for working-class was informed by Gilbert (2008), suggesting that the working-class and working-poor class are individuals employed in manual labor or service industries, who cannot depend on steady employment, and have incomes that are below mainstream living standards. This article focuses on Latina doctoral students from working-class families who experienced financial hardship. The term Latina refers to individuals who identify as female with heritage stemming from Mexico, Central America, South America, or the Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean (Rivera et al., 2010). This definition of Latinas was broadly conceptualized to honor Latinas’ diverse ethnic identities (Rivera et al., 2010). The term Latinx is used to signify the collective group (gender-neutral). The U.S. Department of Education defines persistence as the act of continuing towards an educational goal (Cuccaro-Alamin, 1997). Doctoral persistence is defined as the enrollment in a doctoral program for a consecutive time period with the goal of obtaining a doctoral degree (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016).

THE CULTURE OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION

THE IMPACT OF ETHNOCENTRISM

Doctoral education involves a socialization process in which students learn customs, traditions, and values through peer and faculty interactions, mentoring relationships, and engaging in research, teaching, and service activities (Gildersleeve et al., 2011). Therefore, the doctoral persistence of working-class Latina students must be understood within this socialization process, which operates to preserve existing patterns of educational inequities (Espino, 2012; Espino et al., 2010; Pecero, 2016). Scholars have suggested that doctoral programs have both official and unofficial curricula, with the latter having a differential impact on students from historically marginalized groups (Margolis, 2001; Townsend, 1995). The official curriculum generally encompasses a plan of study and duties to fulfill respective program requirements, which are transparent and anticipated by students; whereas, the unofficial or hidden curriculum are values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior students may absorb from faculty and peers without conscious knowledge (Foot, 2017). Within the hidden curriculum are distinct messages to students about the culture within a doctoral program that work to reproduce that culture (Margolis, 2001). Researchers have purported that doctoral education at PWIs circulate White middle-class cultural values and remain a chilly climate for historically marginalized students due to discriminatory and non-inclusive practices (Gildersleeve et al., 2011). For example, Latina students have reported experiencing overexposure to dominant Eurocentric curricula in doctoral programs at PWIs (Pecero, 2016). Furthermore, Latina students are often discouraged from using culturally appropriate epistemologies and theoretical frameworks in their research when attending PWIs (J. C. González, 2006; Rodriguez, 2006; Von Robertson et al., 2016)

Researchers (Pecero, 2016) have also documented that the scholarly endeavors of Latina students may be stifled by program faculty when their research is related to their communities of color, as the curriculum in many higher education programs reflects a preponderance of scholarship centered on White males (Townsend, 1995). Rodriguez (2006) noted students reporting that “brown on brown” research was not valued, whereas research regarding Eurocentric issues was accorded legitimate (p. 1078). Such prejudicial practices place an undue burden on Latina doctoral students to either divest their academic interests or become the sole ambassador of research and scholarship related to communities of color (Hinojosa & Carney, 2016; Pecero, 2016). In contrast, Latinx students attending Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) have reported supportive departmental climates, positive student engagement, and gains in academic and personal development (Fosnacht & Nailos, 2016; Vaquerera,

2007). Despite the sense of belonging and support for academic advancement Latinx students experience at HSIs, these intuitions are less likely to offer doctorate level programs across various disciplines in comparison to non-HSIs (Fosnacht & Nailos, 2016). Consequently, there is a continued need for doctoral programs at PWIs to examine discriminatory practices and create inclusive environments in which working-class Latinas doctoral students can find support systems that aid in doctoral persistence.

EXPERIENCES OF TOKENISM AND SELF-CENSORSHIP

The underrepresentation of working-class Latinas in doctoral programs at PWIs often results in experiences of tokenism and self-censorship (Franklin et al., 2014; Hinojosa & Carney, 2016; Pecero, 2016). Tokenism refers to the experience of being over-observed, stereotyped, and excluded due to identification with a minority status (Kanter, 1977). Self-censorship is the act of suppressing one's voice or involvement, typically out of fear or deference to others' sensibilities (Rodriguez, 2006). In an ethnographic study of 22 Latinx doctoral students at PWIs, Gildersleeve et al. (2011) found that nearly all student participants reported tokenism experiences in which they were often asked to provide answers to classmates about their entire culture or gender. Likewise, Hernández (2015) reported that Latinx students are often perceived as cultural ambassadors, as they are called to serve as the Latinx representative on university committees and entrenched in programmatic efforts to recruit Latinx students. These additional efforts may be psychologically and physically taxing to working-class ethnic minority doctoral students, as their White, middle, or upper-class counterparts may not assume these same responsibilities in doctoral programs (Crumb et al., 2020). Contrarily, Aguirre-Covarrubias et al.'s (2015) survey of Latina graduate engineering students attending HSIs found that students reported positive experiences with faculty instructors who were supportive and encouraging, had high expectations, and provided academic and personal advice that contributed to their persistence. However, it is important to note that although students had exposure to diverse faculty of similar ethnic/racial backgrounds who contributed to their persistence, they still reported a lack of financial support and working multiple jobs, as they did not have enough funding to cover additional expenses associated with graduate school. Additionally, the researchers noted that a study participant faced discrimination related to having a child while pursuing a graduate program. Hence, Latinas' propensity to face challenges in doctoral education due to their multiple identities is prevalent across settings.

