RECONCEPTUALIZING GRADUATE SCHOOL PREPARATION: EXAMINING UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARS’ RESPONSES TO A CRITICAL RACE CURRICULUM

By

ARACELI FRIAS

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of ARACELI FRIAS find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Pamela J. Bettis, Ph.D., Chair

____________________________________________________________________

Dawn M. Shinew, Ph.D.

____________________________________________________________________

Paula Groves Price, Ph.D.
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RECONCEPTUALIZING GRADUATE SCHOOL PREPARATION: EXAMINING UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARS’ RESPONSES TO A CRITICAL RACE CURRICULUM

Abstract

by Araceli Frias, Ph.D.
Washington State University
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Chair: Pamela J. Bettis

Scholars estimate that fifty to fifty-seven percent of doctoral students across disciplines do not complete their Ph.D. These rates are troubling given that racial/ethnic minorities and women have been found to be overrepresented in the number of students who leave their doctoral programs. These findings have strong implications for graduate school preparation programs (GSPPs) that are charged with increasing the number of underrepresented students who earn doctoral degrees. Past studies examining the experiences of graduate students of color have found frequent reports of racial/gender microaggressions. The nature of these microaggressions are often intertwined with various facets of academic politics and hostile climates which are related to factors that contribute to doctoral attrition.

In discussions to reform doctoral education and improve the experiences of racial/ethnic minorities, researchers recommend targeting the socialization process and agree on the need to be explicit about academic politics and make the insights and success strategies of graduate students of color accessible. I argue that GSPPs are positioned to initiate these recommendations since their students undergo the process of anticipatory socialization. Moreover, I argue that it is
equally important to create a curriculum that addresses how systemic racism and patriarchy have shaped U.S. graduate education, including for students to comprehend how White supremacist capitalist patriarchal ideology is enacted through doctoral socialization.

The purpose of this study was to develop and pilot a critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation that shares the community cultural wealth of graduate students of color and builds a critical comprehension of academia. To understand how racial/ethnic minorities responded to the curriculum, data was collected from four female undergraduates who were affiliated with a GSPP and volunteered to participate in the study. The findings revealed that a critical race curriculum elicited significant topics that arose for undergraduate scholars during their socialization which have implications for their scholar identity. The four themes that emerged from the data include: fighting for credibility, navigating gender inequality, wrestling with academic socialization and building a critical awareness. I conclude with emphasizing the importance for GSPPs to involve their students in theorizing and creating more equitable institutions.
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Maria Susanna Frias.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Nearly fifty to fifty-seven percent of doctoral students across disciplines do not complete their degree (Nesheim, Guentzel, Gansemeer-Topf, Ross & Turrentine, 2006; Nettles & Millet, 2006; Gopaul, 2011). Racial/ethnic minorities and women have been found to be overrepresented in the number of students who leave their doctoral programs (Lovitts & Nelson, 2000; Council of Graduate Schools, 2004). These findings are deeply troubling because racial/ethnic minorities represent a small population of graduate students. To illustrate, in 2009, Whites made up 62% of fall graduate enrollment\(^1\) compared to African Americans (12%), Hispanics (6%), Asians/Pacific Islanders (7%) and American Indian/Alaska Natives (less than 1%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). An overrepresentation of these groups in rates of doctoral attrition pose serious ramifications for the growth of racial diversity within academia and top leadership positions across professions. The absence and difficulty of capturing national data on doctoral attrition has made it challenging for scholars to fully understand the extent to which racial/ethnic minorities are affected, although one does not have to look far to learn how these students experience dehumanizing and marginalizing graduate program cultures (Watford, Rivas, Burciaga & Solórzano, 2006). The testimonies of doctoral students of color reveal the interplay of social, programmatic and political factors that can exacerbate attrition (Nesheim et al., 2006; Gildersleeve, Croom & Vasquez, 2011).

\(^{1}\) Includes graduate and professional programs.
A number of scholars have examined the experiences of graduate students of color and have found frequent reports of racial and gender microaggressions\(^2\). These include: being portrayed as an affirmative action case; having their merit questioned; being told they do not belong in academia; being subjected to racial/ethnic, sexist or stereotypical jokes; experiencing disapproval of “brown-on-brown” research, facing disapproval of employing alternative epistemologies; being academically exploited; having less access to faculty advisors, faculty networks and co-authored publications; receiving fewer offers for research and teaching assistantships; experiencing peer exclusion and faculty avoidance; being intellectually devalued; being told they lack commitment to their program and career if they (i.e. women of color) become pregnant; experiencing doctoral tracking; and experiencing invisibility in the curriculum (Ellis, 2001; Sulé, 2009; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008; Burciaga, 2007; Gonzalez, 2006; Gonzalez, 2007; Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007; Contreras & Gándara, 2006; Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; Nettes & Millet, 2006; Quijada, 2006; Torres, 2006; Watford et al., 2006; Hughes, 2004; Milner, 2004; Shears, Lewis, & Furman, 2004; Solórzano, 1998; Cheatham & Phelps, 1995; Johnsrud, 1995). A deeper examination of these microaggressions reveals the implicit and explicit operation of White supremacist capitalist patriarchal ideology (hooks, 2000). When this ideology is enacted through the process of doctoral socialization, it serves as a plausible explanation for why racial/ethnic minorities and women find the culture of doctoral education to be dehumanizing. It may even explain why these groups are overrepresented in rates of doctoral attrition.

\(^2\) Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal & Esquilin (2007) describe racial microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 273).

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2
Research on first-generation students who are in doctoral programs also highlights the struggles associated with navigating graduate school. This literature adds a contextual layer to understanding the experiences of a subpopulation of graduate students of color, given that racial/ethnic minorities represent more than half of the first-generation and low-income population (Engle & Tinto, 2008). First-generation students have reported difficulties with the culture of doctoral education. These students draw attention to the detrimental nature of departmental politics, not only for the negative implications they can have for their doctoral experience and academic career but for the distress it can cause when they are unaware how to navigate it (Beal, 2007; Gardner & Holley, 2011; Nesheim et al., 2006). In their interviews with first-generation doctoral students, Gardner and Holley (2011) had two participants who emphasized the importance of knowing the politics of graduate education in order to navigate through them. Another student was explicit that prospective doctoral students needed to be aware that pursuing a Ph.D. would require that they play by the rules of the game.

The issues of doctoral attrition, academic politics and hostile climates have led researchers to advocate for reform in doctoral education, specifically targeting the process of socialization (Austin, 2002; Gonzalez, 2006; Torres, 2006; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Cheatham and Phelps (1995) offered a more specific recommendation that I believe complements the reform of socialization. They called for the development of a curriculum that addresses the experiences of racial/ethnic minority graduate students, especially the strategies that they have used to navigate and adapt to graduate school. While scholars recommend targeting doctoral socialization for reform, I argue that graduate school preparation programs (GSPPs) are positioned to initiate changes more readily within the context of anticipatory socialization. Anticipatory socialization is similar to doctoral socialization in that it involves
students learning the norms, values, traditions and ways of thinking in academia and in one’s discipline. Implied in its name, this stage occurs prior to students’ matriculation into a doctoral program. While Gardner (2010) has defined anticipatory socialization and provided a few examples of the tasks that are included in this stage, I expand upon her list to include all of the activities that take place in a GSPP. In my theoretical framework, I explain how these tasks mimic doctoral socialization because of the dominant discourses that are circulated with regard to research, scholarly conduct and the values of the academy.

Statement of the Problem

Racial/ethnic minority students who intend to pursue a doctoral education are in need of a culturally-relevant graduate school preparation that also builds a critical comprehension of academia if they are to understand how to navigate academia. The norm for GSPPs to utilize a compensatory framework that reproduces liberal dominant ideology (e.g. meritocracy, equal opportunity, colorblindness, etc.), does not encourage an interrogation of discourse and overlooks the existence of the hidden curriculum, and leaves important issues of socialization unaddressed, especially as they pertain to raced, gendered and classed experiences. Scholars who have investigated the experiences of graduate students of color, including those with prior participation in a GSPP, agree on the need for including more race-inclusive graduate perspectives and a discussion of academic politics (Cheatham & Phelps, 1995; Gardner & Holley, 2011; Simpson, 2003; Willison & Gibson, 2011). However, these recommendations, while important and needed, do not build an understanding of the ways that systemic racism and patriarchy have shaped U.S. graduate education. Moreover, these recommendations do not include efforts to work with students in recognizing and naming the White supremacist patriarchal discourses that create the hardships encountered by graduate students of color. A few
scholars (Oakes, Rogers, Lipton & Morrell, 2000; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Romero, Arce, & Cammarota, 2009) have examined college access and retention programs that utilize forms of critical pedagogy but no studies exist on the use of a critical race curriculum in GSPPs, how students respond to its content or the benefits they may perceive from it.

**Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to develop and pilot a critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation and to understand how racial/ethnic minorities responded to the curriculum. I was also interested in learning how racial/ethnic minorities, as undergraduate researchers, made sense of their experiences with anticipatory socialization. The research problem, need and purpose of the study frame the following research questions:

1. In what ways do racial/ethnic minorities respond to a critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation?

2. In what ways can a critical race curriculum enrich understandings of graduate school preparation and anticipatory socialization?

**Significance of the Study**

Lopez (2003) argues that educators who are in a position to prepare tomorrow’s leaders have an ethical responsibility to raise questions about race, racism (e.g. systemic, epistemological) and sexism in the U.S. Honoring this responsibility works to nurture the next generation of scholars who can push toward the creation of more equitable and inclusive institutions (Watford et al., 2006). This study is significant because it disrupts a traditional assimilationist approach to doctoral socialization by reaching out to students during the stage of anticipatory socialization. Introducing a critical race curriculum to students at this stage closes the gap between published community cultural wealth (e.g. the knowledge of racial/ethnic
minorities found in qualitative research) and prospective graduate students of color. Without exposure to such a curriculum at a pivotal stage, racial/ethnic minorities may overlook the deep-seated assumptions of their socialization and unable to recognize the implications of perpetuating dominant norms. Cultivating a critical comprehension of academia attempts to inoculate students of color against legitimating deficit interpretations of their struggles and their dissonance with the cultural values of academia. It is my hope that this curriculum can diminish or lessen the prevalence of impostor syndrome among racial/ethnic minorities (Gardner & Holley, 2001; Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Furthermore, this study is significant because it extends research on the use of critical race theory (CRT), critical race feminism (CRF) and critical race pedagogy within the context of a GSPP. In doing so, this study offers a framework for how to disrupt compensatory approaches to graduate school preparation and identifies topics pertinent to students of color that can be adapted and modified by other programs. Lastly, incorporating a CRT approach to anticipatory socialization is significant because it introduces students to the habit of interrogating and challenging the dominant ideology informing their socialization and positions them to lead the conversation on reimagining doctoral education. If students retain these habits, they are likely to be better equipped to become active agents within their doctoral training.

A Note on Complexity

It is useful to comment on the complexity behind the origins of this dissertation topic, especially for the significance behind bridging two strands of literature into a shared conversation. While I provide an in-depth account of my researcher positionality in my methodology chapter, it is necessary to foreground my experiences as a McNair alumna and doctoral student as the driving factors behind the rationale for this study. These experiences
equipped me with an understanding of how research on two separate but related educational contexts, needed to be synthesized to draw attention to importance of GSPPs to align their services with the relevant literature on doctoral education. As a McNair alumna, I understand that doctoral attrition compromises a key objective of the McNair Scholars Program which can threaten the future funding of these programs. Taken together with my experience as a doctoral student and my exploration of the literature on graduate students of color, I recognize the importance of GSPPs to prepare their students for how to navigate academic politics and negotiate cultural dissonance. Matters that if handled poorly, can increase the risk of attrition and negate the efforts of the GSPP. Later in this dissertation, I cover with detail how a critical race methodology was especially well-suited to the rationale of this study.

**Overview of the Study**

An abundance of emancipatory frameworks and pedagogies exist within the critical tradition. It can be difficult to claim and justify the use of one when these frameworks and pedagogies frequently overlap and are united by a commitment to social justice and the eradication of systemic inequality. The decision to utilize CRT was based on its conceptualization of tenets in the field of education as well as the existence of research on its application to graduate education. Because gender and patriarchy are equally important foci of analyses that can be overlooked in graduate education, it was essential to bring in critical race feminist theory. These frameworks work in a complementary fashion to draw attention to the operation of patriarchy alongside racism and in doing so, represent a more holistic attempt to work toward social justice by acknowledging the importance of eradicating systemic racism and patriarchy.

In this study, I loosely refer to the concept of *critical race pedagogy for graduate school*
preparation, but I do not delineate a rigid definition. At the time of the study, I understood the enactment of CRT’s tenets within educational spaces as doing critical race pedagogy. Critical race scholar David Stovall alludes to this in a presentation and emphasizes that educators who label themselves as social justice advocates must demonstrate a pedagogy that engages students in transforming inequities.

I’m more impressed by what people are actually doing based on what they know. So when we’re talking about transformative teaching, what I’m talking about is this notion of understanding the plight of yourself and your students. And the conscious decisions you make in changing those realities, including your own (Stovall, 2008).

Thus, I refer to the term critical race pedagogy to mean engaging the principles of CRT within the seminar space. Lastly, these frameworks were central to creating a curriculum for graduate school preparation that directed attention to issues of race, class and gender in academia. Moreover, they contained the necessary principles to address the root of systemic inequality which has contributed to the issues addressed in the statement of the problem.

The research design and methodology were informed by the research problem, purpose, and theoretical frameworks. The curriculum was piloted in a semester-long series of weekly seminars. Data was collected from four female students who volunteered to participate in the study and were affiliated with a GSPP. The following qualitative methods were used in this study: semi-structured interviews, seminar meetings, researcher journal, participation on a Facebook Group Page and document analysis.

Outline of the Study

This dissertation is organized around six chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the study, including a statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, and
significance of the study. Chapter Two follows an unconventional approach in addressing the review of the literature. In this chapter, I attempt the task of providing a macro-perspective to the issue of underrepresentation in doctoral education and transition into a deductive process of identifying the need for the study. To accomplish this, I begin with identifying the landscape of factors at work in maintaining underrepresentation (e.g. raced/gendered history of doctoral education, discourses of socialization, the prevalence of microaggressions) and intentionally shift focus to the context of GSPPs. In this shift, I draw attention to how the findings of these two bodies of research overlap, how these sites are interrelated and how GSPPs serve as the appropriate site in which to situate the study. I briefly review the literature on social justice approaches to college access and retention programming and argue that this approach should be modified for the context of GSPP. In this assertion, I am clear that incorporating a social justice approach to graduate school preparation is one step in addressing the root source of underrepresentation in doctoral education.

Chapter Three begins with an overview of CRT as it emerged in the legal field and its guiding tenets. This is followed by a discussion of two approaches to CRT scholarship in education and a discussion of the principles of CRF. In this chapter, I discuss the CRT tenets created by Solórzano and Yosso (2001) as they inform the preliminary curriculum. Moreover, I expand upon the tenets of CRT to intentionally incorporate issues of gender, patriarchy and their intersectionality with race and how it affects students in/outside of academia. Chapter Four describes the critical race methodology, data collection and analysis techniques, and validity criteria. This chapter also contains a statement of my researcher positionality and how I interpret my positionality to have shaped the study. At the end of this chapter, the participant profiles are presented to aid the reader in understanding the findings within the context of each participant’s
social position(s). Chapter Five presents the results of the study organized across four themes. These four themes include: (1) fighting for credibility (2) navigating gender inequality (3) wrestling with academic socialization and (4) building a critical awareness. These findings are discussed across sub-themes and are primarily represented through excerpts of transcript dialogue. The findings revealed that students grappled with a recognition of inequality within academia, of gendered expectations and myths of “equal opportunity” discourses.

Lastly, Chapter Six provides a discussion of the results as they pertain to the research questions and outlines recommendations for theory, practice and policy. These recommendations are made to support future research endeavors on this topic. This chapter also calls for the U.S. Department of Education and educational policymakers to re-evaluate their official stance on the purpose of higher education. With this antecedent in place, I frame my recommendations for policy within efforts that work toward the development of socially-conscious/culturally-competent global citizens committed to creating a stronger democracy, greater quality of life and advancing systemic equality.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Graduate school preparation programs (GSPPs) represent the nation’s largest effort to create a graduate school pathway for historically underserved populations, namely racial/ethnic minorities, first-generation and low-income college students. Yet, it is unknown if the programming offered by GSPPs addresses the challenges and cultural clash that racial/ethnic minority doctoral students encounter while in pursuit of the Ph.D. or if they sufficiently address the factors related to doctoral attrition. This is especially important when some racial/ethnic minorities have described their experience in a doctoral program as making them feel like a casualty of war (Anderson-Thompkins, Gasman, Gerstl-Pepin, Hathaway & Rasheed, 2004), enduring a process of self-dehumanization (Murillo, 2003) or undergoing coursework that is spirit crushing (Shahjahan, 2005). While the literature on GSPPs remains underdeveloped, I argue that it is necessary for GSPPs to explicitly discuss the raced, classed and gendered challenges reported by graduate students of color because many of these programs are charged with serving historically underrepresented populations and because the nature of these racialized and gendered struggles can serve as precursors to doctoral attrition if students are not aware of how to navigate them.

I begin this chapter by providing data on the educational attainment rates of students of color as an indicator for why it is crucial to protect this small population of doctoral students. I proceed with drawing attention to the issue of doctoral attrition, specifically explaining how departmental and cultural practices contribute to attrition. Next, I provide a brief history of doctoral education in the United States and discuss how departments enact discursive practices of socialization. Then I review the research on the experiences of graduate students of color,
highlighting how their particular challenges and experiences of cultural dissonance are attributable to conflicting discourses of socialization. Following this, I provide a review of research on GSPPs, demonstrate the interconnectedness between the challenges encountered by graduate students of color and alumni of GSPPs and emphasize the similarity between the recommendations that scholars have made for practice in both contexts. Finally, I refer to the literature examining the application of critical race theory and forms of critical pedagogy in college access and retention initiatives as a viable approach to implement recommendations for practice that serve future doctoral students.

**Understanding Underrepresentation in Doctoral Education:**

**Disparities in Educational Attainment and Doctoral Attrition**

The severe underrepresentation of racial/ethnic minorities in U.S. graduate education raises a concern for the ability of our social institutions to fulfill the ideals of a democratic society that mirrors our nation’s diversity (Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2005). Without the diversity of perspectives informed by race/ethnicity, gender, class and other socially-situated identities, our nation’s intellectual resources and leadership professions are diminished (Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2005). To understand the present state of educational attainment among racial/ethnic groups and the implications these disparities hold for the representation and retention of racial/ethnic minorities in doctoral education, Figure 1 illustrates the loss that occurs across levels of education (Burciaga, Perez Huber & Solórzano, 2010, p. 423).

Figure 1. Reprinted with permission.
This figure reveals that out of every one hundred students that begin elementary education, nearly ninety percent of Latina/os, Native Americans and African Americans do not earn a college degree, resulting in a drastically small population that possess the most basic qualification to apply for graduate school. With these rates in mind, it becomes apparent that doctoral attrition has disproportional consequences for racial/ethnic minorities. While doctoral attrition has been identified as major issue in graduate education, it is also a significant issue for racial/ethnic minorities and women because they are often found to be overrepresented in attrition rates (Lovitts & Nelson, 2001; Gardner, 2008; 2010).

The highest attrition rates have been found within the humanities and social sciences with up to 67% of doctoral students not completing their program and the lowest rates of 24% have been found in the biomedical and behavioral sciences (Gardner, 2010). Trends of doctoral
degree attainment over twenty years reveal that since 1983, African Americans and Hispanic U.S. citizens largely earn Ph.D.s in the field of education and the social sciences (Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2005, p. 15). These trends have remained partially consistent halfway into the third decade. The Survey of Earned Doctorates reported in 2008 that the two leading fields of doctoral degree attainment for African Americans included education at 37% and social sciences at 17%; among Hispanics, 24% of doctorates were earned in the social sciences followed by life sciences at 23%; among American Indians, 33% of doctorates earned were in education and 24% were earned in the life sciences (National Science Foundation, 2009). With the social sciences being a field associated with high attrition and representing one of the top two fields that African Americans and Hispanics pursue their degrees in, it is useful to have a thorough understanding of the factors associated with attrition that may disproportionally affect an already underrepresented group.

Examining Doctoral Attrition: Institutional Context and Socialization

In order to improve doctoral education, Golde (2005) asserts that it is important to understand the patterns and causes of attrition. This includes looking beyond the limitations of past research that explain doctoral attrition as a result of students’ aptitude and directing attention to the role of institutional factors that drive a students’ decision. These institutional factors include the culture, norms and practices of the program, department, discipline, graduate school or institution (e.g. such as institutional ranking) (Gardner, 2010; Golde, 2005; Council of

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3 This report focused on the thirty year trends of the two largest racial/ethnic minority populations and did not examine similar trends for Native Americans, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders.

4 It is important to note that second field with most degrees awarded was comparable with the life sciences at 16%.

5 Gardner (2010) cited the work of Bowen and Rudenstine (1992) who reported the high attrition rate of 67% within the humanities and social sciences. It is unknown if Bowen and Rudenstine include education under the social science umbrella. If so, then we have a stronger sense of the extent to which racial/ethnic minorities might contemplate attrition.
Graduate Schools, 2009). Equally important, is examining how any combination of these environmental factors can uniquely shape the process of doctoral socialization and students’ resulting perception and response to it (Gardner, 2008). Students’ responses to socialization can affect their performance, satisfaction and their decision to persist or leave their program; thus, it is an appropriate lens to understand the factors that drive attrition (Gardner, 2008; Nettles & Millet, 2006).

In one study, Golde (2005) sought to understand relationships between the structure and culture of the academic department and its role in doctoral attrition. She examined four departments (biology, geology, history and English) at a highly ranked Research I University in the Midwest⁶ and found that students who did not complete their programs reported that they had different goals and expectations than those upheld by their department and discipline. For doctoral students across the disciplines of biology, geology, history and English, the practice of research within their respective disciplines was not found to be as meaningful as they anticipated and required particular skills that did not reflect their strengths. This included an inability to enjoy the solitary nature of research in history, the lack of persistence required to endure repeated failures of experiments in biology as well as the personal acceptance of the slow nature of making scientific discoveries, the lack of interest in publishing research in geology that would limit accessibility solely to the academic community and a dissatisfaction with the lack of making a tangible contribution to larger society through geology research. In this instance, the solitary nature of research in history and the lack of emphasis on making contributions to society are norms that can be remedied through a program or department’s commitment to transforming

⁶ These departments were ranked in the top 10 by the National Research Council.
Aside from differences in student expectations, Golde (2005) also identified how norms and practices unique to the department can facilitate attrition, for instance, the manner in which a department addresses students who come to their doctoral program without the academic breadth needed to succeed. Golde found that students were expected to get up to speed with the needed coursework on their own, received no guidance on how to make this work and did not always have the flexibility within the program to address their shortcomings. Sulé (2009) noted a similar finding reported by a female African American doctoral student within a science and engineering field. Gardner (2008) also noted poor practices that could exacerbate attrition; in one chemistry department at a Land-Grant University a female faculty adviser expected her female advisee, who was also a mother, to work forty to fifty hours beyond her assistantship responsibilities. This doctoral student emphasized how this unrealistic expectation led her to question whether she wanted to complete her Ph.D. In these instances and in past research, students reported feeling unsure with how to navigate the expectations of their doctoral program which can threaten the retention of these students (Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Golde & Dore, 2001; Nyquist & Woodford, 2000).

The relationship between the doctoral student and their adviser has been identified as “the single most critical factor” in academic persistence and attrition (Nettles & Millet, 2006, p. 95). Golde’s (2005) findings reinforce this idea such that her participants from the field of biology and geology reported that their poor advising relationships characterized by infrequent contact, lack of trustworthiness and intellectual support factored into their attrition. These students reported that the behaviors of their adviser continuously broke down their self-esteem and confidence. Golde’s participants explained that the decision to leave their doctoral programs was
the better choice to the alternative of switching advisers because of the politics that have affected past students at Midwestern University who made this choice.

Another factor that was found to influence doctoral attrition in Golde’s (2005) study was the department’s expectations regarding career choice. Faculty across departments at Midwestern University constructed a departmental culture that conveyed an expectation that their students must become faculty at Research I institutions. This expectation led some students to leave because they did not “fit in” with these expectations. The participants in Golde’s (2005) study as well as other studies have reported that there is an absence or lack of discussion on career options outside of Research I institutions and academia (Golde & Dore, 2001; Nyquist & Woodford, 2000). Faculty were considered to be unaware, uninformed and unsupportive of any other option (Golde, 2005). Golde suggests that the attrition of these students could have been prevented had the program, department or faculty exposed their students to a broader range of career opportunities for Ph.D.s that could utilize their interests and strengths. Golde concludes that the departmental structure and culture interact with students’ expectations and interests and are important factors in doctoral attrition.

It is necessary to always consider the role of institutional factors and how they can shape experiences in doctoral education, including those that exacerbate attrition. With a working understanding of these factors, it is now important to highlight how these factors are situated within dominant raced and gendered norms, traditions and academic culture of a given historical period that do not resonate with the diversity of today’s graduate student population.

**Doctoral Education in the United States**

*The Raced and Gendered History of Doctoral Education*

Since its inception during the mid to late 1800s, the development of research programs
and advanced graduate study in the U.S. has been modeled after German universities, from the conferral of the first Ph.D. at Yale University to the formation of Johns Hopkins University (Nettles & Millet, 2006; Geiger, 1997). As graduate study continued to expand in the 1880s, the German influence spread across American universities (Geiger, 1997). Returning American scholars who earned their advanced education abroad spent their careers refining American institutions to align with the values and ideals of German education. These values included engagement in research as the most respected role in the university and a disdain for responsibilities that took time away from research such as teaching introductory courses to undergraduates (Geiger, 1997).

The focus on research led to early stages of stratification and hierarchy in academia, where autocratic department heads, like those of their German mentors, delegated the undesirable responsibilities, such as the teaching of introductory courses, to assistant professors (Geiger, 1997). University administrators at Cornell, Chicago, Wisconsin, California, Indiana, Ohio State, Princeton and Harvard developed an unspoken culture where “teaching men” and “research men” held different roles (Geiger, 1997, p. 277). By 1915, the steady growth of student enrollment at eleven of the largest research universities⁷ led to greater funding revenue and the expansion of faculty. This period also marked a shift in the culture of academic departments to a more “collegial, American model” (Geiger, 1997, p. 278). During this period, attitudes within the university shifted where any full professor had an opportunity to serve as department head and junior faculty were encouraged to strive for the rank of full professor (Geiger, 1997).

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⁷ Chicago, Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, Penn, Yale, California, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin
What is ignored and underemphasized in the liberal dominant discourse describing the academy as objective, colorblind and gender-neutral is that during the historical time period of its development, racial and gender discrimination and segregation excluded the participation and representation of racial/ethnic minorities and women in the nation’s leading research universities. The social construction of academic hierarchies, the value of research over teaching, the segregation of women into separate colleges and the reliance on philanthropic gifts to support research represent markers of a classist Eurocentric patriarchal model of university life. Many longstanding traditions of doctoral education, socialization and faculty governance of academe are not inclusive or representative of the interests of today’s diverse population but rather living representations of German patriarchal values.

Scheurich and Young (1997) speak at length of the implications of academe’s White supremacist patriarchal history and its role in shaping institutional and epistemological racism. This type of institutional and epistemological racism are prevalent within the high-stakes testing industry that has contributed to racial stratification in K-12 and postsecondary education (Oakes, Rogers, Lipton & Morrell, 2000). Similarly, Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2002) explain how these forms of racism not only maintain an apartheid of knowledge in academia but also reproduce racial and gender stratification among faculty in institutions of higher education (Wilson, 2004). This stratification also holds consequences for the retention of students of color and their sense of belonging at the university. Because stratification results in less racial diversity within the tenured faculty body, senior administrative positons and influential trustee positions, it is more likely that these groups will fail to understand and prioritize the needs, interests and history of students of color when shaping university policies that influence the campus culture (Feagin, 2010). When the governance and norms of academia are not able to
meet the needs or account for the unique circumstances of diverse students, Gardner (2008) states that racial/ethnic minorities and women are more likely to be dissatisfied with their graduate experience.

Conflicting Views about Doctoral Education across Three Discourses of Socialization

In their interviews with stakeholders of doctoral education Nyquist and Woodford (2000) identified three major discourses of socialization that shape the culture of a doctoral program or department. They include beliefs regarding the purpose of a Ph.D., beliefs on acceptable standards for doctoral enrollment and beliefs regarding the best models of doctoral training/funding practices. The traditional attitudes associated with these facets of socialization maintain that the purpose of the Ph.D. is to prepare students as future researchers, that graduate enrollment standards need to be very selective and that the apprenticeship model for doctoral training is best. In contrast, the more progressive and inclusive attitudes maintain the belief that doctoral students should be prepared for a variety of career options, that Ph.D. programs should admit all qualified applicants and that other types of mentoring aside from the apprenticeship model are needed (Nyquist & Woodford, 2000).

Knowing these discourses and their influence on shaping the culture of a doctoral program is useful for identifying the underlying points of contention between doctoral students and faculty. In fact, I argue that these points of contention, or competing discourses, serve as the ideological motive behind acts of racial and gender microaggressions. Students come to know

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8 These employers include research intensive universities, comprehensive and doctoral universities, liberal arts and community colleges, business and industry, foundations, government, disciplinary and educational associations, K-12 education, and accrediting agencies.
9 Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal & Esquilin (2007) describe racial microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 273).
the dominant discourse during their socialization into their discipline and institutional context (Gardner, 2010). While some scholars discuss socialization as occurring in various stages (see Gardner, 2010), it can generally be understood as a process that begins once a student enters their doctoral program and extends all the way through to the completion of their degree. Doctoral socialization is a dialectical process and operates across contexts such as faculty mentoring and advising, in the practice of research, in teaching and in the performance of university service (Gardner, 2010). It is a process where students become aware of, adopt, challenge or resist the norms, attitudes, beliefs, values, traditions, skills, knowledge, disposition, modes of thought, habits, and expectations associated with their field and membership in academia (Gardner, 2010; Gonzalez, 2006; Nettles & Millet, 2006; Austin, 2002; Tierney, 1997). This process is met with ongoing reflection where students begin to formulate their own meaning about graduate education and the professoriate, discover and refine their research interests, assess the extent to which their personal values and passion are agreeable with their field and cultivate their specialized niche (Austin, 2002). Thus, through the process of socialization, students learn the discursive practices of being a scholar.

I argue that faculty who uphold the conservative (i.e. traditional) attitudes of the aforementioned facets of socialization, reinforce White supremacist patriarchy since these traditional views originated from the patriarchal German tradition. Furthermore, the historical context of race/sex discrimination and segregation in the U.S. made it possible for these views to become normalized. The conservative views on these aspects of socialization are visible within the struggles encountered by graduate students of color. These include: a belief that research is superior to teaching and a professional life in academia is superior to professions outside of academia; support for selective enrollment standards while overlooking the impact of race, class
and gender inequalities that exist in the K-12 and postsecondary education system; and a legitimization of the apprenticeship model where students are expected to concede to their advisor regarding appropriate research topics, theoretical frameworks, methodologies and career choice. A Latina faculty member captures the irony behind academic socialization “But to me the irony of any graduate program is that we teach students to teach and learn, but faculty are not critical of their own teaching and learning” (Gonzalez, 2007, p. 295). Her observation is important because it points to the existence of absolved responsibility from interrogating the historical and sociopolitical factors behind conservative views on socialization. In this manner, traditional attitudes toward socialization serve as “stock explanations” for faculty to justify and maintain White supremacist patriarchy in academia (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

The findings of Gildersleeve, Croom and Vasquez (2011) support this notion such that in their interviews with doctoral students of color, faculty who maintained rigid expectations for their students to follow White academic norms were perceived as stifling their own scholarly creativity and growth. These racialized aggressions were intertwined with the socialization process and forced students to endure periods of dehumanization (Gildersleeve, Croom & Vasquez, 2011). Faculty who enact and legitimate a conservative discourse of doctoral socialization also obstruct opportunities for racial/ethnic minorities to transform the culture of research in their field and/or the culture of academia. Ultimately, the dissemination and legitimization of particular discourses on socialization are vital to examine alongside the narratives and testimonies of racial/ethnic minorities to identify points of contention that may exacerbate attrition. Similarly, identifying these points of contention also advance our understanding of the ideological underpinnings that fuel racial and gender microaggressions that surface in academia.
A Review of Racial/Ethnic Minority Experiences in Doctoral Education

Now that I have discussed the raced and gendered history of graduate education and how this history is interwoven into discursive practices of socialization, I proceed with a review of literature on the experiences racial/ethnic minorities in doctoral education. In this review, I situate the experiences of graduate students of color within the three previously mentioned discourses of socialization to illuminate how these ideologies can exacerbate feelings of not belonging, lack of support and create a hostile culture that supports doctoral attrition (Gonzalez, 2006). It should be noted that this review does not capture the experiences of all racial/ethnic groups equally, especially as it relates to their experiences across disciplinary fields.¹⁰

Conflicting Views on the Purpose of a Ph.D.

