

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF ON-CAMPUS EXPERIENCES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL
STUDY OF PERSISTENCE FOR LIMITED-RESIDENCY DOCTORAL GRADUATES

by

Kaitlin Elizabeth Yourous

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2020

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF ON-CAMPUS EXPERIENCES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL
STUDY OF PERSISTENCE FOR LIMITED-RESIDENCY DOCTORAL GRADUATES

by Kaitlin Elizabeth Yourous

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2020

APPROVED BY:

James Eller, EdD, Committee Chair

Lucinda Spaulding, PhD, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the residential experiences of individuals who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program from various institutions of higher education. Tinto's theory of integration provided the theoretical framework for the study to answer the central and research subquestions: (a) How do individuals who completed a terminal degree in education in a limited-residency program describe their residential experiences? (b) How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in relation to their ability to conduct independent research? (c) How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in relation to developing relationships with peers and faculty? and (d) How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in their integration into their academic community? Maximum variation was attempted, and participants were selected through purposeful, criterion sampling, yielding a sample size of 11 participants who earned Doctor of Education (EdD) degrees from a variety of universities. Data were collected through questionnaires, semistructured interviews, personal items, and focus groups and were analyzed using Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological approach. Results from data collection and analysis generated five primary themes: (a) human connections, (b) preparation for the dissertation, (c) mentorship, (d) tangibility of the university, and (e) personal resolve and tenacity. Empirical, practical, and theoretical implications of the study's findings and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Keywords: doctoral persistence, limited residency, education, integration theory

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my devoted and loving husband, Ben. From the moment I began this journey, you had my back every step of the way. Thank you for all the times you worked 12+ hour days but still managed to come home and take care of me and everything else while I worked. Thank you for being willing to learn about a topic I feel passionate about and for always being my sounding board. You were constructively critical when I needed a push but always supportive and encouraging. I can tell you there is no way I could have done this without you . . . but knowing and loving you for more than half of my life, I know you would say that is not true. So, I will amend my statement in this way: There is no way I would have wanted to do this without you.

Acknowledgments

Although the doctoral journey can at times feel lonely and isolating, it is also a journey that is impossible to complete on your own. I would like to first thank Dr. James Eller, my dissertation committee chair, and the final professor I had on campus before I entered candidacy. Words can hardly express my gratitude for the high standards you set, your guidance and thorough feedback, and, of course, your patience and encouragement from the humble beginnings of my research plan to the final manuscript.

I am also beyond grateful for the contributions of my additional committee member, Dr. Lucinda Spaulding. Your kindness, thoughtful feedback, and remarkable expertise on doctoral persistence provided me with the confidence and guidance I needed to persist. Because of you and Dr. Eller, I know I have completed a product of which I will always be proud.

I would also like to thank Dr. Fred Milacci, who sparked my interest in doctoral persistence and took the time to connect me with Dr. Spaulding before I embarked on the dissertation journey. Although it was a simple gesture, it was the catalyst I needed. Thank you for also setting aside time while my classmates and I were on campus to allow us to see a dissertation defense, explain the dissertation process to us, and for all of your helpful hints. All of it made the journey less daunting and overwhelming, including your reminder to always “keep the main thing the main thing.”

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the 11 individuals who participated in the study. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for not only taking time out of your busy lives to share your experiences with me but for the encouragement and words of wisdom you provided. I truly enjoyed hearing each of your stories, and I absolutely would not have been able to complete this journey without you.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	3
Dedication.....	4
Acknowledgments	5
List of Tables	11
List of Abbreviations	12
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	13
Overview	13
Background.....	13
Historical Context.....	14
Social Context	17
Theoretical Context	18
Situation to Self	19
Problem Statement.....	21
Purpose Statement	23
Significance of the Study.....	23
Empirical Significance	23
Practical Significance	24
Theoretical Significance	25
Research Questions	26
Central Research Question	26
Subquestion 1	26
Subquestion 2	27

Subquestion 3	27
Definitions	28
Summary.....	29
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	30
Overview	30
Theoretical Framework	30
Related Literature	38
Individual and External Factors That Influence Persistence	38
Factors That Impact Social Integration	43
Factors That Impact Academic Integration	47
The Limited-Residency Doctoral Student	53
Summary.....	63
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	66
Overview	66
Design.....	66
Research Questions	69
Setting.....	69
Participants	71
Procedures	73
The Researcher's Role	76
Data Collection	77
Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale	77
Semistructured, Open-Ended Interviews.....	79

Personal Item	82
Focus Groups	83
Data Analysis	85
Epoche	86
Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction	87
Horizonalization	87
Imaginative Variation	88
Generating the Essence of the Phenomenon	88
Trustworthiness	89
Credibility	89
Dependability and Confirmability	90
Transferability	90
Ethical Considerations	91
Summary	92
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	93
Overview	93
Participants	93
Allen	94
Brittany	95
Carol	96
Danielle	97
Eli	98
Faith	99

Grace.....	100
Helena.....	101
Iris.....	102
Jim	103
Kathryn.....	103
Results	105
Theme Development	105
Research Question Responses	123
Phenomenological Descriptions	130
Summary.....	132
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	133
Overview	133
Summary of Findings	133
Discussion.....	135
Theoretical Literature	135
Empirical Literature.....	138
Implications	144
Empirical Implications	144
Theoretical Implications.....	146
Practical Implications	147
Delimitations and Limitations	149
Recommendations for Future Research.....	150
Summary.....	152

REFERENCES	154
APPENDIX A: SCREENING SURVEY	170
APPENDIX B: LIBERTY UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL	171
APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT LETTER	172
APPENDIX D: SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT POST	173
APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM	174
APPENDIX F: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE	177
APPENDIX G: DISTANCE DOCTORAL PROGRAM INTEGRATION SCALE	178
APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW GUIDE	181
APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP QUESTION GUIDE	184
APPENDIX J: REFLEXIVE JOURNAL SAMPLES	185
APPENDIX K: AUDIT TRAIL	187

List of Tables

Table 1 Participants Demographic Information	73
Table 2 Standardized Open Ended Interview Questions	80
Table 3 Participants Item Selection	83
Table 4 Standardized Open Ended Focus Group Questions	84
Table 5 Interview Questions and Corresponding DDPIS Items	86
Table 6 Organization of Themes, Subthemes, and Number of Coding References	105
Table 7 Participant Quotes on Shared Experience of the Doctoral Journey	111
Table 8 Participant Quotes on Personal Factors Related to Persistence	122
Table 9 Participants' Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale Results	127

List of Abbreviations

1. CPED – Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate
2. DDPIS – Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale
3. EdD – Doctor of Education
4. EFA – Exploratory Factor Analysis
5. IRB – Institutional Review Board
6. NSF – National Science Foundation
7. PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the residential experiences of individuals who completed a terminal degree in education in a limited-residency program from various institutions of higher education. Although traditional and limited-residency doctoral programs both experience high rates of attrition, the problem is limited-residency doctoral programs are at risk for higher attrition rates (Okahana & Zhou, 2017), and there is a scarce amount of literature on the unique characteristics of limited-residency doctoral programs and students' persistence experiences. This chapter provides an overview of doctoral persistence within historical, social, and theoretical contexts. Statistics on doctoral persistence and attrition are provided with a brief synthesis of current literature on the problem of doctoral persistence. The empirical, practical, and theoretical significance of the study are also discussed following the problem and purpose statements. My philosophical assumptions and motivations for conducting the study are included in addition to the research questions and definitions of terms. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Background

Earning a doctorate is the pinnacle of academic attainment. It is a goal pursued by few and accomplished by even fewer. Attrition of students in doctoral programs is unfortunately a common experience. Despite an annual growth averaging 4.7% in the number of doctoral degrees awarded from 2006 to 2016 (Okahana & Zhou, 2017), it is still estimated 50% of all doctoral students will not earn their terminal degree (Caruth, 2015). Furthermore, Nettles and Millett (2006) claimed doctoral completion rates are lower for students in education when

compared with other disciplines, which was supported by Okahana and Zhou (2017), who found a decrease of 2.9% in the number of education doctoral degrees awarded from 2014-2016.

Although a decrease in education doctorate recipients is a current problem, this has not always been the case. According to the National Science Foundation's (NSF, 2016) Survey of Earned Doctorates, in 1986, the field of education held the largest percentage of doctorate recipients at 20.8%, closely followed by psychology and social sciences at 19.3%. Over the next 30 years, that percentage continuously declined, and the field of education fell second to last in percentages of doctorate recipients at 9.4% (NSF, 2016). Numerous studies on persistence and attrition that specifically target doctoral programs in education have been conducted to understand this phenomenon, yet there still is not a direct answer explaining higher attrition rates within the discipline. The goal of this study was to contribute to the growing body of literature on persistence in limited-residency doctoral education programs; but, to better understand the problem of attrition and retention, it was necessary to first examine and understand the historical, social, and theoretical contexts of doctoral programs in education.

Historical Context

In 1861, Yale University conferred the first three earned Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees in the United States to Eugene Schuyler in philosophy and psychology, Arthur Williams Wright in physics, and James Morris Whiton in classics (Rosenberg, 1961). Within 30 years, the PhD expanded to other disciplines to include education, and, by 1893, the first PhD in education was awarded by Columbia University (Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, & Garabedian, 2006). By design, the PhD was intended to train professional researchers in a specific discipline and develop future faculty for higher education (Toma, 2002). However, in the field of education, it was identified there was also a need for a terminal degree that could enhance the skills and

knowledge of school practitioners (Perry, 2012; Toma, 2002). As a result, Harvard University inaugurated the first Doctor of Education (EdD) program and awarded its first EdD in 1920 (Perry, 2012). Since then, the quality of EdD versus PhD programs has been heavily debated (Perry, 2012), and there is unresolved confusion concerning the degree titles (Perry & Imig, 2008). As a result, the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) was founded as a means to find balance between programs designated for developing stewards of practice (i.e., EdD programs) and stewards of the discipline (i.e., PhD programs; Perry & Imig, 2008).

A component of the CPED initiative included a discussion between participating institutions on appropriate capstone projects for EdD students, which indicated a shift away from traditional dissertations (Perry & Imig, 2008). Emerging capstone projects in EdD programs included problem- and field-based projects, such as needs analyses, institutional change plans, or critical analyses of district-wide programs (Perry & Imig, 2008). Despite the CPED's recognition of a need to reclaim the EdD as a degree for practicing professionals, it is still not uncommon for EdD programs to also incorporate rigorous theory-based coursework and traditional dissertation requirements similar to PhD programs to likewise develop competent researchers (Shulman et al., 2006; Toma, 2002).

Toma (2002) argued the debate over the quality of the EdD versus the PhD is moot, as both degrees require scholarly research and productivity even though their purposes may be different. Similar to the assertions of the CPED, Toma (2002) claimed the purpose of both degrees is not always clear when examining university requirements, but ideally

the Ed.D. develops researching professionals while the other [PhD] trains professional researchers. These researching professionals are presumed to view research not an end in itself, but as a means to improving professional practice through applying theory to

understand current problems in the field. They focus on what is not known, as opposed to what is already known, starting with a practical problem as opposed to with a literature review. (p. 4)

Additionally, even though the intent of the PhD is to train future faculty and researchers, it is not uncommon to have both PhD and EdD recipients serving as faculty in higher education (Shulman et al., 2006). Therefore, even though both degrees initially had distinctive purposes at their inception, these distinctions may not be as common to date, although there is a gradual shift toward each program returning to its roots (Perry, 2012; Perry & Imig, 2008; Shulman et al., 2006; Toma, 2002). However, there might be unique differences in the type of student each program attracts.

Since EdD programs are typically designed for practicing professionals, it can be reasonably assumed some individuals who pursue their EdD may also remain in their teaching or administrative practice. As a result, these students may be drawn toward part-time, fully online, and/or limited-residency programs where they can remain employed in their current positions (Ivankova & Stick, 2007; Santicola, 2013), as opposed to traditional, full-time doctoral programs. However, doctoral persistence in limited-residency or fully online programs is a relatively new concept and seems to have only exacerbated the issue of doctoral persistence. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2017), the number of education graduate students enrolled in an entirely distance education program increased since 2003-2004 from 8% to 34.3% in 2015-2016. Furthermore, the number of education graduate students who participate in some, but not all, distance education courses has also increased from 20.7% in 2003-2004 to 58.2% in 2015-2016 (NCES, 2017). This increase is likely related to better accessibility to the Internet and more affordable technology, which has made pursuing a

terminal degree a possibility for many. However, students enrolled in doctoral programs completed at a distance, either through fully online or limited-residency programs, are at a higher risk for attrition (Patterson & McFadden, 2009; Rovai, 2002). Students in online or limited-residency programs experience a 10-20% higher attrition rate than those in traditional full-residency programs (Rovai, 2002). Furthermore, even though distance education programs have little effect on academic achievement (Bernard et al., 2004), traditional residency programs have a more positive impact on retention than distance education programs (Bernard et al., 2004). Given more education graduate students are pursuing their degrees through distance education each year (NCES, 2017), it is not surprising the number of doctoral degree recipients, specifically in education, continues to fall (Caruth, 2015; Okahana & Zhou, 2017).

Social Context

Earning a doctorate degree is often only thought of as an academic accomplishment. However, the value of a terminal degree extends beyond a diploma and the ability to write “Dr.” in front of one’s name. The doctorate also provides an admission ticket into a distinguished and exclusive society of scholars. A scholar is an “expert in a field of study with the capability to contribute new knowledge to a chosen discipline” (Rockinson-Szapkiw & Spaulding, 2014, p. 4), and advancing one’s scholarship is necessary for any who wish to enter academia. Scholars differ from students in that a student is a consumer of knowledge, and a scholar produces knowledge through independent, rigorous research (Lovitts, 2005).

Although the doctoral dissertation is an independent task, ironically, the path to scholarship is not. Doctoral students who integrate into the scholarly communities of their discipline and experience a sense of belonging are more likely to persist, especially when given opportunities to conduct research and/or publish in collaboration with faculty or experienced

researchers (Amjad et al., 2017; Baker, Pifer, & Flemion, 2013; Murkami-Ramalho, Militello, & Pierr, 2013; Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, & Spaulding, 2016). Furthermore, those who wish to pursue a career in academia as a professor must show a record or the potential for developing a record of scholarly productivity in their field (Rockinson-Szapkiw & Spaulding, 2014).

Considering the dissertation is typically the doctoral candidate's first opportunity to complete individual scholarly research, the dissertation highlights the importance of identifying ways to contribute to one's field as a student through the scholarly community and collaboration. The task of integration and collaboration can be especially challenging for the limited-residency doctoral student due to the nature of the program and limited amounts of time on campus.

Theoretical Context

Theoretical frameworks of student persistence have largely focused on students at the undergraduate level (Astin, 1999; Tinto, 1975), but some researchers have developed theoretical perspectives and models on doctoral persistence (Lovitts, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Lovitts' (2005) and Tinto's (1993) models of doctoral persistence are similar in that they recognize the role of individual factors (i.e., creativity, motivation, knowledge) and institutional factors (i.e., integration into the culture of one's department and community, dissertation advisers, peers and faculty) on persistence. However, when these articles were originally published, they required further research to validate the assumptions of the theoretical models. Now the current literature identifies a variety of factors that align with both models, which contribute to the growing body of knowledge on doctoral persistence. These factors include faculty and chair mentorship (Bagaka's, Bransteter, Rispinto, & Badillo, 2015; Brill, Balcanoff, Land, Gogarty, & Turner, 2014; Colbert, 2013; Devos et al., 2017; Kennedy, 2013; Kuo, Woo, & Bang, 2017 Radeaker, Duffy, Wetzler, & Zaikina-Montgomery, 2016; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016), social and

academic integration (Bagaka's et al., 2015; Baker et al., 2013; Brill et al., 2014; Colbert, 2013; Devos et al., 2017; Harris, 2011; Murkami-Ramvalho et al., 2013; Radeaker et al., 2016; Santicola, 2013; Warburton & McCauly, 2014), personal attributes and familial support (Colbert, 2013; Kennedy, 2013; Litalien & Guay, 2015; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016; Santicola, 2013), financial resources (Earl-Novell, 2006; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011), and the candidate's readiness to conduct individual, scholarly research (Bagaka's et al., 2015; Bernauer, Semich, Klentzin, & Holdan 2013; Colbert, 2013; Harris, 2011; Kennedy, 2013; Kuo et al., 2017; Lambie, Hayes, Griffith, Limberg, & Mullen, 2014; Murkami-Ramvalho et al., 2013; Radeaker et al., 2016; Santicola, 2013; Thompson, 2014; Warburton & McCauly, 2014). However, the current literature lacks sufficient research on doctoral persistence in limited-residency programs, specifically, individuals' residential experiences and the contribution of those experiences toward persistence within limited-residency doctoral programs.

Situation to Self

As a doctoral candidate within a limited-residency education program, my motivation to conduct this study stemmed from a pragmatic approach where the focus was on the outcome of the research, and the solutions it might offer (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, I intended findings from this study to possibly influence limited-residency doctoral program formats and curriculum and offer practical solutions to the problem of doctoral persistence. Despite high attrition rates, limited-residency programs are likely to transition to fully online programs to make terminal degrees more accessible and affordable based on current trends in online learning (McPherson & Bacow, 2015; NCES, 2017). My intent for the study was to better understand the value, if any, of residential or on-campus experiences. Although fully online doctoral programs may increase matriculation, there is no guarantee students will persist to graduation without the

necessary social and academic integration that is critical for persistence (Tinto, 1975, 1993). This is not to say online or limited-residency programs do not attempt to provide opportunities for student integration. Asynchronous and synchronous forms of communication and participation through discussion forums, real-time video lectures, and group projects are often integrated into online curriculum (Croxtan, 2014). Although these tools may foster social interaction and student satisfaction (Croxtan, 2014), it is unclear if virtual forms of interactions are adequate in fostering academic integration as well.

My on-campus experiences, which were done in 1-week intensive formats, played a significant role in my preparation and motivation to conduct my individual research, not only because they developed my research skills, but they also provided opportunities to network and meet scholars and experts in the field. Although I believe my on-campus experiences played a valuable role in my ability to persist and earn a doctorate degree, I understood participants in my study may have differing opinions concerning their on-campus experiences. It was my responsibility to ensure results of the study were truly representative of participants' experiences and not influenced by my opinions in any way. As a result, I employed a transcendental phenomenological approach, which provided meaning solely from the perspectives of those who experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994), as opposed to hermeneutic phenomenology where my experiences and knowledge would have played an integral role in providing meaning and interpretation of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Therefore, the following research was conducted from an epistemological perspective, underpinned by a constructivism research paradigm. Epistemology examines how reality comes to be known, and the relationship between the knower and what is known (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009). Within the framework of constructivism, individuals make sense of the world,

or reality, based on their own historical and social perspectives, and meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world and through their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Patton (2015) stated, “Data from and about humans inevitably represent some degree of perspective rather than absolute truth” (p. 706). Therefore, the intended study was not designed to determine absolute truths but to understand the unique and subjective experiences, or realities of the participants. As the human instrument for data collection and analysis, it was imperative I bracket my personal experiences, biases, and preconceived notions before and throughout the research process. Bracketing, through *epoche* (Moustakas 1994), minimized the impact of my perceptions on the study’s results and supported my goal of ensuring the descriptions of the phenomenon only reflected the experiences and subjective realities of the participants.

Problem Statement

Attrition in doctoral programs is not only a problem for individuals who fail to complete their terminal degree, but for higher education institutions as well. Doctoral programs are often ranked and evaluated based on the rate of students who graduate (Best Colleges, 2018). Furthermore, doctoral students and candidates may spend a significant amount of money and sacrifice personal time to pursue their degree (Santicola, 2013). Since limited-residency programs allow students to remain in their careers, it is possible limited-residency doctoral students have to sacrifice more personal time than traditional doctoral students (Baker et al., 2013). Limited-residency students have to balance full-time employment, personal obligations, and schoolwork (Patterson, 2017), whereas the traditional doctoral student only has to balance schoolwork and personal obligations. This is not to say traditional doctoral students do not make sacrifices, but their sacrifices may be different than a limited-residency doctoral student. Traditional doctoral students typically have to end full-time employment or move to attend the

university where they have been accepted, which can create a financial burden or remove these students from their established support network of family and friends (Baker et al., 2013).

Regardless, when sacrifices are made to pursue a goal, undoubtedly it is a disheartening experience when the goal is not met. The time and money spent may feel like a waste. Although, some students will enroll again into doctoral programs and persist to graduation, others will not (Kennedy, 2013).

The problem of doctoral persistence in limited-residency can also be examined as an empirical problem. Doctoral persistence and attrition are thoroughly researched topics, yet most studies include research settings and participants from traditional doctoral programs (Brill et al., 2014), and/or cohort-based programs (Preston, 2014). There is a scarce amount of literature related to persistence in limited-residency doctoral programs (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). A grounded theory of persistence and attrition in limited-residency doctoral programs (Kennedy, Terrell, & Lohle, 2015) explained a connection between students' noncompletion and inadequate dissertation support, such as advisor issues, dissertation issues, and program issues. However, understanding what makes some individuals quit is not an adequate method of understanding why some limited-residency doctoral graduates persist. Byrd (2016) and Duckett (2014) briefly discussed how doctoral students from a limited-residency cohort appreciated their time on-campus as a method for building community, and M. T. Spaulding (2019) additionally found requiring online doctoral students to visit campus during coursework fostered stronger relationships between them and their advisors once they entered candidacy, all of which is essential to persistence (Tinto, 1975, 1993). This study attempted to address the lack of research examining the role of on-campus experiences as it relates to doctoral persistence and attrition within limited-residency programs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the residential experiences of individuals who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program from various institutions of higher education. Doctoral persistence was defined as persisting through coursework and the dissertation to earn a terminal degree (Tinto, 1993); residential course was defined as any course conducted on-campus (Goddard College, n.d.); and limited-residency was defined as taking a combination of online and residential coursework (Goddard College, n.d.). The theory guiding this study was Tinto's (1975) integration theory as it explains how social and academic integration into the school community contributes to student persistence. Academic integration involves one's role as a student, self-esteem, and intellectual/academic development, as well as provided supports from the academic community, such as resources and services (Tinto, 1975). Social integration includes interactions, connections, and a sense of belonging with peers, faculty, and the school community (Tinto, 1975).

Significance of the Study

This phenomenological study has empirical, practical, and theoretical significance for doctoral students, administrators in higher education, and other researchers who have interest in doctoral persistence. Ultimately these potential implications provided a justification for the study.

Empirical Significance

This research intended to fill a gap in the literature on doctoral persistence in limited-residency programs. There is burgeoning research that addresses the unique needs and characteristics of online or limited-residency doctoral students and graduates (Ivankova, 2004;

Mu, Coppard, Bracciano, & Bradberry, 2014; Patterson, 2017; Rockinson-Szapkiw, Sosin, & Spaulding, 2018; Rogers, 2018; Scarpena, 2016); however, there are areas within this narrow field of research that still need to be studied. A grounded theory of attrition in limited-residency programs was conducted that indicated inadequate interaction with faculty, staff, and peers, and poor integration into the doctoral program played a significant role in attrition (Kennedy, 2013). However, this study only identified negative factors related to attrition. The study did not identify the positive factors that contribute to persistence in limited-residency programs. Although limited-residency programs attempt to bolster interaction and integration through on-campus and classroom experiences (Tinto, 1993), qualitative research on the role of residential experiences as it relates to persistence did not exist.

Practical Significance

Based on the current research, higher education institutions can implement support services, resources, and programs known to foster persistence such as faculty and chair mentorship (Bagaka's et al., 2015; Brill et al., 2014; Colbert, 2013; Devos et al., 2017; Kennedy, 2013; Kuo et al., 2017; Radeaker et al., 2016; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016) and use curricula to prepare candidates for rigorous and scholarly research (Bagaka's et al., 2015; Bernauer et al., 2013; Colbert, 2013; Harris, 2011; Kennedy, 2013; Kuo et al., 2017; Lambie et al., 2014; Murkami-Ramalho et al., 2013; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016; Thompson, 2014; Warburton & McCauly, 2014). Social and academic integration are also necessary for persistence (Bagaka's et al., 2015; Baker et al., 2013; Brill et al., 2014; Colbert, 2013; Devos et al., 2017; Harris, 2011; Murkami-Ramalho et al., 2013; Radeaker et al., 2016; Santicola, 2013; Tinto, 1993; Warburton & McCauly, 2014), but it was unclear if the short amount of time limited-residency students spend on campus actually promoted integration, or if it was simply a hoop they had to jump

through to graduate. From a practical standpoint, findings from the study could encourage universities and administrators in limited-residency doctoral programs to continue to require on-campus experiences or modify current residential requirements to bolster persistence.

Furthermore, results from the study may also impact doctoral program curricula, specifically the coursework offered in residence. On-campus coursework directly related to completing research may be more valuable than elective or content courses (Bernauer et al., 2013; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). Finally, this study's findings have the potential to assist future doctoral students who are contemplating traditional versus nontraditional program formats.

Theoretical Significance

This study also has theoretical significance for researchers of doctoral persistence. Tinto's (1975) integration theory was developed to explain persistence in undergraduates, however this model is applicable and has been used as a theoretical framework for numerous doctoral persistence studies as well (Kennedy, 2013; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016; L. S. Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Additionally, Tinto (1993) developed a longitudinal model of doctoral persistence, however, when the model was originally introduced, there was not enough research to support the model as a theoretical framework for doctoral persistence. Much of the current literature on doctoral persistence supports Tinto's (1993) model, especially in traditional doctoral programs. It is likely many higher education institutions require on-campus experiences for distance graduate programs as an attempt to foster social and academic integration, and as a result, persistence. This study sought to reveal if on-campus experiences assisted with sufficiently integrating the participants into their school communities, which would contribute to Tinto's (1993) longitudinal model of doctoral persistence and expand the model to nontraditional doctoral students.

Research Questions

Social and academic integration are vital for persistence (Tinto, 1975), and doctoral programs at a higher risk for attrition include limited-residency programs, and the field of education (Okahana & Zhou, 2017; Patterson & McFadden, 2009; Rovai, 2002). Therefore, it was imperative to understand the residential experiences of those who have completed their doctorate in education in limited-residency programs and how they persisted. The following research questions were developed based on these premises.

Central Research Question

The central research question was: How do individuals who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program describe their residential experiences? The central research question was developed to address the gap in the current literature, and to understand the influence of residential course experiences on doctoral persistence. Social and academic integration of traditional doctoral students plays a significant role in their ability to persist (Baker et al., 2013; Tinto, 1993), and this integration is possible through the interactions and coursework that occur on campus (Tinto, 1993). However, it was unclear if limited-residency doctoral students integrated into their school community in a similar way because their residential or on-campus course experiences had not been studied and evaluated. This research question sought to describe the residential experience as a means for understanding the relationship between short amounts of time on campus through residential coursework and social and academic integration.

Subquestion 1

Subquestion 1 was: How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in relation to their ability to conduct independent research?

Attrition can occur at any stage of the doctoral process; however, it is more likely to occur during the dissertation or capstone phase when students become doctoral candidates and are required to conduct independent research (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). Candidates' readiness to conduct research and their research self-efficacy contribute to persistence through the candidacy phase (Litalien & Guay, 2015; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). Additionally, academic integration is vital for persistence (Tinto, 1975), and it involves the student's intellectual development. In the case of doctoral candidates, intellectual development involves the essential transition from consumers of knowledge (i.e., students) to producers of knowledge (i.e., scholars). This research subquestion sought to describe any on-campus course experiences that assisted participants in preparation for their independent research and development as scholars.

Subquestion 2

Subquestion 2 was: How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in relation to developing relationships with peers and faculty? Social integration is an important component for persistence throughout doctoral coursework and candidacy, as students and candidates reported they relied on their classmates for emotional support or academic mentoring when tasks became difficult or overwhelming (Santicola, 2013), and faculty mentorship is a statistically significant predictor of doctoral persistence (Bagaka's et al., 2015; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). This research subquestion explored how participants' on-campus experiences contributed to social integration with their peers and faculty.

Subquestion 3

Subquestion 3 was: How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in their integration into their academic community? At the graduate level, social and academic integration are more closely intertwined when compared to

the undergraduate level (Tinto, 1993). Due to the specialized nature of a doctoral degree, coursework and learning are strictly discipline and department based. As a result, smaller communities exist within the larger school community and doctoral students are more likely concerned with integration into these department-based communities than the institution as a whole (Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) suggested social integration with peers and faculty at the department level leads to higher levels of academic integration and intellectual development. This research subquestion sought to describe participants' on-campus experiences in relation to integrating into their school or department communities.

Definitions

The following terms were pertinent to the research study:

1. *Academic integration* – One's role as a student within the academic institution, including academic performance (e.g., grade point average), and intellectual development (Tinto, 1975).
2. *Doctoral persistence* – Doctoral persistence includes persisting through the coursework, candidacy, and successfully defending a dissertation to earn a terminal degree (Tinto, 1993).
3. *Limited-residency* – As defined by the universities participants attended. Limited-residency includes a combination of courses taken online using synchronous and asynchronous tools, and coursework completed on campus, which may include weeklong intensive courses, weekend courses, monthly lectures, etc. (Goddard College, n.d.).
4. *Residential course* – A class doctoral students must attend on campus that includes in-person interactions with peers and faculty (Goddard College, n.d.).

5. *Social integration* – Occurs through peer interaction within the academic institution, building friendships, semiformal extracurricular activities, and interactions with faculty and staff (Tinto, 1975).