Experiences of discrimination often beget self-censorship, which emerges as a consequence of underrepresented students continually negotiating when and how to respond to discrimination. Some Latina students have responded to incessant discrimination and prejudicial occurrences by saying as little as possible and silencing their voices (C. G. González, 2014; Rodriguez, 2006). Furthermore, researchers (Hinojosa & Carney, 2016; Pecero, 2016) noted that Latina doctoral students who reported high levels of discrimination and tokenism protected themselves by disengaging in class and attempting to finish their programs expeditiously, whereas other Latina doctoral students chose to depart from academia due to racial battle fatigue (Franklin et al., 2014) in trying to meet oppressive academic norms (Ayala & Ramirez, 2019; Hernández, 2015).

CONFLICTS IN SOCIAL CLASS LOYALTY

Conflicting social class loyalty further complicates doctoral persistence and is proposed as one of the most prominent issues for working-class women in doctoral education at PWIs (Crumb et al., 2020). Working-class Latinas may experience cultural incongruities or dissonance as they attempt to interfuse aspects of their ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds with the social mores of doctoral education at PWIs (Pecero, 2016; Ramirez, 2017). Accordingly, Latina students may feel pressure to isolate from their families or culture to assimilate to the culture of doctoral education (Pecero, 2016; Ramirez, 2017). Making such adjustments is potentially stressful for working-class women doctoral students because they may perceive themselves as no longer fitting in with their working-class family

and friends, nor do they feel a sense of belonging in the privileged setting of the program (Pecero, 2016). The doctoral socialization process may pressure Latinas to conform to alternative values even if they coincide with their personal values and attitudes (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-Garcia, 2018). Moreover, the conformist nature of doctoral education may exacerbate the elusiveness of self-identity and a sense of belongingness for working-class Latina doctoral students with ongoing financial concerns (Ramirez, 2017).

THE IMPACT OF FINANCIAL CHALLENGES ON STUDENT PERSISTENCE

Working-class Latina doctoral students face significantly more financial struggles due to their low socioeconomic origins than their middle or upper-class peers as they strive for upward mobility (Hernández, 2015; Ramirez, 2017). Psychological distress, decreased ability to focus, and pressure to graduate sooner are among many factors frequently cited as secondary effects of financial challenges faced by working-class students (Crumb et al., 2020; Ramirez, 2017). Working-class women doctoral students at PWIs may be less likely to disclose distress regarding financial challenges to faculty and peers. The unwillingness to disclose financial distress attributed to the shame and inferiority attached to a working-class status (i.e., internalized classism) could be detrimental to working-class Latina doctoral students' academic performance. In addition, researchers identified that working-class doctoral students often have full-time off-campus jobs or multiple part-time jobs to account for unmet financial needs (Cueva, 2013; Holley & Gardner, 2012), which detracts from their engagement in academic activities.

FAMILIAL SUPPORT AND DOCTORAL PERSISTENCE

In a quantitative study of 273 doctoral students nationwide, Warnock and Appel (2012) identified that deprivation of familial intellectual support, financial resources, and graduate support networks significantly hampered working-class doctoral students' achievement. Warnock and Appel reported that working-class doctoral students were less likely to consult parents or family members about their academic experiences in comparison to graduate students from middle and upper-class backgrounds. Through the analysis of autoethnographies, Tokarczyk and Fay (1993) posited that many working-class women students did not consider their family as a useful social or financial resource in their graduate education endeavors.