A number of studies have documented that students of color desire to use graduate education for the purpose of serving their community, family or society (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Reyes & Rios, 2005; Ramirez, 2006; Gasman, Hirschfeld & Vultaggio, 2008; Gonzalez, 2006; Gonzalez, 2007; Luna & Prieto, 2009; Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007; Villalpando, 1996 as cited in Delgado Bernal, 2002; Wing, 2003). However, many times, the graduate socialization process implicitly expects people of color to assimilate and perform a White masculine scholar identity (Balderrama, Texeira & Valdez, 2006; Gonzalez, 2006). Gonzalez (2006) found that advanced Latina doctoral students responded to this expectation with resistance, with some approaches

¹⁰ Much of qualitative inquiry into the doctoral experiences of racial/ethnic minorities are conducted by scholars of color in fields that support qualitative research. It is suspected that the reason for fewer narratives or testimonies of racial/ethnic minority doctoral students in STEM fields is due to their lower representation in these fields and because STEM scholars of color are less likely to publish qualitative inquiry into their experiences as a scholar.
more successful than others\textsuperscript{11}. Those methods that were unsuccessful, contributed to increased isolation, marginalization and disillusion with the academy which can create conditions ripe for attrition.

Doctoral students’ race, class and gender intersect to affect perceptions of what it means to be researcher and how one is supposed to perform the identity of a researcher (Tooms & English, 2010). Within the traditional doctoral seminar space, the process of becoming a researcher through exposure to theory and engaging in a discussion of the literature is not always satisfying to students of color who come to their doctoral programs with an urgent desire to use their education in ways that can be benefit their community. For instance, in a class discussion of socioeconomic and racial inequality, doctoral students of color felt disdain towards the norms of seminar discussion that limited discussion to a theoretical analysis which their White peers considered to be “fun and recreational” while they were left with an unmet desire to make purposeful use out of analysis to accomplish social change (Gonzalez et al., 2002, p. 552).

As a space of socialization, the context of the seminar space as it is facilitated by a professor, implicitly conveys the norms, attitudes and modes of thought associated with academic life. While there is an emphasis on the purpose of the Ph.D. to train students to become researchers, scholars of color have critiqued traditional dominant practices regarding the process of theorizing (Martinez, 2000; Quijada, 2006; Stovall, 2013; Wing, 2003). Martinez (2000) and Wing (2003) offer an explanation for why doctoral students of color can be dissatisfied with seminar discussions. They explain that the process of theorizing “can be

\textsuperscript{11}Gonzalez (2006) explains that those methods that were deemed unsuccessful were because they contributed to further isolation and marginalization. Methods that were deemed successful were attributed to becoming integrated with scholars who supported their resistance.
detached from our fleshy rootedness in the world” (Martinez, 2000, p. 27) which does not resonate with students who are empathetic to the suffering of their own communities and families and desire to develop solutions (Wing, 2000). Martinez critiques how abstract theorizing can too often dominate academic discussions that are experienced differently across race, class and gender “Theorizing for the sake of theorizing can itself be a strategy of evasion, delusion, and willful ignorance” (Martinez, 2000, p. 27). Quijada (2006) voiced a similar idea in his reflections of his doctoral experience. The use and proliferation of academic jargon and the direction of theoretical discussions led him to perceive of the seminar space as people “arguing over seemingly meaningless problems, at the same time real people were struggling with real problems” (Quijada, 2006, p. 257). The perspectives of Martinez (2000), Wing (2003) and Quijada (2006) share similarities with Stovall’s (2013) recommendation for scholars committed to social justice to be less consumed by “abstract theorizing” and connect theory with work with communities in need (p. 290). These interests point to a discourse of socialization that some students of color bring to the academy, that is the purpose of a Ph.D. is to train researchers to bridge scholarship with activism.

Similarly, doctoral students of color have also expressed disappointment with the lack of interdisciplinary perspectives, a Eurocentric curriculum and an overemphasis on theories utilizing deficit discourse models to explain the experiences of communities of color (Sulé, 2009; Burciaga, 2007; Gonzalez, 2006; Quijada, 2006). In these instances, students reported that if they had not challenged the discussion material, these issues would remain unaddressed. As previously mentioned in reference to Golde's (2005) study, doctoral students have expressed the importance of research and scholarly dialogue to be personally meaningful. The absence of this type of fulfillment is one factor that has been associated with attrition.
Conflicting Views on Standards of Graduate Enrollment

The significance of hostile campus climates may be overlooked for the implications it has for doctoral students of color. Hostile climates have been found to contribute to feelings of not belonging and compromise the retention of racial/ethnic minorities (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella & Hagedorn, 1999). One dimension of hostile climates can be created by discursive practices maintaining that graduate enrollment standards need to be more selective and the number of doctoral recipients needs to be decreased (Nyquist & Woodford, 2000). In several instances, these discursive practices represent racial microaggressions that are encountered by students of color in graduate education. Attitudes regarding enrollment standards have been encountered by graduate diversity officers across departments at various comprehensive doctoral institutions in the U.S. (Griffin & Muniz, 2011). The testimonies of graduate diversity officers reveal some of the attitudes faculty have regarding the recruitment of diverse populations. These include a stigma against students from minority-serving institutions and assumptions that they are less qualified, unable to meet the academic standards of doctoral programs and if admitted, would signal diminished academic standards (Griffin & Muniz, 2011; Sulé, 2009). A female African American doctoral student (Amerie) from an HBCU was explicitly told in her first year by a professor that “you don’t belong here. You’re not prepared to do the work” (Sulé, 2009, p. 121).

These attitudes are not only expressed by faculty but are also enacted by other White graduate students, adding to the hostile climate (Sulé, 2009). Amerie explains how her statistics professor explicitly told the students of color in front of the whole class that they would not receive special treatment. She suspected that the professor set the tone that demeaning doctoral students of color was acceptable behavior because the TA of the course engaged in similar
behavior, telling other students that the students of color were affirmative action admits (Sulé, 2009). Latina doctoral students who held teaching assistantships even noted that White undergraduate students questioned their credibility, disregarded their contributions and assessments as a teaching assistant and bypassed them for the White professor (Gildersleeve, Croom & Vasquez, 2011; Gonzalez, 2006). In Sulé’s study, we can see how proponents of the conservative view on standards of graduate enrollment can draw upon a discourse of affirmative action as a threat to liberal discourses of meritocracy and individualism rather than a socially just policy to remedy centuries of structural racism (Chapman, 2013; Horsford & Grosland, 2013).

White graduate students can also act on their beliefs in more covert ways such as competitiveness or exclusion. For nearly thirty years, African American students have reported being excluded by their White peers in the formation of study groups or social relationships in general (Allen, 1982; Hughes, 2004; Sulé, 2009). Allen (1982) found that 51% of African Americans felt that their White peers avoided social interaction with them and 34% indicated that this happened often (as cited in Shears, Lewis, & Furman, 2004). Unfortunately, this issue persists today with African Americans reporting being intentionally left out of invitations to peer study groups even when their peers were aware of their struggle in a course (Hughes, 2004; Sulé, 2009). It comes as little surprise that racial/ethnic minority doctoral students who experience hostile environments report that they feel they must work twice as hard to prove themselves and to eliminate any suspicions that they benefited solely from affirmative action (Sulé, 2009; Gasman, Hirschfeld, & Vultaggio, 2008; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008; Boylorn, 2006; Gonzalez, 2006; Hughes, 2004; Pruitt & Isaac, 1985).

Aside from attitudes on graduate enrollment standards, faculty can also act on their belief that the number of PhDs need to be decreased. While different from the way Burciaga (2007)
conceptualized the term, doctoral tracking\textsuperscript{12} is prevalent in academia and operates similar to the assumptions made by those who track students of color away from the college trajectory. Instead, doctoral tracking can function to deter students of color from completing a Ph.D. Hughes (2004) describes a racial microaggression committed by a faculty person who acted on a racialized stereotype and encouraged a female African American doctoral student to pursue a second master’s degree in a physical education program rather than continue in education administration. This situation represents how racial microaggressions can be a cultural issue occurring within the department and can promote senseless attrition among a severely underrepresented population. Faculty who commit gendered microaggressions can do so in a way that reflects a belief that the number of PhDs should be decreased. A female economist at a prominent research university reported to the \textit{Chronicle of Higher Education} that women can encounter differential treatment and lower expectations from male advisers, such that it is not uncommon for male faculty to invest less time with their female advisees on their dissertations and be less likely to promote their female advisees for faculty positions at top research institutions (Wilson, 2004). In both of these situations, departmental practices create a culture of doctoral tracking which can facilitate conditions that are difficult to navigate and tax the resilience of marginalized doctoral students. Depending on the resources available and critical resistant navigational skills of the doctoral students in these conditions, the situation itself is prime for pushing students out or tracking them away from coveted opportunities.

\textit{Conflicting Views on Models of Doctoral Training}

\textsuperscript{12} Burciaga uses this term to explain the views and subsequent professional development opportunities extended from faculty that align with their perceptions of which students will earn positions in research institutions vs. community colleges.
Past research found that many doctoral students of color pursue a Ph.D. to benefit their community. In Gonzalez et al. (2002) study, we learned that this purpose also informs expectations for their doctoral training. The traditional view that the apprenticeship model is best for doctoral training may not fit the needs of doctoral students of color if faculty do not hold the research specialization related to the student’s interests or if faculty are unwilling to support the topic even when they could offer guidance on developing a sound research design and a strong scholarly argument. During the stage of doctoral coursework, one Latina faculty member reflected on her doctoral experience and explained that a faculty member preferred that she not use Chicano theory because he was not familiar with it, preferring that she switch her topic (Gonzalez, 2007). For this Latina and other doctoral students of color who find themselves in similar situations, a professor’s lack of flexibility to branch out beyond their own epistemological beliefs clashes with the doctoral training needs of diverse students.

Embracing the apprenticeship model of doctoral training can lead to problems during the dissertation stage, especially if faculty’s political beliefs clash with an advisee’s dissertation topic. One Latina described her dissertation advisor as anti-bilingual education and encountered several instances in which their advising relationship was compromised by his upper-class White male privilege (Gonzalez, 2007). She explained that he did not agree with the positive findings of past research or the findings of her study that supported past research, often made offensive remarks, did not offer constructive criticism and did not offer supportive guidance. This experience led her to recognize how the actions of unsupportive dissertation advisers can threaten the ability of Latinas to complete their Ph.D. (Gonzalez, 2007). Similarly, a male African American doctoral student who did not fit his scholarship interests within the norm of the program described his adviser as disengaged from learning about him or the role that race
and gender played in his research agenda (Gildersleeve, Croom & Vasquez, 2011). Faculty who endorse the apprenticeship model may be also likely to exhibit attitudes of Whiteness and patriarchy such that they implicitly position their perspectives as the dominant authority on topics of scholarship that are important to academe. Sulé (2009) presents a testimony given by a female African American doctoral student who was blatantly told by her male adviser that her interests in examining issues of race and gender in organizations would not be of interest to scholars. She also revealed that she was cautioned by others against looking at issues of race and gender (Sulé, 2009). A number of Latina/o, African American and Asian American doctoral students have expressed similar concerns regarding faculty disapproval over the pursuit of race-related research, where it was conveyed that it was not “true scholarship” or that it “lacked prestige” within academia and would hinder their future career opportunities (Gildersleeve, Croom & Vasquez, 2011; Gonzalez et al., 2002; Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; Watford et al., 2006; Poon & Hune, 2009). Without understanding how to navigate these situations, Latina/o doctoral students report feeling pressured to acquiesce to the expectations of their faculty advisor (Torres, 2006; Gonzalez, 2006).

Once more, the discourses of doctoral training models include beliefs about graduate funding such that those with conservative views believe that current funding practices are sufficient while others believe that funding practices must change (Nyquist & Woodford, 2000; Patel, 2014). Conservative views are also entrenched in the raced and gendered history of doctoral education given that past funding practices have been sufficient for the White, male, middle-class, oftentimes single and childless graduate student population who likely did not need to seek out additional means to support themselves (Brus, 2006; Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007). Moreover, this population was and likely still is able to benefit from the gendered division of
labor or the labor of domestic workers as it relates to responsibilities of the home and family (Brus, 2006; Dua, 2005).

The growing diversity of doctoral students includes women, students of color, especially those from first-generation and low-income backgrounds. Graduate stipends are not always sufficient for these populations as some have turned to credit cards (Patel, 2014), additional employment (Burciaga, 2007; Gardner & Holley, 2011) and more debt (Council of Graduate Schools, 2012) because their funding was not sufficient to meet their financial needs or responsibilities. Faculty who hold the belief that funding practices are sufficient may respond negatively to students who seek outside employment. For instance, Burciaga (2007) found that Latina doctoral students who sought out additional employment to make ends meet, were met with criticism from faculty advisers where they were intellectually demeaned and framed as having a lack of commitment to finish their degree. Brus (2006) explains how a vicious cycle can unfold from faculty assumptions. Once a doctoral student is perceived as unable to fulfill the desired expectations, they are believed to lack commitment which can lead faculty to have lower expectations of the student. These lower expectations can result in a decreased investment of faculty time, resources and opportunities. Ultimately, Brus (2006) argues that these assumptions exacerbate the isolation and marginalization of students which do not bode well for retention or becoming competitive for the job market.

Graduate funding practices not only encompass assumptions that the amount is sufficient to dedicate one’s time fully to doctoral study but also extend to beliefs regarding which students are suited to hold teaching or research assistantships. Brus’ (2006) assertion that faculty can engage in a faulty line of thinking that exacerbates attrition is apparent in the narrative of Guillion (2008). As a pregnant doctoral candidate in her last year, Guillion received notice from
her department chair that she would not be awarded a teaching assistantship for the spring semester because her departure to give birth would be “too disruptive” (Guillion, 2008, p. 16). The gendered assumptions of this department chair, who was also Guillion’s dissertation chair, that she would not be able to meet her teaching responsibilities after giving birth because she would assume the full-time parenting role illustrates how sexist discrimination can operate within a department to unfairly penalize women. While it is speculative to claim that male doctoral students expecting a child are not subjected to the same discriminatory behavior, scholarship on issues related to motherhood and academia have become increasingly visible (Berry & Mizelle, 2006; Castellanos, Gloria & Kamimura, 2006; Correll, Benard & Paik, 2007; Evans & Grant, 2008).

In this review, I have presented a select number of challenges, which are not comprehensive, that racial/ethnic minorities encounter in doctoral education that pose a threat to their academic persistence and retention if they are not equipped with the critical resistant navigational skills to address them. The nature of these challenges and their implications for doctoral attainment should be of concern to GSPPs. The findings from this review of literature should prompt GSPPs to reflect on the following questions: what messages are being conveyed to racial/ethnic minorities regarding why they should consider pursuing a Ph.D.? How have we prepared students to recognize and navigate raced and gendered discourses that conflict with their purpose of pursuing a Ph.D. or the development of their research agenda? How are we preparing our students to navigate racially hostile spaces or a hostile program culture, especially when politics are involved? How are we preparing our students to recognize their agency as a vital constituent of academe and how are we encouraging them to transform traditional practices of how and whose knowledge is discussed, constructed and applied within
the seminar space, including how knowledge is used to serve the broader community? While these are only a few questions among many others, it is essential for GSPPs to recognize that racial/ethnic minorities will need a strong rationale to commit to the Ph.D. in light of existing racial and gender microaggressions.

Recommendations for Doctoral Reform

Scholars who have studied the experiences of graduate students of color offer a number of recommendations to improve doctoral education. Milner (2004) calls for efforts to “mak[e] the implicit explicit” so that students are able to understand and navigate the politics of academia (p. 26). This suggestion works well with Torres’ (2006) recommendation that doctoral reform efforts should target the socialization process. For instance, heightened attention and discussion of the politics in academe can feasibly be incorporated into an earlier stage of socialization and can be contextualized through an inclusive curriculum that centers the knowledge of racial/ethnic minority graduate students, especially the navigational strategies they have used to adjust to graduate school (Cheatham & Phelps, 1995). Such a curriculum would largely benefit from the use of narratives and/or testimonies because of the thought-provoking insights that come with personal reflection and analysis (Reyes & Rios, 2005).

While scholars recommend targeting doctoral socialization for reform, I argue that GSPPs are positioned to initiate changes more readily within the context of anticipatory socialization. Nurturing a positive and critical anticipatory socialization with undergraduates can better equip these students with the foresight and confidence to negotiate discourses of graduate education and to remind students to engage in dialogue or reflection that calls upon a critical imaginary to transform academia. To better understand how GSPPs are well suited to aid recommendations for doctoral reform, an introduction and review of relevant research is
warranted to further illustrate that these needs are shared.

**Graduate School Preparation Programs**

**A Brief Introduction**

Graduate school preparation programs first surfaced around the U.S. in the mid-1980s. Among the most widely known include TRIO’s Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program (McNair Scholars Program), the Committee on Institutional Cooperation’s Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP), the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowships (MMUF), the National Science Foundation’s Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) and the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation Program (LSAMP). While these are just a few GSPPs, the past twenty-five years has resulted in a proliferation of similar initiatives that are either institutionally-led or are housed within a department with a field-specific emphasis. The hallmark of a GSPP is the opportunity to conduct undergraduate research with a faculty mentor and to gain in depth information on the graduate application process via mentoring and/or through specialized workshops. Even with a number of GSPPs across the country, no two programs are like. These programs vary with regard to their programmatic design, disciplinary emphasis, fiscal budget and mission.

There are two major distinctions among GSPPs, those that provide comprehensive services for graduate school preparation and those that mainly emphasize opportunities for undergraduate research. Among the most typical services offered by comprehensive GSPPs are: a paid summer research opportunity, seminars/workshops on the graduate school application process and graduate school culture, preparation for the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), information about graduate funding, and funds to present one’s research at an academic...
conference. It is expected that these services will equip students with the necessary information and skills they need to effectively transition into the graduate environment (Crawford et al., 1996; Nnadozie et al., 2000; Simpson, 2003). Most of the aforementioned GSPPs are unified by the goal to increase the number of first-generation, low-income and underrepresented students who earn doctoral degrees. Other GSPPs like REUs and LSAMP are focused on increasing the number of these students who earn graduate degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.

An Overview of Existing Research

Studies on undergraduate research programs and GSPPs have grown recently, mostly through dissertations. Unfortunately, most of this inquiry has been limited to the use of questionnaire data, and the few qualitative studies that exist have captured student perspectives at a singular point in time. Past studies have documented the outcomes of undergraduate research (Crowe & Brakke, 2008); student ratings of mentoring satisfaction (Grimmett, Bliss, Davis & Ray, 1998); ratings of overall satisfaction with program services (Greene, 2007); and ratings of academic, research and social self-efficacy pre- and post-McNair research experience (Williams, 2004). One of the few dissertations utilizing a qualitative approach did incorporate interviews with McNair Scholars although the focus of the study was on a topic unrelated to the services of the program (Olive, 2009). Another qualitative study examined how involvement in a GSPP informed Latina/o students’ attitudes toward graduate education (Luna & Prieto, 2009). Within the Intellectual Entrepreneurship Pre-Graduate School Internship program, students received mentoring on how their research interests could be used to serve their community, in depth information about the culture of academia and tailored guidance on how to select graduate programs that would support and nurture their cultural interests. While it was beyond the scope
of their study to examine how students responded to the variety of culturally-relevant mentoring and services, Luna and Prieto’s (2009) reference that this GSPP provided these distinct services is worth noting for its innovative approach in serving the interests of a racial/ethnic minority group.

Among existing research, only three studies examine GSPP alumni perspectives, two of which, are dissertations. I focus on these studies for their emphasis on exploring GSPP alumni perspectives of their graduate school preparation in relation to their standing as a graduate student. Simpson (2003) utilized a comparative research design to examine differences in the academic\(^{13}\) and social\(^{14}\) experiences of racial/ethnic minority graduate students, with and without prior participation in a GSPP. She also examined where there were differences in student responses based on the type of GSPP the respondents had participated in. She examined students who had participated in a comprehensive GSPP and an undergraduate research-only GSPP. Across her three groups of interest, Simpson concluded that involvement in a GSPP did not result in any significant differences in the quality of academic and social experiences at the graduate level between GSPP and non-GSPP participants; however, she did find that responses differed based on the type of GSPP students had participated in. For example, students who had been involved in a comprehensive GSPP reported more positive academic experiences and stronger psychological well-being (e.g. confidence and sense of self) after the start of their graduate program than those who had participated in an undergraduate research-only experience.

\(^{13}\) According to the Minority Graduate Student Experiences Scale, the Academic Experiences section consists of four subscales: academic performance, faculty concern for teaching, academic relationships with faculty, and sense of community (Simpson, 2003, p. 31).

\(^{14}\) The Social Experiences section contains four subscales: psychological well-being, isolation, faculty interactions outside of class and socialization (Simpson, 2003, p. 32).
Two interesting findings from this study revealed that students felt dissatisfaction with the lack of faculty interactions\textsuperscript{15} outside of the classroom and overall had reports of lower satisfaction with graduate social experiences than academic experiences. Simpson (2003) concluded with a recommendation that GSPPs should strengthen their approach in preparing students for social acculturation into graduate school by discussing the academic and social hardships that racial/ethnic minority graduate students encounter and argued that these topics should be incorporated into programming to cultivate navigational strategies.

An ethnographic dissertation focused specifically on one McNair Scholars Program at a public research university in the Rocky Mountain region. Of interest was how Beal (2007) described the program’s innovative curricular and pedagogical approaches. She explains that this program made an intentional effort to disrupt the social reproduction of a White Western scholar identity through an emphasis on a student-driven researcher identity, although the details regarding how this disruption occurred are unknown. One dimension of this program’s services included a semester-long seminar titled Diversity in Graduate Education which addressed institutional racism; more specifically, the role of power in creating exclusionary practices that restrict the number of faculty of color, including the various obstacles that racial/ethnic minorities and other subordinated groups encounter in academia. One facet of Beal’s (2007) ethnography included interviews with alumni in an effort to determine how useful the skills gained from the McNair Program served its students in their graduate experience. A testimony

\textsuperscript{15} This is a subscale within the Social Experiences section and measures faculty concern about professional development, satisfaction with quality of faculty interactions out of class, number of informal interactions with faculty, availability of opportunities to engage with faculty in activities outside of class, including non-academic activities.
from a first-generation and low-income McNair alumnus raised an important observation regarding the difficulties of navigating graduate school that he was not prepared for. He states I have seen the people who know, these other students who surround me who were of dual Ph.D. parents, all right...Who know not to do that [take a stance counter to a professor’s in public dialogue] but I didn’t know...These are the things you don’t do, right? And they are very subtle and there are many, many of them. So this is one of those codes. ...It’s like the politics that I didn’t get. This was not part of my socialization. So I’m constantly wondering when I’m going to step on the mine, right? I tiptoe around this department (Beal, 2007, p. 440).

This finding illustrates that some of the same recommendations for doctoral education are also pertinent to improving practices of graduate school preparation. Namely, Milner’s recommendation that the implicit (e.g. politics) must be made explicit, which I argue, would be appropriate to incorporate into the anticipatory socialization efforts of GSPPs. Other first-generation doctoral students have commented on the importance of knowing the “rules of the game” in order to successfully navigate academia (Gardner & Holley, 2011, p. 84). In this manner, it can be said that learning the politics of academia is an important component of making the “rules of the game” explicit. The significance of mentoring students on how to negotiate departmental politics cannot be understated such that this practice has been associated with positive doctoral experiences (López, 2011).

Another study on the McNair Scholars Program at a mid-size northwestern university extends the findings of Beal’s (2007) study and examined the learning curves that helped or hindered the persistence of McNair alumni in graduate school (Willison & Gibson, 2011). Willison and Gibson (2011) defined learning curves as “graduate school situations, experiences,
and/or issues for which [they] weren’t prepared” (p. 157). Among their findings was that social acceptance and acculturation into one’s graduate program were issues that McNair alumni did not feel prepared for, especially as it pertained to addressing racism and/or prejudice within the academic and larger community (Willison & Gibson, 2011). Willison and Gibson (2011) concluded that McNair Scholars could benefit from learning of these stressors and the ways that graduate students have pushed through them.

This review of research offers a number of useful and overlapping recommendations for improving the graduate school preparation of racial/ethnic minorities, however, I argue that a necessary enhancement is missing. Aside from incorporating content that speaks to the politics in academe, stories of the challenges encountered by graduate students of color and their navigational strategies, a critical-analytical component must also be present to expose the White supremacist patriarchy embedded within the structural, ideological and cultural foundation of academia and graduate school. This approach would go beyond equipping students with navigational skills by cultivating a critical comprehension of academia during the influential stage of anticipatory socialization. Similar initiatives already exist within a few college access and retention programs that embrace a commitment to social justice. This leads to the third strand of literature informing this study. I proceed with a review of these programs and describe their unique and theoretically-grounded program designs which served as the foundation from which I conceptualized a critical race approach to graduate school preparation.

The Rise of Critical Pedagogy in College Access and Retention Initiatives

Some educators may consider it daring or controversial to engage students in a critique of systemic racism and patriarchy; however, Giroux (2007) explains that these efforts are motivated by a desire to create a “more socially just world” and a stronger democracy (p. 2). He asserts that
this begins with utilizing our capacity to question (Giroux, 2007). Carolyne White may very well have been the first TRIO director\textsuperscript{16} to outwardly critique the ideology behind college access programs and speak on the implications it has for racial/ethnic minorities. She asked

Does the overall effect of the program support maintenance of students’ cultural heritage(s) or attempt deconstruction and reconstruction within the White, middle-class male cultural norm? Or, worded differently, is the program attempting to socialize students in a competitive worldview that may facilitate academic success, but effectively alienate students from their friends, family and heritage? (White, Sakiestewa, & Shelley, 1998, p. 451).

White’s question is crucial because TRIO Programs represent the nation’s largest effort to increase the representation of first-generation, low-income and underrepresented students in higher education. She suggests that compensatory approaches within college access programs push students of color to unilaterally adopt White masculine middle-class cultural values, values which can conflict with one’s family, culture or community. Issues arising from the expectation for racial/ethnic minorities to assimilate into dominant cultural norms have persisted over time. Gil-Gomez (2003) has observed differences in the way Latina/o college students respond to this expectation. She noted that some Latina/o college students are solely concerned with succeeding and have no regard for questioning or changing the system and some students experienced a strong cultural dissonance with White masculine values. While the impact of White’s question within the TRIO community remains unknown, her concerns are relevant to the goals of the social justice in education movement.

\textsuperscript{16} Carolyne White was a director for TRIO’s Upward Bound program which is a college preparation program that serves high school students who are first-generation and low-income students.
The Purpose of Critical Pedagogy for Social Justice Education

Multiple forms of critical pedagogies exist. Those that are used depend on the specific interests and goals of the educator. The various strands of critical pedagogy are united by the goal to engage students in seeing, understanding and transforming inequities of power and privilege (McLaren, 2009). In seeing and understanding these inequities, students are encouraged to use their education to inform how they assert their agency so that they assume greater responsibility in governance (Giroux, 2007). Scholarship on critical pedagogy has been critiqued for its overemphasis on classism and capitalism (Leonardo, 2005) which has brought other scholars to advocate for a more anti-racist approach grounded in “the race-radical philosophies of people of color” (Allen, 2005, p. 54). The overarching principle of critical pedagogy is amenable to its various outgrowths given that critical pedagogy is not static and has no formulaic method to interrogate and transform power and privilege (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). Because this study focused on the experiences of racial/ethnic minorities, it is pertinent to review how scholar-activists have used form(s) of critical pedagogy in various educational settings that address the lived experiences of students of color and how these students’ educational aspirations have been affected by it.

Critical Pedagogy in the High School Classroom

A review of literature on critical pedagogy in college access programs or high school retention initiatives uncovered three different efforts. They include the University of California, Los Angeles Outreach Program (UCLA Outreach) (Oakes, Rogers, Lipton & Morrell, 2000); the South City High Futures Project (Futures Project) in Southern California (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008); and the Social Justice Education Project (SJEP) in the Southwest (Romero, Arce, & Cammarota, 2009). While there are several similarities, these initiatives vary in design.
regarding the emphasis of the program, their articulation of critical pedagogy, the racial/ethnic
groups served, curriculum content and the duration of time students spend in the program.

UCLA Outreach and the SJEP both work with high school juniors and seniors but SJEP
is designed to serve Latina/os while UCLA Outreach serves both African Americans and
Latina/os. Among the three, the Futures Project is the most extensive, serving twenty-seven
working class African American and Latina/o high school students beginning with their
freshman year through to their senior year. The rationales behind UCLA Outreach and the
Futures Project converge on the commitment to increase the number of diverse college students
in light of an allegedly race-neutral admission process (Oakes, Rogers, Lipton & Morrell, 2000).
These initiatives prioritize the needs of racial/ethnic minorities to ensure that they experience a
smooth transition into college (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). The intent of the SJEP was
not centered on providing college preparation services but appeared to work more as a high
school retention initiative. The purpose of the SJEP was to engage Latina/o students in building
a “critical racial, cultural, historical, and social conscious” while providing them with a
curriculum that ensured they would gain the skills needed to meet state standards (Romero, Arce

A distinct feature of these approaches is that they involve a team of researcher-educators
who specialize in issues of inequality and social justice and hold dual appointments as faculty
professors and/or teachers. These three initiatives incorporate readings from the sociology of
education, Chicana/o studies, critical race theory and critical theory (Oakes et al., 2000; Duncan-
Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Romero, Arce & Cammarota, 2009). The UCLA Outreach and
Futures Project prepare their students to think as “critical sociologists of education” by having
them apply their readings into the design of a research project that addressed topics related to
race, class and education. The Futures Project specified that the students had to examine an issue that impacted racial/ethnic minorities at South City High School.

The outcomes of the research project assumed different forms for students in UCLA Outreach and the Futures Project. The UCLA Outreach students presented their research to a panel of UCLA faculty members specializing in the sociology of education while the Futures Project students collaborated with the American Civil Liberties Union to challenge current issues of educational inequality in the state of California. This collaboration made it possible for students to work with politicians and educational policymakers to utilize the findings of their research in productive ways (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Even though these two programs had students share their research in different ways, they both encouraged students to design their own research project on a topic that was relevant to their daily lives and incorporated an opportunity for students to discover their agency as researchers who shared their findings in useful ways.

The SJEP used a different approach that was confined to curriculum and various in-classroom activities. The curriculum and activities were informed by their Critically Compassionate Intellectualism Model of Transformative Education (CCI). The CCI model incorporated a Chicano indigenous epistemology that engaged students in a critical reflection of the self, family and community to work toward a “liberation of the mind and spirit” (Romero, Arce & Cammarota, 2009, p. 218). The theoretical foundation of SJEP included learning about hegemony, social reproduction, colonization, racism, and privilege, alongside resistance, agency and transformation. These ideas did not render students hopeless but rather all the students felt more competent on how to initiate positive changes in society. Moreover, the students felt that the culturally-relevant curriculum, pedagogy and environment nurtured a newfound academic
identity that was informed by their social position, culture and history. Aside from the SJEP having overwhelmingly positive outcomes on their students’ state exit exam scores and graduation rates in comparison to non-SJEP students, the program successfully instilled the belief that education could belong to their students (Romero, Arce & Cammarota, 2009).

In summary, these efforts illustrate that the goals of critical pedagogy can be tailored to different contexts in the high school setting without compromising the academic persistence of students but rather, strengthening it by making the content culturally-relevant. The similarities among these initiatives are an important step towards addressing Carolyne White’s disdain for compensatory models of education. Because compensatory practices can also be found in college retention programs, I proceed with describing the critical approach of one program in the Rocky Mountain region.

*Critical Pedagogy in College Retention Programming*

The Center for Ethnic Student Affairs Diversity Scholars Program at the University of Utah also incorporates a form of critical pedagogy in its approach to the college retention of racial/ethnic minorities. Similar to the SJEP, its approach is mostly curricular although it incorporates a service learning component. The Diversity Scholars Program serves freshmen students of color who are traditionally admitted students, sponsored students and scholarship students. A requirement of this program is that all Diversity Scholars enroll in a year-long ethnic studies course that examines how social, political, economic and historical factors have shaped the U.S. education system and the implications it has on the schooling conditions for

17 According to the Diversity Scholars webpage, sponsored students are “those students admitted under the University’s 5% policy which allows 5% of any incoming class to be compromised of students who do not meet the initial admission criteria.” (http://diversity.utah.edu/students/first-year-experience)
racial/ethnic minorities (Alberto, Aléman & Bernal, 2009).

With their lived experiences at the forefront, the Diversity Scholars are exposed to histories, concepts, perspectives and theories that facilitate a holistic understanding of how people of color are impacted by the abuse of power, privilege and institutionalized inequality. Similar to the three high school initiatives, this ethnic studies course also includes topics of meritocracy, microaggressions, social justice, resistance, agency, and activism. These concepts are intended to equip students with a critical literacy and position them as more informed on controversial topics surrounding the education gap, notions of equity and the politics of education. Through this curricular emphasis, students are prompted to reexamine their educational experiences using concepts learned in the class and engage in inter-ethnic/racial dialogues about race and racism. While this program differs in the fact that their students do not conduct a research project, they are asked to write a personal education narrative using social theory to critically analyze their educational experiences (Alberto, Aléman & Bernal, 2009). At the 2010 Annual Critical Race Studies in Education Conference, Octavio Villalpando presented preliminary retention data on the 2007 Diversity Scholars cohort. He found that this cohort of students had the highest retention rate at their junior year (above 90%) in comparison to students of color who were not in the Diversity Scholars Program (80%) and White students (under 70%) who also began their studies in the same year (Villalpando, 2010).

Adopting a culturally-relevant curriculum in accordance with the principles of critical race theory, suggests that important educational objectives can be met. In the case of the SJEP and Diversity Scholars Program, students of color have surpassed the performance of those who are not affiliated with such programs. This review on the use of critical pedagogy in retention and college access initiatives provides useful models of how scholar-activists have
conceptualized alternatives to compensatory practices and incorporated a mission of social justice into education. Since these efforts are relatively uncommon, there are many opportunities to extend the use of critical pedagogy and critical race theory in education. In the next section, I explain where I envision critical race theory and critical pedagogy to be of use to an important group of students.

