Exploring the Experiences of Female Doctoral Nursing Students Who Have Completed Research Focused Doctoral Degrees in Nursing

Colleen M. Sunday

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd

Recommended Citation


http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd/133

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Knowledge Repository @ IUP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations (All) by an authorized administrator of Knowledge Repository @ IUP. For more information, please contact cclouser@iup.edu, sara.parme@iup.edu.
STUDENT HAS RESTRICTED ACCESS TO FULL TEXT OF THE DISSERTATION.

ONLY COVER PAGES AND ABSTRACT ARE AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME
EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE DOCTORAL NURSING STUDENTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED RESEARCH FOCUSED DOCTORAL DEGREES IN NURSING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Colleen M. Sunday

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

August 2015
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Nursing and Allied Health Professions

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Colleen M. Sunday

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

________________________
Elizabeth A. Palmer, Ph.D.
Professor of Nursing and Allied Health Professions, Chair

________________________
Kathryn Bonach, Ph.D.
Professor of Sociology

________________________
Teresa C. Shellenbarger, Ph.D.
Professor of Nursing and Allied Health Professions

ACCEPTED

________________________
Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Title: Exploring the Experiences of Female Doctoral Nursing Students Who Have Completed Research Focused Doctoral Degrees in Nursing

Author: Colleen M. Sunday

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Elizabeth A. Palmer

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Kathryn Bonach
Dr. Teresa C. Shellenbarger

Despite the recent increase in both PhD nursing programs and student enrollments in these programs, graduation rates are not closing the gap on the lack of PhD prepared nurses, researchers and educators. Given the reported high attrition rates and the recent Institute of Medicine call to double the number of nurses with a doctorate by 2020, it is imperative to understand the collective experiences of nursing PhD students and the unique challenges they face. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of female nurses who have completed PhD degrees in nursing.

Charmaz’s grounded theory methodology was used to gain insights into the experiences of ten nurses who graduated with PhD degrees in nursing. Through in-depth interviews and comprehensive data analysis, the theoretical framework of nursing doctoral student resilience was constructed. This theoretical framework suggests that various components (adversity, intrinsic resilience, and extrinsic resilience) interact as doctoral students choose to develop and utilize resilience. The resilience process was conceptualized by the presence of particular personality traits, characteristics, protective factors, and external support mechanisms that enabled PhD students to adapt to the rigors and challenges of doctoral study and ultimately complete the doctoral degree. Traits of intrinsic resilience exemplified in this study included being a person who is balanced, connected, optimistic, passionate, able to persevere, having purpose, being self-reliant,
and having strong internal drive. Traits of extrinsic resilience included accessing the support of cohort members, faculty, university resources, family, and friends when facing adversity.

Most profound, is the discovery that the completion of PhD degrees is a decision. Study participants tapped into their resilience and chose to complete the PhD. Study findings indicate that resilience can be learned and suggest the need for strategies that support the development and enhancement of resilience in PhD nursing students. This study has implications for doctoral students, PhD faculty and program administrators with specific strategies to tap into resilience or promote student success. Future research is needed to understand the experience of students who do not complete degrees and to further develop this explanatory theory.