On the contrary, current researchers noted that Latinas value the support from their romantic partners, parents, children, and other relatives and identify this support as vital to doctoral persistence (Hinojosa & Carney, 2016; Ramos, 2020; Sanchez, 2015). Furthermore, researchers found that high achieving Latinas from lower socioeconomic backgrounds had a continued sense of responsibility to their families (i.e., familismo) to be successful, which helped them to successfully persist in doctoral and professional degree programs (Ramirez, 2017). Specifically, family support may help Latina doctoral students garner self-confidence and decrease self-doubt (Ramos, 2020). Despite these findings, Hernández (2015) reported that Latina doctoral students might sometimes withdraw from their families due to the academic and personal stress they face in their programs. Latina scholars (Espino et al., 2010) illuminated how working-class students faced difficult circumstances such as feelings of separation and pondered how to unite pursuing doctoral level education and the networks that ensue from engagement in academe with their working-class identities. The authors note that physical and psychological distance from the institution and home may exacerbate feelings of separation (Espino et al., 2010). In essence, researchers have generated multiple interpretations of the significance of familial support regarding Latinas' persistence in doctoral education and note that working-class students still experience dissonance between integrating their academic identity into their family or "home" identity (Espino et al., 2010; Kiyama, 2018). These issues are vital as many Latina students may be first-generation doctoral students and their families may provide social support but have limited guidance on how to navigate the idiosyncrasies of doctoral level education (Ramos, 2020).

Overall, a review of the extant literature establishes that researchers have made noteworthy contributions to aid in understanding the experiences of Latina students and doctoral students from working-class backgrounds. However, an increased focus on working-class Latina students' experiences in doctoral level programs at PWIs is still warranted. Most studies on Latinx students are focused on the undergraduate student population and few of these studies demarcate the construct of social class status alongside how Latina students' gender, ethnicity, and other identities influence doctoral persistence (Aguirre-Covarrubias et al., 2015). The following sections provide an overview of two theoretical frameworks that challenge the hegemonic structures of doctoral education at PWIs and emphasize the multiple identities of Latinas.

LATCRIT

Doctoral education is a conduit for social reproduction due to its replication of structured power relations between privileged social classes that maintain social hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1977; Espino, 2012). LatCrit stems from Critical Race Theory, which aims to challenge dominant ideologies that support racialized inequities (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). LatCrit elucidates Latinx individuals' multidimensional identities and the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression they may experience (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Along with offering a robust analysis of how gender roles and expectations impact the lives of Latina women (Hernandez-Truyol, 1997), the fundamental tenants of LatCrit and CRT are (a) the acknowledgment that racism is a fundamental part of American society that exists within institutional structures, (b) the challenge of dominant ideologies that uphold faulty views of the existence of an equal opportunity for people of color, (c) the active propagation of social justice, and (d) the centralization of marginalized voices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). LatCrit discourse calls for transformative research to centralize the marginalized voice and recognize Latinx persons as legitimate creators of knowledge (Hernandez-Truyol, 1997). Situating the current article within the LatCrit framework allows for an intricate depiction of doctoral persistence centered on working-class Latinas' experiences and voices. The use of LatCrit highlights the manifestations of colorblind and class-blind ideology in educational spaces, which results in ignoring the systemic barriers working-class Latinas face in matriculating to and persisting in doctoral education at PWIs.

MULTIRACIAL FEMINISM

I selected Multiracial Feminism as a corresponding framework to assure an examination of the distinctive identities and socio-cultural complexities of Latinas' family, school, and community lives and how they collectively shape their doctoral education experiences. Multiracial Feminism is a theoretical and practical paradigm developed by women of color whose social locations provided them with unique perspectives on self and societal structures (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Unlike theoretical frameworks that analyze one structure of ascribed marginalization and generally omit or subsume all others, multiracial Feminism problematizes race, class, and gender inequities (Ramirez, 2013). Multiracial feminist discourse proposes that one or another form of identity may be salient in an individual's conscious at any given moment (Ramirez, 2013). Inclusive feminist inquiry calls for researchers to avoid the erasure of women of color experiences in literature by analyzing the power relations that constitute all social constructions of identity that shape women's lives in distinctive ways (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Multiracial Feminism maintains that women experience overlapping forms of privilege and subordination depending on their race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and the setting (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Within the constraints of multiple ascribed marginal identities, Multiracial Feminist discourse emphasizes that women create viable lives for themselves, their families, and their communities (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Using Multiracial Feminism alongside LatCrit will allow for the readers to embrace the subjective view of Latinas' educational experiences while simultaneously taking a critical look at structures within higher education systems at PWIs that serve to impede or support their doctoral persistence.

