A Critical Dialectical Pluralistic Examination of the Lived Experience of Select Women Doctoral Students

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The purpose of this study was to explore and to understand the daily life experiences of 8 women doctoral students who were in pursuit of their doctorates. A partially mixed concurrent dominant status design was utilized in this study embedded within a mixed methods phenomenological research lens and driven by a critical dialectical pluralistic philosophical stance. Specifically, these 8 students were interviewed individually to examine their lived experiences as doctoral students. The interview responses then were subjected to a sequential mixed analysis that was characterized by 2 qualitative analyses (i.e., constant comparison analysis, classical content analysis) and 1 quantitative analysis (i.e., correspondence analysis). The 2 qualitative analyses revealed the following 3 metathemes: adjustment (how these doctoral students made necessary accommodations with regard to all aspects of their lives), which comprised the themes of time management, interaction, belief, and lifestyle; encouragement (circumstances that motivated them to pursue their doctoral degrees), which comprised the themes of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation; and discouragement (circumstances that demotivated them from pursuing their doctoral degrees), which comprised the themes of internal discouragement and external discouragement. The correspondence analysis revealed a fourth metatheme, namely, marital status (separating the single students from the married/divorced students), which comprised the themes of locus of motivation and locus of discouragement. Seven of these women doctoral students struggled to balance either dual roles (i.e., as doctoral students and wives/mothers, or as doctoral students and professionals) or triple roles (i.e., as doctoral students, wives/mothers, and professionals). Implications of the findings are discussed. Keywords: Women Doctoral Students, Critical Dialectical Pluralism, Mixed Methods, Mixed Research, Mixed Methods Phenomenological Research, Descriptive Phenomenology

Although the number of doctorates awarded each year continues to increase (Hoffer et al., 2001; Maher, Ford, & Thompson, 2004), with few exceptions (e.g., the field of education; Hoffer et al., 2001), fewer women complete doctoral degrees than do men (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009a, 2009b). Further, women increasingly take longer to earn their doctorates than they did in previous years (Hoffer et al., 2001). Such a delay in graduation potentially has several ramifications. In particular, increased time to earn a doctorate:

a) makes pursuing this degree a much less attractive option, which, in turn, can adversely affect future enrollment figures;

b) leads to women delaying their ability to earn at their full potential;

c) leads to women having less time to contribute maximally in a professional role; and

d) makes it more difficult to fill professional positions where there are shortages of talented women with terminal degrees (Maher et al., 2004).

Interestingly, White (2004) used the metaphor of the *leaking pipeline* to discuss barriers to, access to, and progress in, doctoral programs. According to White (2004), the idea behind the leaking pipeline is that women in general, and women with children in particular, *leak out* of the system because of the challenges they experience that men do not necessarily experience. Thus, it is essential "to increase our understanding of factors that constrain or facilitate women's degree progress" (Maher et al., 2004, p. 386).

To date, limited research has been conducted investigating factors that affect doctoral degree progress of women (Brown & Watson, 2010). These research studies have revealed that obstacles faced by women doctoral students include the following: late entry to the doctoral program (Chesterman, 2001); having responsibility for childcare (Brown & Watson, 2010; Jackson, 2008); familial duties (Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2008); experiencing marital problems such as divorce (Maher et al., 2004); studying part-time instead of full-time (White, 2003); inability to secure stable funding; feeling marginalized, excluded, or ignored (Thanacoody, Bartram, Barker, & Jacobs, 2006); and having a complex life circumstance (Hill & McGregor, 1998), as well as experiencing higher levels of stress, problems with low self-esteem, and feelings of not being part of the culture of their departments (Chesterman, 2001; Deem & Brehony, 2000; Leonard, 2001; Nerad & Cerny, 1999; Thanacoody et al., 2006).

The life experiences of women doctoral students vary in multiple ways. In addition to age, cultural, and socioeconomic differences, women doctoral candidates also might balance roles as wives, mothers, and/or professionals. Some women have difficulty balancing these roles that can lead them to drop out of their doctoral degree programs. Brown and Watson (2010) revealed that the academic life of women suffered, not because of gender, but due to the dual roles of researcher/student and wife and/or mother. The juxtaposition of the two roles often creates a contradictory lifestyle. Moreover, findings across studies indicate that women with multiple roles of wife, mother, and graduate student seem more likely to have their progress toward the doctoral degree slowed down (e.g., Brown & Watson, 2010; Maher et al., 2004; Williams-Tolliver, 2010). Many women doctoral students have noted that lack of time impacts their ability to meet the demands of home and study (Brown & Watson, 2010). According to Williams-Tolliver (2010), many women struggle to find sufficient time to manage their studies alongside family and work responsibilities, thereby leading to an array of problems—both academic and non-academic. Further, Williams-Tolliver (2010) found that women doctoral students felt overwhelmed with too many responsibilities and lack of support from others.

Marital and social support have been identified as being major aspects in women's lives (Castro, Garcia, Cavazos, & Castro, 2011; Moyer, Salovey, & Casey-Cannon, 1999; Williams-Tolliver, 2010). These studies have shown that women doctoral students struggle and have difficulties balancing academic work and personal and/or family relationships. Castro et al. (2011) observed that encouragement from husbands had a significant impact on women's academic success. Without the appropriate support from their spouses, family

members, and colleagues, women doctoral students might face obstacles meeting academic requirements.

The conflict experienced by women frequently can create stress and tension. In fact, there is a clear link between stress and doctoral study for women doctoral students noted in literature (Brown & Watson, 2010). Several authors have reported concerns related to health and time management as primary stressors commonly affecting women's day-to-day lives (Maher et al., 2004; Williams-Tolliver, 2010), thereby making them at-risk for stress-related illnesses such as heart disease, hypertension, and stroke (Williams-Tolliver, 2010).

Many researchers focus on students' perceptions of the pursuit of a doctoral degree from an academic standpoint that refers to factors influencing doctoral candidates from *within* the doctoral program (e.g., Jiménez y West, Gokalp, Pena, Fisher, & Gupton, 2011; Maher et al., 2004; Weidman & Stein, 2003; Willison & Gibson, 2011). However, scant research has been conducted into doctoral students' perceptions from a non-academic standpoint. Non-academic, as used in this study, describes factors that influence students *outside* of the degree program. These factors might include time management (Jiménez y West et al., 2011; Willison & Gibson, 2011); balancing the life demands of family, work, and school (Brown & Watson, 2010; Moyer et al., 1999; Williams-Tolliver, 2010); and factors that encourage and/or discourage students in their pursuit of a doctoral degree (Protivnak & Foss, 2009). These factors adversely affect women doctoral students more than male doctoral students because women are more likely to have to balance multiple roles than are men (Brown & Watson, 2010). These multiple roles make it more difficult for women to focus adequately on their doctoral studies (Brown & Watson, 2010). Indeed, as surmised by Gardner (2008), few researchers have focused on the unique experiences of women doctoral students. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore and to understand the daily life experiences of eight women doctoral students in pursuit of their degrees.

This article involved the collaboration of the following four co-authors: Anthony J. (Tony) Onwuegbuzie is a professor at Sam Houston State University who teaches doctoral-level courses in qualitative research, quantitative research (i.e., statistics), mixed methods, and master's-level courses in research methods. At the onset of the study through the data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation phases of the study, Roslinda Rosli was a doctoral candidate pursuing a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at Texas A&M University. However, Roslinda since has graduated from her doctorate degree program. Jacqueline (Jackie) M. Ingram is a doctoral candidate pursuing an Ed.D. in Reading at Sam Houston State University. Finally, Rebecca K. Frels is an assistant professor in the Department of Counseling and Special Populations at Lamar University, Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor (LPC-S), Certified School Counselor, and Play Therapist in the state of Texas. Rebecca, a former doctoral student of Tony who had graduated the semester before the study began, and who had kindly volunteered to team-teach with Tony the mixed research course enrolled by Roslinda and Jackie—from whence the study originated—provided an important bridge between the professor and student members of the research team due to her role as an assistant professor coupled with her recent graduation from her doctorate degree program.

All co-authors contributed significantly to every phase of the development of the article. During this development, the co-authors met face-to-face on several occasions. A combination of telephone and email was used to communicate on the remaining occasions. The article underwent numerous drafts before it was submitted to *The Qualitative Report* for consideration. Just prior to submission, the article was presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference in 2013 that was held in San Francisco, CA. Unfortunately, due to unavoidable circumstances (e.g., Roslinda giving birth to a child around the time of the AERA conference), neither student co-researcher was available to present this research at the AERA conference—providing a compelling example of the

multiple roles faced by many women doctoral students. Thus, in order to preserve the critical dialectical pluralistic nature of the study (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2013), Eunjin Hwang, another doctoral student at Sam Houston State University who was co-conducting as lead author of a team of women doctoral students a mixed research study examining the perceived barriers of select doctoral students in completing their doctorate degrees, kindly volunteered to present the findings on behalf of the four of us. Interestingly, as a single mother herself, while presenting our study at the AERA conference, she was able to identify with many of the findings of our study, helping to legitimate our findings and interpretations.

Tony and Rebecca have a passion for mentoring learners—including graduate students—and, between them, have presented and have had numerous works published with graduate students. Further, Rebecca and Tony travel yearly to multiple countries in Africa to mentor and to teach research methodology refresher courses in qualitative research, quantitative research, and mixed research for instructors of social science research methodology courses representing numerous African nations. Tony also travels to numerous other parts of the world (e.g., Asia, Central America, South America, Australia) to mentor and to teach research methodology courses and workshops in qualitative research, quantitative research, and mixed research for doctoral students and faculty members. As further evidence of their passion for the topic of mentoring, recently, Rebecca (as lead author) and Tony, alongside another colleague from Sam Houston State University (i.e., Linda R. Zientek) received the *Distinguished Paper Award (2012) AERA Mentorship and Mentoring Practices Special Interest Group,* as well as the *Outstanding Published Manuscript (2012) Award* for their article that was published in the journal entitled *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning.* As such, the current study was in line with their research interest in mentoring.