Reconceptualizing Graduate School Preparation:
An Argument for a Critical Race Curriculum

From past research on doctoral education, we have learned that racial/ethnic minorities and women are not only overrepresented in doctoral attrition but that these groups have encountered unnecessary challenges in their doctoral experience (e.g. racial microaggressions, politics) and/or cultural dissonance with academia that are difficult to navigate (Burciaga, 2007; Cheatham & Phelps, 1995; Contreras & Gándara, 2006; Council of Graduate Schools, 2004; Ellis, 2001; Gardner & Holley, 2011; Gildersleeve, Croom & Vasquez, 2011; Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; Gonzalez, 2006; Gonzalez, 2007; Hughes, 2004; Johnsrud, 1995; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000; Milner, 2004; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008; Nesheim et al., 2006; Nettles & Millet, 2006; Quijada, 2006; Shears, Lewis, & Furman, 2004; Solórzano, 1998; Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007; Sulé, 2009; Torres, 2006; Watford et al., 2006). At the same time, alumni of GSPPs have reported similar struggles at the doctoral level, but there is a disconnect between these two bodies of research findings, recommendations for practice and their actual implementation into GSPPs. The recommendations for practice offered by Beal (2007), Cheatham and Phelps (1995), Gardner and Holley (2011), Milner (2004), Simpson (2003) and Willison and Gibson (2011) collectively point to a need for a critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation. The positive findings associated with incorporating a critical race
approach in education indicate that extending these efforts into a new setting have great promise for equipping students with the community cultural wealth necessary to attain their doctoral degree. In the following chapter, I outline how the tenets of critical race theory inform my conceptualization of a critical race curriculum and pedagogy for graduate school preparation.
CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Graduate school preparation programs (GSPPs) are spaces with rich theoretical potential to imagine the goals of social justice. In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson initiated a national discourse with his State of the Union address on the importance of higher education for people of color as part of his War on Poverty. His legislation of the Higher Education Act of 1965 created the first set of national college-access programs\(^\text{18}\), including the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, for first-generation, low-income and underrepresented students. In this legislation, President Johnson created a master narrative that depicted education as the means through which racial/ethnic minorities could pick themselves up by their bootstraps to rise out of poverty (Thompson, 1990). The history of these TRIO programs lends themselves nicely to a critical race analysis. For example, while President Johnson’s action may be perceived as altruistic, the political support behind this legislation can be better understood through the lens of interest convergence. Interest convergence is a tenet of critical race theory that argues White elites only support and initiate advances for racial justice when it benefits and aligns with their interests (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Wise (2010) argues that this legislation would not have garnered the political support necessary without its uplift all in need colorblind language (Wise, 2010).

It can be said that the earliest GSPP was borne out of a myth of meritocracy and encouraged compensatory models of college access that would likely promote colorblind and

\(^\text{18}\) The first set of college-access programs are known under the umbrella term TRIO programs.
postfeminist discourses. In Chapter Two, I stated that compensatory GSPPs initiate a process of anticipatory socialization that circulate dominant norms and values of graduate education and thus, I argued that these programs do ideological work. To draw attention to dominant ideology and how it has shaped academia as a raced and gendered institution, I draw from critical race theory (CRT) and critical race feminism (CRF). I employ these frameworks to situate my research within a paradigm that interrogates power and inequality; centers the voices of people of color; and examines the intersections of race, class and gender with the goal of engaging students in building a critical comprehension of academia and reconstructing the discourse of graduate school preparation.

I begin this chapter with a brief overview of the history and aims of CRT as it first appeared in the legal academy. I continue with a more extensive discussion of the historical events that initiated CRT’s move into the field of education, including its tenets. Next, I address the emergence of CRF and how its theoretical contribution of a gender and intersectionality analysis advance the goals of CRT. Lastly, I theorize how each of CRT’s tenets, including the goals of CRF which I embed into CRT’s tenets, shape a preliminary critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation.

**Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory first emerged in the legal academy during the mid-1970s. Its intellectual pioneers worked within the field of critical legal studies (CLS), a predominately White male group of neo-Marxist and leftist law professors who challenged legal scholarship that created and reinforced social inequality in the U.S. (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004). CLS scholars critiqued the process of legal reasoning, rejecting the idea that it was neutral, objective and free from social, economic, political and cultural influences
(Brown & Jackson, 2013). CLS’s approach to social justice focused on revealing the ways that the American legal system enforced, represented and validated the interests of the dominant social group (Brown & Jackson, 2013).

Despite the field’s emphasis on social justice, a number of scholars grew dissatisfied with the direction of CLS for several reasons. CLS demonstrated a lack of attention to the role of racism in the legal system and society (Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004), exhibited colorblindness that did not address or recognize the rise in subtle forms of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000) and maintained a sense of complacency with incremental change during a time when many of the gains from the 1960s Civil Rights Movement were being reversed (Taylor, 2009). The gains that were being reversed were attributed to the decisions of conservative Supreme Court justices who restricted and/or eliminated the conditions under which racial/ethnic minorities could win employment discrimination lawsuits, request compensation for attorney’s fees, have the terms outlined in consent decrees made in cases of discrimination honored and seek protection under civil rights statues (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Moreover, CLS was ill-equipped to address the far-reaching effects of the Supreme Court’s decision in *City of Richmond v. Croson* that not only eliminated the “set-aside program for minority contractors” but conflated governmental policies and programs intended to remedy the effects of past racial discrimination with reverse discrimination (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p. 13). Two far reaching effects were how the Court’s rationale also threatened the legal grounds for considering race in the hiring and promotion process as well as affirmative action admissions programs into institutions of higher education (Brown & Jackson, 2013).

To rectify the shortcomings of CLS, Derrick Bell, Allen Freeman, Richard Delgado, Lani Guinier and Kimberlé Crenshaw generated scholarship, known as critical race theory, that
theorized the interconnected relationships of race, racism, and power; including ways in which social and institutional inequity could be transformed (Taylor, 2009; Peters, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). More specifically, the type of social and institutional transformation that critical race scholars advocate for, is that of a more egalitarian and inclusive society (Bell, 2009). CRT scholarship seeks to empower communities of color by drawing upon their collective wisdom to aid in theorizing a more inclusive society (Bell, 2009).

There are five tenets that inform the work of CRT scholarship on the theorization of race, racism and power, they include: the belief that racism is normal and ordinary in U.S. society or racial realism; interest convergence; race as a social construction; intersectionality and anti-essentialism; and voice or counter-narrative (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2013). Credited as the father of critical race theory, Derrick Bell conceptualized the concept of racial realism, which is a belief that racism is “an integral, permanent, and indestructible part of American society” (as cited in Brown & Jackson, 2013, p. 14). This articulation of a systemic racism is distinct from racism more commonly thought of as individual acts of racial hostility (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Because Bell viewed racism as entrenched within the structure of the U.S., he disagreed with the stance of civil rights organizations, members of the African American community and advocates of social justice that racism could be eliminated (Brown & Jackson, 2013).

The principle of interest convergence, also developed by Bell, maintained that White elites only support and initiate advances for racial justice when it benefits and aligns with their interests or would not be a detriment to the interests of middle and upper class Whites (Bell, 1980 as cited in Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2013). A
widely referenced example is that of *Brown v. Board of Education* which was perceived as a gain for civil rights, however, Bell argued that this decision was not motivated by altruism, mercy or newfound social decency (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Rather, this decision was motivated by a constellation of factors that would have interfered with the interests of the U.S.

Among these factors included a fear of a mass disorderly conduct given that African Americans had served in World War II and the Korean War and would not be content to return to the same oppressive social conditions given that they had willingly put their lives on the line for the country (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Further research revealed that because the U.S. was in the midst of the Cold War and concerned with the possible growth of communism among emerging third world countries, it was interested in maintaining an image of the superiority of democracy over communism (Bell, 1995; Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The U.S. recognized that in order to maintain this image, it would have to abolish segregation to rid the U.S. of its negative publicity in the world press (Bell, 1995; Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Bell also argued it was likely that White elites realized the South could not evolve and yield the benefits of an industrialized economy without eliminating segregation (Brown & Jackson, 2013).

An additional principle that informs the view of CRT scholars is that of race as a social construction. CRT scholars refer to the expertise of biologists, geneticists, anthropologists and sociologists who agree that race is not a legitimate scientific finding; put differently, there are no distinct genes associated with particular races (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Rather, how our society understands race is solely due to the social construction of race as a category of organization based upon particular phenotypic differences to justify a “hierarchy and an ideology of White
supremacy” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 38). However, CRT scholars are clear that the social construction of race continues to be an influential force that shapes reality, especially in the way it affects the lives of people of color negatively (Ladson-Billings, 2013). As an anti-essentialist framework, CRT denies any assumption or belief that all people belonging to a particular group share identical thoughts, make the same choices or have the same beliefs (Ladson-Billings, 2013). While people may turn to same race/gender groups for social, cultural and political support, it does not mean that they abandon their respective rights to have different perspectives or pursue different lifestyles (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Through these established tenets, early work in CRT examined laws promoting the interests of White supremacy and acts that reinforced the subordination of racial/ethnic minorities (Wing, 2003). CRT set a precedence for deconstructing the ways in which allegedly race-neutral laws and policies shape and manifest everyday racial and/or gender subordination by utilizing parables, chronicles, storytelling and counter-narratives (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Brown & Jackson, 2013). Despite the ideological differences that informed their commitment to social justice, CLS provided important theoretical insights on which CRT continued to expand (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Expansions of CRT have led to the development of Latina/o critical theory (LatCrit), Asian critical theory (AsianCrit), tribal critical race theory (TribalCrit) and critical race feminism (CRF). These additions strengthened the analytical sophistication of CRT by broadening its theorization of race and racism beyond a black-white binary (Brayboy, 2005) and illuminated ways that laws have subordinated other communities of color. LatCrit, AsianCrit and CRF include other axes of oppression interconnected with race and racism such as gender, patriarchy, immigration status, language, ethnicity, culture, identity, skin color, phenotype, accent, surname, nativistic racism
and naturalization (Chang, 1993; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2006; Wing, 2003).

**Critical Race Theory in Education**

A number of prominent events in the 1980s compelled the CRT movement to expand its theoretical reach into the field of education. For example, the initial gains made towards educational equality were being reversed by forms of covert racism. This included state legislation dismantling affirmative action and the re-segregation of schools through White disenrollment from schools with a high concentration of racial minorities and their matriculation into private and parochial schools (Taylor, 2009). A need arose for a comprehensive theory of race in education to conceptually explain the reemergence of racial inequality and to interrogate educational policies and practices that facilitated unequal academic achievement between White students and students of color (Taylor, 2009).

Gloria Ladson-Billings and Tate IV wrote a seminal piece titled “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education” which was first published in 1995 in The Teachers College Record and marked the beginning of critical race scholarship in education. This piece was motivated by a concern for the absence of a theorization on race and educational inequality. Class and gender-based analyses were inadequate to explain disparities in the educational experiences, disciplinary action, performance and achievement of students of color in comparison to Whites. Informed by CRT scholarship in the legal field, Ladson-Billings and Tate outlined three prepositions central to understanding inequality as it manifests within the education system. These prepositions are: (1) race is an important factor in examining inequality in the U.S., (2) the U.S. is built on a foundation of property rights, and (3) a comprehension of social and educational inequality requires an analysis of where race and property intersect (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009).
In their second proposition, Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) emphasize that the development of capitalism in the U.S. was centered on property rights, not human rights. The importance of property rights required a government that was designed “to protect the rights of property owners” (p. 171). Through this protection, property owners are able to yield an accumulation of social benefits, which we can understand as disparities between middle class/elite Whites and people of color, that cannot be atoned systemically though a plea to individual and civil rights. One example in which middle class and elite property owners yield exponential benefits is through the greater funding of their children’s schools based on property taxes. These better resourced schools offer more expansive curricular options for academic and creative enrichment and are more likely to be taught by certified and well-trained educators. These conditions, then, position students from wealthier families to have an advantage in meeting state and federally-mandated standards of what “students should know and be able to do” (p. 172). Access to this exclusive curriculum (i.e. intellectual property) is a benefit afforded wealthy property owners and not an individual or civil right (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009).

In their third proposition, Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) reference Cheryl Harris’s conceptualization of whiteness as property as an analytical construct to examine the intersection of race and property in education. Harris outlines four property functions of whiteness: (1) rights of disposition; (2) rights to use and enjoyment; (3) reputation and status property; and (4) absolute right to exclude” (as cited in Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009, p. 176). The rights of disposition can be understood as instances where whiteness can be ascribed to the performance of white norms. Here, white property is theorized as alienable. The rights to use and enjoyment speak to access to social, cultural and economic privileges, such as those afforded by more extravagant educational facilities and expansive curriculum. Reputation and status property
refers to the property of Whites as having the most reputable status and those things not associated with whiteness, such as urban schools or bilingual education, as lacking reputability. The *absolute right to exclude* relates to an idea that non-Whites are unwelcome or conceived as intruders to White spaces. This is represented in the history of education in the U.S. where first blacks were denied access, the segregation of schools and the growth of private schools. Today, the right to exclude is exercised through tracking and restricted access to seats in honors programs and advanced placement classes (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009).

In the work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009), we can see that their approach to CRT in education focuses on the deconstruction of racist laws, ordinances and policies that impinge on people’s rights (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Solórzano (2013) takes a slightly different approach, explaining that it is necessary to reinvent CRT for new context and adapt its principles to serve the interests of communities in need. Solórzano and Yosso’s (2009) approach to CRT in education also builds an explanatory framework that addresses race and racism but includes methods and pedagogy that strive to challenge and transform structural and cultural racism, including all forms of subordination. In my dissertation, I draw from the rich theoretical ideas articulated by Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) as well as Solórzano and Yosso’s (2001) CRT tenets for the field of education and synthesize connections among the two approaches. The tenets outlined Solórzano and Yosso (2001) are:

1. the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination,
2. the challenge to dominant ideology,
3. the centrality of experiential knowledge,
4. the commitment to social justice and
(5) the transdisciplinary perspective.

The first tenet, similar to the belief of *racism as normal*, acknowledges the exploitative history of the United States. This history accounts for the conditions leading to the creation of systemic racism, namely, 350 years of slavery, legal segregation and adherence to the doctrine of manifest destiny (Chapman, 2013; Feagin, 2006). The British ideology that “only people who owned the country, not merely those who lived in it, were eligible to make decisions about it” positioned White men as the dominant group, dating back to the 1600s when Pilgrims arrived in New England (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 25; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009). Their arrival and subsequent dispossession of Indian tribes from their land because they had not “subdued” it, rendered Indians without legal civil rights to land according to British ideology and allowed only propertied White males to enjoy legal rights (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009, p. 171; Ladson-Billings, 2009). This appropriation of power allowed wealthy White men to position themselves as creators of all U.S. social institutions, laws, policies and practices that are framed as normal and ordinary in everyday life (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). For these reasons, CRT scholars challenge and critique the dominant ideology of liberalism represented in discourses of objectivity, neutrality and normality within mainstream institutions, laws and policies (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

**Critical Race Feminism**

Critical race feminism serves the dual purpose of working towards the goals of feminism within CRT and discussing the importance of race within feminist theory (Wing, 2003). The feminist movement can be understood as efforts dedicated toward eradicating gender oppression within political and social institutions, including the private sphere (hooks, 2000). Exposing and dismantling patriarchy is the key toward addressing the ways that gender oppression
subordinates women and men in (un)seen ways. As an ideology that becomes enacted through discursive practices, patriarchy represents a belief that men are inherently dominant, superior and endowed with a strength that cannot be matched by women (hooks, 2004). Furthermore, patriarchy enforces oppression through means of authority and control over subordinate groups (hooks, 2004).

Like CRT, CRF emerged in the legal academy in the late twentieth century out of the dissatisfaction that female legal scholars felt toward feminist jurisprudence which overlooked the concerns of women of color (Wing, 2003). They did not agree with the act of essentializing the experiences and opinions of women on various issues but rather emphasized the need to discuss these issues as they impacted women at the intersection of their race and gender identity (Wing, 2003). Law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, foremother of CRF, developed the concept of intersectionality. As a signature feature of a CRF analysis, intersectionality considers how race, gender and class operate as a holistic identity that produces different experiences for women of color as they navigate institutions of White patriarchy (Wing, 2003). Among the domestic legal and social policies of interest to CRF scholars are welfare, education, health, childcare and custodial rights, domestic violence and immigration, including an examination of the ways these policies may oppress women of color (Few, 2007).

Critical race feminism draws ideas from CLS, CRT and feminist jurisprudence to inform its framework. CRF does not subscribe to a finite canon; however, it draws from strands of feminist theory, including the works of bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker (Wing, 2003). Despite the shortcomings of dominant feminist theory in addressing the role of White supremacy in its oppression of women of color, CRF scholars do not completely dismiss the usefulness of its theoretical tools. Scholars of CRF often
incorporate concepts from well-known feminist work to aid their analyses (Wing, 2003).

*Drawing Connections Between Critical Race Feminism and Education*

Even though CRF originated to address the legal concerns of women of color, its goal to expose and dismantle patriarchy and gender oppression is also relevant in the field of education. CRF does not prescribe its own tenets like CRT in education but shares similarities in that it has a commitment to social justice, is anti-essentialist, transdisciplinary and calls for theory to inform transformative practices that combat gender and racial oppression (Berry, 2010; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Few, 2007). Utilizing both frameworks allows for equal attention to identifying, analyzing and transforming the operation of patriarchy alongside racism, enabling scholars to more effectively work toward social justice.

Critical race feminism in education draws attention to multiple consciousness which refers to the ability of women of color “to adapt in order to survive in a racist patriarchal society,” including the education system (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010, p. 21). Each woman’s experience, perspective, choices and outcomes offer partial truths from their standpoint of being a woman of color (Few, 2007). CRF scholars are interested in identifying the specifics of these women’s partial story while being cognizant of the institutional structures that influence their social realities (Few, 2007). This multiple consciousness contributes valuable knowledge to CRT scholarship in education, such as Yosso’s (2005) theory of community cultural wealth which documents the resistant, navigational, aspirational, social, linguistic and familial capital of people of color.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will articulate in more detail how the overarching interests of CRF are applicable to the field of education by embedding them into my discussion of how CRT’s tenets inform my conceptualization of a critical race curriculum. This format
allows for a more focused theoretical discussion of how the aims of feminist theory complement
the tenets of CRT in education rather than attempting to discuss CRF’s role in education as a
separate endeavor.

**Graduate School Preparation Programs as Sites of Anticipatory Socialization**

It is important to remember that the process of socialization has been identified as a
necessary target of reform for doctoral education. To problematize doctoral socialization would
also have implications for anticipatory socialization. To reiterate, doctoral socialization
represents the process by which students acquire an understanding of the norms, values, beliefs,
traditions and expectations of becoming a scholar in their field through a variety domains (e.g.
interactions with faculty, research, teaching, academic conferences). The stage of anticipatory
socialization, as it is mediated by a compensatory GSPP, begins to circulate dominant discourses
relating to these topics. I expand on Gardner’s (2010) definition of anticipatory socialization to
capture the extensive activities that take place in a GSPP. The stage of anticipatory socialization
begins the moment students begin their graduate school search, spanning to the time they receive
offers of admission into doctoral programs and even into the initial stages of their coursework
(Gardner, 2010). Some of the activities involved during anticipatory socialization include
conducting undergraduate research, preparing the materials required to apply to graduate
programs; preparing and taking the Graduate Record Exam (GRE); communicating with faculty
and prospective graduate student colleagues; visiting graduate schools; selecting a graduate
program; becoming acquainted with program expectations at orientation and completing the first
few months of coursework (Gardner, 2010).

Although these activities are different than those that occur at the doctoral level, the
similarities lie with the racialized and gendered dominant discourses that can frame these
activities and the conduct that is deemed appropriate in the academy. Moreover, the dissemination of messages about the benefits of earning a doctoral degree, the norms of undergraduate research and the messages that are conveyed about doctoral education and graduate student life all serve to influence students’ perceptions about what it means to be a doctoral student and a scholar. Like doctoral socialization, the dominant discourses that inform anticipatory socialization are problematic because they represent a conceptualization of doctoral education, research and scholarly identity that are portrayed as normal when in fact, these views were shaped during a period of racial and gender exclusion.

Gopaul (2011) recommends that doctoral socialization should involve ongoing attention to how politics operate in doctoral programs and knowledge of how academia is governed. A critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation can begin this process by engaging students in a critical comprehension of academia that includes an understanding of how systemic racism and patriarchy have shaped U.S. graduate education and the implications this has for academia today. In the following section, I describe how the tenets of CRT and goals of CRF informed my preliminary development of a critical race curriculum.

Conceptualizing a Critical Race Curriculum for Graduate School Preparation

The Centrality of Race and Racism with other Forms of Subordination

In Advancing a Critical Comprehension of Academia

Macedo (1995) condemns the structure of education for its separation of disciplines because it inhibits thinking across fields that inform problems and societal issues. He argues that the outcome of disciplinary boundaries contributes to a fragmentation of knowledge that obstructs people’s ability to acquire holistic understandings or a critical comprehension of reality. To build on this concept, I argue that it is necessary for anticipatory socialization to
cultivate a critical comprehension of academia. While not a complete list, a critical
comprehension of academia for students in a GSPP should include an understanding of race,
class, gender, racism and patriarchy as it relates to (1) the construction of an epistemology of
patriarchal Whiteness and how these ideologies permeate the culture of doctoral education (e.g.
traditions, norms, values, governance), including their representation within racial and gendered
microaggressions; (2) racism and patriarchy as ideological discursive tools used to divide
subordinated groups; and (3) the creation of opportunities for students to link bodies of
knowledge to gain a holistic understanding of reality and the role of politics in shaping reality
(Macedo, 2000).

Before proceeding, it is necessary to be clear about what is meant by the terms systemic
racism and White supremacy. Systemic racism does not refer to individual acts of racism but to
White supremacy’s role in the legitimation, validation and privileging of Whites’ interests,
views, economic security, representation of identity and appropriate conduct (Thompson, 2004).
White supremacy refers to the embeddedness of whiteness, a form of (un)conscious beliefs of
White superiority and entitlement that are represented within the U.S.’s political, economic and
cultural system (Ansley, 1997 as cited in Applebaum, 2012; Leonardo, 2002 as cited in Gillborn,
2013). It is equally important to be explicit about how patriarchy functions in order to
understand academia as a raced and gendered institution. Patriarchy is a system that affects our
social world through cultural symbols and ideas that are male-generated, male-focused and male-
dominated; it is way of life that is perceived as normal (Johnson, 2006), just as systematic
racism. Patriarchy imposes definitions of reality, especially in relation to gender identity, gender
expectations and gendered traits, as well as the reward and punishment of behavior that meet or
deviate from gender expectations.
A prominent feature of patriarchy is an interest in acquiring and exerting control, usually through the legitimation of social hierarchies. Hierarchies establish positions of power that allow individuals to make decisions over the welfare of people, resources and afford varying levels of autonomy to those higher in the hierarchy. The ideas and interests of patriarchy are circulated through social institutions such as the family, religion and the economy which prescribe expectations and rules for our behavior. Because the system of patriarchy is embedded into the culture of our society, everyone participates in it, shapes it, is shaped by it and contributes to its oppressive outcomes. It is important to recognize that the ideas and interests of patriarchy could not exist in the social world without actions of individuals who bring them to life; however, because we cannot be exempt from participating in this system, we have the power to decide how we participate in a patriarchal system. Our actions can disrupt, resist or reproduce it.

The purpose of a critical comprehension of academia is to encourage a habit of interrogating normative social practices, policies and structures so that students can identify the hidden curriculum and identify the action that is needed to challenge or negotiate inequitable policies and practices. These efforts encourage students to view themselves as key stakeholders in the democratic enterprise of education with the social responsibility to transform academia into a more inclusive institution that represents the views, needs and interests of its constituents.

*In the Construction of an Epistemology of Patriarchal Whiteness*

A discussion of race and racism is poignant in raising consciousness of epistemological racism, how it operates within the production of knowledge and how it has contributed to dominant ideology in doctoral education. Epistemology refers to the production of knowledge, types of knowledge and the parameters that govern knowledge (Crotty, 1998). It can be said that everyone endorses an epistemological position that dictates what constitutes knowledge and rules
for how knowledge is created. In Chapter Two, I drew attention to the important historical factors of legalized race/sex discrimination and segregation that excluded the representation of racial/ethnic minorities and women during the formation of research universities in the U.S. These conditions allowed for the rise of epistemological racism. Epistemological racism has a number of facets and operates at the institutional and social level. At the institutional level, its effects become apparent when courses utilize a curriculum that privileges the experiences of Whites, relies heavily on White contributors or put differently, omits the experiences and/or contributions of people color (Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002). Ladson-Billings (2012) points to the ways that the social sciences have created theories that misrepresent race because they draw from notions of normality and exceptionalism that are modeled after whiteness. She argues that these ideas contribute to much of the education research on students of color that is laden with a deficit perspective and dominated by conceptions of failure.

Epistemological racism is also active when the contributions of scholars of color are invalidated or dismissed, especially when their scholarship speaks to matters affecting their community and/or challenges dominant discourse. Scheurich and Young (1997) appear to speak of the same issue although they do so under the name of institutional racism. They describe institutional racism as existing within a research discipline that has been heavily influenced by a community of researchers who have framed variables, utilized particular labels or created ideas that are racially-biased. Tyson (1998) points out that theories and methodologies embedded with epistemological racism are seldom deconstructed and challenged by White scholars, instead the onus is placed on scholars of color to defend the legitimacy of their epistemologies.

The issue of epistemological racism may be more appropriately conceptualized as an epistemology of patriarchal whiteness (Thompson, 2004). Thompson explains that research
conducted across disciplines that adhere to the American Psychological Association’s guidelines for publication are affected by standards of patriarchal whiteness. These standards impose limitations on who is deemed as an authority, standards of objectivity and assumptions of a discoverable reality. Kincheloe (2007) helps to conceptualize how these standards are biased given that the power and privilege of the dominant group (i.e. White, male, upper-class, heterosexual) has utilized its privilege to define what constitutes reason, rationality, truth and objectivity in the production of knowledge. This group’s power and influence is readily traceable to the formation of western modernism as it was shaped by the ideas of social science researchers, educational leaders, philosophers, politicians and corporate leaders and yet, these ideas that have structured our society are not recognized for being racially or gender exclusive (Scheurich & Young, 1997).

Epistemological racism is also prevalent within the field of gender studies, especially within the emergence of feminist theory and the feminist movement. During the development of feminist theory, institutional racism, class divisions and a lack of access to journals and publishing companies were factors that excluded African American women from contributing to the development of theories and analyses of gender (hooks, 2000). Many traditional research practices, standards governing research and early bodies of knowledge exemplify an epistemology of patriarchal whiteness given that the early development of research as a process and investigation did not include the contributions of people of color or women. In fact, early research was conducted to serve the interests of European imperialism and colonization by shaping perceptions about indigenous peoples (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). For many years, social science research has disseminated or represented an underlying interest in ideology, power, sexism, racism, domination, repression, and control” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 13). The
system governing the production of knowledge has massive implications for race, gender and social justice scholars today and is perhaps most apparent in the ongoing paradigm wars of academia (Anderson & Herr, 1999; Gage, 1989; Mayer, 2000).

Knowledge of research politics are pertinent to anticipatory socialization so that students can become aware of how these attitudes may shape their research experience rather than unquestioningly adopting the epistemological views of their faculty mentor. Students who desire to conduct social justice research may encounter resistance from academic communities and political forces that are grounded in a positivist epistemology, especially if they utilize frameworks of critical race, feminist, queer or postmodern theories which are invalidated from the standpoint science based research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Undergraduate research is usually thought of as building the desired research skills for graduate school and generating an intimate understanding of life as a researcher. Evident in the review of literature, there are a number of politics at work in the research experience that must also be addressed in one’s graduate school preparation. A critical race curriculum takes up the task of addressing how an epistemology of patriarchal whiteness is also enacted and experienced at the social level. This includes responses to the doctoral program’s curriculum, the perspectives that are privileged and/or legitimated by professors or other students in the seminar space and the research experience as it is influenced by faculty advising. In other words, a critical race curriculum addresses ideological underpinnings of racial and/or gendered microaggressions encountered by doctoral students of color in academia. It also enhances students’ anticipatory socialization because once they transition into a doctoral program, they are prepared to recognize a microaggression as a product of patriarchy and/or whiteness rather than internalizing deficit messages that exacerbate the impostor syndrome.
Racism/Patriarchy as a Tool for Fragmentation

Messages borne out of dominant ideology that pertain to race and gender usually serve a role in creating a division, or fragmentation, among members of marginalized groups. McLaren (2009) explains that divisions are created by messages designed by the dominant group to generate distrust or resentment among marginalized groups to prevent them from uniting on shared issues of inequality19. One example is the message that we live in a post-racial and post-feminist society of equal opportunity. When these messages are internalized by subordinated groups, social divisions can become visible across and within race (i.e. inter/intra-racial racism), gender (i.e. inter/intra-gender sexism) and class. The centrality of racism recognizes that race and gender are used as tools for fragmentation which call upon critical race pedagogues to incorporate questions that promote self-reflection and reflexivity on one’s location in a stratified society (Lynn, Jennings & Hughes, 2013). Without the incorporation of critical race pedagogy to expose why and how fragmentation happens, communities of color and women will continue to “add to or participate in their own oppression” (hooks, 2000; Leonardo, 2005, p. 45; McLaren, 2009).

A critical race curriculum must address forms of fragmentation because racial/ethnic minorities have much to gain from uniting against systemic inequality (Allen, 2005). For instance, the creation and circulation of the Asian model minority discourse by White social scientists, media commentators and politicians has been a successful tool for delegitimizing African Americans’ claims of racial inequality while supporting negative stereotypes against

19 “Fragmentation occurs when relations of domination are sustained by the production of meanings in a way which fragments groups so that they are placed in opposition to one another” (McLaren, 2009, p. 70).
them (Feagin, 2010; Teranishi & Pazich, 2013). This stereotype has negatively affected Asian Americans because the aggregation of their racial group has obscured the differences and needs of particular ethnic subgroups and removed them from issues of underrepresentation in education (Teranishi, 2002; Wing, 2001). It is in the interest of Asian Americans and other racial/ethnic groups to forge alliances with each other because of their shared issues. This includes prolonged periods of unemployment and wage inequality, even when there is an equal or greater level of education (see Wise, 2010, pp. 94-96; Nadal, Pituc, Johnston & Esparrago, 2010); the need of particular Asian ethnic subgroups for affirmative action (Wing, 2001); and shared concerns and needs regarding graduate education (Nadal et al., 2010; Poon & Hune, 2009).

Intra-gender sexism has been a dividing matter among women, even those committed to feminism. This internalized oppression has led women to “self-hate” or misplace one’s anger and frustration at one another rather than the larger structural and cultural forces of White supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 2000). A prominent attitude that creates divisions among women is the faulty belief that it is possible for them to attain the same level of social equality with White men of the dominant class (hooks, 2000). It is a faulty belief because it assumes that men are free from oppression and it requires women’s participation in the culture of exploitation in order to achieve the same benefits (hooks, 2000). McRobbie (2009) offers the example of women who attain a position within the middle class and are encouraged to view their success as a result of their hard work and receive the message that it is acceptable to “repudiate their social inferiors” (p. 72). Before women can establish stronger relationships with each other, they must interrogate their own views for the presence of White supremacist capitalist patriarchal ideology and how these views bring them to marginalize each other and perpetuate a patriarchal culture (hooks, 2000).
I have offered a few examples of fragmentation that are not exhaustive by any means but emphasize the importance of creating opportunities to unite against race, class and gender inequality. When there is unity, there is an opportunity to benefit from a depth of perspectives representing varied social positionalities, especially within and across race, class and gender. In this manner, our uneven critical consciousness becomes more informed of the ways we can experience oppression and privilege (Zamudio, Bridgeman, Russell & Rios, 2009). Zamudio et al. (2009) refer to Collins’ work on the matrix of domination and emphasize the point that these “partial view[s] of power can still produce valuable, if not complete or perfect, knowledge” that are necessary in building a critical consciousness (p. 460).

**The Challenge to Dominant Ideology**

It would be nearly impossible for compensatory models of GSPPs to refrain from circulating discourses of dominant ideology. As a program that is likely to involve recruitment efforts aiming to generate an interest in or promote the advantages of a doctoral degree to racially underrepresented groups, first-generation and low-income populations, liberal discourses of meritocracy, diversity, equal opportunity and financial independence are among those messages likely to be disseminated. Because the stage of anticipatory socialization functions as a site where meanings are created and internalized about graduate education, it is fitting to examine the questions and responses that may arise throughout a student’s experience in a GSPP. Some of these may include *What does it mean to be a scholar? What can I research? What is the GRE and what does it measure? What does my GRE score mean? What does it mean if I (don’t) get into graduate school? What does it mean if I (do not) complete a Ph.D. program?* If a GSPP’s response is informed by dominant ideology, then these programs aid in the reproduction of the status quo. It becomes essential then to challenge key discourses of
dominant ideology.

