DIVORCING THE DOCTOR: BLACK WOMEN DOCTORAL STUDENTS AND THEIR INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE DOCTORAL PROCESS

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of DANA MURRAY PATTERSON find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Chair

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Abstract

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This study uses qualitative methods to examine how eight Black women face the challenge of managing relationships as doctoral students. While not claiming to be a "true ethnography," this study uses tenets of both critical ethnography and autoethnography to deconstruct misunderstandings resulting from traditional male and White oriented representations of Black women's experiences. In addition, this study employs an Afrocentric theoretical framework to guide the analysis of data and illustrate truth from a cultural perspective.

The goals of this study included the amplification of the voices of eight Black women who were also doctoral students, in order to disrupt and deconstruct traditional understandings and provide a foundation for developing orientation, mentoring and support networks for African American women based on empirical research and contemporary theories grounded in cultural reality. It is the stance of this study that these frameworks enhance the likelihood of success for Black female doctoral students. This study has the additional goal of being of use to Black female doctoral students by providing insight and validation that Black women's experiences are significant and relevant.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memories of Bigmama Nellie Jones for investing in me. The $20 fed my body but your faith in me and example of what it meant to be a Black woman, fed my soul. My mother, Jacqueline Jones Murray, the first Black woman I ever met. Your grace and compassion are imprinted in my heart. I am because you were and forever shall be. To Aunt Bonnie and Aunt Callie, wisdom, strength and spirituality are gifts that I will cherish always. To Bigdaddy Murray, my teacher and spiritual guide for as long as I can remember, your legacy will outlive us all. I will always be proud to be a Murray. To Uncle Julius and Uncle Richard, for making me feel like I was your "blood." Your memories have an eternal home in my heart. To Bigdaddy Jones, although I don't remember our meeting in the physical, I felt our hearts meet and agree often in a spirit of gentleness and generosity throughout this study. To my ancestors—may my success give honor to God and reflect your tenacity and brilliance as a people.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

> Black women are a prism through which the searing rays of race, class, and sex first focused, then refracted. The creative among us transform these rays into a spectrum of brilliant colors, a rainbow which illuminates the experience of all mankind. (Wilkerson, 1986, p.8)

Late in the fall of 2002, I pondered the idea of entering a Ph.D. program and was struck by an awesome sense of anxiety. I have since come to realize that my anxiety was based in part on my knowledge of several women who had received doctoral degrees and by the end of their studies were single, divorced, childless, or enmeshed in unfulfilling and troubled relationships. This seemed to be very characteristic during and immediately following the graduate experience (especially of the Black women I knew). As I thought about the road ahead in my pursuit of a doctoral degree, the voices of the strong, competent, articulate, intelligent, and lonely women I know rang in my mind. I wondered what it is about the academic pursuit that sentenced these women to a drought of intimacy. What is the unspoken oath pledged by many female scholars and why are they willing to risk so much loss in the pursuit of knowledge? Even more importantly, what are the secrets of women who have successfully managed the trials of academic study while balancing meaningful intimate relationships? What is it about the experiences of Black women that make their relationships so vulnerable? These questions framed the beginning of my inquiry and guided the development of the research questions, purpose, and methodology for this study.

According to research by Smith and Schonfeld (2000), all students perform better in diverse environments. Like many students from diverse backgrounds, as Black women

pursue higher education, they are faced with challenges to their success (Moses, 1989). The specific challenges faced by Black female doctoral students may be colored by their marginalized gendered and raced identities. Willis and Lewis (1999) say, "Daily, we [Black women] endure the exacting threefold forces of race, class and gender oppression" (p. 245). Furthering the understanding of Black womanhood, Willis and Lewis (1999) use a study by Hine and Thompson (1998) to expound on how the historical implications of race, class and gender oppression have rendered the specific struggles faced by Black women as "very different from the struggle of African American males and White women" (Willis & Lewis, 1999, p. 250). The ability to face and eventually overcome the unique adversity facing Black women may be attributed to persistence.

As the persistence of Black female doctoral students contributes to a diverse campus, the ways in which they navigate the culture of higher education, is critical for those wanting to understand how to increase the likelihood of success for all students of higher education. Simply stated, if Black women contribute to diversity, and diversity contributes to student success, the success of Black women then should be an important factor for everyone in higher education working towards the success of all students. Johnson (2001) helps to solidify the urgency and significance of this study as he laments about the lack of information on Black women's unique experiences in higher education:

> The need for them [Black women] to have successful experiences is paramount. To ensure that this happens, community colleges and other postsecondary institutions must recognize their unique qualities and abilities. They must also understand that the needs of African-American women may be different from anyone else attending the college, and so might their survival strategies, or how they cope with these needs (p.126).

Managing personal relationships amid tremendous academic obligations is a particular challenge to which Johnson (2001) alludes. Others have also made similar

observations (*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2003). Hine and Thompson's (1998) study indicates the significance of "community" in helping Black women to establish an agenda which includes education and developing a sense of self-value. The health and survival of a woman's intimate relationships with self and others during doctoral study may ultimately depend on how she learns to manage her own survival as a Black woman in the academy.

One of the first orders of business in this study must be that of situating the title "Divorcing the doctor: Black women and their intimate relationships during the doctoral process." I use the idea of "intimacy" in this study to indicate "intensity" rather than "proximity." That is, intimacy or degrees of closeness occur for each of us within some facet of our interactions with self or others. Examples of the others in our socio-cultural realms may include domestic partners, sisters, parents, children, friends or even our own individual sense of a higher power. In this understanding, it is possible to have a deeply "intense" relationship with a friend (for instance) while at the same time having a relatively superficial (or otherwise less intense) relationship with a partner, parent or anyone who resides in closer "proximity" than the friend. Using this example, one may conclude that they have a more "intimate" or close relationship with the friend than with someone with whom they may be more "physically" intimate.

No assumptions were made about the existence or absence of any relational ties among women selected for the study. Instead, this study sought to draw on the most "vital" and "intense" relationships self-identified by each woman in the study. Since "partnered" relationships were not a prerequisite for this study, readers may question how the idea of "divorce" is connected and embedded. Whereas intimacy indicates a

closeness, divorce connotes a perhaps involuntary separation. Divorcing the doctor" has at least two valences for me.

First there may be a literal, traditional divorcing (or distancing) of a woman from those she loves in pursuit of her doctorate, a consequence of the ever-present strain of constantly privileging allegiance to the academy over intimate relationships with self and others. The mental and emotional taxation on relationships during doctoral study may weaken relational ties and result in their eventual termination. I venture to say that all relationships which were initially intact and healthy prior to a Black woman's embarking on post-graduate education—including those with self, family, and a higher power—may be at risk for "divorce" in the wake of shifting priorities and changing demands for physical, mental, and emotional resources.

The second, perhaps less conventional but equally revealing, example of "divorcing the doctor" alludes to the ways that Black women in this study shift in and out of their academic persona in order to assume an identity which may be dictated by race or gender. At times it may feel critical, vital, or necessary for women to "divorce" or "distance" themselves from their educated identities as Ph.D's or doctoral students in order to enjoy the intensity of their other identities as sisters, mothers, wives, and daughters which have been curtailed by the rigorous demands of academic work. In essence, the doctoral experience calls for a "distancing" or "divorcing" of our personal lives in order to embrace and become "married" to our scholarship with the promise of becoming a successful academician (Patterson, 2004). In writing these descriptions, it is obvious that while one divorce unfolds externally, the other is an equally gripping

internal process that calls upon Black women to examine themselves as well as their motives for beginning the "affair" with higher education in the first place.

It is within this context that I attempt to amplify the voices of eight Black women (including my own) to stand as true and accurate accounts of our experiences as doctoral students and Black women. In no way should these narratives represent all women or even all Black women. What they should do is call attention to the fact that Black women doctoral students have a story that is as unique as their position along the continuum of race and gender. Too often the experiences of Black women in the academy have been understood from a traditional perspective that asserts "Whiteness" and "maleness" as the norms by which all other experiences are evaluated and studied (Gardner, 2005; Ward & Bensimon, 2003). The Afrocentric research model as posited by Asante (2003) problematizes these assumptions by honoring Black women's experiences as "raced" and "gendered" beings. Asante's model recognizes and validates human existence from a cultural perspective and is therefore an appropriate lens to guide all aspects of this study including, the methodological, theoretical, and analytical.

My review of literature originates from an Afrocentric "place" that centralizes knowledge within culture. This study then acknowledges through careful examination of the literature that all doctoral students carry the burden of academic rigor coupled with personal responsibility. It goes on to concede that all women within this group share the added impact of gender within a patriarchal system. It ultimately concludes through the review of literature that Black women within this same group, however, have an additional racial identity which must undoubtedly be negotiated within academia if they are to realize success in this regard. Given historical accounts of racial and gender

exclusion in higher education, it may be wise for campuses to look holistically at Black women from racial and gendered perspectives (Wise, 2005). This enhanced view of the Black female experience may augment and supplement what has historically been assumed by traditional student development models which are undoubtedly situated in the White male experience. With this in mind, the currents of this study do not attempt to undercut the dynamics of doctoral study for all students nor diminish the gendered experiences of women among that population but simply (or complexly) add to those components "race" as a salient factor to be considered when accounting for "all" voices present in the collective conversation on life in higher education. Future studies could, for example, take the layering of identities further to include those who are also weighted by issues of sexual orientation in a society where lesbianism is ostracized. For the purpose of this study, I focus on race and gender knowing that true accounts might also capture voices of those who experience oppression due to sexual orientation or additional forms of "othering" that may occur (Greenstein, 2000).

The fact that this study focuses on the process of managing intimate personal relationships is a direct implication of a pilot study completed in the fall of 2004 which found that among Black women, relationships outside of the academy are as significant to the existence and persistence of Black women as those within the academy (Patterson, 2004). Other studies have indicated a link between the persistence of Black female scholars and their relational ties. Hammons-Bryner (1995) cited relationships with older brothers among the motivating factor for Black women in achieving academic excellence. Hammons-Bryner (1995) clearly states,

> Respondents reported that college enrollment changed their existing relationships, that a form of distancing prevented new associations from intimacy, that the lack

> of intimacy—past and present—affected achievement and that older brothers had helped to impel them toward college (p. 12).

This study also challenged the dominant perceptions of academic excellence. Based on these conclusions, I ask: What are Black women doing to take care of those relationships that may be (at least partially) responsible for 'taking care' of them during the doctoral process? My premise is that given the fact that Black women in the pilot study cited their relationships as sustaining forces for them as students, how might the weakening or elimination of those same relationships prior to, during, or after doctoral study impact their success as both scholars and women? I entered this study fully prepared to find and report as well that intimate relationships have no impact on the ultimate success or persistence of the Black female doctoral students in this present study. My initial inclinations that credited personal relationships with partial responsibility for the perseverance of Black female doctoral students proved to be accurate (albeit not in the ways I expected).

Based on the significance of relationships for Black women, which is demonstrated in the review of literature, and those stories which have proceeded in the pilot study, I sought to ask the critical questions which preempted the "what if" of this study. For example: What if this study showed that there was a distinct struggle underway in the lives of the eight Black female doctoral students in this study to manage relationships as a part of their survival in higher education? Might those concerned with the success of Black women in higher education therefore be concerned with strategies that could be developed to support the women in this study, all women, and ultimately all doctoral students, in developing more balanced lives which may be shaped by the cultural needs of the individual often dictated by identities such as race and gender? (Ellis, 2001)

I do not expect this study to create an explosion of higher education policy revisions which compensate for race and gender but I do expect that the examination of these eight Black women's stories, will be a rare opportunity to put their needs—both academic and personal—at the center of policy consideration. Those responsible for recruiting, orienting, mentoring, and retaining Black women might understand that what often appears to be "business as usual" in the life of "just another doctoral student" may also be colored by the specifics of gender and race. This study may encourage others concerned with equity and diversity in education to tune in to the marginalized voices of Black women doctoral students within their sphere of influence.

The results of this study could be significant to researchers, theorists and practitioners in higher education. The themes derived from this study may go on to lead future researchers to develop theories about the persistence of Black women in doctoral studies. Theorists focused on critical race models, Black feminism, and Africana Womanism could use the results of this study to help construct evidence to support or challenge their positions. Theorists may also use the findings to help resolve arguments that arise by examining the critical themes derived in this study. Practitioners may find greater understanding about the needs of the populations represented and go on to develop models which acknowledge the impact of both race and gender on survival in doctoral study. My ultimate goal is that future Black female doctoral students might find in this study a useful conceptual roadmap that prepares them, and those who will support them, to better navigate their own experience with doctoral study and intimate relationships during the doctoral process.

The primary question addressed by this study is: How do Black female doctoral students manage their intimate relationships during doctoral study? Secondary questions include: specifically, what strategies do Black women employ to maintain intimate relationships? How might the strategies developed to manage intimate relationships during doctoral study be shaped by race and/or gender? How might the critical exploration of strategies used by Black women in the academy to manage intimate relationships during doctoral study help to disrupt and re/deconstruct traditional ideas about recruitment, orientation, mentoring, and retention of Black female doctoral students? Why should those in higher education even care about the findings of a study such as this one? And ultimately, what can the survival stories of women who have managed the process provide for those in the pipeline? The response to each of these questions holds significant implications for future research and practice involving Black women in higher education.

As this study seeks to recover intricate, detailed, and descriptive knowledge about the culture of Black female doctoral students, I employ qualitative research methods. This study is guided by the qualitative research methods outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) who state, "qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods" (p. 11). Characteristics of a qualitative study include (a) data such as interviews, observations, documents and records which are produced by a strategic research design, (b) procedures which include some form of coding data as part of a non-statistical sample and (c) findings presented in the form of written and verbal reports (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The basic tenets of a

qualitative study provide the methodological format for this study. In short, the study uses semi-structured interviews to produce data for the purpose of drawing unquantifiable results. Drawing on the lived experiences of Black women and setting them as the subjects of this study fits the Afrocentric model as it situates knowledge within the community as opposed to outside of it and relies on the accounts of participants to illuminate their own experiences from an insider's perspective (Reviere, 2001).

Specifically a critical framework is used to further explore issues pertaining to Black women in the academy. The tenets of a critical inquiry include (a) scrutinizing social processes; (b) disrupting assumptions; (c) invoking social consciousness and change; (d) aiding in emancipation from domination and oppression; (e) lending authority to the voice of subjects (Thomas, 1993). This study seeks to authenticate the voices of Black female doctoral students and change the current assumptions which may not acknowledge the ways that race and gender impact their doctoral experience thus lending itself to a critical process. In this critical exploration, the taken for granted are questioned and the assumed more closely examined. By helping to situate the findings within a set of critical parameters involving discussions of both raced and gendered perspectives the presence of dominant discourses which may be present within the culture of higher education can be more easily detected, interrupted and deconstructed (Groves, 2003). The guiding principles of Afrocentricity question the centralization of power within a context of "Whiteness" and "maleness" which is conducive and complimentary to the critical stance assumed by this study (Reviere, 2001).

In addition, auto-ethnographic data is introduced as I, as the researcher, sought a venue to situate and validate my own story as a Black female doctoral student working to

maintain relationships within as well as beyond the academy. Autoethnography is "the study, representation, or knowledge of a culture by one or more of its members" (Buzard, 2003, p. 61). This understanding further resonates with the Afrocentric model by providing a "place" from which to execute research which is a requirement for authenticity using an Afrocentric model (Reviere, 2001). In this particular study the selected "place" from which the study initiates is also the magnet which brings together the methodology, theoretical perspective and analytical framework. Adhering to the tenets of autoethnography, it is important to consider my own identity and how it impacts as well as has been impacted by the research (Groves, 2003). This study compels me to look critically at my own experience in order to truly digest the complexity of my identity as a Black female Ph.D. student conducting research about Black female Ph.D. students.

As in all instances of participant/observation the role of the researcher/participant is significant (Thomas, 1993). In this particular study, the relationship is pivotal given my own positionality as a Black female doctoral student and because of the need for an accurate and truthful recollection, transcription, and analysis of the data. In essence, my ability to portray the genuineness and reliability of my own relationship to the present study as well as each participant becomes a key impact on the trustworthiness of the final report particularly in light of the Afrocentric theoretical framework emphasizing truth and accuracy from a cultural perspective. My ability to cross academic and cultural borders while securing the trust of both the women in my study as well as the academic audience for which I write determines the usefulness (to some extent) of this study. In fact, some theorists believe that the accuracy and validity of a study is tied to having an "insider's" view (Groves, 2003). Further, Collins (2000) suggests that "individuals who

have lived through the experience about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read or thought about such experiences" (p. 209). Consequently I, as both the researcher and the researched, recognized the need to attend to the reflexivity necessary to successfully cross boundaries with multiple identities intact (Murillo, 1995). I address issues of reflexivity as an ongoing process through journal entries throughout this study.

Given the need to place the cultural experiences of Black female doctoral students at the center, an Afrocentric approach as proposed by Asante (2003) is used to guide the study. Truth and accuracy from a cultural perspective are at the core of models derived from Asante's perspective which has been further developed by Reviere (2001). It was therefore likely that the Afrocentric framework would provide a feasible backdrop for pursuing this research about Black women in the academy. The Afrocentric model is specifically designed as a tool in research that probes the human experience and explores the possibility of "embedded assumptions about race and culture" (Reviere, 2001, p. 709).

The following chapter offers an in-depth review of the relevant literature about (a) the doctoral experience, (b) issues forged at the intersections of race and gender, and finally (c) responsibilities and relationships in the lives of Black female academics. Further discussion of and evidence for the research design and methodology are presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents findings which emerged during the data analysis as well as descriptive profiles of the research participants. Chapter 5 elaborates on the findings of this study by examining them in light of implications for theory and practice in higher education in order to determine their usefulness as relevant research

worthy of consideration and discussion. Chapter 6 presents concluding thoughts and lays the foundation for a new model of Black, female, intellectual development. The study concludes with a brief overview and list of all references used and consulted.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Black women in the academy must work to deconstruct historical barriers while also situating a sense of the educated self among an academic and lay community who have not previously known her as such (Schwartz, Bower, Rice & Washington, 2003). As many Black women make their way toward a fully integrated self-identity, they may have to reconcile obligations to self and others along the way in light of the woman they are becoming. In order to understand and develop an appreciation for the experiential differences of Black female doctoral students, attention is drawn toward literature that converges and expands upon knowledge along three vectors of experience for Black female doctoral students.

As illustrated by the text in Appendix 1, the experience of Black female doctoral students may be marked by three distinct but conjoining vectors. First, there is the doctoral experience and all of its historical implications, evolving dynamics as well as rigorous demands. Second, there are the emerging identity issues of an increasingly well-educated Black woman who must negotiate her race and her gender in light of the historical implications of each in higher education. Finally, there are obligations (real or imagined) to self and others that may be impacted by both raced and gendered identities still being refined in the previous vector. These same relationship obligations may be additionally intensified by the struggles that Black women face as a result of their historical academic legacy outlined in the first vector. The visual model displays how the vectors are interconnected and converge to create a unique experience for Black female

doctoral students at the intersection. These vectors are used to guide and provide an organizational framework for the review of literature.

The Doctoral Experience

In order to fully understand the experience of the Black female doctoral student, it is necessary to understand what it means to be a doctoral student. Doctoral study in this chapter therefore is discussed with regard to (a) the historical foundations, (b) current trends in terms of demographics, and (c) expectations and requirements. Exploration of these three aspects of doctoral study provides a more composite view of the doctoral experience as a vector of Black women's experience within the academy.

The FUBU History of Doctoral Study

Higher education, as an institution, was originally created for elite White men by elite White men (Perkins, 1989). Thus I adopt the FUBU (For Us by Us) label from pop culture to help illustrate the historical implications and intentions of doctoral study. The Ph.D. was originally only granted to middle-aged individuals who already made their mark in the field and in doing so gained the notoriety and respect of peers for having lived the ideal of "lifelong education." Having originated at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin in the 19th century, the Ph.D. did not gain a following in the United States until the 20th century when it was hailed for the ability to produce a professional scholar capable of conducting original research (Thelin, 2004). Doctoral study in the United States includes the completion of rigorous coursework and individual research guided by an advisor who serves as the chair of the student's doctoral committee. In most cases the student is granted the title of doctoral candidate once he or she has completed a comprehensive examination demonstrating far reaching knowledge in their

chosen field and prior to beginning the dissertation process. The Ph.D. is a scholarly tradition that began in the oldest school in Berlin and has produced renowned experts in fields such as education, science and industry as well as the arts and humanities (Thelin, 2004). The doctorate degree continues to be recognized as one of the highest scholarly achievements possible. It is in this regard that individuals are often willing to devote great financial and time resources to the process of earning what began as a title conferred solely upon middle-aged White men in Germany.

Despite this historical precedent, African Americans have made great strides towards the goal of increasing the numbers of doctoral degrees earned. In 2001, Black people accounted for 6 percent of the total doctoral degrees granted in the United States (*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2003). Despite the changing trends in higher education today, women and people of color are faced with the burden of forging academic spaces that were not created with their specific needs in mind. It was not until after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that women and people of color were permitted access to higher education (Washington, 1996). It goes without saying that laws cannot regulate attitudes. As in the violent integration story of "Ole Miss" [University of Mississippi], Black people have not always been welcomed into institutions of higher education despite the legal right to access (Cohodas, 1997). As a matter of fact, some researchers believe that higher education has yet to embrace diverse faculty, students or staff (Smith & Davidson, 1992). Due to the relatively low numbers of Black students engaged in graduate study prior to 1970, research on them is particularly scarce (Ellis, 2001). The number of women receiving doctorates has steadily increased from about 11 percent in 1963 (Kerlin, 1995). In a study produced by Nettles (1990 as cited in Kerlin, 1995),

Black doctoral students as well as other minorities indicated that they faced racial bias and discrimination. Based on the historical foundation of higher education, it is plausible that remnants of patriarchal and racist attitudes might still exist in the cultural fabric of higher education as they do in other institutions. It is the haunting presence of these remains that continues to feed the oppressive nature of dominant discourse in education.

Current Trends

The face of higher education has changed drastically over the past few decades. Women now stand relatively close to men when comparing degree attainment in particular fields and doctoral programs, yet still lag behind in fields such as Math and Sciences. Statistics report that minorities are earning doctoral degrees at higher rates while the numbers of Americans earning doctorates has actually decreased overall (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Compared to the graduate students of the past, today's graduate student is more assertive and involved in the educational process. Consequently, stakeholders such as employers and research funding sources are also more vocal about the skills and competencies that they seek in today's Ph.D.s (Nyquist, 2002). Competence among diverse populations is among the most desirable traits sought by perspective employers

The majority of doctorate degrees awarded to Black students are in education. This is a trend which has extended for several years. Black students rarely earn doctorates in natural sciences or mathematics (*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2003). Women today make up about 58 percent of all graduate students while Blacks only constitute about 8 percent of all graduate students (National Center for

Educational Statistics, 2003). In 2001 Black women earned 63.4 percent of the total doctorates awarded to African Americans (*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2003). To further exemplify the gender and racial gaps in doctoral study consider the following: Black women have steadily increased the number of Ph.D.s awarded to them since 1990 from 550 Ph.D.s to about 1,017 Ph.D.s recently. In comparison, Black men had an increase of only 236 total doctorates going from 351 in 1990 to 587 in 2001. Compared to their White counterparts in doctoral study, Black scholars take longer on average to complete doctoral programs, are older when they complete doctoral programs and are almost 10 percent less likely to have served as teaching assistants as doctoral students (*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2003). These findings suggest the presence of unique challenges that may delay timely completion of doctoral study as well as full engagement and socialization as with many teaching assistantships.

Given increasingly diverse student bodies, the current climate and terrain of graduate education need to be revised to be more inclusive and reflective of the diversity among constituencies. Some of the major issues facing all doctoral students today include: (a) Students lack the information needed to make informed choices during the initial recruitment and orientation phases, (b) the narrowing of scope and emphasis on individual success and highly competitive environments during doctoral study is contrary to the expected "community of scholars" expected by many new doctoral students, (c) interaction with faculty is often limited to lecture classes that do not provide the same structure for engagement as in seminar-style courses (d) women and minorities continue to face alienation and discrimination, and (e) while students look to graduate study as a means to gaining social territory, they are often faced with a reality that elicits stress and

emotional pressure with little time to cultivate their own personal relationships (Myers, 1999). There is a need to consider simultaneously who is in graduate school and what is expected of them once they are matriculated.