Roslinda and Jackie are beginning researchers who had entered what Onwuegbuzie et al. (2012) and Onwuegbuzie, Frels, Leech, and Collins (2013) referred to as representing the emergent scholar phase, wherein Rebecca and I encourage doctoral students to present their research at professional meetings and to submit their research articles for review for possible publication. Indeed, prior to the onset of this study, Roslinda and Jackie already had presented other research at conferences (e.g., AERA; International Mixed Methods Conference) and had had works published in Tier 1 journals (e.g., Anderson et al., 2012). As the title of their previous research indicates, namely, *Doctoral Students' Perceptions of Characteristics of Effective College Teachers: A Mixed Analysis* (Anderson et al., 2012), they had a particular interest in finding ways to maximize the learning and educational attainment of doctoral students. Therefore, the current inquiry was in line with this research goal.

Mixed Research Question

The following mixed research question was addressed: In what ways, if any, do the requirements of pursuing a doctoral degree affect daily life experiences of select women doctoral students?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underlying the current study was academic resiliency theory (also used by Castro et al., 2011). According to Morales (2008), academic resiliency represents the ability to succeed in an educational context despite being exposed to one or more risk factors (e.g., lack of family support). More specifically, McMillan and Reed (1994) concluded that positive interpersonal (e.g., high expectations from family, familial

support, mentor support) and individual factors play a role in developing academic resiliency (see also Zalaquett, 2006).

As noted by Morales and Trotman (2004), academic resilience is a time-related construct inasmuch as it refers to educational outcome anomalies that occur after a person has been exposed to one or more risk factors that are statistically linked to negative educational outcomes. Consequently, the longer the duration of the time sequence under examination, the bigger and more representative the resilience picture becomes. For academic resilience researchers, the major goal is to learn about and thus spread resilience to underachieving groups (Morales, 2008). And because, as noted previously, women doctoral students can be viewed as representing an underachieving group inasmuch as fewer women than men complete doctoral degrees (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009a, 2009b), our use of an academic resilience theoretical framework had logical appeal.

Methodological Framework

The methodological framework for this study was a 13-step process (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006) that occurred in the following three stages:

a) the *Formulation Stage* (i.e., determine the mixed goal, objective, rationale, purpose, and research question[s]);
b) the *Planning Stage* (i.e., select the mixed sampling and research design); and
c) the *Implementation Phase* (i.e., collect and analyze quantitative and/or qualitative data, validate/legitimate and interpret the mixed research findings, write the mixed research report, and reformulate the mixed research question[s]).

Rather than representing a linear process, the methodological steps within each phase are interactive and recursive (Collins et al., 2006). Each of these stages with respect to the present study is discussed in the following sections. This methodological approach was selected for the current study because it was deemed as providing a combination that would yield "complementary strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses" (Johnson & Turner 2003, p. 299).

Formulation Stage

The goal of this mixed research study was to understand a complex phenomenon (Newman, Ridenour, Newman, & DeMarco, 2003)—specifically the lived experience of select women doctoral students. This goal is consistent with the goal of retaining doctoral students and thereby reducing the high dropout rate of doctoral students (Golde, 2005). The objectives of this mixed research study were:

a) exploration,
b) description, and
c) explanation (Johnson & Christensen, 2010).

The objectives of the qualitative phase were exploration and description; and the objective of the quantitative phase was description.

The research philosophical stance for our study was what Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2012, 2013) refer to as a critical dialectical pluralistic stance, which operates under the

assumption that, at the macro level, social injustices are ingrained in every society. According to this stance, rather than the researcher presenting the findings (e.g., conferences, journal articles, books, technical reports), the researcher assumes a research-facilitator role that empowers the participant(s) to assume the role of participant-researcher(s), who, in turn, either present/perform the findings themselves or co/present/co-perform the findings with the research-facilitator(s). Two of the four researchers were doctoral students at the time of the study. A third researcher had very recently completed her doctorate. The fourth and final researcher served as a mentor of the three co-researchers. As concluded by Bowl (2003) and Wright (1997), women in education are an underrepresented and underserved group in terms of research attention, further justifying our use of a critical dialectical pluralistic stance.

Apart from a quest to address social justice, critical dialectical pluralism involves incorporating multiple epistemological perspectives (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2012, 2013). Specifically, in our research, we combined phenomenology and postpositivism. This combination yielded what Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2013, in press) referred to as mixed methods phenomenological research (MMPR)—specifically, a concurrent MMPR, which consisted of a dominant descriptive phenomenological phase and a less-dominant postpositivist phase (i.e., PHEN+quan). In descriptive phenomenology, researchers focus on describing participants' individual lived experiences or *life-world* (Todres & Holloway, 2004). More specifically, according to Giorgi (2009), four core tenets of descriptive phenomenological inquiry prevail:

a) intentionality;
b) research is always initially descriptive;
c) phenomenological reduction is involved (i.e., the researcher brackets or suspends past knowledge and is sensitive to the implications of the data for the underlying phenomenon; the researcher reduces elements that are intentionally related to consciousness and focuses on the role of subjectivity); and
d) "the *essence* or *bare bones* of what constitutes the phenomenon is articulated as the structure"—thereby yielding a description of "the common themes or essential parts from within the experience that identify the phenomenon and transcends the experiences of different individuals"; (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013, p. 5).

In the present study, phenomenological reduction was enhanced by including a male and non-doctoral student on the research team who was able to play devil's advocate whenever needed and who was able to keep the women researchers on the team *honest* by posing difficult questions about various aspects of the research study (e.g., procedures, interpretations) and by providing his research team members with the opportunity for catharsis by attempting to identify with their feelings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In contrast, a postpositivist stance was adopted, for example, to analyze attributes such as communication vagueness and to quantitize (i.e., convert qualitative data into numerical codes that can be analyzed quantitatively or statistically; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) the emergent themes. Figure 1 displays the philosophical assumptions and stances underlying the study.

Figure 1. Philosophical assumptions and stances underlying the study.
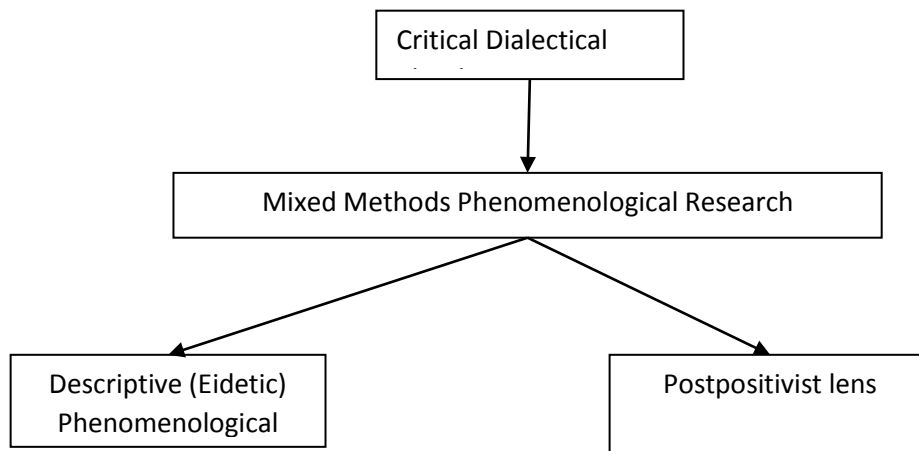
The rationale for conducting this mixed research study was participant enrichment and significance enhancement of the findings by

a) obtaining an optimal sample—with two members serving as participant-researchers who adopted an emtic viewpoint (i.e., "representing the place where emic and etic viewpoints are maximally interactive"; (Onwuegbuzie, 2012, p. 205)—and

b) maximizing the interpretations of data, respectively. Pertaining to participant enrichment, the study was explained thoroughly to each participant and the value of their participation made clear.

With regard to significance enhancement, the researchers sought to obtain thick and rich data (Geertz, 1973) by mixing both quantitative and qualitative data. The purpose for mixing quantitative and qualitative data for this study was framed around Greene, Caracelli, and Graham's (1989) five different research purposes with respect to mixing: (a) *triangulation* (i.e., comparing results from the qualitative data with the quantitative findings), *complementarity* (i.e., seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one analytical strand [e.g., quantitative] with findings from the other analytical strand [e.g., qualitative]), *development* (i.e., using the findings from one analytical strand to help inform the other analytical strand), *initiation* (i.e., discovering contradictions and paradoxes that emerge when results from the two analytical strands are compared that might lead to a re-framing of the research question), and *expansion* (i.e., expanding the breadth and range of a study by using multiple analytical strands for different study phases). The purpose specific for the present study was complementarity and development.

Using Plano Clark and Badice's (2010) typology, the research question in this study represented a general overarching mixed research question, which is defined as a broad

question that is addressed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Specifically, the following mixed research question guided the present study: In what ways, if any, do the requirements of pursuing a doctoral degree affect daily life experiences of select doctoral students?

Method

The Planning Stage

Participants and setting

Participants were selected via a purposive sampling scheme whereby the selection of participants is based on specific purposes to answer a research study's questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Specifically, the participants for this study, which included the researchers, were eight women doctoral students at two state universities in the southwestern United States. These women were pursuing a doctorate degree representing the field of education (e.g., reading). Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) demonstrated that six interviews might be "sufficient to enable development of meaningful themes and useful interpretations" (p. 78)— suggesting that our sample size was adequate for obtaining data saturation. All participants were enrolled in the same course that met weekly at a satellite campus for both universities. Two of the researchers, alongside the other research participants, were full members of the class and, therefore, were classified as being complete member participants (Adler & Adler, 1987) because they were both researchers and participants in this study. Ethical factors were noted during the interviews (e.g., each participant was informed that member checking techniques would be used at various stages of the research process to ensure that the researchers' descriptions did not misrepresent them) and confidentiality was maintained through the use of participant-selected pseudonyms.