Meritocracy and equal opportunity are two of the most important ideologies to deconstruct because these ideas and values are embedded within the institution of education. Moreover, these ideas are so normalized that students of GSPPs, participate in a number of social practices with the expectation that they will one day be able to reap the benefits of advanced credentials. Services provided by a GSPP such as GRE preparation and socialization into the norms of research are designed to equip students with the merit necessary to become competitive applicants for graduate school. In doing so, GSPPs perpetuate the use of standardized exams and may not problematize or contest the ways its raced and classed content function as a gatekeeping tool for privileged opportunities. The GRE is often used in decisions of graduate school admission into highly-ranked graduate programs and/or the awarding of research assistantships and prestigious fellowships (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Even the favorable outcome of graduate admission must be interrogated because acceptance into a doctoral program can be framed and perceived as a reward for a students’ hard work which may increase the likelihood that the student themselves will legitimate forms of meritocracy.

Without interrogating the features that make GSPPs successful and the sociopolitical conditions that make them possible, students may find it easy to legitimate or never question meritocracy. For instance, the relatively small number of students that GSPPs serve, allow these programs to provide hours of individualized attention and monetary resources. Essentially, these programs mimic class privilege through the allocation of financial resources and services that build the types of cultural and social capital that are rewarded. These factors create favorable circumstances for student success that may elicit feelings of gratitude for the opportunity to benefit from a GSPP but overlook attention to the race and class privilege that create the need for
GSPPs in the first place. Moreover, it is not likely that the services provided by GSPPs can compete with the educational experiences and social capital that privileged students accumulate from a young age. Oakes et al. (2000) succinctly capture this idea in their statement “While not a firm equation, hard work plus privilege will usually trump hard work alone” (p. 13).

The GRE is an example of how whiteness and class privilege are at work in high-stakes standardized exams. Feagin (2010) emphasizes that the use of standardized entrance exams “have usually been designed, consciously or unconsciously, to measure things that white middle-class people know or do well” (p. 178). Without a space to critically analyze the content of the GRE, a students’ performance on this exam can bring them to legitimate the test as a measure of competence which can have rewarding effects or elicit a deficit view of oneself if they do not perform up to the standard that is expected (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009). Even though the main objective of GSPPs provide much needed services and are feasible to implement, they remain a short-sighted and small-scale solution to address underrepresentation in graduate education.

Prior to participation in a GSPP, it is important to consider the role that contemporary popular culture has played in targeting messages toward young women, especially those from working-class families. In general, it is the message that if young women plan appropriately, they can attain the life they aspire to: the ideal marriage, career success and financial independence (McRobbie, 2009). Because this message implicates a pursuit of higher education, women of color may come into GSPPs with these desires. It would be easy for GSPPs to reinforce this message if they emphasize the career and financial advantages of earning a Ph.D.; however, initiating discussion of how gender inequality operates within academia, the workplace, the home and society may be perceived by the program’s administrators as beyond
their scope of services. Or worse, beyond their own understanding. Students of GSPPs, especially women, have a stake in learning the ways that discourses of equal opportunity and meritocracy do not live up to their gender-neutral promises, including how gendered norms are rewarded in the public and private sphere.

For women, the pursuit of a graduate education is laden with gender issues because it represents a transgression of the patriarchal gendered role of being subordinate to a man, whether educationally or financially. Women who encounter men who adopt views of hegemonic masculinity are likely to encounter the politics and penalties of transgressing gendered roles. Berry (2006) offers a personal account of how highly educated and successful women are penalized in romantic relationships if a man perceives a woman’s success as outshining his own. In this manner, female students of GSPPs may begin to encounter contradictions to the dominant ideology that the U.S. is a gender-equal society with equal opportunity and that planning for the ideal life is in fact, a gross oversimplification.

Women who are mothers or end up having children while in graduate school may encounter unanticipated experiences illustrative of the gendered institutions of academia and the home. Kimmel’s (2011) findings on the gendered politics of housework and childcare would seem to suggest that the significantly less time men spend in sharing these responsibilities would create greater challenges for women to meet the time-intensive demands of a doctoral program. Within a patriarchal culture, men are more likely to reap greater advantages from meritocracy in academia when gendered roles normalize the needs and preferences of men as priority over those of women. Dua (2005) reinforces this idea in her conceptualization of the ideal student:

the ideal student is a male student who has no demands that distract him from his graduate education. If he has any such demands, departments expect them to be taken care of by his partner/spouse leaving him free to exist only for his education and to define
himself as a student. Thus, just as ‘the worker’ with a job is the same ‘individual’ who in actual social reality is a man, the concept of a universal worker excludes and marginalizes women who cannot, almost by definition, achieve the qualities of a real worker because to do so is to become like a man”, the same can be said for the ideal student (p. 10).

Data on racial and gender discrimination and inequality expose the fallacies behind discourses of colorblindness, equal opportunity and the American Dream. Pomerantz (2009) speaks at length of how women encounter unrealistic expectations for what they can say and do; for instance, women are expected to be attractive and smart but cross the line if they are sexy or intimidating. These gendered expectations not only play into faculty’s conceptualization of how female graduate students should perform as scholars but also follow women into the workplace. Kimmel's (2011) review of gender discrimination and inequality in the workplace reinforces the point made by Pomerantz that women are penalized for fulfilling and/or transgressing feminine behavior. These penalties include discrimination in promotion and raises, the glass ceiling and wage inequality (see pp. 257-282). The issue of gender inequality is also compounded by race and level of education (Kimmel, 2011). Taken together, striving for the American Dream appears elusive, even for college educated racial/ethnic minorities in the face of racial housing segregation and discrimination, mortgage lending discrimination, police malpractice, employment discrimination, promotion discrimination, hostile workplace climates, entrepreneur discrimination, health care discrimination, public discrimination and health/environmental racism (see Feagin, 2010, pp. 143-187; Flaherty, 2014; Wise, 2010, pp. 66-126).

Administrators of GSPPs that target historically marginalized populations should periodically evaluate how they practice ethical integrity in the process of meaning-making about graduate education and graduate school preparation. Macedo (2000) argues that educators have an obligation to “tell the truth about things that are important, things that matter” (p. 12). This
can begin with understanding the contradictions of dominant ideology, challenging it and creating a space for counternarratives that intertwine students’ social realities with issues of equity, responsibility and democracy.

**The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge**

A CRT and CRF approach to graduate school preparation privileges the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate and a relevant starting point for analyzing how racial and gender subordination operate in graduate education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009). This tenet honors the “voice” principle of CRT in legal field. Ladson-Billings (2009) explains that in order to understand the complexities of racism and move forward with appropriate recommendations for legal remedies, people of color must be able to share the realities of their everyday experiences. The voice component, she adds, is necessary to better understand the educational system (Ladson-Billings, 2009). The decision to situate the documented experiences and realities of graduate students of color alongside discourses of socialization in the literature review was an intentional move on my part as a student of CRT to highlight the counter-story to departmental integration and doctoral attrition. In this manner, I attempted to build a deeper understanding of the raced and gendered academy and drew attention to problematic norms in doctoral education through the component of voice. This same practice is expected to drive my understanding of students’ experiences with anticipatory socialization in the GSP Scholars Program as well as build a curriculum for graduate school preparation centered on the voices of graduate students of color. This curriculum also functions as a counter-story to doctoral education than that of one shared by a GSPP that opts for a safe colorblind narrative. Ladson-Billings (2009) emphasizes that it is important for people to be exposed to multiple vantage points and assess multiple perspectives before placing stock in any story of truth.
Delgado Bernal (2002) affirmed that students of color are creators and holders of knowledge. Identifying the experiential knowledge of students of color about doctoral education can be found or captured through narratives, testimonios, cuentos, life histories and counterstories (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Henry (2011) describes personal narratives such as those published in journals and/or book manuscripts as “rich resources for curricular planning, re-articulation, and meaning-making” (p. 273). A curriculum that is driven by experiential knowledge redresses White supremacy’s omission and suppression of counternarratives by drawing attention to how racial/ethnic minorities experience race and gender issues in doctoral education, doctoral attrition, a lack of faculty and/or curricular diversity and hostile departmental climates (Zamudio et al., 2009). This content makes it possible for a critical race pedagogue to discuss how these interrelated issues fit into the larger system of academe and serves as a basis for understanding that improving racial/ethnic diversity in academia requires a holistic approach.

The range of perspectives that can be shared with narratives and testimonies contributes a deepened and more complex understanding of racialized and gendered experiences in graduate education given that the intersection of multiple factors (e.g. skin color, class, generational status, etc.) inform different social realities and outcomes for people in the U.S. (Delgado, 2003; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Highlighting the various axes of subordination in one’s lived experience is useful for explaining why the experiences of graduate students of color are not homogenous. Moreover, the awareness of these different social realities make it possible to point out the varying microaggressions that doctoral students encounter in academia and open the space to discuss the requisite critical navigational strategies needed.

Students of GSPPs have much to gain from the community cultural wealth found in the experiential knowledge of past and current scholars of color. As a form of counter-storytelling,
these narratives and testimonies oftentimes offer words of encouragement to prospective graduate students of color and important insights about perseverance despite the difficult obstacles the authors have encountered that resulted in such knowledge. Counter-storytelling accomplishes an important goal for graduate school preparation such that it can caution students that they are not alone in their struggles and that they can benefit from the experiences of past graduate students of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Within Yosso’s (2005) conceptualization of community cultural wealth, these narratives and testimonies represent one or more forms of resistant, navigational, aspirational, social, linguistic and familial capital. In these instances, the reflexive testimonies or narratives serve as a source of empowerment because they offer a framework to understand modes of resistance and perseverance and also help create change (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013; Robinson, 2013). These perspectives add a well-rounded view of graduate education and disrupt attempts to use graduate students of color as uncritical and non-threatening role models (Delgado, 2009).

Equally important, this tenet supports the view that students have valuable knowledge that should position them as contributors to the process of graduate school preparation rather than relying on the educator’s perspective of which topics are deemed important. Compensatory approaches can ignore how students’ other social identities may be affected by the pursuit of graduate education which is likely to affect students’ well-being and/or persistence. Positioning students as co-creators of a curriculum allows them to become “empowered to redefine their education on their own terms” such as leading dialogue on issues relevant to their daily lives while also gaining the academic and critical competencies needed to succeed in a doctoral program (Lynn, Jennings & Hughes, 2013, p. 617; Tan, 2009). With these things in place, this approach strives to fulfill Tierney’s (1997) call for a bidirectional socialization, or rather a
bidirectional anticipatory socialization, within the context of a graduate school preparation program.

**Commitment to Social Justice**

Scholars have criticized the manner in which educators and university administrators claim to advocate for social justice but demonstrate contradictory behaviors, including actions that are in opposition to other social justice advocates (Boyles, Carusi & Attick, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009; Lynn, 2010 as cited in Lynn, Jennings & Hughes, 2013; Stovall, 2010). At the heart of this issue is that people hold varying perceptions of what constitutes acceptable social justice goals and outcomes which in some instances, have led administrators to support exclusionary policies and practices that reinforce the interests of White supremacy and patriarchy (Boyles, Carusi & Attick, 2009; Lynn, 2010 as cited in Lynn, Jennings & Hughes, 2013). Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) offer the example of the growing multicultural paradigm which represents a different stance toward social justice than that of critical (race) theorists. They explain that the multicultural paradigm operates from a liberal ideology and follows an analogous approach to civil rights law in the pursuit of equality. That is to say the multicultural paradigm represents a belief that the U.S. will eventually (i.e. incrementally) achieve equality through the acceptance, tolerance or respect of differences. Differences that Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) argue are grounded in trivial cultural artifacts (e.g. ethnic foods, songs, dance, telling of folktales etc.) rather than working for radical transformation of an unequal system.

Critical race and other scholars alike have been clear that combating systemic inequality is not a solitary effort but requires forging alliances across race/ethnicity, class and gender (Fischman & Haas, 2009; hooks, 2000; Leonardo, 2005; McLaren, 2009). I have explained that one intent of a critical race curriculum is to address the discourses perpetuating divisions among
marginalized groups which works toward building the necessary alliances for organizing against racism, patriarchy, classism and other forms of subordination. Secondly, implementing this curriculum works towards building a critical consciousness of how exploitation and domination function in and outside of academe which Freire (2003) argues is a precursor to the pursuit of transformative action (as cited in Tan, 2009). In this manner, the development and implementation of a critical race curriculum advances social justice in four ways. First, it disrupts the banking method approach to graduate school preparation, a process that can “anesthetize students’ critical abilities” of how they perpetuate exploitation and domination, particularly through discursive practices (Akom, 2009; Macedo, 2000, p. 4). Secondly, it challenges dominant ideology and initiates a shift in consciousness and a reinterpretation of reality, which Reinharz (1992) asserts is a form of transformative action. Third, it makes the community cultural wealth of graduate students of color accessible of which resistant capital is an important feature. Coming to a critical understanding of resistance in and outside of doctoral education and choosing to resist, has the capability of contributing to significant momentum for change (Taylor, 2009). Lastly, this curriculum utilizes opportunities for students in a GSPP to accept the responsibilities of critical citizenship and view themselves as agents of change to fight for a more democratic and more humane society (Macedo, 2000). Creating these opportunities works in tandem with centering students’ perspectives in dialogue on issues related to graduate school preparation and the reimagining of doctoral education.

The Transdisciplinary Perspective

The fields of history, political science, economics, sociology and ethnic/gender studies offer a multitude of useful findings, arguments and foci of analyses that equip a critical race pedagogue to engage students in a holistic analysis of racial and gender subordination in
academia. For instance, the field of history has made it possible to access research on the history and evolution of graduate education in the U.S., especially the manner in which legalized racism and sexism in the U.S. has contributed to the raced and gendered institution of academia. The intersection of history, political science and economics has made it possible to examine the conditions of the 1960s to understand the purpose and motives behind the rise of GSPPs and the U.S.’ investment in the education of racial/ethnic minorities. In addition, drawing from economics and ethnic/gender studies helps us to understand how capitalism creates a stratified society by assigning greater value and social rewards to people with college degrees, especially advanced degrees; how a capitalist economy directly affects the funding of public universities; and how the rise of a neoliberal global economy has influenced the mission of universities to meet the needs of the market by creating a higher demand for science, technology, engineering and mathematics graduates who will be responsible for maintaining our economy’s competitiveness (Macedo, 2000).

Ethnic studies and gender studies have long sought to address gaps in research relating to the experiences of gendered racial/ethnic minorities; theorizing and exposing how White supremacy and patriarchy function; and spurred a growth in critical whiteness studies among White allies. The outcomes of research in these fields as well as sociology have made it possible to write the review of literature for this dissertation topic as well as this theoretical framework. Thus, this dissertation is representative of a transdisciplinary approach to the subject of graduate education and preparation.

Now that I have discussed how the theoretical perspectives of CRT and CRF inform a critical race curriculum, I put forth the following goals of CRT for GSPPs: to collectively engage with students in (1) questioning and analyzing the dissemination of dominant cultural knowledge
and the expectation to perform these dominant cultural norms implicated in graduate school preparation; (2) identifying the manifestation of racism, patriarchy, classism and other forms of subordination within the structural and cultural spaces of graduate education and working together to transform them.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This study sought to challenge compensatory approaches to graduate school preparation through constructing and implementing a critical race curriculum with a small group of students who were members of one graduate school preparation program. Similarly, this study sought to examine how racial/ethnic minority GSP Scholars responded to a curriculum that intentionally discussed race, class and gender and challenged dominant discourses of graduate education. To understand how students of varying social positions interpreted and responded to a critical race curriculum, it was appropriate for this study to follow a qualitative research design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The methods available to this design allow for the production and collection of narrative data that “provide for clarification, understanding and explanation” (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003, p. 9) which advance our understanding behind why and how particular individuals and/or groups experiencing a particular situation form certain meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

In this chapter, I explain how CRT informs the methodological design of this study. Next, I outline the methods of data collection followed by an explanation of the data analysis techniques. Then I describe the steps taken to establish the validity of the study and conclude with a statement of my positionality and its influence on this dissertation. For the ease of understanding the findings outlined in Chapter Five, the participant profiles created from the life history interview are presented at the very end of this chapter.

Critical Race Methodology

Parker and Lynn (2009) maintain that CRT can also function as its own methodology because it informs the selection of qualitative research methodologies that best allow for
identifying the historical, legal and contemporary social context of people of color while also deconstructing whiteness and White privilege. Critical race feminists are especially motivated to utilize methods that are conducive to accomplishing some form of social, political or economic transformation for their participants (Few, 2007). A CRT methodology utilizes methods that allow for the identification and engagement in educational problems (Parker & Lynn, 2009). Because CRT can function as theory and method, it utilizes methods that honor the contribution of voice, which allow us to understand how race, gender, racism, patriarchy, class and other forms of subordination affect the lives of students of color – as a theory, it builds upon ontological and epistemological understandings as it relates to race, class and gender (Parker & Lynn, 2009). At the same time, it is inclusive of other critical epistemologies (Parker & Lynn, 2009).

Through methods that allow for the documentation of voice or a person’s lived realities, such as interviews and focus groups, a CRT methodology moves the researcher to select questions that allow for capturing of the participants’ reality as it is “shaped by convergence of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors that are refined into a set of ‘truths’ that are viewed as real” (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013, p. 251). Moreover, a CRT methodology would shape questions discussed in an interview or group setting that not only discuss their lived realities but move toward discussions of race and racism through an ideological perspective (Parker & Lynn, 2009). The influence of the researcher in shaping the production of data is evident in decisions to deconstruct and expose liberal discourses of colorblindness, meritocracy and equal opportunity as an ideology that serves the needs of White supremacy in the U.S. (Parker & Lynn, 2009).

Development of a Critical Race Curriculum
In Chapter Two I drew attention to the recommendations made by scholars for an inclusive curriculum that incorporated the knowledge of graduate students of color. To do this, I incorporated narratives and testimonies published in academic journals about the graduate experience. I conceptualize these articles as an accessible form of community cultural wealth that is often difficult to find at predominately White institutions. These articles contribute to a counterhegemonic discourse of doctoral education and the authors and participants of this scholarship initiate conversations on how to negotiate one’s cultural dissonance with the values of the academy. Moreover, it is not far-fetched to claim that these published testimonies function as a written form of mentorship that can be drawn upon when trusted colleagues are hard to find.

Another facet of the text curriculum was influenced by the critical tradition. Weiner (2007) argues that critical pedagogues should address topics and issues that disrupt the reproduction of the status quo or those things that students “are not ‘allowed’ to know” (p. 68). To supplement themes found within the published narratives and testimonies, additional articles and book chapters were incorporated to provide GSP Scholars with a primer on compensatory education, dominant ideology, deficit thinking, meritocracy, systemic racism, epistemological racism, etc. In this sense, students would have access to the conceptual language to build a critical comprehension of academia.

It is important to clarify that this curriculum was expected to shift based on the needs of the participants. While traditional notions of curriculum are confined to the idea of curriculum as a static text, I adhere to Aoki’s (1993) conceptualization of the curriculum as both a planned text and lived (as cited in Tilley & Taylor, 2013). Because critical race pedagogy prioritizes the centrality of experiential knowledge, the participants regularly directed the lived curriculum.
More specifically, they discussed how experiences driven by their social identities intersected with the text curriculum or triggered thoughts and questions relating to the text curriculum. Thus, the participants as well as myself, had roles in shaping the curricular knowledge exchanged. Appendix A lists the articles and book chapters that represent the text curriculum utilized in this dissertation. Appendix B briefly outlines the topics of our seminar discussions by week.

Methods

Research Site and Demographics

This study was conducted at a public research university in the Pacific Northwest with racial/ethnic minority students affiliated with a GSPP. In the 2011-2012 academic year, Pacific Northwest University20 (PNU) had an enrollment of over 19,000 students. Most of the student body were in-state residents (81%), followed by out-of-state residents (10%) and international students21 (9%). Women represented a slightly larger portion of the population, followed by men at 52% and 48% respectively. Of the total enrollment, 21% of the population were multicultural students22.

Graduate School Preparation Program

The GSPP targeted for this study, referred to as the GSP Scholars Program for the remainder of this dissertation, meets Simpson’s (2003) designation of a holistic GSPP that provides comprehensive services to students from first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented backgrounds. The services provided include a summer research experience

20 Pseudonym
21 These figures all correspond to the main PNU campus where the study was conducted.
22 The university website did not provide a racial disaggregation of this percentage.
under the guidance of a faculty mentor; GRE preparation; courses on the subject of graduate school, the graduate application process, and life in the professoriate; financial support to present research at a conference; a workspace complete with computers and free printing; informative panels on the graduate school experience; and a host of other scholarly activities. Within the last year, the GSP Scholars Program at PNU changed its eligibility criteria to allow the induction of sophomores. Thus, the program was in its second year of having a “three year track” cohort of students. This program was targeted for the recruitment of participants because of its high number of racial/ethnic minority students that met this study’s desired sample characteristics.

**Gaining Access**

Prior to recruiting participants for this study, it was necessary to identify the appropriate gatekeeper and build the necessary trust to proceed. While establishing this trust can require a substantial amount of time, fortunately, I already had a professional relationship established with the gatekeeper (i.e. the director of the GSP Scholars Program) for two years. The director, who will be referred to as Dr. Aranda for the remainder of this dissertation, played an essential role that made the implementation of this critical race curriculum possible. Dr. Aranda allowed the voluntary participation of his students in the GSP Scholars Programs and even assisted me by reserving a room to facilitate the study. After meeting with Dr. Aranda in June 2011 to discuss an opportunity to pilot the curriculum, approval was granted and it was agreed that the study would take place during the fall 2011 semester.

**Recruitment of Participants**

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23 Pseudonym
I utilized a purposeful sample for this study with a specific interest in the participation of racial/ethnic minorities\(^{24}\) (Patton, 1990). Dr. Aranda generated a list of GSP Scholars who met the study criteria and provided me with a copy of their fall semester course schedules to identify the best day and time to schedule seminars for the study. Once these students were identified as prospective participants, Dr. Aranda facilitated introductions via email (see Appendix C). Following his introduction, I introduced myself to each prospective participant via email (see Appendix D), attached a description of the study, the consent form and provided instructions on how to set up the first interview.

**Sample**

The prospective participant pool was made up of ten GSP Scholars; however, only seven students indicated an interest in participating in the study. Three of the seven initial participants withdrew from the study after completing their first interview and attending the first seminar. In their emails to me, the participants who opted out shared that they encountered changes in their course schedules and had underestimated the time needed to commit to the study. All of the participants who withdrew were seniors who were also in the process of managing the graduate application process.

The four participants who committed to the study represented various racial/ethnic groups, academic disciplines, and class standings (see Table 2). The group was composed of all women: two seniors, one junior, and one sophomore who joined the study a month after the first seminar. Two identified as Mexican/Mexican American, one identified as Black/Filipino and one identified as Filipina/Chinese. Most of the participants were from working-class families.

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\(^{24}\) I was interested in those populations deemed racially underrepresented in graduate education (i.e. African American, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders).
with the exception of Nina who was raised by her mother and experienced their transition into the middle-class. Three were first-generation college students with the exception of Nina.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity*</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Class Standing</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>“Year track” in GSPP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>Black/Filipino</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Communication and English</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Elementary Education (Spanish minor)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savanna</td>
<td>Filipina/Chinese</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Speech &amp; Hearing Sciences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Participants’ chosen racial/ethnic self-identification

Consent

This study was certified exempt by the Washington State University Institutional Review Board. Following Dr. Aranda’s introduction to the study, the prospective participants were emailed the study description and the consent form. The email specified that the researcher would provide a hardcopy to sign at the time of the participants’ first interview. On their scheduled interview date, I reviewed the consent form with the participant and asked if they had any questions. After addressing the questions, the signed consent form was returned to the researcher before proceeding with the interview. The participants were also encouraged to select a pseudonym at this time that would be used to protect their identity in the study.

Data Collection

The data archive of this study consisted of seminar dialogue, one-on-one interviews, online dialogue, documents and a researcher journal.

Seminars

Eleven weekly seminars were scheduled over the fall semester, beginning in early
September and ending in early December of 2011. All of the seminars, with the exception of two, were held in the conference room reserved for the study. The other two seminars were scheduled in the same building but in a different conference room. Each seminar was scheduled for ninety minutes\textsuperscript{25} in the late afternoon and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

A tentative agenda was created for each seminar based on themes in the curriculum and points raised by participants in their interviews or in previous seminars. The direction of each seminar varied according to the concerns and/or questions raised by the participants. At times, their need for technical information prompted me to locate supplementary material, to create informative resources (e.g. how to find a prospective faculty contact), or to provide tutorials (e.g. how to locate graduate fellowships).

\textit{Role of the Researcher}

Freire (2009) introduced a new way of understanding the role of the educator-researcher as a participant in collaborative work. It is appropriate to quote Freire at length to capture the role that I, as the researcher, took on in the seminar space:

the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (pp. 56-57).

\textsuperscript{25} This was the maximum amount of time that the participants had available although it was my initial hope that these seminars could have been scheduled for two hours.
This description rejects the maintenance of hierarchical relationships between the researcher and participants by encouraging the active participation of the researcher in the study. Rather than adopting an authoritative and/or distant role, as a teacher-student, I facilitated discussion, disclosed personal experiences to share a sense of vulnerability and asked questions of clarification when I sought understanding from my participants as the students-as-teachers.

**Interviews**

Fontana and Frey (2005) explain that interviews serve as a basic method of gathering data “to obtain a rich, in-depth experiential account of an event or episode in the life of the respondent” (p. 698). Qualitative researchers and feminist scholars have written extensively on the dynamics of the interview process. For example, researchers sharing feminist values utilize a different approach to interviews than those who do not bring a feminist standpoint which includes the manner in which they view their relationship to the interviewee (Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2008). Berry (2010) describes the approach of critical race feminist scholars as adopting a position of mutual vulnerability, where the researcher must allow themselves to be vulnerable in the sharing of relevant personal experiences to connect with their participants. Berry (2010) explains that mutual vulnerability is a necessary part of an engaged pedagogy. Similarly, other feminist scholars share a desire to achieve a more equitable relationship with participants through “openness, reciprocity, mutual disclosure, and shared risk” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 181) which Ellis and Berger (2001) term reflexive dyadic interviews. These conversational style interviews move towards reciprocity and away from a non-relational and interrogation-style approach that is often utilized to fulfill standards of objectivity. Aside from an interest in minimizing hierarchical relationships, it was also important to be conscientious of asking personal questions of racial/ethnic minorities without revealing anything about oneself which can
generate suspicion of the researcher (Dunbar, Rodriguez & Parker, 2001).

To maximize the richness of the data, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with each participant over the course of the fall semester (August, October, December). Each interview lasted between sixty to ninety minutes long. In some cases, interviews lasted as long as two hours. The interview questions (see Appendix E) were emailed to the participants a week in advance. All interviews were conducted in a room located in a building on a central part of the campus. Before the start of the interview, I placed a sign outside the door that read “interview in process, do not disturb.” The room was also locked to the outside once shut. All of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

**Participant Portraits.** The first interview was designed to gain an understanding of the participants’ background, their path to college, their recruitment into the GSP Scholars Program and their goals for the future. Aside from these questions, the participants were also asked to share their research interests and/or research experience, reasons for pursuing a graduate degree and what they wanted to get out of this study. If not explicitly mentioned, I probed for details about the participants’ racial and gender identity and how these identities informed their perceptions. Careful listening allowed me, as the researcher, to introduce new questions as the interview proceeded in an effort to better understand the interviewee (Reinharz, 1992). The participant portraits are included at the end of this chapter and provide more information about the participant and the identities they brought into the study. Shared themes in this interview aided in generating talking points for the first seminar.

**Mid-Study Reflections.** This interview focused on the participants’ reflection of the curriculum and the progression of the study up to that point. To honor the collaborative nature of the study, this interview was designed to seek ongoing feedback from the participants as
stakeholders to (re)shape a curriculum that met their needs for graduate school preparation (Herr & Anderson, 2005). The questions were designed to prompt the participants to reflect on the curriculum material and the researcher’s pedagogical approach in the seminars. Shared themes across the participants’ second interview continued to inform talking points for the remaining seminars.

**Post-Study Reflections.** The final interviews were scheduled after the last seminar. In this interview, I asked the participants to reflect on and discuss their experience in the study, their perceptions of co-constructing a critical race curriculum and how they would address resistance to the implementation of such a curriculum into other GSPPs across the nation. Lastly, I also asked for final suggestions on the redesign of the curriculum and seminars for future efforts.

**Documents**

In the progression of qualitative research it is not uncommon for the researcher to realize that the scope of data collected needs to be expanded (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993; Herr & Anderson, 2005). Herr and Anderson explain that the researcher’s ongoing data analysis stimulates new reflections and understandings of the data that can reveal unanticipated problems. This was evident in reviewing and coding the first few seminar transcripts which made it clear that the seminar discussions were often led by one participant and the contributions of the other GSP Scholars were mostly to chime in or agree. Moreover, work responsibilities limited Savanna’s attendance to the first hour of each seminar which resulted in the decreased presence of her voice. In an effort to work toward a more equal representation of voice, informal “take home” questions were emailed to participants with instructions to return their responses to the researcher before the following seminar.
Social Media

This study incorporated the use of social media (i.e. Facebook group page) to facilitate the learning process (Schroeder, Minocha & Schneidert, 2010). Facebook was selected for its features that allowed social interaction online (e.g. respond to status updates), the incorporation of multimedia information and the ability to build aggregate knowledge through blog-like features (e.g. notes) and discussion threads (e.g. posting and responding to wall comments) (Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007 as cited in Schroeder, Minocha & Schneidert, 2010). The primary reason for incorporating this medium into the study was to prevent any loss of discussion momentum generated by the seminars and to capture new thoughts or ideas as they occurred in real time (e.g. after conversation with a faculty mentor, family member, etc.). Logging on to Facebook is nearly an everyday habit for many students so the participants were encouraged to actively participate on a private Facebook group page created for this study. Social media platforms such as Facebook serve as a medium to access numerous sources of information. This information can include alternative bodies of knowledge produced by marginalized groups which can be effective teaching tools for students (Kincheloe, 2007).

Researcher Journal

The use of a research journal during qualitative research is considered to be an essential component of the data collection. Herr and Anderson (2005) describe it as “a chronicle of research decisions; a record of one’s own thoughts, feelings, and impressions” (p. 77). In this manner, the journal is useful for the researcher to gain a greater understanding of the nuances of the research process and how they came to understand their craft (Herr & Anderson, 2005). For these reasons, I utilized a journal, beginning on the day of the first participant interview and up until the last interview of the study. The reflections documented in this journal have
complemented the ongoing analysis of the data, especially with writing the preliminary findings. The journal entries allowed me to access a record of my thoughts on what I learned about the process and myself, to identify any prominent topics that resonated with me during the interviews and to consider how this information might help to understand the interviewee’s responses. This documentation allowed me to remain cognizant of any emergent biases, especially with regard to how my perception of the data was influenced by personal experiences and pinpointed where critical reflexivity was needed (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

The journal was also utilized to write summarizing descriptions after the seminars. This included notable facial expressions, body language and perceived interest in the discussion. Because it is logistically untenable to be an insider researcher and engage in precise observations to the extent of an ethnographer (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994), observations were not a primary source of data collection in the study, only summaries of observations based on my memory.

**Action**

Within critical race praxis, there is an emphasis on working with participants to identify a problem affecting their community and engaging in action to transform it. Action is considered essential to the process of building a critical consciousness and for the participants to recognize themselves as agents of change in the fight against systemic inequality. Without action, Tan (2009) states that the cycle of inequality and injustice continues. Over the course of the study, this goal became difficult to facilitate because of the limitations of time for all participants to thoroughly process and discuss the readings before engaging in action. Moreover, Savanna missed the last thirty minutes of each seminar to leave for her part-time job and on two occasions, a participant would be absent which also made it difficult for them discuss their
understandings of the readings with the group. The intent of this study to also meet the needs of
the participants resulted in the action component not extending past a discussion of possible
ideas for action.

It should be noted that within the critical tradition, the action component is
case conceptualized differently. Reinharz (1992) refers to the work of feminist action researchers to
conclude that the interrogation of dominant discourses is a form of action because it has a
“change-outcome” which disrupts the status quo (p. 187). Despite the constraints of the
participants’ schedule preventing their organization for action, I found that one of the
participants did engage in action on the individual level which is described in the results.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with the data collection (Maxwell, 1996;
McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). The ongoing analysis allowed me to adjust interview and
discussion group questions where appropriate and to identify what additional data needed to be
collected (Erlandson et al., 1993). The advantage of this approach was that a preliminary
exploratory analysis allowed me to gain a general sense of the data through the memoing of
ideas, reflections on data organization and the need to seek more data (Creswell, 2008). Writing
memos during data analysis is considered to facilitate the analytical thinking necessary to
perform a more rigorous analysis (Maxwell, 1996).

Each discussion group transcript, interview transcript and Facebook dialogue thread was
reviewed separately and on more than one occasion in order to become familiar with the data

26 These needs were tied to the participants’ class standing, such as those who faced time constraints due to their
involvement in the graduate application process and Savanna’s employment obligation.
(Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). In each review, I noted general impressions of the data such as shared and diverging ideas of the participants as well as preliminary descriptors. Once I gained a working familiarity with the data, I reviewed each data source again with a specific interest in identifying responses that pertained to the research questions and for codes grounded in the theoretical frameworks (Maxwell, 1996). At this stage, I coded the data by assigning short descriptive labels to brackets of the text (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 2008). These labels summarized and/or sorted “particular events, key words, processes” among the data that addressed the research questions or were repeatedly mentioned (Seidel, 1998; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 31).