Requirements and Expectations

Despite the diversity among scholars, there are certain processes that embody the culture of doctoral study including preliminary examinations, the writing and the defense of the dissertation. While highly debated, these rituals serve as the "rites of passage" for those wishing to attain the doctoral degree (Berelson, 1960). Doctoral students today are expected to adhere to many of the traditional formalities of doctoral study that were instituted under the German model of doctoral study despite changes in the cultural demographics and societal trends of today (Berelson, 1960). Requirements such as the preliminary (or comprehensive) exam and the dissertation are meant to be indicators of one's ability to contribute to the field by demonstrating an ability to conduct independent research and develop scholarly ideals (Berelson, 1960). Historical models of intellectual development according to Cross (1970) and other theorists have chronicled the genesis of women and Blacks as they moved towards "connected knowing" and "demonstrated confidence in their intellectual and intuitive knowledge of the world" (Schwartz et. al., 2003, p. 254).

Progressive acquisition of knowledge in a linear time sequence captures the essence of traditional developmental models although Cross (1970) alludes to the anxieties that may be experienced by students who are returning as graduate students after a hiatus from higher education. Many of these markers such as increased anxiety depict the condition of Black women doctoral students as it has been indicated that they

are often older in comparison to White doctoral students and take longer to matriculate. Traditional models of student development have failed to capture the "interpersonal dynamics of persistence among African American doctoral students" (Schwartz et. al., 2003, p. 255). Despite conditions that are often considered less than ideal for the success of African Americans in doctoral programs, some Black women have managed to meet and exceed academic requirements of doctoral work prompting further questions about what specifically contributes to success for Black female doctoral students.

One of the conditions that may preclude the success of doctoral students is socialization. Socialization in relation to doctoral study refers to the process by which outsiders are inducted into an academic community and made to feel that they belong (Gardner, 2005). Many aspects of socialization depend on the knowledge and beliefs held by doctoral students about doctoral study which may impede their ability to assume the role handed them by the academy. The assumption of roles indicates the presumption on some level of a "performance." It is in the traditional performance of "smartness," exemplified by the ability to be adequately socialized, that many Black women may find their greatest challenge.

Students are granted access to graduate programs based (in part) on their ability to score well on standardized tests and other perceived measures of potential success such as faculty recommendation, and undergraduate and masters level grades (Schwartz et al., 2003). While this study is not a critique of the tenets of doctoral study and admission procedures, it is interesting to note that universities have yet to heed the research findings of such scholars as Guinier (2003) who calls for "confirmative action" or the use of multiple criteria in the admission decision of higher education students in lieu of

affirmative action (p. 49). Innovative methods such as the consideration of a "whole person evaluation" as described by Guinier (2003) might help to level the playing field by assessing multiple "ways of knowing" and assigning value to different learning styles that might acknowledge the diversity among doctoral students today (p. 49).

I tend to agree with the insightful statement by Nyquist (2002). "The Ph.D. was not 'done wrong;' in fact, it has been done magnificently. But changes in society create new requirements, and we need to honestly assess the efficacy of the Ph.D. now to ensure that its recipients continue to make the kinds of contributions in the public and private spheres that the nation needs to remain strong." (p. 14). As new information is made available through research and other scholarly inquiry on the experiences of populations within the doctoral subsets, changes in requirements and expectations should reflect that new knowledge (Gardner, 2005; Nyquist, 2002).

The emphasis on individual success and achievement of some doctoral requirements reflect traditional Western educational thought which may in itself serve as a subtle displacement of the cultural grounding of many Black female scholars. King, Ferguson and Alese (1998) indicate that Black women develop survival skills in accordance to gendered patterns of communal behavior that may be traced to their African cultural heritages.

> This communal essence is the Black females' shared legacy with women world wide. . . .Yet the legacy of communality experienced by African American women is specifically shaped by African cultural foundations. Black women commonly act to apply, include, and preserve communal principles within their ethnic communities and within White cultural settings. These capacities are

> channels for the expression of the women's individual and collective identity and function as an active for of resistance to race, gender and class oppression; and resistance to sexual oppression (King, Ferguson & Alese, 1998, p. 33).

Requirements and expectations that do not resonate with their cultural values may precipitate some Black female doctoral students into a dissonance between what they know to be culturally appropriate and what they must do to be successful in doctoral study.

Issues Forged at the Intersection of Race and Gender

For each of us, there are particular issues formed at the intersection of race and gender. For Black female doctoral students, the issues may be further complicated by (a) the ways in which their image, as Black women, have been articulated in formal education (or not), (b) the dualism and internal struggle associated with crossing borders as an educated Black women and (c) various conflicting feminist epistemologies all claiming to be the "true voice" of Black women in the academy and beyond. Literature in each of these categories may help to conceptualize life at the intersection of race and gender for Black female academics.

Identity Theft and Black Womanhood

According to Afrocentric teachings, the tenuous relationship between Black people and education is a result of a dislocation of sorts. Because education in the United States has historically not provided means for Black children to locate themselves within the literature, they experience a kind of "death" as cultural beings despite what they may gain as educated beings (Asante, 2003). Additionally women in education continue to experience a covertly hostile environment despite increasing numbers (*Chronicle of*

Higher Education, 2004). The presence of Apartheid in South Africa should have taught us a lesson about expecting numbers to dictate power. A study by Ward (1997) captured the response of participants to the reality of existing as Blacks and women in academic spaces. Ward says,

> Having been Black female doctoral student in a major, white research academy, I lived Dubois' "twoness" daily. It was precisely from this reality that I chose to explore the mask, as protection, as sanctuary, and necessity for Black female doctoral students to succeed in this environment. In many instances, a mask is a grotesque head or face used to frighten or to ward off evil spirits. Yet the women under study expressed that when in the institution, regardless of their dilemma or perceived reality at a particular time, they had to assume a non-threatening, non-retaliatory, almost expressionless persona in order to promote self, survive, and succeed. (p. 7)

As Black women experience the impact of carrying not one, but at least two historically marginalized identities into academe, it is instructive to note how they have coped with the oppression that accompanies their dual identity.

Border Crossing: On being Black and Educated

For many Black women, education has historically been about uplifting the race. The first Black women to become educated did so in order to return to their communities as teachers (Perkins, 1997). Today, as many Black women find themselves in the position to conduct research on their own cultural groups, they face a new paradox. The irony of this paradox is best coined by Generett and Jeffries (2003) when they ask, "How does one understand the 'other' when she is the 'other' and few have been able to articulate a

definition of 'other' that is acceptable to her and from which she can begin the understanding process?" (p. 3). Thus the Black female intellectual must demonstrate a connection to her community even in the midst of her scholarship. The idea of "border crossing" alludes to the idea of using one's identity to "pass" and gain access to a space that other members of one's group may not also enjoy (Murillo, 1995). Education has in some respects provided a vehicle towards emancipation for Black female scholars. This emancipation has however come at a cost as education can distance many Black women from the very communities that they so desperately desire to serve (Generett & Jefferies, 2003).

According to Anzaldua (1987), "Those who inhabit multiple realties are forced to live in the spaces, places and positions in between categories and identities resulting in the consciousness of the borderlands." (p. 237). To understand that a Black woman is at the same time living all the implications of her race and of her gender is to acknowledge the complexity of her being. Indeed, "Black women experience womanhood in the context of Blackness; they do not experience their gender and ethnic identities as separate parts of who they are" (Houston, 2000, p. 11). The essence of Black women as owners of both their raced and gendered beings takes on an even greater significance in research. Aleman (2003) states that most research dissects race and gender as separate categories without giving any validity to the fact: "that a simultaneously raced and gendered reality is not a formal or guiding unit of analysis. It is as if to say that the moment of being both raced and gendered holds no important research consideration" (p. 189). Failure to recognize the researchable aspects of race in light of gender has in some contexts contributed to the dilemma in claiming a gendered identity for Black women in academia.

Conflicting Feminist Epistemologies

As Black women attempt to articulate their value as educated Black women, they are still faced with choosing the voice they will employ to that end. There are at least two epistemologies that frame Black women's educated stance within the academy. One is Black Feminist Thought as articulated by Collins (2000) and the other is Africana Womanism framed by Hudson-Weems (2001). These schools of thought come complete with their own rhetoric, language, doctrine and definition of what it means to be a Black woman. That is, each claims to provide a juncture for the fusion of a raced and gendered identity for Black women.

According to Collins (2000) Black feminism provided a paradigm shift whereby Black women's everyday acts of resistance to oppression based on race, class and gender might be addressed. Collins (2000) contends that Black Feminism evokes the consciousness of oppression in our nation by considering how race, class and gender impact society as opposed to previous models of feminism which only considered gender. Black Feminism provides a collective identity for Black women who are not adequately represented by traditional feminist views. This perspective which accounts for both race and gender provides a means to gain social, economic and political power for Black women.

Taylor (1998), a scholar who has studied Black Feminism, has openly questioned the reasons that many Black female scholars have turned away from Black Feminist in an effort to embrace a "womanist" perspective. Taylor cites that Black women may equate the tenets of any feminist perspective (even Black Feminism) with the ideals and values of White middle class women. Taylor (1998) asserts that Black Feminism has withstood

the test of time and political scrutiny. It has been an invaluable vehicle by which to move issues of race, class and gender to the forefront. For many Black woman scholars, there are some issues that cannot be discounted. For example, as a Black female doctoral student, I am resistant any attempts to circumvent my identity using hegemonic Black or feminist ideals to contain me. The desire to name one's self according to Africana Womanist scholars has urged the birth of a new epistemological tradition for women of African decent.

Hudson-Weems, (1989, 1993, 2001) first used the term Africana Womanism in 1989 to provide a contrast to the ways in which Black or Africana women differ from White women in terms of ideology and focus. Hudson-Weems (2001) says that an Africana Woman has 18 attributes including: (a) Self namer, (b) Self-definer, (c) Whole, (d) Spiritual, (e) Respected, (f) Male compatible, (g) Recognized, (h) Family oriented, (i) Genuine in sisterhood, (j) Ambitious, (k) In concert with the Africana Male in struggle, (l) Authentic, (m) Nurturing, (n) Mothering, (o) Respectful of elders, (p) Flexible and Adaptable, (q) Creative, and (r) Strong. While some critics believe these attributes to be essentialist, Hudson-Weems contends that these qualities are the aspirations of Africana women. While each of the attributes posited by Hudson-Weems present some facet of womanhood the gendered autonomy for Black women within this model is not the priority. Hudson-Weems clearly articulates her stance that Black women should position themselves to oppose racism over gender oppression as racism is the most oppressive force.

Hudson-Weems (2001) uses Africana Womanism to challenge and critique Black Feminists, whom she believes have their priorities all wrong. She states that the

oppressive system at work in society is to blame for the ways in which Black women are excluded from fully participating in society rather than placing the blame on men (especially Africana or Black men). She contends that the priority for the Africana woman should be to lift the veil of racial injustice first and foremost as she shares this plight with the Africana man and child. She goes on to claim that Africana women should engage Africana men in the struggle to first end racism and then all forms of oppression. In her understanding of Black Feminist ideology, emphasis is erroneously placed on securing rights and privileges from a gender perspective rather than from a racial one.

Reed (2001) writes from an Africana Womanist perspective that Hudson-Weems' (2001) concept of Africana womanism stands in contrast to the "Womanism" represented by Alice Walker (1983). In Walker's Womanist views, there is a relationship with feminism as well as a place for lesbian identities within the tenets of Womanism. Reed (2001) contends that the Africana womanism perspective posed by Hudson- Weems (2001) draws on ideals formed by Africana women in the Diaspora and provides a framework to build coalitions between Africana men and women to uplift a race that has been oppressed by a racist regime.

With these different and often opposing views of Black womanhood, it may be difficult for many young Black female scholars to situate themselves. Adhering to the political attributes of one may mean abandoning the cultural ideology of the other. Acknowledging the historical impact of one may mean dismissing the group cohesiveness of the other. This academic identity crisis may be intensified by internal conflicts about responsibilities and relationships during doctoral study.

Responsibility and Relationships for Black Women

A sense of responsibility towards self and others may guide the ways in which Black women engage relationships. There may be certain gendered and raced expectations that dictate the specific role of Black women in (a) taking care of self and (b) taking care of others. Cultural expectations are embedded in the ways that humans interact with one another. The question then remains as to how the Black female doctoral student conceives doctoral study. Does she see it as a part of "taking care of self" or as a means of "taking care of others"?

On Taking Care of Self

Thought of in many circles as the pillars of their community, Black women often shoulder a great deal of responsibility. Women, as the nurturers of others, share the need to renew and rejuvenate self but many Black women fail to participate in regular self-renewal practices (Buford, 2005). The act of caring for others while neglecting self sets up a dichotomy that can splinter the lives of young Black women who are still in the process of developing self-identity and self-esteem.

One of the most important relationships for Black women is the obligation to self (Buford, 2005). Spending the time and energy needed to regroup after having given much of self to the world, is often a critical need unacknowledged by Black women. Buford (2005) in a very poignant observation, lamented that "We [Black women] save the company, save our families, save the community. And then we forget that even a savior needs a spa day" (p. 128). The results of consistent self-neglect can contribute to declining health, stress related illnesses and fatigue. It may come as no surprise, then, that Black women have the highest incidence of illnesses such as heart disease, obesity

and diabetes (which can be stress related) when compared to all women (Beaubeuf-Lafontant, 2003). Physical and mental care are not the only means by which Black women may attend to their needs. Many women find it necessary to incorporate some form of spirituality even without the tenets of religion.

While some women may not claim to be "religious," Hudson-Weems (2001) asserts that the Africana woman or woman of African descent strives to be "spiritual." As spiritual beings, many Black women recognize the presence of a higher power in their lives and therefore make some effort to maintain that relationship. Research by Starks and Hughey (2003) found spirituality to be one of the most critical variables in the life satisfaction of African American women, regardless of age, income or educational level. Spirituality differs from religion in that religion is an adherence to a strict denomination or ritual where spirituality refers to an intimate and personal relationship with one's higher power whatever she conceives that to be. According to Watt (2003), "African American college women often turn to spiritual beliefs to cope with the everyday struggles that come with living in a socially and politically oppressive system. For many African American college women, spirituality includes a search for meaning that shapes their identities, which in turn helps them to better cope with the negative messages they receive from society"(p. 29). In spirituality, which may also include tenets of religion, Black women can find the strength to cope with the effects of environmental racism and the energy it takes to cope with insults to self-esteem daily.

The ability to acknowledge what comprises care of the whole self (mind, body, and spirit) may be among the first steps to create an existence which is respectful of the needs of Black women in particular and all women in general. Black women continue to

face substantial risks for physical, mental and emotional problems if they cannot conceive a way to articulate their needs and advocate for the resources needed to take care of self in light of all that they may be expected to do for others (Broman, 2001).

On Taking Care of Others

Many Black women find their strength in the ability to take care of others (Caputo, 1999). They may spend extraordinary amounts of time and resources caring for the needs of family and friends while also serving as official and un-official mentors and community advocates. Many Black women continue to do these things because they feel that it is what is expected of them from a cultural perspective as educators, nurturers and women. As discussed previously, even the idea of education as a means to uplift the race was for many Black women a tangible way to increase the social and economic condition of their communities (Perkins, 1989). Educated Black women are plagued by the highest divorce rates, and the lowest birth rates among all women, so it is not surprising that many of them are facing a relationship crisis (Clarke, 2002).

Society holds women to certain familial expectations. These expectations are colored by components of culture and gender (Boisnier, 2003). As daughters, women in many cultures are expected to be the care givers for aging or ill parents who often look to their adult children to provide economic and healthcare support which call for time as well as money (Goldstein & Reiboldt, 2004). Similarly, in many traditional extended families, older siblings are expected to provide care for younger siblings when parents are unable or unwilling to do so (Hammons-Bryner, 1995). In an investigation of African American family relationships by Hammons-Bryner (1995), one Black respondent commented that her brother who was 10 years older had “taken care” of her by working

at a factory which employed all of the adults in their extended family (p. 14). This example illustrates the widely held sentiment that that care-taking is an expectation in Black communities (Broman, 2001).

According to the Afrocentric perspective, the Black woman tends to be naturally "mothering" and "caring" (Reed, 2001, p. 168). While these terms may imply a certain essentialism in its construction of a hegemonic femininity, it has been noted that for African American women in particular, the existence of "heterogeneity of social relationships, experiences, and outlooks" actually supersedes "this tendency in regards to Black womanhood" (Houston, 2000, p. 11). The specific impact of overlapping identities found at the intersection of race and gender significantly shapes the experiences of Black women. It is the significance of that impact, called "multiple jeopardy" by Houston, which produce the heterogeneous response of "multiple consciousness" (Houston, 2000, p, 11). In this light, theories which tie Black women to an "ethic of caring" have merit. In such womanist pedagogies, the natural tendencies that propel Black women to nurture and care also highlight essential characteristics that exploit and expound on cultural expectations of care-taking among Black women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002).

It is worth noting that for many Black women scholars of childbearing age the cost of education in dollars and in time often means the absence or lengthy deferrals of pregnancy (Clarke, 2003). Goldstein and Reiboldt's (2004) study identifies parenting as one of the strategies used by Black women to combat the common stresses and problems associated with living in a world subjugated by gender and race. Karenga (1993) points out the two major roles assigned to women—mother of the world and sustainer of the world. As mothers, women may hold themselves to or be held to certain standards in

regard to how they approach the task of parenting their children. Consequently, Black women scholars are often cut off from a primary source of comfort, grounding, and positive interaction. They may also experience the disapproval of others who see child-bearing and rearing as a vital role in preserving and sustaining Black culture in a hostile world (Clarke, 2002).

Women who do have children while pursuing advanced or professional education have a different set of challenges. Children are often incapable of accepting the idea of sharing parents' time and attention (Broman, 2001). It is therefore not surprising that women caught in the crunch of doctoral study may suffer tremendous guilt and develop a tendency to overcompensate for time spent away from children (Hare & Hare, 2004).

Despite the educational status that a woman may attain, it is quite likely that her partner will not recognize her achievement as an excuse to refrain from traditionally gendered domestic roles. Women are still expected to cook, clean and bear children in a partnered relationship (Stohs, 2000). Stohs noted that African American and Asian American women with the greatest income and education were least likely to report large time and task disparities in household labor with their spouses, yet they performed 14.5 and 12.9 hours more household labor, respectively, than their spouses (p. 356). This tendency among women is known in many literary circles as "the second shift" (Carlson, 2001). Indeed, the high incidence of divorce among Black women may also be affected by the competing expectations of career and family (Besharov & West, 2001).

As a friend, many a Black woman finds herself in the role of counselor, confidante, and sounding board. Hudson-Weems (2001) highlights this tendency among Black women who express a "genuine sisterhood" alluding to the nature of female to

female relationships among Black women (Reed, 2001, p. 168). Women in our culture certainly participate in closer and more intimate friendships than men. A study by Shaw and Coleman (2000), argued for future studies that seek an in-depth understanding of friendships among and between Black women and their contribution to persistence during the educational process. That study also found that women tended to view friendships as a valuable part of their academic success (Shaw & Coleman, 2000). A crisis for a friend often means a crisis for the typical Black woman, just as a success for a friend is a reason for her to celebrate.

The issue of mentorship is certainly a common theme in Black communities (Coker, 2003). The slogan, "each one, teach one" or "he (she) ain't heavy" speak to the idea of lifting as one climbs (Smith & Davidson, 1992, Perkins, 1989). For many Black women, the task of mentoring others is not optional (Patton & Harper, 2003); but, on the other hand, the academy often proposes the additional expectation of being mentored by others which can be far more difficult for Black women than their peers (Patton & Harper, 2003). Authenticity, according to Hudson-Weems (2001), is among those values held by the Africana woman. If a mentoring relationship cannot pass the test of genuine authenticity, many Black women may find if difficult if not impossible to commit to it. Relationships dictated by the academy may sometimes have an element of distrust. Mentoring relationships that are allowed to happen naturally and are nurtured by the academic community may have a better chance of survival (Heinrich, 1995).

Black women experience extraordinary demands on their economic, physical and mental resources. According to Goldstein and Reiboldt (2004), "These [Black] women are the leaders, the sustainers, and the essence of the family and community" (p. 260).

As Black women consider the "costs" of obtaining a doctoral degree, they may overlook a host of the gendered and raced obligations which often accompany them. As a matter of fact, Aleman (2003) says that given the growing presence of women in higher education it may be fatal for educators to overlook "gender's racial details and distinctions in higher education" (p. 179). She goes on to state that "Race consciousness without a consideration of such behavioral and experiential realities like gender is misrepresentative and illusory" (Aleman, 2003, p. 180). Such statements clearly call for research that is inclusive of Black women as raced and gendered beings.

Summary

Black women experience competing expectations in their roles as scholars, women, and relational beings (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2003). Each role is bound by clear expectations which reflect the intersections of race and gender in our culture, yet the research often fails to present the Black female experience holistically. Despite substantial evidence of a chilly climate in higher education for people of color and for women, there is little research examining the cumulative effect of racism and sexism on Black women students and academics. As Black women struggle to construct a coherent, holistic identity in the midst of conflicting models and epistemologies, their advisors, faculty and mentors may be unaware of the internal conflicts produced by the Eurocentric educational system, or, painfully, they may expect Black women to abandon their own culture and embrace the academy (Jackson, 1975). As Black women find the survival of their most intimate relationships challenged by their academic pursuits they are forced to choose moment-by-moment to nurture relationships or seek academic success. The aspects of that struggle which are influenced by gender and race are precisely what the

present study seeks to uncover and explore. In many cases, a study of race and gender also includes aspects of class. Knowing that identity for Black women has many layers, I focused specifically on the intersections of race and gender in order to uncover experiences from these perspectives. Understanding what the women in this study do as well as the mental and emotional processes that impact their behaviors may help to provide guidance to other Black women entering the doctoral process as well as to broaden the perspectives of the institutions where Black women work and study.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLGY

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

Using Afrocentrism as a theoretical and methodological guide, this study uses qualitative methods to explore and expound on the experience of Black female doctoral students. Specifically, critical and autoethnographic methods frame the study. A critical perspective helps politicize and problematize what may have been held as normal and essentially taken for granted with regard to Black female doctoral students. As I work to frame the questions posed by this study from a critical perspective, I ultimately assume a posture that acknowledges societal wrongs that need to be corrected or addressed by the ensuing research (Korth, 2002). Because I draw on my own "embedded" identity as a Black women doctoral student, the study is also autoethnographic. While this study is not a true "ethnography," it encompasses elements of qualitative research methods, critical study, autoethnography and an Afrocentric theoretical framework. The use of tenets derived from critical theory that seek to disrupt hegemonic thought and to question assumed social practices prevail throughout this study. Likewise, autoethnographic methodology frames the use of individual interviews as I interject personal reflections and experiences to triangulate and thus exemplify the specific experiences of Black women as it relates to sustaining intimate relationships during doctoral study. The Afrocentric research model provides tools to guide the research process and keep it aligned with its purpose which is to answer the following research questions.

How do Black female doctoral students manage the survival of intimate relationships during doctoral study? Specifically, what strategies do Black women

employ to maintain intimate relationships? How might the strategies developed to manage intimate relationships during doctoral study be shaped by race and/or gender? How might the critical exploration of strategies used by Black women in the academy to manage intimate relationships during doctoral study help to disrupt and deconstruct traditional ideas about recruitment, orientation, mentoring and retention of Black female doctoral students? Why should those in higher education even care about the findings of a study such as the one presented here? And ultimately, what can the survival stories of women who have managed the process provide for those in the pipeline? A more thorough look at the Afrocentric theoretical framework provides a vehicle to explore all other aspects of methodology in this particular study.

Theoretical Framework

The Afrocentric theoretical framework chosen as the overarching foundation for this study helps to situate the research process within a cultural context. At the core of Asante's (2003) model of Afrocentricity in research is the truthful sharing of accurate accounts of cultural information. The Afrocentric framework is particularly useful when studying members of marginalized groups because of the critical stance that is assumed by a discourse that counters Eurocentric epistemology and challenges majority ways of knowing. According to Reviere (2001), five research canons or criteria must be satisfied in order for the research to be considered legitimate and useful within the Afrocentric framework. The canons are: (a) ukweli, groundedness of research in the experiences of the community; (b) kujitoa, consideration of the process by which knowledge is structured and a denial of objectivity; (c) utulivu, the concept of justice; (d) ujamaa, the need for the recognition and maintenance of community; and (e) uhaki, harmonious

relationships between researcher and researched. The formal theory of Afrocentrism developed by Asante is based on a scholar having both the right and the responsibility to describe reality from his or her own perspective. In recognition of the guiding canons described by Reviere (2001), this research study strives to (a) report accurately and truthfully the accounts of the participants, (b) acknowledge the cultural capital of participants, (c) avoid any acts of oppression or marginalization, (d) acknowledge and work to meet any needs in the community which may be illuminated by this study, and (e) demonstrate respect and consideration for the epistemologies of participants in this study. These tenets are omnipresent throughout this study and guide the methodology and analysis of data.