Table 1 presents selected demographics (i.e., age, occupation, marital status, years of marriage, number and ages of children, ethnicity, distance travelled to university, religion). It can be seen from this table that the sample contained an even distribution of minority (i.e., $n = 4$) and non-minority (i.e., $n = 4$) students. The ages ranged from 29 to 58 ($M = 38.00$, $SD = 9.90$). Two of the participants were single, five were married, and one divorced. Three of the participants had no offspring, whereas the remaining five participants had between one and four offspring. With respect to occupation, four of the participants were teachers (i.e., Kindergarten, Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 7), one was a university instructor (i.e., reading), one was a reading specialist, one was a dyslexia specialist, and the remaining participant was a full-time student. Finally, with regard to religious affiliation, five participants were Christian (4 Baptist, 1 Methodist), one was a Muslim, and two had no religious affiliation.

A partially mixed concurrent dominant status design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009) was utilized in this study. Specifically, the qualitative data were collected, and then analyzed by coding, quantitizing, and qualitizing the data through narrative discussion. The qualitative component was characterized as being dominant, yielding a qualitative-dominant mixed research study (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Further, with reference to Nastasi, Hitchcock, and Brown's (2010) Type III sampling design typologies, mixing of the qualitative and quantitative research in this study occurred at the data analysis stage.

Table 1: *Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

Participant (Pseudonym)	Age	Occupation	Marital Status (Number of years married)	Number of Children (ages)	Ethnicity	Distance traveled from home to university	Religion
Ramona	30	Third-grade teacher	Married (9 years)	2 (6, 7)	Hispanic	70 miles	Methodist
Sandra	29	Kindergarten teacher	Married (2 years)	1 (3)/Pregnant	Black	80 miles	Baptist
Lily	35	Student/Resident advisor	Single	0	Asian	1 mile	Islam
Savannah	29	Seventh-grade teacher	Single	0	Black	50 miles	Baptist
Marchaline	39	Fourth-grade teacher	Married (15 years)	2 (10, 12)	White	60 miles	None
Nichole	39	College reading instructor	Married (19 years)	0	White	102 miles	Baptist
Kimberly	58	Reading specialist	Married (17 years)	4 (28, 30, 33, 36)	White	50 miles	None
Liz	45	Dyslexia specialist	Divorced	2 (20, 24)	White	45 miles	Baptist

The Implementation Phase

Instruments and procedure

As per the assertions of Johnson and Christensen (2010) and Patton (2002), the researcher was the primary instrument in our research. The methods of data collection utilized in this study involved a demographic questionnaire and semi-structured interviews (Appendix A). Also, debriefing interviews took place that involved each researcher (i.e., interviewer) being interviewed by another person (i.e., debriefing interviews) who used interview guides developed by Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2008) to inquire about how the interviewer was feeling and her/his overall experience with the interview (see Appendix B for example items). These debriefing interviews took place face-to face or via Skype. Each regular and debriefing interview was audio recorded and/or filmed through the aforementioned Skype application, Flip video camera, and/or digital sound recording device. Each interview was transcribed and sent back to the participant for member checking. Some modifications were made to the original transcript to reflect more clearly the participant's meaning.

Because the demographic questionnaire contained both open- and closed-ended items and the semi-structured interviews contained open-ended items, the mixed data collection style used in the present study could be referred to as *Type 2* data collection (Johnson & Turner, 2003). Further, this combination represented one of the 30 between-strategies mixed data collection combinations identified by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009).

Mixed analysis

To analyze the data, a sequential mixed analysis (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003) was used. Utilizing constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and classical content analysis (Berelson, 1952), the researchers coded chunks of words into meaningful units of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs (Johnson & Christensen, 2010; Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2011) that described the contents of the segmented data. The codes became the underlying themes within each metatheme, which were identified a posteriori (Constas, 1992). Codes and locus of typology (i.e., theme) development were participative and investigative (i.e., stemming from the intellectual constructions of the participants and researchers, respectively; Constas, 1992). Also, the verification component was technical (e.g., use of debriefing interviews). After the coding process, the researchers employed data transformation in which the qualitative data were analyzed descriptively (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2010). The researchers conducted cross-case and within-case analyses (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to present the findings pertaining to these cases in detail. A correspondence analysis (a multivariate and visual technique for conducting a quantitative analysis of emergent themes; Michailidis, 2007) also was performed using QDA Miner 4.0 (Provalis Research, 2011a) to factor themes/metathemes with their associations in at least a two-dimensional map (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, Dickinson, & Zoran, 2010). This correspondence analysis represented what Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2010) referred to as a *crossover mixed analysis*, whereby the analysis types associated with one tradition (i.e., quantitative analysis: correspondence analysis) were used to analyze data associated with a different tradition (i.e., qualitative data: emergent themes)—thereby being consistent with our critical dialectical pluralist stance (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2013). Moreover, conducting a correspondence analysis helped us to avoid engaging in what Bazeley (2009) refers to as a *superficial reporting of themes* in which "qualitative researchers rely on the presentation of key themes supported by quotes from participants' text as the primary form of analysis and reporting of their data" (p. 6). In addition, several conceptually ordered displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were utilized to present variations of themes and metathemes, including a bubble plot and a clustered matrix chart.

Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie (2003) identified the following seven stages of the mixed analysis process:

    a) data reduction,
    b) data display,
    c) data transformation,
    d) data correlation,
    e) data consolidation,
    f) data comparison, and
    g) data integration.

In the present study, the researchers used five of Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie's (2003) seven stages: data reduction, data display, data transformation, data correlation, and data integration. Specifically, qualitative data were reduced to themes and metathemes (i.e., data reduction), qualitative and quantitative data were displayed in tables and figures (i.e., data display), quantitative data (i.e., demographic data) were correlated with qualitative data (i.e., themes) (i.e., data correlation), and quantitative and qualitative findings from the data were integrated (i.e., data integration). Finally, Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2010) conceptualized that, optimally, mixed researchers make 13 decisions during any given mixed analysis process, which yielded an inclusive framework for conducting mixed analyses. These 13 sets

of decisions are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: *Summary of Onwuegbuzie and Combs's (2010) 13-Criteria Meta-Framework for Mixed Analysis Techniques Used*

Criteria	How Criteria were Manifested in the Study
Rationale/purpose for conducting the mixed analysis	Involved complementarity and expansion (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989)
Philosophy underpinning the mixed analysis	Involved critical dialectical pluralist assumptions and stances (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2013)
Number of data types that will be analyzed	Collected both quantitative data and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010)
Number of data analysis types that will be used	Utilized both qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007; Onwuegbuzie, Slate, Leech, & Collins, 2007, 2009; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003)
Time sequence of the mixed analysis	Involved sequential analysis (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009)
Level of interaction between quantitative and qualitative analyses	Quantitatively analyzed the qualitative data (i.e., quantitized data) that informed the analysis of qualitative data at the previous stage (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009)
Priority of analytical components	Conducted qualitative-dominant mixed analysis (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Morse, 2003)
Number of analytical phases	Not linked directly to any phases of the mixed analysis (Greene, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003)
Link to other design components	Not linked directly to any mixed research designs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009)
Phase of the research process when all analysis decisions are made	Made mixed analysis decisions iteratively (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007)
Type of generalization	Made analytic generalizations (Onwuegbuzie, Slate, Leech, & Collins, 2009)
Analysis orientation	Involved case-oriented analysis (Onwuegbuzie, Slate, Leech, & Collins, 2009)
Cross-over nature of analysis	Quantitized qualitative data (e.g., effect sizes; Onwuegbuzie, 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003); and correlated the quantitative and qualitative data (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2010)

Results

Cross-Case Analysis

Prior to analyzing the interview data to extract emergent themes and metathemes, we assessed the vagueness of words spoken by each participant (cf. Hiller, 1971). Specifically, we used Hiller, Fisher, and Kaess's (1969) conceptualization of communication vagueness, which they defined as a "psychological construct, which refers to the state of mind of a performer who does not sufficiently command the facts or the understanding required for maximally effective communication" (p. 670). WordStat 6.0 (Provalis, 2011b) was used to assess the vagueness of each participant's story. WordStat 6.0 contains the following 10 categories of communication vagueness:

a) ambiguous designation (i.e., something potentially specifiable is mentioned but not definitely identified; e.g., *stuff*, *and so on*);
b) negated intensifiers (i.e., negations can be evasions; e.g., *not quite*; *not necessarily*);
c) approximation (i.e., use reflects real or referential vagueness or imprecise knowledge; e.g., *sort of*, *pretty much*);
d) bluffing and recovery (i.e., when a speaker/writer is not communicating effectively and attempts to shift responsibility for making sense of content to the listener/reader; e.g., *actually*, *anyway*);
e) admission of error (i.e., repeated admissions of error indicate lack of confidence or lack of competence; e.g., *I made a mistake*, *I don't know*);
f) indefinite amount (i.e., an amount that is potentially knowable but is not specified; e.g., *some*, *a couple*, *a little*, *a lot*);
g) multiplicity (i.e., pseudospecification or glossing over of complexity; e.g., *types*, *kinds*);
h) probability and possibility (i.e., indicates lack of clarity or lack of definite knowledge; e.g., *at times*, *generally*);
i) reservations (i.e., expressions of doubt or reluctance to commit to a specific point of view; i.e., *appear*, *seems*); and
j) anaphora (i.e., excessive and repetitious use of pronouns instead of direct references makes content more difficult to follow; e.g., *she*, *he*, *it*, *them*, *latter*, *former*).