Following the initial coding of the data, the data was indexed by shared and/or similar labels into tables on Word document. This process was useful to condense large amounts of data into analyzable units (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). It is important to clarify that the interview data for all of the participants were reviewed, coded and indexed in the order in that they were conducted (e.g. data from the first interview was coded and analyzed separately from the second and third interviews). Each seminar transcript was also coded and indexed separately rather than reviewing all eleven as a whole. Each source of indexed data (e.g. seminar/interview one, two, etc.) was reviewed again and was assigned a category (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). These categories emerged from the data rather than being predefined. As each category was identified, the indexed data was reviewed again for fit. If it did not fit, it was transferred into another category when necessary. If the data fit into more than one category, it was cross-indexed (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). Once a preliminary list of categories for the seminar data was identified, the indexed seminar data was reviewed as a whole (e.g. all eleven indexed seminar data) and collapsed into shared exhaustive categories. Throughout this process, the bracketed
data was identified by its origins so not to lose its context (e.g. the following description S3.P4 means the data bracket was from seminar three and is located on page 4 of the seminar transcript) (Maxwell, 1996). The organization of seminar data in this way, allowed me to identify the presence of reoccurring categories across time while still retaining copies of the original data transcripts to preserve the context (Weisman, 1979 as cited in Seidel, 1998).

With the data reduced and organized into manageable units, I reviewed the data labels and its corresponding categories to generate themes to achieve a conceptual schema of the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This was accomplished in two ways. First, a data display was created within a Prezi canvas and was composed of circular diagrams listing the category and the data labels under it (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data displays are considered to be “an important heuristic device” that allow the researcher to see what is happening (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Once the data diagrams were displayed in a manner that they could all be viewed as a whole, I examined these diagrams for new or refined themes. The second approach involved reviewing each source of the categorized data (e.g. interview and seminars) and writing a data summary for each to further refine the identified themes.

**Matters of Validity**

Maxwell (1996) defines validity as “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (p. 87). He explains that researchers must be concerned with the possibility that their conclusion, explanation or interpretation might be incorrect. Denzin (1992), however, argues that “there is, in a sense, no final truth or final telling. There are only different tellings of different stories” (as cited in Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 27). Under a critical theory epistemology, I understand that my relationship to the participant is subjective and dialectical (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose,
In attempting to interpret the participants’ reality, my own reality influenced by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender factors become entangled with the participant’s in the process of coming to a sense of “truth” (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013).

In their discussion of CRT’s (in)compatibility with qualitative research epistemology and methodology, Parker and Lynn (2009) clarify that CRT scholars will need to continue to explore questions of quality criteria as they continue to utilize a critical race methodology in qualitative research. While they do not outline a prescriptive set of validity criteria, they point to relevant insights gained from other qualitative studies that ultimately speak to matters of quality in qualitative research that are relevant to a critical ontology, epistemology and critical race methodology. These insights can be condensed into the following: statement of researcher positionality, social justice validity and participant subjectivities.

Referring to the work of Lincoln (1995), Parker and Lynn (2009) state that providing a statement on researcher positionality allows others to assess the study’s validity by examining how thorough the researcher was in disclosing their subjectivities and how the researcher interprets their positionality to inform their relationship with the participants. Moreover, it allows others to judge the researcher’s own background and rationale leading to the topic and framing of the study. In a detailed, honest and well thought out statement, readers can identify any poorly managed or unjustified biases affecting the findings. To fulfill this quality criteria, I provided a statement of my researcher positionality with careful attention to the recommendations made by Milner (2004) about race, researcher positionality and addressing (un)seen dangers as well as Fine’s (1994) piece on Working the hyphens.

Because CRT espouses a strong commitment to social justice, Parker and Lynn (2009) allude to the idea that social justice validity can be determined by addressing who the research is
for, what purpose it serves and why the research being conducted? They assert that it is the community’s standards for the research that ultimately determine whether the study upholds social justice validity. Parker and Lynn refer to the insights of Wong (1998) who cautions other critical scholars against expecting or searching for the participants to demonstrate a critical consciousness through their perspectives. To do so, would deter the researcher from honoring the participant’s needs or concerns for the research. Evident within the methodology, I “checked in” with the participants to identify what they hoped to gain from the study in the first interview. We proceeded to discuss everyone’s responses at our first seminar meeting and identify if there were any other topics that were left out. Throughout the seminars, I periodically checked in with the participants to assess their satisfaction with our curriculum content. Lastly, their perspectives were also gauged at their second and third interview. All feedback was incorporated into shaping the direction of the remaining seminars.

In the representation of the findings, Parker and Lynn (2009) underscore the importance of capturing the participant’s subjectivities to move toward a holistic understanding of how their subjectivities inform their lived reality. They refer to Bloom’s (1996) methodological design and method of analysis that allowed her to highlight the role of the participants’ subjectivities and how the participant’s chosen and imposed roles dictated the choices she was able to make. Bloom emphasizes that capturing these subjectivities are important for the interpretation of data because without this attention to detail, it can obscure understandings of which choices and decisions are made out of one’s own volition or if they are limited to particular constraints. In my research, sought to capture the participants’ subjectivities through their life history interview as well as probing questions that stemmed from the seminar dialogue. Because CRT and CRF acknowledge the importance of intersectionality and how it influences a person’s lived reality, I
came to this research with the intent of uncovering these subjectivities.

Now that I have elaborated on criteria important to the quality of a critical race methodology, I add to the discussion of validity criteria for CRT research by addressing a couple of conceptual tools from Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) assessment of trustworthiness, or “methodological soundness” (as cited in Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 131). These conceptual tools attempt to illuminate truth value under a constructivist and critical constructionist epistemology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited in Erlandson et al., 1993; Crotty, 1998; DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013). I comment specifically on Lincoln and Guba’s conceptualization of \textit{credibility} and \textit{transferability} because they address important factors that can distort the findings of the study that scholars may inquire about and because this study contains elements that have promise for transferability into other settings. I do not address the \textit{dependability} of my findings here given that it is not useful to explain where, at what point in time, and what factors attribute to the shifts in consciousness. Secondly, I do not provide an explanation for the \textit{confirmability} of findings given that this would be redundant with my detailed description of how I maintained my data archive, indexed and analyzed my data. This discussion justifies the steps I took in considering the whole of my data when describing my findings.

To achieve \textit{credibility} of findings that are a truthful representation of the participant’s views, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend prolonged engagement with the participants in their setting to minimize the chance of random distortions affecting their contributions (i.e. the data). Distortions that can affect the data include particular events that are not typical in the participant’s lives, atypical contextual factors affect a participant’s responses (e.g. last semester in college or finals week) or an unfamiliarity with the researcher. To minimize any sense of uncomfortableness that the participants may have had with me, I honored mutual disclosure and
vulnerability in the interview and seminar process. I consider this attempt successful given that all of the interviews did resemble a conversation, with participants also asking me questions about my background and identifying shared similarities (e.g. family upbringing, sibling relationships, and goals for the future). While I quickly learned that two of my participant’s class standing as a senior shaped how involved they could be in the study and the curriculum content they desired, through follow up questions I was able to contextualize their perspectives from those of different class standing. I was able attribute the seniors’ preferences to the unique pressure of being in the midst of the graduate application process rather than a disinterest in the preliminary research design.

Transferability refers to the ways in which the findings of the study can be utilized for a different context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited in Erlandson et al., 1993). Qualitative researchers understand that generalization is not possible given their understanding that the passing of time affects the findings documented by a study which mean that a study’s findings cannot be replicated. However, with thick description, interested researchers or scholar-practitioners can determine what components of the study are applicable for their needs and context. I am confident that I have provided thorough blueprint and rationale for my research design that will allow those interested in building off of this study to easily identify the logic behind my decisions, what I did, what worked well, what didn’t, the challenges I encountered with the design of the study as well as my own limitations as a researcher. My researcher positionality statement, the limitations of the research and my recommendations for future research were written with the intent to provide others with a helpful direction to improve upon this research.
RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

Milner IV (2007) states that the roles and identities of the researcher are inseparable from and a complex part of research in education. Fine (1998) refers to this notion as the hyphen and calls for researchers to work the hyphen in qualitative research. She describes the hyphen as the place “at which Self-Other join in the politics of everyday life, that is, the hyphen that both separates and merges personal identities with our inventions of Others” (p. 70). Working the hyphen is a process where researchers identify their relationship to the context of the study, their relationship to the participants and acknowledge how they interact with and are perceived in that context. To explain how my roles and identities are inseparable from this dissertation, it is necessary to share research on the self (Milner IV, 2007). This includes a reflection and disclosure of my family history, how I was raised and my educational journey. Delving into my background is pertinent as it has allowed me to work the hyphen in my relationship with the participants throughout the course of this study.

I am a second generation Mexican American woman who was born in Yakima, Washington and was raised in a two parent home. I have an older brother who is a year older than I am and a younger brother who is two years younger than me. My mother was born in the U.S. to migrant farmworker parents and is the oldest of five. My father was born in rural country town in Jalisco, Mexico where he lived most of his early life until he migrated to the U.S. in his early twenties. My mother, who is bilingual, has always been the primary breadwinner in our household and raised my two brothers and myself in a predominately English-speaking home. My mother enrolled in college after graduating from high school but decided to leave school to secure full-time employment as a secretary when she became pregnant with my older brother. My father, a monolingual Spanish speaker, worked seasonally as a migrant farmworker; mostly,
picking whatever fruit was in season. My mother eventually completed a bachelor’s degree in education while taking college courses in the evening and still worked full-time to support our family. At the age of twelve, I witnessed our family’s transition out of poverty into the lower middle-class when my mother became a middle school ESL teacher. She continued her education and also earned a master’s degree.

Because my mother understood the importance of education, she raised my brothers and me to have a college-going mindset. Although I was a second generation college student, my mother did not know what factors someone would take into account when selecting colleges to apply to or how the type of college/university could shape different educational experiences. Like my mother, I decided to apply to in-state colleges so that I could be close to home and figured I would receive the same education as college students elsewhere. My racial/ethnic background allowed me to benefit from a few retention programs during my undergraduate experience. The professionals and faculty involved in these programs were also strong advocates of the McNair Scholars Program. Thus, I was fortunate to enter into a space where my educational aspirations were supported and nurtured as I seamlessly transitioned from the College Assistance Migrant Program and Chicano Education Program to the McNair Scholars Program. These experiences influence how I understand my role in this study as both an insider and outsider researcher.

The rationale for this study started to develop when I began my doctoral program. Throughout my first year, I struggled with the transition and felt unprepared in a significant way despite my participation in a graduate school preparation program. It was difficult to maintain a sense of well-being for many reasons. I entered into my program with a small cohort of two other students, one of whom worked full-time and the other had to manage responsibilities to her
family. This social factor affected why I found my doctoral experience to be unbearably lonely at times and yet, the workload convinced me I was too busy to seek out community elsewhere.

As a participant of college retention and mentoring programs, I was accustomed to being part of a community and having a sense of belonging. At my graduate institution, there was no office dedicated to the unique needs of racial/ethnic minority graduate students. Even if our Multicultural Center intentionally welcomed graduate students of color, the staff would not necessarily have the knowledge to address issues pertinent to doctoral students. For example, I was often confused about how to manage my doctoral experience with regard to collaborating on research; when, how often or where I should submit conference proposals; how to make time for preparing publications; and learning of possible career paths with a Ph.D. I also struggled with how to make sense of the day to day experience, especially when I didn’t find some courses or seminar discussions to be fulfilling. Seminar discussions oftentimes left me confused about the relevance behind dense abstract theory to everyday life and to make matters worse, I felt worn down by the workplace politics I encountered with my graduate assistantship.

Without a space to make sense of these concerns, not knowing if I could be open about them without fear of reprisal and feeling frustrated by hearing a few of peers say “that’s just the way it is”, I sought out research studies on the experiences of graduate students of color. This was a pivotal moment in my first year because within these studies, I found validation for my concerns. It was a powerful realization to learn that I was not alone and that I was not crazy for feeling the way that I did. These studies and narratives validated many of my concerns, critiqued the White supremacist culture of the academy and offered reasons for why it was necessary for graduate students of color to persist. With each article I read, I often wondered, why wasn’t I told this? My attempt to make sense of my experience pushed me to re-think the notion of
“graduate school preparation” and I recognized how vital it was for students of color to receive culturally-relevant graduate school preparation. These are the roles, values, beliefs and experiences I have brought to the research process (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

In researching the self in relation to others, I perceive myself as an insider researcher, because like my participants, I am a woman of color who participated in a GSPP (Milner IV, 2007). Yet, I consider myself an outsider researcher because I was not an alumna of their GSPP. Milner IV (2007) draws from the work of other scholars to point out that it is important for researchers to be explicit about how they have acquired their knowledge about their participants or their communities. To understand how the GSP Scholars in this study perceived their racial and cultural background to influence their experiences and/or perspectives, I began the study with a life history interview to learn more about their family history and educational trajectory. In several instances, the participants made explicit reference to their race/cultural background for different aspects of their experience and at other times, I asked probing questions for the participants to identify the factors that influenced their decision making. To assess what knowledge the GSP Scholars had regarding race and culture in society and education, I asked about their major; classes they have taken with regard to race, class and gender; and opportunities they have had to talk about race at home or in college. The participants’ varying knowledge, experiences and perspectives about race and society became apparent throughout the study whether in interviews, how they approached different topics in seminar discussion or whether they were less vocal but clearly listening, and perhaps reflecting during the seminar discussions.

Within the design of the study, there were several opportunities built-in for engaged reflection and representation (Milner IV, 2007). First, during particular topics of seminar
discussion, I posed questions to bring the group to interrogate their/our beliefs and to identify how some of our beliefs bring us to legitimate and/or reproduce social and systemic inequality. Second, through my observations as the researcher and insights recorded in my researcher journal during the transcription process, I was able to detect which participants were less vocal and identify the types of topics during which they were quiet. To understand how these participants made sense of this and to avoid privileging my perspective over theirs, I shared my observations with them during their second interview in which I asked them how they perceived the topic of discussion or if they disagreed with the perspective being shared. Third, for the group to reflect on major topics of our past discussions, we reviewed excerpts from the transcribed seminars to reach a mutual understanding of the meaning(s) behind dialogue and to reach a meta-awareness of emerging themes. In utilizing critical race theory and critical race feminism, I sought to encourage a *shift from self to system* to consider the roles of policy, institutional, systemic and collective issues implicated within the study (Milner IV, 2007). Moreover, I also addressed how the U.S.’ history of slavery and racism, along with the history of graduate education, has shaped the raced and gendered institution of academia. These frameworks have allowed me as the researcher to address both the social and broader systemic issues affecting doctoral education and graduate school preparation.

To summarize, I conceptualize my role in this study as a committed intellectual and recognize that it is impossible for scholars of social justice research to reach a state of being a “critically super-conscious organic intellectual” (Fischman & Haas, 2009, p. 571). Throughout the process of this study, I became conscious of the limitations of my knowledge with regard to gender issues and how attention to our racial identity often brings us to overlook issues of gender, as well as emphasizing the intersectionality of race and gender in our experiences. It was
likely that I missed opportunities for our group to discuss the intersectionality of race and
gender; however, I had the opportunity to build my own consciousness in the analysis of the data
by delving more deeply into gender studies research and critical race feminism. Thus, this study
led me through a transformative process where I truly came to understand Fischman and Haas’
(2009) conceptualization of what it means to be a committed intellectual. I close with the
following quote

“…an educator who is a committed intellectual is sometimes critically self-conscious and
actively engaged in social networks, but at other times is confused, or even unaware of
his or her limitations or capacities to be an active proponent of social change. They will
continue to be both oppressed and oppressor, even as they struggle to become less of
both” (Fischman & Haas, 2009, p. 571).

Concluding Statement

In this chapter, I disclosed how my positionality as a researcher has influenced the study.
Through a detailed account of my social identities and life history, I articulated how I was both
an insider and outsider researcher. My ongoing reflections over the course of the study made the
limitations of my knowledge visible but allowed me build upon these areas to live up to the role
of a committed intellectual. With regard to the design of the study, I addressed how the critical
race curriculum for graduate school preparation was developed and was expected to evolve over
the progression of the study. Opportunities for the participants to shape the curriculum was built
into the interview questions and seminar dialogue. Their indirect re-shaping of the curriculum
also unfolded when I noted my reflections and observations in my researcher journal and during
the transcription of the seminars and interviews. Due to the overarching interest in exploring the
participants’ responses to the critical race curriculum, the seminar dialogue and individual
interviews represent the primary data of interest. To best capture their responses, Chapter Five presents their perspectives, body language and tone through excerpts from the seminar dialogue, supplemented by my observations as the researcher.

PARTICIPANT PORTRAITS

Nina

Nina is a 29 year old woman who racially identifies as Black and Filipino. She is a senior double majoring in communication and English and has been involved with the GSP Scholars Program for two years. Nina grew up as an only child in a single parent household living with her mother in the Pacific Northwest. Her mother immigrated to the United States from the Philippines at the age of eighteen. Out of the group, Nina was the only second-generation college student; her mother had earned a master’s degree in English and currently works as the director of a nationally-known college preparation program. It was at the age of fourteen that Nina experienced her family’s transition into the middle-class.

As a non-traditional student, Nina explains that the delayed start of her college education stemmed from a disillusionment with the U.S. public education system and curriculum that excluded the contributions of racial/ethnic minorities to society. “I never learned anything about myself or people that looked like me…it got boring to me and I dropped out…of the 9th grade.” Nina’s dissatisfaction mirrored that of many other high school students who find themselves “bored, academically unengaged, and deeply alienated in school” (Noguera, 2008, p. 124). Following her decision to leave high school, Nina pursued full-time employment. She describes her decision to apply to college as a result of an epiphany after leaving work one day, “…the truth is you really need an education or so many bright people would just be stuck doing, you know, jobs that don’t even tap into their brain and the things that they know and the things that
they can do. And I finally realized that I wanted to go to school; and this is so much more my tempo – college.”

Nina’s two career aspirations are to become a faculty professor and to one day start a school for minority youth facing harsh life challenges (e.g. low-income youth, children from single parent households, young in gangs, youth with parents with drug addictions). Nina’s desire to work with minority youth stems from a need she sees within a particular population in her community. “I feel if people in those situations could relate to somebody where they wanted to be [college], then they would have an easier time getting there. But in school there was nobody like that for me.” Nina’s plight was reflective of unsupportive educational environments where students of color report having few teachers and educational professionals that care about them (Noguera, 2008). Thus, the role of graduate education for Nina represents an opportunity to give back to her community. Similarly, Nina views the mission of the GSP Scholars Program as essential in providing the pathway for more racial/ethnic minorities to earn a degree that will validate their voice and provide opportunities for them to address the absence of their representation in education. At the time of the study, Nina was in the process of applying to graduate schools.

**Savanna**

Savanna is a 20 year old woman who is Filipino and Chinese but self-identifies as Filipino. She is a senior majoring in speech and hearing sciences and has been involved with the GSP Scholars Program for two years. As the youngest in her family, Savanna also has an older brother attending PNW University. Savanna grew up with her mother and father in Hawaii although her parents were born in the Philippines. Neither of her parents have a four year college degree from the U.S. but her father earned a bachelor’s degree in agriculture in the
Philippines. She explained that once he moved to Hawaii, he earned his associates degree in nursing and then began working as a registered nurse. Savanna’s mother works as a store clerk in a known tourist shop in Hawaii.

Self-described as “independent”, Savanna credits her own drive regarding her aspiration to earn a graduate degree in order to achieve her goal of becoming a speech language pathologist (SLP). Savanna discovered her passion for working with the elderly population while she was volunteering at her local hospital during high school. While occupational therapy was her initial interest, she was encouraged by a male SLP to change specialties. She decided to intern with him and over the course of her internship, Savanna realized she wanted to switch specializations. “The reason why he wanted to be persistent with me was that he was saying ‘there are few Filipino speech therapists around, especially in Hawaii.’ Even around the U.S…he made a good point and I started to realize that.” Today, Savanna continues working with elderly citizens in an assisted-living facility for part-time employment. Her interest and enjoyment in this field stemmed from the gratitude she saw from the patients she worked with in the hospital. “It was very rewarding and a lot of them were like ‘I’m so happy to see you.’ And so, the residents that don’t get any visitors, I feel for them you know?”

Savanna perceives the mission of the GSP Scholars Program as a beneficial opportunity for students who are underrepresented to be prepared for graduate school. She explains that it has been a pivotal resource in providing information about graduate school and an opportunity to conduct research under the guidance of a mentor. While Savanna already intended to earn a master’s degree prior to her acceptance into the GSP Scholars Program, she states that the program triggered the idea of earning a Ph.D. At the time of the study, Savanna was also in the process of applying to graduate schools.
Rosa

Rosa is a 20 year old woman who racially identifies as Mexican American. She is a junior majoring in elementary education and minoring in Spanish. While she is currently in her second year with the GSP Scholars Program, upon graduating, Rosa will have had three years benefiting from their services. Rosa is the oldest of four siblings; she has two brothers and two sisters. Her parents began their education in Mexico but neither had the opportunity to complete their high school degree. Rosa’s father currently works as a truck driver, and her mother works as a seasonal farmworker.

When asked about her career goals, Rosa passionately expressed that she knew she wanted to become a teacher at a very young age. When sharing the story of her educational journey, Rosa explains that her mother played a pivotal role in motivating her and her siblings to stay in school which was accomplished through a variety of proactive methods. Rosa shared that “she was just always really involved and just carried us around everywhere – from meetings and all sorts of stuff.” For a period of time her mother served as representative for mothers at their elementary school, served as the secretary for the Migrant Education Program and was involved in parent councils. Because Rosa’s mother was actively involved in parental education advocacy, Rosa explained that “she’d take us to different programs that they’d offer, like summer schools or little camps and stuff.” Aside from her mother’s influence, Rosa’s educational trajectory is a prime example of the college-going culture that college-access programs strive to create. Rosa’s experiences prior to her involvement in the GSP Scholars Program include the Migrant Education Program, Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID), Upward Bound, College Assistance Migrant Program and Student Support Services. She affirms that “going to college is everything I’ve worked for ever since I was really young.”
Rosa views the Ph.D. as a tool with which she can help her family and her community. It is also a credential she felt would garner respect. “I think being a woman, a Mexican woman you know, I feel like you don’t have that respect often…having a higher degree I think would make it where people are like ‘okay, what you’re saying is legitimate. You can help. You can do this.’ And so I think it’s also having that empowerment.” At the time of the study, Rosa was in the process of identifying her research interests and searching for a prospective faculty mentor for her upcoming summer research project.

Alma

Alma is a 19 year old woman who racially identifies as Mexican. She is a sophomore majoring in sociology and is in the first year of her involvement with the GSP Scholars Program. Like Rosa, Alma will have benefitted from three years of involvement in the program once she graduates. Alma is the oldest of three siblings; she has two younger sisters. Neither of her parents earned a high school degree and both currently work in an agricultural warehouse. Her father also divides his time between working in the warehouse and as a farm laborer. Alma has also been involved in the College Assistance Migrant Program and came to PNW University as a fully-funded Gates Millennium Scholar.

Alma shared that she initially began her freshman year as a nursing major but switched to sociology a month prior to our interview. At that time she was contemplating career goals. She indicated that her decision to switch majors was difficult because of her longstanding fascination with nursing dating back to elementary school. Alma shared that her struggle with science classes forced her to re-think her original career goal. During a meeting with the director of the GSP Scholars Program, Alma commented that Dr. Aranda walked her through an exercise to identify her passions and strengths. What resulted was identifying sociology as another one of
her passions. What Alma enjoys about the idea of a sociology degree is its versatility and the flexibility of career opportunities compared to a specialization in nursing which she perceived would restrict her to healthcare services. At the time of our interview, Alma was considering a career as a sociology professor.

Alma’s induction into the GSP Scholars Program as a sophomore reflected a programmatic effort to involve undergraduates at an earlier stage in their academic careers so that they might become more competitive candidates for graduate school. She explained that her first year in the program would differ somewhat from other GSP Scholars because she would not be conducting research but would be studying abroad in Italy during the summer. The importance of becoming involved in research brought Alma and Dr. Aranda to agree on “shadowing” the research of a prospective faculty mentor during the upcoming spring semester. Alma’s perception of the mission of the GSP Scholars Program was that it was successful because it was advanced not only by the staff but by the helpfulness of other GSP Scholars in the program as well. “I know today when I presented…there were other scholars that said ‘oh did you know this?’ And then there was another scholar that gave me advice. And just that idea that we’re all like together and everything makes that goal possible – all those goals possible.”
CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study challenge the operation of deficit thinking, meritocracy, colorblindness and postfeminist discourses that are overlooked and/or ignored in compensatory approaches to graduate school preparation. The intention of this study was to address the recommendations outlined by scholars to improve the conditions of graduate school preparation and doctoral education for racial/ethnic minorities. These recommendations were synthesized into a critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation. Utilizing critical race pedagogy in conjunction with a critical race curriculum promoted a deeper engagement with the role that graduate education plays in students’ lives. The findings revealed that students grappled with a recognition of inequality within academia, of gendered expectations and myths of “equal opportunity” discourses. This awareness disrupted the participants’ initial beliefs that graduate programs would be receptive to diversifying their dominant research paradigms or accept different perspectives on the purpose of a Ph.D.

This chapter presents the research findings organized by themes and sub-themes that emerged during an analysis of the data. These four themes include: (1) fighting for credibility (2) navigating gender inequality (3) wrestling with academic socialization and (4) building a critical awareness. Sub-themes are nested within each theme to draw attention to the nuances of how the main idea operated within the lived experiences or thoughts of the participants. Given that the transcripts of seminar dialogue represent the primary data, I present selected excerpts to illuminate the themes. These excerpts are lengthy but necessary to illustrate the range of ideas, feelings, and interconnections of the participants’ understandings (Krueger & Anne, 2000). Quotes from one-on-one interviews are also used to reinforce the themes and supplement the
seminar dialogue.

**Fighting for Credibility**

The most prominent theme that emerged from the data revealed the GSP Scholars’ recognition that pursuing a doctoral degree would entail an ongoing fight for credibility. Evident in the narratives of scholars of color (Villalpando, 1996 as cited in Delgado Bernal, 2002; Gonzalez et al., 2002; Viernes Turner, 2002; Gloria & Castellanos, 2006; Watford et al., 2006; Sulé, 2009; Poon & Hune, 2009) and mirrored in the participants’ experiences, the intersection of their race, class, and gender identity produced life experiences that informed their research interests and scholarly identity. The following testimonies illustrate the participants’ reflexivity in response to the scholars’ narratives, including a recognition of parallel experiences that corresponded to their own anticipatory socialization.

*Validation of Scholarly Identity*

The desire to belong but not necessarily assimilate into the academy prompted GSP Scholars to seek validation of their scholarly identity. This recognition was a driving factor in negotiating a sense of belonging which motivated some women to seek credibility through the “legitimacy” of White faculty. This topic surfaced in connection to Quijada’s (2006) encounter with epistemological racism in his graduate program and his advisor’s demeaning remarks about his chosen coursework and research interests. Nina identified with Quijada’s experience as it related to a concern about how her research interests would be perceived by White faculty.

Nina: I feel someone else wouldn’t take my work seriously. Because my advisor [summer research mentor] had to convince me that it’s worth writing about…that’s one where I related to him. Because I keep – I’m always questioning myself. Like, *you’ll never get paid for that. Nobody will ever buy that book. That’s not real research. That’s*
just what you want to talk about. But other people are researching what they want to talk about and theirs qualifies. I mean White people, you know what I mean? And theirs qualifies as research. And he had to convince me that I can talk about myself and my community and still – and it’s still legitimate research…And he had to tell me that I was right. I’m not making that up and that I should say something – that it’s not in books and it should be…and he’s White and so I kinda needed to hear that from a White person.

Rosa: And that, to me, brings a question…I think earlier in this article he was talking about questioning who he was and being an impostor in his own shoes. And it’s like, I guess we need that reassurance. It’s sad to think back and realize that okay, we need White people to say, you know, whatever we’re doing is okay.

Nina: Yeah!

Savanna admitted a similar concern in her second interview regarding the legitimacy of her research interests by the academic community and those in her field. Her summer research mentor also played a pivotal role in validating research on race and one’s ethnic community.

It kinda makes me feel like oh, is my research enough to even be considered by the schools? So my research interests are multicultural issues and increasing cultural competency - specifically in my field. It’s an important aspect of my field…It kinda makes me think like will my research make a dent in my field? Will it make a big impact? You know, it kinda makes me think a lot, like I know at some point in my research I was like, well do I want to stick with this or do I want to change it to something that has to do with a particular disability and kinda make a difference in speech language pathology? My mentor kept reminding me that you know “Your research is great and it’s an eye opener. It can be an eye opener.” And so I guess I just, I
listen to what she has to say. ‘Cause she’s my mentor and she has many many publications.

It is not uncommon for students in the stage of anticipatory socialization to become concerned about their research interests as they begin to define their own respective niche in their discipline; however race-related research was a central concern. Nina, Rosa and Savanna’s insecurity about the legitimacy of their research interests speaks to two dimensions of Harris’s (1993) theory of whiteness as property (as cited in Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2009). The shared recognition that White faculty hold the dominant and reputable status in the academy, speaks to the operation of reputation and status property in the experience of these GSP Scholars.

Without the endorsement of a White mentor (i.e. their research project having an association with whiteness) or consideration for the views of White faculty on a graduate application review committee, they come to a conclusion that their research may not have reputability. These shared recognitions point to the existence of the white racial frame (Feagin, 2006). This frame explains how dominant White racialized ideas of superiority evoke a need in racial/ethnic minorities to depend on and/or defer to their White mentors regarding the value of their research in a White-controlled social institution, like the academy. Nina drew attention to the connection between race and power, or the absolute right to exclude, where she describes Whites to be in the position to determine what counts as research (Thompson, 2004) and subsequently benefit from a double standard validated by the notion of “colorblindness.” Like many other scholars of color, Nina was frustrated with a racialized double standard in academia (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). Her confidence to pursue the research topic she was passionate about was largely attributed to the validation of her White male faculty mentor.

Savanna’s scrutiny of her own research interests led her to reassess how well her topic
would be received within graduate programs in her field. Her concern with how her field defines a “big impact” in speech language pathology is also laden with underlying racialized meanings. While research on cultural competency in speech language pathology would translate into more effective practices that benefit racial/ethnic communities, Savanna entertained the idea of changing her emphasis in order for her research agenda to be perceived as making a big impact in the eyes of graduate admission committees, committees that are more likely to be made up of White faculty members given the racial demographics of academia. Sadly, this approval appears to override any meaning she or her ethnic community would attach to the big impact associated with SLPs developing their cultural competency. Thus, it is apparent that one’s research agenda also becomes a target for racial subordination.

Rosa also pointed out that this need for reassurance was quite upsetting. The intermittent self-doubt, bouts of impostor syndrome, and sense of invisibility voiced by Rosa is not unlike the concerns voiced by Latina/o graduate students (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The need for reassurance, validation and legitimacy that these women were seeking is not surprising when considering that the academy – and entrance into it - has historically been shaped by White middle and upper class men. Fortunately, Nina and Savanna’s faculty mentors understood the value of complementary theories of knowledge and supported research connected to social justice. However, these instances illuminate the discretionary power held by faculty to socialize new scholars into valued theories of knowledge and potentially obstruct research topics of great significance to one’s community. These defining moments are indicative of the norms associated with academic socialization such that novice scholars of color can be encouraged to view themselves as dependent on the approval of their White mentors (Feagin, 2006). What is not made explicit within many mentoring relationships is how White faculty mentors normalize
and reproduce their academic forms of White privilege when they do not openly question the significance of their power over the development of their advisees as they are formulating their research interests and identity.

This need for validation prompted me to ask a follow up question to clarify my own understandings of Nina’s revelation. I wondered whether her position as an undergraduate researcher contributed to her need for validation from an established faculty mentor of any race, or if race exacerbated her position as an underrepresented novice scholar to seek validation specifically from a White professor.

Araceli: If it was a faculty of color who said, you know, “Your research is worthy. Your research is important.” So does that mean that maybe (pauses) we27 still sort of doubt it? Nina: I will be totally honest. I had an African American mentor and I held his opinion highly. But I mean, I’m a realist…And so I have this mentor and he’s a person of color and he’s young. And I had to think about all the different ways - like I don’t want people to think we’re sleeping together…‘Cause he’s young and he’s attractive and so I’m like great, you know? I didn’t want people to think like he’s going easy on me because he’s also a minority. Because even though - I also hold his opinion as high if not higher - I went somewhere else because I know how the world views it. So I’m perpetuating it, I’m a mess. [Nina and everyone laughs]

Araceli: I’m kind of wondering if both peoples’ voice or both peoples’ opinions hold

27 My intent, as a participant in the study, in using the word “we” was not to insinuate that all participants would share the same perspective but rather to invite everyone (we) to start thinking about their (our) beliefs. Given the quick opening to pose a follow up question, “we” was the first word that came to mind that I knew would not run the risk of constraining the conversation between Nina and myself only.
weight but weight in different areas?