Summary

Doctoral persistence and graduation rates, particularly in nontraditional program formats, continue to fall below a satisfactory level (Okahana & Zhou, 2017). Considering the amount of time, energy, and money doctoral students devote to their degrees, higher education institutions need to implement policies and practices that will contribute to persistence. Not only does this benefit the student, but the reputation of the institution as well. Most research on doctoral persistence and attrition focuses on traditional doctoral programs, with an emphasis on social and academic integration as essential factors that contribute to persistence (Baker et al., 2013; Brill et al., 2014; Colbert, 2013; Harris, 2011; Radeaker et al., 2016; Tinto, 1975; Warburton & McCauly, 2014). Although the body of literature on limited-residency doctoral programs continues to grow, there was a need to conduct research to better understand the on-campus experiences of individuals who persisted within a limited-residency doctoral program, especially as more institutions move to online learning models with optional or no residential components. This study implemented a transcendental phenomenological approach to answer the central and guiding research questions and capture the essence of this phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Doctoral persistence is a widely studied topic in the current literature. However, most of the research focuses on traditional doctoral programs and students, and the factors that contribute to persistence. This chapter provides a synthesis of the available literature pertaining to traditional and limited-residency doctoral programs. The chapter begins with the theoretical framework that provided the foundation for the study, followed by related literature organized by the main components identified in the theory: personal and external factors, social integration, and academic integration. Although some factors identified in current research can be applied to limited-residency doctoral students, the literature posited a need for studies that specifically target limited-residency doctoral students and graduates to ensure their experiences of persistence are represented. The final section of the literature review synthesizes the literature specific to limited-residency doctoral students to identify their unique and similar needs to traditional doctoral students. The chapter concludes with a summary restating the problem and identifying the contribution this study will make to the literature.

Theoretical Framework

When an individual decides to pursue their terminal degree there are a myriad of options available to accommodate the needs of most prospective students, but these program options usually fall under two categories: traditional and nontraditional. Traditional, full-time doctoral programs typically require students to end employment and fully immerse themselves in the coursework and scholarly community (Baker et al., 2013). Furthermore, pursuing a doctorate in a traditional residential program may also require prospective students to move or commute if the program they desire is not available in their local community. In contrast, nontraditional

programs, which are usually presented in limited-residency or fully online format, typically allow students to continue employment, remain in their current communities, and learn at their own pace (Gardner & Gopaul, 2012; Ivankova & Stick, 2007). Although fully online programs do not require a presence on campus at any time during the program, limited-residency programs blend online learning with some time on campus. The residency component of a limited-residency program may be met either through weekend or nightly class meetings, weeklong intensive courses, or other formats that require students to come together in a traditional classroom. Each program format has its advantages and disadvantages, which are better understood when regarded from a theoretical perspective.

The convenience of online or limited-residency doctoral programs is appealing, but, to an extent, the very nature of these programs disregard theoretical frameworks of persistence in academia. Tinto's (1975) model of integration and Astin's (1999) developmental theory of student involvement provided paradigms that favor traditional residency doctoral programs and support the continued need for residential components of limited-residency programs. Astin (1999) described student involvement as the "amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518) and posited student learning and development are directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in any educational program. Limited-residency doctoral students certainly must contribute a significant amount of physical and psychological energy into their online and in-class coursework and independent research to persist, but the theory of involvement when combined with Tinto's model of integration suggests the additional need for integration within the academic and social community of the school.

Tinto's (1975) seminal model of integration and persistence is rooted in Durkheim's (1961) theory of suicide. Durkheim's theory stated suicide is likely to occur when an individual lacks collective affiliation and moral (or value) integration. In other words, the individual lacks sufficient and meaningful personal interactions, and their values (whether perceived or actual) diverge from society (Durkheim, 1961). Tinto similarly described the college setting as a social system with unique values and social structures. Therefore, a lack of meaningful interactions with others in the system and incongruence with the institution's values can lead to departure, much in the same way as a decision to commit suicide.

Tinto (1975) further clarified college communities are made up of both social and academic systems, and successful integration into both domains is critical for persistence. Academic integration involves one's role as a student, academic performance, and intellectual development (Tinto, 1975). For doctoral students, academic and intellectual development are essential as they transition from students to scholars and confront the daunting task of independent research (Lovitts, 2001; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). Social integration includes interactions, connections, and a sense of belonging with peers, faculty, and the school community (Tinto, 1975).

Tinto's (1975) theory of integration divided academic and social domains into two separate systems. However, each system may impact the other. A student who is socially integrated to a degree where it impacts his academic performance may not persist due to poor grades. Insufficient grades indicate poor academic integration, and could lead to an involuntary withdrawal (Tinto, 1975). Conversely, a student who performs well academically but devotes so much time to studying he does not develop friendships or relationships may not sufficiently

integrate into the social system of the school community and will either withdraw completely or transfer to another institution (Tinto, 1975).

Almost 20 years after he developed his seminal model of integration, Tinto (1993) further developed his model by comparing persistence between undergraduate and graduate students, specifically doctoral students. Although Tinto (1993) did not develop a theory of doctoral persistence, he did develop a longitudinal model of doctoral persistence that closely emulated his original model of integration (Tinto, 1975) with significant differences. In his longitudinal model of doctoral persistence, Tinto (1993) suggested the social and academic systems within the graduate school setting are more intertwined than in the undergraduate setting. Due to the specialized nature of a doctoral degree, coursework and learning are strictly discipline and department based. As a result, smaller communities exist within the larger school community and doctoral students are more likely concerned with integration into these department-based communities than the institution as a whole (Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) stated:

In this respect, the notion of social integration at the graduate level is more closely tied to that of academic integration than it is at the undergraduate level. Social membership within one's program becomes part and parcel of academic membership, and social interaction with one's peers and faculty becomes closely linked not only to one's intellectual development, but also to the development of important skills required for doctoral completion. In a very real sense, the local community becomes the primary educational community for one's graduate career. (p. 232)

Establishing membership early into one's community within both realms is critical within the coursework stage of the doctoral degree and establishes a foundation for persistence throughout all stages of graduate study (Tinto, 1993). Prior to the candidacy phase, doctoral students are

required to demonstrate they have acquired the necessary skills and competencies to conduct scholarly research. A student's level of competence is often determined through comprehensive exams, and Tinto (1993) suggested academic and intellectual development as a result of academic integration is more important at this stage; keeping in mind social integration often leads to better academic development and integration at the graduate level.

The final stage of graduate study—completion of the doctoral dissertation—is where the model of persistence also differs significantly from the undergraduate model. The dissertation is an independent task; therefore, interactions with other students and faculty are minimal. Candidates' relationships with faculty are limited to their committees, with the most vital relationship existing between the candidate and committee chair (Lovitts, 2001; Tinto, 1993). At this stage, sufficient academic and social integration has already occurred and should sustain the candidate to the completion of his doctorate (Tinto, 1993).

Although Tinto (1975, 1993) stressed the importance of social and academic integration in persistence, he also recognized individual characteristics and external factors play a vital role. At the undergraduate level, family background (i.e., socioeconomic status and parental support), academic ability (i.e., grade point average), and commitment to graduating all contribute to persistence in conjunction with the student's integration within the school community (Tinto, 1975). Integration, whether in the social or academic realm, either fortifies or deteriorates the student's commitment to the institution and/or her goal of graduating (Tinto, 1975). Poor integration in either system could result in the student completely dropping out of college if institutional and goal commitment are both low or transferring to another institution if goal commitment is high but institutional commitment is low (Tinto, 1975). For graduate students, Tinto (1993) recognized individual characteristics that contribute to persistence, such as

motivation, self-directed learning skills, dedication, and familial support (Gardner, 2008; Santicola, 2013; L. S. Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012) with the addition of individual education experiences that occurred at the undergraduate level. Similar to the undergraduate model of persistence, goal and institutional commitment upon matriculation were also prevalent factors (Tinto, 1975, 1993). Doctoral students' goals often need to expand simply beyond graduating to persist. The individual who wishes to become a professor, which requires a doctorate, is likely to have a higher level of goal commitment than the individual who pursues a doctorate simply for the sake of earning it (Tinto, 1993).

Additionally, the model of doctoral persistence differs from Tinto's (1975) undergraduate model by specifying the nature of external commitments and factors that can impact persistence. It is not uncommon for a doctoral student to have an outside career or family to support (Wyman, 2012), neither of which are considered in Tinto's original model of persistence. In the model of doctoral persistence, Tinto (1993) also included financial resources as an external factor. Graduate tuition is much higher than undergraduate tuition, and the doctoral degree takes an average of 8 years to complete (NSF, 2015). Financial resources, whether it is financial aid or the student's own money, have to be sufficient enough to cover the amount of time it takes to complete the degree. Tinto (1993) speculated even if a graduate student is fully integrated into the school community and has a high level of goal commitment, they might not persist if there is conflict within any of the external factors.

Tinto's (1993) longitudinal model of doctoral persistence also discussed differences in enrollment status. Part-time students are at risk of isolation and poor integration within their department and school communities. Tinto (1993) concluded:

The difference between full-time and part-time attendance, in this regard, is not merely a difference in time commitment. It is also a difference in the degree to which one is able to become involved in the intellectual and social life of the student and faculty communities that undergird graduate education. (p. 234)

Limited-residency doctoral students are also at risk for insufficient integration due to the minimal time spent on campus and the asynchronous interactions with other students and faculty throughout the online portions of the coursework (Wyman, 2012). Furthermore, informal department interactions play a role in sufficient integration (Tinto, 1993), and these interactions may be nonexistent for the limited-residency student. So how is the sense of connectedness and involvement fostered in the limited-residency doctoral student? Breitenbach (2019) found online discussion forums provide a slight sense of social connectedness during candidacy; however, the classroom as a community may play an even more important role in academic and social integration, especially for the nontraditional student (Tinto, 1997).

Tinto (1997) expanded upon his theory of integration by recognizing the need to discuss how students persist when their involvement and integration is limited to the classroom (i.e., community college students, part-time students, or limited-residency students). When classroom communities incorporate collaborative and interdependent learning between faculty and students, a sense of community may develop that can contribute to persistence (Holmes, Trimble, & Morrison-Danner, 2014; Tinto, 1997). However, students have to personally commit to active involvement and developing relationships with peers and faculty within the classroom (Astin, 1999; Duckett, 2014; Tinto, 1997). Simply showing up to the classroom is insufficient. This refers back to the individual's commitment to his goal and institution. Higher commitment at the

onset of the program can foster better academic and social integration, which results in continual commitment to graduating and the institution (Tinto, 1975).

Tinto's (1993) longitudinal model of doctoral persistence, in addition to the seminal underpinnings of his original theory of integration, provided a specific lens from which to examine on-campus experiences and their role on persistence. Limited-residency doctoral programs attempt to promote the development of the classroom community, and subsequently academic and social integration, through residential coursework requirements (Duckett, 2014), effective developments of cohorts (Santicola, 2013), discussion board forums that mimic the synchronous discussions that occur in traditional classrooms (Holmes et al., 2014), and collaborative projects (Holmes et al., 2014). Although these practices are research-based and laudable, statistics indicate limited-residency or online programs are at a higher risk for attrition (Patterson & McFadden, 2009; Rovai, 2002). Furthermore, it was not understood how or if on-campus experiences actually contribute to a limited-residency doctoral student's integration in the same way as a traditional doctoral student, and if integration impacted their persistence. As a result, Tinto's theoretical framework provided a guide for creating research and interview questions that searched for an explanation or connection between on-campus experiences, integration, and persistence.

These theories of integration and involvement have direct implications for methods of practice within coursework, which are classroom based, but doctoral attrition is more likely to occur during the dissertation phase, which is a largely independent task (Harris, 2011; Kennedy, 2013; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). Tinto's (1993) longitudinal model of doctoral persistence was an attempt to explain the process of doctoral persistence, but when he originally created the model there was not a sufficient amount of research to support it. However, his model

speculated social and academic integration prior to candidacy, as well as external factors, contribute to persistence during the candidacy phase. Although a single study has not been conducted to validate Tinto's model of doctoral persistence, the following review of literature synthesizes how institutions and doctoral students attempt to foster academic and social integration not only within the coursework but during the dissertation phase to promote persistence in completion of a terminal degree. Furthermore, this study attempted to provide additional support for Tinto's longitudinal model of doctoral persistence by examining how on-campus experiences during the coursework played a role in persistence for participants during candidacy.

Related Literature

The review of related literature is organized based on the theoretical framework that grounds the study. A variety of factors have been identified that contribute to doctoral persistence, and each of these factors contributes to either a student's social or academic integration. Individual characteristics and external factors also play a role in persistence and are discussed. This section of the literature review concludes with a subsection dedicated specifically to research concerning limited-residency doctoral students.

Individual and External Factors That Influence Persistence

Before plunging further into social and academic integration, it would be negligent to not also recognize and discuss the concept of individual characteristics as a contribution to persistence. The pursuit of a terminal degree is deeply personal and typically grounded in a desire for lifelong learning, better career opportunities, and personal growth (Colbert, 2013; Rogers, 2018). Personal elements that lead to persistence may consist of internal factors (e.g.,

commitment and observable behaviors), and external factors, such as the support the student or candidate experiences outside of the school community, and financial resources.

Familial support and integration. From matriculation to graduation, doctoral programs require a significant amount of devotion and personal sacrifice from the student (L. S. Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Personal sacrifices may include putting the doctorate first (Santicola, 2013), which leads to a loss of time spent with family and friends or missing out on significant events (L. S. Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012; Kennedy, 2013). Therefore, it is important to recognize the personal sacrifices made by the candidate's family as well. A loss of time with one's family can lead to a lack of support (Wyman, 2012), but despite this hardship, some families support the student's goal to complete their doctorate (Duckett, 2014). Familial support plays a common and significant role in persistence or attrition, especially for the nontraditional student (Duckett, 2014; Gardner & Gopaul, 2012). Part-time and limited-residency students may find it difficult to integrate into their social and school communities due to their limited amounts of time on campus (Gardner & Gopaul, 2012). If students are unable to find the emotional support they need through their department and school community, these individuals will turn to external support from their families, coworkers, and friends (Gardner & Gopaul, 2012), and this perceived support may contribute to their academic self-regulation, which contributes to persistence (Williams, Wall, & Fish, 2019). Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. (2016) additionally found familial integration has an effect on persistence when combined with other integration and institutional factors, but familial support alone has not been determined to contribute to persistence. However, a lack of familial support alone can contribute to attrition (Kennedy, 2013; Wyman, 2012). Although support from one's family by itself may not lead to

persistence, all other factors that contribute to persistence may be irrelevant if doctoral students or candidates do not feel supported by their families.

Personal characteristics. Individuals who pursue and complete their doctorate predictably have similar personal characteristics that lead to their persistence. A sense of commitment and dedication is obviously necessary (Santicola, 2013; L. S. Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012), and at times doctoral students must shift their priorities and place the coursework and dissertation first (Santicola, 2013). Patience and a willingness to delay gratification may also contribute to persistence since doctoral students must commit several years of their lives toward earning their degree (Lovitts, 2008). However, commitment, patience, and dedication alone may not be enough. Doctoral students and candidates must also exhibit the ability to work independently and efficiently, set and meet goals, and self-direct their independent research (Gardner, 2008; Gardner, Hayes, & Neider, 2007; Lovitts, 2008; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2012). Gardner et al. (2007) additionally stated doctoral students and candidates must exhibit effective communication skills. For traditional students, oral and written communication skills need to be well developed, and, for limited-residency students, effective writing skills are essential since a vast majority of coursework and interactions are conducted through writing.

Doctoral students and candidates must also exhibit humility throughout their pursuit of a terminal degree (Gardner et al., 2007). Once doctoral students complete the coursework, they engage in a transition where they feel more confident in their academic knowledge and abilities (Baker & Pifer, 2011). However, their newfound sense of accomplishment may also come with the fear of failure or embarrassment, and a need to maintain the impression of competence, especially when interacting with faculty (Baker & Pifer, 2011). Humility includes seeking out

and accepting advice and guidance from those who have walked the same path toward earning a doctorate (Baker & Pifer, 2011; Gardner et al., 2007). Baker and Pifer (2011) found doctoral candidates who reached out to advanced students on how to approach faculty reduced their sense of isolation, were more willing to engage with faculty, and decreased their sense of self-doubt and fear of failure. Humility is essential when failure occurs—which it often does—but especially during independent research. Successful doctorate candidates can overcome the fear of failure, to accept failure when it occurs, and seek alternative ways to reach success (Gardner et al., 2007). When individuals continue to commit and refuse to quit during hardship and failure, they exhibit perseverance. Many doctoral students will experience failures and setbacks during their coursework and candidacy, but those who exhibit perseverance are more likely to persist (Santicola, 2013).

Character traits such as commitment, personal agency, and patience are vital to persistence (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2012), but Lovitts (2005) argued differences in intelligence types may also play a small role, especially during the candidacy phase. Lovitts (2005) identified three different types of intelligence: analytical, practical, and creative. Those with analytical intelligence often excel during the coursework because they are told what to do and how to be successful. However, they often struggle during candidacy because of the lack of structure (Lovitts, 2005; Pifer & Baker, 2016). Individuals with practical intelligence can efficiently problem-solve and evaluate and critique their own work. Unlike those with only analytical intelligence, those with practical intelligence are not dependent on others to figure out the next step when solving problems (Lovitts, 2005). Individuals with practical intelligence can strike a balance between working independently on their research and depending on their advisors or chairs for guidance (Baker & Pifer, 2011; Gardner, 2008). Practical intelligence is important in

persistence, but Lovitts (2005) argued creative intelligence is the most vital of them all. Lovitts' (2008) study clearly distinguished between the success of students with only intellectual ability (e.g., analytical thinking skills) and those with creative intelligence. Lovitts (2008) described students with creative intelligence:

They are interested in answering questions, willing to be critical, willing to think about what they hear or read, and willing to look at problems in different ways. They also actively seek feedback on their ideas, can distinguish between good and bad ideas, and can roll with the punches and pick another question when they "hit the wall." (p. 304)

Lovitts (2008) claimed candidates with creative intelligence have the easiest transition from student to independent researcher. However, the study only included traditional students and did not account for the learning and intelligence styles necessary for online learning environments.

Terrell (2002) conducted a study that examined the learning styles of online doctoral students. Similar to results of Lovitts' (2008) study, students who preferred abstract conceptualization (i.e., learning by thinking and systematically approaching problem sets through logical analysis) dropped out at a lesser rate than other learning styles (Terrell, 2002). However, the study also showed a willingness to adapt one's learning style to the demands of online learning also contributed to persistence within the online environment.

Financial resources. Tinto's (1993) longitudinal model of doctoral persistence suggested, in addition to personal characteristics and commitments, external factors such as financial resources have an impact on persistence. Financial resources are available in the form of student loans, self-finance, fellowships, grants, or university-sponsored employment through graduate or teacher's assistantships (Earl-Novell, 2006). Since part-time and limited-residency doctoral students are not regularly present on campus to participate in fellowships or

assistantships, these individuals will usually have a full- or part-time job while pursuing their degree (Poock & Love, 2001). Students with jobs outside of the university or department often have a more difficult time completing their dissertation due to the time demands of both school and work (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Similarly, Earl-Novell (2006) found students who self-financed their doctoral studies were less likely to persist, as opposed to their counterparts who worked as graduate assistants or participated in fellowships. Fellowships and assistantships provide better opportunities for doctoral students to integrate into their school and department communities since their work and studies occur in the same setting (Earl-Novell, 2006).

It is evident personal factors such as commitment, perseverance, familial support, and finances play a significant role in doctoral persistence. Aside from financial resources, these influences rarely garner the attention of higher education institutions because university policies and practices cannot be modified to address the emotional constitutions of the individual doctoral student. Internal and individual factors are outside of the university's realm of control. As mentioned before, practices that promote social and academic integration are at the forefront of higher education policies and methodology within doctoral programs.

Factors That Impact Social Integration

Tinto's (1975) model of integration incorporated social and academic aspects that contribute to persistence. Gardner (2012) additionally described socialization and social integration as the student's ability to adopt the values, norms, and skills of their discipline and school community. Individuals who are unable to adapt and integrate into their department's culture and value system are at risk for attrition (Golde, 2005). Socialization and social integration begin with admission into a doctoral program and at the beginning of coursework (Gardner, 2008). At this stage, individuals are learning what it means to be a doctoral student, the

expectations of performance and independence, and how to “fit” into their smaller school communities (i.e., departments; Gardner, 2008). As a result, the development and use of cohort-models within doctoral programs is a customary method to bolster socialization and social integration into one’s department and discipline (Santicola, 2013).

Cohort models enable students to start their program at the same time and take the same classes with the same instructors as a collective group (Preston, 2014; Santicola, 2013). The notion behind cohorts is to have the same group of students work together and provide support to one another throughout the coursework, which should theoretically build an available network for students once they enter candidacy (Santicola, 2013). However, the literature is divided on the effect of peer support and interactions as a means for promoting persistence. In a grounded theory study of connectivity and persistence (Terrell, Snyder, Dringus, & Maddrey, 2012), support from fellow peers enabled connectivity and social integration, and Gardner (2010) found doctoral programs with high-completion rates had robust support networks that existed between students. Some of Gardner’s (2008) participants in a study on the role of socialization and becoming an independent researcher stated peer relationships were more vital to persistence than relationships with faculty, even though these relationships are often left behind once a student enters the candidacy phase.

Conversely, Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. (2016) found student social integration was not a statistically significant predictor of persistence in online doctoral students, and one significant theme found in Santicola’s (2013) study was a preference by doctoral students in cohorts to work independently and research alone. Yet, the same participants in Santicola’s study also indicated they liked relying on their classmates for emotional support or academic mentoring if necessary. However, this support was not the most important aspect, which is similar to findings in studies

conducted by Bagaka's et al. (2015) and L. S. Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012), and a review of the literature completed by Brill et al. (2014). This indicates a need for balance for doctoral students as they transition to scholars. There is a desire to work autonomously and identify as an independent and competent researcher (Baker & Pifer, 2011; Gardner, 2010; Santicola, 2013), yet the interactions and guidance from peers provides a safety net of support when candidates feel overwhelmed or when tasks becoming challenging (Fiore, Heitner, & Shaw, 2019; Preston, 2014).

Scholarly networking within and outside of the student's department provides an outlet for social integration and may establish a network of support for students once they transition to the dissertation phase (Tinto, 1993). Scholarly networking involves identifying and building relationships with established scholars who have similar research interests or expertise in one's chosen field, advanced students within the program and department, and faculty members outside of the dissertation committee (Adegbola, 2011; Baker & Pifer, 2011). Adegbola (2011) coined the term *scholarly tailgating* to describe the networking process for doctoral students and candidates as a benefit for advancing their research, professional identities, and future careers. Scholarly networking or tailgating has also been referred to as "standing on the shoulders of giants" (Amjad et al., 2017, p. 307), in which doctoral students or burgeoning researchers collaborate with elite researchers to advance their own scholarly identity and integrate in the community of their discipline. Networking may lead to collaborative research and coauthorship opportunities with an elite researcher and scholar, which has shown to improve persistence (Bagaka's et al., 2015) and assist with obtaining careers in academia (Adegbola, 2013; Amjad et al., 2017). These observations of scholarly tailgating also reiterate the important relationship between social integration and academic development.

Scholarly networking, however, does not have to be conducted on such a grand scale of collaborating with an elite scholar. Networking for the doctoral student may also include the development of relationships with advanced students in the department or program or faculty members outside of their dissertation committee (Baker & Pifer, 2011). Advanced students and faculty members may provide an outlet for emotional support, reduce the sense of isolation, and serve as key informants for successful strategies in the transition from doctoral student to candidate (Baker & Pifer, 2011). These relationships may be even more vital for the individual who lacks support from his dissertation chair or committee. Baker and Pifer (2011) stressed the importance of these networking relationships, stating, “In the absence of such relationships, some students struggled to have even a basic understanding of what to expect during this stage and how to deal with the dramatic change in structure during the transition” (p. 8).

Finally, social integration may also depend on the student’s status of enrollment. Part-time and limited-residency doctoral students do not have the same opportunities to regularly interact (whether formally or informally) with their peers or faculty. Gardner and Gopaul (2012) discovered part-time students had a significantly more difficult time integrating into their departments; because social integration is linked to academic development and integration at the graduate level (Tinto, 1993), these students also felt a lack of knowledge acquisition and intellectual development. However, there are also advantages to limited interactions with others in the school community. Traditional doctoral students become so acclimated to regular support and interactions from their peers and other faculty members throughout coursework, the effects and sense of isolation during candidacy are likely more prominent (Gardner, 2008). Part-time and limited-residency doctoral students are familiar with isolation due to the nature of their coursework (Wyman, 2012), and, if they can overcome the sense of isolation, it is possible it

would make the transition into candidacy easier from a social aspect when compared to their traditional counterparts.

Factors That Impact Academic Integration

In Tinto's (1975) theoretical model, academic integration played a more vital role in persistence than social integration at the undergraduate level. However, Tinto's (1993) longitudinal model of doctoral persistence concluded sufficient social integration at the graduate level often leads to better academic integration. Academic integration involves provided support and resources from the institution (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016), including faculty support, how well programs "fit" or meet the expectations of its students through its curriculum (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016), and opportunities for doctoral students to become active participants in the scholarly community through research or publishing opportunities (Baker et al., 2013; Murkami-Ramvalho et al., 2013; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016)—all of which should contribute to the academic and intellectual development of doctoral students into scholars (Baker et al., 2013; Kennedy, 2013; L. S. Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012).

Resources and support. Availability of resources for doctoral students leading up to and during the dissertation phase, specifically library resources, is a crucial component of academic integration. Mullins and Kiley (2002) indicated a link between doctoral candidates' literature reviews and their ability to undertake feasible and substantive research. Yet, Harris (2011) claimed "doctoral students are generally unprepared to conduct dissertation level research" (p. 605). Doctoral programs will often embed generic research library skills into the coursework, but individualized research consultation from university librarians is more beneficial to doctoral students as they conduct their literature reviews (Warburton & Macauley, 2014). Full-time residential doctoral students often have the benefit of frequent access to their librarians as a

source of assistance in refining their literature searching strategies, tracking the work of noted researchers, and undergoing systematic searches to build their literature reviews (Warburton & Macauley, 2014). Although limited-residency doctoral students have online access to the same databases, articles, and journals as their residential counterparts, the ability to engage in face-to-face interactions with a valuable asset, such as a librarian, is limited to their small amount of time on campus or through virtual interactions.

Resources related to academic and scholarly writing skills may also impact a student's intellectual development and persistence. Doctoral students are often ill prepared for the rigorous academic requirements related to research and scholarly writing, which can lengthen time to degree once the student enters the dissertation phase (Duckett, 2014; Golde, 2005). Obstacles can occur at any stage of the writing process, including the planning, execution, and revision stages (Sverdlik, Hall, McAlpine, & Hubbard, 2018), and at any time throughout the student's degree program. However, proficient writing skills are the most vital during the student's development of the dissertation manuscript. The sheer length of a dissertation can be overwhelming in itself; however, many doctoral students are also daunted by a lack of understanding regarding dissertation requirements (Fitzpatrick, 2013). Doctoral students often rely on individualized feedback from their professors to improve their writing skills (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2012; Odena & Burgess, 2017), but straightforward institutional and faculty expectations regarding the dissertation before they commence writing are also necessary (M. T. Spaulding, 2019). Fitzpatrick (2013) found traditional doctoral students who perceived their faculty and committee members as providing clear expectations throughout the coursework and dissertation were more likely to persist than students who were uncertain about expectations. Doctoral students and graduates have indicated a need for direct instruction in writing through the coursework

(Jalongo, Boyer, & Ebbeck, 2014) or through peer-led writing groups (Aitchison, 2009). Peer writing groups may benefit the doctoral student twofold: Not only do peer writing groups influence students' academic development, but they also provide an opportunity for social integration with fellow students (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2012).

Faculty and chair mentorship. Probably the most vital form of academic support and integration originates from the relationship students create with their dissertation chair or advisor (Fiore et al., 2019; Golde, 2000; Lovitts, 2001). Although student communities provide substantial emotional support, a candidate's dissertation committee essentially serves as the gatekeepers for completion of a terminal degree (Lovitts, 2001). A candidate's advisor and committee decide if the individual has transitioned from student to scholar and successfully defended findings from their research (Lovitts, 2001). As a result, faculty members may feel a greater sense of responsibility to guide students through difficult times, provide clear expectations and meaningful feedback, and ensure the success of students they mentor (Gardner, 2010; Lovitts, 2008; Terrell et al., 2012).

Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. (2016) and Bagaka's et al. (2015) both found the role of the dissertation advisor and faculty mentorship as statistically significant predictors of doctoral persistence. Like many factors that lead to doctoral persistence, however, it is not a singular contributing factor. In a study on doctoral students' experiences leading to completion or attrition, all participants spoke at length about the role of their dissertation chairperson, but there were several noncompleters who had positive experiences with their advisors, and some completers who had negative experiences (Devos et al., 2017). Although the role of the dissertation advisor and faculty is important, the responsibility to persist or quit ultimately falls on the student (Fiore et al., 2019).

The previous statement is not intended to minimize the role of faculty members on persistence, but to better identify their role. Part of the process of transitioning from student to scholar requires the candidate to become a part of the research and scholarly community (Baker et al., 2013). Professors and faculty often provide a pathway into the academic community and an opportunity for students to engage with other scholars (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). Students who are willing to take the initiative to network with notable scholars and those with similar research interests are more likely to bridge the isolation effects when completing their dissertation because they have found a way to engage in learning-based interactions they experienced during the coursework phase (Baker et al., 2013; Lovitts, 2008). Additionally, faculty members who conduct research may provide opportunities for students to collaborate on research projects and publish before they transition to their independent research (Brill et al., 2014).

Finally, faculty members in doctoral programs serve as dissertation chairs, advisors, or dissertation committee members. The importance of these roles cannot be stressed enough since it is more likely a doctoral student will leave the program during the dissertation phase than any other time (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). The guidance and feedback dissertation chairs provide to their candidates as they develop their dissertations can contribute to the candidate's willingness to persist (Brill et al., 2014; Kennedy, 2013; Radeaker et al., 2016). A key difference between those who complete and do not complete their doctorate depends on their ability to conduct research that makes sense to them, and that they can move forward on their dissertation without experiencing too much emotional distress (Devos et al., 2017). Doctoral candidates look to their chair as an experienced mentor who has walked the same path they are on, and, at times, their ability to move forward in their research depends on the feedback provided by their chair.

Once again, the decision to persist falls on the candidate, but faculty mentorship and support during the dissertation phase is one of the most significant aspects that assists the student in the transition from student to scholar.