Figure 2 displays the frequency of vague phrases made by each participant across all 10 categories.

It can be seen from Figure 2 that Liz, Marchaline, Nichole, and Sandra provided relatively high frequencies of vague phrases, whereas Kimberly, Lily, Ramona, and Savannah provided relatively low frequencies of vague phrases. Interestingly, although no pattern was apparent between the level of communication vagueness and the demographic variables of age, number of children, occupation, distance travelled to university, and religious affiliation, there appeared to be somewhat of a link between the level of communication vagueness and ethnicity, with three out of the four minority students having the lowest levels and three out of the four non-minority students having the highest levels. Also, although there was not a strong relationship between the level of communication vagueness and marital status, interestingly, the two single participants had two of the lowest communication vagueness levels. Thus, our analysis of communication vagueness allowed us to differentiate participants who were most clear about their experiences and perceptions regarding being a woman doctoral student from those who were less clear about these experiences and perceptions, which further facilitated our within-case analyses by providing additional nonverbal cues (cf. Denham & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

The classical content analysis revealed 36 codes that emerged from the coding process. Figure 3 displays the eight most frequent codes that represent the important concepts for the participants (pseudonyms are used for each participant), and which were further categorized into emergent themes and metathemes. It can be seen from this figure that time allocation was by far the most prevalent code ($n = 53$), followed by support from family ($n = 35$) and management skills ($n = 53$). The constant comparison analysis led to the following three metathemes being extracted from the codes: adjustment, encouragement, and discouragement. Each of these is discussed in detail in the following sections.

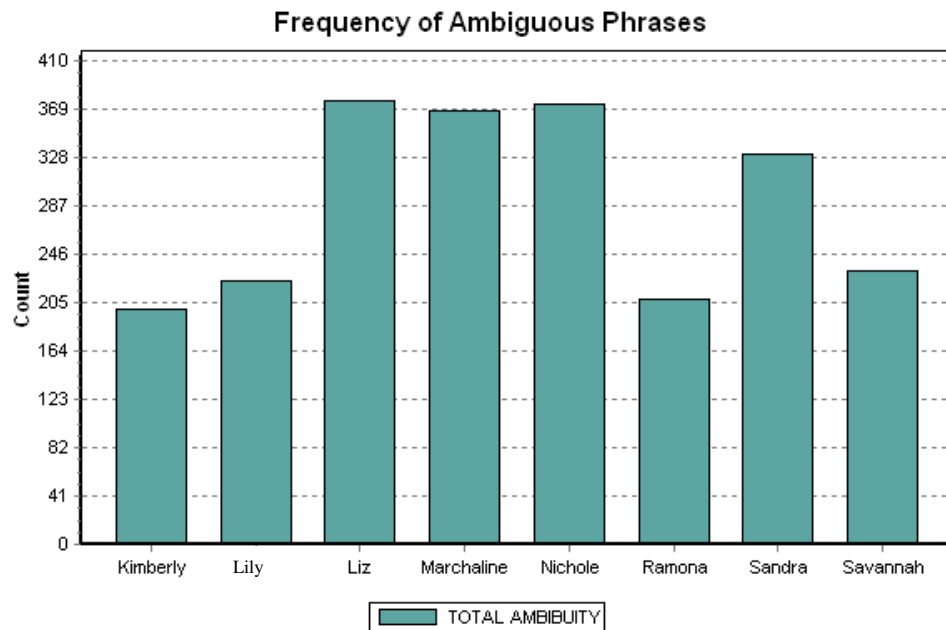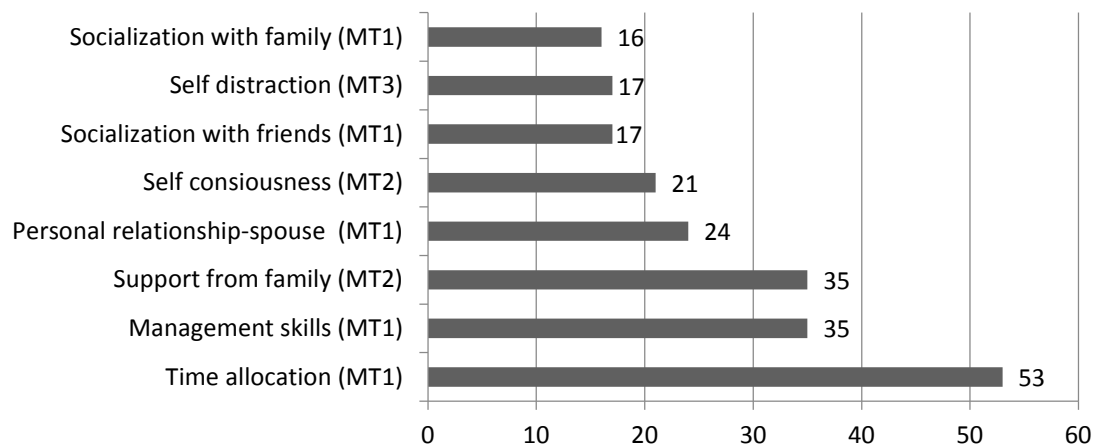*Figure 2*. Frequency of ambiguous phrases stated by each of the eight selected participants.

Figure 3. The breakdown of most frequently occurring codes.

Metatheme 1: Adjustment

The metatheme adjustment refers to how select doctoral students made necessary accommodations with regard to all aspects of their lives such as home, family, work, doctoral studies, and leisure time. Five codes under this metatheme were among the most common with frequencies between 16 and 53 occurrences, which appeared to indicate that adjustment was a strong factor that influenced doctoral students' life experiences. Further, we categorized these codes into the following four themes, as seen in Table 3: time management, interaction, belief, and lifestyle.

Table 3: Theme Clustered Matrix of Eight Doctoral Students

Metathemes (MT) **Themes**	**Kimberly**	**Li**	**Liz**	**Marchaline**	**Nichole**	**Ramona**	**Sandra**	**Savannah**
Adjustment (MT1)								
Time management	7	9	18	13	12	8	10	14
Interaction	6	4	5	11	9	2	6	14
Belief			1		4			4
Lifestyle		4	1			1		
Total	13	17	25	24	25	11	16	32
Encouragement (MT2)								
Intrinsic motivation		1	4	3	2	1	5	13
Extrinsic motivation	7	4	20	9	12	7	8	8
Total	7	5	24	12	14	8	13	21
Discouragement (MT3)								
Internal	2	9	2	1	4		2	11
External	3	5				4		24
Total	5	14	2	1	4	4	2	35

Time management was overwhelmingly the foremost theme consistently across the eight cases, wherein the participants noted that they were not able to make necessary adjustments related to time and were weak in time management skills. This finding supports results from previous studies (Jiménez y West et al., 2011; Willison & Gibson, 2011). For example, Marchaline believed that she must manage her work efficiently at school so that she had sufficient time for study when she returned home. She explained that, "I make sure I don't take a lot of extra things home. So I've had to make that adjustment to where school doesn't come home with me like it used to."

In addition, when comparing time management with the other themes under metatheme adjustment, the correspondence analysis (Figure 4) showed that Kimberly, Sandra, and Marchaline were very similar in the relatively high value that they placed on time management and interaction with family and friends. Even though Ramona and Liz were placed under time management and interaction, they also were close to lifestyle. In contrast, Lily placed lifestyle in the relatively high value rank compared to other participants. During the interview, Lily revealed that as an international student, she had had a major lifestyle adjustment since she came to the United States in 2008 and stated, "I don't have family here. Sometime I just gather with . . . [name of country] friends. We have a few students here. So they are like my family."

Figure 4. Correspondence analysis of the four themes (i.e., lifestyle, beliefs, time management, interaction) comprising the *adjustment* metatheme pertaining to the select doctoral students: lifestyle, beliefs, time management, and interaction.
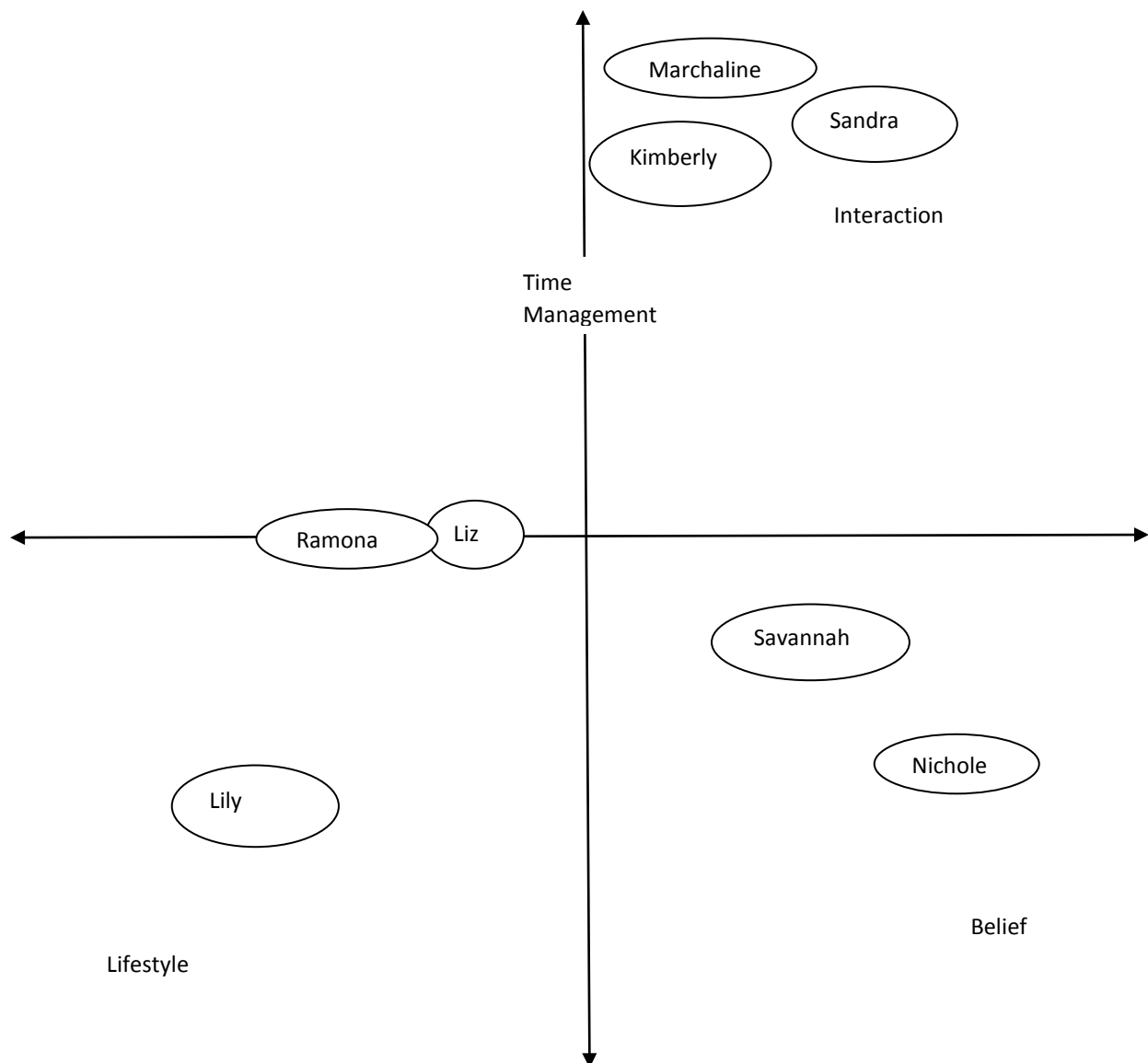
Metatheme 2: Encouragement