Afrocentric perspectives ultimately provide a native voice for the telling of an account grounded within the subcultures of race, gender and scholarship. Afrocentric research is distinguished by its execution from an Afrocentric "place" where Afrocentric values such as justice, truth and harmony are used to analyze human behavior. According to Asante (2003) there are three beliefs that permeate Afrocentric thought. The first belief is that (a) researchers should hold themselves accountable for uncovering racist theories embedded in traditional Eurocentric methods; (2) researchers should strive to centralize Afrocentric values as a legitimate framework for acquiring and assessing knowledge; and (3) researchers should begin their inquiry from an Afrocentric place. The third belief excludes the possibility of objectivity in Afrocentric research by compelling the researcher to acknowledge her own cultural bias and the origins of such as she enters the research process. Use of the Afrocentric framework makes full use of the native experience of Black women and further authenticate the reliability of data obtained

from this “primary” source as true and accurate (Reviere, 2001). The reporting of findings from an Afrocentric perspective adds to the growing pool of knowledge about Black female doctoral students from a cultural perspective which acknowledges their experience as raced and gendered beings.

Methodological Frameworks

This study combines critical and autoethnographic methods in order to explore the often hidden but consequently “really useful” knowledge garnered from an insider’s perspective (Jordan & Yeomans, 1995). This section expands on the rigor implied by the use of qualitative methods and procedures in general and critical study and autoethnography, specifically as well as the ways that reliability and validity has been established using these models in light of the fact that I, as the researcher, am a member of the very group I have researched.

Qualitative Methods

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), qualitative research is a way of gathering knowledge about the social world using means other than quantification as the primary process of interpretation. Qualitative research methods are used to retrieve intricate details about the feeling, thoughts and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn using quantitative research. Because this study seeks to discover how Black women develop thoughts, feelings and behaviors that enhance the likelihood of survival in intimate relationships during the doctoral process, qualitative methods are more appropriate than quantitative methods to capture the details necessary to understand and conceptualize the process.

There are three major components of qualitative research used this study: data collection, organization, and reporting (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For Black women researchers, qualitative methods provide an opportunity to consider our own fluid identities including race and gender, as critical components of the ways we experience the world and that likely will influence the ways we approach our research (Generett & Jeffries, 2003). Specifically, "conducting qualitative research dictates that Black females in the academy will serve a number of competing, conflicting and contrary masters, forcing us to constantly consider who we are in order to better understand the world around us" (Generett & Jeffries, 2003, p. 6).

Indeed, Etter-Lewis (1991) as cited by Generett and Jeffries (2003) notes that "qualitative inquiry is an appropriate outlet for understanding a self that is characterized by the fierce intersection of race, class and gender, whereas oral narrative is ideally suited to reveal the multilayered texture of the lives of Black female academics" (p. 7). Within this study are embedded values about the understanding of "self." As I took on the role of both researcher and researched, I faced a similar dilemma to that of the fictional "lady or the tiger" as she stands knowing that whatever choice she makes will ultimately end in pain. As a Black woman I understood all too well the need to contribute to research that explores the experiences of Black female academics, which stood behind door number one. I also knew the consequences of conducting research on my own group, only slightly hidden by door number two. Ultimately, I made the choice to pursue this study despite the peril and risk of having my work scrutinized by those who still believe in the myth of objectivity and have not learned that identity can be a significant contribution to this type of research. In opening this Pandora's box, I risked further compromising my

own identity as a member of this group of Black doctoral female students even as my goal was to aid in the emancipation of this group from a web of dominant discourse which has deemed Black women in the academy deviant at best and traitors at worst (Generett & Jeffries, 2003). My motives for pursuing scholarly research on Black women could have been (and may still be) questioned by those within academia. My loyalty to other Black women may have been subjected to severe analysis if this study revealed truths that did not resonate with positive images of "Blackness" and "femaleness." Depending on which role I embodied on any given day as I conducted the research, I often found it necessary to minimize my identity as an academic or a Black woman in order to blend in with the "natives" of each context. In order to disrupt existing power structures that may not have acknowledged Black women's experiences in education as gendered and raced, I had to find the means to get past gatekeepers and that sometimes meant sacrifice in the name of qualitative research. At the end of the day, I knew that my race and my gender that served me so well in some aspects of this study could also hinder the acceptance of my findings as legitimate, creditable research in other domains.

There are several concerns with the use of qualitative research which have haunted me throughout this process, including the holistic injunction as outlined by Noblit and Engel (1999) as well as establishing the validity of qualitative methods in the face of more traditional quantitative research (Johnson, 1997). As a part of the holistic injunction, a researcher is compelled to "tell all." As a member of the group I have chosen to study, I know that there may be political and socio-cultural consequences of "telling all" that could deem me more of an "outsider" working for the academy and

(perhaps even more treacherous) my own scholarly acceptance within academia than an "insider" among Black females.

According to Noblit and Engel (1999), qualitative researchers develop a strategy for "checking" their work including data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. According to Johnson (1999) as cited in Whittmore, Chase and Mandle (2001), "validity standards in qualitative research are even more challenging because of the necessity to incorporate rigor and subjectivity as well as creativity into the scientific process" (p. 522). The goal in establishing validity for qualitative research then becomes to "demonstrate the truth value of multiple perspectives" (Whittmore et. al, 2001). The Afrocentric perspective values truth from a cultural perspective and acknowledges members of a community as the owners of that truth. The question will be for me as well as the other participants in this study, if we are willing to trust that our "truth" will be valued when our experiences with education don't validate that expectation.

It is necessary to approach qualitative research using an Afrocentric framework with the understanding that different assumptions prevail in the epistemological development of qualitative inquiry than in that of questions that drive quantitative study. If a study accurately reflects the experiences of the participants from a critical perspective, the integrity of the research is assured thus the study may be deemed valid (Whittmore et. al, 2001). This study seeks then to accurately reflect the experiences of Black female doctoral students from our own perspective. Because this study is also "critical," I am compelled to explore the possibility that even our own perspectives

contain embedded contradictions inherent in our socialization as Black females in a White patriarchical society.

Even in accepting the validity of Black women's experiences from our own perspective, a critical inquiry involved questioning how our perspectives may have been skewed by the fact that we "grew up" academically within a system riddled with dominant discourse and immersed in Eurocentric rhetoric which has constantly measured our existence in comparison to the experiences of White males in the academy. In order to be critical, I needed to consider the possible effect of being immersed in a system that has devalued and discounted the experiences of Black women along with many other marginalized groups since its inception. I asked myself critical questions such as how have the Black women in my study (including myself) been impacted by the self-esteem crushing power of dominance and oppression? Moreover, how might our understanding of the academic experience be colored by the internalized messages received as consumers of social capital within such a system?

Critical Inquiry

This study employs the use of specific qualitative methods and several tenets of critical inquiry. I use the term critical inquiry gingerly as this study is truly a hybrid of qualitative methods which aim to disclose truths and increase understanding about the ways that Black women in doctoral programs negotiate their gender and race to achieve academic success. Ethnography, which comprises some aspects of this study, comes primarily from the field of anthropology where the emphasis is on understanding "culture." In order to understand culture, the researcher must become immersed in the cultural environment as an active "participant" (Anderson, 1989). As the techniques of

critical ethnography have emerged so has criticism of the ideological nature of the research. "Critical ethnographers aim to generate insights, to explain events, and to seek understanding. They also share. . . . the view that the cultural informant's perceptions of social reality are themselves theoretical constructs" (Anderson, 1989, p. 253). This perspective seems to shadow the imperatives of the Afrocentric model by conferring authenticity upon the voice of community members by virtue of their position as a member of the group being studied. The critical ethnographer constructs an "insider's" view of reality that is "inherently a matter of political and economic interests" (Anderson, 1989, p. 254).

In this study I had to overcome my own cultural barriers in order to understand the ways that I, as a member of the group I studied and a member of the study itself, have also been co-opted and how my own colonization continues to impact my ability and willingness to be critical of my experience as it relates to doctoral study and relationships (Groves, 2003). It is certainly easier to see the flaw is someone else's rhetoric than to acknowledge it in my own or even within a member of my own group.

Theorists agree that reflexivity may be the most central concern for the critical ethnographer. Anderson (1989) says,

> Perhaps the most pressing issue facing critical ethnographers today with respect to validity or trustworthiness of their accounts is the exploration of reflexivity that is self-reflective processes that keep their critical framework from becoming the container into which the data are poured (p. 254).

Groves (2003) argues that reflexivity guides the ways that researchers reflect on how their own involvement may have shaped data collection, analysis and production. It calls for an honest introspection of how identity influences meaning. Critical ethnography has struggled to gain respect even among traditional ethnographers because

of the ways that it validates the emic or insiders perspective as truth and allows individuals to construct their own social reality (Jordan & Yeomans, 1995).

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is produced by ethnographic researchers "indigenous to the culture under scrutiny, who are as concerned with examining themselves as 'natives' as they are with interpreting their cultures for a non-native audience" (Deck, 1990, p. 246). In other words, autoethnography is the study of a culture by one of its members using their own identity as a tool to interpret and understand what is happening. Deck (1990) explains that the ability to be both participant and observer requires a dual understanding of what is happening. In this respect, I was more confident in my ability to have that dual "understanding" of what was happening than in my willingness to "reveal" what was happening. My fears were born of my understanding of the ways that my position as a "border crosser" between Black female culture and the world of academia may have been interpreted by other members of my group (Anzaldua, 1987).

Writers of autoethnography are gifted with an ability to understand the hidden transcripts of that which they are attempting to explain (Groves, 2003). With this unspoken camaraderie comes the need to understand how identity works to provide and deny access. Autoethnographers are able to use their own experience to authenticate what they come to know about a culture and thus add to the validity of their own research. The advantage of autoethnography then may be summed up by the power to move others to make political conclusions without stating so. It is an "intentional process with unintended effects" (Butz & Besio, 2004, p. 353).

Much like the women who participated in this study, the research methodologies that inform my work stand at the intersection of several techniques from which I borrow to create the ideal vehicle for the hearing, understanding and eventually the sharing of the data. In deciding on the chosen methods, I was informed by the Afrocentric theoretical framework and likewise the theory was guided by the critical and autoethnographic methodologies contributing to this study. It was not sufficient to use ethnography as a method alone that did not sufficiently allow me as the researcher to question and critique the meanings behind the behaviors. It seemed to be of more use to me as an ethical researcher committed to addressing systems that contribute to the oppression of Black female doctoral students to employ tenets of critical ethnography that "takes us beneath the surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying obscure operations of power and control" (Madison, 2005, p. 5). It was also not enough to disclose my own hidden transcripts through autoethnography without also privileging the voices of other Black female doctoral students with a story to tell. The power of this study is at the intersection where each method bends and yields to the other making space for the imagery of performance that contributes although the use of critical study and autoethnographic methods ultimately shape the specific research design and methods.

Research Design and Methods

Data was collected using a series of in-depth individual interviews with seven of the participants. In addition, autoethnographic moments were captured through journal entries where I as a Black female doctoral student chronicled my own experiences and reactions to the study as it unfolded. Additional supplemental material was collected

during the process via subsequent e-mail and phone conversations with participants. While there was originally a focus group planned, participants were unable to participate due to distance, and practical constraints on personal resources including financial and time. Each participant was selected based upon 1) her willingness to participate in the study, 2) her status as a current doctoral student, and 3) her self-identification as a Black woman. Interviews were transcribed, and coded using the constant comparative method in order to derive themes that capture the 'thick and rich lived' experiences of subjects (Guba & Lincoln, 1984).

Sampling

This study relies on the insight of a small, purposeful sample of self-identified Black women. Thomas (1993) remarks that in doing a critical study it is important to select a sample that has "insider's knowledge" of the culture being examined (p. 37). The goals of this study are to report on the experiences of participants as Black women and their particular survival strategies in regards to intimate relationships. Thus the population for this particular study includes Black female academics working toward a doctoral degree. An appropriate sample therefore includes women identifiable by all of these criteria. One of the characteristics of ethnographic research is the use of small sample sizes (even as small as one as in a case study) that represent the qualifications of the culture to be researched. As the results are not intended to generalize to the entire population but rather to examine fully the set of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors used by participants in certain conditions, a nonprobability or purposeful sample is appropriate (Higginbottom, 2004). Purposeful sampling is often used when studying ethnically diverse populations because of the small pools of possible participants that may be

available at any given time and place (Pires, Stanton & Cheek, 2003). A sample size of eight women including the researcher/participant is therefore adequate to examine the cultural characteristics of this sample of the population given the rarity of Black women working toward a doctoral degree.

Purposeful sampling refers to the conscious and deliberate selection by the researcher based upon a set of previously selected standards (Higginbottom, 2004). The sample in this study consists of Black women currently enrolled fulltime in a doctoral degree program at a college or university and who were willing to participate in this study. I attempted to be as inclusive and exhaustive as possible in finding potential participants. I looked to different disciplines, regions and research institutions. The sample was then selected from this pool based on willingness to participate and proximity to the researcher. In recruiting participants for this study, the previously mentioned criteria were used to determine the adequacy of those referred for this particular study. Participants were invited into the study using formal letters, phone calls and e-mails to identified members of the group. Referrals and nominations (including self-nominations) from colleagues and constituents within the realm of higher education were encouraged. I used existing networks as well as connections to professional associations to finalize study participants.

Introduction of Participants

In order to fully understand the impact of each story, it is necessary to understand what each woman brought to the table and how she wove her own unique distinction with such emphasis and enthusiasm into a story that has never before been told. There is an old African proverb that says ‘until the lion[ness] learns to tell [her] own story the tale of

the hunt will always glorify the hunter.' In this tale, the pursuit of intellectual validation in the form of a Ph.D. takes on new dimensions as Black women spoke with clarity and specificity about instances when just being Black or just female were insufficient.

Peachy[1], a woman that I found shockingly honest and hauntingly lonely, was first to lend her voice to the study. She is a genetic scientist from a research university in the Northeast. Born in Washington, D.C., her parents' only child together, she spent most of her childhood in the care of her grandmother. Warm honey brilliance that is more striking than most, she seems unaware of her own power. Although she is not presently in a partnered relationship, she looks to the day when she will be "loved and cared for." At the ripe old age of 25, she is way too practical and her tone oozes of conservative southern charm. Peachy plans to complete her academic career summer 2006.

Alexis is a mature 26 year old soul held captive in a young girl's body. She was the second sister interviewed. Cautiously speaking each word as though she were a politician, she catches herself on several occasions with her guard down. At those moments, a laugh escapes the tower she has constructed to protect herself from the pain of appearing to care. Chronically serious, she is a newlywed attending a Ph.D. program in communications in the Midwest. She plans to complete her degree by June 2006. I found Alexis to be casually meticulous and graceful with a pleasant baked cinnamon demeanor and Mona Lisa smile.

Star, age 31, the third participant is a proper lady who has the ability to put others at ease without seeming to grant herself the same liberty. At the end of her doctoral process in education, she is reflective and thoughtful pausing often to contemplate and consider what she will share. She is from the Midwest and attends school in the same

[1] All participants are referred to throughout this study using self selected pseudonyms

area. Engaged to be married, she is open and honest—enough. Reserving some details for a time and a place not yet specified, she is careful to test the waters prior to completing her dive. Ironically, intricacies of her life that were too "risky for the interview" are revealed during a dinner conversation. Quieting the risk taker that lives in her soul, she shares the politically correct version of her story.

Sydney is a shy 27 year old Midwest woman with a lively 'sister-girl' personality. As an education student in the Northwest region, she is away from many of her friends and family. Newly married, she and her partner are both Ph.D. students which makes for an interesting story on its own. Afrocentric beauty and pride give way to her developing self esteem as she seeks to incorporate this new symbol of womanhood into an educated persona. Not quite confident in her own ontology, she is in a constant state of seeking approval as a first year Ph.D. student in Education.

Trina, a vivacious wife and mother of one seems to have no end to the amount of energy that she can summon. Laughter and humor are her shields. I am unable to detect a vice. She emerges from a fog of deception stunned and suspicious. Licking her wounds she pretends to be grooming herself. The pain refuses to be hidden as it peeks from the corners of her smiling eyes. Involvement and leadership at Northwest University intercede on the behalf of loneliness for this self-made celebrity. With a charisma that rivals Oprah, this dynamic 33 year old woman from California gives only what is requested of her. No more and no less. Trina moves cautiously toward her final year of graduate study in Education pausing only to remember the lessons she wished she had not learned.

Two final interviews speak unfinished business of telling Black women's stories in academia. Ann, a tall model bronze chiseled woman began the interview process but because of her splintered obligations to the others in her life including the academy, was unable to complete the journey. I bring aspects of her partial story as they remind me of the subtle demands on my own resources that have threatened to keep me from telling these stories. The telling is only a part of what must be done. After the telling comes the knowing which is in many cases more painful but equally as liberating. A career student, Ann is a sister who has managed to sustain herself mind body and soul through the loss of what she referred to as a "divorce" as she felt that her relationship with prior live-in partner was best described as a spousal relationship. As the only child of her parents, she describes herself as "an only child as well as a child with siblings" as she grew up as an only child with her mother but has a half sister and half brother on her father's side. Ann is 31 and hails from the Northeast. Planning to complete her Ph.D. in Cultural Studies in May 2006, she finds little time for anything or anyone else.

On the other hand, Nina knew from the first time that she heard the title that she wanted to be one of the voices that contributed to this study. As a matter of fact if memory serves me, she cried. Currently single, Nina attends a Northeastern University as a Ph.D. student in Education Administration. A strong spiritual woman with southern roots, Nina unremittingly scheduled every aspect of her life in order keep track of her many obligations to the academy and beyond. It is ironic that when she finally found the time to submit to a phone interview, we talked for nearly two hours just to find that the recording was flawed and while all of my words were recorded, her responses were not. Due to the fact that she is working on the final requirements for her own doctoral

program, her reaction to the news of the technical mishap surprised me. Amazingly enough she did not recoil her spirited words, but offered to supplant them with her own written responses to the interview prompts. I eagerly and gratefully agreed to collect her feedback via a series of e-mails. Complemented by my meticulous notes, even these "twice-baked" responses seem a valuable commodity to assist in the understanding of the Black female doctoral experience.

In order to clarify the use of the two interviews that are incomplete, I will refer to them as supplemental. While they contribute to the richness of the data and serve as incomplete versions of the stories shared, it is not truthful to represent them as full responses to the protocols as shared by the other participants. Ann's first interview was transcribed and is used to build on themes derived when discussing identity and sources of support.

Nina's oral interview was not audible so her written responses to the prompts were coded and used as data, in there own right, substantiated by the fact that I spent two hours listening to the inflections in her voice and tone as she shared similar comments with me verbally during the original interview. The notes that I took from Nina's interview helped to locate emotions which were embedded throughout her story more than the actual words themselves. If I had some foreshadowing about the fate that would befall the actual "oral" interview, I would have feverishly written every beautiful word that escaped from her lips to travel the length of several states and finally into the flawed device that I held to my ear. Needless to say, the loss of words captured in that moment will haunt me for a very long time. Nina's willingness to respond to the prompts in

writing are a testament to the camaraderie and rapport that was established across the miles using only our shared spaces of Blackness, womaness and intellectualness.

Each of the women in this study was selected based on her self-identification as a Black woman, and a current Ph.D. student. One of the women, I met at a conference in the spring and found myself drawn to because of the confidence that she exuded in that process. Two of the women were referred by a mutual academic mentor who knew of my study and used this platform to share my topic which immediately drew the women. One of the women came to my acquaintance as she worked on the final credentials of her study in an area close to me. Three of the women were chosen due to the combination of their proximity, willingness and accessibility.

While I was not necessarily interviewed for this study using the protocol provided, I spent many days and nights pondering the questions that I asked of my participants. I felt the sting of their words hitting my heart like a hard rain. In many cases, it stirred my soul in ways that I could only write about. My writing took the form of journals that helped by providing a place where I could reflect on my own thoughts and feelings. It was a place where I could carefully dissect the meaning derived from my data from my own feelings as a Black woman conducting this study. True to the auto-ethnographic nature of this study, I am using my perspective as an insider to interpret and translate the experiences of my participants. I am also using my own thoughts and feelings as a way to triangulate the data and give it depth within the context of my own experience as well as grounding participants of the study's experiences as Black women in the academy. Because my experiences are so germane to the composition of this study, I feel that is it important to reveal the "place" from which I have initiated this

research in an effort to demonstrate the façade of objectivity while also being transparent about my motives. While this study is not a memoir of my own matriculation, it is the culmination of my academic journey and my essence is embedded in every word. At times my "essence" has been loud and piercing but more often it has lingered quietly as an echo within the hidden transcripts of this text as not to confuse or dilute the stories of my participants. It is in this light and with this understanding that I believe now may be the ideal opportunity to tell my story.

Dana's story

I must begin this section by making it very clear that my struggle with education is not at all academic. My educational journey and my personal sojourn to becoming the woman that I envision are conjoined. For me this has been an intellectual awakening of the potential to be what society says I should not be. As a Black female Ph.D., I am aware that I am society's greatest contradiction. My educational journey has brought to me an opportunity to feel more intensely, question more intelligently and fight more passionately. The difference between me prior to this experience and now is clarity. I am now clearer about who I am and what that means in the context of this world in light of my race, my gender and my educational status. That knowledge has come with a price and my story chronicles the paying of that price.

My mother and father's eldest child, I am one of 10 siblings total. My mother gave birth to three daughters prior to departing this life at the young age of 29. My father holds his Ph.D. in Theology from the Lexington Theological Seminary. My mother had what is equivalent to a M.A. in her field of Dietetics. I have three sisters with graduate degrees and my siblings who have not completed college are not yet of an age to have

done so. I present these facts to illustrate that "doing school" has never eluded me. As a result of doing relatively well in my educational endeavors, I have developed confidence in my ability to meet the intellectual expectations of a western educational society. My anxiety as a Black woman in pursuit of a doctoral degree is complicated and intensified by my relationships—thus the focus of this study.

The process of writing about one's own experiences is difficult at best but for a Black female in higher education, it is almost painful (Generett & Jefferies, 2003). This rings true for me—this is the section that almost was not. Pulling the covers from my own struggle with managing relationships lets the breeze blow over my nakedness as a Black woman. It is to admit that my performance is not seamless. I struggle both inside and outside of the classroom. The truth is that I struggle more in the latter. The story that I have to share is of my own coming to intimately know and love education. Since education is about the way a person receives and processes information, it is ironic that I originally thought my story had no impact upon my education. I could not understand how my beliefs, attitudes and behaviors shaped the way that I approached knowledge and how profoundly it affected my life.

Over the past few months I have done much reading. I have read about theories and methodologies and epistemologies. And in all of my reading the work that had the most impact upon me were the stories of people's struggle with education. I could identify and situate myself directly in relation to these stories of betrayal, triumph, persistence and hope. The stories were familiar, like bed time stories. I knew the characters and they knew me. As I read, I felt the internal contradiction that comes from viewing people of color as knowledge makers. I have read stories of women in higher

education as well as men, people of color as well as White people. In all there was a thread—the struggle. Internal or external, each of these individuals struggled to find the strength, knowledge, words, courage, endurance or faith. Their stories urge me on like the day my training wheels came off to try riding on my own. Test my wings. In the writing of this study, I understand that I must question that which seems to be obvious and disrupt that which seems to be comfortable. If I am to be critical of my own experiences, I must struggle with my story in a way that makes it authentic—makes it yield some insight.

My emergence as a Black female academician is a political statement. A model of persistence, I know that my achievements are not mine alone. They belong to my people and therefore, I feel compelled to acknowledge them. I was taught as a child that respect was the greatest gift that a person could give another. Having attended racially mixed schools most of my life, I am aware of my tendency to perform when it comes to education. I was less prepared to understand my tendency to perform in other roles outside of the academy. The opportunity that I have to author this dissertation without fearing for my life is evidence of changes that have occurred in society and more profoundly within me as a Black woman in these United States. Not long ago, my writing of my own name would have been enough to signal the cavalry and alert the lynch mob. I would have been considered an insurgent and a rebel. As a Black woman, I would have been the least likely among all humans to be expected to have the capacity to articulate my own knowing. To add insult to injury, I have proceeded to do so within an Afrocentric framework which denies that knowledge is generated exclusively from a Eurocentric "place" and acknowledges that indeed knowing comes from being.