The curriculum and readiness to conduct individual research. Once doctoral students enter the candidacy phase of their program, the experience is unlike any other they have encountered in their academic careers (Lovitts, 2005). Most doctoral students are successful during the coursework phase of their program, despite the more rigorous content and expectations, because the process is the same as their experiences in undergraduate and master's programs (Lovitts, 2005). Coursework is structured and time-bound, and students play the role as consumers of knowledge. Other than guidance and feedback from one's chair and committee, the task of completing a dissertation is completely independent, unstructured, and students transition to scholars, or producers of knowledge (Lovitts, 2005). The social and academic integration that occurs during coursework prepares the student by establishing networks, support systems, and resources that will all contribute to the completion of the dissertation; however, by the dissertation phase, the candidate's persistence depends on their ability to conduct individual, scholarly research (Tinto, 1993).

Lovitts (2005) claimed doctoral students ready themselves for independent research through the acquisition of knowledge. Procurement of formal knowledge provides the skills and facts students need to pass their comprehensive exams and conduct their research (Lovitts, 2005). The curricula during the coursework phase is equivalent to formal knowledge and is one of the primary ways students prepare themselves for their dissertation (Breitenbach, 2019). Although coursework may also focus on leadership and practitioner skills in an EdD program, it is also prudent the coursework and curriculum prepares students for their dissertation

(Breitenbach, 2019). Candidates who perceive the curricula, instruction, and programs as relevant, high-quality preparation for dissertation research (Ivankova & Stick, 2007; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016) with clear and stated expectations (Colbert, 2013) are more likely to persist. Since the dissertation requires original research, the curricula should include a heavy focus on research design and methodologies (Bernauer et al., 2013), conducting ethical research (Thompson, 2014), statistical analysis (Bernauer et al., 2013), and developing sound literature reviews that will guide the student's topic and research (Harris, 2011; Warburton & Macauley, 2014). Furthermore, research-oriented classes should be properly timed within the coursework. Bernauer et al. (2013) found front loading research methodology classes in the coursework led students to fixate on particular topics and methodologies (rather than allowing the literature to guide both), and students felt a disconnect between the methodology courses and applying these skills to their dissertation because of the elapsed time. Lastly, it would be ideal to design the curriculum and coursework objectives to promote the identification of a dissertation topic before students enter the candidacy phase. Kennedy (2013) and Devos et al. (2017) both found students who entered the dissertation phase without an identified topic and a clear structured path were more likely to quit than those who were prepared with a verified researchable topic.

Lovitts (2005) also argued the acquisition of informal knowledge is equally as important when transitioning from student to scholar. Informal knowledge is acquired through experiences, interactions, and opportunities (Lovitts, 2005, 2008). In doctoral programs, this translates into opportunities to conduct research with faculty members and other students before conducting independent research, presenting at conferences, and observing the behaviors necessary to conduct independent research (Lovitts, 2005, 2008). The acquisition of informal knowledge is

not passive, and it requires the individual to seek out these opportunities through social integration into their school community (Tinto, 1993).

Perceived competence in one's ability to complete the dissertation and doctorate has also been found to be one of the leading factors of doctoral persistence (Litalien & Guay, 2015; Lovitts, 2008). The curriculum not only provides opportunities to develop competence and the necessary skills that will prepare doctoral students to partake in independent research, but it can also help to build the student's research self-efficacy (Litalien & Guay, 2015). *Self-efficacy* refers to an individual's personal beliefs about their capabilities, and it is vital to cognitive development and learning (Bandura, 1993). *Research self-efficacy* refers to an individual's perception on their ability to conduct research (Litalien & Guay, 2015). The number of research courses a doctoral student takes has a positive impact on research self-efficacy (Lambie et al., 2014), but passively acquiring skills within a class may not be adequate to make students feel capable of independent research (Lovitts, 2005). However, opportunities to increase student research productivity by collaborating on research projects with experienced researchers, publishing, and presenting during the coursework phase has the most prominent effect on research-self efficacy and readiness to conduct individual research (Bagaka's et al., 2015; Kuo et al., 2017; Lambie et al., 2014).

The Limited-Residency Doctoral Student

The preceding review of literature included a synthesis of factors that contribute to doctoral persistence for both traditional and limited-residency doctoral students. However, it is important to disaggregate the information to fully understand the similarities and differences between these two groups of students, keeping in mind there is a dearth of literature on limited-residency doctoral students and graduates.

Profile of the limited-residency doctoral student. The quality and acceptance of online or hybrid (i.e., limited-residency) doctoral programs as compared to traditional programs is a widely debated topic across disciplines (Adams & DeFleur, 2005; Mu et al., 2014). Although the perception of the quality of an online doctoral degree may negatively influence potential career opportunities in academia (Adams & DeFleur, 2005), Mu et al. (2014) found there were no statistically significant differences between traditional and online/limited residency doctoral students' or graduates' performances in regard to GPA or comprehensive examinations. However, the quality of online and limited-residency doctoral programs is still important to those pursuing a doctoral degree (Ivankova, 2004; Scarpena 2016). Prospective students want the flexibility and accessibility of online learning; however, they also want to attend reputable schools (Ivankova, 2004; Scarpena, 2016), with a preference for schools that also have a brick-and-mortar location (Terrell, Lohle, & Kennedy, 2016).

Ultimately, the most vivid contrast between traditional and limited-residency doctoral students is the value placed on institutional factors versus personal factors as they relate to persistence (Cherry & Blackinton, 2017). Prevalent themes in studies on doctoral persistence for traditional students emphasized the importance of institutional factors toward persistence, such as opportunities for collaborative research, department integration, faculty pedagogy and mentorship, and organization of coursework and instructional materials (Baker et al., 2013; Cherry & Blackinton, 2017; Lovitts, 2005, 2008). These factors are evident when examining the differences between students who pursue full-time doctoral studies, and those who pursue part-time studies. When choosing a doctoral program, potential full-time students are more concerned with academic and social integration factors (e.g., faculty interactions and opportunities for assistantships), whereas potential part-time students are more concerned with program

availability and their ability to maintain employment (Poock & Love, 2001). Since part-time doctoral students, like limited-residency students, are classified as nontraditional (Tinto, 1997) this could suggest social and academic integration factors, while important, are not quite as essential for the nontraditional doctoral student and personal factors external of the institution are far more prevalent in persistence.

If personal factors play a notable role in persistence for the limited-residency doctoral student, what traits does the limited-residency doctoral student need to possess to be successful? Like their traditional counterparts, a keen sense of time management, work ethic, and ability to problem solve are obviously necessary traits (Cherry & Blackinton, 2017; Lovitts, 2008). Furthermore, limited-residency doctoral students must be “willing to develop and learn, highly motivated, committed to the process, self-directed, self-disciplined, communicative, tenacious, flexible, hard-working, and have advanced writing skills” (M. T. Spaulding, 2019, p. 87). Some researchers, however, have attempted to identify less obvious traits that not only make a limited-residency student unique, but successful. Some of these studies included examining Type A personalities (McDermott, 2002) and brain hemispheric preference (Terrell, 2015) as predictors of doctoral completion in limited-residency programs. Although neither of those factors were determined to be statistically significant predictors of success, these studies indicated researchers on doctoral persistence are progressively trying to understand the limited-residency doctoral student.

Some factors that do predict success in a limited-residency doctoral program include grade point averages from one’s master’s program (Snyder, 2017), a lack of critical stress during the dissertation phase (Devos et al., 2017) and internal locus of control (McDermott, 2002). *Locus of control* is the extent to which individuals believe they have power in relation to the

events that occur in their lives (McDermott, 2002). Those with internal locus of control believe they have power over their lives and can influence events and outcomes, whereas individuals with external locus of control believe all outcomes are controlled by outside forces (McDermott, 2002). Although there are significant events outside of one's power that can derail an individual's studies (e.g., the death of a family member, loss of employment, or a critical illness), how an individual reacts to those events can make a difference between persisting or quitting.

Internal locus of control is also closely tied to intrinsic motivation (Fazey & Fazey, 2001; Terrell, 2014). Although there are extrinsic rewards for earning a doctorate such as increased earning potential, careers in academia, upward mobility, and status (George-Reid, 2016; Rogers, 2018), intrinsic motivators such as a desire to develop confidence, intellectual capacity, and independence, or becoming a role model (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2018; Rogers, 2018) play a more significant role in statistically predicting success in a limited-residency program (Terrell, 2014). Furthermore, it can be argued learning is autonomous, and those with internal locus of control are likely to demonstrate more autonomy in their learning (Fazey & Fazey, 2001).

Autonomy in learning and self-awareness of one's learning preferences is especially crucial for the limited-residency student since online coursework is done independently and without the consistent and immediate availability of an instructor (Kennedy, 2013). Terrell (2014) examined Kolb's four experiential learning styles to determine if a preferred learning style or strategy could predict successful completion in a limited-residency doctoral program. Terrell (2014) found learning styles may not affect attrition rates in a limited-residency program, but this is likely a result of intrinsic motivation and internal locus of control, in addition to resounding evidence theories of learning styles are not empirically supported (Coffield, Moseley, Hall, & Ecclestone, 2013; Cuevas, 2015; Paschler, McDaniel, Rohrer, & Bjork, 2010; Roediger &

Karpik, 2006). Participants who did not match the preferred and predicted learning style but demonstrated higher levels of internal locus of control and intrinsic motivation were just as likely to persist as those who possessed the preferred learning style (Terrell, 2014). How an individual learns is outside of their realm of control, however a high degree of intrinsic motivation “may have allowed them to overcome any negative issues caused by incongruence between their preferred learning style and the limited-residence environment” (Terrell, 2014, p. 8). In other words, the internal desire to learn and grow, with an understanding learning is autonomous and within the control of the learner (Fazey & Fazey, 2001), can contribute to persistence for the limited-residency doctoral student.

Self and situational awareness can also be included in the profile of the limited-residency doctoral student (Effken, 2008; Harleman, 2013). Effken (2008) found doctoral students choose distance education—whether online or limited residency—for a reason. The flexibility of online learning is often at the forefront of those reasons (Patterson, 2017), but self-awareness of learning capabilities should also be a prominent factor when considering distance doctoral education (Effken, 2008). Numerous studies conducted with limited-residency doctoral students and graduates have indicated obvious personal persistence factors such as spirituality, grit, motivation, high comfort level with technology, and students’ abilities to self-initiate and guide their learning (Bolliger & Halupa, 2012; Cherry & Blackinton, 2017; Duckett, 2014; Ivankova, 2004; Kennedy, 2013; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). Perhaps it can be argued the reason the students from these studies were successful in a limited-residency doctoral program is because they were aware they embodied these necessary qualities before choosing a distance program.

Similarly, Harleman (2013) argued situational awareness in a limited-residency doctoral program encompasses an awareness of the supports or obstacles within one's microenvironment—rather than an awareness of personal traits—and may also influence persistence. More specifically, situational awareness may include recognizing the impacts pursuing a distance doctoral degree will have on one's life and family and making adjustments to prioritize or minimize one's responsibilities (Harleman, 2013). However, situational awareness considers more than just the obstacles related to pursuing a doctoral degree (Harleman, 2013). For the successful limited-residency or distance doctoral student, it also includes an awareness of the supports in one's environment (Harleman, 2013). For many, the pursuit of a doctoral degree is not an individual affair, and the encouragement from one's family (e.g., spouse, parents, or children) is often cited as a contributing factor of persistence (Patterson, 2017; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). Although limited-residency doctoral students may feel a sense of isolation and lack of support from their peers and faculty, perhaps the situational awareness of the support they do have in their immediate environment compensates for these deficits.

Limited-residency doctoral students' needs. Traditional and limited-residency doctoral students and graduates are similar in their critical need for productive and supportive faculty advisement during the dissertation phase (Fiore et al., 2019; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016; Wyman, 2012). Opportunities to collaborate, publish, and present with peers and faculty members also plays a role in academic integration and persistence for both groups of students, even when it is done at a distance for limited-residency students (Holmes et al., 2014). Poor social and academic integration is a natural component of distance education, and it places limited-residency doctoral students at a higher risk for attrition (Patterson & McFadden, 2009;

Rovai, 2002), but the literature has indicated some limited-residency doctoral students can persist if certain needs are met, which is further discussed in the review of literature.

Coursework plays an imperative role in preparing the limited-residency doctoral student for success in the candidacy phase—perhaps far more than the traditional student (Terrell & Lohle, 2016). Although all doctoral students need a strong foundation in research methods before attempting their dissertation, traditional doctoral students often have the benefit of learning how to conduct research firsthand by collaborating with faculty and other students before embarking on their independent research (Lovitts, 2005, 2008). In most cases, the limited-residency doctoral student does not encounter the opportunity to complete a research project until he or she enters the candidacy phase (Terrell et al., 2016). In two separate studies, Terrell and Lohle (2016) and Terrell et al. (2016) found limited-residency doctoral students self-identified a need for a better connection between the coursework and dissertation. In one study, limited-residency doctoral students indicated a need for coursework that would have prepared them for independent research, such as research methods, data collection, and analysis for both qualitative and quantitative research (Terrell et al., 2016). However, they also identified a need for coursework that would help students to identify a research topic and begin developing a research plan (Terrell et al., 2016). Similarly, students in Terrell and Lohle's (2016) study indicated frustration with transitioning from the coursework to the dissertation phase without a clear topic and plan in mind. In addition to coursework that prepares for the dissertation, students from both studies suggested an orientation to the dissertation process would be beneficial (Terrell & Lohle, 2016; Terrell et al., 2016). This orientation could include guidelines, directions, and structure for completing the dissertation, and it would be supplemental to coursework opportunities that allow

students to begin working on components of the dissertation under the direction of a professor before they enter into candidacy (Lovelace, 2015; Terrell & Lohle, 2016).

Limited-residency doctoral students have also identified specific needs concerning the delivery of instruction during the coursework, and these needs are often centered around increasing the amount of synchronous interactions—both formal and informal—between students and faculty (Herndon-Stallings, 2018; Johnson, 2015; Myers, Jeffery, Nimmagadda, Werthman, & Jordan, 2015; Yalof & Chametzky, 2016). Johnson (2015) found, across disciplines, numerous participants in the study requested more residential courses—specifically courses taken closer to candidacy that were designed to assist students with developing a research project. However, requiring too many residential courses takes away the enticing convenience and flexibility of a limited-residency doctoral program (Terrell et al., 2016); therefore, the need for synchronous interactions has to be provided in a different way (Myers et al., 2015). During formal delivery of instruction, limited-residency doctoral students benefit from virtual synchronous forms of lecture and discussion through videoconference applications (e.g., Skype) or chatrooms that mimic traditional classroom interactions as opposed to asynchronous lecture videos or discussion formats where initial posts and responses are not conducted in real time (Myers et al., 2015).

The presentation of lectures and discussion formats are decided by the institution and are considered formal methods for delivering instruction, but informal delivery of instruction and interaction has also been identified as a need for limited-residency doctoral students (Terrell, Snyder, Dringus, & Maddrey, 2012; Yalof & Chametzky, 2016). Limited-residency doctoral students and candidates have developed online communities of practice, which are shown to increase the likelihood of persistence (Terrell et al., 2012; Yalof & Chametzky, 2016). Online

communities of practice allow for immediate feedback and assistance, which are proven valuable once a student enters doctoral candidacy (Terrell et al., 2012; Yalof & Chametzky, 2016). Often, it is the feeling of not moving forward due to a lack of feedback that can hinder a doctoral candidate from progressing, and online communities of practice that meet in real time through video, audio, or instant messaging chat groups allow limited-residency students and candidates to receive immediate answers when perhaps their professors, chairs, or mentors are not readily available (Terrell et al., 2012; Yalof & Chametzky, 2016).

Communities of practice can be established formally through one's university, such as an established cohort, or informally. Informal communities of practice for online or limited-residency doctoral students are often established using social networking platforms (Herndon-Stallings, 2018; Myers et al., 2015). Because these informal communities of practice are external to the university, Herndon-Stallings (2018) found they allowed individuals to express opinions and frustrations freely and provided benefits of access to resources and advice beyond the scope of the university (Herndon-Stallings, 2018). Furthermore, social networking groups external to the university provided a way to bridge the sense of isolation many online or limited-residency doctoral students experience during their coursework and dissertation (Herndon-Stallings, 2018; Myers et al., 2015; Rockinson-Szapkiw, Heuvelman-Hutchinson, & Spaulding, 2014).

Benefits of a limited-residency doctoral program. Unfortunately, the benefits of online and distance learning often do not progress beyond the discussion of flexibility and availability, however there are many other less obvious advantages to be considered and discussed. Online and limited-residency doctoral programs are often only considered from a perspective that outlines the disadvantages that exist when learning from a distance, specifically the sense of isolation students experience when they are not regularly interacting with their peers and faculty

(Duckett, 2014). For all doctoral students, there is a recurring sense of isolation regardless of program format, which is a clear disadvantage (Ali & Kohun, 2009; Baker & Pifer, 2011; Duckett, 2014; Fiore et al., 2019; Gardner, 2008). The feeling of isolation may occur at different times for traditional and limited-residency doctoral students, which could result in a benefit for the limited-residency student (Gardner, 2008; Duckett, 2014). Traditional doctoral students are often surrounded by peers and faculty during the coursework phase, which is when they integrate into their school and department communities (Gardner, 2008), but this structured interaction time is eliminated once they enter candidacy (Gardner, 2008). Limited-residency students experience isolation throughout their coursework and while they complete their dissertation, and although they are required to attend classes on campus for limited amounts of time, this requirement might not adequately ease the sense of isolation due to time constraints (Duckett, 2014). However, isolation during coursework has its advantages for limited-residency doctoral students. If they can persist through coursework and transition to candidacy, they do not have the additional task of adjusting to the sudden sense of isolation traditional doctoral students experience (Gardner, 2008).

As mentioned previously, there are less obvious advantages and benefits of completing a doctorate through a limited-residency or online program. For people of color, perceived racial anonymity through online coursework is seen as a beneficial way to avoid racial stereotyping or bias that may occur in a traditional classroom setting (Rogers, 2018). Online learning is also advantageous for introverts or those with social anxiety who are skilled in writing (Effken, 2008). A vast majority of online coursework and discussion is conducted through writing submissions, even in synchronous formats such as chatrooms, and provides opportunities for the voices of those who would typically be silent in a traditional classroom to be heard (Effken,

2008). Additionally, students can see some of their classmates' work through online forums and group work that provides a visual representation of the standards expected of doctoral students (Ivankova, 2004).

Finally, the benefits of online learning in a limited-residency doctoral program comes down to perspective and choosing to see the disadvantages from an advantageous point of view (Patterson, 2017). Rather than viewing the distance as a hindrance to persistence, participants in Patterson's (2017) study stated the flexibility and availability of online learning made it possible to persist. Additionally, because limited-residency doctoral programs allow individuals to maintain employment, for many, the pursuit of a terminal degree allowed them to concurrently develop and apply their newfound knowledge into their practice (Patterson, 2017). Moreover, online learning and limited-residency doctoral programs have allowed doctoral students to maintain their current roles and identities as parents, spouses, children, employees, and friends while simultaneously developing a new identity as a scholar (Patterson, 2017; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2018).

Summary

Those enrolled in traditional doctoral programs are not guaranteed to persist, but the factors that contribute to persistence are more prevalent in traditional doctoral programs, especially those that employ a cohort model. Best practices found in the research most often relate to traditional doctoral students. Although these practices can be emulated as much as possible within limited-residency programs, perhaps higher education institutions should try less to strictly mimic traditional programs and find a way to make limited-residency doctoral programs unique by capitalizing on the specific characteristics and needs of limited-residency doctoral students. The literature shows attrition typically occurs during the dissertation phase for

a variety of reasons: a sense of isolation, lack of support from the candidate's advisors or family, weak or nonexistent integration into the school community, and, most notably, the candidate's perceived or actual inability to conduct independent research. Limited-residency programs have attempted to limit the sense of isolation from peers and faculty and foster social and academic integration through residential requirements in their program, but it is unknown if they have also capitalized on using residential classes as an opportunity to ready their students for independent, scholarly research. Perhaps this is one of the keys to reducing attrition rates in limited-residency doctoral programs.

The literature also indicates doctoral students need to integrate within their academic and social communities and have the necessary skills and confidence to complete the required research for their dissertation. Although the scarce amount of available literature on limited-residency doctoral programs indicated these students found ways to compensate for poor integration, social and academic integration should not be ignored. Limited-residency doctoral program administrators have to figure out a way to ensure students' time on campus makes a significant impact on their ability to persist, especially because residential experiences may create an additional financial burden for students who have to take time off from work and pay for travel expenses. Therefore, residential courses in limited-residency programs should primarily focus on advancing the students' academic development by better preparing them for independent research. Higher education institutions that employ limited-residency doctoral programs should plan their curricula so a majority of research design, methodology, and scholarly writing courses occur on campus where students would benefit the most from interactions with faculty, librarians, and other students, and so they have the opportunity to possibly collaborate on research projects. Although it is known some limited-residency doctoral

programs have implemented this curriculum and program strategy, what was not known was the role on-campus experiences play in contributing to doctoral persistence. This indicated a gap in the literature and identified a need to conduct a study on the role of residential courses on persistence in limited-residency doctoral students.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the residential course experiences of individuals from various institutions of higher education who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program. The research questions sought to describe the experiences of these individuals to understand how their time on campus may have contributed to persistence. Therefore, a qualitative study and a phenomenological design was the appropriate method for answering these research questions. Procedures for participant and site selection, data collection, and analysis are thoroughly discussed within the chapter as to permit replication of the study. Data collection consisted of questionnaires, semistructured interviews, personal items, and focus groups. The semistructured interview guides for both individual interviews and focus groups are provided. Additionally, methods for establishing trustworthiness and ethical considerations are included, followed by a chapter summary.

Design

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological design. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated qualitative research is appropriate when a problem needs to be explored and a complex understanding of the issue and context of the problem are needed. Qualitative research occurs in natural settings, and attempts to “make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Data are collected through personal interactions and observations with participants and highlights the human aspect of research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is in stark contrast to quantitative research, which quantifies attitudes, opinions, and behaviors into useable statistics, and pursues results that can

be generalized to a large population (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2006). Qualitative research seeks understanding and meaning within distinct human experiences, and it is those unique experiences that are valued in qualitative research, even if they cannot be generalized (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Although the relationship between on-campus experiences and doctoral persistence could have been examined quantitatively, doing so would not account for the nuances and complex individualized experiences of those who have completed their doctoral degree. Furthermore, phenomenological research seeks to describe and understand the comprehensive nature of a concept or phenomenon experienced by multiple individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike quantitative research designs that test hypotheses and seek to provide explanations and generalizability to larger populations, phenomenological research searches for universal meanings within the experiences from the individuals who have lived them (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

There are a variety of ways to conduct phenomenological research and stark differences exist between the two most common approaches: hermeneutic and transcendental phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutic and transcendental phenomenology are both deeply rooted in philosophy and they seek to study the human experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Prominent phenomenological pioneers such as Moustakas (1994) and van Manen (1990) drew heavily on Edmund Husserl's (1962) writing, specifically his definition of phenomenology as the science of the essence of consciousness. Moustakas (1994) demonstrated phenomenology's roots in philosophy and Husserl's ideas by discussing reality as it relates to phenomena, consciousness, and experiences. A *phenomenon* is what an individual is made conscious of through the senses, but, in transcendental phenomenology, what is "real" is dependent upon the subject (Moustakas,

1994). Transcendental phenomenology brings together what is observed and provides meaning from the perspectives of those who experienced the phenomenon, but Moustakas (1994) further argued the phenomenon itself is not real. The subject's perception of the experience is the only thing that is real (Moustakas, 1994).

Despite having similar roots, transcendental phenomenology differs from hermeneutic phenomenology in that transcendental phenomenology strictly subscribes to developing textural and structural descriptions, which lead to a synthesis of the *essence* of the phenomenon, which described *what* the participants experienced and *how* they experienced it? (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Additionally, transcendental phenomenology provides meaning solely from the perspectives of those who experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994), whereas, in hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher's experience and knowledge play an integral role in providing meaning and interpretation of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I implemented a transcendental phenomenological approach. A transcendental phenomenological approach was appropriate for the study because I sought to describe the participants' experiences and give voice to those who earned their doctorate in education through a limited-residency program. Furthermore, transcendental phenomenology was more appropriate for this study as opposed to hermeneutic phenomenology because of my role as the researcher and relation to the research topic. As a limited-residency education doctoral student and candidate, I had my own understanding and knowledge of the benefits of on-campus experiences. In hermeneutic phenomenology, my previous experiences would have played a fundamental role in understanding and interpreting the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, I understood other limited-residency graduates may not have valued on-campus experiences as I did. Therefore, I chose to employ a research design that only focused on

the description of the experience from the participants' perspectives to minimize bias (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

The following research question guided this transcendental phenomenological study: How do individuals who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program describe their residential experiences? The three subquestions were:

1. How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in relation to their ability to conduct independent research?
2. How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in relation to developing relationships with peers and faculty?
3. How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in their integration into their academic community?

Setting

A formal setting or site selection was not appropriate or necessary for the intended study. Participants resided in a variety of states and graduated from different universities, although there were several participants who graduated from the same universities. Data were not collected at any of these institutions, but rather through online and teleconference interactions with each individual participant. However, it is imperative to describe the different universities from which participants graduated to highlight the unique characteristics between these limited-residency doctoral programs. Pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy of participants and institutions.

Six of the 11 participants graduated from United University, a private, faith-based, nonprofit university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. United University offers

residential and limited-residency programs at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral level. Prior to the 2018-2019 school year, students who were enrolled in United University's limited-residency doctoral programs in education completed most of their coursework online and were required to participate in a minimum of three weeklong or weekend intensive courses totaling nine units or hours. Intensive courses required students to complete some assignments online before and after meeting on campus. Weeklong intensive courses required doctoral students attend class on campus for 8 hours a day, Monday through Thursday, and for 4 hours on Friday. Weekend intensive courses required students to attend class for 8 hours a day for 2 days over the course of three weekends.

Three of the 11 participants graduated from Freedom University, a private, faith-based, nonprofit university in the Southwest region of the United States. Freedom University offers residential and online programs at the baccalaureate level, and fully online as well as limited-residency programs at master's and doctoral levels. Doctoral students in the EdD program were required to attend two weeklong (i.e., Monday through Friday) residencies where they attended class for 8 hours a day at a resort adjacent to the university's campus. During residential courses, participants stated they worked with a variety of faculty members to identify topics and develop research plans for their dissertations.

One participant graduated from Colonial University, a private research university in the Northeast region of the United States. Colonial University offers residential, limited-residency, and fully online programs at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral level. Doctoral students in the EdD program were required to attend two weeklong (i.e., Monday through Friday) residencies, usually during the summer semester. Similar to United University's residential

courses, students were required to complete some assignments online before and after their time on campus.

One participant graduated from Gulf University, a public research university in the Southeast region of the United States. Gulf University offers residential, limited-residency, and fully online programs at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral level. The university's EdD program implements a cohort model. Two of the courses were conducted completely online, and the remaining courses were offered in hybrid format, meaning 80% of the course was conducted online and the rest was conducted on campus. Hybrid courses were conducted over a 16-week period, and doctoral students were required to travel to campus one weekend per month (i.e., approximately four times per semester). Students typically were enrolled in three courses each semester, and each course would meet during the weekend residency.

Participants

Participants were selected through purposeful, criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposeful sampling ensured individuals who could best provide information concerning the phenomenon were selected for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were required to have completed their EdD or PhD in education through a limited-residency doctoral program and completed at least one course in residence. Participants' on-campus experiences were delimited to actual courses or classes that included a syllabus, learning objectives, and content related to their degree. Some limited-residency programs only require on-campus orientation and, although these on-campus experiences may foster social integration, it is unlikely they contribute to the student's intellectual development and academic integration (Tinto, 1975, 1993). Furthermore, participation was limited only to individuals who completed a traditional dissertation, since many education doctoral programs are transitioning to action-based research

projects (Perry & Imig, 2008). To ensure selected participants could provide information-rich perspectives (Patton, 2015) and able to articulate their experiences in a reflective and accurate manner (Spradley, 1979), a Likert-scale question on level of confidence in recalling their on-campus experiences was included on the screening survey (see Appendix A).

Participants were recruited after I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix B). The initial pool of potential participants was drawn from my professional acquaintances and social media groups designed for EdD and PhD students and graduates. Six of the 11 participants were recruited from social media, three were recruited from my professional acquaintances, and two were identified through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a sampling technique where existing participants recruit potential participants (Patton, 2015). I continued to recruit participants until thematic saturation was met (Moustakas, 1994). The sample for this study included 11 participants, which meets the recommended sample size criteria for phenomenological studies (Polkinghorne, 1989).

As illustrated in Table 1, maximum variation of participants—including race, gender, age, and the institutions from which participants graduated—was attempted during recruitment to reinforce transferability of results (Polkinghorne, 1989). However, there were some key demographic categories absent in the sample: individuals of Hispanic, American Indian, or Asian descent; individuals under the age of 39 or over the age of 73; and individuals who earned a PhD. All participants earned an EdD and completed traditional dissertations equivalent to those typically produced by those who hold PhDs. Additionally, there were only three male participants; however, this is representative of the gender disparities prevalent in the field of education, where an average of 31.5% of education doctoral recipients are male (NSF, 2016). As previously stated, pseudonyms were used for all participants and universities to protect the

identity of each individual and institution.