Nina: I mean you’re right; they both have Ph.D.’s but one is older. One is tenured. And one is White. And I mean, reality is, his voice holds more weight except for like, I mean maybe in an African American seminar it doesn’t. But I’m not in those too often. And so then here we are...that’s horrible...And it’s funny because I’m doing something on African American vernacular and not having the African American teacher (pauses) you know it seems like that’s kinda backwards but it’s just - I don’t know. It’s just the reality of it. Like I just, I want to be taken as seriously by as many people as I can. And I know what it usually took to do that. So yeah, that sucks. [people chuckle]

Nina’s further explanation illustrated how the intersectionality of age, race, rank, gender and sexuality complicated her decision to select a formal mentor for her research project. As a Black and Filipino woman, Nina demonstrates how her multiple consciousness made her cognizant of the stereotypes that circulate in society about ethnic men and women that could be used to question her credibility as a scholar (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Her self-proclaimed realist perspective reflects an understanding of the intersecting racialized and sexualized stereotypes depicting Black men as hypersexual and Black women as promiscuous (Andersen & Collins, 2010) which was also compounded by the suspicions that cross gender advising often raises at the graduate level (Dua, 2005). Though we did not discuss the intersection of race and gender in selecting a faculty mentor, gender remains an important factor in understanding male privilege and the politics of mentoring relationships. Bearing similarities to Nina’s rationale, Dua (2005) found that women are often inclined to select male advisors for their faculty rank, power in the department/program because of leadership appointments and for their well-respected networks in comparison to female advisers. While I did not explicitly ask
Nina how a mentor’s gender would affect her perceptions, she did state a desire to select a mentor on the basis of qualities that would serve to garner respect. Selecting a White mentor with the expectation that their whiteness would position her more favorably in the academic world legitimates Bell’s conceptualization of racial realism, or the permanence of racism, because Nina’s choice reproduces the social structures of race and gender. This is an interesting twist on how racial/ethnic minorities may seek privileges associated with whiteness as property within their mentoring relationships. If Whiteness and the male gender carry material and social value, then students of color could circumvent their subordinate status by gaining the validation and legitimacy from White male faculty who hold “property functions of whiteness” in academia (Harris, 1993 as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 26).

Despite their commitment to social justice and pride in their racial/ethnic identity, GSP Scholars are not immune to contributing to racial oppression (Leonardo, 2005). Through the participants’ testimonies, we can understand how race and gender operate to shape their decisions and how particular actions can be rewarded. Without a critical inquiry into the phenomenological experience of becoming a scholar, GSPPs can hinder the development of a GSP Scholar’s researcher identity and indirectly encourage complicity with perpetuating racial and gender stratification in academia. Moreover, colorblind approaches or superficial discussions of race in the academy can invalidate the mission of GSPPs that claim to prepare and empower racial/ethnic minorities to diversify academia and transform their institutional cultures.

_In the Classroom Space_

In addition to the politics of research and mentoring, the fight for credibility also extended to the classroom space. Doctoral students of color often report experiencing racial and/or gender microaggressions in academia, especially within the classroom. Because most
undergraduate courses follow the lecture model of teaching and learning, GSP Scholars are unlikely to be familiar with having their credibility being called into question in spaces where there is an emphasis on the construction of knowledge (e.g. doctoral seminars).

To add to the participants’ understandings of how the D/discourses of doing-being a scholar are enacted in the classroom space, I simulated a hypothetical, but real example of a racial microaggression in action. I asked the participants to imagine themselves as doctoral students in an education seminar and to imagine me as a fellow graduate student peer. I then proceeded to articulate a deficit perspective, accusing Latina/o parents of lacking concern for their children’s education due to their absence at parent/teacher conferences (Yosso, 2005; Olivos, 2004). Not usually the first to speak out, Alma immediately jumped in.

If they were to say that, they don’t see the perspective of what is going on in the family. Those parents are intimidated to go to those meetings because they don’t know the language. Sometimes they don’t offer translators...and them talking and not even getting a single word of what they’re saying - so why would they go if they know they’re not going to get a single word from it...And like them saying that about the Hispanic parents - it comes back to what is going on with the family. They do care. That’s one of the reasons so many of them have migrated here. They want a better life for their children.

The way to get a better life is through education.

To bring attention to the passion behind Alma’s delivery, I asked the group to imagine which emotions would surface in response to this blatantly negative generalization about their racial/ethnic community. I asked them to consider how their emotions would affect the delivery of their counter response and how this might impact their peers’ interpretation of their poise as a scholar. Rosa was the first to comment.
Yeah, I feel like – I know I personally would be very upset and angry. Just even talking about it, I don’t know. You’re explaining it. I know it’s a hypothetical situation but it’s still always very (pauses) I don’t know, to me, it always just makes me mad. And so it would be very hard for me. As he’s [hypothesical doctoral student] talking, I’m trying to come up with a scholarly response to try to even bring in right now. And so I can see how much harder it would be to do that in a seminar. Especially a graduate seminar because if we are very emotional about our answers then it’s going to be like okay, well this person can’t handle what other people are saying. This person can’t (trails off). I don’t know. Just definitely like be a little bit more discredited than everybody else I think, as a scholar while you’re answering.

Interestingly, while the aim of the GSP Scholars Program is to prepare its students for graduate school through scholarly activities, what remains absent is the explicit acknowledgement of the ways that institutional and epistemological racism manifest in research (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Graduate programs dominated by Eurocentric paradigms, a lack of transdisciplinary approaches and rigid faculty specializations can be detrimental to students of color who conceive of their doctoral study as a time to advance their contribution to their communities through research. When distinctions between the nature of undergraduate and graduate education arise in GSPPs, recognizing the classroom as a space of scholarly inquiry requires acknowledging that dehumanizing ideologies and discourses often circulate there. Similarly, acceptable forms of scholarly conduct and demeanor must be recognized as grounded in White male-generated and imposed norms, language forms and roles (Feagin, 2006).

Rosa’s insinuation that a scholarly response must be free from emotion is an issue that has been raised by past scholars who illuminate that these predicaments are not exempt from
becoming racialized and gendered attacks. For instance, female graduate students and scholars can be portrayed as unscholarly or “not fitting in” if their scholarly inquiry and/or conduct exhibits any emotion or emphasizes the value of one’s subjectivity because doing so deviates from traditional masculine norms of being unemotional, rational and objective (Johnsrud, 1995; Garrison-Wade, Diggs, Estrada & Galindo, 2011). For female graduate students and scholars of color, the prejudicial attitudes attached to race and gender operate in tandem. Rosa emphasized the difficulty associated with generating a dispassionate counter response to an attack against her racial/ethnic community in a manner that did not jeopardize her credibility or composure as a scholar. At times, the magnitude of this difficulty can result in women of color remaining silent (hooks, 1990) so to avoid activating the “angry person of color” archetype (Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Gasman, Gerstl-Pepin, Anderson-Thompkins, Rasheed & Hathaway, 2004).

The decision to be silent can mask the thought processes and emotions that operate underneath the experience of a racialized and gendered microaggression. Rosa described the progression of her own thoughts and emotions to include anger, a moment needed to manage her emotions and channel her energy into a tactful response so to avoid a hypothetical reaction from White colleagues that might include accusations of rudeness, being “overly emotional” or intimidating (Lewis, Wills, Wilson & Jay, 2010, p. 6; Gasman et al., 2004). While this imaginary situation raised awareness of how dissent can be interpreted, that awareness does not guarantee that they will enjoy the same White privileges as their peers. Even when being tactful about voicing their perspectives, Native American doctoral students still report that their White peers find them to be confrontational, hostile, angry or combative (Shotton, 2008). Although Rosa had not mentioned a prior encounter with a controversial discussion like this one, it
appeared that she, along with the others, were more readily able to understand the impact of this documented racial microaggression. Taken together, fighting for credibility in the classroom space revealed itself to be a political struggle over who has the power to authenticate one’s identity as a scholar and which identities are rewarded. In spaces where a norm of White masculinity is legitimated and rewarded rather than contested and discouraged, the act of Othering on the basis of race and gender remains unavoidable.

*Sense of Purpose*

Another facet of our curriculum included reviewing the information needed to understand racial and gender stratification in academia. This included the push out rates of racial/ethnic minorities across K-20 education, research on doctoral attrition, faculty demographics, epistemological racism in tenure evaluations and graduate student narratives. Unsurprisingly, several women in the group came to a point of disillusion. This disillusion or sense of hopelessness is not new to scholars and graduate students of color who develop an enhanced critical consciousness and literacy (Hughes, 2004; Fischman & Haas, 2009; Duncan-Andrade, 2009). Moreover, pedagogical approaches that foster a critical reading of the world have been known to result in a period where students’ heightened understandings lead them to report feeling a sense of “gloom and doom” (Fischman & Haas, 2009). For GSP Scholars, this disillusionment can elicit questions behind their purpose for pursuing a Ph.D. in the face of White masculine institutional and capitalist structures that reinforce racial and gender inequality.

During our third seminar Nina voiced her frustration at the realization that her initial expectations about graduate school and the imagined impact of her career were counter to the realities described by scholars of color.

Umm, I feel like the more I do this, the more I have to talk myself into it. Because like
the more I read and the more I go to a seminar or go to like workshops with [GSP Scholars Program] or do my own research or look around - it’s like climbing a waterfall. Like *why am I doing this again?* Like *why did I want to do this again?* Because I have like all these - how it started in my brain was that I was going to change the world. And they were going to publish my book. And then everybody was going to read it in class and all the White kids were going to be deeper and all the minority kids were going to be like *ah finally, somebody said this.* You know what I mean? That’s literally how I saw it and the more I go, that’s just hilarious. I mean I’m gonna do it because I said and now it’s just my ego that’s making me do it but I can’t - not really sure. I don’t, like is there a point? Because I mean, is this what I want? I don’t want to sit here and try to constantly prove my worth. I know what I’m worth. And I don’t want to sit here and you know, you pick apart my lifelong research just so you can tell me so I can be on your staff forever. I don’t want that. And then so what do I want? What am I fighting for? What’s the point? So we can look better on paper?

Professionals that manage college access or GSPPs like the GSP Scholars Program, oftentimes privilege discourses grounded in liberal multiculturalism and/or overlook the fallacy of post-feminist discourses that will raise challenges for their female students of color as they transition into graduate school and professional careers (McRobbie, 2009). These discourses encourage racial/ethnic minorities and women to believe that once they enter into academia, their diverse perspectives and/or interests will be welcomed and valued in the academy. In this manner, it is

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28 McLaren (1995) describes liberal multiculturalism as the belief in an inherent equality among Whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asians; including a disparagement of the notion of cultural deprivation. Moreover, these beliefs assume that the existing inequality in the U.S. is attributable to a lack of social and educational opportunities that allow for equal competition in a capitalist economy (p. 40).
easy to understand how Nina formed grandiose expectations of her educational and career goals. The implications of GSPPs overlooking, sanitizing and/or omitting the challenges encountered in academia unnecessarily lead to inaccurate understandings of institutional and cultural transformation. The omission of this information preserves a romanticized notion of change where the expectations voiced by Nina are not necessarily impossible but could only come to fruition under the alignment of the most optimal conditions in academia.

The beliefs of liberal multiculturalism may indirectly support narratives of redemption which were present in Nina’s articulation of her career goals. Nina envisioned herself as the superagent professor who would have the necessary power needed to overhaul the systemic failures found in the education system through the use of her scholarship and teaching to transform curriculum (Fischman & Haas, 2009). Missing from Nina’s graduate school preparation was a discussion of the raced and gendered institutional politics at work in the hiring and tenuring of faculty as well as dynamics of hostile campus climates as reported by faculty of color. Nina understood that becoming the superagent professor would not be so easy when encountering White students who invalidated non-Eurocentric epistemologies and questioned the credibility of professors of color in the classroom (Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009; Tuitt, Hanna, Martinez, Salazar, & Griffin, 2009; Garrison-Wade, Diggs, Estrada & Galinda, 2011; Flaherty, 2013). For people of color like Nina committed to social justice efforts, discourses of liberal multiculturalism and postfeminism are dangerous because they advocate for false narratives that can eventually dismantle their passion. For instance, compensatory models of GSPPs that fuel discourses of mythical hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009) and frame the attainment of a graduate education as a way for their students to assume the role of heroic superagent can result in students questioning their role in the academy and whether they still
want to pursue an academic career when they repeatedly encounter racial microaggressions (Torres, 2006).

The permanence of whiteness and hegemonic masculinity bring even the most reputable and well-established scholars of color to question whether the academy is a site where transformative resistance can occur (Solórzano & Yosso, 2004). For scholars whose work is grounded in social justice, this question is a reoccurring one. The literature appears to suggest that social justice work in the academy necessitates a periodic renewal of commitment given that “weariness and despair are predictable” in a country where racism is permanent (Taylor, 2009, p. 11). A growth of discourse on critical hope to sustain perseverance has been slowly emerging (Freire, 1992; West, 2004; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Fischman & Haas, 2009). Nina’s question, “What am I fighting for? What’s the point?” echoes the wear of racial battle fatigue on her spirit and indicates a need for ways to maintain a sense of integrity in academia. More recently, Stovall (2013) called for scholars engaged in social justice work to nurture a commitment to self-care in order to relieve the stress on our minds and bodies associated with barriers and setbacks to our work. To the chagrin of students of color, these issues remain silent in GSPPs and the GSP Scholars Program. While these topics are discussed in conference panels intended to support faculty diversity and/or conferences highlighting race or the intersection of race and gender in the academy, the lack of access to counterhegemonic discourses serve to further isolate prospective scholars of color from strategies that are useful to their persistence.

**Elitist Ideologies**

Following several weeks of discussion on the complexities associated with faculty relations, classroom dynamics, graduate funding assignments, and research experiences of graduate students of color, I wanted to understand how the participants’ interpretation of these
events affected their initial perceptions of what it meant to be accepted into a Ph.D. program. Their responses revealed a conscious awareness of elitist attitudes which also exacerbated their fight for credibility.

Araceli: I mean how does this fit in with what some of you were saying last week where, what it means to get into a Ph.D. program? Will people believe that if you get in, you can do this work? I mean, does this [racial microaggressions] fit in with something you originally thought would be possible once you’re in a Ph.D. program? I mean we know racism exists and last week you were talking about “if I get in, these professors agree that I bring something to the table. I’m intellectually competent.”

Nina: But no, not like “we’re good now.” It’s just we’re better than-

Rosa: -our other minority (Nina: Exactly!) friends I think.

Nina: ‘Cause then we’ll be like Hi, I’m Dr. so and so. And they’ll [Whites] be like Doctor? Immediately, what program? You know what I mean? And they weigh it by that. And let’s say it’s neurosurgery, neurosurgery, whatever! You know, let’s say it was that. Then they’d be like, just another way to diminish you, what hospital? Oh it’s not John Hopkins. And if it’s not that, then so on and so and so and so and so on. No matter what, there’s no way out of it. So all we’re trying to do is get us our best chance (pauses) of being respected [laughs].

This exchange is saturated with values, beliefs and attitudes that remain largely unspoken in academia and the GSP Scholars Program. The group admitted to an understanding that despite their intellectual competency, the social reproduction of White elitist ideologies would still subject them to markers of status like institutional affiliation. The paradox of GSPPs advocating for higher education is that its students are still invisibly placed along hierarchical social
categories despite earning graduate degree(s) (Apple, 1995). Nina pointed out how elitist ideologies operate to maintain these categories among the most highly educated groups through the use of institutional affiliation as a marker of where one is on that hierarchy and the level of respect that is warranted. Nina and Rosa came to the conclusion that acceptance into a doctoral program would not signify that they had won their fight for credibility but rather that they would be perceived more favorably than other people of color. Though not explicitly stated above, it is apparent that these women understood that privileged sub-groups (i.e. graduate students of all racial/ethnic backgrounds) are not exempt from being subjected to the divisive nature of elitist ideologies.

It is also important to mention that while all individuals are subjected to the oppressive nature of elitist ideologies, they also manifest differently across race, class and gender. In the past few years alone, two examples signal to the American public that a person of color’s fight for credibility is never ending and perhaps unattainable as long as racist deficit scripts are circulated and legitimated. Donald Trump publicly called into question President Obama’s educational qualifications to have secured admission to Columbia and Harvard University (Fouhy, 2011). Similarly, news of African American high school senior Kwasi Enin gaining acceptance to all eight ivy league institutions garnered racist attacks from members of Reddit, a social media news website (Martinez, 2014). Both instances illustrate that even when racial/ethnic minorities possess meritocratic achievements to compete for coveted opportunities, in this case, ivy league admission, White elitist ideologies often through the critique of affirmative action, allow for these achievements to be delegitimated. All women also encounter a similar plight as they secure coveted positions that were previously dominated by men; however, raced women encounter the operation of both White and masculine elitist ideologies.
Nina and Rosa’s exchange on the fight for credibility reveals that these thoughts are already occupying the consciousness of GSP Scholars and serve as justifiable grounds for the GSP Scholars Program to evaluate its ethical-political responsibility to its students. GSPPs are in a position to incorporate dialogue about the social construction of elitism, the implications of elitist values becoming more widely adopted among racially diverse populations, elitism’s function to serve the interests of the most privileged in a capitalist economy and the ways in which elitist values operate as a divisive tool. Omitting this topic in graduate school preparation efforts could lead GSP Scholars to believe they will be perceived as equals and/or be ill equipped to recognize when race, class or gender privilege is operating to position others at an unfair professional advantage. This critical illiteracy reproduces the “self-blame” function of meritocracy and leaves students of color unable to thoroughly explain the contextual factors shaping their stratification in society.

Navigating Gender Inequality

With each passing year, women represent larger numbers of students who matriculate into U.S. doctoral programs, yet their daily experiences are usually ignored. Nina, Savanna, Rosa and Alma came to our seminars with experiences that spoke to their raced and gendered identities; these included ways in which their identities impacted their relationships in private and public spheres. These issues illuminate the penalties of patriarchal masculinity that define the parameters of heterosexual romantic relationships, prescribe unequal gender roles in the family, and stigmatize successful women in the workplace.

Gendered Roles & Relationships

As women of color aspiring to earn a graduate degree, the participants’ identities triggered an awareness of new issues related to gender, power and education that revealed
unequal social outcomes between women and men. Nina pointed out how values of patriarchal masculinity determine taken for granted but usually unspoken standards of acceptable heterosexual relationships and how she anticipated that these standards would impact her life while pursuing her Ph.D.

Nina: One thing that did cross my mind about that is that I would have to do it in place of a family.

Rosa: Yeah! [looks attentively]

Nina: I didn’t mention that but that’s one thing – like I’m so used to that thought that I forgot to mention it but (pauses) that’s what a Ph.D. means to me. And I’m pretty sure it doesn’t mean that to a man. To me, it means I might die single because it’s like – you know like it’s intimidating for a woman to have that kind of power and that kind of education. And if I don’t have a man who also – who finds me attractive and I find him attractive and we’re on the same level and he can handle that – you know what I mean? I’d feel like a man – that’d be real easy. He could marry anybody. No one would look down on him for marrying beneath him, you know what I mean. Oh, but let me have my Ph.D. and I want to marry a garbage truck driver and everybody’s gonna talk shit. No matter what.

Rosa: I totally agree with that…And my thought right now, I’m like purposely pushing aside even thinking about having a family in the future because I need to get that Ph.D. Or I need to finish my graduate studies and like –

Nina: It’s scary!

Rosa: Yeah.

Nina articulated a series of concerns and personal observations that contradict the promises
offered by postfeminist discourses, namely those that claim women of the 21st century enjoy the same freedoms as men with regard to obtaining a successful career and satisfying marriages (McRobbie, 2009). For Nina, pursuing a Ph.D. meant an unspoken acceptance that she would experience greater difficulty in finding a romantic partner or would experience social criticism if she chose an unconventional partner. The grave belief in the possibility that she could “die single” emphasizes the discursive power of patriarchal masculinity to penalize women who transgress dominant constructions of femininity and by implication, challenge the gendered role of hegemonic masculinity in a relationship. This is not an exaggerated concern; for example, Dowling (1981) found that women who are financially independent oftentimes have a more difficult time securing a relationship (as cited in Kimmel, 2004, p. 12). Nina briefly touched on how this issue is further compounded by attractiveness where not being deemed as attractive serves as an exclusionary mechanism, or form of gender power (McRobbie, 2009) in relationships. McRobbie (2009) explains that women encounter and negotiate discursive practices of femininity that create challenges for highly educated and career ambitious women like Nina in the domain of relationships. There is an unspoken understanding that women contend with a plight of self-perfectibility, where a feminine identity requires a lifetime attention to physical appearance that is usually fulfilled by the fashion and beauty industry (McRobbie, 2009).

Nina spoke more extensively on how patriarchal masculinity allocates more relationship privileges to men than women; however, despite this broad generalization, her statement indirectly insinuated that men of lower socioeconomic status (e.g. garbage truck driver) and men who are “on the same level” are also penalized by the expectations of hegemonic masculinity. Men of a low socioeconomic class are socially discouraged from pursuing a romantic
relationship with a woman of a higher socioeconomic class or risk attacks to his masculinity. At the same time, men of a similar socioeconomic class as a woman with a Ph.D. also contend with maintaining their own definition of masculinity and how it informs their identity. Nina’s statement “...and he can handle that” underscores that even men of a similar social standing as women might experience and have to manage threats to their masculinity. Aside from the nuances of masculine identities, Nina pointed out that it is an acceptable social norm for men of middle or upper-socioeconomic classes to cross class divisions in the pursuit of a relationship with a woman; however, men from working class backgrounds are not afforded these same privileges because doing so would not allow them to fulfill the dominant patriarchal role. Despite these taken for granted social practices, Nina emphasized that women, no matter what class background, are penalized by gender roles defined by patriarchy in the domain of relationships. She demonstrated this with her skepticism about the pool of available men who would feel confident with their masculinity to accept a relationship with a woman who had an equal or higher level of education and a prominent career.

Rosa expressed a similar sentiment as other Latina doctoral students and gave thought to the ways in which pursuing a doctoral degree would be complicated by negotiating gendered cultural expectations, such as the significant energy required to maintain a relationship, marriage or family (Gloria & Castellanos, 2006). Relationships and/or a marriage were perceived as carrying additional gendered cultural responsibilities for Rosa as a Latina woman that would divert time away from her doctoral work or threaten her ability to complete her degree. Rosa’s statement illustrates how the regime of personal responsibility as a tool of patriarchy coerces women to make the right choices (e.g. alter their plans for a family or relationship) while ignoring and leaving intact the gendered privileges afforded to men (McRobbie, 2009),
privileges that have allowed men to enjoy success in academe. At the doctoral level, Dua’s (2005) conceptualization of the ideal student explains one way men benefit from gendered privileges in a masculine institution. These privileges include being exempt from responsibilities that are assigned to the female gendered role (e.g. cooking, cleaning, being a supportive and nurturing partner and/or parent) which are time intensive tasks. Dua explains that this release allows men “to exist only for his education and to define himself as a student” (p. 10). Given their intermediate transition into a new social position, Rosa and Nina acknowledged that becoming scholars poses a “scary” reality for ambitious women of color who also desire to have a fulfilling relationship and family life.

Savanna’s graduate school aspirations also forced her to confront discursive practices of patriarchal masculinity as it affected her existing relationship. Merely being in a position where she was preparing for graduate school was enough to trigger attitudes of disapproval from her boyfriend’s family. In a relationship that was on the cusp of transgressing gendered normative standards, Savanna’s experience bore similarities to Nina’s earlier explanation.

I have a boyfriend and his Korean auntie was saying that “You know, your girlfriend’s in school and she’s going to go into graduate school, but you know, it’s going to look really bad if you’re not gonna be at the same level as her. And you’re gonna, you guys are gonna cause problems – or that’s gonna cause problems”...I never thought about that but I still don’t really think it’s – I don’t know where I’m going but – you know, it’s like okay, say my boyfriend was going to graduate school, would you say the same for me if I was not going to school?...I mean what difference does it make? I just don’t understand.

Savanna shared that while she did not give prior thought to how differences in educational attainment would affect her relationship, she had to confront the patriarchal views about gender
roles held by Jesse’s aunt. The messages conveyed by Jesse’s aunt illustrates the power of patriarchy to maintain dominant gender roles through discourses legitimated by family (Connell, 2009). Savanna’s story revealed how Jesse’s aunt used discourses of patriarchy to pressure Jesse to think of how Savanna’s pursuit of a graduate education would affect or threaten his identity as a man. Outside the scope of Savanna’s experience, we can witness how patriarchal rhetoric is effective at penalizing women like Savanna who strive for a career or independence afforded by a graduate education, if Jesse were to end his relationship. Differences between Savanna and Jesse’s aunt on views of gender roles are not uncommon given that they are from different generational groups, ethnic groups and differ in level of acculturation (Kimmel, 2004). These factors explain the difference in beliefs between Savanna, as a younger Filipino American woman and that of Jesse’s aunt, a traditionally-raised Korean American woman. Savanna’s early departure from this seminar did not allow us to discuss this issue further as a group; however, she was able to elaborate further in her second interview.

I don’t agree with her point of view because I mean, so what? So what if I want to be the breadwinner of the family? What if I want to be? I’ve always been independent. What if I want to be the person who makes the money because who knows what’s gonna happen. You know? Like I want to make my own money for myself...it’s like, it does put an inequality between the female and male because who says that males are supposed to be smarter? Are supposed to be the one making the most of the money? I’m pretty sure his other family members feel that way. His mom has told him that too.

Savanna disagreed with the subordinating beliefs of patriarchy that create an expectation for

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women to become financially dependent on men without regard to the possibility that an event may change that. Her reflection augments Kimmel’s (2011) assertion that gender differences, or rather, discourses of gender difference (e.g. men are the breadwinners) are the product of gender inequality (e.g. women/men should take all appropriate measures to avoid relationships that violate gendered normative standards) and not the other way around. Savanna refused to allow these beliefs to affect her desires for financial independence or dictate the parameters of her relationship. Instead, she chose to interrogate the origins of gender roles by asking who socially constructs gender. While Savanna did not explicitly name a who, Feagin (2010) reminds us that sexism is endemic such that the U.S. carries a history of state and federal laws that were created by elite White men who portrayed women for centuries as “unequal by nature and thus in need of male control” (p. 199).

Savanna’s decision to interrogate the historical origins of sexist ideologies represents how personal experiences trigger critical inquiry and an expansion of critical consciousness. The space to openly discuss gender, power and education allowed Savanna to not only name the oppressive functions of patriarchy as it affected her relationship but also illuminated how women perpetuate a patriarchal culture (hooks, 2004). Fortunately, Savanna felt comfortable with negotiating a definition of gender that felt right and made sense to her (Kimmel, 2004); however it became apparent that she would have to contend with more than one woman in Jesse’s family who supported the maintenance of patriarchal gender roles.

Negotiating Power in Patriarchal and Capitalist Culture

Aside from romantic relationships, everyday social relations were another domain where GSP Scholars anticipated facing hostility from men. These concerns related to attacks on one’s sexuality, examining our connection to power, and addressing feelings of guilt.
Nina: And then I’m like, I don’t know. I don’t want anybody to be like “well she’s definitely a bitch or a lesbian.” You know what I mean?

Rosa: Yeah

Araceli: Oh, I didn’t think about that.

Nina: Because for women that have power, and I’m sayin’ I do believe that having a Ph.D. is having power, because it’s a title that resonates with people. And if just your title will resonate with somebody then you do hold a certain amount of power. And women with power are always accused of being bitches or lesbians. And I don’t want men to be like, I can’t approach her. Ughhh, it’s a mess.

Rosa: The power, the Ph.D. carrying power – sometimes that’s what I thought a lot before and I know I want to do this and I know I want to pursue graduate study and then I think about it like, do I really just want power?

Nina: Ah, I know!

Rosa: And I feel bad about, you know, wanting to pursue a Ph.D.

Nina: Yeah! You’re one of them! I know, me too! (laughs) I think that all the time [sighs].

Rosa: [laughs] And it’s kinda like a dumb thought. Like whatever you know. But it’s like, I don’t know - it scares me ‘cause I don’t want to try to do my graduate study and try to pursue a Ph.D. when it’s like I come to the realization that oh I just want to do this because I want to have this title and I’m going to have so much power. I know I love all this stuff but you know it’s just scary too.

Nina: I know what you mean! ‘Cause I love it too. But couldn’t I just love it with no title?
Rosa: Yeah

Nina: Couldn’t I just work at the mall and come home and read my work, you know what I mean?

Rosa: And then that goes back to the part, well then if you don’t have that, how are you going to change things?

Nina: **Exactly!**

Within this excerpt, Nina and Rosa raised three interrelated concerns. The first made reference to ways in which patriarchal masculinity attempts to subordinate women who deviate from the traditional feminine gender role (i.e. obtaining power from a Ph.D.) through the use of discursive practices. Patriarchy attempts to reestablish its masculine power through subjecting women to multiple forms of marginalization; one example is an attack on sexual orientation, usually through the use of labels such as “bitch” “lesbian” and “dyke” (Kimmel, 2004) which carry a negative stigma. These terms are often used to create a hostile and oppressive culture to discourage women from veering away from normative femininity (Kimmel, 2004). Lorde (2010) also acknowledges how patriarchal masculinity operates at the intersection of race and gender to penalize African American women for being openly assertive. Within the African American community, there is an understanding that heterosexual Black men are scarce; African American women who seek a same race partner but do not adhere to feminine norms are portrayed as undeserving of Black men (Lorde, 2010).

Nina’s assertion that a Ph.D. held power brought Rosa to openly question her intentions for pursuing a Ph.D. She feared the possibility that attaining power would be the primary reason driving her pursuit of a graduate degree. While I missed the opportunity to ask Rosa to explain why desiring power would be a bad thing, hooks (2004) encourages women to reflect on their
role in the perpetuation and maintenance of patriarchy and to be conscientious of any lust for power. I suspect that attainment of power (i.e. Ph.D.) is also laden with the fear of acquiring the domineering, individualistic, and exploitative characteristics associated with patriarchy. It is worth mentioning that in the GSP Scholars’ explanations of what it means to earn a Ph.D. and how they described their career goals, it was clear that they have a desire to use their education and their expertise to serve and empower their communities.

Nina pushed the conversation further by interrogating why it was necessary to participate in the formal system of graduate education to earn a title when she could read and engage in research independently. In everyday dominant discourse, it is generally accepted that “that’s just the way things are”; if one wants to become a researcher, one pursues the formal training to do so to be recognized as a researcher. A question like Nina’s is not usually met with an explanation that discusses the historical factors that shaped the dominant ideology of formal education. Illich (1977) explained that in the early seventeenth century elite White men circulated the belief that “man was born incompetent for society and remained so unless he was provided with ‘education’” (as cited in Prakash & Esteva, 2005, p. 17). Traces of this ideology are apparent in Rosa’s belief that without a Ph.D., the ability to initiate change was less likely. This perception is not uncommon. Among oppressed groups, a desire for change may not move beyond hope as capitalist ideology has effectively functioned for years to convince marginalized people that they are powerless in a system where structural change is formally accomplished through professions requiring an advanced degree (hooks, 2000). hooks (2000) rejects this ideology and maintains that exploited and oppressed groups have the power to participate in organized resistance against discrimination. Nina and Rosa perceived the attainment of a Ph.D. as a prerequisite and perhaps the only means to accessing positions where change could be
accomplished. This recognition led me to note that there was a need for expanding our understanding of personal agency, one that could be informed by the history and role of community organizing efforts and grassroots social movements in accomplishing change. This would also include a need for opportunities to theorize ways in which professionals with a Ph.D. could complement the efforts of grassroots social movements as scholar-activists.

*Performance of Gender*

The increase in doctoral degrees conferred to women has influenced a demographic shift in the workplace, specifically with regard to professions that have historically been occupied by White men. Nina’s position as a GSP Scholar brought her to think about the difficulties associated with being a woman of color in graduate school and eventually, the workplace as it related to negotiating patriarchy and racism.

One thing I find fascinating about that is that I feel like specifically for women of color who are going to grad school, it’s like I feel like our lives are gonna be like this constant balance of masculine and feminine. Like we’re going to have to tone it up and turn it down, turn it off and turn it on all the days of our lives. We turn it up so that we can be respected and so that we can get jobs. And so that people believe that we’re smart. And so people won’t think that we got there solely for affirmative action...And then we’re gonna have to tone it down and make ourselves more feminine by dumbing down so that our men won’t be threatened by us. So our bosses who are men won’t be threatened by us. So other women won’t be threatened by us. So White women won’t think we’re megabitches. Because I mean if you already thought I was a bitch. And now I have an education, you’d have to think I was the worst bitch ever. So like that’s gonna be nuts. And that’s what I think it is mostly. I think that’s the biggest difference for women
of color with Ph.D.s and women of color without them. Because I know White women are gonna have to do that too. It’s not like White men love their women to be smarter than them, you know what I mean. So I know that they have their own thing. It’s even more so for a minority woman. And to choose it says a lot. Why are we doing this again? [laughs] Why are we choosing this?! [laughs]

Nina spoke of the binary characteristics involved in the everyday performance of femininity and explained the challenges she foresaw for women of color because of their multiple marginalities. Women would have to engage a particular degree of self-policing to read various social contexts and determine the appropriate gendered behavior for each situation. Nina gave an example of how seeking employment involved more than just preparing for an interview. She stated that women of color would also need to skillfully perform a hybrid of White feminine and masculine characteristics that would command the respect and amiability to be perceived as a competent candidate while simultaneously assuaging any raced/gendered fears (e.g. exuding a type of confidence that would not be interpreted as threatening and/or emasculating because of White patriarchy’s social construction of racial and gendered stigmas). Gender studies scholars have affirmed the difficulty of such a performance (McRobbie, 2009; Pomerantz, 2009; Kimmel, 2004) and McRobbie has asserted that embodying complete perfection as it is has been defined for normative White femininity is seemingly impossible and out of reach for women of color.

Nina’s insinuation that the presence of an educated woman of color could be threatening to a future male supervisor (i.e. boss) is not far-fetched; Kimmel (2005) explains that diversity initiatives designed to achieve gender and racial equality create a sense of defeat among White men. The workplace has historically been intertwined with the masculine identity of White men, especially middle-class professions. Thus, the presence of groups that threaten their access to or
maintenance of scarce professions can trigger their “class-based gendered rage” against women, racial/ethnic minorities and other subordinated groups who are perceived as invading White masculine domains (Kimmel, 2005, p. 220). This rage could serve as one explanation for Smith’s (2003) findings that African American women often encounter less coaching, support, mentoring and other career assistance in the workplace. Nina concluded that making the decision to “choose it” (i.e. the Ph.D.) comes with a series of ramifications for one’s future - topics that were not discussed by the GSP Scholars Program.