FOSTERING THE SUCCESS OF WORKING-CLASS LATINA DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Economic differences do not have to result in differences in academic achievement for working-class Latina doctoral students. Doctoral students at PWIs who access resources early in their doctoral studies are more likely to persist to graduation (Crumb et al., 2020). Researchers have documented supportive structures that may influence the successful persistence of working-class Latina doctoral students at PWIs. The following section outlines evidence-supported strategies that may support Latinas' doctoral persistence at PWIs. The following discussion is delineated into two sections: *personal factors* and *institutional factors*.

PERSONAL FACTORS

Embracing personal agency and academic efficacy

Working-class Latina doctoral students often consider their underprivileged upbringing as an aspect that has aided their persistence. Researchers have suggested that working-class students expect hard work unaccompanied by a sense of entitlement (Crumb et al., 2020; Richardson et al., 2004). In accordance, working-class women doctoral students may have more confidence in their intellectual ability and merit in educational environments (Crumb et al., 2020). Whereas past researchers have purported that working-class minority students experienced feelings of inferiority and shame (Sánchez et al., 2011), other researchers (Crumb et al., 2020; Hinojosa & Carney, 2016; Pecero, 2016; Ramos, 2020) revealed that these students were confident in their academic ability and reported fewer feelings of inferiority in elitist doctoral environments. Using LatCrit as a lens, it is apparent that Latinas and working-class students have much confidence in their academic capabilities. It is vital to seek literature created by and centered on Latinx scholars to counter deficit-based ideology related to their academic capacities (Ramos, 2020).

Embracing familismo

Latina working-class women students have identified that their families' display of emotional support and love positively influenced their doctoral persistence (Corona et al., 2017; Hernández, 2015; Pecero, 2016; Ramos, 2020). Family connectedness has special resonance for working-class doctoral students as they are often pressured to disassociate themselves from their backgrounds and conform to the middle-class standards (i.e., hidden curriculum) of predominantly White academic environments. Support from family members is associated with positive social adjustment and emotional well-being (Sarubbi et al., 2019), both of which are imperative as students adapt to the rigors of doctoral level education. Accordingly, Latinx working-class parents are often highly supportive of the students' doctoral endeavors, although the parents may be less familiar with higher education and language differences may exist (Ceja, 2004; Espino et al., 2010; Ramos, 2020). High achieving Latinas are often raised in families in which education is valued (Kiyama, 2018; Ramos, 2020). This value placed on higher education counters evoked stereotypes that working-class Latinx parents are anti-intellectual and disinterested in their descendants' educational pursuits (Kiyama, 2018).

Moreover, family support should be seen as a larger collective of individuals rather than solely parents (Kiyama, 2018). As stated earlier, multiracial feminist scholars suggest one or another form of identity may be salient at a given time, depending upon the setting. Accordingly, when considering doctoral level education, it is imperative to consider the inclusion of a student's romantic partners and children, as there is a need to include salient roles of partner/spouse or mother in the doctoral journey (Trepal et al., 2014). The entire familial unit can benefit from an increased understanding of the responsibilities of doctoral students (e.g., conference travel) and the time-dedication necessary for these endeavors.

Recognizing the myth of meritocracy

The emulation of family-related values regarding work-ethic is identified as a strategy of persistence in managing academic workloads and persevering through hardships. Working-class women students have an early understanding that they have to put forth additional effort to be equally productive in doctoral education (Crumb et al., 2020; Vasil & McCall, 2018). LatCrit reminds us that institutions of education uphold faulty views of the existence of an equal opportunity for students of color (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Working-class Latina women students often recognize that the system of meritocracy that is valued and emphasized in working-class families conflict with the racist, sexist, and classist structures of the academy (Vasil & McCall, 2018). Nevertheless, access to privileged networks to ascertain social capital may still be necessary for working-class Latina doctoral students to receive equitable educational opportunities.

Establishing peer support networks

Researchers have identified that forming peer networks provided Latina students with an immediate outlet to express their feelings and frustrations regarding their experiences in sometimes hostile doctoral education environments (Patterson-Stephens & Hernández, 2018). Additional scholars (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-Garcia, 2018; Ramirez, 2014) echoed support for these findings suggesting that Latina students who have difficulty finding support in their program should turn to peers outside of their departments or to social media (Hernández 2015). Communalism is a critical aspect of working-class Latina students' retention and persistence (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-Garcia, 2018). Personal connections with peers are important in enhancing working-class doctoral students' sense of belonging at PWIs (Crumb et al., 2020; Espino et al., 2010; Patterson-Stephens & Hernández, 2018). This sense of belonging mirrors the concept of *personalismo*, that close personal relationships are important in the Latinx culture (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017).

INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

Creating inclusive academic environments

Although doctoral education has a critical role in reproducing class stratification, programs and institutions can also provide opportunities for disrupting dominant ideologies and practices (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-Garcia, 2018; Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Ramirez, 2017). Researchers have indicated that the successful persistence of working-class Latina doctoral students is influenced by (a) welcoming campuses that support diverse cultural identity (J. C. González, 2006; Ramirez, 2013), (b) department-wide support systems and support programs (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-Garcia, 2018), (c) diverse staff and faculty members who expose students to diverse curriculum (Espino, 2012; J. C. González, 2006), and (d) positive undergraduate and master's level experiences that help to build resiliency (J. C. González, 2006). Latina students who feel less conflict between their institutions and personal identities have more positive educational experiences (Vasil & McCall, 2018; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy 2018). Given these points, it is important to note that doctoral students with multiple minority identities endure an increased amount of psychological stress while pursuing higher education (Corona et al., 2017). Additionally, many working-class students may be first-generation doctoral students and experience uncertainty as they transition to doctoral study (Warnock & Appel, 2012).

Formal faculty mentorships

Mentorships are underscored as significant to promote the persistence of working-class Latina students (Acevedo-Gil & Madrigal-Garcia, 2018; Ramos, 2020). Increasing mentorships and diversity in graduate programs at PWIs may positively influence students' academic and social engagement, which in return, may help students to persist in potentially hostile environments (Figueroa & Rodriguez, 2015; Mireles-Rios & Garcia, 2019). Studies related to the successful persistence of Latina students at HSIs have shown that within-group mentoring (e.g., same race/ethnicity, or gender) helps

Latinas develop a greater level of self-confidence in their academic endeavors (Vaquera, 2007). However, with less representation of Latinx faculty at PWIs (Gutiérrez et al., 2019), cross-cultural mentorships may be necessary. Supportive cross-cultural mentoring relationships that promote students' persistence can be established across any culture, age group, or gender (Crumb et al., 2020) as multi-racial feminist discourse champions that one or another form of identity may be salient considering the setting and situation (Zinn & Dill, 1996). Furthermore, interacting with individuals who are different from oneself helps counter stereotypes and decreases discriminatory behavior (Vaquera, 2007). Hinojosa and Carney (2016) emphasized the importance of intentional academic mentorship for Latinas to support their professional endeavors, such as including students in research, teaching, and service initiatives.

Class conscious faculty

LatCrit scholars espouse that classism, along with racism and sexism, exists within higher educational systems (Solorazano & Yosso, 2001). Tinto (1993), a noted theorist in doctoral student retention, asserted that when students feel valued and appreciated in their educational experience, they are often willing to accept considerable economic hardships to continue their education. Class conscious faculty may aid working-class Latina's persistence by arranging graduate assistantships or connecting them to personal support networks outside of the institution. Thus, institutional administrators can require faculty to attend training or professional development workshops related to recognizing social class biases and how they are propagated in various recruitment and admissions procedures. Many faculty serve as doctoral advisors, and researchers suggested that in cases of the hidden curriculum, faculty advisors can minimize students' obstacles by making expectations explicit, sharing power and access to resources, and creating relationships of trust with students in which they can openly express their needs (Harding-DeKam et al., 2012).

IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AS A FIELD OF STUDY

The present article has important implications related to how higher education faculty can decrease the dissonance working-class Latinas experience as they integrate their academic and home identities and strive to persist in doctoral programs at PWIs. Accordingly, there are several ways to support Latina's doctoral persistence. University faculty and other personnel can engage the entire family unit into the doctoral transition process, as researchers have shown that familismo has a positive influence on Latinas doctoral persistence. Hence, it is recommended that academic programs expand initiatives to help Latinas transition to and persist in doctoral programs. An example is the use of inclusive and comprehensive orientation initiatives. Doctoral program coordinators can create innovative new student orientations such as including break-out rooms for students to meet with staff in financial aid to gain information about funding, meet writing center and library personnel, meet peers in student organizations, and create online access to these resources as well (Sarubbi et al., 2019). New student orientations can also be used as a source of academic and social integration by having break-out rooms for Latinas to meet with individual faculty and peers to discuss research interests and current grant projects. Programs could go a step further by recognizing Latinas with family caregiving responsibilities and support the creation of peer support groups for students who are caregivers and have them network at orientation. There are also important implications related to providing inclusive curricula and culturally responsive pedagogy. University educators at PWIs should strive to offer a diverse curriculum that will ensure that working-class Latina students are exposed to content that reflects their life experiences. Programs faculty can design courses that specifically address working-class histories, social class stratification, and facilitate connections between students' personal histories and course content (Crumb et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