Table 1

Participants Demographic Information

Name	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Degree	University
Allen	56	Caucasian	Male	EdD	Private, Research
Brittany	39	Multi-Racial	Female	EdD	Private, Faith Based
Carol	73	Caucasian	Female	EdD	Private, Faith Based
Danielle	39	African American	Female	EdD	Private, Faith Based
Eli	45	African American	Male	EdD	Private, Faith Based
Faith	45	Caucasian	Female	EdD	Private, Faith Based
Grace	39	Caucasian	Female	EdD	Private, Faith Based
Helena	65	Caucasian	Female	EdD	Private, Faith Based
Iris	43	Caucasian	Female	EdD	Public, Research
Jim	41	Caucasian	Male	EdD	Private, Faith Based
Kathryn	67	Caucasian`	Female	EdD	Private, Faith Based

Note. Names listed are pseudonyms

Procedures

Approval from Liberty University's IRB was obtained to ensure the physical and mental safety of all participants prior to conducting pilot interviews, recruiting participants, and collecting data (see Appendix B). Before I began recruiting participants, I completed two pilot interviews with colleagues to refine my interview protocol and question guide. Potential participants were recruited directly via email or through social media groups designated for doctoral students, candidates, and graduates. Those who were contacted directly via email received a recruitment letter (see Appendix C) with an explanation of the purpose and process of the study and an invitation to participate. Individuals recruited through social media received the recruitment letter via email or the messenger application included with their social media platform after they expressed interest by responding to the recruitment post (see Appendix D). As a method of snowball-sampling, the email invitation encouraged participants to forward the invitation to other individuals who may qualify and be interested in participating in the study. An online screening survey (see Appendix A) using Google Forms was included in the email to

ensure all participants met the criteria.

After participants completed the screening survey, I verified their participation eligibility and sent them a second three-part questionnaire using Google Forms. The first part included the consent form (see Appendix E) and informed participants of the risks and benefits of the study and their right to privacy and confidentiality, as well as the steps taken to ensure both.

Participants were also informed of their ability to withdraw from the study at any time, who to contact with questions about the study, the processes for collecting data, and how they would receive feedback at the conclusion of data collection and the study. Once participants provided consent, they were directed to the second part of the form and asked to provide basic demographic information and a more in-depth description of their doctoral program (see Appendix F). The Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS, Holmes, 2018) was included as a third section on the Google form (see Appendix G). The DDPIS requested information concerning the participants' levels of satisfaction with faculty integration, student integration, and curriculum integration from their doctoral programs. After participants completed the second Google form, I contacted each individual via email to schedule a mutually agreeable time and location for the interview and requested they select a personal document or item that represented their on-campus experience to bring to the interview. These documents may have included photographs, illustrations, journals, essays, or personal items, and were not limited in scope by me. During the interview, participants had an opportunity to explain their document or item. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked to scan and email any paper documents if they had not yet done so. Nine of the 11 participants sent their item before the scheduled interview.

Before each participant's scheduled interview, I printed an interview guide (see Appendix

H) and reviewed and scored their responses to items on the DDPIS. Responses from DDPIS questions that corresponded to interview questions were noted on each participant's interview guide to ensure participants' interview responses aligned with their DDPIS responses, and to enable follow-up questions during the interview. Furthermore, I disaggregated and scored participants DDPIS responses by factor (i.e., faculty integration, student integration, and curriculum integration) and overall program integration to get a sense of their level of satisfaction with integrating into their doctoral programs. Mean scores below 3 indicated low levels of satisfaction, and mean scores above 3 indicated higher levels of satisfaction (Holmes, 2018).

Since participants lived in different states across the country, all interviews were conducted via teleconference and audio recorded and transcribed. All interviews followed a semistructured format. Questions were formulated prior to the interviews and used as a guide (see Appendix H); however, I also had the opportunity to ask follow-up questions based on the responses from the participants and discuss any unique patterns I observed in their DDPIS responses. Memoing was conducted during the interviews. Additionally, when I noticed patterns or connections between participants' statements from previous interviews, I noted them on the guide. Copies of the transcribed interviews were sent to participants to ensure accuracy and provide them opportunities to add additional information (Patton, 2015).

After all individual interviews were completed, I began analyzing the interviews, items, and DDPIS data using a transcendental phenomenological approach and NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program. After all interviews were completed and data were initially analyzed, I generated a list of tentative themes that informed the question guide for the focus groups (see Appendix I). Since participants lived in different regions and time zones in the

United States, finding a mutually agreeable time for everyone to participate in a focus group was challenging. As a result, I selected four dates and times over the course of two weekends and invited participants to inform me if they were available. Ten participants were able to participate during at least one of the times listed. Based on their responses and availability, I created two focus groups, then sent a follow-up email confirming the date, time, and contact information for their designated focus group. Nine participants followed up confirming their participation and contact information for their designated focus groups. The day before each focus group, I contacted participants again to provide directions for joining the group teleconference, however, I only reached six participants during the focus groups. The focus groups were audio recorded, transcribed, and used as a form of member checking to substantiate the themes that evolved from initial data (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996).

The Researcher's Role

As the human instrument for data collection and analysis, it was imperative I bracket my personal experiences, biases, and preconceived notions before and throughout the research process to ensure the description of the phenomenon only reflected the experiences of the participants (Patton, 2015). Throughout my coursework and candidacy, I was enrolled in a limited-residency EdD program and, during my coursework, I participated in elective and required residential research method courses taken in intensive formats. Although I gained a significant amount of information from my required research courses conducted online, the on-campus research class experiences played a significant role in my preparation and motivation to conduct my individual research, not only because it developed my research skills but provided opportunities to network and meet scholars and experts in the field. *Epoche*, or the suspension of judgment, is a critical component of data collection and analysis in transcendental

phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). *Epoche* requires sustained concentration and effort to suspend preconceived notions and biases, and to perceive the phenomenon from a naïve perspective (Moustakas, 1994). This procedure in data collection and analysis was the primary way I bracketed myself out of the study. Throughout data collection and analysis, I kept a reflexive journal where I disclosed any awareness I had concerning my biases and ideas (see Appendix J).

Although several participants graduated from the university I currently attend, only one was a former classmate of mine and we did not have a personal relationship beyond the classroom. Additionally, I attempted to recruit professional acquaintances or former coworkers for the study. Only one professional acquaintance participated, and she is an employee from a different school district with which I collaborated while I was employed by my school district.

Data Collection

Rigorous and valid qualitative research requires a variety of data collection methods (Patton, 2015). The DDPIS responses, individual interviews, personal items, and focus groups transcripts were used to enable the triangulation of data, which helped to establish credibility in the findings of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Questionnaires, interviews, and the collection of personal items were completed first to establish an initial impression of the phenomenon from the perspective of the individual (Moustakas, 1994). Focus groups were conducted last as a method to verify burgeoning themes and identify any possible new themes (Patton, 2015; Vaughn et al., 1996).

Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale

After participants completed the demographic questionnaire section of the Google form (see Appendix F), they completed the DDPIS (Holmes, 2018) section (see Appendix G). The

DDPIS measures satisfaction with faculty integration, student integration, and curriculum integration (Holmes, 2018). The DDPIS was used to validate the existence of themes or patterns within the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018) by corroborating participants' responses on the DDPIS to their interview responses, and to determine if students actually experienced integration into their distance doctoral programs. Since participants were all graduates, they were asked to reflect on their previous doctoral program when answering the questions, and the questions were reformatted into past tense. This 32-item instrument was deemed valid and reliable for the 3-factor instrument.

The DDPIS was developed and tested in a single study (Holmes, 2018). Initial DDPIS content and face validity was investigated through a subject matter expert panel, and additional face validity and item relevancy was established through a pilot test that yielded a 34-item instrument (Holmes, 2018). A maximum likelihood method of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with oblique rotation was conducted to further investigate the validity and structure of the DDPIS (Holmes, 2018). Although the researcher hypothesized the DDPIS would measure five factors of integration, the EFA results indicated the DDPIS measures three factors included in the instrument: (a) faculty integration, (b) student integration, and (c) curriculum integration (Holmes, 2018). Two items cross-loaded on multiple factors above .32, therefore, those items were removed. Holmes (2018) forced a three-factor solution and the 32-item three-factor solution appeared highly interpretable. Additionally, all variables loaded above .40, and all loaded on only one factor. There are 13 items for the faculty integration subscale, 13 items for the student integration subscale, and six items for the curriculum integration subscale. Each item or question contains a 5-point scale measuring satisfaction levels: 1 = *very little*, 2 = *low*, 3 = *medium*, 4 = *high*, and 5 = *very high* (Holmes, 2018).

Holmes (2018) established internal consistency reliability with Cronbach's alpha, and test-retest reliability with Pearson's r . Reliability was computed for each factor and for the entire instrument: faculty integration ($\alpha = .937$), student integration ($\alpha = .957$), and curriculum integration ($\alpha = .899$); and the DDPIS 32-item instrument ($\alpha = .966$; Holmes, 2018). The Pearson's r for the DDPIS was $r(107) = .855, p < .01$ (two-tailed; Holmes, 2018). Reliability coefficients for each of the three factors were: faculty integration $r(107) = .780, p < .01$ (two-tailed), student integration $r(107) = .810, p < .01$ (two-tailed), and curriculum integration $r(107) = .842, p < .01$ (two-tailed; Holmes, 2018).

Semistructured, Open-Ended Interviews

In phenomenological research, interviews are the primary form of data collection since they enable participants to describe, recall, and provide meaning to their own experiences within the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, initial and primary data were collected through semistructured, open-ended interviews. All interviews followed a semistructured format and were conducted via teleconference since participants lived in different states across the country. Questions were formulated prior to the interviews and used as a guide (see Table 2); however, I had the opportunity ask follow-up questions based on their responses during the interview and from the DDPIS. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Memoing was conducted during and after the interviews as I noticed connections and patterns between participants interview responses, which assisted with generating the description of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 2

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

Questions

Opening Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself—your current job, the year you graduated from your doctoral program, and your dissertation topic.
2. Why did you decide to pursue a doctorate?
3. Why did you choose a limited-residency program?
4. Please describe the format of your limited-residency program, specifically the requirements for being on campus.
5. When you initially chose your doctoral program and realized you would be required to complete some coursework on campus, what was your attitude toward that requirement, and did you experience any shifts in attitude about the on-campus requirement?
6. Please describe any activities outside of class you chose to attend or were required to attend while on-campus, and in what ways were they beneficial to you as a student.

Questions Related to Social Integration and School Community

7. Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.
8. Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.
9. Please describe how any of the relationships you developed with students or faculty while on campus were beneficial or a hindrance to you during your doctoral journey, especially during the development and defense of your dissertation.
10. In what ways, if any, does the on-campus experience contribute to doctoral persistence from a social aspect?
11. Who was the most significant or memorable person you met during your time on-campus, and why were they significant?
12. Doctoral students and candidates often experience a sense of isolation especially during candidacy. Can you describe any experiences you had as a doctoral student or candidate where you felt isolated and how you were able to overcome that?
13. Based on the DDPIIS, you experienced a _____ level of integration. At what point in your doctoral journey, if any, did you feel like you were a valued member of your school or department's community, and can you please describe your experience of integrating into your overall school community.

Questions Related to Academic Integration and Intellectual Development

14. Please describe your transition from the coursework stage of your doctoral degree to the dissertation stage.
 15. Describe the point in your doctoral journey where you felt prepared to take on the task of independent scholarly research, and were there any on-campus experiences you had that prepared you for candidacy and the completion of your dissertation?
 16. In what ways, if any, does the on-campus experience contribute to doctoral persistence from an academic aspect?
 17. Please describe any academic resources you accessed outside of the classroom while you were on campus, such as access to a library, staff members, or other resources, and why they were valuable to you as a doctoral student?
 18. How did you identify and select your chair and committee? What role, if any, did your on-campus experience play in identifying your committee members?
-

Questions Related to Participant's Ability to Persist and Their On-Campus Experience

19. Please describe your transition from candidate to scholar.
20. What was the most memorable aspect of your on-campus experiences, and in what ways, if any, did it contribute to your persistence?
21. What are the main factors or reasons you were able to persist in a limited-residency doctoral program?
22. What can institutions do to foster persistence for limited-residency doctoral students?
23. What are your thoughts on limited-residency doctoral programs versus fully online doctoral programs, and how might your experience as a doctoral student been different had you completed your program completely online?
24. If you were to complete your doctorate again, please explain why you would or would not enroll in a limited-residency program and describe anything you would do differently.
25. You were asked to bring a document or item that represents your on-campus experience. Please tell me about the item or document you brought, why you selected it, and its significance.

Closing Questions

26. What additional information would you like to share with me about your on-campus experiences we haven't discussed yet?
-

When viewed from Tinto's (1975) theoretical framework, social and academic integration are vital to persistence at all levels of postsecondary education. These factors of integration framed the research questions and, as a result, the interview questions. Questions 1 through 6 were opening questions. They were designed to provide background information to build the participant's profile and to ease the participant into the interview (Patton, 2015). Social integration at the doctoral level includes interactions, connections, and a sense of belonging with peers, faculty, and the school or department community (Tinto, 1975, 1993). Questions 7 through 13 related to the participants' social interactions with other students, faculty members, and their experience of integrating into the school community. Academic integration involves students' intellectual development (Tinto, 1975). At the doctoral level, this refers to the intellectual development needed to complete the coursework and comprehensive exams, but also extends to the ability of completing independent, scholarly research (Tinto, 1993). Questions 14 through 18 related to known factors that contribute to academic integration, such as faculty mentorship in the form of dissertation chairs/advisors and committees (Brill et al., 2014; Lovitts, 2008), access to resources and academic support (Harris, 2011; Warburton & Macauley, 2014), and the

individual's readiness to conduct scholarly research (Bagaka's et al., 2015; Bernauer et al., 2013; Colbert, 2013; Kennedy, 2013; Kuo et al., 2017; Lambie et al., 2014; Lovitts, 2005, 2008; Murkami-Ramvalho et al., 2013; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016; Thompson, 2014). Tinto (1993) also recognized the impact of external factors that contribute to doctoral persistence, such as personal attributes, goal commitment, and external support. Questions 19 through 25 were designed to identify any of these additional factors and their relation, if any, to the participants' on-campus experiences. Question 26 allowed the participant to contribute additional information they found pertinent to their experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Personal Item

Although interviews are the primary form of data collection in all qualitative studies, the nature of qualitative research allows for additional methods of collecting data to corroborate or enhance the participants' interview responses (Denzin, 1970). Participants were asked to provide a personal document, visual representation, or item that represented their on-campus experience and were not limited in scope by me (Merriam, 1998). This method of data collection was used for triangulation to verify alignment with the participants' item and verbal statements and to illuminate any new information on the individuals' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Two participants were unable to identify an item that represented their on-campus experiences. Because participants had the opportunity to discuss the significance of their item during the interview, those responses were coded for significant statements during data analysis and each item was coded based on whether it reflected social or academic integration, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Participants Item Selection

Name	Item	Integration Code
Allen	Photos with classmates	Social
Brittany	Facebook memory of photo	Social
Carol	Dissertation	Academic
Danielle	Brick replica	Academic
Eli	Graduation video	Academic
Faith	Literature binder	Academic
Grace	No item	N/A
Helena	Photo with professor	Social
Iris	Photo with cohort and course syllabus	Social and Academic
Jim	No item	N/A
Kathryn	Literature binder	Academic

Note. Names listed are pseudonyms.

Focus Groups

Focus groups allow researchers to garner insight into the variations or similarities of perceptions of a particular experience or topic (Patton, 2015). For this study, focus groups were used to garner insight into the variations or similarities of perceptions of on-campus experiences. Focus groups are a valuable method of data collection as interviewees may be hesitant to provide information in a one-to-one setting, and, at times, hearing about others' experiences assists individuals in recalling different aspects of their own experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, since the focus groups were conducted after individual interviews, they allowed the participants time to reflect on their interview responses and provide additional information they may have recalled after the interview ended.

After all individual interviews were conducted, I began preliminary data analysis using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach and coded significant statements into tentative themes for each research subquestion. Based on those burgeoning themes, I created a focus group question guide (see Table 4) to validate or refute the current themes or identify new themes. Participants for the focus groups were selected based on their availability, but since

many participants were available for a variety of the initial four dates, attempts were made to group participants to minimize familiarity within the group. Despite the use of snowball sampling, none of the participants in either focus group personally knew any other participant in their group. All participants lived in different states and a variety of time zones, therefore, both focus groups were conducted via teleconference. All dialogue from the focus groups was audio recorded and transcribed.

Table 4

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions

Questions

Opening Question

1. Will each individual please state your name, the institution from which you graduated, and your degree earned.

Question Related to Academic Integration and Social Integration

2. From an academic aspect, what were the strengths or benefits of your program's residential courses, and what were the weaknesses?
3. From a social aspect, what were the strengths or benefits of your program's residential courses, and what were the weaknesses?

Questions Related to Overall Integration into the Academic Community

4. Please discuss if you believe it is necessary or important for limited-residency doctoral students to integrate into their school communities in the same way as traditional doctoral students.
5. Please discuss the role, if any, your residential experience had on your persistence?

Closing Question

6. Please discuss any additional information you would like to share concerning your residential experience and persistence.
-

Similar to the individual interview guide, question one was included to ease participants into the discussion and to assist them with becoming familiar with one another (Patton, 2015). Questions 2 and 3 related to Tinto's (1975) theoretical model of persistence to elucidate any additional factors of social and academic integration participants related to their persistence, and to also corroborate interview responses. Questions 4 and 5 related to the participants' beliefs on

the value and necessity of on-campus experiences as it relates to integration and persistence (Tinto, 1975). Question 6 provided an opportunity for follow-up statements, questions, and clarifications to ensure confirmability of results (Patton, 2015).

Data Analysis

Before interviews were conducted, participants' responses to the DDPIS were analyzed to generate descriptive data on each participant and to prepare for the triangulation of data. Participants' responses to the instrument were transferred from the Google form to a Google spreadsheet and analyzed on an individual basis. Each item response on the DDPIS produced a numerical score to measure satisfaction (1 = *very low*, 2 = *low*, 3 = *medium*, 4 = *high*, 5 = *very high*; Holmes, 2018). The participant's overall satisfaction with their program was calculated by averaging the numerical scores for all of the items on the DDPIS. However, the data were also disaggregated by the instrument's three factors—faculty integration, student integration, curriculum integration—to measure the participant's level of satisfaction in each area. Individual mean scores above 4 indicated high levels of satisfaction, scores between 3 and 4 indicated medium levels of satisfaction, and scores below 3 indicated low levels of satisfaction (Holmes, 2018). The overall and disaggregated scores are reported in Chapter 4 in each participant's biography.

The DDPIS was also used to triangulate data by corroborating responses on several interview questions and is illustrated in Table 5 and Appendix L. Prior to individual interviews, I created a memoing document for each participant which allowed me to document notes on my observations, connections, and follow-up questions during the interviews. A hard copy of the interview guide served as the foundation for the memoing document. However, on this document, I also recorded the responses to the DDPIS item that corresponded to my interview

questions to ensure the participants' interview responses aligned with their DDPIS responses. If there appeared to be a discrepancy between the participant's oral responses and DDPIS responses during the interview, the memoing document allowed me to immediately ask follow-up questions for clarification.

Table 5

Interview Questions and Corresponding DDPIS Item

Interview Questions	Corresponding DDPIS Item(s)
Question 7	Items 3, 5 12-15, 17, 18, 21, 25, 29, 30
Question 8	Items 2, 4, 8-11, 19, 22, 23, 31, 32
Question 9	Items 3, 10
Question 10	Item 25
Question 12	Items 13, 25
Question 13	Item 19
Question 14	Items 1, 20, 26-28
Question 15	Items 7, 20, 26-28
Question 16	Items 7, 20, 26-28
Question 17	Item 7
Question 18	Items 4, 22

Epoche

Once data from the DDPIS, interviews, and items were collected, preliminary data analysis was conducted using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach. Prior to launching a phenomenological study, Moustakas (1994) stated the researcher must set aside prejudgments and be "open, receptive, and naïve" (p. 22). Suspending judgment is also known as *epoche* (Moustakas, 1994). *Epoche* requires the researcher to engage in disciplined reflection about personal biases and preconceptions concerning the subject material (Moustakas, 1994). However, *epoche* is more than just refraining from judgment. To engage in *epoche*, the researcher must also refrain from ordinary ways of perceiving experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Every quality, statement, and description has equal value, and nothing is determined in advance (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, *epoche* requires sustained attention and concentration throughout the research process (Moustakas, 1994). *Epoche* is an essential preliminary step to

data collection and analysis because it helps to ensure the descriptions and essence of the phenomenon truly reflect the experiences of the participants (Patton, 2015). Through self-reflection and dialogue, the researcher brackets their own experiences and judgments (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Identifying my role as the researcher was an initial step in bracketing and *epoche*. However, I also engaged in *epoche* prior to data collection by reviewing interview questions and eliminating those based off preconceptions of what I hoped to find. Finally, as I collected and analyzed data, I practiced objectivity and awareness of how my own biases and experiences might influence my interpretations by completing reflexive journals (see Appendix J) before and after interviews and focus groups (Moustakas, 1994).

Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction

The next step in data analysis was transcendental phenomenological reduction. Moustakas (1994) labeled this step of data analysis as such because *transcendental* refers to moving beyond the everyday and perceiving experiences freshly, and *reduction* refers to going back to the original source. The purpose of transcendental phenomenological reduction was to develop textural descriptions of the phenomenon, or *what* participants experienced (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). To develop textural descriptions, I first bracketed the research topic and questions and set aside all other thoughts, beliefs, or preconceived notions. Transcriptions of individual interviews and focus groups and captions for personal items were initially read for familiarization, and to generate preliminary categories or codes based off initial elucidations.

Horizontalization

Horizontalization occurred next, which means each experience was treated with equal value (Moustakas, 1994). Transcriptions were thoroughly read a second time; whereby significant statements were coded using the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo.

Statements were tentatively clustered into categories based on their relevance to the research questions. Once clustered under their research questions, significant statements were reexamined. Vague, repetitive, or overlapping statements were eliminated, leaving only the horizons (Moustakas, 1994). The horizons, or textural meanings of the phenomenon, were then reduced into themes. Data that were unexpected and unique but seemed initially irrelevant to the research questions were placed into a miscellaneous category, then were later reexamined for possible new themes or to determine if they were relevant to the final determined themes. Themes of the phenomenon were then synthesized into a coherent textural description, which included only the essential components of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Imaginative Variation

The next step of data analysis involved imaginative variation, which lead to the structural description of the phenomenon. Structural qualities of a phenomenon include “time, space, materiality, causality, and relationships to self and to others” (Moustaks, 1994, p. 99). Through the use of imagination, rather than the use of software, I identified structural qualities within the textural themes of the phenomenon to develop a description of how the experience of the phenomenon came to be (Moustakas, 1994), or how the phenomenon was structured. In addition to imagination, I used my own intuition to consider the contexts of the phenomenon, different frames of references, universal structures, and divergent perspectives of the participants to develop a description of the conditions that produced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Within the experience of the phenomenon, Moustakas (1994) claimed “invariant structural themes” (p. 99) exist, and these themes were used to generate a structural description.

Generating the Essence of the Phenomenon

Textural and structural descriptions were essential to generating the essence of the phenomenon. The *essence* of an experience or phenomenon provides a synthesis of meaning derived from these composite descriptions. Patton (2015) stated textural descriptions describe *what* the participants experienced, and structural descriptions describe *how* they experienced the phenomenon. Both textural and structural descriptions were synthesized for meaning and integrated into a “unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). The essence captures the conditions and properties of the phenomenon, without which the phenomenon would fail to exist (Moustakas, 1994). These phenomenological descriptions are reported in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

Due to the subjective nature of qualitative studies, qualitative researchers must include methods to ensure trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis (Patton, 2015).

Trustworthiness in qualitative studies requires researchers to establish credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research refers to the accuracy of the study’s results in reflecting reality and truth (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Triangulation of data is a common method for validating the existence of themes or patterns within the phenomenon and was implemented in this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation requires qualitative researchers acquire information from multiple data sources to corroborate evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I verified congruency between participants’ statements throughout data collection and analysis using multiple forms of data collection, including DDPIS responses, interviews, personal items, and focus groups.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability in qualitative studies ensures methods for collecting and analyzing data are rigorous and appropriate, and that findings accurately represent the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An audit trail (see Appendix K) of data collection and analysis was conducted to ensure dependability of procedures and findings, and that interpretations were consistent with the data. Additionally, a peer who is familiar with phenomenological research reviewed and debriefed the research process to ensure the legitimacy of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Member checks and reflexivity are critical methods of establishing confirmability because they validate the accuracy of the descriptions derived from the personal experiences of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Reflexivity requires the researcher to disclose personal biases or experiences concerning the subject material (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although *epoche* requires the researcher to suspend judgment while analyzing the data, reflexivity understands humans will still have preconceptions and biases (Patton, 2015). Disclosing this information through reflexive journals and identifying my role in relation to the topic provided transparency to the reader so they could understand the position I held within the study and to critically evaluate whether my biases or experiences influenced my analysis or interpretation of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After I completed data analysis and generated textural and structural descriptions, I asked all participants to provide feedback on the meanings or interpretations of the significant statements to ensure my personal biases and preconceptions did not influence my descriptions (Patton, 2015).

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research refers to the idea that findings from one study can be transferred and applied to other settings and contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

Generating rich, thick descriptions within my results contributed to establishing transferability because it provided an elaborate illustration of the setting, context, and phenomenon, which enabled the reader to transfer that description to other settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Furthermore, attempting maximum variation in my sample by selecting participants who varied in age, gender, race, and ethnicity, and who graduated from a variety of different universities, increased transferability.

Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical considerations included protecting the privacy of participants and the potential impact the findings may have had on their higher education institutions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It was possible results could show on-campus experiences were negative, burdensome, and/or wasteful. Therefore, pseudonyms and general descriptions of the universities from which participants graduated were used to maintain the privacy of all participants and institutions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Snowball sampling was an additional ethical consideration, as it may have impacted the potential participants' rights to privacy. To address this ethical issue, I requested participants ask for permission before sharing another individual's contact information with me. In addition, participants forwarded my information and recruitment letter to potential participants, which allowed them to initiate contact with me.

Furthermore, participation in the study was completely voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collection did not begin until I received approval from Liberty University's IRB (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once data collection began, names of individuals and institutions were immediately replaced with pseudonyms on each document to safeguard against a breach of confidentiality in the event data were lost or stolen. I maintained a codebook of all pseudonyms and kept it separate from the data in a locked

filing cabinet when not in use. Transcriptions and documents were maintained on a password-protected computer and flash drive, and the flash drive and any relevant paper documents were secured in a locked filing cabinet when not in use (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

Qualitative research requires rigorous methods of data collection, analysis, and establishing trustworthiness. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the residential experiences of individuals from various institutions of higher education who completed their terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program. This chapter outlined the methods for selecting the design, site, participants, data collection, and analysis procedures, and establishing trustworthiness. Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach was used as the primary method of data collection and analysis to capture the essence of the phenomenon. Data were collected through the DDPIS, semistructured interviews, personal items, and focus groups.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the residential experiences of individuals who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program from various institutions of higher education. The central research question was: How do individuals who have completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program describe their residential experiences? The additional guiding three subquestions questions were:

1. How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in relation to their ability to conduct independent research?
2. How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in relation to developing relationships with peers and faculty?
3. How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential course experiences in their integration into their academic community?

This chapter introduces and describes the individuals who agreed to participate in the study. The remainder of the chapter focuses on answering the research questions through the development of themes and includes textural and structural descriptions, which were synthesized for meaning to describe the essence of the phenomenon. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Participants

All participants in this study graduated from a limited-residency EdD program within the last 4 years. Participants graduated from private and public universities, as well as faith-based, secular, and research universities. Participants' demographic information was reported in Table 1 and is also discussed in the individual biographies below. Because phenomenological research is

designed to capture the voices of those who experienced the phenomenon, all quotes from participants are quoted verbatim without spelling or grammar corrections. However, some quotations were edited to protect the privacy of the individual or institution (e.g., when participants disclosed a name or other identifying information). These edits were identified through the use of brackets.

Allen

Allen is a 56-year-old Caucasian man who completed his EdD in higher education administration in 2017. He currently works as a director of marketing for a continuing studies unit at a state university in Massachusetts. Allen attended Colonial University, a private research university in the Northeastern region of the United States. Allen is a full-time doctoral student and completed his doctoral degree in 5 years. His program required him to attend two weeklong summer residencies, and the coursework for his residential courses was delivered in hybrid format where some of the coursework was completed online before and after the weeklong residency. Allen chose a limited-residency doctoral program due to time constraints. He worked full time and had a family, so he needed a program where he could complete coursework online. However, he chose a limited-residency program because he also wanted the opportunity to take some classes on campus. Based on his responses on the DDPIS, Allen experienced a high level of overall satisfaction with his program integration ($M = 3.91$). Allen's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with student integration ($M = 4.38$), followed by curriculum integration ($M = 3.83$). His lowest level of satisfaction was with faculty integration ($M = 3.46$); however, his faculty and curriculum integration scores still fell within the medium to high levels of satisfaction. Allen chose two photographs with his classmates to represent his on-campus experience. The photographs were significant because of the friendships he made and maintained

after the on-campus experiences ended. Allen further explained the significance of these relationships after the coursework ended:

The two pictures were kind of the core people who, not only did friendship extend online, but even after we had finished our two residencies over the 2 years. . . . There were four of us who would meet online to just discuss how things were going, even though we were doing different topics and we were in different places. . . . But it was a way for us to just talk about our experiences and kinda keep . . . try to keep each other on track. So, for a while, once a week, for an hour, we would just all . . . we had a predetermined time, and we would just log on and talk about how things were going.

Brittany

Brittany is a 39-year-old multiracial woman who completed her EdD in curriculum and instruction in 2017. She is currently in her 16th year as an educator, and she works as a teacher support specialist in instruction and compliance for a special education department in an elementary school. Brittany attended United University, a private faith-based university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. She was a full-time doctoral student and completed her doctoral degree in 3 years and 3 months. Her program required her to attend three residencies, and she chose residential courses that met in a weeklong (i.e., Monday through Friday) format. The coursework for each residency was delivered in hybrid format where some of the coursework was completed online before and after the weeklong residency. Brittany chose a limited-residency doctoral program due to time constraints. She worked full time as a middle school special education teacher and knew she would have limited time outside of the workday, so she wanted a program where she could work at her own pace. She chose a limited-residency program because she wanted the opportunity to take some classes on campus over the summer or

during breaks. Based on her responses on the DDPIS, Brittany experienced a very high level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 4.93$). Brittany's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with faculty and curriculum integration ($M = 5.00$), followed closely by student integration ($M = 4.84$). Brittany shared a Facebook memory as her item to represent her on-campus experience because it symbolized the lasting friendships she developed with two other individuals while on campus:

It's interesting because every year in a Facebook memory, there's a picture of a gutter that pops up on my feed. Because, again, we were walking from the library one night and [Tiffany] dropped her water bottle, and it rolled down the gutter. And, so, the running joke was, our life is in the gutter. And she tagged me, so, like, every summer, she shared and the three of us will kind of laugh.