Validity is a very important consideration as one might approach an autobiographical narrative because of the bias involved. Until we can find evidence which triangulates our own accounts and situates it within a richer narrative, it is difficult to tell if our perceptions are based on reality or our skewed views of reality. A prominent feminist writer, Sandra Harding (1986) wrote,

> The insights of Freud and Marx have taught us that the accuracy of our autobiographies is limited by what we select as significant by what we have inadvertently forgotten, by what is too painful to recall, and by what we cannot know about the forces operating in our natural/social surroundings that shaped our early experiences (p. 201).

Harding (1986) goes on to suggest that an autobiography should seek to be "critical rather than "self-congratulatory" (p. 202). It is in these words that we come to understand that our best lessons are taught by revealing the nature of our own struggle. Yet, it is not sufficient to simply recite a personal account.

It is in the context of my "rites of passage" that I must reflect upon my identity as a Black woman, for this conceptualization did not come easily. My biological mother died when she was 29 and I was 9. Thus my understanding of Black womanhood came with the knowledge that Black women would leave me and ultimately abandon me. Even my own claim to the concept came at the cost of forgiveness and acknowledgement of the ways that I had disappointed and thus abandoned myself or at least the parts of myself that had committed to be a daughter, a sister, a wife and a mother. It is this picture of Black women leaving that makes it more difficult for me to skip opportunities to nurture my intimate relationships to meet my academic lover. I often feel like I am cheating on those that love me most to be with what I (at times) love most. You must understand that I am a woman who prides myself on taking care of others. Even in this study, I am using

my academic moment to take care of sisters that I know will follow me in this hot affair with the academy.

My sisters are some of the most important women in my life. I love them and much of what I do is for them. One of the last things that my mother ever told me was to "take care of my sisters." I have lived those words. I tend to their emotional, mental and physical needs through thick and thin. When I am unable to help them, I feel as though I have failed. In a likely match, I have chosen to do research that seeks to champion my "sisters" in the academy. I am interested in discovering how and why they manage intimate relationships during doctoral study. Only in my discovery of the Afrocentric Research Methodology as described by Ruth Reviere (2001) am I able to claim the honest and selfish reasons for this line of inquiry. My sister's success is my success and her failure mine as well.

It is my firm belief that performances should be convincing and believable. It is in this light that I have become more critical of my own performances as wife, mother and daughter. It is as an academic that I am most confident in my ability to impress an audience. Perhaps it is the fact that my success as an academic is less expected than my superior performance in my roles dictated by my gender. As a woman, I am expected by society to know how to be a good wife, a loving mother and an attentive daughter. I should have learned these models as I transitioned from girlhood to womanhood (Bettie, 2003). The proper and accepted method of performing these roles should have been a part of the cultural capital handed down to me from women in my life. Somehow, there was a disconnect and the baton was never passed. It is the fragility of my Black womanhood that is at risk as I write about a process that I have yet to master. The truth

about how I manage intimate relationships during the doctoral process is that I am a chameleon. I am able to be what others need me to be at any given moment whether that be a mother, a daughter, a sister or a friend for example. I am deeply perceptive of those around me and I talk to God like a girlfriend. My own needs are buried deep below my understanding of what has been sacrificed so that I could have the educational opportunities afforded me. The truth is that I am in debt. I owe my children and my sisters but because they are a part of the community that I seek to serve through education, I believe that my debt to them will be paid on the other side of this educational journey. If I find myself unable to convince them of the same, I can temporarily and unapologetically divorce this doctorate (or at least the performance piece) in order to save our relationship and prevent them from "divorcing the doctor" that lives in me.

My story justifies how I was seduced by education. It was the allure of education and all the glamour that it brings that made me feel useful and adequate. In motherhood, sisterhood or partnership, my work has no end; I can never do "enough." In my personal relationships, I am always aware of my inadequacies where as in education, I can simply address them in the next draft. In relationships, there often fails to be a next time and I cannot hide behind the performance of "smartness" because they rarely aid me on the stage of my real life. My degrees won't heal the damage that has been done and the hearts that have been broken by this affair.

Madison (2005) contends that gaining "access" is among the most important work in qualitative research. I agree and have thus granted access to the hidden transcripts of my life as a way of dismantling any remnants of neutrality or objectivity. This study is

urgent to me in the same manner that my romance with education is urgent and pressing. I offer myself along with my participants to be questioned, puzzled over and analyzed.

The following table presents the demographics of each participant as well as the two supplemental interviewers (denoted by an asterisk). The table is introduced as a means to organize the significant attributes of each participant and provide supplemental information about the level of personal diversity among the women in this study. Specific information may have been changed in order to protect the identity of participants and their families.

Coded Name	Age	University attended	Marital Status	Place of Birth	Degree Area
Peachy	25	Northeast University	Single	Washington, DC	Science
Alexis	26	Midwest University	Married	Indianapolis, IN	Communications
Star	31	Midwest University	Engaged	St Louis, MO	Education
Sydney	27	Northwest University	Married	St. Louis, MO	Education
Trina	33	Northwest University	Married /1 child	San Diego, CA	Education
Ann*	31	Northwest University	Divorced/Single	Brooklyn, NY	Education
Nina*	29	Northeast University	Single	Detroit, MI	Education
Dana (real name)	35	Washington State University	Married/ 4 children	Tuskegee, AL	Education

*denotes incomplete or problematic interviews

Data Collection

Upon finalizing the sample and selecting participants and prior to the actual collection of data, each member was asked to sign a written consent form to insure that she fully understood the scope of the study, expectations of her as a participant, my role as the researcher and how she could withdraw from the process in the event of any discomfort or study induced anxiety. It was further explained that participants would be

queried using three sets of interview prompts. The first set of prompts were designed to capture information about personal identity while also providing an opportunity to name those responsible for providing significant support during the doctoral process. The second set of questions raised awareness about the doctoral experience and provided an opportunity to elaborate on the impact the doctoral experience may have had on those relationships (if at all). The final set of questions was designed to help the women reflect on the interview process and their life choices. While the interview protocol was designed to be used in three separate interviews, only one of the participants actually scheduled a second session to complete the interview process. Most of the participants chose to complete each of the sets of questions during one interview session which generally lasted 90 minutes to 2 hours. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded in order to determine themes during the analysis process. Tape recorded interviews and field notes dictated immediately following each session provided accuracy and aided in recall during the transcription and subsequent analysis of the data (Green-Powell, 1997).

In light of the autoethnographic aspects of this study, I used my own experience as a Black female doctoral student as a canvas upon which to paint the picture that so eloquently came together through the process of conducting this study. Rather than submit to a formal interview, I used my journal as a place to record and reflect on my thoughts in regard to my study. My reflections on this process became a part of the data used for this study. In this spirit, I offer the following interview schedule which guided my individual interviews with the other participants of the study.

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol #1 (Establishing identity and naming those in your life)

1. How do you identify/define yourself? How did you come to this identity? How do you believe that others define you?
2. As a Black woman, you carry at least two historically oppressed identities with you as a doctoral student. What messages have been reinforced for you during your educational experience about what it means to be a Black woman? How?
3. Talk to me about whom or what influenced your decision to pursue a doctoral degree? What life experiences prepared you for the doctoral experience? Who or what made you believe that you would be successful as a doctoral student?
4. What people in your life have been your major sources of support during your doctoral study?
5. There are at least two models of Black womanhood expressed in modern literature today. Africana womanism as coined by Hudson-Weems proclaims power in naming oneself and calls upon Black (or Africana) women to join Africana men in the struggle to end racism in our society as the most oppressive force. At the other end of the spectrum born of traditional feminist models is Black Feminism as coined by Collins which presents an inclusive model that champions the need for Black women to claim space that is marked but their unique gendered and raced identities. If the two were placed on a continuum where race and gender emerged as primary and secondary respectively, where would you stand?
6. Share with me a story or example that might help me better understand your life as a Black female doctoral student

Interview Protocol #2 (The doctoral experience and your relationships)

1. What have been your greatest successes as a doctoral student thus far? What have been your biggest regrets?
2. What would you identify as your strengths?
3. What would you identify as your needs?
4. What would enhance the doctoral process for you?
5. Thinking back, what relationships were most significant to you as a child/ teenager or young adult prior to higher education? What relationships are most significant in your life right now? Why do you think these have changed or not?
6. How (if at all) do your significant (intimate) relationships impact your academic journey?
7. Thinking about all that you do and feel compelled to do in your life, who or what do you feel the most urgency around "taking care of?"

Interview Protocol #3 (Reflections on the process and your life choices)

1. If you could choose again, would you be a doctoral student now? Why or why not?
2. Imagine that your daughter is considering doctoral study. Knowing what you know now about the process and its impact on your life as a Black woman, what would you tell her?
3. What are your reactions to being a part of this study as a Black female doctoral student conducted by another Black female doctoral student? Did my identity hinder or enhance the process for you? Please explain.
4. Are there areas of concern for you as a Black female doctoral student that this study did not explore?
5. Are there any final general thoughts or reflections about this study or your doctoral experience that you would like to share with me?

Each participant was interviewed using the above interview protocols consisting of descriptive prompts as a guide. While the total interview time was designed to last for no more than 90 minutes, some participants spent considerable amounts of time after the session discussing the nature of the interview and the study. Each session was recorded in a setting that was natural and familiar for the participant in order to compensate for the time spent participating in the study (Higginbottom, 2004). Interviews began immediately following approval of the proposal by the doctoral committee and the Institutional Review Board of Washington State University. Following the collection of individual interviews, some participants continued to think about the questions and supplied e-mail addendums to elaborate on previous answers asked of them during the interview session. These additions became part of the data set as they demonstrated additional thought provoked by the original interview prompts. The planned focus group session which was originally conceived to provide a cohort of Black female doctoral students did not materialize due to logistical complications. Time and distance proved to be larger barriers to this type of gathering than previously considered. Due to the fact that the women in this study longed to hear the collective stories of Black women in doctoral

programs, I will provide each of them with a personal copy of this completed study. In addition, I will offer my own ear and voice in any way feasible.

Part of data gathering and analysis was the keeping of a research journal. This journal served as a venue for reflexivity as I sought an appropriate space to conceive personal thoughts that reverberated with a group identity. Further, I used my autobiographical journal to record reactions and make preliminary analyses which accounted for the personal bias associated with my own identity as a Black female doctoral student. My journals became a way to organize my thoughts about the data, the process and the participants prompting the first stages of data analysis. By using my journals as a space to "lay out" the stories rendered by my data, I was able to overlay the experiences of the women I interviewed with my own experiences to see how they conjoined or diverged in relation to the other women in my study. This process helped to provide clarity about the existence of themes as they emerged supported my voice as I articulated the emergence of dissenting views of Black womanhood that did not resonate within the other studies I had read about Black women and their experiences as doctoral students.

Once the data were mined and themes and categories emerged, the relationships among themes were explored (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In order to capture the autoethnographic experience, I as participant/observer, chronicled my thoughts, feelings and reactions to the study and shared them throughout to augment the other participants' disclosures. This type of retrospection required me to be conscious of my own thoughts versus those that were surfacing as a result of a collective conscious among Black female academics.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Afrocentric perspective via constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Using the tenets of the Afrocentric paradigm as outlined by Reviere (2001), data were rigorously deconstructed and filtered through a screen which acknowledged each aspect of the model including the five research canons or criteria that had to be satisfied in order for the research to be considered legitimate and useful within the Afrocentric framework. The canons again are: (a) ukweli, groundedness of research in the experiences of the community; (b) kujitoa, consideration of the process by which knowledge is structured and a denial of objectivity; (c) utulivu, the concept of justice; (d) ujamaa, the need for the recognition and maintenance of community; and (e) uhaki, harmonious relationships between researcher and researched (Reviere, 2001). As categories and themes from each data set emerged, they were compared to the themes and categories noted in each subsequent and prior data set. Relationships between themes are also among the tenets of this model.

Reviere (2001) states:

> To analyze the data obtained from an Afrocentric inquiry, the researcher must judge the data against the Afrocentric canons of ukweli, uhaki, utulivu, ujamaa, and kujitoa. . . . .In addition, the researcher must depend on two other sources for useful data and for guidance in the interpretation of the data. First the researcher must use his or her own experiences that are pertinent to the subject of the inquiry, and second, he or she must consult with the wider community for guidance in the interpretation of the data (p. 722).

In honor of this requirement and in order to insure the accuracy and thus the trustworthiness of data, member checking was used in two forms. First, members of the sample were asked to review particular interpretations for accuracy and integrity of the critical details presented in individual accounts. Three participants participated in this

process and submitted key feedback that ultimately grounded my work and validated the voices that emerged. Second, an advisory board was composed to assure that the data resonated with the community represented by the sample. The advisory board was composed of Black women who had completed the doctoral process. The use of an advisory board as described in this research study is consistent with methods employed using Afrocentric research methodology (Reviere, 2001). According to Reviere (2001), one method to solicit community validation during the study might be "to initiate direct correspondence with well-established scholars, including those of Afrocentric orientation, to dialogue on the ideas and finding generated by the inquiry" (p. 721). The individuals who had previously been identified for this advisory role and who had agreed to serve as mentors for me are: Dr. Cynthia Dillard, Dr. Linda Tillman, Dr. Cheryl Presley, Dr. Mary Stone Hanley and Dr. Cynthia A. Tyson. Although the specific role and function of the advisory board was expected to evolve and become more explicit, I anticipated presenting themes that emerged from the study to individual members of the advisory board during at least two intervals in the research process and receiving informal feedback which would ultimately become part of the tools used to develop this study according to the Afrocentric framework. What I found in reality was that these gifted, brilliant women who had intended to serve as my mentors in the process modeled what it would mean to go beyond "dating this doctorate" and become married to the academy. Each of the women I sought for intellectual council held academically intense and prestigious positions on their various campuses. I initiated contact with each of my mentors each through very different venues.

Dr. Linda Tillman was extremely instrumental during the initial drafting and framing of my study. Although her words hit my heart like a brick, I have come to appreciate and value the passion with which she guided and helped to shape my thoughts as I struggled to find my scholarly footing. Her feedback as a formal mentor through my acceptance as a Clark Scholar at the 2005 AERA Conference was invaluable but the care and concern that she continues to demonstrate for me as an academician have sustained me. Dr. Tillman and I have talked on one occasion since I presented my initial ideas to her in Montreal Canada but I hear her voice in my head even now saying "So what? You have to ask the 'so what' question?"

I was drawn to Dr. (Sister) Cynthia Dillard even before I met her. As the coordinator for the Talmadge Anderson Heritage House, I had the distinct privilege and opportunity to serve as a trustee for an academic space that bore her name. The T.A. Heritage House is home to the Cynthia B. Dillard Art Gallery. Even as I cared for the articles that had been gifted to that space for over two years prior to beginning my study, I had not anticipated meeting the dynamic woman that stood behind that name carved in wood above my head. The Globalization and Diversity conference held at WSU in 2005 provided a window for that meeting to take place. After her soul stirring lecture as a major keynote for the conference, I made my way through the throngs that encircled her to capture a glimpse of this woman who had been places and seen things that most people only dream about. Through her amazing oratorical ability, each of us who listened to her in that lecture hall had the opportunity to travel to Africa and partake in ancient traditions of healing and renewal. I needed to meet her. I wondered what I might say to make myself stand out as a person that she would remember among the hundreds that clamored

to meet her. I found that my role in the Heritage House served as a vehicle to transform our chance meeting into a spiritual journey where we reminisced, shared (the way sisters do) and eventually vowed to nurture our connection. At this first and only (in person) meeting, Dr. Dillard agreed to serve as a mentor for me in my writing process. Despite my own clumsiness with the intricacies of that role, she has been vigilant and her emails and phone calls urging me to remain grounded were like oxygen. Her guidance provided me with fuel for the journey rather than the roadmap as I had anticipated but a map with no fuel would not have gotten me far.

Dr. Cheryl Presley impressed me from the start. A smart, savvy woman who commanded respect and admiration among all constituents, I wanted to walk in her light. I approached her during a consulting trip to my campus as she was there to help evaluate the policies and procedures affecting graduate study in the college of education. Even as she smiled and agreed to have me remain in contact with her, there was a tell tale sign in the way that she urged me to call her in addition to sending random e-mail to let her know that she should expect a correspondence from me. Even as I admired her ability to agilely maneuver the career that I seek as a dual educator and administrator in student affairs, I heard despair in her tone as she cautioned me to “choose one” and not attempt this fence straddling that may have been partially responsible for keeping her from making a lasting connection with me. While our contact was fleeting, her impact on me as a Black woman who has a “heart to serve” remain in my mental reservoir to consult as I conceive role models that embody the presence that I want to have in academic spaces.

Dr. Cynthia Tyson was introduced to me by one of the other women on my advisory board. The fact that we have not had greater and more profound interactions is

purely my own exasperation with the process of becoming emotionally invested with mentors just to find that the tie was not what I needed or hoped it would be. When we met, I was tired. And while the prospect of her notoriety as a prominent member of the infamous "Sisters of the Academy" intrigued me, I was literally exhausted by the possibility of starting another "long distance relationship." I flirted with the possibility of seeking mentorship from this vibrant, young scholar but I must admit much to my own dismay that ours is the relationship that I let get away. I failed to pursue her although she graciously extended her hand to me in that room full of loud, academic strangers. I still remember her knowing smile as she handed me her card. I wish I had called, emailed or made some attempt to let her know how weary I was of the process and that my failure to "believe" had nothing to do with her strength as an example for me in this academic development. I write these words now as a testament to her ability to make a lasting impression on this young Black female scholar in that dimly lit room amongst some of the greatest academic minds in education. She stood out because she was truly "outstanding" and perhaps fate will be kind and provide us a second meeting where I will have renewed faith in this process and my ability to affect it as a Black woman.

Dr. Mary Stone Hanley was an epic tale whispered to me by a colleague and fellow graduate student I met at a conference. After hearing of my research focus, she referred me to Dr. Stone Hanley because her scholarship worked at the intersection of art and education. I found the thought of such a scholar rivaled finding a rare coin or spotting a unicorn. I was both excited to contact her and intimidated by her unique academic stance articulated in her writings and the classes she taught. Upon my return and at the urging of my colleague, I contacted Dr. Stone Hanley and was amazed by her

willingness to give of her time and her resources. As with previous mentors, she warned me of her limits early and urged me to contact her during the "down time" of her academic appointment. I was hard headed. Bursting at the seams to have my work validated, I emailed her large, unpolished versions of my work. I imagine that I must have seemed presumptuous and audacious, presuming that she would have the energy to sort through my musings to find the value in my work. Although I never received the practical feedback on my misguided work that I craved from this woman who stood so unabashed proclaiming the validity of art as scholarship, she did provide me something far more valuable. She provided a "possibility." Until I heard of her work, I had not found scholars practicing the theory that I was proposing in my attempt to use spoken word to transform my scholarship into something usable beyond the academy. If it had not been for a glimpse of that possibility, I may have turned back.

A final Black female Ph.D. helped me give birth to the initial idea for this study. Dr. Brenda Common[2] was Dr. Brenda Common-Jones when I met her during my internship as a masters student under her guidance. She and her husband became friends and confidants to me and my husband and we valued what they provided us in the form of companionship and down home reality. On the surface, they were an example of a couple that had weathered the storm of one woman's academic "affair" and come through shining. It was this example of a Black woman having it all that first gave me the inkling that I might also one day hold the title of "Dr." even as a mother and wife. I was close enough to Brenda to know of the heartache her "academic affair" had caused and how she had chosen not to divorce her academic persona even in the wake of a troubled marriage and physically distanced family. I was encouraged by the fact that her marriage

[2] The identity of this woman has been concealed per her request.

and her family ties had survived. My encouragement gave way to disappointment (and fear) as she told me how the internal wounds sustained by her battle with the academy had ultimately claimed the life and vitality of her marriage to her partner. While I felt a sense of despair for her as my colleague and friend, I must admit that I had selfish thoughts as well. I had just been accepted to the Ph.D. program at WSU and this news sufficiently dented my belief that my relationships (that had at times seemed more tentative than hers) would survive this process. I decided that my fear would provide the motivation to pursue this study because there were stories that needed to be told. Throughout the process, Brenda has provided me with the inspiration and courage to tell the survival stories of Black women's relationships in hopes that they might encourage others in the pipeline and in this way advised the study.

Ultimately, I have only had the constant feedback from one member of my advisory board, Dr. Cynthia Dillard. While Dr. Dillard did not serve as a "reader" per se, she provided priceless support and encouragement via phone and e-mail. I believe that the other members might have better served my purposes if I had employed a similar model to seek their input. At the end of this process, I believe that the advisory board model may be better instituted when there is more direct contact or previously established relationships with members so that expectations can be discussed freely and limitations can be more easily addressed. In an area where Black women Ph.D.s are a rare commodity, much thought and planning should go into the securing of resources including time and space to communicate with those in an advisory role.

In terms of the use of my experiences to analyze the data, I used my understanding of the culture of Black female doctoral students from an insider's

perspective (as I am a member of this group), to explain and make sense of phenomena which occurred during the course of this study. My actions resonated within that internal space where I have reconciled my dual identity as both researcher and researched. I was able to create such a space based on my ultimate goal for this study which was that it might be useful in the lives of other Black women as they make sense of their own academic journey in light of intimate relationships with self and others.

In conclusion, this portion of the study has illustrated the process by which Afrocentric methods have been used to frame and guide the theoretical, methodological and analytical aspects of the study. It was my responsibility to initiate this study from an Afrocentric "place" that resonated with all aspects of the model and respected the tenets as they have been explained in this section. If the study commenced from an Afrocentric "place," the findings should have been filtered through that lens and been evaluated based on the Afrocentric research canons as described by Reviere (2001). There are specific means for introspection as well as retrospection built into the design of this study which insured that the Afrocentric model prevails as the guiding framework throughout all aspects of this study.

Data Presentation

I anticipate disseminating the findings of this study beyond this dissertation in many forms to reach a wider audience which in turn may have a greater impact. Analysis of the data resulted in the production of a narrative chronicling the process used by participants to increase the viability of intimate relationships during the doctoral processes. The result, according to Higginbottom (2004), is that the analysis will also demonstrate the "acknowledgement of interpretation of the significance and purpose of

human behavior" (p. 10). I acknowledge that the ultimate goal of this study was to meet the requirements of the doctoral student process. The presentation of the data analysis has therefore taken place through traditional narrative methods ("the dissertation"). In addition to the formal dissertation, I anticipate presenting the findings of this study to a diverse audience, including Black women in the higher education pipeline, and therefore have planned to employ alternative presentation methods such as autoethnographic performance.

Performance autoethnography or autoethnographic performance, a creative educative venue, uses the body to display a "critical self-reflexive discourse in performance, articulating the intersections of peoples and culture through the interactions of the always migratory identity" (Spry, 2001, p. 706) The political potential for personal and cultural emancipation for Black female academics through this method of performance was explored as I as the researcher used my own understanding of this academic expression to create a product which might be of use in various academic and non academic settings. Performance allows us to draw out, examine and display the rituals and behaviors of actors in the social drama of the text. I find this model especially useful in exemplifying the liminality of Black female doctoral student's experiences (Madison, 2005). Spry (2001) proclaims that "good" performance autoethnography reveals "the fractures, sutures, and seams of self interacting with other in the context of researching lived experience" (p. 712). This method of delivery provides a merger of "story and theory" (Spry, 2001, p. 713). The audience experiencing autoethnographic texts must be compelled and drawn to the complex social drama precipitated by the willingness of the author to expose the vulnerability of findings that remove distance,

embrace intimacy and thrive on provocative emotional reality (Spry, 2001). The findings of this study illuminate many social dilemmas in regards to Black female doctoral students and their struggle to manage intimate relationships. The use of performance autoethnography will help to create a dramatic energy that captures the emotions alluded to in the written text. Ultimately, I plan to perform parts of this dissertation to diverse audiences. While the majority of the dissertation uses largely traditional presentation of the data, I also include pieces that could essentially be performed as a way to present the findings.

References to individual names and/or identifying situations during performances of this study will be avoided to prevent the further alienation, oppression or "othering" of the Black women who have yielded their voices to this cause. Instead, collective imagery will be welded together from the pieces of identities and stories shared during this study and during my own experience as a Black female Ph.D. student.

Summary

The use of qualitative methods within an Afrocentric framework provided the most useful vehicle for exploring my informants' experiences because this non-traditional format yielded itself to a nonprobability or unquantifiable result grounded in the cultural experiences of Black female doctoral students. Specifically, the use of critical autoethnographic methods helped to situate the experiences of the participants within the culture of Black women pursing doctoral studies. Even as experiences of the women in this study were explored, they were also scrutinized against a social system that ranks Black female doctoral students among the lowest of all in the graduate experience (King, 1995). The specific research design and methods highlighted and demonstrated the

validity of first hand information from “natives” to the culture of Black female academicians to elaborate on our own experiences.