Gendered Microaggressions

Microaggressions are prevalent in the gendered institution of academia and take a multitude of forms. Understanding the politics behind the allocation of graduate funding helps explain the risk of doctoral attrition among women and students of color. Our curriculum included a discussion of an excerpt written by Jessica Smartt Gullion (2008) titled “Scholar, Negated” that spanned issues of sex discrimination, gender expectations, departmental politics and navigational strategies. The GSP Scholars learned of Gullion’s plight as a pregnant doctoral student who was near graduation and was notified shortly before her last semester that she would no longer have a teaching assistantship because her impending departure to give birth would be considered disruptive. The women were angered, disappointed, and bewildered that a female faculty member in a position of power would withdraw a teaching assistantship on the assumption that Gullion would not be able to manage the responsibilities of parenting and graduate school but rather be distracted by motherhood.

The women’s feelings of anger and confusion about Gullion’s department chair partially stem from the assumption that because the department chair was female, she would be more sympathetic or flexible to Guillion’s needs. This situation illuminates how patriarchal norms are
legitimated by a female administrator and speaks to the power of departmental administrators to maintain a culture of masculine hegemony. Our discussion addressed the sensitive nature of challenging sex discrimination given that Gullion’s departmental chair was also her committee chair. After brainstorming strategies to navigate the situation and revealing how Gullion’s situation unfolded, there was a great degree of frustration. Nina pointed out that a man’s commitment to his education would never be questioned nor would he be penalized for starting a family on the assumption that he would be distracted by fatherhood. She also commented on the double bind women encounter with regard to meeting and/or transgressing gendered expectations of motherhood.

Another thing that was trippin’ me out was like, well when you have a baby, people will automatically assume if you’re a woman, that your job is gonna take the back burner.

And if your job doesn’t take the back burner, then they’re like “what kinda mom is she?”

So it’s like lose-lose. I’m a bad mom. I’m a bad employee, you know? It’s unfair.

Working mothers often encounter stigmatizing attitudes in and outside of the workplace (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007). Nina stated that if women challenge the gendered role of motherhood and maintain the same level of dedication to their career, they are criticized for not being a good mother. Rosa offered an important counter-story to the topic of doctoral attrition in her connection between this gendered microaggression and its relationship to creating a culture of attrition.

What if she didn’t complete her Ph.D.? Then yeah it’ll look bad on her but then like I don’t know – it says a lot of the program. It can’t support it’s, it can’t encourage its students. It can’t support them.

Rosa understood that there were factors outside of a graduate student’s control that could lead to
doctoral attrition, especially if financial support is withdrawn for discriminatory reasons. Golde (2005) affirms that departmental practices (e.g. allocation of financial support) and cultural assumptions often create conditions that facilitate attrition. In short, the space to discuss our identities as women of color and our concerns about gendered expectations allowed us to develop a more thorough understanding of gender inequality. More importantly, naming these inequalities was an essential step so that we could begin to understand how to navigate and challenge these situations.

**Wrestling with Academic Socialization**

A hallmark of the GSP Scholars Programs is the undergraduate research experience. Nina, Savanna, Rosa and Alma articulated several experiences in their anticipatory socialization that bore connections to the stressors reported by doctoral students of color. While their anticipatory socialization offers a brief introduction to the culture of academia, many significant insights for graduate school preparation remain inaccessible because they are tied to the varied experiences of doctoral socialization. This includes key knowledge of the attitudes, beliefs, values, knowledge, modes of thought, and expectations associated with membership in academe and one’s field (Gardner, 2010; Nettles & Millet, 2006; Austin, 2002; Tierney, 1997). These are the implicit processes of doctoral education; one goal of our curriculum was to fulfill Milner’s (2004) recommendation in making the implicit processes of socialization *explicit*.

**Recognizing, Resisting, and Reproducing Elitist Attitudes**

I argue that compensatory models of GSPPs that do not offer a space or sufficient time to critique the dominant ideology and discourses of graduate education position racial/ethnic minorities to become susceptible to adopting the values of academe, including those that are elitist and oppressive. In a compensatory framework of graduate school preparation, students are
encouraged to conform to the attitudes and practices of their discipline in order to be recognized as scholars within their academic communities. I wanted the GSP Scholars to critically reflect on their development as researchers. I began with problematizing the views I received throughout my graduate education, including those I legitimated, challenged and struggled to resist. I disclosed to the group the ways in which I found myself adopting new attitudes about what makes a credible scholar and how those attitudes were beginning to shape my judgment of other students. I explained that once I recognized the values I had internalized, I had to put myself back in check\(^\text{30}\) and cautioned the GSP Scholars to be conscientious of this in their own socialization. This phenomenon was not far-fetched as Rosa had begun witnessing the role of elitist attitudes play out in her search for graduate programs.

Rosa: That’s so true. Like right now how you’re saying we have to check ourselves into what I guess dominant culture has- what we’ve perceived in dominant culture and into how we think. I was looking into programs for education and I did see a lot of oh you can get a Ph.D. in - oh you know, Leadership Education or something like that - And you can get your Ed.D. And I was like well... [Rosa laughs]. And putting them in order in my head, like a preference in what would look better, I guess you know. I was like well, I guess I should do a Ph.D. because you know people will take me more seriously. And that’s, I don’t know, now thinking about it, that’s one thing I guess I have to check myself now too more often but yeah [trails off].

Nina: But it’s hard ‘cause I don’t want to perpetuate this sick ass cycle but doesn’t it

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\(^\text{30}\) To put oneself “on check” is a colloquialism used within particular communities, usually racial/ethnic communities from Generation Y to signify the need to re-think one’s behaviors and/or attitudes.
count for something? Like I made fun of my ex ‘cause he goes to the University of Phoenix. *How do you even go to the University of Phoenix?* He’s like [imitates a bragging tone] “yeah, I’m in college too!” I’m like, [switching to a sarcastic tone] “whose your mascot?” [everyone laughs] But......eghh - but the best I can say is he’s *trying*. I mean (pauses) *IT IS LESS!* [everyone laughs] Like he didn’t have to do what I had to do to get here - and I mean there should be - I don’t know. Like when is it - when are you being (pauses) an asshole, like stuck up and when are you right? You know?

Rosa and Nina easily recognized elitism but the decision to resist or legitimate that attitude was unclear. This decision was especially complicated if they had a stake in benefiting from elitism. Though only a junior, Rosa had already picked up the idea that a Ph.D. held greater prestige and respect than an Ed.D. While Rosa did not share where she received this message, it is not uncommon for these views to be circulated among the GSP Scholars Program, faculty, mentors, GSP Scholar alumni or within the media’s recognition of who is an expert. At no point in our conversation did the women mention any knowledge of the purpose behind separate professional and research degrees; rather, Ph.D.s were viewed as superior.

Nina wondered if there were particular situations in which elitism had merit. Gaining admission to a selective research university had more value in what it meant to be in college for Nina. Despite commending her ex-boyfriend for pursuing higher education, Nina implied that there were distinctions among the expectations, diligence and varying efforts that are required to earn a degree from a large research university in comparison to an open enrollment online for-profit institution. She hesitated to completely embrace this elitist perspective because the decision to further one’s education was commendable. Dissonance was apparent when it came to resisting elitism because as GSP Scholars, they were likely to benefit from the meritocratic
nature of a GSPP. Supporting the preservation of these divisions would mean that they deserved access to privileged opportunities and/or well-paying careers. It was difficult for Nina to dismiss the influence of meritocratic ideology that legitimates some educational credentials and institutional affiliations over others; however, she did not easily give in. She recognized how these oppressive and divisive attitudes resembled acting like “an asshole” and “being stuck up.” Essentially, she recognized that these behaviors were demoralizing.

Nina’s last question “Which part do you deserve to feel elite because you put in a shit load of work and which parts are you just like - it’s your business card?” raised an important consideration for rethinking how GSP Scholars experience feelings of elitism and pointed to a need to make clear distinctions between how this differs from conventional understandings of what it means to consider oneself elite. Drawing from the first part of Nina’s question, I suspect that she is referring to a recognition of elitism that is due for the “shit load of work” that is required to transcend a history of socioeconomic hardships, racial/gender microaggressions and the systemic barriers that exclude or discourage racial/ethnic minorities from achieving success. Thus, this feat becomes worthy of pride and elitism for having possessed the tenacity to overcome systemic racism without the privileges given to dominant groups. While we did not have time to develop any definitive answers to Nina’s question in the seminar, it was clear that this question had implications for the pedagogical philosophy of GSPPs. If GSPPs knowingly serve students from marginalized groups, is it their intent to promote discourses that advocate for the reproduction of the White supremacist patriarchal capitalist (hooks, 2000) ideologies that have historically oppressed their communities for centuries?

The domain of academic publishing is also well-known for its elitist practices and its gatekeeping function for tenure in the professoriate (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). The
transmission of values related to publishing take place during one’s academic socialization to their field. Departments and disciplines possess their own cultural assumptions about which journals are worthy of the prestigious designation of being top-tier journals. Publishing practices of top-tier journals (i.e. predominately Eurocentric focus and White peer review) function as one form of institutional racism in research that contributes to racial stratification in academia; this topic was pivotal to understand the systemic cycle of racial/ethnic underrepresentation in academia. Interrogating elitism in academic publishing was interpreted differently among the GSP Scholars. For example, Savanna believed it was important to emphasize these distinctions during the training of all GSP Scholars in the program.

Before I even established my research topic, you know um (pauses) [GSP Scholars Program] came off as we can research anything we want. Any question we want and it would be valid. And so you know yes, we can research anything in [GSP Scholars Program] but if I’d heard about the politics of graduate school, I’d probably would have (pauses) I, well, I don’t know. I just would think a lot more about whether my research could be at the top tier [journals]. I think more along those lines. I think this would be good with like sophomores and juniors. Just to give them an idea, you know. You can research other things but think about whether you’re gonna be in the [top tier journals].

In line with the philosophy behind the purpose of research, Savanna’s response indicated that the GSP Scholars Program trains their students to believe that they can research any question they want. She communicated a sense of ambivalence between the philosophy and politics of research as they operate in the graduate environment. Savanna wrestled with how to negotiate this information as it related to her research agenda at the graduate level. Despite an earlier seminar where we examined the exclusive practices of top-tier journals and the penalization of
faculty of color up for tenure for having non-top-tier publications (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Savanna did not comment on this as being a factor in her reservations. It is important to mention that our seminar discussion addressing elitism in publishing was a topic we touched on briefly and it did not become the focal point of our conversation. To promote a thorough awareness of how peer-review practices for top-tier publications play a role in institutional racism and racial stratification, I recognize that this topic warrants a lengthier discussion in future revisions of the curriculum.

*Recognizing the Limitations of Scholarly Spaces*

Wrestling with academic socialization also involved addressing dissatisfaction with the particular norms and practices found in the classroom, especially with regard to the restriction of discussion topics and the ways of thinking deemed to be appropriate. Doctoral training includes several years of coursework where students are expected to benefit from the process of intellectual exchange with their peers and professors. The GSP Scholars expected to encounter an openness to intellectual diversity and current issues within the classroom space. Reflecting on the narratives of graduate students who did not encounter such an openness in the classroom, the GSP Scholars responded in different ways. Rosa commented on the impact that this type of graduate environment would have on her while Alma brainstormed ideas on how to challenge the classroom limitations to learning.

Rosa: ...I feel like I would dread to go to his seminars because you can’t really be yourself. You can’t really talk about these things. Especially if it’s something that you’re passionate about and you’re reading about something that’s bringing up a lot of points that you want to talk about and then you don’t. It’s like what happens now? Who do I talk to? How do I even learn from this? Or is what I’m thinking on the right track or
not? And you’re just kinda left in a limbo I feel like.

…

Alma: I was gonna say like how it is stressful and that it is like dreading the whole semester. But I mean, if the professor is like not gonna change his views or anything, how are we reaching out to the students in the class in making our own group and seeing their perspective and how they think? They might not say it in class just because the professor – how intense he is. What he believes in. But the students outside of class might actually think the same as you or have different perspectives as well.

Rosa’s confession provides an important insight on how classroom dynamics can impact the well-being and satisfaction of students of color with their graduate program. She revealed that this type of environment would have a detrimental impact on the educational growth of students who are unable to discuss research issues of interest to them. Like other racial/ethnic minorities pursuing a doctoral degree, Rosa sought a space that welcomed the utilization of theory, pedagogy and research in ways that would allow them to serve their community (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Reyes & Rios, 2005; Ramirez, 2006; Gonzalez, 2007; Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007). Such incongruences among the goals of doctoral students, their academic training and their chosen profession have been documented by researchers (Golde & Dore, 2001). The exclusion of their topics of interest prompts a heavier reliance on independent learning outside of classroom coursework. This sense of dissatisfaction with one’s doctoral training compounds other dimensions related to academic integration, ultimately making it more difficult to maintain the commitment required for academic persistence.

Alma acknowledged that a close-minded professor could shape a dreadful semester but she saw the situation as an opportunity to utilize personal agency to navigate the challenges to
academic growth rather than passively adapting to the situation. Her idea of creating a community of learners outside of the classroom is similar to other strategies that doctoral students of color have used to create a support system with peers in their cohort (Hadjioannou et al., 2007). In this manner, students are likely to gain strength and motivation from a support system, gain greater confidence and garner support in future classroom discussions. Despite the unappealing aspects of doctoral education, Rosa and Alma showcased their determination by discussing solutions, taking ownership of their education and moving forward.

Aside from discussing navigational strategies, it was essential for GSP Scholars to understand how a lack of epistemological diversity was related to the reproduction of deficit discourses in society. I asked the group to imagine how the omission of diverse theories of knowledge could impact the professional practices of doctoral students who move on to powerful careers. Rosa shared a personal experience that provided insight into how educational training can impact the practices of future teachers.

I feel like it’s very detrimental. It only hurts the students that they’re working with...This summer, you know I was working with students and there were other staff that were just going straight for their teaching license...I saw them take a very different approach to how they worked with students...They didn’t pay attention to the stress or the economic stress that the student had. And so it was kinda always like there was that ideal picture they had of what a student should be acting like in the program. And that’s what they compared every other student to. And so that’s what I feel you have when you have those people who go through programs that aren’t - that don’t question or that don’t see other viewpoints because you just have your narrow mindset still. And you’re not really helping all the students that you’re working with. You’re just helping that certain
percentage that actually do apply or sort of apply to your ideal thought.

Rosa’s description offered a concrete example of how university efforts to achieve diversity fall short. There is an apparent disconnect between the range of opportunities to benefit from diversity in education and how this translates into a culturally-competent professional preparation. Macedo (1995) points out that teacher preparation curricula are almost always missing courses on race relations, ethics and ideology. Rosa indicated that this missing component in academic socialization misleads future educators to use Whiteness as “that ideal picture” of appropriate student conduct. She recognized the value in the theoretical perspectives of human development and comparative ethnic studies to understand the outside factors that impacted racial/ethnic minority students in the summer program. Without such knowledge, Rosa’s peers were ill equipped to understand the lived realities of students of color when they were utilizing a colorblind approach. Rosa’s experience allowed her to draw connections between the shortcomings of academic socialization and the way it can manifest within educator-student relations. This lack of interdisciplinary perspectives is not uncommon at the graduate level. For example, only 27.1% of doctoral students reported their graduate programs as preparing them to incorporate other disciplinary perspectives into their research (Golde & Dore, 2001).

This theme captured our efforts to problematize academic socialization. Experience with interrogating aspects of academic socialization will hopefully encourage GSP Scholars to continually reflect on their own transition once at the doctoral level. This would include formulating their own beliefs about the kind of scholarly identity they would like to assume and envisioning the systemic and cultural changes they would like to see in academia.
Building a Critical Awareness

Another facet of our critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation was to encourage questions regarding the macro/meso-structural and cultural processes of graduate admission that legitimate inequality. Such topics are usually overlooked because competitiveness as a value and behavior has become normalized in dominant discourses of higher education (Suspitsyna, 2010). These questions were prioritized because they interrogated the macro-structures that governed the services provided by the GSP Scholars Program which intersected with the daily lives of GSP Scholars.

 Eligibility Criteria and Restricted Opportunity

Students who are eligible to participate in the GSP Scholars Program must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents. The limitations of eligibility and the number of students admitted into the program were topics that surfaced in our discussion of privilege and meritocracy. Rosa shared her re-interpretation of the plight a couple of her sorority sisters had to endure as a result of the limitations imposed by citizenship status.

Yeah, that’s crazy now that I think about it. I feel bad because there was like a couple or a few of our girls that are 1079 students and...they’re working so hard to even get the funding to go to grad school. One of them is in a master’s program at [PNW Branch campus] so that’s really good. Now that I think about it, she didn’t have all this training. Like she had to do all the application process, all the talking to people, talking to professors on her own.

Considering the extent of time required to prepare strong graduate applications, Rosa was able to understand the added challenges that undocumented students encounter with the graduate application process. Before they could begin to prepare their graduate applications, these
students would be left to navigate the application process with little guidance on how to identify a graduate program that is a “good fit.” In addition, these students may have been less likely to have participated in a summer research experience because of eligibility restrictions or the need to generate a significantly greater income to fund their tuition costs for the following semester. Such constraints create huge disparities between relatively privileged groups such as GSP Scholars and students who are undocumented residents. The disparities of privilege carry over into graduate education for undocumented students as well. These students carry the added responsibility of funding their graduate education with considerably less resources available to them. Ultimately, this can determine whether they are able to apply to and fund their graduate education in a program that is in-state or out-of-state and enroll into a graduate program full-time vs. part-time.

Savanna also raised the question of citizenship and inquired about the number of students that could be served under the GSP Scholars Program.

I asked Dr. Aranda [director] one time and he said “as much as we can get.” But I mean, what if we had fifty? I don’t know but that just reminds me of my friend. She graduated last year and she’s an international student but she is Asian. And she wanted to get into [GSP Scholars Program] but she realized it’s for U.S. citizens. And I was like well, we’re kinda on the same level - as in we don’t know much about graduate school or first-generation. I don’t - why is U.S. citizen a requirement?

Despite Dr. Aranda’s elusive response, Savanna recognized that the likelihood of all eligible students in need of graduate school preparation services could far exceed the capacity of the GSP Scholars Program to provide services to them. Like Rosa, Savanna was aware of how peers within her social network were excluded from services they needed because of their citizenship.
Savanna’s observation pointed out a general need for graduate school preparation services but such services were either not accessible or made explicit to undergraduates. Questioning these standards of eligibility was one step in disrupting mainstream achievement ideology that asserts success as the outcome of hard work and effort (Carter, 2008). Within the context of the GSP Scholars Program, these women became aware that only a select group would benefit from privileges of the program and that their preparation for graduate school would afford them particular advantages over those who were ineligible based on citizenship.

**Measures of Intelligence and Competence**

Upon entry into the GSP Scholars Program, students become familiar with the purpose of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) for graduate admission. Considerable time in the GSP Scholars Program is spent explaining, demystifying and teaching test-taking strategies for the GRE. Because this exam can be used a gatekeeping mechanism, the historical and political intent behind its development was important to building our critical comprehension of graduate school access. First, I was interested in how the GSP Scholars interpreted the GRE and what discourses were made available to them about the exam. At the time of the seminar, Savanna and Nina had already taken the exam. Rosa and Alma had not yet taken part in their program’s formal GRE preparation training, nor had they seen any practice exams.

Rosa and Alma both perceived the GRE to represent a more challenging exam than the SAT as well as being another “hoop to jump” which caused them anxiety. Both Savanna and Alma interpreted the GRE to be a cumulative exam that measured their mastery of material from high school to college. Aside from these similarities, the GSP Scholars also communicated other discourses about the GRE.

Savanna: What I learned from a conference was a GRE is one of the factors that
distinguishes whether you’re good enough for a program...like GREs give them a sense of where you’re at or what you’re capable of...I guess the readings actually made me feel a little, I guess - uneasy about the subject ‘cause that was my weakness...And it also reminded me of how little my vocabulary is [laughs].

Rosa: And to academia, just like what I’ve been hearing, it’s an exam to place you amongst other students and to rate how prepared I guess you are to start a graduate program.

Alma: For what it means to academia, it’s how (pauses), the schools see it like if you’re adequate for what the school is looking for, the program you’re interested in and how prepared the students are.

Nina: The GRE to me is the biggest crock of shit in the entire world. The stupidest thing ever...Literally, when I was taking the test I was like I don’t think like this. I know I’m not dumb! I just don’t think like this...And then I’m taking the test and I’m like, if I answer this correctly and you thought I was smart because I knew what time the train left, you’d be wrong for thinking that about me. That’s not why I’m smart. That’s not, it doesn’t show what I bring to the table.

Three of the four GSP Scholars, described the GRE as a measure of their knowledge and competency for graduate school. Without a curriculum that interrogated the cultural and political bias of the GRE, Savanna, Rosa and Alma would interpret a denial of admission as an indication that they were not prepared, inadequate, incapable or not good enough for a graduate program. Compensatory approaches would likely not discuss the sociopolitical history and racial and cultural bias of the GRE which measures the cultural interests and curricular content accessible within White middle-class communities (Feagin, 2010). Compensatory approaches are
dangerous because they legitimize the stratifying function of the GRE through the stand alone service of offering test preparation without critical dialogue and action. Sadly, this is not an uncommon practice; education professionals and faculty seldom discuss the socioeconomic conditions that facilitate differences in performance on standardized tests (Carter, 2008). The damaging effects of this approach are evident in Savanna’s internalization of her verbal reasoning score to indicate that she was “language deficient.”

Nina was the only GSP Scholar to articulate a radically different perspective of the GRE. First, she challenged the rationale of the exam serving as an assessment of intellectual competency. Nina pointed out that the way the GRE assessed problem-solving was irrelevant to the ways of thinking and/or knowledge needed to function in today’s technologically-advanced world. Nina asserted that the GRE did not holistically assess intelligence and was not a useful gauge of the ways students could demonstrate their competency for graduate school. Scholars affirm Nina’s argument and remind us that performance on entrance exams are correlated with an applicant’s family wealth (Oakes et al., 2000; Parrish, 2006). Differences in race consciousness found among racial minority groups may offer a partial explanation as to why Nina was the only GSP Scholar to articulate a different perspective of the GRE. Feagin (2010) explains that the African American community more often perceives the American Dream as a racialized myth and is the least likely group among racial/ethnic minorities to accept dominant discourses of meritocracy.

*Deconstructing Graduate School Access*

Deconstructing the graduate application process continued with examining graduate school access as a social construction. Nina problematized these components while Savanna, Rosa, and Alma appeared to be caught off-guard by the question “why are things the way they
Araceli: Why can’t anyone who wants to go to graduate school, go to graduate school? Why do they have to go through this application process?

Nina: Well that’s how our society decides how something is worth. Like you give - we assign worth to however hard it was for you to obtain it...so we have to make things hard so that you can jump through these hoops so that you can earn the right to say that you did this thing that other people can’t or aren’t willing to do. Does that answer it?

Araceli: It does. And I’m just asking your opinion, do you believe it should be that way?

Nina: Yes and no.

Araceli: ...Because they [graduate programs] can admit people, so I mean, if they’re operating by their own rationale - you have to have a high GRE score, stellar letters of recommendation, research experience and so on - keep in mind that 50% of students still don’t finish their degree. Soooo, how does that fit along their lines? I mean, aren’t they already accepting people who deserve to get in and who have what it takes?

Nina: I’m very very confused by that. Because I can see both sides. Like it shouldn’t be like oh everybody apply and then let’s see how it goes. Because then the classes are packed and the teacher can’t give you attention. And there’s people who don’t really want to be there and people that should. And I think that there should be filters but I just - I’m torn about what those filters should be....Like the GRE’s just silly completely but the letters of rec for example - that makes sense...but then let’s just say my dad is rich, well that gives me way more connections than you. Automatically. And then now we’re back to the aristocracy and it’s like, ugh.
Nina: Like if my dad graduated from there [an elite institution] I’m sure I could get a letter of rec faster than someone who’s the first in their family. And a better letter of rec than they could get because I know more accomplished people you know. So then that becomes fake. That goes back to the aristocracy. Then when you think about a personal statement - like I’ve actually read the personal statement of someone whose life is very similar to mine and because I’m a writer and they’re math-minded, my life sounded so much more interesting but that’s because that’s what I do. I can write. Now this person might have had a more interesting story, then that’s it. They’re out the window for that one. And then I’m like damn. Even the personal statement isn’t (pauses) speaking to the person and that’s what makes me - I don’t know.

Nina understood that American society circulates ideas of meritocracy, especially as it pertains to the meaning and value of symbols of merit. These meanings are legitimated through dominant forms of recognition (e.g. graduate school admission) which signals the group of people who are successful achievers and those who are not because they “can’t or aren’t willing.” We can see that discourses of meritocracy reinforce binary characterizations of competency and how they are adapted into the meaning making process. This is evident in Nina’s explanation that American society believes “we have to make things hard” so that only a select group can “earn the right” to receive recognition for their achievements. In the case of the graduate application process, its screening components must impose a social form of “natural” selection.

Nina’s further reflection offered a tour through her thought process as she deconstructed each element of the graduate application. She admitted that while she disagrees with its components, she upholds the need for filtering mechanisms. Ultimately, her rationale for
upholding a screening process is motivated by the limitation of resources imposed by capitalist economy, such as a sufficient number of academic institutions with adequate faculty to meet the demand for higher education. Nina’s main concern was that open enrollment for graduate school would result in an exponentially larger matriculation and thus, exceed available resources (e.g. class accessibility, faculty attention, graduate funding, etc.). Given that many public institutions already face budget shortfalls, Nina’s concern for the implications of open enrollment negatively affecting her ability to learn has merit.

Initially, Nina indicated that letters of recommendation were equally attainable and a fair representation of an applicant. Once she considered the role of class, she recognized the privileges associated with having legacy ties to a prestigious institution and a more expansive and well-recognized social network. She explained that these social ties favor middle and upper-class students with access to esteemed faculty or university officials who could then write a letter of recommendation for them. These class privileges can create a stark contrast between the applications submitted by wealthy applicants and those of first-generation college students such that their class backgrounds afford opportunities that position them more favorably (Mickelson & Smith, 2010).

As an English major with an emphasis in creative writing, Nina pointed out how her writing strengths worked to her advantage in drafting an engaging personal statement. She knew that failure to write an essay that would capture the interest of an admissions committee would not bode well for leaving a significant impression. Her interaction with other students applying to graduate school gave her a newfound sense of how the components of the application process failed to capture the competency of her peers. This discussion allowed the group to move beyond a deficit interpretation of graduate school rejection and provided a multifaceted
understanding of reasons why students receive denials of admission.

Critical legal scholar Delgado (1995) has advocated for reconstructing the traditional admissions process and imagining new criteria that capture if the student is deserving of admission (as cited in Delgado Bernal, 2002). In an effort to answer this call, I asked the GSP Scholars to think about how they would change the graduate application process if they had the power to do so. While Rosa and Alma did not respond, it was still difficult for Savanna and Nina to envision a fundamentally different alternative. Savanna shared that she would make the application process more convenient for students by creating one universal application that could be sent to all graduate programs, eliminating the need to complete separate applications for each school. I suspect that it was premature to expect ideas for transformative reform given the minimal amount of time that we had been meeting. The lack of time to sufficiently explore all of our questions led us to a point where we recognized structures and practices of inequality but not transformative possibilities. Solórzano (1989) noted that the lack of time is often the biggest barrier to engaging in action to address a particular social problem, especially if time is constrained to one semester or quarter.

Questioning the Possibilities for Change

Deconstructing the foundation of achievement ideology, meritocracy, and equal opportunity proved to be unsettling. At times, I noticed pensive and disturbed expressions in the group. When asked about their feelings and reactions to our discussion, the group agreed that it was disturbing. Overwhelmed by the vast mechanisms of exclusion, Rosa conveyed a sense of disillusion to initiate the change needed in society for communities of color to advance.

Rosa: To me I feel like it makes sense but because it’s so disturbing you have no idea what to do. Like all we can do is talk about it and then like you can’t really change it.
You know what I mean? Even if we do reach out to like other people. There’s only so many people out of the whole population... You can’t really change it and it’s a small population of people that do think like this and will critique things like the educational system in comparison to others. Like it’s just, I don’t know. There’s not a lot you can do about it.

Nina: That’s true

Rosa’s sense of powerlessness reminded me of my own disillusionment as a first year doctoral student. I too, struggle with feelings of powerlessness to transform structural and ideological forces. hooks (2000) cautions marginalized groups against giving in to the feeling that their situation is hopeless because doing so would fulfill the intent of White supremacist capitalist ideology. Nina raised questions about the extent of change that is possible in academia. If the graduate admissions process did not provide an avenue of equal opportunity, she questioned why the current system remained intact.

And that’s like with the compensatory education where you’re like - you’re fixing the victim [everyone murmurs in agreement]. And the reason why I’m conflicted is like (pauses) because that’s like saying it’s the victim’s fault. You know what I mean? But then it isn’t logical to say let’s go attack the system and break down the legal, the education, everything, all the institutions of America and start over? That’s almost a joke to say that. So like what are you supposed to do? So with [GSP Scholars Program], you’re teaching us how to keep up with White people basically. And so it’s either that or go change the acceptance program? And like how would they do that? So then they’re left with nothing but to fix the victims and teach us how to be like our counterpart as if there is something with us but what’s left? Because I mean we’d never
get to grad school if we’d have wait for grad school to get fixed first. So I’m like, and I wouldn’t be willing to sit on the sidelines. I’d rather just keep playing the game that I’m used to playin.

To Nina, it was logical that evidence of inequality in current practices of graduate admission decisions would necessitate a need to transform those structures. She recognized that the likelihood of institutional transformation was not promising. In the meantime, the method of compensatory education embedded in the GSP Scholars Program appeared to be the most promising option to gain acceptance into graduate school. Nina and Rosa raised poignant questions about roles and responsibilities. They wondered about the role of the individual and the role of GSPPs in working towards a more fair application process31. Nina’s belief that the GSP Scholars Program has no other option besides acquiescing to a compensatory approach speaks to the need to build in adequate time to define change, theorize possibilities for change, and engage in community organizing with relevant stakeholders to initiate change. Fischman and Haas (2009) reinforce this point and explain that a commitment to social justice is not an isolated effort; it must be a collaborative project including “similarly committed fellow activists” even if it involves developing such a community (p. 571).

At first interpretation, it appears that Nina viewed the GSP Scholars Program as the primary group responsible for advocating for change. Fischman and Haas (2009) help us to broaden our understanding of change as a social responsibility. Therefore, the GSP Scholars Program would represent one group within a countersystemic network that aims to contest

31 The notion of a “more fair” application process is incongruent with larger goal of critical race theory to eradicate racism and systemic inequality because the existence of application process implies exclusion from an opportunity that yields privileges.
oppressive and exploitive structures. While these efforts would involve a substantial amount of time, perhaps some satisfactory changes would not take as long as Nina imagines. Counter to Nina’s idea that “it would be a joke” to target our social institutions for a transformation, Fischman and Haas (2009) believe that they can be challenged and eradicated. They emphasize the importance of unrelenting will, courage and commitment to withstand this struggle with others. Nina insinuated that “playing the game” may be the only option available to students of color; Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) partially agree. They explain that it is vital to secure academic competencies and credentials; however, they condemn doing so through a “passive consumption of an oppressive curriculum” (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 101). Thus, according to Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) playing the game also requires resistance and contesting inequality in the effort to accomplish change.

At the time Rosa shared her sense of disillusion we were near the end of the semester. Our group was left with only one day to focus on the topic of change and unfortunately, there were only three of us present at our last meeting. Rosa and Alma believed that creating change without a Ph.D. was more difficult and limited. When asked about their awareness of a present-day social movement by a community of people not necessarily with Ph.D.s, neither were familiar with the Occupy Wall Street movement which was in its height of popularity within the media. Rosa and Alma’s stance on change revealed a limitation of our critical race curriculum. Future iterations of this curriculum would need to uncover assumptions about change and introduce content on the history of social movements and grassroots organizing as a primer to discuss change and personal agency.

Surprisingly, Savanna initiated her own action outside of the study. Throughout our seminars, Savanna was an attentive participant although I could not gauge how she felt regarding
our critical analysis of academia. I would describe Savanna’s participation as occasionally asking questions of clarification; however, she seldom voiced an opposition to dominant discourses or revealed any dissatisfaction with Eurocentrism. I gained more insight into how Savanna was processing the topics of our discussion when we met for our last interview. Savanna admitted that she was still uncomfortable with discussing race and gender issues, especially as it pertained to whiteness, and was confused by our use of particular terminology (e.g. meritocracy, dominant ideology, etc.); however, she did indicate that her perceptions had changed. Savanna described her stance as reflecting a “20-80 feel of the graduate application process.” Twenty percent being in agreement with the process due to the need to identify the best candidates to fill the minimum number of available slots and eighty-percent of her view was in disagreement with the process. She explained to me how our discussions provoked her to learn more about a topic that bothered her.

Savanna: But in a way it’s also not fair because I actually did my persuasive speech on the GREs.
Araceli: Oh really?
Savanna: ...I did a little bit more research on the GREs and found in an article that...there’s these false negatives. Minority undergraduates with a low GRE score but a sufficient GPA [were] found to be successful in graduate school. And they concluded that you don’t have to take the GRE. You don’t have to have high scores on the GRE in order to be successful and I know that’s been proven in past experiences. Did you say that you did well on your GREs?
Araceli: No. I said I didn’t do well but then I had a high GPA and obviously doing well so far [smiling].
Savanna: Yeah! And you’re in your last year. The researcher concluded that the GREs aren’t - do not predict the success level or the performance level for minorities. So why are we required to take them?