Working-class Latinas enter higher education with a variety of unique academic and non-academic attributes that influence their successful persistence in doctoral programs at PWIs. This article emphasizes how factors such as embracing familismo and creating inclusive academic programs and environments with class conscious faculty may contribute to the doctoral persistence of Latinas from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Nonetheless, there is a need for additional studies to gain further understanding of factors that influence the doctoral persistence of Latinas at PWIs (Corona et al., 2017). Further development of transformative research in this area may improve inclusiveness and potentially increase access to doctoral-level education for economically disadvantaged students. A large portion of research studies that examined the influence of social class status on educational experiences has been conducted using quantitative methodological approaches (Liu et al., 2004). As a result, students' personal perspectives and insights are often excluded from the literature. Variations in research methodology would provide a more comprehensive understanding of working-class Latinas' doctoral experiences. Researchers can use various qualitative approaches such as autoethnography and case studies that allow for counter-storytelling and testimonios that give a subjective voice to Latinas' experiences in doctoral education. These scholarly inquiry approaches support the tenants of LatCrit that challenge dominant ideologies and centralize the voices and experiences of working-class Latinas.

Furthermore, continuing to build on research that explores the complex relationships between socioeconomic status, first-generation doctoral status, academic and social integration, and family engagement is vital. For example, researchers have identified that families of students of color, first-generation, and economically disadvantaged students are at risk of feeling less engaged by the educational system; yet, most of this research is focused on the undergraduate student population. Thus, there is a need for research on how these families experience the doctoral transition process. Researchers can consider the application of frameworks such as LatCrit and Multiracial Feminism in their studies as well as Chicana feminist epistemology (Calderón et al., 2012) that have been used to explore the educational experiences of Latinas. Scholars must continue to examine Latinas' successful educational experiences to challenge the long-standing inequities in doctoral education at PWIs and explore the personal and institutional factors that support their successful persistence.

REFERENCES

- Acevedo-Gil, N., & Madrigal-Garcia, Y. (2018). Mentoring among Latina/o scholars: Enacting spiritual activism to navigate academia. *American Journal of Education*, 124(3), 313-344. <https://doi.org/10.1086/697212>
- Adames, H. Y. & Chavez-Dueñas, N. Y. (2017). *Cultural foundations and interventions in Latino/a mental health: History, theory, and within-group differences*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315724058>
- Aguirre-Covarrubias, S., Arellano, E., & Espinoza, P. (2015). "A pesar de todo"(despite everything): The persistence of Latina graduate engineering students at a Hispanic-serving institution. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2015(172), 49-57. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20152>
- Arena, J. (2011). Bringing in the Black working class: The Black urban regime strategy. *Science and Society*, 75(2), 153-179. <https://doi.org/10.1521/siso.2011.75.2.153>
- Ayala, M. I., & Ramirez, C. (2019). Coloniality and Latinx college students' experiences. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 52(1), 129-144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2019.1635542>
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *The outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511812507>
- Calderón, D., Bernal, D. D., Huber, L. P., Malaon, M. C., & Velez, V. N. (2012). A chicana feminist epistemology revisited: Cultivating ideas a generation later. *Harvard Educational Review*, 82(4), 513-539. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.82.4.1518621577461p68>