She further shared the importance of her item and why she would pursue a limited-residency program if she had to complete her doctorate again:

I would do the same way, limited-residency. I know students that do it fully online, but you don't ever make the connections to other people. And, you know, you don't get the Facebook memory of the water bottle in the gutter.

Carol

Carol is a 73-year-old Caucasian woman who completed her EdD in educational leadership in 2017. She and her husband own an editing business that edits legal documents and, most recently, doctoral dissertations. Carol attended Freedom University as a full-time doctoral student at a private faith-based university in the Southwestern region of the United States. She completed her doctoral degree in 6 years. Her program required her to attend two residencies where students met with a faculty member to identify a dissertation topic and tentatively begin

developing a dissertation prospectus. She did not choose a limited-residency program because of its program format but because she had family members who were already pursuing their doctorate from the university. Based on her response on the DDPIS, Carol experienced medium levels of satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 3.63$). Carol's DDPIS scores indicated a high level of satisfaction with student integration ($M = 4.69$), a medium level of satisfaction with faculty integration ($M = 3.00$), and a low level of satisfaction with curriculum integration ($M = 2.66$). Carol chose her dissertation as her item that represented her on-campus experience. However, she chose this item not because the residential experience was significant in the development of her dissertation, but because students in the program worked on developing their dissertation topics while in residency.

Danielle

Danielle is a 39-year-old African American woman who completed her EdD in educational leadership in 2018. She previously worked as a school psychologist, but just recently opened her own practice where she completes educational testing, parent education, and advocacy work for clients. Danielle began her doctoral journey in a traditional, residential doctoral program, but found it difficult to maintain a balance between work, raising a young family, and attending classes. As a result, she ultimately transferred and completed her degree through a limited-residency program. Danielle finished her terminal degree at United University, a private, faith-based university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. She was a part-time doctoral student and completed her degree in 4 years. Her program required her to attend three residencies, and she chose to attend two that met in weeklong (i.e., Monday through Friday) format, and one on the weekends over the course of three weekends. The coursework for each residency was delivered in hybrid format where some of the coursework was completed

online before and after the residency. Based on her responses on the DDPIS, Danielle experienced a medium level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 3.43$).

Danielle's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with faculty integration ($M = 3.53$), followed closely by student integration ($M = 3.38$) and curriculum integration ($M = 3.33$).

Danielle chose a brick replica as her item to represent her on-campus experience because one of her professors brought a brick to class to help students put their dissertation into perspective.

Danielle explained:

Well, actually, the professor always talked about how your dissertation is just one block.

If you think about a wall, your dissertation is just, like, one block in the wall. It's like you're building. . . . You're helping to build this body of research . . . and, for me, we had these little replica blocks, and I would look at that when I was working on my dissertation and it would just remind me to put everything in a particular perspective even though it seems . . . this dissertation seems really big—and it is really big—but it's also . . . it's a small piece of a larger body.

Eli

Eli is a 45-year-old African American man who completed his EdD in leadership with organizational development in 2019. Eli is a veteran of the United States Air Force and has been an employee of the Department of Defense for 27 years. Currently, he works as the assistant chief of fire prevention for an Air Force base in California. Eli attended Freedom University, a private, faith-based university in the Southwestern region of the United States. He was a full-time doctoral student and completed his doctoral degree in 4.5 years. His program required him to attend two residencies where students met with two faculty members to identify a dissertation topic and tentatively begin developing a dissertation prospectus. Eli chose a limited-residency

doctoral program for convenience and because he completed his master's degree through Freedom University as well. Based on his response on the DDPIS, Eli experienced a high level of satisfaction with his overall program integration ($M = 4.72$). Eli's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with curriculum integration ($M = 5.00$) and high levels of satisfaction with student integration ($M = 4.84$) and faculty integration ($M = 4.46$). Eli sent a video of one of Freedom University's graduation ceremonies and a photo of a cap and gown to represent his on-campus experience. Eli shared how both items served as motivation for him to complete his degree:

That served as motivation—watching the video, and watching the . . . listening to the people's names, especially the people that I know from the social media, from Facebook groups—to see them walk across the stage, to get hooded, and to see them walk down the stage. Watching those videos just motivated me.

Faith

Faith is a 45-year-old Caucasian woman who completed her EdD in curriculum and instruction in 2019. She currently works as a middle school teacher in Utah. Faith began her doctoral journey in a traditional, residential doctoral program before she married her husband, who serves in the United States Military. Faith reported, because of her husband's job, they are required to move almost every 3 years and, although her original program attempted to work with her from a distance, it became too complicated to continue. She took a break from pursuing her doctorate for several years and then transferred to a limited-residency program. Faith finished her terminal degree at United University, a private, faith-based university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. She was a part-time doctoral student and completed her doctoral degree in 5 years. Her program required her to attend three residencies, and she chose residential

courses that met in a weeklong (i.e., Monday through Friday) format over the summer. The coursework for each residency was delivered in hybrid format where some of the coursework was completed online before and after the residency. Based on her responses on the DDPIS, Faith experienced a medium level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 3.84$). Faith's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with curriculum integration ($M = 4.33$), followed by faculty integration ($M = 4.00$), and student integration ($M = 3.46$). Faith chose a binder that was a required assignment for her final residential course. The assignment required students to gather and summarize 22-25 research articles that would later be used to develop the literature reviews for their dissertations. The binder was significant for Faith from both an academic and social aspect:

The binder was the, at that time, it was the culminating piece of work. So, it was everything that the coursework had been hinting at and telling me that I would ultimately pursue, came together in the articles and in the reviews in that binder . . . [and] because I felt like, people had so much either angst over it, or pride in it, that it was, it was really representative of the experience, and the, even the social experience, to see all those binders together on the table.

Grace

Grace is a 39-year-old Caucasian woman who completed her EdD in educational leadership in 2016. Grace is a former special education teacher and currently works as an assistant principal at a charter school in North Carolina. Grace attended Freedom University, a private, faith-based university in the Southwestern region of the United States. She was a full-time doctoral student and completed her doctoral degree in 4.5 years. Her program required her to attend two residencies where students met with a faculty member to identify a dissertation

topic and tentatively begin developing a dissertation prospectus. Grace chose a limited-residency doctoral program for convenience because, like Faith, her husband is in the military and they moved frequently. A limited-residency program also allowed her to continue working and raise a family, although she would have preferred a fully online program. She chose Freedom University for her doctoral program because she also earned her master's degree in special education there. Based on her response on the DDPIS, Grace experienced a very high level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 5.00$). Grace's DDPIS scores indicated high levels of satisfaction with faculty, student, and curriculum integration ($M = 5.00$). Grace was unable to choose an item that represented her on-campus experience. Although she experienced a high level of integration and had a positive experience on-campus, her residency courses were not meaningful to her. She simply stated, "The residency was nice, but I don't need it."

Helena

Helena is a 65-year-old Caucasian woman who completed her EdD in curriculum and instruction in 2019. She is a retired army veteran and currently works as an adjunct professor for United University. Faith completed her terminal degree through United University, a private, faith-based university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. She was a full-time doctoral student and completed her doctoral degree in 3 years. Her program required her to attend three residencies, and she chose residential courses that met in a weeklong (i.e., Monday through Friday) format over the summer. The coursework for each residency was delivered in hybrid format where some of the coursework was completed online before and after the residency. Based on her responses on the DDPIS, Helena experienced a high level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 4.69$). Helena's DDPIS scores indicated the

highest level of satisfaction with curriculum integration ($M = 4.83$), followed closely by faculty integration ($M = 4.76$) and student integration ($M = 4.54$). Helena chose a photo with one of her professors as her item that represented her residential experience. However, during the interview, Helena explained that, had she been able to, she would have sent a video she had completed as a required project for one of her on-campus classes. For Helena, the collaboration with fellow students and the creation of this final product was the most memorable aspects of her on-campus experience.

Iris

Iris is a 43-year-old Caucasian woman who completed her EdD in instructional leadership for nurse educators in 2019. She is currently employed as a nursing faculty member for an associate degree program at a community college in Texas. Iris completed her terminal degree through Gulf University, a public research university in the Southeast region of the United States. She was a full-time student and completed her doctoral degree in 4.5 years. She chose her specific limited-residency program because her boss was a student in the program at the time, and because the course descriptions aligned with her interests. The program format was not a deciding factor for her. Iris' program implemented a true cohort model that required all students attend class on campus one weekend each month during the semester for a total of four weekends. All of her courses, except for two summer courses, were delivered in hybrid format. Iris was typically enrolled in three courses per semester, and each course met during the weekend she was on campus. Based on her responses to the DDPS, Iris experienced a high level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 4.41$). Iris' DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with curriculum integration ($M = 4.67$), followed by student integration ($M = 4.54$) and faculty integration ($M = 4.15$). Iris sent two photographs of her cohort and a course

syllabus to represent her on-campus experiences; however, the photographs held more significance and meaning than the syllabus. Iris explained how the first picture was taken at the beginning of her program and the second photograph was taken towards the end of her program. Iris stated, “The pictures mean part of the journey to me—the sacrifices, the friendships that were maintained, and, then, also, just the little social events that we did. I did enjoy that.”

Jim

Jim is a 41-year-old Caucasian man who completed his EdD in educational leadership in 2019. He is currently an instructor within the department of physical education at a United States service academy. Jim completed his terminal degree through United University, a private, faith-based university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. He was a full-time doctoral student and completed his doctoral degree in 3 years. Jim was unsure if a doctoral program that consisted of mostly online coursework would be the right fit for him. He chose to take one online course “to wet [his] foot in the water,” and, once he was successful in that course, decided to continue with the limited-residency program. His program required he attend three residencies. He chose to attend two that met in weeklong (i.e., Monday through Friday) format and one that met on the weekends over the course of three weekends. The coursework for each residency was delivered in hybrid format where some of the coursework was completed online before and after the residency. Based on his responses on the DDPIS, Jim experienced a medium to high level of overall satisfaction with his program integration ($M = 3.88$). Jim’s DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with faculty integration ($M = 4.62$), followed by curriculum integration ($M = 3.50$) and student integration ($M = 3.31$). Although Jim had an overall positive experience on campus, he was unable to select a significant item to represent his time on campus.

Kathryn

Kathryn is a 67-year-old Caucasian woman who completed her EdD in curriculum and instruction in 2019. She is currently a registered behavior technician who provides applied behavior analysis therapy to children with autism spectrum disorder. Kathryn completed her terminal degree through United University, a private, faith-based university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. She was a part-time doctoral student and completed her doctoral degree in 7 years. Kathryn did not select her doctoral program because of the coursework delivery format. She based her decision on cost effectiveness and proximity to her location, and because she wanted to attend a Christian university. Her program required she attend three residencies, and she chose residential courses that met over four weekends during the semester. The coursework for each residency was delivered in hybrid format where some of the coursework was completed online before and after the residency. Based on her responses on the DDPIS, Kathryn experienced a high level of overall satisfaction with her program integration ($M = 4.03$). Kathryn's DDPIS scores indicated the highest level of satisfaction with curriculum integration ($M = 4.5$), followed by faculty integration ($M = 4.23$) and student integration ($M = 3.62$). Like Faith, Kathryn also chose the literature review binder to represent her on-campus experience. Before completing this assignment, Kathryn had not chosen her dissertation topic, but the process of building the binder helped her narrow down her topic and prepare her for her transition from coursework to candidacy. She explained:

I hadn't decided on my topic yet and the purpose of that course . . . the course itself was hugely, hugely productive and beneficial to me personally as a doctoral student because it narrowed down your focus. By the time you were done, you had to have your topic. And you had to have this literature binder done, this research binder done. Because, then, [after] that, moved you on. That course moved you on to your proposal defense.

Results

Data collected through questionnaires, semistructured interviews, personal items, and focus groups generated five primary themes, which are discussed in the following section: (a) human connections, (b) preparation for the dissertation, (c) mentorship, (d) tangibility of the university, and (e) personal resolve and tenacity. Additional subthemes were revealed within human connections and preparation for the dissertation and are discussed, as well. Information derived from the identified themes were used to answer the research questions and develop phenomenological descriptions.

Theme Development

Themes were developed using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach and organized using the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo. Transcriptions of individual interviews and focus groups, and captions for personal items, were initially read for familiarization and to generate preliminary categories or codes. After reading through transcriptions the first time, I decided the most efficient way to begin organizing significant statements was to code them based off their relevance to the research subquestions. Statements that seemed meaningful but did not initially appear to answer the research questions were coded under a separate node. Once clustered under their research questions, significant statements were reexamined for patterns and similarities using keywords, and codes or emergent themes were developed. Transcriptions and significant statements were read again, and themes and subthemes were refined to produce five themes and six subthemes as illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6

Organization of Themes, Subthemes, and Number of Coding References

Theme	Total Main Theme Codes	Subtheme	Total Subtheme Codes	Aggregate Coding References
Human Connections	70	Importance of Direct Access to Faculty	57	200
		Fortify Online Relationships	29	
		Shared Experiences	44	
Preparation for the Dissertation	55	Informal and Out-of-Class Experiences	19	118
		Accountability and Developing Necessary Skills	15	
		Improving Academic Aspects of On-Campus Courses	29	
Mentorship	33	N/A	N/A	33
Tangibility of the University	24	N/A	N/A	24
Personal Resolve and Tenacity	27	N/A	N/A	27

Human connections. Early in the data collection and analysis stage, it became obvious participants highly valued opportunities to form meaningful human connections through their programs' residential experiences based on their responses to interview questions, and the personal items they chose to represent their on-campus experiences. Additionally, nine participants' highest levels of satisfaction on the DDPIS involved student or faculty integration. This was the first theme to clearly emerge. Online and distance learning can be extraordinarily isolating (Wyman, 2012), however, the ability to travel to campus provided an occasion for

participants to develop relationships that otherwise might not have occurred in a fully online program. Danielle described the importance of such on-campus experiences:

I do think having a few classes on campus—being limited-residency—is important because I think that's where you seal your connections. That's where you kinda get refueled. That's where you have a chance to build relationships. . . . And so, for me, I know being in an online program, I wouldn't have been able to. . . . If it was solely online, I wouldn't have been able to have those relationships—if we didn't have residentials.

The challenges of making connections and not always seeing the human side of people was also echoed by Allen and Brittany. Allen stated:

I met some really great people through the process, and that was a really big positive going through the doctoral process. . . . And when you're sharing meals with people and talking about, not only your own experience, but your life, you get to know people a little bit better. And that wouldn't have happened without that residency component.

Brittany also concluded:

I think online, because you're trying to remain professional, you don't always get to see the human side of people. . . . I can see how being an online student and not having that on-campus aspect would be challenging for some people because you're basically reading an online response and you don't know the background of the person, you don't know their job, you don't know the life experience they've had that's impacted them.

However, it is also important to remember creating relationships and making connections is not necessarily a direct result of being on campus. Limited-residency doctoral students have to take the initiative while on campus, as demonstrated by Helena who claimed, “I never felt isolated because I made a point to reach out and stay connected.”

Within the theme of human connections, three additional subthemes materialized: (a) importance of direct access to faculty, (b) fortify online relationships, and (c) shared experiences.

Importance of direct access to faculty. Nine out of 11 participants reported high levels of satisfaction with faculty integration on the DDPIS. However, having direct access to faculty while on campus was beneficial to all participants, but for a variety of reasons. For some, like Carol, it was the encouragement she received from a faculty member when she lost confidence in her writing ability:

After one professor just destroyed me with passive, not passive, split infinitives. . . . And he destroyed me with that so I couldn't even write because I was so worried about doing split infinitives. So, by the time I got to her [another professor], I could no more write than I could fly in the air. She told me, she said, "You're going to have to re-find your voice." And she helped me with that. I met her and actually saw her at a residency.

For other participants, on-campus courses were beneficial because they played a role in identifying and selecting a dissertation chair or advisor, which is one of the most important faculty relationships to establish for doctoral students and candidates (Golde, 2000; Lovitts, 2001). At times, residential faculty can play a role in creating connections between students and other faculty, as was the case for Danielle:

I met my dissertation chair probably two years before I really started my dissertation. When I was on campus, my professor was like, "Oh, you're interested in doctoral persistence? You have to meet Dr. [Smith]. This is her research interest." And so, I was able to meet her then, and then I had an actual class with her. I had an on-campus class with her. . . . And so, I think having that one-on-one introduction from another faculty member while I was on campus—to be able to say, "Hey, come meet this person"—that

would have been difficult to do online. And then having a class with her really helped solidify our relationship and make sure that we were on the same page as far as interests and things like that.

Jim, however, took the initiative in his very first residential course to introduce himself to the professor who eventually became his chair:

That's where finding my chair, because I had gone to those classes on campus, that was incredibly beneficial. . . . In that first intensive, you go in and you hear the dissertation process for the first time [and] it still doesn't make any sense to you. The person who gave that speech ended up being my chair because I introduced myself. I said, "Hey, I'm [Jim]. I'm the guy that wrote this. I changed it and you explained it appropriate, thank you very much for reading my stuff." And he was like, "Oh, you're the guy from [service academy]" and so on and so forth. And so, that's where my relationship with him started to ascend. He's great, I still value my friendship with him.

For other participants, it was the immediate feedback and clarity on assignments and expectations that were beneficial to them as they navigated their doctoral coursework and began to develop their dissertation proposals. Eli appreciated the opportunity to work with advanced researchers (i.e., faculty). He stated, "We were all novices in research, so being able to work with the faculty members, that was huge in my opinion." Eli also enjoyed the additional feedback he received on his proposal from faculty outside of his committee:

You gotta have that face-to-face with faculty members when you're on this journey. . . . Sure, you have your chair, but going to residences, it gives somebody that's not on your committee a look at what you're working on and so, you get a fresh set of eyes.

Kathryn echoed the value of having feedback from a faculty member outside of her dissertation committee:

His input was very instrumental in helping me narrow down my topic [and] in helping me write certain parts of my proposal, especially the “why” part: “Why should anybody be interested in your topic?” And that never even occurred to me until I took Education [999] and listened to Dr. [Young] explain that to us, in person. And then, it was like, “Okay. Oh, wow. Okay.” So, it provided, I think, a much needed focus for me and I'm not sure that some of that would have been communicated to me as effectively . . . all online.

Iris, however, valued immediate feedback from her professors on her coursework assignments:

I think that when you're able to have a face-to-face with faculty and know their expectations, it will help with academics, because we can read a syllabus . . . and see, “Okay, this is due, this is due.” But . . . being a student, it's very difficult. Yes, we have rubrics, but when you're there in class and they're explaining what they want from that assignment or what they need in that presentation, I felt like the grades . . . my grades would have definitely. . . they may have still been good, but I would have had a harder time completing the task if I hadn't had that face-to-face.

Fortify online relationships. Every participant mentioned the role of social media and online platforms as a means for establishing or maintaining connections with other doctoral students and candidates. However, as expressed by Eli and Allen, attending courses on campus solidified a lot of the relationships participants developed early in their coursework. Eli claimed:

You actually build relationships when you're in the coursework. . . . I built relationships with the people in my courses and then when I went to the residencies. . . . Basically, once we met face-to-face or in person, it just really reinforced the friendship.

Allen further reinforced the fortification of online relationships:

By the time I started my first residency that summer, I had interacted with a number of students through online . . . but going on campus, I actually got the opportunity to meet and solidify some of those relationships that were begun online.

For other participants, they met fellow students and establish friendships during their residential course, thereby creating relationships in-person that helped them to maintain connections online after leaving campus. Faith explained how she realized, in hindsight, the value of meeting other students in-person during the coursework:

So, I think that it is, as much as I probably would not have said this prior to those experiences, I think that it was beneficial to develop that social network in person, because I never, ever stayed in touch with any of the individuals—even that I had to work with in group scenarios from the online coursework—but, I don't think that, had it been entirely online, any of those networks would have been established.

Shared experiences. An additional component of forming and reinforcing human connections included the participants' opportunities to meet and engage in-person with other individuals who were going through the same journey. On the DDPIS, seven participants indicated high levels of satisfaction with student integration. However, as illustrated in Table 7, every single participant mentioned the importance of having at least one person in their life who could relate to the struggles and challenges of completing a doctoral program.

Table 7

Participant Quotes on Shared Experience of the Doctoral Journey

Participant	Quote
Allen	"I do feel that, that shared experience, we all understood, we all understand what it takes to go through the doctoral process."
Brittany	"There's also a human connection that helps because someone else knows exactly what it means. Or, they understand exactly the amount of stress or time, or the . . . lack of participation in other things."
Carol	"The cohort part of it and getting to know people that support you, and people that are in your same position that you can group with . . . and solve a lot of the problems that occur simply by having that."
Danielle	"I think the residential classes probably had a little impact on my persistence . . . particularly once you get later on in the program. It was good to have that camaraderie like, 'Oh, I'm not the only one going through this.'"
Eli	"If a school decides to go totally online, then you miss . . . the opportunity to build relationships with your peers—people who are going through the same ups and downs that you are."
Faith	"I think that I just needed or would have wanted the residential aspect for the, like I said, workshopping, working things out, having other people who were going through the process."
Grace	"It would've been nice to know somebody [locally] who was going through it with me—someone who can . . . truly empathize with you. . . . But I found other means when I met people at my residency. We kept in contact."
Helena	"I think it helped a couple others in the class that really struggled—just to have some affirming words from classmates going through the same experience as they were [when] getting ready to do their proposal and write their dissertation."
Iris	"I have a supportive family . . . but I never felt like they understood what I was doing. . . . Not just my immediate family, everyone in my environment. . . . So, the social aspect of having a community that did understand was huge for me."
Jim	"You're like, 'Why am I even doing this anymore? I don't even care'. . . . So, knowing people that have gone through the same process . . . would say, 'No. . . , everybody goes through this'. . . and give me a strategy to figure something out."
Kathryn	"It let me know we're all basically on the same page; we're all facing different challenges and different struggles. . . . Everybody I met, through all my intensives, were committed to finishing the program and getting their doctoral [degree] or their PhD."

Preparation for the dissertation. Although not as prevalent as human connections, preparation for the dissertation was another key theme that materialized from the data. Ten of the

11 participants all mentioned at least one of their residential courses was dedicated toward preparing them for entering the dissertation phase of their doctoral program. For several students, especially those who graduated from United University, the residential course designated for developing a research plan before entering candidacy was the most beneficial to ensure they were prepared to transition into the dissertation phase. Faith claimed:

The [999] class was good preparation, for sure, because there were a lot of bugs worked out there that I didn't even, didn't even occur to me I had. I felt prepared for the dissertation portion before I went there, but I felt more prepared leaving it. I was definitely, I was ready.

Kathryn expressed similar sentiments:

I hadn't decided on my topic yet . . . and the course itself was hugely, hugely productive and beneficial to me personally as a doctoral student because it narrowed down your focus. By the time you were done, you had to have your topic. And you had to have this literature binder done, this research binder done. Because, then, that moved you on. . . . That course moved you on to your proposal defense.

Additionally, within the theme of preparation for the dissertation three additional subthemes materialized, including an unexpected subtheme: (a) informal and out-of-class experiences, (b) accountability and developing necessary skills, and (c) improving academic aspects of on-campus courses, which was the unexpected subtheme.

Informal and out-of-class experiences. Although the residential coursework prepared participants for their dissertation to a certain extent, it was the informal and out-of-class experiences on-campus that resonated more with participants. These out-of-class or informal experiences, at times, provided actual skills or resources participants used during their

dissertation. At other times, they helped participants mentally prepare for the challenge of completing a dissertation.

For Jim, an informal seminar outside of his regularly scheduled class time with his professor provided information on the logistics of the dissertation process and expectations. As Fitzpatrick (2013) noted, such opportunities can be beneficial to persistence. Jim explained, “They had a step-by-step process of what to expect during the dissertation process.” For Allen and Iris, the out-of-class experiences prepared them for the isolation of the dissertation journey and provided them encouragement by helping them see it was possible to persevere during the dissertation. Allen stated:

The faculty member I described before—who founded the whole program—did a nice seminar on how, once you go into the dissertation phase, you're pretty much on your own and you might feel isolated, so these are some steps to feel less isolated. So, some of those are really good resources.

Iris' experience was slightly different but also helped to mentally prepare her for her dissertation:

We would have a fall orientation where all of the cohorts would come, so it wouldn't just be cohort [number], which was my cohort . . . and we would all get together and they would, kind of, have . . . a speaker. Someone might present their research. They would always talk about the dissertation process, even when we weren't close to the dissertation. So, you always had this, “Oh, there's a cohort above us. They're succeeding.” So, I felt like that was huge. We didn't just see our own cohort, we saw other cohorts before and after us. So, you feel like you're in a system that's actually having some success.

Carol and Eli, who both graduated from Freedom University, found the library resources and in-person access to the university's librarian to be one of the most beneficial out-of-class experiences for them for the development of their dissertation. Carol noted:

I made good contact with the head of the library. . . . I was having trouble finding information on andragogy, and he sat me down and continued to help me from there out. He went in, he did searches for me, he taught me how to search.

Eli also took advantage of meeting with the librarian while he was on campus:

People don't realize how much the library is one of the greatest resources you could use during your dissertation process. . . . I was able to schedule a meeting with the head librarian at [Freedom University] and they showed me tips and trades on how to search effectively in Google Scholar, and . . . how to use their library to find research or articles on my topic.

Danielle's most memorable out-of-class experience involved seeing a dissertation defense. She recalled,

We went to someone's dissertation defense during class and that was very beneficial because you were able to see, before you got there, what it was like, what it entailed, and it kind of took some of the unknown out of it, so you knew exactly what to expect.

Accountability and developing necessary skills. For some doctoral students, attending on-campus courses kept them accountable and ensured they were prepared for the rigors of completing a dissertation, or acted as a means to filter out students who were unable to develop the skills or personal resolve necessary to complete the dissertation. Brittany concluded she believed a professor was intentionally strict and demanding as a method for establishing accountability:

Dr. [Johnson] is really nice by the way, but she has that reputation of being strict, which she should be because it's, you know, you're now going to be a part of a small percentage of people in the world population. And you need to be capable and you need to have a work ethic, and you need to know how to communicate well. So, I liked that. I didn't have a problem with it. It also helped weed out students. . . . You know, "Is this what you really want to do?"

Brittany added on-campus courses also helped her prepare for the dissertation because it taught her how to "[work] at a fast pace and under a time constraint. . . . That does prepare you to handle stress well or to work well with others."

Additionally, most participants shared residential courses typically required them to give group or individual presentations and, for some, these presentations helped prepare them for their defense. Iris especially felt her numerous presentations for the coursework prepared her to defend her dissertation:

I learned so much and we had to present. I think, in one of our mixed methods classes, we had eight different presentations . . . and it was so, so scary, but it was right before our comps. And so, me defending my dissertation, like, if you would have told me 3 or 4 years ago that I could have done that without vomiting, I would have laughed. . . . I literally walked in there a couple of weeks ago and felt like I was talking to colleagues, which would have never happened if I hadn't have been supported and practiced up.

Brittany also stated in-class presentations were an unexpected preparation for the defense:

I think that helped me prepare for criticism for the dissertation defense. I felt like getting up and presenting in front of others—I had never had a problem with that . . .but if you have someone who has a question about something that is unclear . . . , I think it helped

for dissertation defense time because that committee is asking you specific questions about, whatever you've done in your research and why did you choose it this way.

For Kathryn, her residential courses taught her the simple but necessary skill of writing concisely:

Some of the neat things that happened in that course were using 10 words or less to be able to describe something or to communicate an idea. . . . That's all you could do was 10 words. And so, what that did for me with Dr. [Thomas] and Dr. [Kennedy] was, that helped me begin to not be so verbose in everything, and in my writing.

Improving academic aspects of on-campus courses. Although all participants valued their on-campus experiences much more from a social perspective than an academic aspect, an unexpected subtheme emerged concerning the participants' opinions on how to make residential courses more academically valuable. There was some preparation for the dissertation while participants attended courses on campus, but nine of the 11 participants expressed a desire for their universities to make student's time on campus either more available or more worthwhile to better prepare them for the rigors of independent research. Helena expressed a desire for more optional opportunities to take courses on campus: "I don't know if there was a weakness, other than maybe we didn't have enough residential courses, and it was required when I got my degree, and now it's optional." However, Carol expressed a strong opinion of exactly what should be taught in residential courses:

It just needs to have the quality of. . . . Maybe instead of writing your proposal, you need to learn statistics at that residency. Or, you need to learn APA at those meetings, or residencies. You need to learn the core of what it will take you to write the dissertation,

rather than writing something that is still not anywhere what you'll need in the long run.

So, it's kind of a waste.

Faith did not necessarily feel all of her residential courses were a waste. However, with the exception of her final on-campus course, which focused on the development of her research plan, she did not find her other residential courses worthwhile:

So, the weaknesses would have definitely been the initial classes because it was originally a number of credits that were required on-campus in residence and I know that has since changed. But there were a set kind of menu that you could choose from for those courses, until you got to that last one. Those courses leading up to the last one weren't really leading up to the last one, they were kind of random in nature—the way they were selected to be residential courses—and could have easily been online. And I don't really—aside from having made a solid friend in one of them—I don't really see the point of those being residential. However, the final class that was needed before really entering the dissertation process, I thought that that one was incredibly valuable because it was workshop style.