The metatheme of encouragement comprised the themes of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to encouragements that come from inside an individual rather than from outside (extrinsic motivation). Based on Figure 3, codes such as support from family (35 times) and self-consciousness (21 times) were among the most frequently noted in the study. These codes were further classified as extrinsic motivation (support from family) and intrinsic motivation (self-consciousness) that might affect the selected doctoral students in pursuing their educational degrees. The extrinsic motivation theme, which refers to women doctoral students being motivated to pursue their doctorate degrees by external sources such as family and friends, appeared to be a strong factor that affected doctoral students' life experiences (Figure 5). Examples of statements acknowledging the role of husbands include the following: "I know my husband takes whole

lot of slack as far as when I have to go to school" (Kimberly); "…my husband, he's the rock" (Marchaline); "Fortunately, I've been married to my husband for 19 years, and he's very supportive" (Nichole); and "I don't want to let my husband down" (Nichole). In contrast, intrinsic motivation refers to women doctoral students being motivated to pursue a doctorate degree for its own sake, without some obvious external incentive being present. Examples of statements that were indicative of intrinsic motivation include the following: "I think the main thing that encourages me is intrinsic, it's gotta be intrinsic, because if it's extrinsic you're not gonna go through with it" (Marchaline); and "because I'm still single so I think that's a good idea for being here to pursue my PHD program" (Lily).

Themes   Lily

Encouragement

  Intrinsic motivation

  Extrinsic motivation

Discouragement

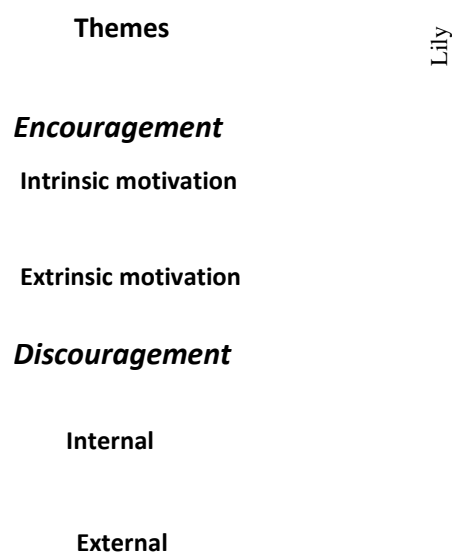   **Internal**

    External

Figure 5: The metathemes of encouragement and discouragement of the select doctoral students.

Metatheme 3: Discouragement

The discouragement metatheme comprised two themes: internal discouragement and external discouragement. An internal discouragement represents inner circumstances of participants that demotivated them from pursuing their doctoral degrees, including self-distraction and loneliness. Conversely, external discouragement involves outside sources that discouraged these doctoral students such as lack of a support system (e.g., university, graduate friends) and a lack of understanding from family (Protivnak & Foss, 2009). For example, Ramona believed that her family sometimes discouraged her and stated that,

> I'm missing out on Daley's gymnastics because I don't take her. Um, so I get to, you know, just the snapshots of my kids' life that I don't get to be what, because I'm either in class physically or the coursework… you know, I have to dedicate that time to the coursework.

In contrast, Kimberly and Lily agreed that a lack of support from the university might be one of potential obstacles pursuing their doctoral programs—similar to the findings of Protivnak and Foss (2009).

Figure 6 displays a correspondence analysis plot of the two themes belonging to the *encouragement* metatheme (i.e., intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation) and the two themes belonging to the *discouragement* metatheme (i.e., internal discouragement, external discouragement). It can be seen from this plot that the participants are positioned in the four quadrants with respect to the four metathemes. Specifically, two students are positioned in Quadrant 1 (i.e., upper left quadrant), one student is located in Quadrant 2 (i.e., upper right quadrant), four students are positioned in Quadrant 3 (i.e., bottom left quadrant), and one student is located in Quadrant 4 (i.e., bottom right quadrant). More specifically, six of the eight participants were most associated with the extrinsic motivation theme, namely, Kimberly, Nichole, Liz, Ramona, Marchaline, and Sandra. In contrast, Lily was most associated with the internal discouragement theme, whereas Savannah was most associated with both the external discouragement theme and the intrinsic motivation theme. Most interestingly, whereas the right hand side of the correspondence analysis plot contained the two single students, the left hand side contained all the married students and the one student who previously had been married (i.e., Liz). As such, the four themes distinguished the single doctoral students from the married and previously married students—yielding a fourth metatheme, which we labeled as *marital status*. Moreover, this marital status metatheme discriminated the extrinsic motivation theme from the other three themes, namely, internal discouragement, external discouragement, and intrinsic motivation. Thus, the marital status metatheme contained two themes, namely:

a) *locus of motivation*, which distinguishes extrinsic motivation (left hand quadrants) from intrinsic motivation (right hand quadrants); and

b) *locus of discouragement*, which distinguishes internal/external discouragement (right hand quadrants) from no discouragement (left hand quadrants).

Figure 6. Correspondence analysis of the two themes belonging to the *encouragement* metatheme (i.e., intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation) and the two themes belonging to the *discouragement* metatheme (i.e., internal discouragement, external discouragement).
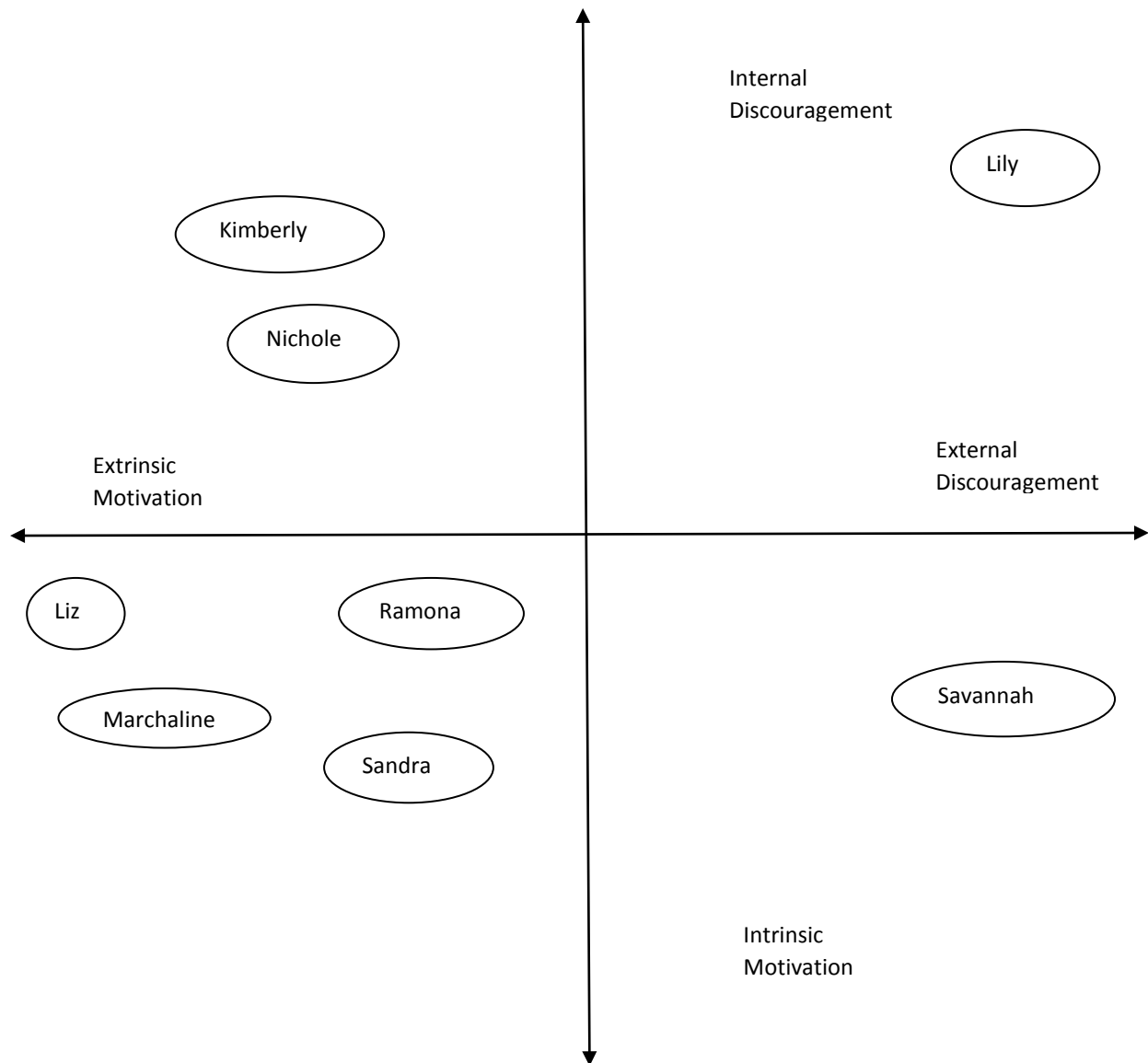
Within-Case Analysis

Because of our revelation of the marital status metatheme, we undertook an in-depth within-case analysis of one single student (i.e., Savannah), one married student (i.e., Nichole) and the divorced student (i.e., Liz). Appropriately, these three students, Savannah, Liz, and Nichole, respectively, contributed the most to the aforementioned metathematic/thematic development (see Table 3).