- Ceja, M. (2004). Chicana college aspirations and the role of parents: Developing educational resiliency. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 3(4), 338-362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192704268428>
- Corona, R., Rodríguez, V. M., McDonald, S. E., Velazquez, E., Rodríguez, A., & Fuentes, V. E. (2017). Associations between cultural stressors, cultural values, and Latina/o college students' mental health. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(1), 63-77. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0600-5>
- Crumb, L., Haskins, N., Dean, L., & Avent Harris, J. (2020). Illuminating social-class identity: The persistence of working-class African American women doctoral students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 13(3), 215-227. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000109>
- Cuccaro-Alamin, S. (1997). *Postsecondary persistence and attainment* (No. 13). National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Cueva, B. M. (2013). *Theorizing the racial and gendered educational experiences of Chicanas and Native American women at the Ph.D. level in higher education: Testimonios of resistance, defiance, survival, and hope* [Doctoral dissertation, UCLA].
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical Race Theory: An introduction*. New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.51089>
- Espino, M. M. (2012). Seeking the 'truth' in the stories we tell: The role of critical race epistemology in higher education research. *Review of Higher Education: Journal of the Association for the Study of Higher Education*, 36(1), 31-67. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2012.0048>
- Espino, M. M., Muñoz, S. M., & Marquez Kiyama, J. (2010). Transitioning from doctoral study to the academy: Theorizing trenzas of identity for Latina sister scholars. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 804-818. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383123>
- Figueroa, J. L., & Rodriguez, G. M. (2015). Critical mentoring practices to support diverse students in higher education: Chicana/Latina faculty perspectives: Critical mentoring practices to support diverse students. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2015(171), 23-32. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20139>
- Foot, R. E. (2017). *"It's not always what it seems": Exploring the hidden curriculum within a doctoral program* [Doctoral dissertation, Kent State University].
- Fosnacht, K., & Nailos, J. N. (2016). Impact of the environment: How does attending a Hispanic-serving institution influence the engagement of baccalaureate-seeking Latina/o students? *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 15(3), 187-204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192715597739>
- Franklin, J. D., Smith, W. A., & Hung, M. (2014). Racial battle fatigue for Latina/o students: A quantitative perspective. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 13(4), 303-322. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192714540530>
- Gilbert, D. L. (2008). *The American class structure in an age of growing inequality* (7th ed.). Pine Forge Press
- Gildersleeve, R., Croom, N. N., & Vasquez, P. L. (2011). "Am I going crazy?!": A critical race analysis of doctoral education. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 44(1), 93-114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2011.539472>
- González, C. G. (2014). Women of color in legal education: Challenging the presumption of incompetence. *The Federal Lawyer*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2470660
- González, J. C. (2006). Academic socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students: A qualitative understanding of support systems that aid and challenges that hinder the process. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 5(4), 347-365. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192706291141>
- Gutiérrez, L. M., Rodríguez-Newhall, A., Mora, A., Areguin, M. A., & Salazar, M. (2019). 'Too many to count': Experiences of microaggressions for Latinx students at a predominantly white institution in the age of Trump. *NCID Currents*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.3998/currents.17387731.0001.105>
- Harding-DeKam, J. L., Hamilton, B., & Loyd, S. (2012). The hidden curriculum of doctoral advising. *NACADA Journal*, 32(2), 5-16. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-32.2.5>
- Hernández, E. (2015). Hermandad: Twitter as a counter-space for Latina doctoral students. *Journal of College and Character*, 16(2), 124-130. doi:10.1080/2194587X.2015.1024795

Latina Doctoral Students

- Hernandez-Truyol, B. (1997). Borders (en)gendered: Normativities, Latinas and a LatCrit paradigm. *New York University Law Review*, 72, 882-927.
- Hinojosa, T. J., & Carney, J. V. (2016). Mexican American women pursuing counselor education doctorates: A narrative inquiry. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 55(3), 198-215. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ceas.12045>
- Holley, K. A., & Gardner, S. (2012). Navigating the pipeline: How socio-cultural influences impact first-generation doctoral students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 5(2), 112. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026840>
- Kanter, R. M. (1977). Some effects of proportions on group life: Skewed sex ratios and responses to token women. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(5), 965-990. <https://doi.org/10.1086/226425>
- Kiyama, J. M. (2018). "We're serious about our education": A collective testimonio from college-going Latinas to college personnel. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 17(4), 415-429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192717709583>
- Liu, W. M. (2011). *Social class and classism in the helping professions: Research, theory, and practice*. Sage.
- Liu, W. M., Soleck, G., Hopps, J., Dunston, K., & Pickett, T. R. (2004). A new framework to understand social class in counseling: The social class worldview model and modern classism theory. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 32(2), 95-122. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2004.tb00364.x>
- Margolis, E. (Ed.). (2001). *The hidden curriculum in higher education*. Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203901854>
- Mireles-Rios, R., & Garcia, N. M. (2019). What would your ideal graduate mentoring program look like?: Latina/o student success in higher education. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 18(4), 376-386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2018.1447937>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Table 324.20: Doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and sex of student: Selected years, 1976-77 through 2017-18. *Digest of Education Statistics*. U.S. Department of Education. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_324.20.asp
- Patterson-Stephens, S., & Hernández, E. (2018). Hermandad: Sista' scholar bonds for Black and Chicana women in doctoral study. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 51(3-4), 396-415. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2018.1546150>
- Pecero, V. F. (2016). *Rise up: Exploring the first-year experiences of Latina doctoral students at predominantly white institutions* [Doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University.] http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1480646788839175
- Ramirez, E. (2013). Examining Latinos/as' graduate school choice process: An intersectionality perspective. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 12(1), 23-36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192712452147>
- Ramirez, E. (2014). "¿Qué estoy haciendo aquí? (what am I doing here?)": Chicanos/Latinos(as) navigating challenges and inequalities during their first year of graduate school. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 47(2), 167-186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2014.900394>
- Ramirez, E. (2017). Unequal socialization: Interrogating the Chicano/Latino(a) doctoral education experiences. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 10(1), 25-38. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000028>
- Ramos, S. L. (2020). *Navegando La Torre De Marfil* [Doctoral dissertation, New Mexico State University].
- Rivera, D. P., Forquer, E. E., & Rangel, R. (2010). Microaggressions and the life of the experience of Latina/o Americans. In D. W. Sue (Ed.), *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact* (pp.59-61). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Richardson, G. S., Lawrence-Brown, D., & Paige, S. (2004). Rejecting pygmalion: The social and cultural capital of working-class women Ph.D. students. *Race, Gender & Class*, 11(3), 36-53.
- Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J., Spaulding, L. S., & Spaulding, M. T. (2016). Identifying significant integration and institutional factors that predict online doctoral persistence. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 31, 101-112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2016.07.003>