Mentorship. To an extent, mentorship was a surprising theme. It was not surprising participants would mention the mentors with whom they met and developed relationships on-campus, whether they were other students, staff, or faculty members. One of the most positive aspects of the on-campus experience for Faith was meeting the woman who eventually became her close friend and mentor:

On the first go around, I met someone who's now a very good friend. We were actually roommates . . . , so that onto itself was a huge shift in attitude for me. . . . Not only did I make this friend, but, additionally, she ended up being a great support in the rest of the

program because she went through everything that I was doing a year prior. And so, I was able to use her expertise and experience, and she became, kind of, a mentor in the process. I even credited her with her mentor-ness in my dedication on the dissertation.

However, it was surprising seven participants found the on-campus experience as an unexpected avenue to become a mentor or contributor to other doctoral students. As Kathryn explained:

So, that's where I really think that I was able to connect the most and be able to feel like, "Yes, I'm contributing to their progress, toward their PhD or their EdD." And that did happen in the intensives also. . . . I think that that didn't start until at least the first or second intensive. And, by then, once I think I was halfway through my course work and you've got some of this stuff under your belt and you don't feel like you're so new to the program anymore, and you're able to look back on other experiences and other coursework you've done and use that to be able to contribute to yourself and to other people, that's, kind of like, where I felt like, or, when I felt like I was as much of a contributor as a student.

The experience of becoming a mentor was similarly echoed by Faith, who finally felt "useful" in her last residential class. In addition, Jim shared:

The person that I chose as my chair, he would call on [me]. . . . Or, basically, he would say something in class, then he would look at me and say, "Hey, is that right?" So, I got the sense that I knew the material to a great extent. And, then, because of that, I believe the other students in the class, kinda, I didn't wanna say lean on me, but they would ask me questions based upon the interactions that I had with the professor.

Receiving mentorship and becoming a mentor during on-campus courses was best summarized by Eli:

I've always felt the value—like a valued member—because that's the purpose. We all have the same purpose. Whether it's someone who is just starting in the program—I could help them, and then vice versa—[or] someone who's either graduated from the program or who is further along in the journey could help me. So, I think everybody plays a valuable role. . . . Or, at least, I feel like I serve as a value to everybody, regardless of where you are in the doctoral journey. . . . So, that's why I would say, “Basically, you have your wingman.” The Air Force calls your “buddy,” your “wingman.” Basically, I had a wingman coming through.

Tangibility of the university. Although all of the participants chose a limited-residency doctoral program for the convenience and flexibility of completing their coursework and dissertations from a distance, nine of 11 participants appreciated also spending some time learning at a physical campus. As Grace stated, the experience of being on-campus made them feel less like an online student and more like a traditional student:

It really makes you realize you're in school, if that makes sense. When all you do is go to school online—and I got my master's there before I went for my doctorate and I never saw the campus; and I'm from the East Coast, and I've been many places, but I've never been . . . anywhere on the West Coast—but to see it, it makes it real in some way, than not seeing it.

Danielle also identified the tangibility of being on-campus may contribute to accountability for students:

Just being on campus and seeing the university and being in the classroom, I think that that makes a significant difference. I think, also, you can feel like . . . What's the word? I wanna say, like, I'm not gonna say, “push it aside,” but almost, kind of, like, you know . .

. . if something's not as tangible—if you haven't laid eyes on it—then maybe it doesn't always seem real? So, maybe you can just stop taking classes easily, or, if you don't have any relationships that you formed in person, then it's easy to just fall to the wayside. I think being on campus, even for just a class or two, kinda helps with that.

For Iris, the tangibility of a physical campus lent credibility, held significance for her, and made her feel like she was a part of the university's community:

I never felt like a distance education student. . . . I don't know, I felt like I was part of the campus. . . . That I was actually a student there, even though I didn't live in [town]. . . . So, I did feel like I was part of the community. . . . Knowing that there was like a brick and mortar school, traveling somewhere, seeing the instructors. . . , it made me feel proud of graduating from somewhere that was a building that I could go to. I'm used to buildings or I'm used to books that I can hold, but I felt like there was something to that, as opposed to just, online. I just know that, for me personally, knowing that I could go to where I was going to school . . . there was a credibility in that for me. That it was a university that people have heard of or that has a certain reputation, that was special for me.

Personal resolve and tenacity. The role of personal resolve and tenacity was an unexpected theme that emerged from the data. Although each participant felt there was some value to their residential experiences as it relates to persistence, not a single participant attributed their persistence to any institutional or curriculum factor. As illustrated in Table 8, when asked what the main factors or reasons were for them to persist in a limited-residency doctoral program, all 11 participants attributed their persistence to personal factors akin to personal resolve and tenacity.

Table 8

Participant Quotes on Personal Factors Related to Persistence

Participant	Quote
Allen	"I can't say I anticipated how difficult it would be, 'cause it was really a huge challenge . . . but . . . I didn't want to quit. I didn't want the time. . . , the financial investment I had made—I didn't wanna let that all go."
Brittany	"When things got difficult. . . , I just thought. . . , 'It's a temporary sacrifice, you finish your degree, you're more marketable, you can make more money, and you can have time to go on the vacations and what not.'"
Carol	"My dad who's deceased. I would've never finished. He never let me give up. . . . If I would have ever given up, I would have been stricken by lightning . . . and that would have been him like, 'Get back to it, girl.'"
Danielle	"I think it's probably a couple of things, probably just intrinsic motivation—just being motivated to get it done. Like, 'I started it, I need to finish it.'"
Eli	"Quitting was not an option for me. . . . Life can stop you from finishing a journey but, for me, quitting was not an option."
Faith	"I would have stayed in the program, no matter what, 'cause I was at that point. . . . I finished all this coursework; I'm getting that diploma. . . . I am probably as tenacious as tenacious gets."
Grace	"It was something—a commitment I made to myself and my family—and something I was gonna see through to the end, regardless of whatever circumstance came my way."
Helena	"Just not quitting. No matter what."
Iris	"If people can access that motivation . . . then it's outside of themselves. . . . If you're just going on how you feel, you're obviously going to quit; but if you're looking at what an impact you moving forward makes, then that motivation's stronger."
Jim	"Knowing that somebody was being paid to fill my job while I was doing this. So, essentially, if I just goofed off and quit, then the US government would've lost on \$6000 That kind of weighed on me heavily."
Kathryn	"[It was] almost to the point of being ungodly stubborn to finish something,. And I do think that: being stubborn, being driven to complete things, being able to persevere."

Research Question Responses

The themes and subthemes ultimately aided in answering the central research question and three subquestions. The central research question was: How do individuals who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program describe their residential experiences? In summary, participants described their required residential experiences as beneficial from both academic and social perspectives, but not necessary for persistence. However, the complete answer to this question is informed by the results of the subquestions and are reported in detail in phenomenological descriptions.

Subquestion 1 response. Subquestion 1 asked: How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in relation to their ability to conduct independent research? Academic integration is vital for persistence (Tinto, 1975) and involves the student's intellectual development. In the case of doctoral candidates, intellectual development involves the transition from consumers of knowledge (i.e., students) to producers of knowledge (i.e., scholars) through the development and defense of their dissertation (Lovitts, 2001). This research subquestion sought to describe any on-campus course experiences that assisted participants in preparation for their independent research and development as scholars.

Although 10 of 11 participants noted at least one of their residential classes focused on skills or assignments that would prepare them for their dissertation, it was ultimately the combination of classes and activities, as well as informal and out-of-class experiences, that slightly prepared participants for the task of independent research. As Iris noted, "We had a . . . pre-dissertation class before comps that helped us, just, know what a dissertation is like, what they use. . . , just, all of the processes involved in dissertation. So, that really helped prepare us."

For some participants, the accountability component, combined with face-to-face interactions, prepared them for their independent research and their defense. Brittany stated:

Each class required some sort of presentation . . . and I think that helped me prepare for criticism for the dissertation defense. . . . So, I felt like getting up and presenting in front of others If you have someone who has a question about something that is unclear---so how do I then communicate that better for next time? Or, have I thought about this and looking at a certain topic, or is there a better way to present this information...because that committee is asking you specific questions about, whatever you've done in your research and why did you choose it this way?

Most participants, however, did not find their on-campus experiences to be essential for their intellectual development. For example, Danielle noted:

Had I not had those previous residential experiences at research universities, I know that I probably wouldn't have felt prepared and I wouldn't have been able to move through my dissertation as quickly as I did because I would have had a larger learning curve because I don't know that I took any courses at [United] in my distance education program that actually helped prepare me to do independent research.

Even though each participant persisted and completed their dissertation, most participants expressed their universities could have done a better job of making the residential courses worthwhile. Specific examples—preparation for the dissertation through direct on-campus instruction in statistics, scholarly writing, and research methods—were discussed. Carol adamantly expressed the need for residential courses to be narrowly focused on preparation for the dissertation:

You know, to me, that's what the people that are there ought to do. And they discuss what is the design, you know? That's not done in residency. They don't really go in. . . . They do a little PowerPoint . . . but do people really learn that from looking at a PowerPoint for 10 minutes? No, they do not. They need to learn what it is and how to apply it for their particular study. In my [opinion], this is what my thoughts are on when a residency would become beneficial.

Subquestion 2 response. Subquestion 2 asked: How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in relation to developing relationships with peers and faculty? Social integration is an important component for persistence throughout doctoral coursework and candidacy, as students and candidates reported they relied on their classmates for emotional support or academic mentoring when tasks became difficult or overwhelming (Santicola, 2013). Additionally, faculty mentorship is a statistically significant predictor of doctoral persistence (Bagaka's et al., 2015; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). This research subquestion explored how participants' on-campus experiences contributed to social integration with their peers and faculty.

All participants indicated the most valuable component of the on-campus experience was the ability to meet other students, staff, and faculty and develop meaningful human connections. Although each participant mentioned relationships they developed with other doctoral students through social media or the online components of their programs, the residential experience ignited and fortified those relationships and made them more meaningful for some participants. For example, Iris explained:

I really did enjoy those times because, looking back, we really developed where we were. . . . Even if we weren't on campus, we had a Facebook page, we were texting. . . . I feel like it really helped us grow as a cohort to be able to depend and help each other.

Furthermore, direct access to faculty and staff while on campus made faculty more approachable, thereby making it easier to establish relationships with them. This proved to be valuable for several participants as they transitioned into the candidacy phase. Danielle expressed her residential courses provided an avenue to begin building relationships in-person with the faculty who eventually served on her committee:

I would say that probably a strength for me for the residency, was having the chance to get immediate feedback, and also to develop some relationships with professors, so that when it came time to pick committee members or a chair, you had at least some knowledge of the residential faculty; and, so you could start building those relationships at residency, if you wanted to. So, that was definitely a plus for me.

The on-campus experience also allowed participants to develop relationships with other individuals who were going through the same journey as themselves and to engage in mentorship—whether as a mentor or a mentee. Eli claimed, “A doctoral journey can seem . . . lonely, but it doesn't have to be.” The shared experience of understanding the struggles, setbacks, and triumphs with someone who was also completing a terminal degree provided a unique support system each participant relied upon, even after their residential coursework was completed.

Subquestion 3 response. Subquestion 3 asked: How do limited-residency doctoral graduates describe the role, if any, of their residential experiences in their integration into their academic community? At the graduate level, social and academic integration are more closely

intertwined when compared to the undergraduate level (Tinto, 1993). Due to the specialized nature of a doctoral degree, coursework and learning are strictly discipline and department based. As a result, smaller communities exist within the larger school community and doctoral students are more likely concerned with integration into these department-based communities than the institution as a whole (Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) suggested, for traditional doctoral students, social integration with peers and faculty at the department level leads to higher levels of academic integration and intellectual development. This research subquestion sought to describe participants' on-campus experiences in relation to integrating into their school or department communities.

Interestingly, based on the participants' responses to the DDPIS, which measures satisfaction with integration for distance doctoral students, each participant, as demonstrated in Table 9, experienced medium to high levels of satisfaction with their integration into their programs.

Table 9

Participants' Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale Results

Participant	Faculty Integration	Student Integration	Curriculum Integration	Overall Integration
Allen	3.46	4.38	3.83	3.9
Brittany	5.00	4.84	5.00	4.93
Carol	3.00	4.69	2.66	3.63
Danielle	3.53	3.38	3.33	3.43
Eli	4.46	4.84	5.0	4.72
Faith	4.00	3.46	4.33	3.84
Grace	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Helena	4.76	4.54	4.83	4.69
Iris	4.15	4.54	4.67	4.41

Jim	4.62	3.31	3.5	3.88
Kathryn	4.23	3.62	4.5	4.03

Note. All columns represent mean scores.

However, the responses on participants' DDPIS did not necessarily reflect how they actually felt about their integration into their universities' communities. Based on their DDPIS results and interview responses, participants expressed medium to high levels of satisfaction with their program's curriculum and interactions with peers and faculty, but this satisfaction did not translate into actually feeling like they were members of their universities' communities. As Allen expressed:

Did I feel as I was part of [Colonial]? I'm gonna have to say probably not. But only because being an online student . . . I don't know. Overall, it's really a hard question to answer because it's a different experience than being an undergraduate who is immersed in the community.

Although several participants expressed they enjoyed the tangibility of the physical campus and how it made their experience as a student seem "real in some way," as Grace described, they also expressed residential courses are usually too short and infrequent to establish a sense of belonging at the university. Conversely, they also did not feel it was as important to feel as immersed in the university's community as a distance doctoral learner, because personal resolve and tenacity are more crucial factors that impact persistence. Furthermore, limited-residency doctoral programs likely attract individuals who may not need the same level of academic and social interaction as traditional doctoral students. For example, Danielle said:

I don't think that it's necessary. I look at it as building, a community, as kind of like an add-value. So, I think there's something about the limited-residency format that attracts people, whether it's just the ease of it, whether it's, people feel like they work fine

independently, I've talked to people who have said, "Oh, I could never do an online, limited-residency program because I need to be face-to-face." So, I think that's something that appeals to people to want to enroll in an online limited-residency, and most of the time, in my experience, it has been people where they do work well alone. . . .

Community is . . . important, but it's not, like, number one on their list.

Carol and Faith also held similar sentiments concerning limited-residency doctoral students, integration, and personal resolve. Carol claimed:

I don't know how you would ever fully feel like you are part of being on campus. . . . Not even going to campus for 2 weeks out of a whole doctoral process really makes you feel . . . I think it's important that you not feel isolated. But, when you take an online course, you are basically agreeing to isolation—to be your own self-motivator, kind of alone in the process.

Faith also stated:

So, one of the things with the on-campus experience, you're generally talking about youth in undergraduate programs needing that kind of camaraderie because, correct me if I'm wrong but, the reality is, once you actually get to the dissertation, even in the residential doctoral program, unless you're in the hands-on sciences, you're really off on your own and you're just visiting with the chair. . . . So, I think the bigger issue might be not really the on-campus experience, but more the recidivism for doctoral students, in general, because, I mean, we're adults at that point. . . . I think that the idea is that you're an independent entity at that point, able to make independent decisions.

Ultimately, the residential experience did not play a crucial role in the integration of participants into their academic communities in a traditional sense. Although the residential

experience helped participants establish relationships and aided their intellectual development to a certain extent, for these particular limited-residency doctoral graduates, the factors of social and academic integration did not translate into overall integration in the same way as it may for traditional doctoral graduates.

Phenomenological Descriptions

The central research question asked: How do individuals who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program describe their residential experiences? To answer the central research question, it was imperative to examine the textural and structural descriptions derived from the data, and synthesize these descriptions into a coherent and “unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). Four forms of data collected from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon produced five themes and six subthemes. These themes informed not only the textural descriptions (i.e., *what* the participants experienced) but also the structural descriptions (i.e., *how* they experienced the phenomenon; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015).

The textural descriptions derived from participants’ experiences can be summarized as a degree program requirement that resulted in social and academic benefits. Each participant was required by their university to attend a certain number of courses or hours in residence to fulfill the requirements for their degrees. Although participants expressed traveling to campus required sacrifices such as time, money, and separation from one’s family, each participant agreed there were unexpected benefits from doing so. Academic benefits included some preparation for the dissertation phase, which is when attrition is most likely to occur (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016); however, academic benefits were far outweighed by the social benefits. On-campus experiences provided an avenue for participants to make human connections and create

meaningful and significant relationships with their peers and faculty. This later helped them bridge the sense of isolation and access an additional support network.

Through imaginative variation, structural qualities within the textural themes of the phenomenon were identified to develop a description of how the experience of the phenomenon came to be (Moustakas, 1994) or how the phenomenon was structured. In addition to imagination, I used my own intuition to consider the contexts of the phenomenon, different frames of references, universal structures, and divergent perspectives of the participants to develop a description of the conditions that produced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The structural description of the participants' experiences can be summarized as a valuable opportunity that may have assisted in their persistence but did not outweigh the influence of personal resolve and tenacity. Although each participant's experience was unique, there were structural commonalities. Each participant saw value in the residential experience but did not attribute their ability to persist in a limited-residency doctoral program as a result of the institutional and curriculum factors that mandated the residential experience. Rather, each participant relied on intrinsic motivation, tenacity, or resolve to complete their program, and the on-campus experience was value-added in igniting or supporting those personal factors.

Composite textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon led to the essence of the phenomenon, which in turn, also answered the central research question: How do individuals who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program describe their residential experiences? The essence of the experience for the 11 education doctoral graduates who participated in this study can be summarized as a beneficial academic and social experience that was significant, but not necessary, for persistence.

Summary

This chapter presented biographical portraits of each participant in the study, as well as the results from data collection and analysis investigating the role of on-campus experiences on doctoral persistence for limited-residency doctoral graduates. Results were reported through the development and discussion of themes and subthemes, and direct answers to the research subquestions. Results from data collection and analysis generated five primary themes: (a) human connections, (b) preparation for the dissertation, (c) mentorship, (d) tangibility of the university, and (e) personal resolve and tenacity. The chapter concluded with phenomenological descriptions of the phenomenon, including the essence of the phenomenon, which answered the central research question. Implications of results from this study are further discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the residential experiences of individuals who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program from various institutions of higher education. This chapter begins with a summary of results, which are represented in detail in Chapter 4. Additionally, the results of the study and their relevance to and practical implications for current empirical and theoretical research, are discussed. Delimitations and limitations of the research and recommendations for future research are also included, and the chapter concludes with a summary.

Summary of Findings

Data collected through questionnaires, semistructured interviews, personal items, and focus groups generated five primary themes described in detail in Chapter 4: (a) human connections, (b) preparation for the dissertation, (c) mentorship, (d) tangibility of the university, and (e) personal resolve and tenacity. Additional subthemes were revealed within human connections (i.e., importance of direct access to faculty, fortify online relationships, and shared experiences) and preparation for the dissertation (i.e., informal and out-of-class experiences, accountability and developing necessary skills, and improving academic aspects of on-campus courses.)

Through theme and subtheme development, I answered the research subquestions and the central research question. The central research question was answered through textural and structural composite descriptions, which were derived from the themes, and used to generate a description of the essence of the phenomenon. The textural description derived from participants' experiences was summarized as a degree program requirement that resulted in

social and academic benefits. The structural description of the participants' experiences was summarized as a valuable opportunity that may have assisted in their persistence but did not outweigh the influence of personal resolve and tenacity. Composite textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon led to the essence of the phenomenon, which, in turn, also answered the central research question: How do individuals who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program describe their residential experiences? The essence of the experience for the 11 education doctoral graduates who participated in this study was summarized as a beneficial academic and social experience that was significant, but not necessary, for persistence.

The first research subquestion sought to describe any on-campus course experiences that assisted participants in their preparation for their independent research and development as scholars. Ten participants noted that at least one of their residential classes focused on skills or assignments that would prepare them for their dissertation, but it was the combination of those classes, activities, and informal and out-of-class experiences that slightly prepared participants for the task of independent research. Additionally, most participants expressed their universities could have done a better job of making the residential courses worthwhile. Suggestions for improvement resulted in the unexpected subtheme, improving academic aspects of on-campus courses, and included better preparation for the dissertation through direct, on-campus instruction in statistics, scholarly writing, and research methods.

The second research subquestion explored how participants' on-campus experiences contributed to social integration with their peers and faculty. All participants indicated the most valuable component of the on-campus experience was the opportunity to meet other students, staff, and faculty and develop relationships beyond the online component. Direct access to

faculty and staff while on campus proved to be valuable for several participants as they transitioned into the candidacy phase. Additionally, this access was found to play a role in participants' ability to find a chair and committee or help them succeed academically. Moreover, each participant mentioned the value of engaging in and forming meaningful relationships with individuals who were also going through the doctoral journey. These shared experiences and connections provided an unexpected and unique support system for all participants.

The third research subquestion sought to describe participants' on-campus experiences in relation to integrating into their school or department communities. Most participants experienced medium to high levels of satisfaction with their integration into their programs based on their responses on the Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale (DDPIS), however this satisfaction did not translate into actually feeling like they were members of their universities' communities. Although participants indicated some levels of integration, as apparent by the relationships they developed and their academic development (i.e., completion of their dissertation), ultimately, the residential experience did not lead to the integration of participants into their academic communities in the same way as traditional doctoral graduates.

Discussion

The purpose of this section is to discuss the study findings in relationship to the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The study's results supported certain aspects of the theoretical framework, which grounded the study and supported and expanded upon the current literature related to limited-residency doctoral persistence.

Theoretical Literature

The theory guiding this study was Tinto's (1975) integration theory as it explains how social and academic integration into the school community contributes to student persistence.

Academic integration involves one's role as a student, self-esteem, and intellectual/academic development, as well as provides supports from the academic community, such as resources and services (Tinto, 1975). Social integration includes interactions, connections, and a sense of belonging with peers, faculty, and the school community (Tinto, 1975). Tinto (1993) expanded his theory to include graduate students and developed a longitudinal model of doctoral persistence, which suggested social and academic systems within the graduate school setting are more closely intertwined than in the undergraduate setting. For undergraduate students, both systems of integration may negatively impact the other if there is incongruency, but for graduate and doctoral students, the social integration system may actually bolster a doctoral student's academic integration (Holmes, 2018; Tinto, 1993). In other words, establishing meaningful relationships with peers and faculty in one's department or discipline may enhance intellectual development. The results of this study supported this claim.

Although participants did not feel as though they were members of their universities' community in the same way as traditional students, each developed relationships with individuals while on campus (i.e., social integration), and some of these relationships played a significant role in their intellectual development and ability to complete their dissertations (i.e., academic integration). Jim, Iris, and Danielle, for example, met and formed working relationships with their dissertation chairs before they began their dissertation, which made the transition into candidacy easier. Kathryn developed a relationship with a faculty member before she entered candidacy who helped her to centralize her focus and identify the significance of her topic, which eventually became her dissertation topic. Eli met and worked with a woman while on-campus who eventually became his methodologist, and this relationship ensured he was on the right path with his methods and design as he developed his prospectus.

For individuals like Faith, Allen, and Brittany, the relationships they developed on-campus resulted in lasting friendships with peers who provided support throughout their doctoral journey. All three individuals discussed finding a mentor while they were on-campus, and the role their mentors played as they completed their coursework and dissertation. Their mentors not only provided emotional support and encouragement, they also shared valuable resources and provided critical feedback on their work. Although the time spent on campus did not result in a sustained social presence (i.e., where participants formed relationships with peers and faculty and collaborate on research projects and publishing opportunities), results of this study support the notion that the intertwining of social and academic integration plays a role in persistence.

Tinto's (1993) expanded theory of integration also discussed the role the classroom experience plays on integration for nontraditional students who are unable to become as engrained in the campus community due to other commitments or geographic location. Tinto claimed when classroom communities incorporate collaborative and interdependent learning between faculty and students, a sense of community may develop, which can contribute to persistence (Holmes et al., 2014; Tinto, 1997). Results of this study support Tinto's idea of using the classroom to foster integration through collaborative learning. When asked about their residential experiences, each participant at some point mentioned the group work they completed while on-campus, and, for many, the collaborative projects provided an avenue to establish relationships with their peers that could not be replicated in the online experience. Faith explained:

I think that it was beneficial to develop that social network in person because I never, ever stayed in touch with any of the individuals, even that I had to work with in group

scenarios from the online coursework. But with the social network developed from the in-person, there was a lot of . . . there has been a lot of support. I've had individuals ask me for information, and I've asked for information.

Tinto (1993) also noted external and personal factors play a vital role in persistence for traditional undergraduate and graduate students. However, in Tinto's (1977, 1993) models, external and personal factors are presented as an addition, with academic and social integration at the forefront. The results of this study diverge from Tinto's (1993) framework. Although participants found value in their residential experiences and their time on campus contributed to social and academic integration to a certain extent, participants reported personal factors played a more substantial role in their persistence than the benefits they received from attending classes on campus.

Empirical Literature

Although this study expanded upon the literature by addressing a gap in the research, results from this study also supported several key factors related to doctoral persistence that are prominent in the current literature—individual and external factors, factors that impact social integration, factors that impact academic integration, and how the specific characteristics and needs of limited-residency doctoral students are intertwined within each factor.

Individual and external factors. Although most of the study's themes and subthemes indicated there was value to on-campus experiences in limited-residency doctoral programs, it did not support the concept that these experiences are undeniably necessary for persistence. In fact, results from this study support findings in the literature—limited-residency doctoral students are fairly unique from their traditional counterparts in terms of needs for persistence (Baker et al., 2013; Cherry & Blackinton, 2017; Lovitts, 2005, 2008). For these 11 participants,

personal and external factors played just as much, if not more, of a role in their persistence than institutional factors and social and academic integration

Several participants described the impact their family members, colleagues, and friends had on their persistence. Although each participant experienced some level of social integration with their program's peers and faculty and valued the shared experiences they encountered from their peers, results from this study supported current research (Gardner & Gopaul, 2012) that nontraditional doctoral students will turn to external support when the social support from their program is absent or lacking. Danielle explained,

I do know that having community and being a part of a community and having that support . . . is very important to success. And so, if we don't have it fostered in our doctoral program, then we tend to find that community elsewhere, whether it be someone who lives close to you, or other people who have been through the doctoral program.

Additionally, each participant discussed the role of personal characteristics that are prevalent in the literature, such as self-direction, intrinsic motivation, and grit (George-Reid, 2016; Rogers, 2018; M. T. Spaulding, 2019), and the necessity of possessing these characteristics to persist.

Grace stated:

I think it was more of a personal affect. It's nice to meet other people and visit a classroom and meet professors, but I think a lot of that's internal because, once you leave your residency, if you don't have the drive, then you're not going to continue.

Participants also discussed external factors placed on them as doctoral students, such as financial resources and demands. Economic integration (i.e., the role of work and financial support on time to degree and persistence; Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011), impacted each participant. The participants for this study supported the notion in the literature that, while in

school, nontraditional doctoral students are more concerned with program availability and their ability to maintain employment as a means to provide for themselves and their families (Poock & Love, 2001). This is in contrast to traditional doctoral students who aspire to obtain fellowship or graduate assistant positions to finance their degrees while simultaneously integrating into their academic departments (Earl-Novell, 2006).

Each participant in this study indicated they chose their limited-residency program because of the flexibility it allowed for them to remain in their jobs, even though they were required to travel to campus during their coursework. However, several participants discussed the financial sacrifices made to attend residential classes and argued universities need to make on-campus coursework worthwhile out of consideration for doctoral students' financial hardships. Faith claimed,

It's not worth it to drag me out there for something I could easily do online. And there's some resentment there, particularly financial resentment, that, if you're dragging me out there for something that's meaningful and worthwhile . . . , I think that [I] would have been impacted positively in the financial sense and positively in the time collection sense; but I think that I probably would not have finished as quickly had I not had that last residential class.

Fortunately, financial factors did not prevent participants in this study from persisting, but this study does not give voice to those who may not have persisted as a result of the financial demands placed on them by their doctoral programs. Nevertheless, this study does support the claim found in the literature (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011) and in Tinto's (1993) model of doctoral persistence that financial factors must be considered when examining the problem of doctoral persistence in limited-residency programs.

Factors that impacted social integration. In terms of factors that impact social integration, the literature is divided on the role of peer support for doctoral students and candidates. Gardner (2010) found traditional doctoral programs with high-completion rates had robust support networks that existed between students; however, Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. (2016) found social support and integration was not a significant predictor of persistence for online doctoral students. Surprisingly, results of this study supported both claims. Although participants chose limited-residency doctoral programs with an understanding social support from peers would be lacking due to the nature of the program, on-campus experiences provided an avenue to build relationships and social support networks that was valuable to each participant. Carol voiced, “The strength [of the residency] was the support—the strong support—that we built, and we started groups and kept together.” While an argument cannot be made that support networks of peers contributed to persistence, for many participants, support networks of peers made the journey bearable and less isolating. This finding supports the claims that doctoral students have a desire to work autonomously (Baker & Pifer, 2011; Gardner, 2010; Santicola, 2013) and the relationships and shared experiences with peers, when needed, provides a safety net of support, encouragement, and guidance (Santicola, 2013).

Although networking was more prevalent between students than between students and faculty, results of this study support the notion of scholarly networking (Adegbola, 2011; Baker & Pifer, 2011). Scholarly networking further demonstrates the intertwining between social and academic integration (Holmes, 2018; Tinto, 1993) because it involves identifying and building relationships with established scholars with similar research interests, advanced students in the program and department, or faculty members outside the dissertation committee (Adegbola, 2011; Baker & Pifer, 2011). These networking relationships are often established for potential

academic opportunities rather than for emotional support (Adegbola, 2011). Several participants in this study mentioned meeting and establishing relationships with faculty during their on-campus coursework who eventually ended up serving on their committees once they entered candidacy. As noted in the literature, this is one of the most important relationships that attribute to academic integration (Fiore et al., 2019; Golde, 2000; Lovitts, 2001). Although such relationships made for an easier transition into candidacy, the faculty-student relationships did not result in opportunities to research or publish with an experienced researcher prior to candidacy, which has been shown to contribute to persistence (Bagaka's et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the study's findings support the role of scholarly networking with peers on persistence. The participants who created relationships with mentors on campus had a distinct advantage because the mentor often provided emotional support and shared valuable resources and insights on the process of the doctoral journey and dissertation (Baker & Pifer, 2011).