Single student

Savannah: Savannah was a 29 years old African American, who was single and Baptist. She worked as a seventh-grade reading teacher for 40 hours per week. She travelled approximately 50 miles to university for her classes. Savannah used the fourth lowest number of ambiguous phrases. Her most dominant category of communication vagueness was represented by admission of error statements such as "I don't know if it's fear or if it is jealousy…I don't know, I don't know…"

As seen in Table 3, Savannah's two dominant metathemes were adjustment and encouragement. With respect to the perceived meaning of adjustment from participants, Savannah stated that she had to adjust time, work, priority, and communication. These themes were very apparent in her interview:

> Socially, I had to cut out a lot of hanging out with my friends. They're in their 20's and they go out on the weekends and they go to parties and socials. A lot of my friends are looking for husbands right now and my husband seems to be my textbooks. You know, I don't get to go out and do too much of that with them…I used to spend a lot of time with my granny and since being in the program I can call her but it's still not the same. Let me see, personally I've made… I've learned how to put me first. This program has taught me that I need to value my life and the experiences that I can have and it's okay to be selfish sometimes....Like I used to be the person everybody could run over like I really wouldn't say anything back I wouldn't be aggressive. Now, I've learned to become more aggressive and I'm seeing the people who like it and the people who don't. I have to pick and choose days when I focus on doctoral work and when I focus on work for teaching…

Savannah revealed that she had to make adjustments in most aspects of her social life and expressed that being young and desiring more than marriage at the time was not typical of individuals her age. She believed that she had to become more disciplined, assertive, and focused. Savannah realized the importance of managing time within her doctoral program, but she criticized herself for not being able to manage reading and work in a timely manner. Savannah frequently mentioned situations that related to time-management and interaction. She noted that she had to adjust her time by balancing her work and study, reducing the interaction with family and friends, and having faith in God.

Also, as can be observed from Table 3, for Savannah, explicit discouragement was the most prevalent theme. During the interview, Savannah explained how much pressure she has received from her workplace; in fact, when she initially applied to the doctoral program, she mentioned asking three times for a letter of recommendation and was hurt when she saw her principal write one for her colleagues who applied for the same university. She believed that everything related to work had become more difficult since she began her doctoral program. Specifically, she stated that she loved to teach literacy for eighth-grade students, but the management took it away and asked her to teach writing.

In addition, Savannah discussed her weak support system, including her language specialist who used to be her mentor. For example, the language specialist listened to the negativity from others about Savannah's teaching abilities. In the case of Savannah's colleagues, they would not listen to her regardless of the information she shared with them and they provided many negative responses and feedback. Savannah explained, "I was just, this year it got to the point where I walked into his office and was ready to quit and told him I

was quitting." It seemed that Savannah was upset and frustrated with her workplace, but she attempted to rationalize the situation optimistically.

Savannah persevered along her journey toward the doctoral program because of her faith, especially in God. She quoted the Bible and believed that no matter what was happening, God would help her. In order to discipline herself, Savannah attended a Bible study on Wednesdays, church on Sundays, and practiced fasting and praying. Savannah stated:

> …[M]y faith really does encourage me …like we practice fasting and praying a lot and those two methods help me in discipline so it's like I can be disciplined in doing that it helps me being disciplined in that and focusing on my assignments more or just trying to do what I need to do.

Savannah also mentioned some of her discouragers while in the doctoral program:

> …Sometimes I want to procrastinate and…or I'll feel this way about making this grade and then…and my principal didn't send off a letter of recommendation… they just don't listen to me and I guess that's kind of a discouraging because you're in this program that is focusing on literacy that's not only literacy for reading, but just literacy in…and you have to be literate in every domain of education and they just won't listen…

Savannah indicated that she had been fortunate to have current encouragers that helped her negotiate the discouragement she received via her present occupation. These encouragers stemmed from (a) family, (b) faith, (c) self, and (d) co-workers. Savannah stated that just before her grandfather passed away, a few of his last words to her were about getting her doctorate. She indirectly related this as a feeling of encouragement from her grandfather to continue the pursuit of her doctoral degree. In countering the discouragement, moral support from her family had been a cornerstone for her to moving forward. Her brother always motivated her in the sense that he gave her words of encouragement to support her. Similarly, Savannah's grandmother constantly provided encouragement unconditionally and reminded Savannah that "Regardless of what's going on to keep pushing forward." Savannah also stated, "My Granny… has a lot to do with what encourages me. She tells me regardless of what's going on to keep pushing forward. She tells me not to worry about the loans, just keep pushing forward." Consequently, although she was confronted by challenges at work that discouraged her from continuing to pursue her doctorate degree, and that her vulnerability to these discouragers wounded her, she was healed by her faith:

> I think my faith. There is a quote in the Bible that says, "If I say it, shall I not do it," you know and that was coming from God and to me when I received the letter saying that I was accepted that was the confirmation that He said it and then going through the process is the portion of like okay "shall I not do it," I have to go through the process in order to get to the end. So, I always in the back of my mind no matter what is going on in the classes or how defeated I do feel sometimes it's like He's still going to do it. I just have to go through the process.… If it's not positive or it's not working towards a positive end, I just can't do it. Umm…Yeah, every time I want to get into a relationship I think of Dr. D….but he's like think of a mango like the fruit and he's like when you're studying you have " mango" and I'm like, "Okay, what is mango?" and he's like, "let your man go!

For Savannah, perseverance was something that developed as she practiced her faith, listened to the inspiring words of her grandmother and brother, and was comforted by a humorous professor. By persevering, she renounced the criticisms of colleagues and chose to confront them with action as she completed one course at a time. Table 4 illustrates the descriptors and exemplar of each significant context that Savannah provided.

Table 4

Themes	Descriptor / Exemplar
Time-management	a) Balance study and work I'll say on Friday nights I'm grading papers half the night and then the other half I'm reading an article. b) Time constraints So I'm probably not the best person at managing time especially like I'm a slow reader because I like read everything. I can't just skim read. I feel like I'm going to miss something so managing time is very difficult for me. I feel like I haven't done enough. c) Extra help I'll drink an Amp or a Monster or a Venom and try to stay up and read and then I'll go to sleep and that weekend like that Friday night my body will want to crash.
Interaction	a) Family My family I've adjusted how much time I usually spend with them, like I used to spend a lot of time with my granny and since being in the program I can call her but it's still not the same. b) Friends Socially, I had to cut out a lot of hanging out with my friends. They're in their 20s and they go out on the weekends and they go to parties and socials
Belief	Faith in God In doing that I started to focus on learning how to take better care of myself physically, and spiritually, and intellectually, and emotionally letting people know how I truly felt. Like I used to be the person everybody could run over like I really wouldn't say anything back I wouldn't be aggressive. Now, I've learned to become more aggressive and I'm seeing the people who like it and the people who don't.

Married student

Nichole: Nichole was a 39 year old married White female with no children. She had been married for 19 years. She worked at a university as a reading instructor and was pursuing her doctorate in literacy. Nichole used the second highest number of ambiguous phrases. Her most dominant category of communication vagueness was represented by admission of error statements such as "I don't know how to move on from there."

Nichole's most dominant metatheme was adjustment. She stated that she had to make several adjustments. For example, she revealed:

Umm, I guess I will start with work..Um,…I think that when I am working I like to be at 100% and because I'm so busy and because um, I have so much work in the doctoral program I have to divide my time and I also have to accept things the way they are instead of continuing trying to make it better and that's a problem for me so I have to…strike a balance and say at work "okay, this has to be good enough" and then I have to move on to move on to make sure I cover everything thing.

Moreover, Nichole revealed that she had to make adjustments to most aspects of her life and expressed that balancing what was once a typical activity became much more challenging when pursuing a doctoral degree. In particular, she had to forego her perfectionist traits. With respect to the management of time, Nichole indicated how much she struggled:

… I um you know I have it all mapped out in my head with the readings that we have to do; it's so wonderful if I decided to get up and read an article every day. But because, you know, we work all day Monday, and then I travel an hour and a half and you travel an hour to class, you know, when I get home it's like 10, 10:30; I don't want to read an article and I think that my brain shuts down and I save it all for the weekend and then I'm not able to spend time with my husband. That's all day Saturday and all day Sunday of reading; so I really don't think I am a great manager of time. Um, I think it piles up on me, and I would love to change that about myself, but that hasn't happened for me yet. So, I do not manage it well, and I would love to be able to touch someone with my finger… [w]ho has it all together who could give me some insight on how to manage my time better.