This research has been poised in a way that not only asks questions that have not previously been asked about the experiences of Black female doctoral students but creates contention about the unwritten laws in our society that have rendered these same experiences unworthy of study and scholarly examination. In essence, this study calls into question the reasons “why” the deep understanding of Black women’s experiences have not been sought and used to enhance the doctoral experience for them during a time when multiculturalism seems to be a top priority for many colleges and universities across the country (Nyquist, 2002).

An Afrocentric theoretical framework guided the understanding of cultural dynamics such as “truth” and “justice” as understood within the Afrocentric model for the purpose of this study. The concepts of community were also understood in light of the Afrocentric principles that value shared experiences, culture and history in the formation of communities (Okafor, 2002). The shared experiences in this domain are raced, gendered and academic. The study includes individual interviews with seven self-identified Black women in Ph.D. programs around the country as well as reflections from me in the form of journal entries as an eighth participant/researcher. The specific role of Afrocentric theory as a tool for data analysis is discussed more fully in the final chapters of this study. It is however significant to note that the concept of “truth” in relation to the Afrocentric framework often collided with the concept of “truth” from a critical theoretical perspective. From a critical stance, “truth” requires a careful consideration of how the layers of identity and socialization impact one’s ability to know “truth” while the

Afrocentric framework quietly asserted that “truth” resided within the experience which belonged to the native unexamined and unquestioned.

In chapter four the results of this study are presented in a narrative format that accentuates the Afrocentric nature of this study by adhering to the five research cannons as outlined by Reviere (2001). In order to provide context for the study, I use my own emotional and intellectual experiences as a Black, female Ph.D. student to communicate the intensity with which each data set was collected, analyzed and ultimately reported. In doing so, I diminish any illusions of objectivity as a member of intersecting communities including women, Blacks, and those with higher education. The observance of these research “traditions” helped to ensure that my hearing, understanding and sharing of the valuable lessons lodged deep within this data would resonate with the collective voices of women and Blacks as well as students working towards the doctoral degree.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

I am beyond walking on eggshells with this study. I am even past the point of skating on thin ice. This particular study means more to me than any other study that I have read or written before this point because it represents my chance to "get it right." Daughters, mothers, wives and sisters are looking to me to "get it right." Partners, aunts, friends, cousins and nieces need me to speak the truth of their existence as individuals with race and gender, being careful to give due credit to both. I know that written words have the power to transform hearts and minds so this work is more than just ink on a page. It is the beginning of a revolution.

In my mind, I have stashed vivid images of honey, bronze and cinnamon colored sisters sharing stories of pain and survival in their quest for a doctorate. With quiet, steady voices, my sisters demonstrate confidence in their own ability to survive. Each woman has gifted me her voice for a brief space in which I will attempt to justify as written word the complexities, the gallantry, and the sorrows of her Blackness as well as her womaness. Granting permission for sharing these stories is for me like opening an ancient book with secrets that I am yet too young to hear. Wise beyond their own knowing, I am privy to their joy and pain. The combinations of these dueling emotions linger in my thoughts and at times have threatened my façade of objectivity. Grateful for the opportunity to finally pour these whispers into a suitable container, I looked forward to the writing almost as much as the reading of this next chapter. As I write, I hear a gentle voice urging me to "get it right." Don't forsake the intricacy of Blackness in light

of womaness and do not (even for one moment) think that Blackness will expand to fill the deep caverns shaped and smoothed by the distinction of being a woman. Again the voice beckons "get it right." Knowing that I am alone in this quest, I realize that the voice I hear is my own.

Tenor of Individual Interviews

Prior to actually presenting testimonies of the participants, there are a few general observations that might not otherwise be conveyed by simply reading the text that are, in my view, as important as the words themselves. The tenor of each interview with all seven of the women started off on a very high note. Even with the women with whom I had no prior contact, there was lots of laughing, sharing and establishing common ground even before the tape was turned on. It reminded me of the wide-eyed enthusiasm that I had entering this process and how I anticipated hearing inspiring stories of survival and triumph. I was energized by the promise of my own findings. I felt that the questions had been crafted in a way to extract the kinds of experiences that would shed a much needed light on how these women kept the relationships that supported them during doctoral study viable.

By the end of each of the interviews the tenor had shifted to become very somber and reflective. It was as if the process itself was draining women of their energy. Speech became less audible as reflected in the difficulty I had transcribing the last parts of each interview, there were a considerable number of pauses that had not been present during the onset of the conversation. The words actually felt heavier at the end of the interviews versus the beginning. As a researcher, I found myself just as eager to end the last session as I was to begin the first. I found myself curious about what had accounted for this

drastic change in tone throughout the interview process because it happened not once or twice but all seven times.

As many of the women commented to me that this is the first time they have had an opportunity to share their experiences in this way, I wondered if the process of finally having a place to put something that you have carried for so long was having an effect on the women in this study. I knew that it was having an effect on me as a researcher who could resonate with far more of the "you knows" that I cared to let on. I had the distinct advantage of being able to look each woman in the eye as she shared her soul with me.

Each woman struggled in her own way to give me what she thought I wanted. I believe that that generosity came from a very "womanist" place within them regardless of how they embrace the term. They wanted this study to "turn out right" for me as well as for them. I could feel them trying, checking in with me and asking for permission, clarification, and general consensus in many cases. I wanted to assure them that they could not be wrong as my theoretical perspective had guided me to understand but I felt that to reveal my awareness of their discomfort in an effort to quiet their fears would be to create an unnatural state. To dispel the anxiety would be to somehow change how they were relating to me and my tape recorder in this academic moment. The following statement is just my opinion (but I think I have a right to that as a Black woman sharing academic space with these women). I believe that the thing that kept these women from being totally at ease was that knowing that we were not just having a conversation with each other but that we were having a conversation with the academy. The same academy that had in many ways told us that we did not belong here was now calling upon us to channel an academic persona. The majestic fire created by our unbridled Black

womaness was not sufficient without the added ingredient of our learned academic protocols to quell the flames that could have easily "gotten out of control." As we shot glances at each other across the room, there was a sense of knowing that this was still a performance. That is the saddest thing about this entire process because in a performance, things are made to appear "real." People, places and circumstances are cleansed and sterilized. We never get to see the actors without their "make-up." After having completed this study, I believe that a "naturalistic" study of Black female doctoral students might be more successful free of protocols, committee guidelines and dissertation deadlines. Perhaps it would also be free of racist and sexist assumptions—the haunting knowledge that you are expected to fail, and that your success is never enough.

A study that was able to get beyond the "performance" and the anxiety created by trying to first determine what is expected in any given moment and then the most "academic" box to present it in, might incite more challenging data if there were no "academic" constraints to govern the telling, unbraiding and sharing of life stories as they relate to Black women. Life in such a state would require Black women to unlearn all of the rituals they have acquired to perfect their "performances of smartness" (Gallegos, 2004). Every day they spend on the stage of doctoral study, they are aware that the identity they perform cannot appear to be too Black or too female. The performance of Black women during the doctoral process must "play up" their "smartness," even if it disturbs or even diminishes who they are as Black women. Having to convincingly "wear a mask" may inhibit the ability of some Black women to effectively "stop acting" when it comes to roles that require them to "play up" their gender or their race. These

thoughts haunted me during the interview of the seven women chosen for this study as well as during my own reflection on this process.

The themes that emerged from the data were clear in some cases and complex and daunting in others. I wrestled with meaning that I attached to words that may or may not have been intended by the participants. In this case, Noblit's (1999) ethnographic concept of "making the familiar strange" was one of the most difficult things that I have had to attempt. I had to really listen with the intent of gaining understanding where there would normally be a tendency with this particular population to assume that I know what was intended by a particular phrase or comment. I would normally have assumed that I knew what was meant rather than asking and this was a tendency that I fought tooth and nail. Sometimes the battle got the best of me and my fatigue would give way to a synthetic knowing that is often portrayed in my analysis. In order to have an appropriate place to work through my own Black woman knowing, I kept a journal. For the most part, my journal is a very private experience, but for this study, it also served as the place where I made the initial analysis and connected the concepts that later became themes. For that reason, I will use excerpts from my journals (denoted with italics) to depict the process of analyzing the data and situating my own thinking which was at times accurate and at other times very inexact.

Overview of Macro and Micro Themes Found in this Study

Because there was such a direct connection between the organization of the literature reviewed and the themes presented in the data, I have chosen to present the themes identified in this study according to the places they held within the original vectors of experience for Black women as posed in chapter two and presented in

appendix 1. The vectors are: (1) Historical implications of the doctoral experience, (2) Identity issues and the intersection of race and gender; and (3) Responsibility and relationships. The fact that the macro themes easily fall into one or more of these vectors further makes the case for the reality of these vectors in the first place. If the case for the existence of at least three overlapping experiences has been established in the completion of this chapter, it might be more feasible to enter a discussion of Black women's experiences at the intersection of those vectors as we move to chapter five and beyond. The data drives the reality of these three vectors and further helps to situate Black women at the intersection.

The first macro theme, Historical implication of the doctoral experience, contains the micro themes of (1) "Preschool Experiences" which depict how early encounters with integration affected these women and may have prepared them for survival in integrated doctoral school environments. (2) "They Don't Expect Me to be Here" refers to the subtle and direct messages received by Black women throughout their educational journeys that infer that their educational success is not what is typically expected from Blacks or women and certainly not from those who hold both of those identities. (3) "Academic Infidelity" defines the many ways that obligations outside of the academy are pitted against those within and the internal conflict that arises for Black women as a result of having to choose between obligations colored by their innate cultural and gendered identities and those specific to their chosen identities as scholars. (4) "Other Black Folks" speaks to the troubled academic relationships between Black female doctoral students and those who are in positions to serve as role models and mentors to them in their academic pursuit.

The second Macro theme, Identity at the Intersection of Race and Gender, also has four sub or micro themes. The first micro theme (1) "Don't Ask Don't Tell" speaks to the ways that self perception is shaped for Black women in academia as they realize that their voices have been ignored by the very same academy that claims to value them. (2) "Identity Is Complex in the Borderlands" centers on the process of negotiation that occurs for Black women to intellectually reconcile their raced and gendered identities in light of the blossoming academic identity that is often set in direct competition with who they are as Black women. (3) "Ph.D. in My Bones" refers to the formation of early perceptions that Black women held of themselves as scholars regardless of the societal messages they received to the contrary. (4). "Me First" relates to the ways that Black women have justified their physical and emotional absence from family and friends as they pursue the Ph.D. in light of the benefits they perceive the results will yield to their communities in an enhanced ability of Black women to "give back".

The final major theme, Responsibility and Relationships, brings to light four sub themes as well. (1) "Competition vs. Community" conceptualizes the cultural index used by Black women to form relationships based on commonalities within and beyond academic communities and how it directly conflicts with traditional western values such as competition which reigns in higher education. (2) "Hold My Hand" focuses on the deficiencies that remain in Black women's ability to have their needs for support met in academia as well as the inability of others (inside and outside of the academy) to understand how to truly sustain her during one of the most intense academic endeavors of her career. (3) "Soul Survivor" highlights the highs and lows of the spiritual relationship with a higher power for Black women during doctoral study. (4) "Distance Changes

Things" refers to the ways that physical, emotional and intellectual distance alters the ability of Black female Ph.D. students to maintain meaningful relationships with those who were previously close to them outside of academia as they experience the life changing effects of doctoral study.

Each of the macro and corresponding micro themes are explored in depth using the data collected during interviews to illustrate each. In these "hidden transcripts" of dialogue between Black female academicians, a vivid picture of the processes involved in managing relationships during doctoral study emerges. Each survival story makes room for the next and Black women's voices claim the authority that comes from knowledge of their own experiences as scholars who are at the same time Black and female. No other source can claim more direct authenticity in recounting the dilemma faced by Black women doctoral students in managing relationships in higher education and beyond. This cultural expedition will seek to explore the apex of the intersection created by doctoral study, identity as a Black woman and responsibility within relationships inside and outside of the academy. As a means to introduce the complexity of each macro theme, excerpts from journal entries, collected throughout the process of conducting this study, precede the actual text.

Historical Implications of the Doctoral Experience

I heard she sang a good song. I heard she had a style and so I interviewed her to listen for a while. And there she was this Black girl a stranger to my eyes, strumming my pain with her fingers (one time) singing my life with her words (two times). Killing me softly with her song. Killing me softly with her song. Telling my whole life with her words. Killing me softly with her song. I felt all flushed with fever. Embarrassed by the

crowd. I felt she'd found my letters and read each one out loud. I prayed that she would finish but she just kept right on, strumming my pain with her fingers, singing my life with her song. Killing me softly with her song. Killing me softly with her song (song lyrics adapted from original lyrics first performed by Roberta Flack).

These are the words that would not leave me as I listened to each women recount instances in her life where she was injured mentally, emotionally and physically by other Black people in the academy. My inclination and resonation was so keen that I wondered if I had provided some sign that I too had suffered at the unknowing (or less settling the uncaring) whims of other Black people in the academy. My own childhood socialization about what is permitted to be discussed with outsiders and the things that are only "house business" kept the words from parting my lips but here in this closed session, Black women were looking into glassy eyes and saying what I could not. They were articulating the pain and despair that had resulted from failed relationships with "would be mentors and friends" in the academy who bore subtle shades of brown but were somehow immune to the painful inoculation of our experiences as Black women hurt by our own. It seems to me quite ironic that the troubling of relationships between Black women working towards a Ph.D. and those who already have one underlines the implicit statement we have heard throughout our academic careers, "we should not be here."

I consider for a moment unveiling my own pain in the name of research but the details of my story seem less urgent now. I have found a place where the sharing of this ugly "family secret" is not taboo. Finally, I can breathe because I am cognizant that the knowing looks exchanged in hallways and classrooms, bathrooms and computer labs by

me and my sisters in the academy are just acknowledging each other. She feels my pain and although I wish that at times I could take the vaccination, I too feel hers.

The historical implications of doctoral study for the women in this study include the ways that higher education acts as a social institution imparting privilege to some while denying it to others. The fact that White men are the dominant presence in institutions of higher education regardless of their numbers has to do with the way power is distributed in our society. Education has long been a symbol of power and prestige making it a valuable commodity among all populations. Some of the fiercest battles have been fought over the right to access to education in the United States (Wise, 2005). Constitutional rights have been amended explicitly to secure the rights of certain groups of people that have been historically barred from access to educational environments. Women and people of color are two groups that were previously denied access to higher education (Wise, 2005). Since Black women fit into both groups, it may be fair to say that they stand behind double barriers to education. As discussed in the review of literature, access can be legislated but attitudes and climates cannot. Many of the components contributing to a "chilly" climate on college campuses for Blacks and women are descended from years of tradition supported by legal mandates that provided access to some groups such as Whites and men while denying it to others such as women and Blacks (Wise, 2005).

The legacy of discrimination in higher education can be felt throughout the pipeline which reaches back to the way that Black women are socialized to understand what is expected of them as intellectually inferior from their very first experiences with

education. While many colleges and universities currently have as a part of their strategic plans to increase the ethnic and racial diversity on their campuses, it is clear that this goal is set in direct opposition to many of the underlying foundations upon which these early institutions were built.

The attitude of White supremacy that supports discrimination begins early in the educational process (Cozart, Cudahy & Ndunda, 2003). In these themes, we see how Black women have had to manage the residue of oppression and discrimination in education and how their "dealing" or "coping" has helped them develop the survival skills that may be responsible for helping them persevere as doctoral students in predominantly White institutions.

Several sub themes in this study deal with the tentative relationships between Black women and the people and systems within the academy. Many of the systems were encountered and in some cases mastered before any of the women even left primary school. Messages about what it meant to be a Black female navigating academia were ingrained from early experiences with school environments. These messages have shaped how these women continue to navigate higher education and deal with the attitudes that threaten their existence in institutions of higher education.

I Went to Pre-school

Women in this study discussed their early school experiences as integrated educational experiences that taught them some very tough lessons about where they were expected to fall in relation to the academic culture surrounding them. Some credit their early experience with integration (no matter how painful) as indoctrination into a system that would "prepare" them to deal with the Whiteness and the maleness of the doctoral

experience. In many cases, they believed that they learned to cope with the discomfort of being "othered" as far back as elementary school. If it had not been for these "pre-school" experiences, many of the women in this study would have faced blatant discrimination from racial and gender perspectives for the first time in a higher educational setting. According to these women, had they not had earlier "painful" learning experiences, they might have failed to develop the survival skills necessary for a Black woman to emerge from the doctoral experience with all faculties in tact.

Trina spoke of her experience this way: "I actually cheerlead so I had a lot of friends that were like kinda close. But my mom has been my main support system because I remember I used to go to school and get teased and called names because I went to a White school and when I came back, I got teased there—back at home [laughing] so, my mom would always say, oh don't worry about it."

Sydney faced similar tribulations as she transitioned from a predominantly Black elementary school to a White Catholic high school.

> When I got to high school, a predominantly White parochial school,… the difference between me and other people became much more noticeable for me because most of the people that I grew up with went to a Black high school. But I went to a White private Catholic high school. That's when I started to notice the difference in class and the fact that I am one of the few Black faces that are around here. Even just the difference in the town. A predominantly White town that has a history of dealing with racial incidents and things of that sort. The school not so much but I could just tell. I could get the vibe that not many people had been around a Black person. Sometimes, I kinda got the feeling from students…….ok, you're Black and I'm not necessarily sure how you got here. And I kind of wonder why you're here but you're here. So sometimes I felt that I had to kind of prove myself like I'm smart…..well educated…..I come from a good family…..even though we may not have much, we actually have more than a lot of other people that I know. I'm just as deserving to be in this place as you are. And so being in the real world, you are gonna have to get used to Black folks being around. So I kinda took that as a challenge and did my best to try and infiltrate systems.

Sydney learned to navigate her academic environment by understanding how to "code switch" which is another survival technique (Madison, 2005, p. 104).

> I call it a "code switch" where there were some classes where I would have some of my Black friends in there and I would be able to talk to them in certain ways but I could also interact and mingle really well with the White individuals who were in school and there were a few native American and other ethnic individuals in my high school but, I would…I don't know maybe it was just the way I was raised when I've been around White people before but not in such a setting where I had to interact with them everyday and had to just kinda get used to them. I found myself being able to relate to both groups and not lose my identity as a Black person but yet and still work into fitting into the mode of being in a White kind of society in that school. When I moved on to college, the transition was a lot easier.

In this quote, Sydney illustrates the duality of operating as a Black woman in a society that does not value her cultural capital. The pressure to assimilate into White academic culture in terms of language and behavior is immense in early school settings. While Sydney was aware of what she needed to do in order to survive predominantly White school environments, she also knew that there were certain cultural expectations required of her among groups with whom she shared racial heritage.

When asked about what messages she received throughout her educational experience, Nina said: "I have had several messages reinforced during my educational experience. Some of the messages include inferiority, as if I can't meet the standard or expectations."

Even in her Masters program, Nina continued to have to counter and compensate for the messages of inferiority that she received. She says, "I refer back to the struggle I had when entering my Masters program…where I was told that I couldn't be accepted because I wasn't a strong writer…that was bullshit…..I had to fight to get accepted and I am still fighting." In Nina's case, this ongoing fight has resulted in her development of a

survivor mentality. She says of herself, "I am resilient…I feel like I take a fall, but get back up. Praise the Lord!"

Ann spoke of leaning to strategize in terms of when to demonstrate attributes that came naturally to her and when to think independently which she still employs now to succeed in her doctoral program.

> I was brought up in a matriarchal family so I was always outspoken, inquisitive and curious and I was never afraid to break the mold and go about things my own way. That was not always positive or helpful. A lot of my experiences were not great because I was always trying to do my own ways and in education as we understand it, it is about training you to do it a particular way. And that was difficult for me. ….I have always sought out options that allowed me to make my own way….find a window as opposed to coming through the front door. As a Black woman, I would say that I am still doing that…..And it's painful that you must do that by understanding that society is created for White people and you are just a guest in it, helps for comprehension of your experience. It doesn't help to ease the pain; it just helps you understand why it's painful.

One of the things that is most apparent about the pain caused by being Black and female in an environment that has a history of excluding those who own that identity is that you emerge more aware of how to console yourself and how to survive despite the pain. One author calls the strategies that Black women have created to help them navigate higher education their "masks" (Ward, 1997). Perhaps, Black women would not have to hide behind the performance indicated by their "masks" if it were not for the historical implications that leads those in the academy (including Black women themselves) to be startled by their own appearance in a place that has been marked "off limits" for so long.

"They Don't Expect Me to be Here"

Initially when this phrase was used by Sydney, the first participant, I dismissed it but since similar phrases were used by at least three of the other six participants, I had to

consider what this type of "conditioning" could do over a lifetime and how it may have impacted our ability to feel like we belonged as Black women. Expectations are the result of conditioning that happens over time when the same behaviors yield the same results. Historically, White men and others in the academic setting have become accustomed to going about life in higher education without the threat of having their academic spaces or experiences shared by Black women. Even when Black women were in the academic environment historically, they have not been those responsible and set in charge of creating and disseminating information. Frankly, Black women have not been known as the knowledge makers in higher education (Generett & Jeffries, 2003).

As the door opens for Black women to enter and excel in Doctoral programs at a higher rate, opportunities to experience Black women outside of their historical persona as that of Mammy and Jezebel will increase. More and more Black women will find themselves standing before classrooms of students who have already had experiences that conditioned them to believe that what they are experiencing is an anomaly.

Peachy was very clear about her experiences. She said,

> I don't know, I guess you come into it knowing or thinking and believing that you have to work twice as hard or maybe four times as hard because you have that double minority stigma. You've got to balance other people's stereotypes and other people's thoughts of who you are, what you're supposed to do and what you bring to the table versus who you really are and what you really bring to the table and your own experiences. Unknown to you, you get to be the role model; you get to be the good Black girl, the one that made it out of the millions who, you know…. Because the statistics aren't there all the time, but how often do you hear about the people that are succeeding, particularly in the sciences people of color are really rare.

Similarly Nina felt that people did not expect her to do well academically because of her race and gender. She reflects, "I feel that people define me as a statistic, and that even my 'own people' don't even believe that I can do well, or excel. This is especially

true in academia [my experience as a student] and in my career." She continues, "Some of this has been reinforced by other Black female students and their interactions with faculty members. One in particular told me that a faculty advisor in the doctoral program that I am enrolled in told her that she would never make it in the program because she was pregnant."

Star found it strange that her department had more than its "fair share" of minorities. She said: "Our department is unusual, because it has a lot of people of color in it. It's the only department in our entire school that has like, over half people of color. It's very unique."

Sydney, spoke at length about her feelings of being on display as a Black female in a field dominated by White men.

> When you work in a newsroom where the majority are the White folks and you might be the only Black person that is in the newsroom all day long in every part of the complete station. It really made me kind of realize where I am and where I kind of stand on the chain as far as this particular career path and this line of work and where my people are which is scattered few and far between and I know that I will probably have more of a struggle because there are White women that are starting to do this more often, everyday but you know as a Black person and as a woman, I feel like I'm gonna get criticized and looked at a little harder so I have to really be on point and really be on top of my game…. There are fewer of us in higher education so, I always find myself thinking are people looking at you as a model or a rep of what other Black folks are doing. Not those eyes are on you all the time but you kind of feel like that though….. I kind of feel that I have to watch what I do and watch what I say. Just so that I don't give out the wrong vibe or the wrong impression. And I try not to think like that all the time because we can't spend our lives being a spokesperson. We are the spokespeople for the Black people. I do always feel the need to represent because I figure I want to set a good precedence in the best way that I can by my actions and what I do and how I carry myself so that those people who aren't informed or aren't in the know and have never seen a Black woman in this position can kind of say well at least there was this one Black woman that I knew that came through the program and she worked a specific way…..and that was a good impression and so if those follow, we'll be more inclined to recruit and that they will be more warm and that maybe the next person won't feel those eyes as much because they've had the experience

> of a Black woman here and they know that it's something that's inviting and that it wasn't a bad thing.

Many of the women in this study felt responsible for representing themselves as well as other women and Black people because they realized that they may be the first encounter that many have with Black women in academia. The fact that college students can expect to enter an educational setting and not have their experience influenced by Black women is a direct remnant of the historical impact of institutional racism in higher education.

Academic Infidelity

I use this term playfully as well as very gingerly because of the way that each of these women referred to their distinct relationships with their doctoral program. I believe the distinctions that women made between their obligations to the academy and those to others outside of the ivory tower were influenced by patriarchic systems put into place when women and their gendered and cultured obligations were of no concern within academic circles. I was surprised to find the terminology used to speak about the program framed in the same way that one might talk about a lover or a mate. Even as I consider this, my mind drifts to the title that I chose for this study and how that tells much about my own sense of a sordid love affair in terms of my Ph.D. process.