- Rodriguez, D. (2006). Un/masking identity: Healing our wounded souls. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(6), 1067-1090. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800406293238>
- Sánchez, F. J., Liu, W. M., Leathers, L., Goins, J., & Vilain, E. (2011). The subjective experience of social class and upward mobility among African American men in graduate school. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 12(4), 368-382. doi: 10.1037/a0024057
- Sanchez, P. (2015). *Latinas and resilience: The attainment of a doctoral degree* [Doctoral dissertation, Brandman University]. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1695807612/abstract/C716129A37034058PQ/1>
- Sarubbi, M., Marquez Kiyama, J., & Harper, C. E. (2019). Ideologies of invisibility and support for families of color during orientation initiatives. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 56(1), 49-62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2018.1490304>
- Solorzano, D. G., & Bernal, D. D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and latcrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban Education*, 36(3), 308-342. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085901363002>
- Solorzano, D. G., Ceja, M. M., & Yosso, T. T. (2000). Critical Race Theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1), 60-73.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(4), 471-495. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110063365>
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Tokarczyk, M. M., & Fay, E. A. (1993). *Working-class women in the academy: Laborers in the knowledge factory*. University of Massachusetts Press.
- Townsend, B. K. (1995). *Is there a hidden curriculum in higher education doctoral programs?* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (20th, Orlando, FL, November 2-5, 1995). <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED460663.pdf>
- Trepal, H., Stinchfield, T., & Haiyasoso, M. (2014). Great expectations: Doctoral student mothers in counselor education. *Adultspan Journal*, 13(1), 30-45. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0029.2014.00024.x>
- Turner, C., & Thompson, J. R. (1993). Socializing women doctoral students: Minority and majority experiences. *Review of Higher Education*, 16(3), 355-370. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.1993.0017>
- Vasil, M., & McCall, J. M. (2018). The perspectives of two first-generation college students pursuing doctoral degrees in music education. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 27(2), 67-81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057083717717464>
- Vaquera, G. (2007). Testing theories of doctoral student persistence at a hispanic serving institution. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 9(3), 283-305. <https://doi.org/10.2190/CS.9.3.c>
- Von Robertson, R., Bravo, A., & Chaney, C. (2016). Racism and the experiences of Latina/o college students at a PWI (predominantly White institution). *Critical Sociology*, 42(4-5), 715-735. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920514532664>
- Walpole, M. (2007). *Economically and educationally challenged students in higher education: Access to outcomes*. Wiley/Jossey-Bass
- Warnock, D. M., & Appel, S. (2012). Learning the unwritten rules: Working class students in graduate school. *Innovative Higher Education*, 37(4), 307-321. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-011-9204-x>
- Winkle-Wagner, R., & McCoy, D. L. (2018). Feeling like an “alien” or “family”? comparing students and faculty experiences of diversity in STEM disciplines at a PWI and an HBCU. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 21(5), 593-606. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248835>
- Zinn, M. B., & Dill, B. (1996). Theorizing difference from multiracial Feminism. *Feminist Studies*, 22(2), 321. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178416>

AUTHOR



Dr. Loni Crumb is an Assistant Professor in the Counselor Education Program in the Department of Interdisciplinary Professions at East Carolina University and a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor Supervisor. Dr. Crumb has authored scholarly publications and professional presentations related to student affairs in higher education, counseling and wellness, and holistic college student development. Her research interests include counseling in rural areas, rural education, promoting retention and persistence of underserved students in higher education, college student mental health, and social justice and multicultural training.

She received her Ph.D. in Counseling and Student Personnel Services from the University of Georgia, M.A. in Education and Community Counseling from Clark Atlanta University, and B.A. in Psychology from North Carolina State University.