Nichole realized the importance of managing time within the doctoral program, but like other study participants, criticized herself for not being able to read all the material needed to complete her assignments, as well as for not being able to spend time with her husband. Thus, Nichole continually had to make sacrifices, sacrificing the amount of quality time she could devote to her work, relationship, and study. Nichole surmised that pursuing her doctorate degree had caused her to forego other aspects of her life. She quoted her grandfather's advice to help her understand the adjustment:

I'm very close to my grandfather, and he always says, you know, "We always get to a point in our lives where we think we have it made whether… you're raising children or you think you have the children grown and they get out the house, things are going to be better as soon as I buy a car, I'm gonna buy a Mercedes, as soon as I do that." His whole message to me is… nobody ever does. We always say we can always put it off, but life is happening right now and you need to live it and sometimes I feel like I am just existing instead of living and… so that's an adjustment… knowing that I'm existing and not taking full potential.

With respect to the theme of encouragement, Nichole indicated that she had been fortunate in having multiple encouragers:

Oh wow, I think that the biggest encouragers are number one my husband and number two my grandfather, um, it's so nice to know…I think it's something that I didn't have when I grew up that somebody believed in your ability and

believed that you have the ability to accomplish your goals you set in your mind that you're going to accomplish them and I think that's what drives me and it's great and an encouragement, and I know that my grandfather constantly sends cards and emails and he's saying "I'm so proud of you; you're my hero" and it means a lot and those small words carry you for months at a time and I think those are the things that encourage me. I also have a mentor at the school, ABC [pseudonym] University, where I work. When I went through the program as an undergraduate, she was a professor, and she believed in my ability,…and I really wasn't ready to come to higher education, but I really felt honored and decided to come in, and she believed in my ability and that showed she had a lot of faith in me and I appreciated that….

Nichole stated that her grandfather sent her cards and emails that demonstrated to her how proud he was of her and how much he admired her determination and effort. Nichole explained that "… it means a lot and those small words carry you for months at a time and I think those are the things that encourage me."

Nichole also mentioned some of her discouragers while in the doctoral program:

Some of the discouragers that I've had, I think are my parents, my own parents. They don't understand. First of all they didn't understand, or my father, really bothers me,…, but he's more supportive now, but I think it's kind of hard to have your family not understand why…they don't understand the whole purpose, they don't understand who I am. So, I think that's a big discouragement to me, you know, in that um, in that maybe they don't understand what I'm trying to do and sacrifices I've made to be able to do them….

Nichole acknowledged the blessing of having a supportive husband and grandfather while working on her doctorate degree. However, like the other participants, she experienced challenges that discouraged her from continuing her degree. Like Savannah, although Nichole was vulnerable to the discouragers that wounded her, she was healed by the encouragement that surrounded her. Despite her discouragers, Nichole concluded that she persevered due to family, friends, and self:

Um, I think, knowing key essential people in my group, like my husband and my grandfather, believe in me so much and just I think we underestimate the power of, not the power, but um, the feeling that you get when other people do believe in you, …, and I think um, I didn't even believe in my own self that I could obtain that first degree and being able to do that and showing myself I was able to and that I didn't have to and that it was something that I could do myself was very empowering for me, and then to be able to get my master's and then be able to go on to pursue a doctorate degree, um, I think believing in myself and having those key people in my life believing in me matters a lot. I think the key people that believed in me, I finally, finally, after all these years being able to believe in myself really helps me.

Nichole discussed her difficulty with keeping the goal of completing her doctorate degree in sight the closer she came to attaining it. She stated that her grandfather helped her gain a healthy perspective on this phenomenon:

… my grandfather has always told me when I get… he can tell when I get tired, he is so insightful, he calls me my nickname 'Wart' from worry, so he calls me worry wart, he says "Wart, umm, sometimes you can't see the mountain ahead for the rock in your shoes, so don't let the little things, the little bitty rock in your shoe, you know, cloud everything you're working hard for; the beautiful view of that mountain; don't do it" and sometimes I think I allow that to deter me.

For Nichole, perseverance was a characteristic that developed over time. While she pursued her doctorate degree, she listened to the inspiring words of her grandfather. Indeed, she revealed that a big motivator for her to persevere in her doctorate studies was her grandfather and his belief in her. She conveyed that people underestimate the positive impact that someone believes in you has, but that it helped her to persevere. By persevering, she refuted statements made by members of her family that she lacked mental capacity and resolved to complete her degree.

Divorced student.

Liz: Liz was a 45 years old White female and Baptist. She was divorced with two children. Liz had a 24-year-old daughter and a 20-year-old son who were not living with her. She worked as a dyslexia specialist for 40 hours per week and traveled 45 miles to classes. Interestingly, Liz used the highest number of ambiguous phrases. Her most dominant category of communication vagueness was represented by anaphora statements such as "And it's a little more difficult for *them* because it's harder for *them* to understand the amount of time that you put into *it*" [emphasis added].

As illustrated in Table 3, Liz's two dominant metathemes were adjustment and encouragement. Of the metatheme adjustment, time management was by far the most dominant theme. Liz revealed that family, home, time, and work all had been affected by being a doctoral student. Notwithstanding, Liz surmised that having the supportive encouragement of their cohort and family/friends helped her negotiate the stress of being a doctoral student. For the encouragement metatheme, extrinsic motivation was much more frequently mentioned than was intrinsic motivation as a factor that might have affected her life experiences. With respect to extrinsic motivation, the following subthemes emerged for Liz: program structure, friends inside and outside the program, technology, family, professors, and career. With regard to intrinsic motivation, a self-consciousness subtheme emerged for Liz.

During the interview, Liz declared that she purposefully entered the program when her children were older and independent. She noted a professor who told her that "If you have a boyfriend, or a husband, and your children and how it affects the relationships…you know, you need to be prepared for that, to watch your time management…" She felt truly fortunate because she was single and having an advantage living alone in the sense that no one was at home pulling on her time or needing her emotionally. Nevertheless, she admired her graduate school cohort members who had younger children at home and who were able to handle their lives with their families. Liz acknowledged how the program structure has been one of her encouragers since she entered the university. She liked the concept of what a cohort really involved wherein she received much support from the community. She explained:

That was one reason I did pick this program, outside of the fact that reading is my specialty, is that it was a cohort, and I knew it had been real successful for

me when I got my masters and so when I found out this was a cohort kind of curriculum, that we would be running through with each other, it was a huge encourager for me to choose [xx] university because of that.

Liz surmised that people in her cohort and support from the university professors had really kept on motivating her throughout the doctoral program. Also, she saw the benefits of having a doctoral degree and getting articles published for her future career.

Discussion

Validating/Legitimating the Findings

As is the case with all studies, threats to validity/legitimation prevail. In particular, with respect to internal credibility, the biggest threats to the findings were descriptive validity (i.e., factual accuracy of the transcriptions; Maxwell, 1992, 2005) and interpretive validity (i.e., extent to which a researcher's interpretation of an account represents an understanding of the study participants' voice and the meanings that they attach to their words and actions; Maxwell, 1992, 2005). However, descriptive validity and interpretive validity were enhanced by the fact that all eight participants were member-checked and were able to confirm the statements that they made. Further, because two of the researchers were doctoral student participants themselves, they were able to provide an emtic perspective.

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) identified nine legitimation types that are pertinent to mixed research. Each of these legitimation types is defined in Table 5, together with an explanation of how each threat was addressed in the current inquiry. It can be seen from this table that all nine threats were addressed to some degree. Nevertheless, despite the extremely rigorous nature of the mixed research design, replications of this inquiry are needed to assess the trustworthiness of the current findings.

Table 5: *Typology of Mixed Methods Legitimation Types and Approaches Used to Minimize them*

Legitimation Type	Description	How Legitimation Type was Enhanced
Sample Integration	The extent to which the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative sampling designs yields quality meta-inferences.	Collecting both qualitative and quantitative data on the same group of student participants
Inside-Outside	The extent to which the researcher accurately presents and appropriately utilizes the insider's view and the observer's views for purposes such as description and explanation.	Capturing the participants' qualitative and quantitative data (i.e., emtic views) and including doctoral students on the research team (etic views)
Weakness Minimization	The extent to which the weakness from one approach is compensated by the strengths from the other approach.	Combining descriptive precision (i.e., stemming from qualitative analyses) with empirical precision (i.e., stemming from quantitative analyses)
Sequential	The extent to which one has minimized the potential problem wherein the meta-inferences could be affected by reversing the sequence of the quantitative and qualitative phases.	Collecting qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously (i.e., concurrently)
Conversion	The extent to which the quantitizing or qualitizing yields quality meta-inferences.	Obtaining verification of quantitizing of themes via member checking and analysis of audit trail.
Paradigmatic mixing	The extent to which the researcher's epistemological, ontological, axiological, methodological, and rhetorical beliefs that underlie the quantitative and qualitative approaches are successfully (a) combined or	Using a fully mixed research design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009), as well as by undergoing all the major steps of the mixed research process

	(b) blended into a usable package.	
Commensurability	The extent to which the meta-inferences made reflect a mixed worldview based on the cognitive process of Gestalt switching and integration.	Using a team of researchers that was diverse with respect to research, training, research experience, research philosophy, discipline, and affiliation.
Multiple Validities	The extent to which addressing legitimation of the quantitative and qualitative components of the study result from the use of quantitative, qualitative, *and* mixed validity types, yielding high quality meta-inferences.	Using techniques (e.g., member checking, debriefing) that addressed as many threats to the legitimation of both the qualitative and quantitative findings as possible
Political	The extent to which the consumers of mixed research value the meta-inferences stemming from *both* the quantitative and qualitative components of a study.	Using rigorous qualitative and quantitative techniques

Note. This table was adapted from Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006). Reprinted with kind permission of the Mid-South Educational Research Association and the Editors of *Research in the Schools*.