Earlier in our seminar discussion about the GRE, Savanna shared her ambivalence about her score in comparison to that of a White peer. She pointed out that her peer admitted to studying only a month prior to the exam while Savanna engaged in a summer-long preparation. Savanna was motivated to use the GRE as the topic of her persuasive speech for her class assignment. Savanna demonstrated her personal agency by using the classroom space to articulate a counterhegemonic discourse challenging the GRE’s role in the graduate application process. This assignment helped Savanna to make sense of her own experience and even buffered her against the psychological effects of her score on the exam.

I’m glad that my GREs won’t determine my success level because you know when I got my scores, I was like wow. This is really low. And you know my self-esteem level went down and it’s like you know, if I hadn’t talked about it with you guys and talked about it with Nina, I would’ve told myself wow, I’m not ready for graduate school.

Our critique of the GRE served a useful purpose in countering the negative implications that these scores have on affecting students’ perceptions of themselves. Savanna’s admittance that having a space to deconstruct and talk through what their GRE scores mean with each other underscores the value associated with CRT’s voice tenet to aid students of color in discarding a White dominant discourse of competency (Delgado, 1989 as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2009). Even though it was not readily visible at the time, this discussion had an important influence on Savanna and demonstrates the capacity of a critical race curriculum to ignite individual action and a shift in consciousness. While she admitted being uncomfortable with talking about race
and gender, the scope of her research on the GRE pertained to the performance of racial/ethnic minorities on the exam and its relationship to success in graduate school. Her independent findings led her to ask with more incredulity why the GRE remained a requirement for graduate admission.

The findings represented in this chapter are similar to those documented in studies examining the experiences of doctoral students of color. While these findings relate to issues that have been addressed in the literature, in several instances, the curriculum triggered new questions which oftentimes led our discussion into interesting directions. Moreover, the themes presented here reveal in-depth concerns that arise for women of color during the process of anticipatory socialization that have implications for their graduate school expectations, their purpose for pursuing a graduate education and how this purpose sustains their commitment to completing a doctoral program. The questions we explored and knowledge we uncovered in this space provides a more detailed understanding of the issues that are relevant to the lives of students of color. These findings should encourage GSPPs to creatively evaluate the extent that their services address the needs and interests of their participants; including the discourses that they circulate to convey messages about graduate education, socioeconomic mobility and equality in a manner that reflects demographic data.
CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to conceptualize and pilot a critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation that challenged traditional approaches to academic socialization and would address the needs of prospective graduate students of color. In Chapter One I stated that doctoral education predominately reflects the cultural values and norms of White supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 2000). The ideology informing these discursive practices marginalize and/or push out racial/ethnic minorities who do not assimilate, thereby creating environments that maintain the underrepresentation of racial/ethnic minorities in academia. As a representation of the nation’s largest effort to create a graduate school pathway for racial/ethnic minorities, I argued that compensatory models of graduate school preparation actually fall short of providing the community cultural wealth necessary for students of color to be successful in acquiring their Ph.D. Moreover, it is unlikely that compensatory programs provide opportunities for this historically disenfranchised population to theorize and transform academia to represent a more inclusive and democratic institution.

The literature on doctoral education has thoroughly outlined the thematic challenges encountered by graduate students of color, much of which remains unchanged over the last thirty years. Interestingly, these same challenges and recommendations for practice have been raised within the literature on GSPP alumni experiences in graduate education. This dissertation represents the first known attempt to bridge these two fields into a shared conversation dedicated to reconceptualizing graduate school preparation and sought to answer two questions:

(1) In what ways do racial/ethnic minorities respond to a critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation?
(2) In what ways can a critical race curriculum enrich understandings of graduate school preparation and anticipatory socialization?

This chapter begins with a discussion of the results as they pertain to the aforementioned research questions and their significance for improving graduate school preparation. Next, I outline four limitations of the study and transition into recommendations for future research. These recommendations address new directions for utilizing critical race theory in practice and the educational policies that must be in place for these efforts to be successful.

**DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS**

*Research Question 1: In what ways do GSP Scholars respond to a critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation?*

Our critical race curriculum provided topics of discussion pertinent to the role of race in the research process that are often overlooked in the process of academic socialization. The spectrum of our conversations revealed that GSP Scholars responded to the curriculum content in ways that were complex and sometimes contradictory to the goals of social justice and equality. In one instance, a GSP Scholar would legitimate ideas of White superiority through her decision to select a White faculty mentor and yet, the rationale behind her decision illuminates the complexities of negotiating the validating power of Whiteness. Another GSP Scholar considered switching her research emphasis away from race because she perceived it would make less of an impact in her field. Interestingly, the same GSP Scholar was the only participant who utilized a topic of our discussion for a class presentation where she challenged the use of the GRE in graduate admission. Evident across the dialogues presented in the results chapter, the GSP Scholars challenged, resisted and legitimated various White cultural norms and values.

Secondly, the GSP Scholars were open to a critical analysis of dominant discourses on
meritocracy and graduate education and they were open to interrogating their perspectives on these topics. These women did not engage in discursive maneuvers to avoid examining their role in the maintenance of racism, patriarchy and others forms of subordination but rather, openly struggled with their complicity in legitimating dominant discourses that were oppressive (e.g. need for filters in the graduate application process, assigning more value to a Ph.D. vs. Ed.D.). Moreover, their openness to critical analysis allowed them to raise tough questions such as “do I really just want power?” and “when do you deserve to feel elite?” These questions allowed us to grapple with the challenges of building a critical consciousness necessary for dismantling a system of White supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 2000). Lastly, the participants’ receptivity to the curriculum yielded important benefits for their confidence. A discussion of dominant discourses about the GRE and the meaning of graduate school acceptance/rejection was useful for our deconstruction of these constructs. This deconstruction exposed the myth of equal opportunity and allowed the GSP Scholars to reject deficit discourses that encourage self-blame and feelings of incompetence. It is possible that this openness to critical analysis is explained by the participants multiple positions of marginality as women of color; however, it would be interesting to explore if male GSP Scholars of color would also have had a similar response.

Third, the findings demonstrated that GSP Scholars possess resistant and aspirational capital that sustained their commitment to graduate education despite exposure to data revealing the myths of equal opportunity, meritocracy and diversity. I argue that the GSP Scholars’ resistant and aspirational capital was nurtured by a critical race curriculum because of its emphasis on the centrality of experiential knowledge (i.e. community cultural wealth) as a framework for resistance and persistence. This finding is significant such that talking through
the spectrum of microaggressions in graduate school equips GSP Scholars with the foresight to recognize and navigate them. At times, the GSP Scholars responded to the curriculum with distress; however its emphasis on narratives of resistant and aspirational capital pushed the group to form their own narratives of persistence rather than feeling hopeless.

This finding is also significant to directors of GSPPs such that it provides a deeper understanding of students’ capacity for academic persistence despite disillusionment with covert racism and sexism in graduate education. The content of a critical race curriculum may be perceived as controversial or as an impediment to the mission of GSPPs because of the fear that it will sway students away from applying to graduate school; however, this assumption infantilizes students and withholds vital knowledge to navigate situations that affect the everyday lives of racial/ethnic minorities in graduate education.

Research Question 2: In what ways can a critical race curriculum enrich understandings of graduate school preparation and anticipatory socialization?

A central finding of this study revealed that the content of a critical race curriculum provided an opportunity for GSP Scholars to share stories similar to those reported by doctoral students of color (e.g. struggling with credibility, questioning the pursuit of a Ph.D., questioning the validity of research interests). This finding fills an important gap in past research by shedding light on the process of anticipatory socialization, especially with regard to the development of a scholar identity that aligns with one’s personal integrity. Moreover, this finding reveals the internalized concerns of students and the knowledge that can be gained by providing a space for students to make sense of their raced/gendered identity in relation to the purpose of their research agenda and the pursuit of the Ph.D. It is my hope that having created a space for critical reflexivity will equip these GSP Scholars to be more adept at recognizing
moments in doctoral socialization that reinforce White masculine values. In addition, I hope that this recognition prompts the GSP Scholars to negotiate these situations rather than compromising the integrity of their scholarly identity.

In my statement of the problem, I argued that the expectation for racial/ethnic minorities to embrace their doctoral socialization without question should be challenged. More specifically, I recommended that students must be equipped with the skills to question and identify how the system of White supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 2000) and its ideology influence academia and doctoral socialization. Incorporating a critical race curriculum over the period of a semester revealed that the GSP Scholars developed signs of a critical comprehension of academia in this short period. In addition, they were also able to hone their navigational skills for hypothetical obstacles in doctoral education. One key example demonstrating a critical comprehension was when Nina deconstructed how each component of the graduate application process could privilege students from the upper socioeconomic class. Moreover, she articulated how socially constructed measures of competency benefit students with certain strengths (e.g. writing or math abilities) and did not measure other strengths they would “bring to the table.”

While incorporating a critical race curriculum once a week during a semester was useful, I suspect that the extent to which one’s critical consciousness evolves is dependent upon the time invested. Thus, it would be beneficial to incorporate a greater number of weekly meetings and/or encourage independent learning outside of the seminars (e.g. Savanna’s independent research on the GRE).

Evident within the themes presented in the results chapter, the curriculum elicited a number of questions that we did not have sufficient time to explore. Piloting this curriculum did allow us to identify an extensive list of race and gender issues pertinent to graduate school
preparation and anticipatory socialization. This list identifies useful discussion points for expanding upon the curriculum whereby GSP Scholars can theorize transformative possibilities for academe (e.g. reimagining the graduate application process, identifying possibilities to make academia more inclusive).

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Solórzano and Yosso (2005) caution educators to consider the educational context before attempting to utilize critical race pedagogy because of its time intensive nature. Time was a significant limitation I encountered when piloting the curriculum and facilitating dialogue. At times our discussions would pick up momentum when we hit a controversial topic or discovered a shared experience (e.g. experiencing intra-racism, postponing the start of a family, negotiating gender roles in romantic relationships). When popular topics were raised, it usually occurred well into the middle of our seminar and a participant would barely lead us through the depth of her thought process when we reached our time limit. In some instances, there was no time to ask questions of clarification or for another participant to contribute to the dialogue at the same depth. It became clear that the time needed for more than one participant to share their thought processes on various issues could easily span beyond ninety minutes. Another challenge I encountered was negotiating our limited time when tangential questions were raised and conversations would veer off topic. I attempted to respect the participants’ ownership of the discussion and not intervene if the topic appeared important to them. Thus, the scope of material relevant to graduate school preparation easily superseded our ninety minute weekly meetings.

The second limitation of this study was participant size and demographics. A greater number of participants would have added a broader range of perspectives that could have enriched our dialogue, especially from male GSP Scholars of color. Our group’s discussion on
gender, power and graduate education could have raised new insights on how male GSP Scholars experience and make sense of patriarchal masculinity, especially with regard to negotiating career aspirations and romantic relationships. At the same time, I am aware that the presence of men, or a gender mixed group, could have altered the dynamics of seminar dialogue altogether. Moreover, a greater number of racially and gender diverse participants might have raised novel insights about our topics of discussion as they are informed by intersecting identities (e.g. generational status, acculturation, phenotype, etc.). This study did benefit from the participation of two biracial participants; however, it would have been interesting to hear the perspectives of Pacific Islander and Native American students since their experiences are usually absent in the literature. Identifying points of similarity and/or difference in our educational experiences would also be useful for understanding how to build cross-race/gender coalitions.

A third limitation of this study was the exclusion of White GSP Scholars. The intentional decision to exclude this group was motivated by past research findings that would suggest the presence of White students could have threatened the primary purpose of this study. In one study of an all-female racially-mixed group which met to discuss race/ethnicity, class, sexual identity and gender, the researchers noted that their White participants failed to interrogate the “structural nature of their privilege” (Brown & Grande, 2005, p. 241) Instead, it was a habit for these White participants to divert conversations about race to their needs; they also expected people of color to accommodate their fears, embarrassment and guilt and in doing so, reasserted their White privilege. At other times, they listened to the testimonies of students of color without contributing to the conversation and in doing so, created an environment where there was a lack of trust. Similarly, Leonardo and Porter (2010) explained that White privilege almost always operates in conversations about race where racial/ethnic minorities usually encounter a no-win
They are expected to accommodate White students’ need for safety at the expense of their own development or speak freely and risk a personal attack that invalidates their experiences and/or concerns. Applebaum (2012) discussed a habit of White students engaging in discursive maneuvers that prevent them from examining how they participate or are complicit with systemic racism because of their perceptions of responsibility. She explains that White students may adopt the view that if they did not create these unequal structures or did not intend to reproduce racism, then they are not responsible for eradicating it.

The fourth limitation of this study was my rudimentary understanding of critical race praxis. I was inexperienced with how to address the sense of hopelessness when it arose among several of the participants, given that achieving substantial change against systemic inequality required the massive task of social organizing. This was a topic that I had no understanding of, let alone understood enough to facilitate a productive dialogue. Similarly, I was not confident shifting our group’s focus into identifying a problem to address with premature action. This lack of confidence was mostly due to the limitations of time and feasibility. I recognize that praxis is an essential dimension to the goal of critical race theory and without it, the participants miss the opportunity to utilize their agency. Piloting the curriculum has allowed me to identify the gaps in my own knowledge that I can address for future replications of this study, including an awareness of how too little time constrains the goal of building a critical comprehension of academia and tapping into our critical imaginary.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THEORY, PRACTICE AND POLICY**

The findings of this dissertation produced new insights that can inform future directions for theory, practice and policy. In this section, I outline a number of recommendations for each. I take an unconventional approach in my recommendations for practice and address my
suggestions to scholar-practitioners who have the time and flexibility to experiment with curriculum design and pedagogy. I decided on this approach because I felt that additional research was needed before I could pose recommendations to administrators of GSPPs who may have a responsibility to serve White students. My recommendations for policy are driven by my interest in seeing my recommendations for practice instituted on a national scale.

**Recommendations for Theory**

Like many scholars of color, the participants in this study had a desire to eventually use their graduate training for the purpose of contributing back to their community (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Reyes & Rios, 2005; Ramirez, 2006; Gonzalez, 2007; Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007). In one dialogue presented in Chapter Five, I pointed out the danger of compensatory GSPPs utilizing a discourse of mythical hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009) when discussing the benefits of attaining a Ph.D. Fischman and Haas (2009) drew attention to a phenomenon that students oftentimes developed an image of themselves as a heroic superagent and when they learned more about the social reproduction of systemic inequality, they felt hopeless.

While scholars have theorized critical hope, additional research is needed on how scholars remain committed intellectuals (Fischman & Haas, 2009). More specifically, narratives on how scholars and scholar-practitioners maintain critical hope in their own lives, especially in the light of increasing racial violence and violence against women. These narratives would benefit scholar-practitioners who desire to implement a critical race curriculum in a GSPP and their students. Moreover, these narratives would provide a useful framework for novice critical pedagogues to support students’ graduate school aspirations in a way that also nurtures their social justice goals. In this way, the next generation of scholar-activists will receive the necessary insight on ways to remain a committed intellectual that can sustain them during and
after their doctoral training.

In Chapter Five, I also drew attention to the hopelessness that the participants felt about systemic change when we were discussing educational inequality. Some of the GSP Scholars thought it was unlikely that systemic change could be possible and another GSP Scholar believed that compensatory approaches were more viable in the current political context. Underlying these sentiments were ideas about change. I previously mentioned in Chapter Three that critical legal scholars’ dissatisfaction with incremental change was one factor that led to the emergence of critical race theory and yet, there is little research that has theorized change. In their counterstory, Solórzano and Yosso (2005) raised the question “Do we as critical educators ever really engage in transformative resistance? Are our reform efforts ever nonreformist or revolutionary?” While they concluded that most social justice efforts were likely to represent reformist and non-reformists efforts, there is a need within CRT to further conceptualize change and how critical educators can facilitate this conversation with students. Or perhaps, scholar-practitioners who intend to implement their own critical race curriculum may desire to engage their students in theorizing change, the revolutionary transformation they would like to see and follow a process of inductive reasoning to identify a feasible course of action.

Recommendations for Practice

Scholar-practitioners who intend to incorporate a critical race curriculum should consider scheduling seminars either twice weekly for at least ninety minutes or extending a once a week seminar to at least two hours. In both instances, scholar-practitioners may find it helpful to

32 Some of my own questions include: What is change? Do students conceptualize change differently than critical scholars? Are there differences in how critical scholars understand change (e.g. critical race vs. critical race feminist scholars)? What implications might these definitions have for critical pedagogy and social justice?
extend seminars over the course of the academic year, rather than a semester. This would allow the researcher and the participants to have their respective needs met from a redesigned study without the constraints of time. Secondly, scholar-practitioners may want to consider designing the study as part of a formal course so that students can receive an incentive of academic credit for participation. I have found that voluntary participation can impose obstacles to attendance, resulting in an unequal representation of voices in seminar dialogue. Recruiting the participation of seniors was also difficult because during the fall they were managing a full-time course load, part-time employment and their graduate school applications. Offering academic credit for participation could serve as a solution to this problem and aid in the recruitment of a larger, more racially diverse and gender balanced participant pool.

My third recommendation for research and practice is expanding the involvement of White students in an effort to forge cross-race coalitions in the struggle for social justice. Despite my decision to exclude White GSP Scholars, this group could benefit from a critical race curriculum for graduate school preparation, albeit with a different approach. Given the prevalence of colorblind rhetoric and racial illiteracy in the U.S., it is likely that most White students are not prepared to have fruitful conversations about race with students of color. For all GSP Scholars to reap the benefits of a critical race curriculum, I suggest that these efforts must be pursued separately until White students acquire a foundational knowledge of the history of White supremacy, Whiteness, White privilege, patriarchy and are able to recognize ways in which they are complicit with deriving benefits from systemic racism (Brown & Grande, 2005; Applebaum, 2012).

For scholar-practitioners up to the challenge, the first semester curriculum for these students could include topics in the field of critical whiteness studies. White GSP Scholars can
begin to identify experiences that are shared and those that diverge on the basis of class, gender, sexuality and other axes of subordination. In addition to discussing this content, it would be the responsibility of the scholar-practitioner to include opportunities for these students to develop the critical analytical skills needed to examine power and how it affects internalized oppression and domination (Brown & Grande, 2005). Once a working critical consciousness is in place, both groups can come together in a shared space to hold more effective discussions. In this case, theorizing and transforming academia into a more inclusive and democratic institution.

Recommendations for Policy

Scholars of CRT and poststructural feminism have critiqued educational policy for its role in creating and perpetuating racial and gender inequality. Suspitsyna (2010) and Gillborn (2009) argue that educational policy ignores the historical, social and political aspects of inequality; reflects policy priorities that reinforce White supremacy through the use of standardized measures or subjective assessments that disproportionally benefit White students; and promotes the dominant discourse that everyone can achieve upward socioeconomic mobility. With this understanding, outlining feasible recommendations for policy to strengthen GSPPs is not without complications because by their very nature, GSPPs are entrenched in a White supremacist patriarchal capitalist institution of education. Policymakers have also complicated the purpose of higher education, which extends to graduate education, stating that Americans should pursue higher education to gain the qualifications necessary to advance U.S. economic prosperity and global competitiveness (Suspitsyna, 2010).

In an attempt to uncomplicate recommendations for educational policy, I first recommend that the U.S. Department of Education re-evaluate its official stance on the purpose of higher education. More specifically, I call for a conceptual shift that advocates for the development of
socially-conscious/culturally-competent global citizens committed to creating a stronger democracy, greater quality of life\textsuperscript{33} and advancing systemic equality. With the recognition from federal and state governments that this stance benefits our country, it is a commitment that requires the language of educational policy to reflect this goal. Equally important, federal and state governments must substantially investment in initiatives that work toward this goal.

If this policy recommendation was honored, it would allow for a revolution in GSPP practices. Ladson-Billings (2009) states that CRT is an intellectual tool for collaborating with others on the deconstruction of structures and discourses of domination, the reconstruction of human agency and the construction of social and systemic equality. This dissertation represents how I, along with the participants, have deconstructed oppressive liberal discourses, including how they are used to misrepresent the academy through the sharing of counternarratives; we have drawn from the curriculum and our seminars to construct new understandings of graduate school preparation and the eventual attainment of a doctoral education; and with this knowledge, I encourage other scholars and scholar-practitioners to join me in reconstructing how GSPPs nationwide can foster a critical comprehension of academia. Among my recommendations include reconstructing the purpose of graduate education by incorporating the counternarratives of students of color when attempting to recruit students, reconstructing our services by regularly performing a quality check against needs identified in the literature on doctoral education, reconstructing expectations for faculty mentorship and reconstructing the outcomes of our services beyond matriculation into graduate school. Useful outcomes would ways for students to

\textsuperscript{33} In reference to a greater quality of life, I loosely refer to lessons that can be learned from Bhutan’s policy decisions governing the allocation of resources to achieve favorable gross national happiness.
demonstrate a critical comprehension of academia and proposals to transform the whiteness of the academy.

Until these changes are instituted at the national and state level, there is a continued need to serve the existing generation of underrepresented college age youth. The argument that the U.S. represents a system of inequality that has created the underrepresented minority population requires that educational policymakers reframe the rationale for funding college/graduate school preparation and retention programs. It would be an ethical and socially conscious move for educational policymakers to justify the funding for these programs as representative of the U.S.’ commitment to repaying a moral debt arising from a social and political legacy of race, class and gender inequality (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Another recommendation for the U.S. Department of Education is to expand the definition of which racial/ethnic groups qualify as underrepresented minorities and to expand the eligibility criteria. More specifically, a disaggregation of data on Asian Americans would allow for the identification of underrepresented Asian ethnic groups in higher education, such as Filipino Americans, to also benefit from needed services designated for racial/ethnic minorities (Nadal, Pituc, Johnston & Esparrago, 2010). In addition, given the sizeable presence of undocumented students who have resided in the U.S. and have expressed a desire to stay here, a revised eligibility criteria should include these students, regardless if they have met the criteria for Deferred Action for New Arrivals. These policy changes are crucial at the federal level because the U.S. Department of Education is often the leading institution whose definitions of underrepresentation and eligibility criteria are often adopted by state governments, educational institutions and funding agencies.

Evident within the findings, there is a need for GSPPs to be accessible on a larger scale.
Current eligibility criteria exclude students (e.g. undocumented students, international students) who are similarly committed to pursuing a Ph.D. but lack institutional resources to navigate the application process. Moreover, GSPPs as a single entity can only serve a set number of students before it would begin to lack the financial and personnel resources to provide quality services. This finding points out that even students who meet current eligibility criteria may be turned away if they are not competitive candidates for the GSPP they apply to. Changes in educational policy should recognize that graduate school preparation services are a national need and must allocate sufficient funding to colleges and universities to institutionalize these services.

CONCLUSION

This study offers a model of how social justice programming informed by critical race theory can be incorporated into a GSPP. These findings represent an important contribution to understanding the process of anticipatory socialization and the issues that arise for GSP Scholars. It is my hope that directors of GSPPs utilize these findings to reflect on the messages circulated by their program and assess whether the services they provide meet the holistic needs of racial/ethnic minorities. Furthermore, I hope that the findings of this study will initiate the beginning of new dialogue among scholars, stakeholders of doctoral education and those who manage graduate school preparation programs to devise opportunities to talk about race, class and gender in those spaces. If such dialogue results in students of color discovering shared struggles and dissatisfaction with academe, the power of discovering that they are not “the only one” feeling this way, cannot be overstated. GSPPs must involve their students in the process of theorizing inclusive institutions and creating opportunities for them to be active agents in transforming the culture of doctoral education.
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APPENDIX A

Critical Race Curriculum

Note: Asterisk (*) designates readings that we did not get to and [added] indicates articles that were added to supplement seminar discussions.


*Murakami-Ramalho, E., Piert, J., & Militello, M. (2008). The wanderer, the chameleon, and
the warrior: Experiences of doctoral students of color developing a research identity in educational administration. *Qualitative Inquiry, 14*, 806-834.


## APPENDIX B

Weekly Outline of Seminar Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics/Readings</th>
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| September 8| • Participant goals for the study  
• Talking about race in the college classroom  
• Racial identity  
• Race, research and mentorship  
• Impostor syndrome  

Readings:  
| September 15| • Graduate application process  
• Identifying graduate programs  
• Community cultural wealth: navigational capital, graduate coursework and minimizing impostor syndrome  

Readings:  
| September 22| • Participant goals for the study, adjustments to readings, changes in schedule of topics  
• Doctoral attrition  
• Racial microaggressions  
• Research epistemology and connections to graduate school choice  
• Community cultural wealth: aspirational capital  
• Analysis of Araceli’s trajectory to graduate education, social and cultural capital  

Readings:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Participant Driven</em></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>September 29</strong></td>
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</table>
| • Community cultural wealth: resistant and navigational capital  
| • Types of curriculum vitae (CVs)  
| • Maintaining a professional online presence  
| • Culture of Graduate School  
| • Discourses of socialization  
| • Research software  
| **October 6** |  
| • Community cultural wealth: navigational capital  
| • Discovering faculty researcher epistemology, methodological skills, service and affiliations via CVs  
| • Mining the CV for professional development opportunities  
| **October 13** |  
| • Deficit discourse and doctoral attrition  
| • Race, gender, education: gender roles/expectations, obstacles to tenure  
| • Power and credibility  
| • Higher education, relationships, family and transgressing gender roles  
| **October 20** |  
| • Model minority stereotype  
| • Shared struggles among Asian American students and other graduate students of color  
| • Eurocentric curriculum in doctoral education  
| • Doctoral tracking and doctoral attrition  
| • Departmental politics, graduate funding and gender microaggressions  
| • Community cultural wealth: resistant, navigational and aspirational capital  

Readings:


| October 27 |  • Seminar classroom dynamics and White privilege  
  • Challenging dominant ideology and racial microaggressions  
  • Community cultural wealth: resistant and navigational capital  
  • Academic socialization  
  • Culture of doctoral programs  
  • Affirmative action and overt racism  
  • Meritocracy and the GSP Scholars Program |
| --- | --- |
|  | Readings:  
| November 3 |  • Dominant culture, ideology, dominant discourse  
  • Meritocracy, legacy admissions  
  • Deficit thinking  
  • Compensatory education and GSP Scholars Program  
  • Re-imagining the graduate school application process  
  • Purpose of graduate education |
|  | Readings:  
| November 10 |  • Meritocracy, legacy admissions, affirmative action  
  • Dominant culture, ideology, dominant discourse  
  • Deficit thinking  
  • Ph.D. and notions of credibility  
  • American dream  
  • Community cultural wealth: aspirational capital |
**Readings:**


| November 17 | • Activity: Choosing a dissertation chair and discussion  
|            | • Community cultural wealth: aspirational capital, navigational capital  
| *Participant Driven* | • Academic exploitation  
|            | • Compensatory education and GSP Scholars Program  
| December 1 | • Analysis of transcripts and discussion  
|            | • Agency, grassroots organizing and change |
APPENDIX C

Dr. Aranda’s Email Introduction

(Changes have been made to protect the identity of the program and participants)

Wednesday, August 10, 2011

Hello, Scholars

This fall, our program has the unique opportunity to participate in a study that will further the limited research on GSP Scholars Program, and more specifically, the development of GSP Scholars and their preparation for graduate education. If you are receiving this email, that means you have been selected by me to participate directly in this study.

Here are the selected participants:

1. Name (Male); Senior, Hospitality Business Management
2. Name (Female); Senior, English
3. Name (Female); Senior, Psychology
4. Name (Male); Junior, Criminal Justice
5. Name (Female); Senior, Human Development
6. Name (Female); Senior, Speech & Hearing Sciences
7. Name (Female); Senior, Sociology
8. Name (Female); Senior, Business
9. Name (Female); Senior, Human Development
10. Name (Female); Junior, Elementary Education

Participation in this study will consist mostly of individual interviews and a group seminar. Araceli Frias, PhD Candidate in Cultural Studies and Social Thought will be conducting the study. She is a McNair alum for EWU’s program, and previous guest speaker in our [upper division course number]. She will be emailing you shortly with more description about the study, your participation, and to set up an initial/intake interview. She and I will be in regular contact throughout the course of the study.

After reviewing everyone’s fall class schedule, it appears that **Thursdays from 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm** will work for the Seminar, meeting in the [name of building] Conference Room. Please plan accordingly.

As I mentioned to many of you individually, I am excited about your participation in this seminar/study as it will provide you with an opportunity to delve deeper into material we were only able to scratch the surface on in [upper division course number]. I am confident that you will find your participation to be rewarding and highly useful in your preparation for you graduate education.

Dr. Aranda
APPENDIX D

Researcher Email to Participants and Study Description

SUBJECT: GSP Scholar Study

DATE: Wednesday, August 10, 2011

Hi [Participant Name],

My name is Araceli Frias and as [Dr. Aranda] mentioned, I am a McNair alumna (EWU) who has the privilege to work with you this fall for my dissertation study.

This research study aims to be a collaborative process, with you as stakeholder in the project. The primary goals of the project are to: 1) pilot a collaboratively informed curriculum into your GSP Scholar experience and 2) generate the knowledge and skills that are relevant to your life as future graduate student to ensure your success. You are invited to join me in creating of a culturally-relevant curriculum of topics related to graduate school, participate in three interviews, allow your audio recorded contribution to the GSP Scholar weekly seminars to be included in the research project, participate on a private Facebook Group Page dedicated for this study, and complete an anonymous evaluation of the study.

The potential benefits to you for taking part in this study include taking ownership of your graduate school preparation. You will have the opportunity to discuss issues relevant to students of color that are rarely brought up, such as differences between academic culture and racial/ethnic culture, connections between your identity and research interests, and much more. Your involvement can help inform whether other national graduate school preparation programs should consider changes in their curriculum and/or programming.

I am attaching a consent form to this email that you can read over regarding your participation in the study. I will have a hard copy available for you to sign during our preliminary interview.

Prior to the start of the first GSP Scholar seminar (TBD), I would like to schedule an initial interview with you before the end of August. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about your life history, your educational goals, how you came to be involved in the GSP Scholars Program, etc. This interview should not last more than 1.5 hours. I am available to meet any time after 12:00 pm (Monday-Friday) and I am open to conducting an interview during the weekend if that works better with your schedule.

I look forward to working with you.

Respectfully,
Araceli
APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

First Interview: (July 2011)

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. What have been the influential factors (e.g. personal experiences, family) that shaped your decision to attend college?
3. Can you tell me about the role higher education (and soon, graduate education) plays for your life? What has influenced this?
4. How did you come to be involved in the GSP Scholar Program?
5. What are your perceptions about research? What has influenced these perceptions?
6. The mission of the GSP Scholar Program is prepare first-generation, low-income and underrepresented students for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. What are your thoughts of this goal, as a (ethnicity) woman/man?
7. What type of information/services would you like to see the program (and/or your faculty mentor) provide to you that would be relevant to your life as a (ethnicity) woman/man?
8. If you could create the ideal research experience, how would you describe it?
9. Is there anything you’d like to share that you feel you didn’t get an opportunity to address?

Second Interview: (October 2011)

1. These seminars can be thought of as a bit non-traditional. I have resisted the urge to pre-determine the direction of these seminars so that everyone’s opinions about which topics are most important, can be addressed. How do you feel about this type of method being used for these seminars? (e.g. semi-structured, going with the flow, etc.)
2. Given your standing in the GSP Scholars Program (e.g. junior/senior), what is it like to hear the range of concerns about graduate school/application process from the perspective of other GSP Scholars in the study? (especially as they relate to topics specific to race/gender)
3. How is/has graduate school (been) talked about in the GSP Scholars Program in comparison to these seminars?
4. Over the past few weeks, we have discussed some of the experiences of racial minorities in graduate school (including my own) - what is it like to have these narratives as talking points in your graduate school preparation?
5. Much of our seminar discussions have also highlighted the politics of graduate school. How do you feel/what do you think about this being a component of your graduate school preparation?
6. In what ways would you describe your graduate school preparation thus far to be different than those GSP Scholars who did not participate in the study?
7. After transcribing the last six seminars, I have been able to gain a sense of “tone/mood” of the seminars. At times, I have realized that discussing the politics of graduate school can also run the risk of creating a negative portrayal of graduate school as a whole. How would you describe my effort in attempting to create a balanced view of the graduate
school experience? In what ways, can I (or we) improve this?
8. Is the study going the way you would like? If not, how can we do that?
9. Is there anything you would like to share that you feel you didn't get the opportunity to address?

Third Interview: (December 2011)

1. How would you describe your experience in the seminars?
2. What was it like to talk about race, gender and class as it relates to graduate school?
3. What did you enjoy most about our seminars?
4. What aspects of the seminars did you like least? In what ways do you think it could be improved?
5. We’ve discussed some terms and concepts associated with critical theory. Terms like meritocracy and compensatory education, especially as it applies to the GSP Scholars Program. We’ve talked about power and dominant culture and we’ve applied these concepts to graduate school. What are your reflections about having this as a part of your graduate school preparation?
6. Some directors of GSPPs may feel like the content of our discussions would be too controversial and scare GSP Scholars away from graduate school. Now that our seminars have come to an end, how would you respond to their concern?
7. Over the course of the seminars we’ve discussed a lot of topics and often ran out of time to talk about everything. Reflecting back on the study and our seminars, if you were to help me re-design the study, what would you change?
8. What does it mean to you to be a GSP Scholar?
9. Is there anything you’d like to share that you didn’t have an opportunity to address?