Factors that impacted academic integration. The themes from this study illustrated coursework preparation for the dissertation is essential, which aligned with the literature (Fiore et al., 2019; Ivankova & Stick, 2007; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016). Additionally, there must be a process, whether formally or informally, for clearly expressing expectations for the dissertation prior to students entering candidacy (Colbert, 2013). For 10 out of 11 participants, the residential experience provided some preparation for the dissertation either through actual classes or out-of-class experiences. Similar to the study by Terrell and Lohle's (2016), most participants in this study indicated they would have preferred more instruction than they were afforded while they were on campus concerning the skills related to the dissertation. Still, all participants described their transition experience from the coursework to candidacy as a positive because they entered candidacy with a dissertation topic. As noted by Devos et al. (2017) and Kennedy (2013), such

preparation is a key factor in persistence for limited-residency doctoral students who likely do not get the opportunity to conduct scholarly research prior to their dissertation.

It is also important to note that while 10 of 11 participants identified and solidified their topics while in residency, most still struggled with certain aspects of their dissertation (i.e., scholarly writing, statistics, or research methods). The subtheme in this study that addressed the need for improving academic aspects of on-campus courses supported two separate studies (Terrell & Lohle, 2016; Terrell et al., 2016) and indicated a need for better connections between the coursework and the dissertation. Any skills participants were lacking to complete the dissertation were, however, counteracted through self-direction, or by reaching out and learning from the peers and faculty with whom they had created relationships throughout their doctoral journey (i.e., not just the residential component). These findings support the literature and signify the connection between social and academic integration (Holmes, 2018; Tinto, 1993).

Academic integration was necessary because participants were required to develop the academic skills needed to complete their degree requirements. These academic skills, however, were not solely developed in residence but through a combination of all coursework and out-of-class experiences. For example, Danielle shared how access to the university's librarian aided her in building their literature review:

I think having access to the large library, and then we also had a presentation from the library staff, so then even when I was off campus, I could access resources from the library. Like, I borrowed books. They would, like, mail it to me and things like that. And so, I think, had I not been on campus and gotten the tour and been introduced to the resources that the library has, it would have made my research component a little bit

more challenging. So, definitely being on campus helped me in that regard. (Danielle, personal interview, October 11, 2019)

Furthermore, it might not be accurate to say that both academic and social integration were needed for persistence for these particular participants even though their social integration did contribute some to their academic integration (Tinto, 1993). Although each participant socially benefited from attending classes on campus, many also stated they did not “need” it. Still, the residential experience fostered and fortified social integration beyond what would have been developed in a strictly online format for most participants. In addition, social integration contributed to better academic integration for some participants. Finally, every participant expressed they needed personal resolve and tenacity to complete their degree, which supports prior research that, ultimately, “persistence comes from within” (Fiore et al., 2019, p. 116).

Implications

The purpose of this section is to address the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study. Specific recommendations for stakeholders, university administrators, future doctoral students are also included.

Empirical Implications

The purpose of this research was to fill a gap in the literature and address the problem of doctoral persistence in limited-residency doctoral programs. Doctoral persistence is a widely studied topic, but online and limited-residency doctoral programs are a relatively new concept. As a result, there was a scarce, but growing, body of literature specifically examining limited-residency doctoral students. The study’s themes, subthemes, and phenomenological descriptions have empirical significance because they contributed new information to the literature and supported existing literature (i.e., the role of social integration, academic integration, and

personal factors on persistence; McAlpine & Admundsen, 2012; Tinto, 1975, 1993). Results from this study placed residential experiences within the context of social and academic integration as a benefactor to both forms of integration, but not the sole contributor. However, findings from this study added to the literature and research used by higher education institutions to validate and establish program requirements for distance doctoral programs.

The current literature on nontraditional doctoral programs assumed that distance doctoral students, like traditional doctoral students, need to experience social and academic integration to persist. Ultimately, this notion provided a justification for requiring limited-residency doctoral students to attend some of their courses on campus, but the literature lacked a study that could confirm or refute the role in developing social and academic integration through on-campus experiences. Although participants did not feel integrated into their universities in the same way they perceived traditional doctoral students may, results from this study confirmed on-campus coursework can contribute to social integration and academic integration, and, more importantly, the essential intertwining of these two factors of persistence (Holmes, 2018; Tinto, 1993). Additionally, it cannot be ignored that many universities are transitioning to fully online education doctoral programs as a way to make terminal degrees accessible to broader populations of educators and practitioners. Higher enrollment numbers in graduate education translates to higher revenue for the university, but if the elimination of residential courses results in higher attrition rates, then it would be prudent for university administrators to seek a middle ground between what is best for business and practice. If intellectual development and personal resolve are the most important factors that contribute to persistence for distance doctoral students, it can be argued that those who are going to persist will do so with or without an on-campus experience. As more limited-residency doctoral programs segue to fully online

programs, this study may provide a justification for universities to maintain the status quo and continue to require some coursework on campus to bolster persistence for distance doctoral students, or, at the very least, continue to offer on-campus course options for doctoral students. Furthermore, the on-campus experience is but one small component of the entire journey for limited-residency doctoral students. To better understand persistence in limited-residency doctoral programs, it is imperative for researchers to closely examine all components of the experience. By examining the residential experience in isolation, this study not only contributed to the growing body of literature on doctoral persistence but provided insight and a description of an often-overlooked element of limited-residency doctoral programs. As the research in this area continues to grow, results from this study will hopefully contribute a better understanding of the limited-residency doctoral program experience in totality.

Theoretical Implications

Results of this study have theoretical implications for researchers of doctoral persistence. Tinto's (1975) integration theory was developed to explain persistence in undergraduates but has also been used as a theoretical framework for numerous studies on doctoral persistence (Kennedy, 2013; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2016; L. S. Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Tinto (1993) also developed a longitudinal model of doctoral persistence. Although there was not enough research to support Tinto's (1993) theory when it was originally published, current research and results of this study support both Tinto's (1975) original theory and model of doctoral persistence (Tinto, 1993) to a certain extent, particularly the interweaving of social and academic integration.

This study found that even short amounts of time on campus provide opportunities for participants to develop meaningful and lasting relationships with peers and faculty, some of

which contribute to academic development and candidacy preparation. However, because there was not a sustained presence on campus, it is difficult to determine if the social integration participants experienced played as much of a role on their persistence as their academic development throughout all of their coursework, or their contributing personal factors and attributes. For this reason, Tinto's (1993) longitudinal model of doctoral persistence, while likely not applicable in its entirety, has key components that can be applied to limited-residency doctoral students.

Tinto (1975) described academic and social systems as co-equal contributors toward persistence, with the understanding that external and personal factors also hold influence over both systems. However, the participants in this study did not indicate that social integration was as necessary for them as their personal drive and developing the skills they needed to complete their research, even though they valued their residential experiences the most because of the social aspects and benefits that accompanied them. As a result, a revised model of integration and doctoral persistence illustrating the imbalance between social and academic integration is needed to accurately reflect the process of persistence for limited-residency doctoral students.

Practical Implications

Results of this study have practical implications that can be applied to limited-residency doctoral programs to promote persistence. First, results from this study indicate if universities are going to continue to require residential coursework in online doctoral programs, it is advisable to reexamine the curriculum of the courses offered in residence. Doctoral students may still reap the benefits of making social connections while on campus, regardless of the courses they take; however, from an academic standpoint, it would be more beneficial to capitalize on face-to-face interactions by only offering courses on campus that would better prepare students for

independent research (e.g., research methods, data analysis, scholarly writing, selecting a topic). Furthermore, additional opportunities outside of the classroom to prepare students for the dissertation would be beneficial. These opportunities may include access to dissertation defenses, seminar outlining the specific tasks, steps, and processes expected of students once they enter candidacy, or scheduled opportunities for students to meet with the university librarians so they can learn how to adequately search and develop literature reviews.

Second, limited-residency doctoral program administrators should capitalize on the social aspects of the residential experience. Even though participants in this study indicated they did not need to develop relationships with their peers while on-campus, it was an unexpected benefit that impacted them academically and provided an additional tier of emotional support. In addition to limiting residential courses to content matter focused toward the dissertation, professors in limited-residency doctoral programs should provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively within the residential class. Although “group work” is an often-dreaded phrase, for the participants in this study, group work (i.e., as opposed to lecture and discussion formats) provided a pathway to begin organically building relationships with classmates, which supported the literature (Tinto, 1993). Organizing a meet-and-greet with residential faculty and staff members while students are on campus is an additional way to support social integration, and, in turn, academic integration. Providing a designated time for students to speak with faculty outside of class may assist students in building relationships with faculty and provide opportunities for networking and connection-making that might benefit students beyond the dissertation and completion of their doctoral degree.

Finally, results of this study have implications for future doctoral students considering limited-residency or online doctoral programs, or current limited-residency doctoral students

who are selecting courses. As more universities steer toward fully online programs, the opportunity to attend courses in residence has become optional in some programs. Although a fully online doctoral program has the advantage of convenience and flexibility, results of this study show there are advantages of attending courses on campus. Future doctoral students considering limited-residency doctoral programs and current doctoral students who are deciding whether they should take a class in residence should examine the syllabi for residential courses to see if the content offered in residence will truly facilitate their academic development. Students should also weigh the social benefits of attending residential courses.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations are purposeful decisions researchers make to limit or define the boundaries of the study (Patton, 2015). The purpose of this study was to understand the role of on-campus experiences on persistence in limited-residency education doctoral programs. Although I could have selected participants currently enrolled in a limited-residency doctoral program, there was no way to guarantee they would continue to persist to completion and graduation. Therefore, the study's sample was delimited to individuals who had already completed their terminal degree within a limited-residency program. Additionally, the sample was limited only to individuals who had earned an EdD or PhD in education because education doctoral programs (especially distance programs) experience one of the highest rates of attrition (Caruth, 2015; Okahana & Zhou, 2017; Patterson & McFadden, 2009; Rovai, 2002) and the body of research on persistence within this particular population is scarce, but growing. Participants also must have completed at least one course with a syllabus, learning objectives, and content related to the degree they earned in residence. The decision to delimit the sample by this criterion was made because some limited-residency programs only require on-campus orientation, and although these on-campus

experiences may have the potential to foster social integration, it was unlikely they would contribute to students' intellectual development and academic integration (Tinto, 1975, 1993). Finally, participants were also limited to individuals who completed a traditional dissertation since many education doctoral programs are transitioning to capstone or action-based research projects (Perry & Imig, 2008). Although capstone projects are rigorous, the experience is different than completing a dissertation. Requiring the completion of a traditional dissertation from participants ensured that they all had comparable candidacy experiences.

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study that cannot be controlled. Although maximum variation in sampling was attempted to reinforce transferability of results (Polkinghorne, 1989), several key demographic areas were missing, including: individuals of Hispanic, American Indian, or Asian descent; individuals under the age of 39 or over the age of 73; and individuals who earned a PhD. Although all participants earned an EdD, they completed traditional dissertations that were equivalent to dissertations typically produced by PhD students. Another limitation was only three participants were male; however, this percentage is also representative of the gender disparities prevalent in the field of education (i.e., 31.5% of education doctoral recipients are male; NSF, 2016). Finally, a large percentage of the sample (81.8%) attended private, faith-based universities which could skew the transferability of results.

Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the findings, limitations, and the delimitations placed on the study, there are several recommendations for future research. While the study could be replicated in design and purpose, the sample could be expanded to include doctoral graduates from other disciplines. A study narrowing the focus to participants from particular types of universities (e.g., public research universities, private nonprofit universities) or only including participants who attended

an orientation on campus and not an actual course could also be conducted. Additionally, studies could be conducted for specific populations based on demographics (e.g., PhD graduates, African Americans, women, first-generation college graduates). Replicating the study with different samples could indicate different populations of students may perceive or value the phenomenon in unique ways.

The role of on-campus experiences and doctoral persistence could be examined through a case study. If a limited-residency doctoral program is identified as having a remarkably high graduation rate or low time-to-degree rate, future researchers could study the program in totality and, through multiple forms of data collection (e.g., interviews with students, graduates, faculty, and staff, observations of instruction, analyzing curriculum), to identify strengths that could be replicated in other limited-residency doctoral programs.

On-campus experiences and persistence in limited-residency doctoral programs could also be studied quantitatively. Many limited-residency doctoral programs are shifting toward fully online programs (McPherson & Bacow, 2015; NCES, 2017), or making residential courses optional for doctoral students. Future researchers could conduct a comparative study at a single-site and compare time-to-degree or length of time in candidacy between doctoral graduates who were required to attend residential courses during their program, and those who did not attend residential courses. Researchers could also study time-to-degree differences in students who elect to attend courses on campus versus those who don't. Such studies could provide guidance to individuals considering completing their program online and assist university administrators in allocating appropriate resources if results show a lack of residential courses increases time to degree. A similar comparative study could also examine persistence and completion rates during candidacy between individuals who attended residential courses and those who did not. Future

researchers could also compare time-to-degree or persistence rates between individuals who took research or dissertation-related courses in residence to those who only took theory or content-related courses in residence. However, in any of these quantitative studies, it would be prudent to control for external factors that might also impact time to degree or completion rates.

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the residential experiences of individuals who completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program to understand the role and value of on-campus experiences on doctoral persistence. Data collected through questionnaires, semistructured interviews, personal items, and focus groups generated five primary themes: (a) human connections, (b) preparation for the dissertation, (c) mentorship, (d) tangibility of the university, and (e) personal resolve and tenacity. Additional subthemes were revealed within human connections (i.e., importance of direct access to faculty, fortify online relationships, and shared experiences) and preparation for the dissertation (i.e., informal and out-of-class experiences, accountability and developing necessary skills, and improving academic aspects of on-campus courses).

Through the voices of participants, it became evident that on-campus experiences are the most valuable from a social aspect involving students and faculty. Attending courses on campus, even for a short amount of time, provided participants with opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with individuals who understood the experience and challenge of completing the doctoral journey. These relationships formed an additional network of support for participants outside of their immediate families and friendships.

The study also showed the potential to make on-campus experiences more beneficial from an academic standpoint. Although there were opportunities for participants to prepare for

the task of independent research while on campus, most felt that their programs did not capitalize on those opportunities. For many participants, it was not worthwhile to sacrifice time and money to complete a course that could easily be done online. If online doctoral programs continue to offer residential classes, it would be prudent to design the curriculum so that students can benefit the most from face-to-face interactions with faculty and peers.

The most notable and unexpected finding from this study was the role of personal resolve on persistence. Despite the many obstacles that accompany learning from a distance, especially at the doctoral level, participants graduated and earn the coveted title of “Doctor” as a result of commitment, resiliency, and a dogged will to never quit. Eli summarized it best:

If you put your mind to do it, you can do it. The only person that can stop you, is you. . . .

I know some people stop because of financial reasons. But you know what? If you really want to do it, if you really want to finish—even for financial reasons—it's not going to stop you. You'll find a way to become that doctor you intended to be.

REFERENCES

- Adams, J., & DeFleur, M. H. (2005). The acceptability of a doctoral degree earned online as a credential for obtaining a faculty position. *American Journal of Distance Education, 19*, 71-85. doi:10.1207/s15389286ajde1902
- Adegbola, M. (2011). Soar like geese: Building developmental network relationships for scholarship. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 32*, 51-53. doi:10.5480/1536-5026-32.1.51
- Adegbola, M. (2013). Scholarly tailgating defined: A diverse, giant network. *The ABNF Journal, 24*(1), 17-20. Retrieved from <https://rc.library.uta.edu/uta-ir/handle/10106/25317>
- Aitchison, C. (2009). Writing groups for doctoral education. *Studies in Higher Education, 34*, 905-916. doi:10.1080/03075070902785580
- Ali, A., & Kohun, F. G. (2009). Cultural influence on social isolation in doctoral programs and doctorate attrition – A case study. *Information System Education Journal, 7*(64), 1-7. Retrieved from [https://www.isedj.org/7/64/ISEDJ.7\(64\).Ali.pdf](https://www.isedj.org/7/64/ISEDJ.7(64).Ali.pdf)
- Amjad, T., Ding, Y., Xu, J., Zhang, C., Daud, A., Tang, J., & Song, M. (2017). Standing on the shoulders of giants. *Journal of Informetrics, 11*, 307-323. doi:10.1016/j.joi.2017.01.004
- Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*, 518-529. Retrieved from <http://www.myacpa.org/JCSD>
- Bagaka's, J. G., Bransteter, I., Rispinto, S., & Badillo, N. (2015). Exploring student success in a doctoral program: The power of mentorship and research engagement. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 10*, 323-342. doi:10.28945/2291

- Baker, V. L., & Pifer, M. J. (2011). The role of relationships in the transition from doctoral student to independent scholar. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 33(1), 5-17.
doi:10.1080/0158037X.2010.515569
- Baker, V. L., Pifer, M. J., & Flemion, B. (2013). Process challenges and learning-based interactions in stage 2 of doctoral education: Implications from two applied social science fields. *Journal of Higher Education*, 84, 449-476. doi:10.1080/00221546.2013.11777298
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28, 117-148. doi:10.1207/s15326985ep2802_3
- Bernard, R. M., Abrami, P. C., Lou, Y., Borokhovski, E., Wade, A., Wozney, L., . . . Huang, B. (2004). How does distance education compare with classroom instruction? A meta-analysis of the empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 74, 379-439.
doi:10.3102/00346543074003379
- Bernauer, J. A., Semich, G., Klentzin, J. C., & Holdan, E. G. (2013). Themes of tension surrounding research methodologies education in an accelerated, cohort-based doctoral program. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 8, 173-193. doi:10.28945/1921
- Best Colleges. (2018). *Best online doctorate in curriculum and instruction programs*. Retrieved from <https://www.bestcolleges.com/features/top-online-doctorate-in-curriculum-instruction-programs/>
- Bolliger, D. U., & Halupa, C. (2012). Student perceptions of satisfaction and anxiety in an online doctoral program. *Distance Education*, 33, 81-98. doi:10.1080/01587919.2012.667961
- Breitenbach, E. (2019). Evaluating a model to increase doctorate program completion rates: A focus on social connectedness and structure. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 14(1). doi:10.28945/4239

- Brill, J. L., Balcanoff, K. K., Land, D., Gogarty, M. M., & Turner, F. (2014). Best practices in doctoral retention: Mentoring. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 4(2), 26-37.
doi:10.18870/hlrc.v2i2.66
- Byrd, J. C. (2016). Understanding the online doctoral learning experience: Factors that contribute to students' sense of community. *Journal of Educators Online*, 13, 102-135.
doi:10.9743/JEO.2016.2.3
- Caruth, G. D. (2015). Doctoral student attrition: A problem for higher education. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 48, 189-215. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/24894120
- Cherry, L., & Blackinton, M. (2017). Student perceptions of factors influencing success in hybrid and traditional DPT programs: A Q-sort analysis. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 18(4), 71-86. Retrieved from <https://www.infoagepub.com/quarterly-review-of-distance-education.html>
- Coffield, F., Moseley, D., Hall, E., & Ecclestone, K. (2013). *Learning styles and pedagogy in post-16 learning: A systematic and critical review*. London, England: Sage.
- Colbert, M. D. (2013). *An analysis of persistence and motivation in public research institutions for doctoral completers* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3573427)
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Croxton, R. A. (2014). The role of interactivity in student satisfaction and persistence in online learning. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 10, 314-325. Retrieved from https://jolt.merlot.org/vol10no2/croxton_0614.pdf

- Cuevas, J. (2015). Is learning styles-based instruction effective? A comprehensive analysis of recent research on learning styles. *Theory and Research in Education*, 13, 308-333.
doi:10.1177/1477878515606621
- Denzin, N. K. (1970). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. New York, NY: Aldine.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 1-19). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Devos, C., Boudrenghien, G., Van der Linden, N., Azzi, A., Frenay, M., Galand, B., & Klein, O. (2017). Doctoral students' experiences leading to completion or attrition: A matter of sense, progress and distress. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 32, 61-77.
doi:10.1007/s10212-016-0290-0
- Duckett, Y. A. (2014). *Motivated to finish: A phenomenological study on persistence to graduation in asynchronous doctoral programs* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3635598)
- Durkheim, E. (1961). *Suicide* (J. Spaulding & G. Simpson, Trans.). Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. (Original work published 1897)
- Earl-Novell, S. (2006). Determining the extent to which program structure features and integration mechanisms facilitate or impede doctoral student persistence in mathematics. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 1, 45-57. doi:10.28945/60
- Effken, J. A. (2008). Doctoral education from a distance. *Nursing Clinics of North America*, 43, 557-566. doi:10.1016/j.cnur.2008.06.007

- Fazey, D. M. A., & Fazey, J. A. (2001). The potential for autonomy in learning: Perceptions of competence, motivation and locus of control in first-year undergraduate students. *Studies in Higher Education*, 26, 345-361. doi:10.1080/03075070120076309
- Fiore, T. D., Heitner, K. L., & Shaw, M. E. (2019). Academic advising and online doctoral student persistence from coursework to independent research. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 22(3), 111-122. Retrieved from https://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/fall223/fiore_heitner_shaw223.html
- Fitzpatrick, J. A. (2013). *Doctoral student persistence in non-traditional cohort programs: Examining educationally-related peer relationships, students' understanding of faculty expectations, and student characteristics* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3594664)
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2006). *Educational research: An introduction* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon.
- Gardner, S. K. (2008). "What's too much and what's too little?": The process of becoming an independent researcher in doctoral education. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79, 326-350. doi:10.1353/jhe.0.0007
- Gardner, S. K. (2010). Contrasting the socialization experiences of doctoral students in high- and low-completing departments: A qualitative analysis of disciplinary contexts at one institution. *Journal of Higher Education*, 81, 61-81. doi:10.1080/00221546.2010.11778970
- Gardner, S. K., & Gopaul, B. (2012). The part-time doctoral student experience. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 7, 63-78. doi:10.28945/1561

- Gardner, S. K., Hayes, M. T., & Neider, X. N. (2007). The dispositions and skills of a Ph.D. in education: Perspectives of faculty and graduate students in one college of education. *Innovative Higher Education*, 31, 287-299. doi:10.1007/s10755-006-9029-1
- George-Reid, K. A. (2016). *Intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors related to educators' pursuit of doctoral degrees* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Order No. 10607292)
- Goddard College. (n.d.). *The Goddard difference*. Retrieved from <https://www.goddard.edu/about-goddard/goddard-difference/>
- Golde, C. M. (2000). Should I stay or should I go? Student descriptions of the doctoral attrition process. *Review of Higher Education*, 23, 199-227. doi:10.1353/rhe.2000.0004
- Golde, C. M. (2005). The role of the department and discipline in doctoral student attrition: Lessons from four departments. *Journal of Higher Education*, 76, 669-700. doi:10.1080/00221546.2005.11772304
- Harleman, T. G. (2013). *Investigating the effect of situational awareness on persistence of doctoral distance learners* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3577316)
- Harris, C. S. (2011). The case for partnering doctoral students with librarians: A synthesis of the literatures. *Library Review*, 60, 599-620. doi:10.1108/00242531111153614
- Herndon-Stallings, M. (2018). *Online doctoral students and the importance of social network connections* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Order No. 10826782)

- Holmes, B., Trimble, M., & Morrison-Danner, D. (2014). Advancing scholarship, team building, and collaboration in a hybrid doctoral program in educational leadership. *Journal of College Teaching and Learning, 11*, 175-180. doi:10.19030/tlc.v11i4.8855
- Holmes, J. L. (2018). *Integration of doctoral students in distance programs: An instrument validation study of educational doctorate students* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Order No. 10784233)
- Husserl, E. (1962). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (W.R. Boyce Gibson, Trans.). New York, NY: Collier. (Original work published 1913)
- Ivankova, N. V. (2004). *Students' persistence in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln distributed doctoral program in educational leadership in higher education: A mixed methods study* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3131545)
- Ivankova, N. V., & Stick, S. L. (2007). Students' persistence in a distributed doctoral program in educational leadership in higher education: A mixed methods study. *Research in Higher Education, 48*, 93-135. doi:10.1007/s11162-006-9025-4
- Jalongo, M. R., Boyer, W., & Ebbeck, M. (2014). Writing for scholarly publication as “tacit knowledge”: A qualitative focus group study of doctoral students in education. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 42*, 241-250. doi:10.1007/s10643-013-0624-3
- Johnson, C. A. (2015). *Understanding doctoral success factors in online education programs* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Walden University, Minneapolis, MN.
- Kennedy, D. H. (2013). *An investigation of candidates' experience of attrition in a limited-residency doctoral program* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3552547)

- Kennedy, D. H., Terrell, S. R., & Lohle, M. (2015). A grounded theory of persistence in a limited-residency doctoral program. *The Qualitative Report*, 20, 215-230. Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss3/5/>
- Kuo, P. B., Woo, H., & Bang, N. M. (2017). Advisory relationship as a moderator between research self-efficacy, motivation, and productivity among counselor education doctoral students. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 56, 130-144. doi:10.1002/ceas.12067
- Lambie, G. W., Hayes, B. G., Griffith, C., Limberg, D., & Mullen, P. R. (2014). An exploratory investigation of the research self-efficacy, interest in research, and research knowledge of Ph.D. in education students. *Innovative Higher Education*, 39, 139-153. doi:10.1007/s10755-013-9264-1
- Litalien, D., & Guay, F. (2015). Dropout intentions in PhD studies: A comprehensive model based on interpersonal relationships and motivational resources. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 41, 218-231. doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2015.03.004
- Lovelace, J. M. (2015). *Barriers, motivators, and perceived abilities related to completion of the doctoral degree* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://etd.auburn.edu/bitstream/handle/10415/5000/Lovelace.Dissertation.pdf>
- Lovitts, B. (2001). *Leaving the ivory tower: The causes and consequences of departure from doctoral study*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lovitts, B. (2005). Being a good course-taker is not enough: A theoretical perspective on the transition to independent research. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30, 137-154. doi:10.1080/03075070500043093
- Lovitts, B. (2008). The transition to independent research: Who makes it, who doesn't and why. *Journal of Higher Education*, 79, 296-325. doi:10.1080/00221546.2008.11772100

- McAlpine, L., & Amundsen, C. (2012). Challenging the taken-for-granted: How research analysis might inform pedagogical practices and institutional policies related to doctoral education. *Studies in Higher Education, 37*, 683-694.
doi:10.1080/03075079.2010.537747
- McDermott, B. J. (2002). *The utility of perceived stress, locus of control, and Type A behavior pattern as predictors of doctoral degree completion in a non-traditional EdD program* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). West Virginia University, Morgantown.
- McPherson, M. S., & Bacow, L. S. (2015). Online higher education: Beyond the hype cycle. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives, 29*, 135-154. doi:10.1257/jep.29.4.135
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mu, K., Coppard, B. M., Bracciano, A. G., & Bradberry, J. C. (2014). Comparison of on-campus and hybrid student outcomes in occupational therapy doctoral education. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 68*, 51-56. doi:10.5014/ajot.2014.685S02
- Mullins, G., & Kiley, M. (2002). It's a PhD, not a Nobel Prize: How experienced examiners assess research theses. *Studies in Higher Education, 27*, 369-386.
doi:10.1080/0307507022000011507
- Murkami-Ramalho, E., Militello, M., & Piert, J. (2013). A view from within: How doctoral students in educational administration develop research knowledge and identity. *Studies in Higher Education, 38*, 256-271. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.578738
- Myers, L. H., Jeffery, A. D., Nimmagadda, H., Werthman, J. A., & Jordan, K. (2015). Building a community of scholars: One cohort's experience in an online and distance education

doctor of philosophy program. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 54, 650-654.

doi:10.3928/01484834-20151016-07

National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *Number and percentage of graduate students enrolled in distance education or online classes and degree programs, by selected characteristics: Selected years, 2003-04 through 2015-16*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/>

National Science Foundation. (2015). *Doctor recipients from U.S. universities 2015*. Retrieved from <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2017/nsf17306/report/what-influences-the-path-to-the-doctorate/time-to-degree.cfm>

National Science Foundation. (2016). *Table 12. Doctorate recipients, by major field of study: Selected years, 1986–2016*. Retrieved from <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2018/nsf18304/data/tab12.pdf>

Nettles, M. T., & Millet, C. M. (2006). *Three magic letters: Getting to PhD*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Odena, O., & Burgess, H. (2017). How doctoral students and graduates describe facilitating experiences and strategies for their thesis writing learning process: A qualitative approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42, 572-590.

doi:10.1080/03075079.2015.1063598

Okahana, H., & Zhou, E. (2017). *Graduate enrollment and degrees: 2006 to 2016*. Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools.