Interpretations of the Findings

The constant comparison analysis led to the following three metathemes being extracted from the codes: adjustment, encouragement, and discouragement. Further, the classical content analysis revealed that all three metathemes were prevalent, with all eight participants contributing to each metatheme. That is, the adjustment, encouragement, *and* discouragement metathemes were pertinent for all participants. In addition, the correspondence analysis revealed a fourth metatheme, namely, marital status, which, again, involved all eight participants.

For the students in this study, as reflected by the adjustment and marital status metathemes, and as noted by Brown and Watson (2010), the participants' "doctoral journey is very much mediated by [their] domestic situation" (p. 386). In particular, the five married doctoral students and one divorced student in the sample experienced some degree of role conflict, with all of them being pulled between the role of a doctoral student and the role of a wife and/or mother (depending on the age of their children). According to Brown (2008), failure to allocate sufficient time either to the familial or the doctoral program can generate feelings of guilt. These participants had strong expectations of what their roles as wives and mothers should involve and experienced negative feelings (e.g., guilt, remorse, moral panic, disappointment) if they were not fulfilling their own expectations (Thanacoody et al., 2006). For example, Ramona stated:

> Some clarifying words I'd like to add would be…I mean, and we (Matthew and I) talked about this going into it…And a more concrete feeling I have at the end of my statement would be that I'm not being my children's primary caretaker, I sometimes feel neglectful and *deadbeat parent* like.

Interestingly, the two single participants also had to perform a balancing act. However, rather than balancing their roles as doctoral students and their roles as wives and/or mothers, they had to balance their roles as doctoral students and their roles as professionals. As noted by Savannah (a single participant), "I'm trying to read and balance work at the same time." Thus, this constant balancing act by the participants helps to explain why time management was by far the most dominant theme, not only within the adjustment metatheme but across all metathemes, consistent with the findings from several other studies (Jiménez y West et al., 2011; Maher et al., 2004; Williams-Tolliver, 2010; Willison & Gibson, 2011).

The result of this constant struggle for balance was heightened levels of stress and anxiety (Williams-Tolliver, 2010). Nevertheless, the ability to balance academic and family responsibilities has been implicated as being an important factor in women's capacity to advance academically (Brown & Watson, 2010; Neale & White 2004; Ramsay, 2000; Thanacoody et al., 2006).

The emergence of the fourth metatheme, namely, marital status, provides support to Bazeley's (2009) assertion of the importance of going beyond the *superficial reporting of themes*. This marital status metatheme contained two themes, locus of motivation, which distinguishes extrinsic motivation from intrinsic motivation; and locus of discouragement, which distinguishes internal/external discouragement from no discouragement. The fact that the five married doctoral students and one divorced doctoral student in the study—as opposed to the two single doctoral students—provided evidence that extrinsic motivation plays an important role in their dissertation journey has logical appeal because married women tend to have larger extended families than do single women that stem from their husbands and in-laws. As such, at least potentially, they are exposed to more familial external sources. In particular, they have more family members to motivate them, either directly or indirectly, to earn their doctorates. Of these external sources, in almost every case for the married participants, the husband provided the most valuable support. Thus, these married women attribute their advancement on the road to completing their doctorates to an external locus of control.

In contrast, for the single students, intrinsic motivation (e.g., faith in God) was much more important than was external motivation. Also, internal discouragement (e.g., loneliness) and external discouragement (e.g., lack of support system, lack of understanding from family) played a much more important role for the two single doctoral students than for the married/divorced students. The pervasive role of internal discouragement and external discouragement experienced by doctoral students is consistent with the findings of Protivnak and Foss (2009) and Castro et al. (2011). However, the fact that these students persevered, despite experiencing internal discouragement and external discouragement, provides evidence of their academic resilience. Indeed, in some instances, internal discouragement and external discouragement had a *positive* effect on the development of academic resiliency, thereby providing support for the academic resiliency theory, as was the case in Castro et al.'s (2011) study. For example, as stated previously, Savannah renounced the criticisms of colleagues and chose to confront them with action as she completed one course at a time. However, because academic resiliency involves the ability to succeed in an educational context after being exposed to one or more risk factors (Morales, 2008), before academic resiliency of these doctoral students can be declared fully, they would have to complete their doctorates. As such, a follow-up (longitudinal) study is needed on this present group of doctoral students, leading to the reformulated mixed research question as follows: In what ways, if any, do the requirements of pursuing a doctoral degree affect daily life experiences of select doctoral students over the course of their degree programs?

Implications of the Findings

The sampling goal of this inquiry was to make analytic generalizations (i.e., "striving to generalize a particular set of [case study] results to some broader theory"; Yin, 2009, p. 43) and are applying "to wider theory on the basis of how selected cases 'fit' with general constructs"; Curtis, Gesler, Smith, & Washburn, 2000, p. 1002), and not to make external statistical generalizations (i.e., making generalizations, predictions, or inferences on data yielded from a representative statistical [i.e., optimally random and large] sample to the *population* from which the sample was drawn [i.e., universalistic generalizability];

Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). As such, in what follows, we will provide the implications of our findings specifically for the eight doctoral participants only, in order to avoid over-generalizations from being made (cf. Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2010).

An important lesson that we have gleaned from our findings is that those responsible for the education of these eight doctoral students need to be more cognizant of their lived experiences as doctoral students are mostly characterized by dual roles—either they have to balance their roles as doctoral students and their roles as wives (i.e., Sandra, Ramona, Nichole, Marchaline, Kimberly) and/or mothers of dependant offspring (i.e., Sandra, Ramona, Marchaline), or they have to balance their roles as doctoral students and their roles as professionals (i.e., Savannah)—with the former being unique to *women* doctoral students. Indeed, three of the participants' lived experiences were characterized by triple roles—having to balance their roles as doctoral students, wives/mothers, and professionals (i.e., Sandra, Ramona, Marchaline). As such, their instructors and others responsible for these students' journey to their doctorates should attempt to develop as much empathy as possible about their *dual-role* and *triple-role* lived experiences. As declared by Brown and Watson (2010), "Empathy is an important component of the supervisory relationship" (p. 402), which could help reduce the negative emotions (e.g., anxiety) experienced by these students by having their lived experience validated. Such empathy, in turn, also might help instructors be more cognizant of the stringent time constraints under which these dual- and triple-role doctoral students operate, and design course assignments accordingly.

Another important implication for seven out of these eight students (i.e., everyone except Lily, who was enrolled at another university) is the supportive role that their cohort system played for them. This is consistent with the findings of Miller and Irby (1999), in their qualitative study of 13 doctoral students enrolled in the same doctoral cohort, who reported that

> the cohort structure provided empathy, support, camaraderie, and produced a noncompetitive environment through which all members could gain strength…The cohort members in our study felt people in the group filled roles as encourager or energizer. They discovered competition was set aside, feedback was provided, and a strong cohesiveness began to emerge. (p. 362)

Indeed, perhaps Lily would have felt less lonely and isolated if she had been part of a doctoral cohort, as were the other seven students.

An additional implication is that these students might have benefited from a more focused orientation program than they had wherein former dual- and triple-role women doctoral students who successfully earned their doctorates shared their experiences during their doctoral journey so that these student participants could have "adjust[ed] their expectations accordingly and gain knowledge about how to 'work the system' in advance of a crisis or deadline" (Maher et al., 2004, p. 403). Further, these students might have benefited from (a) a formalized student mentoring system wherein faculty advisors and doctoral program coordinators organized formally, at multiple points of their degree programs, for successful doctoral students who are further along their programs to share their experiences with these participants, especially the challenges they have overcome and ongoing challenges and how they coped with them (Maher et al., 2004)—hopefully helping them to increase their academic resilience; and (b) a formalized mentoring system wherein faculty members volunteer to mentor these students. Finally, these students might have benefited from regular opportunities to share their lived experiences individually (e.g., via reflexive journals; Onwuegbuzie, DaRos, & Ryan, 2007) or as part of a group (e.g., via focus groups; Castro et

al., 2011).   Such sharing of information might have helped program coordinators identify challenges faced by these students that they might be able to address, at least to a degree.

Conclusions

The present study was unique in three ways. First, it is one of the few studies to examine doctoral students' daily life experiences from a non-academic standpoint. Second, it likely represents the first study to use mixed analysis techniques to examine these experiences. Third, it is the first study to use both emic and etic approaches by involving participants as part of the research team. By involving researcher-participants, unlike previous studies, the present investigation was able to obtain an emtic view that represented an appropriate balance between the insider's (i.e., emic) view and the outsider's (i.e., etic) views for understanding the underlying phenomenon—known as inside-outside legitimation (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006), which, in turn, improved the quality of meta-inferences made. Thus, as noted previously, the present investigation's use of mixed research led to a combination that yielded "complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses" (Johnson & Turner 2003, p. 299). We hope that as many doctoral students as possible, as well as instructors, advisors, mentors, and others responsible for helping women students successfully negotiate their doctoral journeys, are able to make naturalistic generalizations (cf. Stake & Trumbull, 1982) from at least some of the findings and recommendations that emerged from the current study.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What kind of adjustments have you had to make since entering the doctoral program? At work? At home? At Leisure?
2. How do you manage your time?
3. What are encouragers or discouragers for doctoral students:
4. What helps you persevere in your doctoral program?
5. How does being a doctoral student affect your personal relationships?

Appendix B

Debriefing Questions

1. To what degree were the findings similar or dissimilar to your thoughts prior to conducting the interview?

2. What findings surprised you?
3. In the future, how will you conduct interviews based on what you learned during the interview?
4. To what extent do you think you have provided the participants with opportunities to increase their levels of awareness of the complexities of their surrounding and/or situational context?
5. To what extent do you think your own empathy and insights of the participants evolved during the course of the interview?

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