Early in the process I decided that the title would be "Divorcing the Doctor" because it spoke to my need to portray my experience with education as intimate. In hindsight I think about all the "nudges" and "gentle encouragement" that I had to change the name of my study and how I clung to it refusing to see the inconsistency and confusion that others said were present in my relationship with the title of my study. I had members of my academic committee as well as my advisory council of other Black

female Ph.D.s caution me about how the title might lead to conclusions that were not representative of my study. I felt my heart pounding in my chest as they criticized and questioned something that they had obviously never held as close as I had. It was mine and I was in love with it from the moment that the words hit the paper. Just because I was in love does not mean that I did not consider abandoning the words that caused me such academic scrutiny. I needed terminology that disrupted the common association that brought to mind a temporary situation to something that indicated my sense of passion and commitment to this process even though at the time, I did not have the validity of my sister's comments to back up my inclination that at least for the eight of us who participated in this study, the academy is a "marriage" and anything we do outside of that marriage feels very much like "infidelity."

As an example of the ways that these women battled with the pressure to constantly put academics before their other roles as women in committed relationships, Star says:

> But in terms of my boyfriend it was a challenge because we couldn't just go do things. But it was a challenge because sometimes I would feel like I was neglecting him, and I felt that I wasn't being a good girlfriend. And yet he would constantly go 'No, you do what you need to do and don't worry about me.' I guess I was just trying to live up to those two roles perfectly, and sometimes I did it perfectly and sometimes I felt like I was stumbling but he was supportive nonetheless. It was a little stressful balancing the roles, but it was worth it all in the end. I'm sure the challenge is worse for married people.

Although Star alluded to the demands that this type of competition between romance and scholarship might have on married couples, her words testify to the feeling of being "committed" to something or someone other than one's partner. Normally, this type of unfaithfulness in terms of absolute commitment would lead to a weakening of romantic bliss and perhaps the untimely ending or divorce of a partnered relationship.

With the same type of pressure, why then would it be unlikely that academic infidelity might also lead to the "divorcing of the doctor" in a very practical sense.

Nina summed up her "relationship with the academy" in the following: "Dating this doctorate has been a long process with many challenges, some internal and some external." Similarly, Sydney explained that she constantly struggles with attending to her roles as a daughter and a sister as well as a wife.

> My mom has cancer. I've experienced death in my family of in-laws. These are balls that are always rolling. Someone needs a job; someone is almost arrested because they don't have money for survival. While this it going on, I am trying to stay strong, composed and focused and happy. I'm trying to make time for things that are important and keep in touch with my family. I am always dealing with something difficult in my social life while trying to focus on the academic, it is a constant cycle. Is this my life, always having to deal with family issues? I am trying to stay motivated in school. I don't want to do things wrong and amidst all of that, I am trying to start my marriage on a good foot. I live to be there in times of need and my mom having cancer and I am not there. I am good at dealing with issues and being able to maintain. When I stop, and have time to digest everything, I cry. That's what I do—everyday and trying to take care of self in the process that doesn't happen nine times out of ten but I guess I get the strength from somewhere.

Since the doctoral experience was not designed with the idea that women would be in those settings, it is apparent that women's issues would not be considered historically (Thelin, 2004). As Black women negotiate their academic demands, in light of their responsibilities to family and community, they often find that there is no right answer and they are caught in a paradox. The resulting paradox is not the consequence of being female or being Black but by the juncture where these identities fuse and meet within Black women as they forge into academic territory. Willingly or unwillingly, Black women fight and struggle for the right to exist in academia as Blacks and as women. The struggle until this point may have appeared to be contained in the classroom but as the data reveals, it extends far beyond the confines of the ivory tower into the

personal existence of women who are also struggling to remain connected to Black female lives.

This seems a fitting opportunity to reveal my own struggle with academic infidelity as it relates to my role as a mother to daughters who may someday have an opportunity to "date this doctorate." Honest revelations about "who I am" would include an opportunity to deconstruct my feelings after receiving a note from my oldest daughters, Kayla and Destiny on one recent Saturday afternoon. The note said, "Dear Mom, Me and Destiny want to know if we can spend some time with just us and you cause we have not done that in a long time. Write us back. Love Destiny and Kayla." Without consideration of how my actions might alter the legacy I would leave to them, I wrote back, "Dear Daughters, I have a lot of homework but we will see if I get done in time. Love and kisses mom." Incidentally, we never spent those precious weekend moments together as my daughters had requested. Even as they had used a medium that I was sure to recognize to enter my world of books and papers, they were still rejected. Later after I thought about my actions, I wanted to go back and reclaim the words; drain the ink that wrote those letters back into my pen but it was too late. The damage was done and I may not learn to what extent until much later when my daughter are themselves in love with their scholarship and find that their lives as women, mothers and daughters are mere indiscretions and infidelities at best.

I had a chance to be faithful to the commitment I made to motherhood and I saw it as temptation to be unfaithful to my academic pursuit. Even as I reflect on that decision, I pray that my actions didn't create irreparable damage in my relationship with my daughters preempting a slow and painful maternal divorce. Although they can not yet

understand the rationale behind my reply, I cringe to think that the day may come when they feel the pressure to perform academics on a social stage. Then they will understand for better or for worse.

In a very descriptive monologue, Ann spoke of how her affair with the doctorate eventually caused her divorce.

> Now I didn't mention my spouse. Not that he didn't want to be a support, he couldn't be. Getting your doctorate is such selfish thing it really is a very selfish thing and you need all of the energy flowing inward and you don't have much energy to flow much energy out. So he was good at surviving in our relationship off of very little energy from me but he wasn't very good at pouring a lot of energy into me. And I don't fault him for that. It just wasn't possible and I just realized that he and I weren't going to make it through this war or this battle because I need that little bit of energy. And if that means that I have to also take away the energy that I am pouring out to pour back into me, then that's what I have to do. I just. There is no time for a spouse. There is not time for developing a relationship. There is just no time and in the meantime while you're dealing in that relationship. Things go unnoticed and things go unsaid. You start putting up with stuff because you don't have time to argue complain or negotiate. You just put up with it because there's not time. You can't put down the doctorate and say hey I am tired of this …..you can't get into that. You can't even wrap your mind around how you are gonna negotiate that. And then you are gone all the time. You are studying all the time. You don't have time to sit around and just be. Everything is a moment to think about the next moment. Even when you're sleeping if you're doing really well, you're still thinking about what you have to do. You're making lists. Everything is a list. I have to do this and this and this and this. If you're lucky one of your lists gets done. If you're not doing something, you're planning on doing something. There's just no time for sitting an being and in a relationship, you need time to just sit and be with them. I don't have time to just be. I got time to make a list and complete a list. Make a list and complete a list. The relationship was not on that list. We lasted for two years but this last year, I just could not see the time to just be.

Of all the battles that women must fight in academia, the one with ourselves seems the most complex. Battling the urge to cheat on our academic progress with our other significant life roles, we try to justify this affair. At times we lose sight of to whom we are truly "married" and with whom we are "cheating" with as Black women tied to many obligations within and outside of academia. As we struggle to claim our right to

academic space, we do so with the realization that there is no room for lives that make us appear unable or unwilling to do what has always been done in pursuit of the Ph.D. The academy is unmoved by birthday parties to plan or daycare centers that close at five when the dissertation is due and class isn't over until eight. The academy does not understand the growing impatience of partners who sleep alone, or "used to be" best friends who don't call anymore when we spend the night making "mental" love to our books and dismiss ringing phones to finish a thought. "In pursuit of the Ph.D.," gendered baggage must be shed and the legacy of historical completion rates that fall far beyond men must be disguised (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992). As we search for role models and mentors in this academic game, what we, as Black women, often find are the effects of colonization leaving us to face the consequences of internal racism found in other Black people (Malveaux, 2005).

Other Black Folks

Among the themes that taunt me as a researcher and as a Black woman struggling to survive in higher education is the negativity associated with "other Black" folks in academia. At times, the threat of exposing this ugly scar left me paralyzed. I could not bring myself to betray the confidence that had been entrusted to me to tell it like it is even if that meant telling truths that cast Black people in a critical light as a community. Even as many of these women vowed themselves to help those Black women and men who are in the educational pipeline, they spoke of predecessors who no doubt had those same aspirations, but were avoiding opportunities to connect with and contribute to the success of Black female academics. They believed that, right or wrong, some of these people who had gone before were often instrumental in creating and sustaining hostile environments

for Black female Ph.D. students. One of the most vocal about this phenomena was Trina. She referred to the pain exacted by other Black people throughout her interviews with me. It was like shaking salt on an open wound each time she did so.

In one such instance, Trina said:

> It just seems to me that the people I thought were on my team, when I was recruited and, the people who have left my team or are no longer on my team are all Black or African American. For me it just shows the separatism and stuff like that that we have as a people at the higher educational level. I don't know whether they feel that Ok now you are getting to a certain level where it is more like competition so you are no longer my student you are a colleague now. It's like the "crabs in a barrel" syndrome but I know that a lot of it has to do with jealousy. I have been through a lot since I have been here and so that's pretty much because of Black people here.

Later she went on to explain how these failed relationships had impacted her academic progress.

> I have a couple of incompletes and that's due to some personal issues that I had going on with some faculty members who kinda turned against me. Faculty and administrators who were Black so I took that pretty hard. I almost quit school. Had it not been for my support system, my friends, and stuff like that, I may have quit. I think that the fact that I allowed someone to make me feel so inadequate that I wanted to withdraw from school has been one of my biggest regrets. I think that the reason I allowed them to do it was because they were really close to me and you know that made a difference. If they were just like any old body or any professor who wasn't Black then it wouldn't have mattered……. and just like with those key people who turned against me, I really just had to believe that the Lord was just gonna carry me through and bring me through because I didn't think that I was gonna make it. I thought I was goanna pack up and go home because it was a low blow when you have people that you really really respect who come from the same neighborhood that you come from, who are Black, turn against you.

In an article by Malveaux (2005), there is a reference made to the "Queen Bee Syndrome" which offers an explanation as to why some Black women may refuse to nurture and support other women who aspire to her position because she believes that there is only room for one at the top. This type of behavior builds on the historical

implications of doctoral study that promotes competition. As a part of our educational experience and an attempt to apply this syndrome across the gender barrier, many Black people may come to see other Black people as obstacles to their own success because they represent decreased power and influence and ultimately challenge the mistrust that has been used as a tool against Black people since slavery (West, 2004).

Peachy mentioned how she had been made to feel marginalized as a Black woman in the academy by other Blacks in her field.

> As a Black student, I don't know how this would be even possible, but just to feel that it would be okay to be Black. You kind of have to check that at the door, there'll be no head neck-nodding, head-rotating here you know please check your attitude and that neck turn at the door. They aren't mutually exclusive, Blackness and professionalism, and the sad thing is I get that mostly with other Black people. Again, White people don't care they don't have to care if you roll your neck or switch your attitude they don't care, but it's other Black people who want to hinder your ability to be who you are.

In thinking about this situation, it seems that Blackness that is obvious, visible and otherwise worn like a garment can be recognized beyond what one brings in the intellectual sense and may work to reduce the ability of other Blacks who are trying to perform assimilation based on their academic veracity to do so successfully. Bringing attention to one's Blackness in a space where Blackness is not necessarily an asset may appear to some a risk that is better not taken. The historic implications of race and gender collide to the detriment of Black women in the academy.

Ann told a horrific story of an encounter she faced coming into her doctoral program that resulted from the pressure she felt to receive her degree from a Predominantly White Institution as a Black woman at any cost. Her story is shared here in its entirety in an effort to "educate" other women who might also find themselves in similar circumstances facing similar choices.

OK in the beginning of my doctoral career before I actually [started my Ph.D.], my recruiter brought me for a visit. It was for three days. During the day I met his wife, his children, several of the professors that I would be working with as well as my advisor and some of the other African American professors here. That evening I asked, 'could we go out for a drink to celebrate that I had had some successful meetings and it was a great time?' He said 'OK' and picked me up so I could see what the night life was like because I was going to be bringing my spouse out here too so I wanted to be able to tell him what it was like. So we went to a bar and he bought me a drink. I was more than willing to pay for it myself but he insisted and then he bought me a couple of more drinks. Luckily he was buying me the drinks that I drink. I only drink a particular type because I know how it works for me. So, during that time, I started noticing him and his friends getting closer to me physically. [They were] putting their arm around my waist, hugging on me, and putting their arms around my shoulders. They were saying, 'Oh girl, you look so good.' At one point my recruiter was sitting on the barstool next to me and he had his head down on the bar and his hands folded and he looked up at me and said, 'let's go back to your hotel room and fuck.' I acted as if I didn't hear him. He said, 'man you scared, never mind, never mind.' I excused myself from the bar and went to the bathroom. I was petrified. I was with a group of men, some faculty, some other graduate students and my recruiter. I was 2000 miles away from home and this was my one opportunity to get my doctorate where some school was asking me to come and I was in the bathroom scared to death that I might be raped tonight. I called my mother and she said, 'Well you can't do anything right now. You're all the way out there. Go back to the hotel room. You'll be fine. Just remember what you're out there for.' I called my father and he said, 'sometimes you just have to deal with these kinds of things, Ann.' So, I wiped my eyes, put my cell phone away, took a deep breath, came out of restroom. I finished my drink, tired to ignore them and then asked to be taken back to my room. They took me back. Well, he took everybody else home and then he took me back to [my] hotel room and he made a couple of jokes about coming up. I said, 'I'm going to sleep, I'm not fooling with you. I'll see you tomorrow.' I went to my room and I just sat there for what seemed like hours because I could not believe that I had to deal with this type of harassment like I would get at a normal everyday bar. I had to remember that I had something more important to do. I had to get this degree. No other school was asking me to school so I had to see past him and I wouldn't tell anyone. I wouldn't report it because I looked at him…..and he was an African American male…..as you know, there are gonna be others behind me that need him to ask them to come out here and get this degree and he is going to historically Black colleges and asking people to come and get the degree. Not many recruiters go and do that, so I put my community above myself and I kept quiet and I tried to keep myself safe from him. There were several other instances but I still kept quiet. So, like I said, the war is really important to me. And that's my story.

In sifting through the many racial and sexist implications of Ann's story, I can't help but place blame on the historical and patriarchal structures that sit like a dense fog hovering over colleges and universities, the unwritten rules that condone the objectification and mistreatment of women. It is this hidden historical baggage that underpins the frigid climate that Black women must face as they battle the sexualized and servile stereotypes endemic to the academy (West, 2004).

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) says, "Black daughters must learn how to survive the sexual politics of intersecting oppressions while rejecting and transcending these same power relations" (p. 184). In these fateful words, the birthright of Black women caught between the perplexities of an identity colored by race and gender is fixed in time and space. Black female Ph.D. students are sentenced to a historical judgment by all of those ranked above them in the academic hierarchy, including other Blacks who have somehow survived the historical implications of their own "Blackness."

The fact that these were Black men creates an interesting dilemma for Black women in the academy who must deal constantly with the question of privileging race over gender. Historically, Black women have been expected to endure pain and degradation at the hands of Black men in silence in order to protect "the community" (West, 2004). The idea of "outing" Black men in their mistreatment of Black women presents opportunities for Black women to face the scrutiny that accompanies this kind of treacherous behavior in the Black community needless to say, the possible consequence of being denied entry by a Black person who has earned the coveted position of "gatekeeper" to the ivory tower.

Two other women, Alexis and Nina also told of instances where Black men and women had participated in acts that I believe could have led to the diminishing of their self-esteem using words and deeds. To share these specific stories in this context may be more shrewd than to say that the ways these Black women felt they had been "othered" tapped into an inferiority complex which is a consequence of identity-based deprivation and humiliation. This form of othering may serve to cement the vicious cycle of inferiority. As academics cross the invisible line of acceptance into a world that was not created with them in mind, they feel a need to legitimize their existence in that place. As a critical scholar, my thoughts turn to the socialization process of "becoming educated" in a system that emphasizes competition over community. Perhaps Trina was correct when she spoke of a fear that may be present among many young Black professors. The fear is that up and coming scholars (especially Black women) pose a threat to Black professors. In a world where there is more than one person of color in a room, it may be perceived as a revolution. In this environment, each person must protect against the intruder who might jeopardize the hard-won position and status.

Steele (1997) helped me name it. In his work on the performance and socialization of African Americans, he uses a term known as "stereotype threat." Embedded in his theory is an assumption that African Americans suffer from a perception by others of their intellectual inferiority and a general lack of academic ability. While this theory was used in the context of their study to discuss how White professors may be challenged to overcome stereotypes about the perceived lack of intelligence found within Black people, I felt there was something far more complex going on in my study. I was curious about how a stereotype about Black people grounded in historical

misinformation about intellectual aptitude could affect the ability of Black students to gain the support of Black professors and professionals in the academy. My curiosity was so strong that I actually sought out the advice of someone who would be likely to have some inclination about why people do what they do.

In a lunch conversation with a sociology professor, Lisa McIntyre, on my campus, the crystal gelled. After considering how the years of being taught inferiority in academic settings may have warped our own perceptions, we discussed how Black professors might also be affected by ingrained subconscious perceptions of the inadequacy of Black women (or Black people in general) to meet and exceed academic standards. They may find that as they struggle against widely held opinions of their own marginality, the way to "prove" their intellectual prowess among the burgeoning White scholars in their field might be to surround themselves with those who are perceived and regarded by the academy as "legitimate knowledge holders." Among the ploys to communicate academic excellence is to move among the best and the brightest. In the world of academe, these students are almost always presumed to be White and male—even by Black professors. Consider what might befall the academic who is himself considered marginal simply because he is a Black scholar. What it might mean to be seen encouraging and promoting a minority student who also carries the implication of marginality by virtue of her double negatives is only part of the problem.

Arson, Fried and Good (2002) say that "stereotype threat" is a psychological condition rooted in the systems that have historically held Blacks as inferior intellectually. This threat of being deemed inferior is thought to be what may (at least partially) account for the anxiety about representing one's race in a negative light that

prevents members of the group from excelling academically. "This burden takes the form of a performance-disruptive apprehension, anxiety about the possibility of confirming a deeply negative racial inferiority—in the eyes of others, in one's own eyes, or both at the same time" (p. 114). The thought of conferring inferiority in one's own eyes may be the force at work as some Black professors squander and systematically deny the intellectual potential of Black women. On some level, perhaps they actually buy into the theory that Black people are inferior and while they consider themselves to be an "exception" to this rule, the existence of more than one "exception" seems beyond belief. Consequently, Black people themselves may help to maintain the historical connotation that Blacks are intellectually inferior by perpetrating a vicious cycle that denies Black women access to mentors and sources of support that they desperately need.

In a system that has long privileged Whiteness and maleness, taking opportunities to mentor and develop the talents of White male scholars and avoiding association with those deemed most marginal by the academic cultural capital hierarchy—Black women may contribute to the historical barriers that keep Black women outside. This scenario plays out as Black people avoiding opportunities to mentor other Black people (especially women) because it is assumed that they will not add value to a performance of scholarly superiority. While this analysis certainly cannot heal the pain and erase the scars, it may open a discussion that arms us for the challenges of gaining entry into a world where it has historically been forbidden to value ourselves and our brothers and sisters as knowledge makers.

Black women in academe face a battle predicated on the historical fact that academia is designed to promote the success of an elite group of White men. Not

coincidentally, success in academe is often in direct confrontation with the interest and needs of Black women. The civil rights era that provided many of the Black women in this study with early encounters with integration also taught them to barter for the cultural capital they would need to continue successfully in academia. They continue to encounter the historical racism and sexism, which sometimes is embodied in lowered expectations for Black women. A religious adherence to the traditional rules of engagement by departments, faculty and administrators keeps many of the women in this study from a successful work-life balance. They don't dare stray, dreading the consequences of committing academic infidelity when the relationship holds so much potential. The fragile success of Black academics renders them less able, or perhaps less willing, to extend themselves to assist Black women at the gate. Under the weight of this historical baggage, Black female doctoral students begin to understand the raced and gendered politics of the skin they are in.

Identity at the Intersection of Race and Gender

Note to me from me on being an Insider/outsider at the intersection of race and gender: What if the outcome of my study is to reverse the role of typical ethnography which informs on the other? What if I can find a way to use my position as an insider within education to work for my people? As an informant masked by formal education, I can work and write to educate other Black women about the traps that have been so eloquently set to ensnare them along the way. I can reveal the many ways that identity, trust, and culture are used against us. I can tell them that their sanity as well as that of those they love will be tested in this process. I can tell them that broken families and empty souls do not have to be our souvenirs of the educational process. I can share the

wisdom I looked for as a woman of color in higher education. I can assure them that while many of us have run screaming from the halls of the university crying "I cannot do this," the truth is that "we can" and "we must." I can tell them that we are even more equipped for this challenge than any other group and this is why such an elaborate tale has been created to deflect and distract us. I can tell them that the goal of the academy is not to educate us but to win our allegiance and capture our souls through colonization. I can tell them about the fear and intimidation that washes over academe when a Black woman emerges from this process wrapped in majestic kente cloth wearing locks and armed with knowledge to go back and fight the very injustices that built this system of educational oppression. I can tell them that we have the power to become informants by virtue of our limited passes to this world of "Whiteness" and privilege. If they know about the danger, perhaps they will still take the journey but use an alternate route. Maybe my words will beckon to them to hold tighter to their cultural capital and not abandon it in a box for educations sake. Maybe I should not tell them these things at all. If they fail to be assimilated, they will not gain entry because their retention rests on their ability to be or at least appear assimilated. Maybe the best advice I could hope to give to my sisters and to my daughters is to "fake it" and pray that you are not discovered. This is my dilemma and mine alone in this the writing of my dissertation.

There is an intersection where Blackness meets womanhood. It is within the souls of Black women. It is within the confines of this complicated traffic jam that the fragile egos of Black female identity are forming. Black women are coming to terms with what it means for them to be Black and female in the academy. As we contend with the deafening silence in relation to our survival, we are dying for a chance to enter the

discussion on Black womanhood in academic spaces. We are standing patiently on the sidelines, in the borderlands, fighting the pressure and temptation to choose a side. We are paying for admission to academia with time borrowed from meaningful relationships otherwise. We believe that we are justified. We believe that we are destined to realize academic success. Still we are silenced. Our stories remain untold. It may be because we don't know how to tell it but may also be because others don't know how to ask us. *Don't ask, Don't tell*

It is interesting to note that each woman told me at the completion of this process that she had not, until this point, been asked about her experience. I found it shocking that as many questions as Black women have answered in their academic careers, not one has been about how she does the one thing that some say is most difficult for Black women—survive (O'Conner, 2002). The women in this study often felt throughout their academic journey that their experiences do not matter and that they are somehow not important in the larger scheme of things. While they have been admitted and ultimately tolerated in many academic settings, many of these Black women felt that they were not yet considered "real." As these women develop self-identity in relation to their position within academic settings, what are they learning about their own worth? How much of the failure to inquire about the survival of Black female academics is understood as a denial of intellectual impact which may then be internalized as lowered self-esteem.

Sydney said, "Before you asked the question, I really hadn't thought about it or maybe I wasn't able to articulate it because no one asked the question." As she continued to reflect on the process, she added, "It's been nice to sit down and reflect and to share

time with a Black woman….to be able to be able to know that what I say matters to someone, that what I go through matters to someone."

Failure to study the persistence of Black women in higher education may be one of the greatest deficiencies in higher education because of the missed opportunities to observe diligence and resourcefulness at its best. Black women as scholars have long provided a model of perseverance that encompasses what they endure at the intersection of race and gender.

Identity is complex in the borderlands

In thinking about how Black women in this study conceive their identity, it may be worthwhile to examine how they answered an interview question about where they would fall on a continuum where race and gender emerged as primary and secondary respectively. The specific question follows.

"There are at least two models of Black womanhood expressed in modern literature today. Africana womanism as coined by Hudson-Weems proclaims power in naming oneself and calls upon Black (or Africana) women to join Africana men in the struggle to end racism in our society as the most oppressive force. At the other end of the spectrum born or traditional feminist models is Black Feminism as coined by Hill-Collins which presents an inclusive model that champions the need for Black women to claim space that is marked but their unique gendered and raced identities. If the two were placed on a continuum where race and gender emerged as primary and secondary respectively, where would you stand?" Women were presented with a model that showed this question as a fluid continuum rather than a concrete absolute.

To say that the women in this study struggled with this question is an understatement. The battle was evident in their eyes as they considered instances where their identity as Black women had been bruised by association with gender and race. As each woman plotted her stance, she told stories that helped to situate her existence in that space although I often felt that the stories were there to justify her stance to self more than for my sake. The following chart plots the women's responses to this question that proved to be far more complex than originally intended. One hundred percent would mean that a woman answered such as to place her at one extreme or another while an answer of less than one hundred would mean that she was not at the absolute extreme of either Black feminism or Afrocentric womanism. Even women who found themselves in a state of "liminality" between and betwixt Africana Womanism and Black Feminism indicated that they were one hundred percent or absolutely in the middle (Madison, 2005).