Paschler, H., McDaniel, M., Rohrer, D., & Bjork, R. (2010). Learning styles: Concepts and evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 9, 105-119. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20697325>

- Patterson, J. (2017). *Identifying as husbands, fathers, and school leaders: A phenomenology of doctoral persistence among limited residency students* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Order No. 10686199)
- Patterson, B., & McFadden, C. (2009). Attrition in online and campus degree programs. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 12(2), 1-8. Retrieved from <https://www2.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer122/patterson112.html>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Perry, J. A. (2012). What history reveals about the education doctorate. In M. Macintyre Latta & S. Wunder (Eds.), *Placing practitioner knowledge at the center of teacher education: Rethinking the policies and practices of the education doctorate* (pp. 51–72). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Perry, J. A., & Imig, D. G. (2008). A stewardship of practice in education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 40(6), 42-49. doi:10.3200/CHNG.40.6.42-49
- Pifer, M. J., & Baker, V. L. (2016). Stage-based challenges and strategies for support in doctoral education: A practical guide for students, faculty members, and program administrators. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 11, 15-34. doi:10.28945/2347
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology: Exploring the breadth of human experience with a special section on transpersonal psychology*. New York, NY: Plenum Press
- Poock, M. C., & Love, P. G. (2001). Factors influencing the program choice of doctoral students in higher education administration. *NASPA Journal*, 38, 203-223. doi:10.2202/1949-6605.1136

- Preston, J. C. (2014). Online doctoral programs: Can they produce the business scientists and leaders needed from the 21st century? *International Journal of Leadership and Change*, 2, 39-47. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/ijlc/vol2/iss1/5>
- Radeaker, L. L., Duffy, J. O., Wetzler, E., & Zaikina-Montgomery, H. (2016). Chair perceptions of trust between mentor and mentee in online doctoral dissertation mentoring. *Online Learning Journal*, 20(1), 1-13. Retrieved from <https://olj.onlinelearningconsortium.org/index.php/olj/article/view/605>
- Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J., Heuvelman-Hutchinson, L., & Spaulding, L. S. (2014). Connecting online: Can social networking and other technology support doctoral connectedness? *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 11(3/4), 1-13. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1048878.pdf>
- Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J., Sosin, L. S., & Spaulding, L. S. (2018). Does family matter? A phenomenological inquiry exploring the lived experiences of women persisting in distance education, professional doctorate programs. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 13, 497-515. doi:10.28945/4157
- Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J., & Spaulding, L. S. (Eds.). (2014). *Navigating the doctoral journey: A handbook of strategies for success*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J., Spaulding, M. T., & Spaulding, L. S. (2016). Identifying significant integration and institutional factors that predict online doctoral persistence. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 31, 101-112. doi:10.1016/j.iheduc.2016.07.003
- Roediger, H. L., & Karpicke, J. D. (2006). The power of testing memory: Basic research and implications for educational practice. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 1, 181-210. doi:10.1111/j.1745-6916.2006.00012.x

- Rogers, S. Y. (2018). *Nothing left unfinished: A transcendental phenomenology on the persistence of black women in distance education doctoral programs* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Order No. 10932997)
- Rosenberg, R. (1961). The first American Doctor of Philosophy degree: A centennial salute to Yale, 1861-1961. *Journal of Higher Education*, 32, 387-394. doi:10.2307/1978076
- Rovai, A. P. (2002). Development of an instrument to measure classroom community. *Internet and Higher Education*, 5, 197-211. doi:10.1016/S1096-7516(02)00102-1
- Santicola, L. (2013). Pressing on: Persistence through a doctoral cohort program in education. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 6, 253-264. doi:10.19030/cier.v6i2.7736
- Scarpina, K. R. (2016). *Women in online doctoral programs: An inductive exploration of academic and non-academic factors influencing college choice* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Northeastern University, Boston, MA.
- Shulman, L. S., Golde, C. M., Bueschel, A. C., & Garabedian, K. J. (2006). Reclaiming education's doctorates: A critique and a proposal. *Educational Researcher*, 35(3), 25-32. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/edr>
- Snyder, S. E. (2017). *Predicting the graduation of Ph.D. candidates in online programs* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Order No. 10635732)
- Spaulding, L. S., & Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J. (2012). Hearing their voices: Factors doctoral candidates attribute to their persistence. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 7, 199-219. doi:10.28945/1589

- Spaulding, M. T. (2019). *Mentor and candidate attributes that promote doctoral persistence and postgraduation scholarship in limited residency and online doctoral programs* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Order No. 13864375)
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Sverdlik, A., Hall, N. C., McAlpine, L., & Hubbard, K. (2018). The PhD experience: A review of the factors influencing doctoral students' completion, achievement, and well-being. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 13, 361-388. doi:10.28945/4113
- Terrell, S. R. (2002). The effect of learning style on doctoral course completion in a web-based learning environment. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 5, 345-352. doi:10.1016/S1096-7516(02)00128-8
- Terrell, S. R. (2014). The use of experiential learning styles to predict attrition from a limited-residency information systems graduate program. *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management*, 2(1), 1-10. Retrieved from http://www.iiakm.org/ojakm/articles/2014/volume2_1/OJAKM_Volume2_1pp1-10.pdf
- Terrell, S. R. (2015). Using hemispheric preference as a predictor of success in limited-residency information systems doctoral program. *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management*, 3, 127-133. Retrieved from http://www.iiakm.org/ojakm/articles/2015/volume3_2/OJAKM_Volume3_2pp127-133.pdf
- Terrell, S. R., & Lohle, M. F. (2016). Supporting doctoral students' self-described needs while enrolled in a limited-residency information systems doctoral program. *Issues in*

- Information Systems*, 17, 260-264. Retrieved from http://iacis.org/iis/2016/1_iis_2016_260-264.pdf
- Terrell, S. R., Lohle, M. F., & Kennedy, D. (2016). Student-identified requirements for persistence in a limited-residency information systems PhD program. *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management*, 4, 15-164. Retrieved from http://www.iiakm.org/ojakm/articles/2016/volume4_1/OJAKM_Volume4_1pp150-164.pdf
- Terrell, S. R., Snyder, M. M., Dringus, L. P., & Maddrey, E. (2012). A grounded theory of connectivity and persistence in a limited-residency doctoral program. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(62), 1-14. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ982093.pdf>
- Thompson, C. J. (2014). Responsible conduct of research assessment of doctor of education candidates, graduate faculty, and curriculum considerations. *Innovative Higher Education*, 39, 349-360. doi:10.1007/s10755-014-9289-0
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45, 89-125. doi:10.3102/00346543045001089
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *Journal of Higher Education*, 68, 599-623. doi:10.1080/00221546.1997.117
- Toma, J. D. (2002). *Legitimacy, differentiation, and the promise of the EdD in higher education*. Paper presented at annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Sacramento, CA. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED482308.pdf>

- van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany: State University of New York Press
- Vasilachis de Gialdino, I. (2009). Ontological and epistemological foundations of qualitative research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(2). doi:10.17169/fqs-10.2.1299
- Vaughn, S., Schumm, J., & Sinagub, J. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wao, H. O., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2011). A mixed research investigation of factors related to time to the doctorate in education. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 6, 115-134. doi:10.28945/1505
- Warburton, J., & Macauley, P. (2014). Wrangling the literature: Quietly contributing to HDR completions. *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, 45, 159-175. doi:10.1080/00048623.2014.928992
- Williams, P., Wall, N., & Fish, W. (2019). Mid-career adult learners in an online doctoral program and the drivers of their academic self-regulation: The importance of social support and parent education level. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 20(1), 63-78 doi:10.7202/1057972ar
- Wyman, B. M. (2012). *A hermeneutic phenomenological study of non-completers in online doctor of education programs* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3552302)
- Yalof, B., & Chametzky, B. (2016). Mentoring online doctoral students through a community of practice model. *Online Journal of Distance Education and e-Learning*, 4(2), 39-46. Retrieved from <http://www.tojdel.net/journals/tojdel/volumes/tojdel-volume04-i02.pdf>

APPENDIX A: SCREENING SURVEY

The purpose of this study is to describe the residential experiences of individuals who have completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program from various institutions of higher education. Limited-residency is defined as taking a combination of online and residential (i.e., on campus) coursework. This survey is designed to determine your eligibility to participate in the study.

1. Are you at least 18 years of age?
2. Have you earned your doctorate (PhD or EdD) in education?
3. Did your doctorate program entail a combination of online and residential (i.e. on campus) coursework?
4. Did you attend at least one course (with a syllabus and learning objectives) on campus?
(Note: The course you attended on campus did not have to meet on a weekly basis. It may have been conducted on weekends, weeklong intensive format, evenings, etc.)
5. Did your program require you to complete a traditional five-chapter dissertation using a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods design?
6. Using the scale below, how well do you believe you are able to recall your residential experiences?

0 = No recollection of major events, details, thoughts, emotions, or unique experiences <input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Some recollection of major events, but no recollection of details, emotions, thoughts, or unique experiences <input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Good recollection of major events; Very limited recollection of details, emotions, thoughts, and unique experiences <input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Thorough recollection of major events; Some recollection of details, emotions, thoughts, and unique experiences <input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Very thorough recollection of major events, details, emotions, thoughts, and unique experiences <input type="checkbox"/>
--	---	--	--	--

7. If you are interested in participating in the study, please provide your contact information
(Name, Email, and Phone Number) below:

APPENDIX B: LIBERTY UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 18, 2019

Kaitlin Yourous

IRB Exemption 3914.091819: Examining the Role of On-Campus Experiences: A Phenomenological Study of Persistence for Limited-Residency Doctoral Graduates

Dear Kaitlin Yourous,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46.101(b):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if...the following criteria is met:

(iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Fall 2019

Dear Doctoral Graduate:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education (EdD) degree. The purpose of my research is to describe the residential experiences of individuals who have completed a terminal degree in education through a limited-residency doctoral program and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are 18 years of age or older, have earned a terminal degree in Education (EdD or PhD) through a limited-residency program (combination of online and residential coursework), completed a traditional five-chapter dissertation using a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods design, attended at least one course on campus, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and the Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale, participate in an individual interview and a focus group, bring to the interview an item or document that represents your residential experience as a former doctoral student, and review and provide feedback to the study's findings to ensure accuracy of the information. The initial questionnaire should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The interviews, the focus group, and providing feedback will be scheduled at a later time and should take approximately one hour to complete each. Your name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click on the link provided for the screening survey. If you meet participation criteria, a consent form will be sent to you via email. The consent form contains additional information about my study. You will be asked to electronically sign the form and then proceed to complete a demographic questionnaire and the Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale. Once the consent form and questionnaires are complete, you will be contacted to schedule an interview.

I truly appreciate your consideration to participate in this study, and I look forward to working with you and learning about your experience. **Please feel free to forward this invitation to any individuals you know who qualify and might be interested in participating in the study.** If you have any questions before choosing to participate in the study, you may contact me at xxxxx@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Kaitlin Yourous
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX D: SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT POST

Research Participants Needed

Doctoral Persistence Study

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Have you earned a doctorate in Education (Ed.D. or Ph.D.)?
- Did your doctorate program require you to take some courses online and on campus?
 - Did you take at least one course on campus?
- Did you complete a traditional five-chapter dissertation using a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods design?

If you answered **yes** to all of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in a doctoral persistence study.

The purpose of this research study is to describe the residential experiences of individuals who have completed a terminal degree in education through a limited-residency doctoral program.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to:

- Complete a demographic questionnaire and the Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale
- Participate in an individual interview and a focus group,
- Bring to the interview an item or document that represents your residential experience as a former doctoral student
- Review and provide feedback to the study's findings to ensure accuracy of the information.

The initial questionnaire should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The interviews, the focus group, and providing feedback will be scheduled at a later time and should take approximately one hour to complete each.

Your participation in the study can be done completely online. If you are interested in participating in the study please click on the [Screening Survey Link](#).

Kaitlin Yourous, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Please contact Kaitlin Yourous at [REDACTED] for more information.

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Examining the Role of On-Campus Experiences: A Phenomenological Study of Persistence for
Limited-Residency Doctoral Graduates

Kaitlin E. Yourous
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study concerning the residential experiences in limited-residency doctoral programs and how those experiences may impact persistence. You were selected as a possible participant because you are 18 years of age or older, you have completed your terminal degree (EdD or PhD) in education through a limited-residency doctoral program (combination of online and residential coursework), your program required you to complete a traditional five-chapter dissertation using a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods design, and you attended at least one course on campus. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Kaitlin E. Yourous, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to describe the residential or on-campus experiences of individuals who have completed their terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a questionnaire that includes demographic information, additional information concerning your limited-residency doctoral program requirements, and the Distance Doctoral Program Integration Scale. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.
2. Participate in an individual interview with the researcher. The interview will last approximately one hour and will take place at a mutually agreeable time and location. The location of the interview may be conducted in-person or online, and will be audio/video recorded.
3. Bring a personal document, visual representation, or item that represents your on-campus experience to the interview. These documents or items may include photographs, illustrations, journals, essays, or personal items. Copies of any paper documents will be made, and photos of items will be taken. The original personal item or document will not be kept by the researcher.
4. Participate in a focus group with the researcher and other participants. The focus group will last approximately one hour and will take place at a mutually agreeable time and location for all participants and may be conducted in-person or online. The focus group will be audio/video recorded.
5. Review and provide feedback to the researcher's findings to ensure the accuracy of the information. Your review of the findings will take approximately one hour.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include:

- Identifying the benefits (if any) of on-campus experiences for limited-residency doctoral students
- Possible impact on curriculum and program requirements for limited-residency doctoral students
- Assisting future doctoral students in their decision to pursue their terminal degree in a limited-residency program

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- Participants and the institutions attended will be assigned pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password protected computer and may be used in future presentations. After 3 years, all electronic records will be deleted per federal regulation.
- Interviews and the focus group will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password protected computer for 3 years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Although focus group will be conducted in a private setting, I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Kaitlin E. Yourous. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact the

researcher at xxxxx@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. James Eller, at xxxxx@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX F: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this study is to describe the residential experiences of individuals who have completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program from various institutions of higher education. Limited-residency is defined as taking a combination of online and residential (i.e., on campus) coursework. This questionnaire is designed to capture demographic and descriptive information.

1. Name:
2. Gender:
3. Age:
4. Race/Ethnicity:
5. Degree earned (e.g. EdD in Educational Leadership):
6. Year you completed your doctorate:
7. How many years did it take you to earn your degree?
8. Please list the university/universities attended for your doctorate:
9. If you attended more than one university to complete your doctorate, please specify the university/universities that provided coursework through limited-residency format:
10. During your coursework were you enrolled part- or full-time (based on your university's requirements for full-time status)?
11. To the best of your memory, briefly describe the course(s) you took on campus and how often you were required to meet on campus.

APPENDIX G: DISTANCE DOCTORAL PROGRAM INTEGRATION SCALE

When completing the DDPIS, consider your previous distance education doctoral program.
Please rate your SATISFACTION level with each of the DDPIS items using the following scale:

5 = Very High (VH) 4 = High 3 = Medium 2 = Low 1 = Very Low (VL)

Item		5 (VH)	4	3	2	1 (VL)
1	The sequencing of the coursework in your program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	The encouragement faculty members provided you.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	The quality of academic-related interactions you had with other students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	The relationships you developed with at least one faculty member.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	The quality of social interactions you had with your fellow students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	How using various distance methods to communicate (e.g., telephone, live video, online chat, email, and/or social media sites) helped you feel personally connected with other students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	The quality of academic support in your program (e.g., statistics assistance, writing assistance, and research assistance).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	The quality of academic feedback provided by the faculty.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	The enthusiasm faculty demonstrated for your academic work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10	The quality of academic-related contact you had with faculty (consider all synchronous and asynchronous interactions).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	How easily you were able to approach faculty members with your personal concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	The level of mutual trust among the students in the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	The level of social support you received from fellow students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	The personal relationships you developed with your fellow students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	The level of cooperation with your fellow students when completing program requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	The timeliness of academic feedback provided by the faculty.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	The amount of social interactions you had with your fellow students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	The willingness of students to provide academic - related help to other students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	How well faculty members fostered feelings that you personally belonged in this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	The quality of instruction in your program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21	The amount of constructive feedback you received from your fellow students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	The guidance faculty provided about the dissertation process in this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	The availability of the faculty to discuss academic issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	How you found the coursework in your program to be a good fit for you (e.g., there was good alignment with personal interests, application to future job goals, application to real life, or other similar reasons).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	The sense of social connectedness between you and your fellow students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	How the coursework prepared students for the dissertation process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	The quality of the curriculum in your program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28	The relevancy of the curriculum to your goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29	The opportunities you had to learn from your fellow students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30	The frequency of academic-related interactions you had with other students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31	How the faculty cared about you as a real person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32	The amount of academic-related contact you had with faculty (consider all synchronous and asynchronous interactions).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Semistructured, Open-Ended Interview Questions

Central Research Question:

How do individuals who have completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program describe their residential experiences?

Opening Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself—your current job, the year you graduated from your doctoral program, and your dissertation topic.
2. Why did you decide to pursue a doctorate?
3. Why did you choose a limited-residency program?
4. Please describe the format of your limited-residency program, specifically the requirements for being on campus.
5. When you initially chose your doctoral program and realized you would be required to complete some coursework on campus, what was your attitude toward that requirement, and did you experience any shifts in attitude about the on-campus requirement?
6. Please describe any activities outside of class that you chose to attend or were required to attend while on-campus, and in what ways were they beneficial to you as a student.

Questions Related to Social Integration and School Community

7. Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.
8. Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.

9. Please describe how any of the relationships you developed with students or faculty while on campus were beneficial or a hindrance to you during your doctoral journey, especially during the development and defense of your dissertation.
10. In what ways, if any, does the on-campus experience contribute to doctoral persistence from a social aspect?
11. Who was the most significant or memorable person that you met during your time on-campus, and why were they significant?
12. Doctoral students and candidates often experience a sense of isolation especially during candidacy. Can you describe any experiences you had as a doctoral student or candidate where you felt isolated and how you were able to overcome that?
13. Based on the DDPIS, you experienced a _____ level of integration. At what point in your doctoral journey, if any, did you feel like you were a valued member of your school or department's community and can you please describe your experience of integrating into your overall school community.

Questions Related to Academic Integration and Intellectual Development:

14. Please describe your transition from the coursework stage of your doctoral degree to the dissertation stage.
15. Describe the point in your doctoral journey where you felt prepared to take on the task of independent scholarly research, and were there any on-campus experiences you had that prepared you for candidacy and the completion of your dissertation?
16. In what ways, if any, does the on-campus experience contribute to doctoral persistence from an academic aspect?

17. Please describe any academic resources that you accessed outside of the classroom while you were on campus, such as access to a library, staff members, or other resources, and why they were valuable to you as a doctoral student?
18. How did you identify and select your chair and committee? What role, if any, did your on-campus experience play in identifying your committee members?

Questions Related to Participant's Ability to Persist and Their On-Campus Experience

19. Please describe your transition from candidate to scholar.
20. What was the most memorable aspect of your on-campus experiences, and in what ways, if any, did it contribute to your persistence?
21. What are the main factors or reasons you were able to persist in a limited-residency doctoral program?
22. What can institutions do to foster persistence for limited-residency doctoral students?
23. What are your thoughts on limited-residency doctoral programs versus fully online doctoral programs, and how might your experience as a doctoral student been different had you completed your program completely online?
24. If you were to complete your doctorate again, please explain why you would or would not enroll in a limited-residency program and describe anything you would do differently.
25. You were asked to bring a document or item that represents your on-campus experience. Please tell me about the item or document you brought, why you selected it, and its significance.

Closing Questions

26. What additional information would you like to share with me about your on-campus experiences that we haven't discussed yet?

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP QUESTION GUIDE

Semistructured, Open-Ended Focus Group Questions

Central Research Question:

How do individuals who have completed a terminal degree in education within a limited-residency program describe their residential experiences?

Opening Question

1. Will each individual please state your name, the institution from which you graduated, and your degree earned?

Question Related to Academic Integration and Social Integration

2. From an academic aspect, what were the strengths or benefits of your program's residential courses, and what were the weaknesses?
3. From a social aspect, what were the strengths or benefits of your program's residential courses, and what were the weaknesses?

Questions Related to Overall Integration into the Academic Community

4. Please discuss if you believe it is necessary or important for limited-residency doctoral students to integrate into their school communities in the same way as traditional doctoral students.
5. Please discuss the role, if any, your residential experience had on your persistence?

Closing Question

6. Please discuss any additional information you would like to share concerning your residential experience and persistence.

APPENDIX J: REFLEXIVE JOURNAL SAMPLES

10/2/2019

Conducted my first pilot interview today, and I found it very helpful. I realized it may be a lot more difficult to separate my ideas and biases from the data collection process when I interview individuals from my university because I have firsthand knowledge of what the residential experience is like at LU. I noticed I didn't ask as many additional probing questions as a result. I don't want to completely eliminate LU participants; however, I need to be mindful and go into future interviews as though I'm ignorant to the LU on-campus experiences and requirements. I also realized I need to add some additional questions because I'm not sure I'll be able to generate rich, thick descriptions with what I currently have, or be able to fully answer my RQs. I feel confident with my interview procedures and feel ready for data collection, but if possible I might try to conduct one more pilot interview with an individual from a different university.

10/8/2019

I've completed two official interviews. One interview was done with a student from a private, non-faith-based university and one was done with a student from LU. The interview with the student from a different university gave me an opportunity to learn how to listen better and not make assumptions about his experience. By the time I interviewed the LU student, I felt comfortable truly listening to her on campus experience in a naïve way. I even noticed in my transcripts that my contributions to the interview have decreased. My next three scheduled interviews are all individuals from another private, faith-based university and I'm really excited to hear about their experiences and how they differ from the participants I've interviewed so far. I also need to refine my interview questions a little more. I'm getting a lot of good information, I'm just not sure if I'm fully getting to the heart of my research questions and I can also tell that there's a little too much of "me" in them—as in, my own on-campus experiences were a driving factor in how I drafted my interview questions. So I'm going to go back and refine a few of them so I can truly approach these interviews from a naïve perspective.

10/11/2019

Two more interviews are done, and I finally feel like my interview guide is exactly where it needs to be. I did have a slip in one of my interviews where she started asking me about my own doctoral program and on-campus experience because she had a negative experience and wanted to know more about LU. As a result, it turned into more of a casual conversation than an interview for a few minutes, so I need to be careful about this in the future. However, because she heard about my experience she did share that she could see the value of on-campus experiences if she had an experience like what I had, but now it muddies the water concerning her own experience. When I start analyzing transcripts, I'll want to be sure to only include statements specifically regarding *her* on-campus experience, and not what she thought about mine. I also interviewed another LU graduate and I felt like I did a much better job of taking a step back and listening without preconceived notions or judgments.

10/17/2019

Seventh interview is done, and I finally feel like I have my protocol and procedures down to a science. I think I'm getting close to meeting thematic saturation because I'm easily noticing patterns and trends between participants' interviews and at this point I'm not really hearing any new information, but it's still enjoyable to hear about their experiences. I'm still recruiting and scheduling interviews, and we'll see---maybe someone will blow my mind with some new information.

10/21/19

Started analyzing data in NVivo. I created four nodes for each research question and a fifth node for unique or unexpected statements. As I'm reading through the transcripts initially I'm sorting significant statements by RQ and then once I have all of my data I'll start generating themes. Although I found my on-campus experience to be incredibly beneficial to me from an academic aspect, especially considering how it prepared me for this dissertation, I'm not really seeing that transpire with my participants. Which is good, I think. It means I'm not imposing my ideas and experiences on them. Tentatively it looks like on-campus experiences are more beneficial from a social aspect, which isn't surprising, but definitely different from my own experience.

APPENDIX K: AUDIT TRAIL

Date	Task
7/10/19	Successfully defended research proposal via WebEx
7/11/19	Submitted IRB documents to chair for review
7/23/19	Submitted IRB application and ancillary materials to LU IRB
8/19/19	Received preliminary review and request for revisions from LU IRB
8/21/19	Submitted revised documents to LU IRB
9/18/19	Received IRB Approval
10/2/19	Conducted first pilot interview, then refined interview guide
10/3/19	Sent out emails and social media posts to begin recruiting participants; Conducted second pilot interview, further refined interview guide
10/4/19	Conducted first official interview
10/5/19-11/2/2019	Continued to recruit participants and conduct interviews. Snowball sampling was used to recruit two participants. Tentatively started analyzing data on NVivo using data I had on hand. Significant statements were sorted by RQs. Themes were not developed.
11/2/2019	Completed final interview. No new information that has the potential to generate new themes was presented in this interview or the last several I completed. Thematic saturation was met, and I closed out my recruitment posts and screening surveys.
11/11/2019-11/26/2019	Continued analyzing all data from interviews, personal items, and DDPIS. Tentative themes developed; Finalized focus group guide
12/1/2019	Sent out email with four dates and times (12/7, 12 pm EST; 12/8, 4 pm EST; 12/14, 1 pm EST; 12/15, 5 pm EST) for possible focus groups. Will schedule focus groups if enough participants are available during those dates
12/6/2019	Scheduled first focus group for 12/8. Four participants are available for this date. Scheduled second focus group for 12/15. Six participants are available for this date. Sent follow up email to participant that has not responded at all .
12/8/2019	Conducted first focus group. Sent recording in for transcription.
12/15/2019	Conducted second focus group. Sent recording in for transcription.
12/30/2019	Received final transcriptions for focus groups. Emailed transcriptions to participants who were unable to be reached during focus group in order for them to add any commentary.
1/15/2020-1/17/2020	Finalized coding and organizing codes into themes and subthemes. Removed all irrelevant codes from NVivo.
1/17/2020-1/23/2020	Drafted results and implications

APPENDIX L: DETAILED INTERVIEW AND DDPIS CORRESPONDING ITEMS

DDPIS Item		Corresponding Interview Item (If Applicable)
1	The sequencing of the coursework in your program.	Question 14: Please describe your transition from the coursework stage of your doctoral degree to the dissertation stage.
2	The encouragement faculty members provided you.	Question 8: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.
3	The quality of academic-related interactions you had with other students.	<p>Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.</p> <p>Question 9: Please describe how any of the relationships you developed with students or faculty while on campus were beneficial or a hindrance to you during your doctoral journey, especially during the development and defense of your dissertation.</p>
4	The relationships you developed with at least one faculty member.	<p>Question 8: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.</p> <p>Question 18: How did you identify and select your chair and committee? What role, if any, did your on-campus experience play in identifying your committee members?</p>
5	The quality of social interactions you had with your fellow students.	Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.
6	How using various distance methods to communicate (e.g., telephone, live video, online chat, email, and/or social media	N/A

	sites) helped you feel personally connected with other students.	
7	The quality of academic support in your program (e.g., statistics assistance, writing assistance, and research assistance).	<p>Question 15: Describe the point in your doctoral journey where you felt prepared to take on the task of independent scholarly research, and were there any on-campus experiences you had that prepared you for candidacy and the completion of your dissertation?</p> <p>Question 16: In what ways, if any, does the on-campus experience contribute to doctoral persistence from an academic aspect?</p> <p>Question 17: Please describe any academic resources that you accessed outside of the classroom while you were on campus, such as access to a library, staff members, or other resources, and why they were valuable to you as a doctoral student?</p>
8	The quality of academic feedback provided by the faculty.	Question 8: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.
9	The enthusiasm faculty demonstrated for your academic work.	Question 8: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.
10	The quality of academic-related contact you had with faculty (consider all synchronous and asynchronous interactions).	<p>Question 8: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.</p> <p>Question 9: Please describe how any of the relationships you developed with students or faculty while on campus were beneficial or a hindrance to you during your doctoral journey, especially during the development and defense of your dissertation.</p>
11	How easily you were able to approach faculty members with your personal concerns.	Question 8: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.

12	The level of mutual trust among the students in the program.	Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.
13	The level of social support you received from fellow students	<p>Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.</p> <p>Question 12: Doctoral students and candidates often experience a sense of isolation especially during candidacy. Can you describe any experiences you had as a doctoral student or candidate where you felt isolated and how you were able to overcome that?</p>
14	The personal relationships you developed with your fellow students.	Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.
15	The level of cooperation with your fellow students when completing program requirements.	Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.
16	The timeliness of academic feedback provided by the faculty.	N/A
17	The amount of social interactions you had with your fellow students.	Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.
18	The willingness of students to provide academic - related help to other students.	Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.
19	How well faculty members fostered feelings that you	Question 8: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.

	personally belonged in this program.	Question 13: Based on the DDPIS, you experienced a _____ level of integration. At what point in your doctoral journey, if any, did you feel like you were a valued member of your school or department's community, and can you please describe your experience of integrating into your overall school community.
20	The quality of instruction in your program.	<p>Question 14: Please describe your transition from the coursework stage of your doctoral degree to the dissertation stage.</p> <p>Question 15: Describe the point in your doctoral journey where you felt prepared to take on the task of independent scholarly research, and were there any on-campus experiences you had that prepared you for candidacy and the completion of your dissertation?</p> <p>Question 16: In what ways, if any, does the on-campus experience contribute to doctoral persistence from an academic aspect?</p>
21	The amount of constructive feedback you received from your fellow students.	Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.
22	The guidance faculty provided about the dissertation process in this program.	<p>Question 8: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.</p> <p>Question 18: How did you identify and select your chair and committee? What role, if any, did your on-campus experience play in identifying your committee members?</p>
23	The availability of the faculty to discuss academic issues.	Question 8: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.
24	How you found the coursework in your program to be a good fit for you (e.g., there was good	N/A

	alignment with personal interests, application to future job goals, application to real life, or other similar reasons).	
25	The sense of social connectedness between you and your fellow students.	<p>Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.</p> <p>Question 10: In what ways, if any, does the on-campus experience contribute to doctoral persistence from a social aspect?</p> <p>Question 12: Doctoral students and candidates often experience a sense of isolation especially during candidacy. Can you describe any experiences you had as a doctoral student or candidate where you felt isolated and how you were able to overcome that?</p>
26	How the coursework prepared students for the dissertation process.	<p>Question 14: Please describe your transition from the coursework stage of your doctoral degree to the dissertation stage.</p> <p>Question 15: Describe the point in your doctoral journey where you felt prepared to take on the task of independent scholarly research, and were there any on-campus experiences you had that prepared you for candidacy and the completion of your dissertation?</p> <p>Question 16: In what ways, if any, does the on-campus experience contribute to doctoral persistence from an academic aspect?</p>
27	The quality of the curriculum in your program.	<p>Question 14: Please describe your transition from the coursework stage of your doctoral degree to the dissertation stage.</p> <p>Question 15: Describe the point in your doctoral journey where you felt prepared to take on the task of independent scholarly research, and were there any on-campus experiences you had that prepared you for candidacy and the completion of your dissertation?</p>

		Question 16: In what ways, if any, does the on-campus experience contribute to doctoral persistence from an academic aspect?
28	The relevancy of the curriculum to your goals.	<p>Question 14: Please describe your transition from the coursework stage of your doctoral degree to the dissertation stage.</p> <p>Question 15: Describe the point in your doctoral journey where you felt prepared to take on the task of independent scholarly research, and were there any on-campus experiences you had that prepared you for candidacy and the completion of your dissertation?</p> <p>Question 16: In what ways, if any, does the on-campus experience contribute to doctoral persistence from an academic aspect?</p>
29	The opportunities you had to learn from your fellow students.	Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.
30	The frequency of academic-related interactions you had with other students.	Question 7: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with fellow students and developing relationships.
31	How the faculty cared about you as a real person.	Question 8: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.
32	The amount of academic-related contact you had with faculty (consider all synchronous and asynchronous interactions).	Question 8: Please describe your on-campus experience in relation to interacting with faculty members and developing relationships.