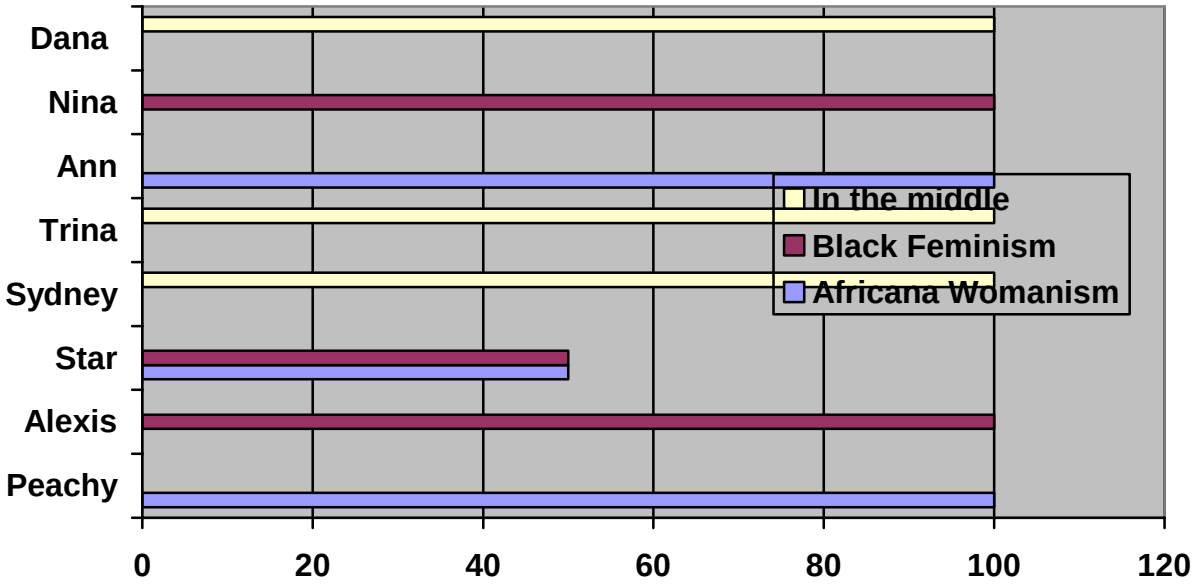


Table displays where women in this study said they would fall on the continuum between Black feminism and Africana womanism

In a room with no mirrors, these women believe that to be a Black woman is to be "Black" first, but inside, they internalize and constantly negotiate the politics of being Black and female. Facing forms of rejection from White women and Black men, they, like the biracial child, seek a place where it is OK to claim all of who they are without fear of offending one side or the other. And just as children of biracial ethnicity are sorted into a prevailing social category for the convenience of others, these Black women have often been asked to decide where they will stand in relation to race and gender issues based on who they "should" be rather than who they are. Since they can't take the mic at two podiums, many use the platform they are standing on to question the debate. They ask, "Isn't there a third podium where the voices of Black female tones can ring true?" The complexity demonstrated by this internal questioning is related to the concept of "outsider within" as posed by Patricia Hill Collins (2000). In this model, Black

women realize the contradiction of having and holding their educated identities which provide certain advantages while still being placed outside of the realm of their communities although these educated personas don't quite allow them access to the privileges of Whiteness.

Anzaldua (1987) writes fluently about the contradictions found in the borderlands.

> A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los *atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, go through the confines of the 'normal.' Gringos in the U.S. Southwest consider the inhabitants of the borderlands transgressors, aliens—whether they possess documents or not, whether they're Chicanos, Indians or Blacks. Do not enter; trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot. The only 'legitimate' inhabitants are those in power, the Whites and those who align themselves with Whites. Tension grips the inhabitants of the borderlands like a virus. Ambivalence and unrest reside there and death is no stranger (p. 25).

This passage in its poetic prose, speaks to the idea of being a outcast in one land and unwelcome in the other. These women wrestled in the "borderlands" with what it would mean to assume an academic identity as Black women to those on either side. As they considered how they would have to accentuate their intellectualness for the sake of academics while downplaying the Blackness and femaleness that lived within them, they were also mindful that performing "smartness" had no place in certain domains where gender and race reigned. So what are the consequences of not having any safe spaces that allow Black women to just be? They learn to be the "other." I witnessed this process as young women struggled with who they would claim to be in academic spaces. "Do I dare claim to be a Black woman, with the fullness thereof?" I could imagine them

asking. Suddenly, it became clear to me that the answers echoed "sometimes, maybe, yes and no."

It is interesting to note that while some of the women identified themselves at both ends of the spectrum others identified themselves as being between and betwixt the two identity models. There is a difference. The woman who placed herself on both ends of the spectrum felt her life demonstrated opportunities to engage the dominance of each aspect of a raced and gendered identity individually. As an example, Star said,

> I was thinking it might be different for me according to what aspect of my life. Like, when I think of my career, when I think of the things that I want to change in society, I think I'm on the Africana Womanism side in terms of the things in society that I want changed. In terms of my own personal career development, I think I'm on Patricia Hill Collins' side. In terms of my personal life, I think I'm on Patricia Hill Collins' side. Yeah, I wouldn't say, I would make that distinction. When it comes to making change, I would stick to this side away from Patricia Hill Collins; but, when it comes to my personal career development and my own personal life with family, I am on Patricia Hill Collins' side. Well just from my perspective in terms of making change in the African American community, and maybe it's my ignorance, but I don't see a great benefit in putting gender first in making change overall in the African American community. Again, maybe it's just my lack of knowledge but with the amount of knowledge I have now, I think that the reason why I'm on the Africana Womanism side when it comes to making change. In terms of my personal life, I'm on Patricia Hill Collins's side maybe because there are other things, you know. I'm doing something that, in my family, women just typically don't do. When it comes to personal issues I'm more like the Black Feminist because I know that we can do more than mother's work, leaders and things of that nature.

This is significant as she felt that there were specific times and places where it was more important to align herself with other women and there were other times when it were more feasible to ally with other Blacks.

On the other hand, the women who saw themselves in the middle of the model felt that there was no separation of the identities and that they were able to operate from a

fully integrated identity model that equally recognized their race and their gender. Sydney gave the following narrative which clearly illustrates here internal struggle with this question.

> I would fall smack dab in the middle because I could run to both sides. Race is a struggle that we have to deal with and the battle will be there always but because the world is so male-dominated, we have to work even harder to have a voice. There is nothing that a woman can't do or endure. For a Black woman, there is even more of an ability to deal and not even break a sweat. Inner beauty and strength come from the intersection of race and gender. Being Black has made us tougher as women. The woman thing is what people see as secondary but we deal with them [race and gender] simultaneously. I would put myself in the middle because they are both equally important. I have to work at the middle point. That's a hard question. I would want to put myself at both ends and at the middle. Can I do that? The more I think about it, I would feel like I would want to be in the middle and at both ends so that I could work on both issues because they equally affect my life. When there is an issue that challenges my womanhood, I can step to that, when there is an issue that challenges my Blackness, I can step to that and when an issue challenges me in both realms, I can step to that. I feel personally responsible for doing everything.

Trina's response was based on her experience with garnering support in both camps.

> I am kinda in the middle because yeah, we're Black first and we are also female but at the same time I guess we should pull together with Black men. But at the same time we are Black female and there are a lot of issues that we have as Black women that Black men don't have and so how are they gonna help us with our issues when they don't even understand it. In that light you need to align yourself with White women and to be honest, I don't care who you align yourself with but you need to align yourself with those who believe in the same cause that you believe in and are willing to help you to advance through whatever obstacles you are going against so I am in the middle. I can go either way because for me personally, Black people have been more of a detriment to me than White people.

The task of locating self on a continuum of Black female identity within this research protocol illuminates the larger issue of locating Black female identity in life

where the continuum is often only visible to those who are on it. I noticed that three of the women named themselves using the words African American while four of the women name themselves using the term Black which may speak to a wider range in the racial identity development of women in this study. Education about the dilemma of Black female identity in academia will likely begin with acknowledgment of the fact that a continuum exists at all.

Ph.D. in My Bones

The women in this study spoke of always "knowing" that they would pursue a doctoral degree. While other little girls were playing hopscotch and braiding the hair of dolls, these women were looking at the world and strategizing their place in it. They were planning the ways that they could manage to get to the places that they believed would make them most useful in a community that requires so much for them to be successful. Many of the women spoke of a sense of "obligation" that came from "knowing" what was happening in their various communities. That sense of "obligation" which was brought up again and again by participants, in many cases, translated to a need to "be successful" on behalf of their communities. Peachy explained how she was drawn to the field of science.

> Sometimes I think I just woke up and I'm here. There are several things that made me interested in science and my interest in science directed my educational path. My aunt had a friend whose son had Sickle Cell Anemia and they were always running him to the hospital. He kept getting crisis episodes. I didn't know anything about Sickle Cell Anemia; no one in my family had a history of it. So as I got into high school and learned a little bit more I knew the basic genetics of it and that it took two mutant copies to get the disease and I wanted to do something about it. Then when I was 16 and they had the OJ Simpson trials, and I thought it was amazing all the information you can get from just a little bit of DNA. At the time I knew what DNA was and I kind of had an appreciation for what it was. But it was still amazing that you could pinpoint a person to the letter just with a

> miniscule of a sample and that really fascinated me. So, I went to a college fair and I told someone I wanted to do genetic engineering because I wanted to heal children of Sickle Cell with genetic engineering. So I did the program, the Biotech program, which was interesting because I didn't have the science or the math to really do it. I don't even know why I thought I could. Actually, my science in my high school was crappy because I went to a poor Catholic school and we didn't have money to invest in or to put in the sciences. I could write a paper like no one's business but I had no clue about science, my math was horrible and here I was thinking I was going to chose one of the hardest majors at the institution, I don't know what was wrong with me when I think about it, I really had lost my mind. So, I don't know what the drive was, I guess I still found myself helping others the way that other people did, the people I knew. I don't know any Black scientist still. So a Ph.D. in genetics just seemed like it was the natural next step. I didn't see life any other way.

Thus the concept of "success" became a part of the fabric of her identity rather than something she had the option of pursuing or not. Making a decision to pursue the field of science, as a Black women, with few role models to set the example and make the goal appear obtainable, speaks to the uphill struggle facing Black women who may have this same interest but lack the tenacity that Peachy embodies. Alexis commented on the "knowing" that guided her decision in academic as well as personal relationships. "I've always been really headstrong, and as a Black female, I always knew what I was going to do ever since I was 19. I always knew I would be a Ph.D. I knew that I was going to have a husband, a particular husband who held similar thoughts about God and thoughts about what he believed."

The concentration of African Americans in the field of education speaks to the value that runs through the veins of most Black communities, "education is the key." The call to success for many of the women in this study was often dictated by their greater understanding of the sacrifices made by their ancestors to provide them access to education that would have otherwise been denied. The survival of extreme isolation and

marginality for Black women, contribute to the belief that Black women have intrinsic resolve that allows them to face the negativity that falls to them exclusively (Ellis, 2001). Without the internal sources of support that many male and White doctoral students enjoy, Black women look to others outside of academe for encouragement and support. Despite the sustenance that she does or does not receive, Black women find a way to believe in their own success as doctoral students.

Still the belief in and the hope for success look very different from the knowledge that one will be successful. It is the "entitlement" to success ordained by powers higher than the dean and the academic chair that have given these women the strength to wage war on failure and plot a collision course with success despite the odds. Knowing is rooted somewhere deep in one's psyche and that in turn is intertwined with one's identity. To know that your destiny includes a rigorous academic journey and yet to remain willing to seek that end requires a keen sense of self including knowledge of one's strengths as well as needs. Women entering doctoral programs are often simultaneously balancing more than their fair share of home and child care (Maher, Ford & Thompson, 2004). Persistence towards degree progress for the women in this study seemed to be "in spite of" rather than "instead of" relational ties. In addition to the impact on Ph.D. completion faced specifically by women, outspoken Black women often face more severe discrimination and less opportunities for mentoring contributing to overall lower satisfaction with the doctoral experience than their male or white counterparts (Ellis, 2001). Black female academicians need to know what they are risking in order to walk through the academic door "first" and how their walking may be interpreted as leadership in one camp and abandonment in the other. She has to reconcile

this dilemma in her person before she can take the step and say with confidence “me first”.

Me first

Most of the women in this study, when asked what or whom they felt urgency around taking care of did not provide the answer that one would expect from the overtaxed and burdened Black female. Most of the women, said “self.” Their responses bucked traditional beliefs about Black women’s self-sacrificing mentalities. This may illustrate the contradiction of an Africana Womanist who is both family-oriented and ambitious (Reed, 2001). While many said that they have to take care of self to be able to take care of others, it was still very enlightening to consider how “self-interest” as a residual educational souvenir might work to help account for the inability or unwillingness we have (as we matriculate through the system) to put others before ourselves. Selflessness is valued in most relationships. It is therefore easy to see how the perception of selfishness may work to distance those with whom we have relationships as we become more engrossed with what the academy “needs” from us as scholars and Black women trying to survive in education.

It is important to acknowledge the tendency of participants to say that she felt oppressed as a Black person and as a female person but to describe her oppression primarily from the perspective of a Black person with no particular gender. Even if you were to compile everything Black women share with Black men and all that they hold in common with White women, there would be something missing. There is an experience at that intersection of race and gender that is not touched by Black manhood or White womanhood. It is the distinct Black woman’s experience. A study on race and gender by

Parks, Carter and Gushue (1996) states that this distinction is a result of occupying "different places in the American social order" (p. 626). This social order is ranked according to codes of race and gender where Black women posses a double negative.

In the quest to foster identity, many of these women did not have the traditional markers of "womanhood" to help solidify their status. Absent romantic relationship and children, they had to find a way to make sense of the decisions they had made by commission or omission to postpone having those aspect of their lives. Since many have indicated that doctoral study is a selfish endeavor, I asked the women to tell me what they felt the most urgency around "taking care of." Their answers were surprising, but I guess it should be expected when one lives in the borderlands where identity is marked by incongruity and confusion (Anzaldua, 1987). Nina said, "Right now, I feel the most urgency to take care of me. I feel so overwhelmed at this point that I have to find a release…get back to balance in my life….so that I can be healthy."

Although Trina is married with a child, she articulated a need to "take care of self" so that she could take care of others. "I had me on the bottom at first, but now, I've moved me up so it's my son and me at the top. I walk a mile a day because I was like, man, I need to be able to run around with the football and this other stuff with my son….so I started last week saying you know what, I need to take care of me, mentally and physically."

Alexis' answer to "what was most urgent" was perhaps the answer that resonated with me most.

> Getting this [dissertation] finished. That is the only thing I see right now, Mike Jones (a prominent rap artist) is a mess but I really love his work ethic. I bought [Mike Jones'] CD for research purposes and [the CD] is like 90 percent grind, 10 percent sleep. On the [track] *Still Tipping*, he has a guest verse performed by Paul

> Whal [a prominent rap artist] and [Paul's] just like, 'I'm like an ant, staying close to the earth.' And I was like 'that is my new motto.' I'm like close to the earth, I just got to really kick it in for another year and I can be finished. Once I get it, they can't take it away and after that it's up to me. If I want tenure, if I don't, I mean it's totally up to me. I got to get [the Ph.D.] first. Essentially, that's all I see. Um, and I'm pretty sure I'm going to have to explain that to my friends. Why I'm going to be MIA [missing in action] for the next year. I have friends getting married; I have a friend having a birthday. I'm like listen, I can't. I got to finish. It's been five years, so I got to finish… Pretty much that's it. Close to the earth. Um and I really don't have a lot space for anyone besides my husband. You know he sort of needs me at times that's all I got I don't have anything else to give anybody else. It has to be a crisis and it needs to be important. So I want to tell one of my girlfriends she needs to leave cryptic messages so I can tell if it's important or not. I'm like, 'we need a short version to hide all of that' A short message so that when my friends get busy I can encourage some of them to go back to school. I just have to stay close to the earth.

Alexis refused to allow herself room to place any other priorities above her academics even if it meant that in doing so, she may lose friends. Her value of herself weighs more in this instance than her value as a friend. The identity process gets complicated when we can no longer see ourselves beyond the academy yet this is the price that we pay to remain "married" to the academy. We change our name and lose our "previous" identity as women who played important and often vital roles in the lives of others.

Star explained the quandary of doing what is typically not done.

> [By obtaining a Ph.D.], I'm doing something that, in my family, women just typically don't do. You know, most women in my family, who are my age and younger have babies, whether they are married or not, you know. And some of them look at me and they're like, 'what are you doing,' you know, and they ask me questions like, that I think are just awful. They're like, 'when are you going to have babies?' and I'm like, 'I'm not even married! Why are you asking me that?' I just laugh at them, I'd rather be married first. It's not that you have to be, but that's my preference. So yeah, I'm just doing something that's very different from what some of, that all of the women are doing in my family. So I guess that's the reason why. I know what I'm doing is important, and I see other women in my family having suffered economically, and we suffer on different levels because they believe themselves, and there is nothing wrong with this, but

> they only see themselves as “mother” and “daughter”. You know, they don’t see themselves as “leader” or anything like that.

Listening to Star explain the tradition of women in her family to limit themselves to narrow identities as mothers and daughters, I thought about how these same family members might take pity on her for narrowing her identity to that of a Ph.D. when she could be such a wonderful mother. Traditional gender roles are often culturally embedded and reinforced by “well-meaning” family and friends (Shaw & Coleman, 2000). The idea of squandering time as a doctoral student when one “should” be getting married and having children speaks volumes about the value that women hold in society. Conventionally, Black women have been the caregivers, nurtures and sustainers of their communities. Black women who would not “want” to continue in this traditional model must seem “odd” to those who never knew they had a choice.

Ultimately identity is all about perspective. Although the motives that shape how a Black female doctoral student navigates her world may be guided by her belief (false or otherwise) that she is worth more educated than not, there is a certain devaluing that is aided in the denial of opportunities to tell her story. As a permanent inhabitant of the “borderlands” she has the burden of convincing those on both sides of the border that she is who she claims to be (a Black female academic) and as such has what it takes to successfully claim dual citizenship. Those who know Black women best know that we can move fluidly from one land to the other, never losing sight of those who look to us. Those who know Black women best, know that even as we go out on midnight scavenger hunts for insight afforded us in the academic world, we never take for granted those on the other side who (for whatever reason) did not make the journey with us. It is ironic that those who know Black women best may be Black women themselves. It is possible

that Black women justify their selfishness in education as a self-less act of sacrifice in the name of emancipation for their communities. Without asking Black women how they justify putting themselves, as academics, first, it may be difficult to see that they are actually putting their "responsibility" to lift the race before their own desires to be mothers and partners.

Responsibility and Relationships

My debt: I owe somebody and I feel the need to pay it forward. I owe them my soul's best even though I am tired of fighting and weary of the baggage that comes from being a Black woman in academia when neither identity will afford me the space to just be. I wake up early and go to bed late so that I can nurture them, teach them, mentor them, protect them, free them, heal them and love them but the debt is still there. Hands worn and heart bruised, I say yes when I should say no. I go when I should stay. I listen when I should shut down. But there is something about the call of my people. I hear it in my sleep (when I sleep). I hear it above the call to action as it floats over my head and rest in my heart. I always answer their call but who answers my call? Who listens when I cry because I know my theoretical perspective but I just noticed that my daughter has breasts? Who pays attention to the last time I held my son or watched a sunset with my husband? Who cares that I screen calls from my sisters because I can't spare the time? Who cares that I need things I can't even articulate and this debt is weighing on me? Who cares that I pray for them more than I pray for myself? Who really cares about me? Everyday I get up thinking about the fact that I need to pay this debt so I write blank checks from my soul's account and sign them, "I will go, send me".

Relationships are vital to the core of Black women in any setting. We thrive on the energy generated from establishing common ground with others. We are naturally drawn to harmonious relationships that honor all parties. Oppression injures our spirit no matter the vantage point. It is because of our gravitation towards harmony that we are so passionate in our fight to end oppression in any form. The one oppression that we are unable to detect and compact is the oppression of our own nature to build community in academic spaces despite the competition imperative. We pray that someone will reach out and hold our hand before we drift too far away from the places that feel comfortable in our Black womaness. We pray silently because in traditional western higher education, the only thing that matters is "winning," a winning that almost always comes at the expense of someone else losing.

Competition versus community

There is an ethos of individuality and competition that drives most Western institutions of higher education. Each year the best of the best flock to prestigious schools such as Harvard and Yale to eliminate the competition and emerge as the "best and brightest." Each year, it is the accumulation of cultural capital rather than knowledge that dictates who will be the successful among us (Douthat, 2005). Cultural capital is the ability to gain and use skills that have worth in the social system that dominates society (Groves, 2003). In the Western educational systems, Black women feel pressure to forsake Afrocentric cultural capital because is not nearly as valuable as European cultural capital. One of the prevailing values of Western cultural capital is competition, which pits us against all who enter academic territory (Douthat, 2005). Faced with the imperative to "be successful" many Black women embrace the notion of competition and

forsake their natural tendency to form communities that empower them to survive the "chilly climate" present in American education for those of us who stand at the intersection of race and gender as Black women. Many of the women in this study had serious concerns about the level of competition that they felt and how that impacted their ability to relate to others.

Alexis explained why she performs a stoic solitary stance in the midst of those who she believe would love to "be her." She said,

> My husband works in an all White church…and he used to introduce me as a Ph.D. student and these housewives would be like …'oh, that is nice. I always wanted to go to school and then I had my kids'…and they tell me this long sob story and I was supposed to turn around and say, 'you know I think that you are an excellent mother.' I've never looked down on being a housewife. They expect me to do the kid talk when I don't have any but they expect me to make them feel better because they are upset that I've got a world that they will never have. I'm half their age and have twice as much education as they have. I look them in the eye and don't say a word. I am not going to stand here and make you feel better or feel worse about yourself because you're jealous. Because I don't say anything, it is just really awkward. They don't know what I am thinking. They don't know what I'm gonna do next, and then they just ramble on and on and they realize that they are embarrassing themselves and I haven't said a word.

It is in this competitive realm that mistrust and contempt is fueled. Black women forsake what Hudson-Weems (2001) would call their natural nurturing instincts so that they can play the role of "competitor." Alexis' fear of being judged or undermined prevented the building of relationships that may have proven beneficial for her husband in his work and for Alexis in hers. The denial of emotions is significant as emotions are a vital part of relating to others. Here, Alexis inventories those who are not in line to assist her in her academic goals and systematically shuts them down. Her refusal to offer them "common ground" for relationship-building may be based on her perception of them as competition rather than a part of her community.

An air of competition also prevented one of these women from asking for what she needed. Peachy states, “If I needed someone to talk to I would have never gone to Allison [a fellow graduate student] because I didn’t think she was going through [what I was going through]. So it’s kind of a competition like the good ol’ boys club, I’ve got to be top. I’ve got to be first. I’ve got to have the highest this and I’ve got to have the best that. My thing is I need a ‘B’ to graduate, outside of that, if you were standing in the way of my ‘B’ then we might have a problem but I really doubt it. I guess I’m really more of a ‘we are the world’ kind of person to say ‘if you need help ask for it’ as opposed to if you need help I hope you find it.”

Peachy was aware of her natural tendency to be community-oriented but she neglected her own cultural capital in this Western academic setting. A barrier was built on perceived competition between two women in graduate school, instead of a relationship validated and supported by both of them. The scenarios with Alexis and Peachy demonstrate how concepts of community which are typically, historically, and naturally used by Black women in other settings to build relationships are devalued in Western academia and replaced with fierce competition, making it doubly difficult for Black female doctoral students to get their needs met (Reed, 2001).

Each of the women felt that one of the needs that she had was to experience genuine support that comes from a community of people who have your best interest at heart. In a predominantly White institution, this type of community is a rare commodity for the typical Black female scholar as indicated by the fact that so many of the women were still searching for environments that feel nurturing and supportive and provide opportunities to demonstrate mutual concern rather than a competitor’s stance..

Hold my hand

Contrary to what you might expect of Black women who have been socialized into the notion of competition versus community, many of the women found themselves in need of the kind of support that we spend all kinds of effort trying to convince others that we do not need. They actually used words like "hand holding" and "being embraced" in terms of specific needs. The ethic of caring is a womanist term that refers to a way of *being* that sets African American educators apart from their peers from other ethnic backgrounds (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). It is in this context that I have come to understand the need for support that is being shared with me as a researcher.

While many professors and educational administrators pride themselves on being able to maintain objectivity and fairness among students, why is this "fairness" understood only in terms of what they are given? If there is not conceptualization of what is also needed by individual students then how can institutions be confident that what they are providing in the way of services and resources is actually "helping?" The women in this study painted vivid pictures of what authentic support "looked like" for them. Unabashed, they spoke of words unuttered, times unspent and caring not given that would have enhanced the educational process for many of them.

Sydney describes what would have enhanced the process for her:

> Overall, I would like a little closer mentorship. Even to the point where someone is holding my hand. Like, OK, 'here is where you are.' Here is what typically happens, here are the good things. Here are your options. Here is what I think you should do and that mentor saying like what you'd like to do, here is where I think you should head…where you should focus. These things may be presenting or getting an article published or searching for jobs now or something. Just really kind of holding my hand throughout the entire process. Not that I don't have a lot of people giving me that guidance because I do and my advisor is great but, I think I want more because I have the potential to not be as focused and not do things in the right order or not stay on top of it. I kind of want to be coddled a

> little bit now. Which probably sounds odd because you're at a point in your academic career where you want the most flexibility and I think you could have that but just I still want to know that I am on the right path. Doing the Ph.D…..I mean the notion of it is kinda scary a little bit for me. I've already thought of this level of my academic career as being this big milestone. To think about the Ph.D. is to think about what you've done to get there. I want to be successful and I want to make the most out of the process and take advantage of all the opportunities that are offered. So having more attention brought toward what I should be thinking about to enhance what I should be doing. I want my work to speak for me and I'd hate to miss an opportunity to do something. It's almost kinda like when you're little having your mom lay your clothes out for you. Just kind of having it….not just for it to be laid out but for someone to be right by my side from start to finish and to really be close to me. That's one thing that I feel like I need.

Although Alexis described herself as very no nonsense in most aspects of her academic career, she was just as matter of fact when it came to what she needed.

> On the flip side of being a big planner, sometimes it gets a little out of control and I start to worry. And then I am a disaster. I am all like hysterical. I can't sleep. I need someone to give me a hug and [ask], 'what do you have to do today?' Just remind me, 'what do you have to do today?' All I have to do is that. Just bring me back from that huge picture that I see. And remind me essentially what my strengths are. It's like, 'I know you know what you need to do today. Just tell me what it is.' Think out loud. [Laughing] So I do need that. I do need a comforter type person. [Someone to say] 'That's Ok, you finished?' Now what I don't need when I'm having a moment is this sort of 'why are you whining? You've done this well so far?' That's not what I need. I need a 'Are you finished?' 'You're not. OK well you do this a little while longer. OK.' And my husband is pretty much the only person who will let me do that. Everyone else has a tendency to sort of get impatient with the 'Oh just get it done. You've always done it. Don't worry about it.' And my brother is pretty good at that too. [They] just sort of listen to me. So I do need someone to do that. On the practical level, I do need my intellectual calmer.

Peachy talks about her needs in the form of options.

> I like having options, I guess, to know that I could be doing this or I could be doing that, which is not a good thing sometimes because too many options could get you a little crazy. Just kind of an array of different things which is kind of fun, I don't know why I need it because part of me feels like I need someone to tell me what I need to do. You know, my boss needs to say, 'this is what you're going to do Peachy, you're going to do this for three years, and you're going to do this for three years and then you're going to work here.' I should be okay with that.

Nina said: “I need to feel valued and even validated even if it comes from within…I need to feel like someone cares about whether I sink or swim…whether I win or lose, whether I succeed or fail.” And when asked what would enhance the process for her, she said, “More encouragement, hands-on guidance…and most importantly someone who believes in me…I believe in myself however those days that I have doubts, that’s where my weaknesses should become my strength through good advisement and counsel from the faculty in my program.”

Perhaps a natural result of learning to live without “hand holding” support as a “student” is the inability to provide it as a professional educator. In this cycle, those who desire to nurture with their whole heart are discouraged to do so by an academic climate that stresses competition and rugged individuality, concepts not found in traditional Afrocentric thought (Okafor, 2002). If there is a compelling responsibility to build meaningful relationships with Black female doctoral students, perhaps they should be mentored in the art of reciprocity and practical support for students that may someday be their academic responsibility.

In the mentoring relationship between those in the academy and Black women as well as other supportive roles outside of academia, there must be an understanding that comes from clear communication. The impasse is what occurs in the meantime when that communication is stagnated. When Black women can not effectively express their needs, it may impair the ability of others to conceive how to best support them. In this moment, my mind travels back to the words that Ann could not find to say to her spouse and the power that those words might have had to guide him to the understanding that held the potential to spare then the painful side effects of “divorce.”

My grandmother used to tell me that prayer is what remains when we have used up all our words. It is somewhere between a groan and a cry; between a song and a moan. It starts in the stomach and works its ways up through the soul. A good prayer can leave you utterly shaking in light of the power it wields. In the quest for support during one of the most intense academic tasks to date, the power of prayer may be a likely reason that Black women turn to spirituality to anchor them in the turmoil of life in the academy. Perhaps it is because the cry for help is inaudible to human ears that God (what ever we conceive that to be) answers that call.

Soul Survivor

Spirituality was omnipresent in the lives of the women in this study. From calling themselves a "child of God" to saying that they were "not on speaking terms with God," these women displayed profound spiritual connections. Many of the women stated that it is that sense of spirituality that sustains them when physical human relationships disappoint and wane. Opportunities to reflect on the distinctions between religion and spirituality emerged regularly as the women made comments to clarify their status as spiritual as opposed to religious beings. They cited spirituality as one of the vital aspects of their success and persistence. While thriving in communities with few opportunities to nurture spiritual development, many of the women found that their faith was tested and ultimately strengthened in the midst of difficulty.

Consider for a moment the words used by each woman to identify herself.

Star: Child of God, Black woman, African American woman
Alexis: Black woman, Black and love Jesus, Rhetorician
Peachy: Black Christian Female (specified ethnicity, faith and gender in that order)

Nina: African American woman, Child of God, Child of my mother, a survivor

Trina: African American Female (later in the study as Spiritual)

Ann: African American woman, only child and child with siblings, split personalities, intellectual, rural and urban, northern and southern, recently single, child of a Ph.D.

Sydney: Child of God, I am a person/human, Black woman

I have noticed the tendency of these adult women to refer to themselves as "children." Despite the religious figure of speech, I find that thinking of one's self as a "child" may be rather concerning. A child is vulnerable and needs to depend on others for what she needs for survival.

Star says of her identity, "Well, I would call myself a child of God. My road hasn't been easy; so many times God was all I had. So I think that's what led me to that [identity]."

Sydney explained her spiritual connection explicitly. "How do I define myself? Well, I am first and foremost a child of God. I was raised, as a very spiritual person and I always give reverence to the fact that there is a higher being that has control over everything. You know my life and what I do and how I'm directed so I always put God first in everything. He comes before me. That's just the way I think."

When asked from whence she drew support, Trina responded,

> My mother has been a major source of support, my husband, my professors and my colleagues and friends-yes. And just [going to] church whenever I can go. Not church locally. But just a Black church that is like about a couple of hours away have been a support system. So my faith has helped me being in an isolated place such as this place.

Trina later explained how she was able to cope with circumstance she

encountered.

> I've always believed in the Lord and prayed but it's just here, you don't have Black churches and pastors you can confide in who really know what you're going through because they haven't experienced it….I traveled for several weeks and was studying with a person who was very spiritual. When you ask him a question, [He would say] 'oh yeah, if it's the lord's will, fine.' [I would say], 'Oh can you take me to the airport?' [He would respond], 'If it's the Lord's will.' Before he answered any question, he had to seek the Lord first in prayer and I have never ever met anybody like that and to really be somewhere where you are truly at peace, you're really happy every word that comes out of your mouth is just about positivism you know—stuff like that and to actually sit down in front of a Black screen and say OK, Lord I need your help. To pray and just have stuff come through and you know, trying to find something in a book and asking the Lord to show you where it's at and then just go straight to it. That type of stuff. You know and it made me realize that you don't need anybody really but the Lord and so I think that it's been through the issues that I've been through and the time that I went and studied with this gentlemen that I realized that OK, this is what's gonna get me out of here. It's not my friend, my colleagues, my husband, my financial….It's the Lord.

Peachy explained how her relationship with God was in transition. "I feel my relationship with God has grown, but we're kind of at a standstill at the moment. We're not speaking….But in the same sense, I try to live my life according to the way I think God would want me to."

So, how does a desert flower find water during the drought? Maybe she doesn't. Perhaps she stores it in times of plenty so that when she finds herself and those around her struggling in spiritual warfare with no rain in sight, she can summon those reservoirs and sustain herself as well as those within her immediate area. While the spiritual relationship seemed so primary for the women in this study, their access to opportunities for spiritual enhancement and development was limited. If wellness is the link between mind, body and soul, many of these women may find that gaps in their spiritual well-being will ultimately lead to gaps in their physical and perhaps mental well being. Just because the women did not explicitly discuss physical health issues does not negate the

fact that their academic journey placed them in a different proximity to spirituality as well as their other intimate relationships. A change in proximity means a shift in the way that one relates to others and in turn a subtle or dramatic change in how those others in our life relate to us.

Distance Changes Things

Among the changes to relationships with self and others which women noticed were the physical, emotional and intellectual distancing which occurred. The women in this study, while prepared for the aspects that would accompany physical distancing, were totally unprepared for how their lives would be shifted and distanced as they embraced academic culture.

Sydney shared a very heartbreaking story of physical distancing that resulted in emotional and intellectual distancing.

> When I was younger, there were friends who have come and gone over the years. One woman that I was close to in elementary school up through high school and we don't talk much now but she sticks out as being my friend back then. We always talked on the phone and shared anything. It was her that even showed me how to put on a sanitary napkin right. She was my ace and that was important. In this all Black neighborhood, my family was doing better than her family but in high school it became an issue. Until that point, we didn't see the class lines like in high school. She didn't have as much as I had and growing up with her was great because we were the same age and we started off going through the same things. We ended up in different places in the schooling track. We always exchanged gifts. Our families hung out. Our moms were good friends. I hate that our relationship dwindled over the years. When we went to high school, she went to the Black high school and I went to parochial school. Back then in her school fashion was really important and for me, it was just a dress code. The student body had a different interest and she feel in with that particular crowd and I think it became a thing that my mom was able at age 16 to buy me a new car. She started treating me differently when we went to different high schools. I still tried to reach out to her figuring that she was just going through something but then came a point in time when she hurt me and then I couldn't try to mend the relationship anymore.

Star explains what can happen to a relationship under the stress of "emotional distance".

> Me and mother are not as close and me and my father talk everyday. And I just think that my mother and father are different and have grown into very different people, different than they were when I was 11 years old. And because of the growth, my mother, it's like, it's almost like she's not as supportive of me as my father is. It's almost like my father supports me more, he's like 'you got get 'em girl'. I mean [he's] just so supportive of me and my aspirations, and my mother is more like 'you're getting a Master's degree?' And she was giving me signals like she was trying to avoid the conversation about being in school that I was afraid for her. And that's hurtful coming from your mother. But my father was just the opposite. My father was like 'I believe in you. You're doing the right thing. Keep at it, keep at it.' So I think because of those different signals, I went for the positive one, which was my father. And because of that, me and my father are closer now. My father, he's the closest person to me now, in terms of my doctoral program.

For the women in this study, distance had ill effects on their ability to maintain relationships. The spaces occupied by growing intellect won't give way to the presence of those who have shared the journey with us thus far. If our relationships outside of academia survive the journey, it may be because they were content to walk beside us when they were used to being carried.

The ways a Black woman relates to those outside of the academy may be directly tied to what is happening to her within the ivory tower. As the pressure to adapt to Western thought that privileges competition over community builds, some Black women may find it more difficult to express their need for support; they fear that appearing needy threatens their competitive edge and diminishes their cutthroat demeanor. Without the adequate language to ask for help, the Black female scholars in this study found that their spiritual lives intensified in many cases. The distance created by physical, emotional and academic changes resulting from doctoral study test the fabric of intimate relationships and cause many relationships to fall short of what is needed to survive.

Summary

This chapter has helped to sort the various themes that were present in this study. Broadly, the themes encompassed the historical implications of doctoral study, issues at the intersection of race and gender and the intricacies of responsibility and relationships for Black women. Within each of those broad themes, micro themes helped to further categorize the phenomena experienced specifically by the Black female Ph.D. students in this study. Each woman's story enhanced the picture of Black female existence in doctoral study while my own story served as the backdrop upon which I understood and made meaning of what was been said. If my participant's voices sang the solos, mine was the constant chorus.

Chapter Five provides further analysis and helps to formulate the theory that guides how this study should impact the theory and practice of higher education. Using current literature and trends, I pose questions that disrupt the traditions contributing to the oppression of Black female scholars. Lifting the veil, this study will add to the growing body of literature that grants permission to discuss Black women in relation to doctoral study.

DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

Chapter Five proceeds in a discussion format with me as the primary discussant. Engaging the findings of this study, expanding on them, and exploring how they relate to the current literature about Black female doctoral students, I will employ the tenets of Afrocentric thought and traditional western thought via my own voice as a colonized Afrocentric thinker who is aware of the effects of her own colonization and seeks to be critical in that light. Basically, I will admit for the sake of this discussion that I am a product of an educational system that is a part of my socialization as a Black female in the Western world. I know that even the process of recognizing my own academic oppression may seem problematic for some but my experience is validated by the stories of the other Black women in this study. While my Afrocentric theoretical perspective did not permit me, as researcher, the ability to scrutinize the experience of my participants, the critical framework demanded that I examine my own "concepts of truth" which ultimately impacted what I choose to tell and how I choose to tell it. It is in full awareness of the resistance I may encounter that I proceed in this manner in an effort to disrupt the discourse that has been a part of my oppression academically and socially in an academic. It is my goal to use this study as a tool of emancipation for my participants and for myself.

Each theme is discussed from a specific cultural "place," guided by my Afrocentric theoretical perspective. Some of the aspects of this dialogue may converge at times which is the nature of a conversation as there are points of commonality and

agreement but there will also be times where the distinct views deviate and diverge from one another because they originate in different "places" as indicated by the theoretical framework guiding this study. Each voice situated in a cultural place represents "truth" (with a little "t") for that perspective to be evaluated by the audience who engages this work. Ultimately in order for this study to be useful in the ways it was intended, it must stir the soul of the reader and cause them to seek the "Big T" truth that resides out there as I am convinced it does exist indeed.

The recommendations for theory and practice based on the implications of the findings in this study are conveyed in the final part of this chapter. The recommendations are delivered in my own voice and from my perspective as a researcher who has been fully immersed in this process. I now trust myself to recognize how my own educational experiences, identity issues and relationship complexities impact my lens. There is urgency for me in attempting the process of shaping theory and practice because I have sisters, daughters, mothers and friends who are at different paths along the academic road I travel. They need to know what I now know. Perhaps the tenets of this study will reach them in time to be of use.

There are implications for practice and theory which emerge in a closer examination of Black women managing intimate relationships during the doctoral process. This study has initiated an entire discussion of Black women which may have previously been viewed as taboo because of their status among the hierarchy of doctoral students as well as the reluctance of those in the academy to approach a topic so saturated with racial and gender implications. While there are other discussions ongoing which involve issues related to Black female doctoral students, very few are launched from an

Afrocentric place with the goal of capturing experiences with relationships specifically. Frankly, most people in the academy despite the presence of liberal agendas just don't know how to talk about what Black women need. This study has been fluent and efficient in providing the language, parameters and venue to embark on this delicate topic. In addition, this study has also set the stage for deep and meaningful conversation by raising issues that point to the urgency and importance of exploring the experiences of Black female doctoral students.

This final chapter will do several things. First it will summarize the findings in this study. Second it will revisit the original research questions and use Afrocentric theory to guide the answering of those questions according to the findings from this study. Third it will provide clear recommendations for theory and practice based on the implications generated by the findings. Finally, it will lay the framework for a new model of Black female doctoral student identity. The new model which I am calling "Enlightened Black Womanist" (Patterson, 2006) will combine aspects of Black feminism and Afrocentricity to describe the racial and gender development of individual women as they matriculate through the doctoral process. This new model acknowledges the stages that contribute to a fully assimilated identity for Black female learners.

Summary of Findings

This study draws on the experiences of Black women and their intimate relationships during doctoral study to gain an understanding of how they manage. Several implications are derived from the findings. The process of managing intimate relationships is touched and influenced by historical implications of doctoral study such as racism and sexism (Ellis, 2001). The ways that Black female doctoral students

navigate their intimate relationships during doctoral study is further impacted by their own shifting self-identity (Houston, 2000). Finally, the changes in responsibility and relationships with self and others throughout the doctoral process contribute to the perceived and actual successes and failures in managing intimate relationships for Black women in pursuit of the Ph.D. (Coker, 2003).

Upon commencing this study, I had very clear ideas about what I expected to find. Based on my own experience as a Black women working towards my Ph.D. with relationships in tow, I expected to hear women tell me about how they had loved and lost those who meant the most to them during their doctoral process. I expected women to share best practices for delegating time, energy, and resources to self and others. I expected to find women who had somehow managed to do what other women looked upon with amazement so that we could remove the mystery and disclose the awe. Still reeling from my pilot study, I was convinced that one of the primary tasks facing Black female doctoral students was that of maintaining the relationships that sustained them during doctoral study. Much like the paradox of my Black womanhood which touches both ends of a perpetual spectrum where gender and race intersect, I was both correct and incorrect. I was at the same time accurate and inaccurate.

I found that the voices of my sisters combined to create a melody that was clearly singing a new song. Rather than arguing the politics of what their song meant for our community, I chose to embrace the empirical evidence presented to me via the data I had so painstakingly waded through and let the music play knowing that they all longed to hear the choir above their individual voices. I suspect that the women in my study, while grateful for the opportunity to first reflect on their experiences and then share that in this

venue, continue to feel a sense of disjointedness. They may have only previously been privy to the records in their own heads—records that often generated misinformation because of the many ways that we as Black women have been colonized by the very education that we seek.

Perhaps even more significant, I found women longing to tell their stories and a deeper longing for those stories to be significant to someone. I expected to find women talking about relationships and I did. The relationships that they spoke of were not those that I had imagined in the confines of my dissertation preparation. The participants of this study have done for the idea of relationships what the title of this study has done for the term "divorce." They have disrupted traditional meanings for the term "relationships" and described relationships in the sense of how they relate to each other, the dysfunctional ties they have with education and how that has been nurtured and fed by experiences in higher education. In addition they talk about how they hope to build reciprocal relationships with mentors and colleagues. While many of these findings are not new in the sense of providing information that has not already been shared in some form or fashion as indicated by the review of literature, they have provided a place where the information can be sifted through a critical, Afrocentric, Black womanist sieve. In this format, it can be used to make a cake to be digested by those with whom Black women share the academy as well as by Black women themselves. This dialogue will insure for these Black women a place at the perpetual table. As a matter of fact, in this discussion if not during any other times in their academic lives, they will be seated at the head of the table.

This study has provided supplemental information for those wishing to explore the intricacies of Black womanhood within the context of relationships during doctoral study. It meets and agrees with previous findings that explore Black female doctoral students in prominent ways and diverges from those studies in ways which are just as important. It speaks from the reality of eight sisters who are living at the crossroads as I write. It is because of this reality that this topic emerged as an urgent and pressing question for me deserving of further study. In this paragraph I finally acknowledge my place in this study as it is and has always been about me and beyond that, my relationship with this topic.

In many respects, this study supports findings by Jackson (1998) who reported that African American college women require a more holistic approach as they are more likely to experience implications of race and gender which contribute to feelings of marginality and discord as college students. Many of Jackson's findings indicated that the women in her study worried about how their relationship to their communities would change as they matriculated. Moving beyond African American college women in general, the study by Schwartz et al. (2003), captured experiences of African American women in graduate school. While relationships were not the focus of the Schwartz et al. study, interpersonal relationships emerged as a significant aspect of the participants' experiences. These studies were similar to the current study in that their purpose was to bring greater understanding to the experiences of Black women in higher education (Jackson, 1998, Schwartz et al., 2003). They were different, however, from the current study, in that the focus was on Black women and their intimate relationships at the doctoral level. Surprisingly the significance of relationships was prevalent in all three

studies leading to the conclusion that Black women in college deal with internal and external relationship issues at all phases of their collegiate education.

In the next section, I revisit the original research questions and with the guidance of Afrocentric thought in translating the findings of this study, I will attempt to answer the how and the why of Black women managing intimate relationships during the doctoral process. It is only in the final answering of the original questions that I can go on to present recommendations for theory and practice in higher education which will inform the new model of Enlightened Black Womanist Identity (Patterson, 2006).

Research Questions Revisited

Okafor (2002) contends that an Africological analysis "seeks to disclose and apply codes, paradigms, symbols, motif, myths, and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a legitimate frame of reference for collecting and interpreting data" (p. 122). Adhering to a specific Afrocentric school of thought to make sense of the values embedded in the data may prove even more challenging as Afrocentric scholars do not even agree about what constitutes African values and ideals (Okafor, 2002). They do, however, agree that value must be derived within the context of the whole and that the goal of African culture is to generate harmony (Okafor, 2002). I use this preface to explain that the answers to the research questions using the Afrocentric model did not come easily. They came as a result of viewing Black women's experiences as scholars within the context of their lives as gendered and raced beings.

Specifically, Black women have a range of gendered and raced tools at their disposal to creatively manage relationships. For example, in response to the strategies that Black women use to manage and maintain intimate relationships, this study cites

various tools. Flexibility, empathy, persistence, perception, self-knowledge and the ability to play multiple roles are among the apparatus that Black women call upon to maintain relationships within as well as outside of the academy. How are the strategies used by Black women shaped by their race and their gender? The strategies are undoubtedly shaped by the reality of residing in the borderlands. Just as children who live in war trodden communities develop survival skills, Black women in the borderlands learn to justify their coming and going. They find ways to bribe gatekeepers on both sides so that safe passage will be more likely. For instance excellence in academia pacifies those in the academy even when Black women must steal away to attend to the bribing of their significant others outside of academia. Deprived of time and attention for so long, many outside of the academic circle count crumbs of attention as major signs that they are "favored."

As often proposed in research calling for new perspectives of socialization, this study has the potential to disrupt commonly held beliefs about what Black women need at every stage of the doctoral process to be successful. Truthfully addressing questions about how the discourse born of this study might help to disrupt and deconstruct traditional ideals about socialization of Black female doctoral students, will mean acknowledging the ways that Black women build relationships as well as also acknowledging that the current presiding thought in higher education sits in direct contradiction to the natural community building tendencies of Black women. To dismiss this fact as a need for Black women to "get on board" with the way things are done in traditional doctoral study would mean denial of the critical questions that ask to whom does access to higher education belong in 2006 and beyond.

As the global demand for individuals who are "educated" increasingly requires that one be comfortable engaging diversity, the addition of Black women in the academic arena will take on more prominence and significance to progressive institutions of higher education. As Smith and Schonfeld (2000) demonstrated, in their study on what contributes to student success, all students perform better in diverse environments. Diversity is aided by the presence of disparity in schools of thought. Black women bring that presence as they pull from their unique gendered and raced experiences to navigate academia. Accordingly, in response to the question "Who should care?" It is clear that anyone concerned with student success will also be concerned with attracting, developing and maintaining Black female Ph.D. students.

The most astounding response may be in understanding the potential that this study has for Black women in the pipeline. Research that uses the experiences of Black women as the standard and refuses to compare and contrast it to White men as the rule will enhance the educational value that Black women feel as they come to see their experiences as significant in their own right. The ability of research to validate the experiences unique to Black female scholars should not be underestimated. Finally, the roadmap that a study such as this one offers to women who are considering their potential for success as scholars and as women with many roles inside and out of academia, illuminates the journey, makes it appear doable and grants transparency to the process. Each is vital to the success of Black women in the pipeline. If success is the ultimate goal, there are things that should and must be done to make the doctoral process "Black women user friendly."

Recommendations

The following recommendations are framed as insights for the academy, the community and Black women themselves as all share in the responsibility to foster academic success for Black women during doctoral study. The recommendations are not meant to be conclusive, but rather the first words in a conversation that needs to take place. As such, the recommendations section does not read like the typical enumerated list of "here's what you have to do." Instead these recommendations are designed to prompt conversation around issues facing Black women that may inform policy and procedures related to their success in doctoral programs.

Embedded within the recommendations, of this study, is inherently further analysis. Making sense of the implications imparted by the themes in this study takes a willingness to consider the context of the telling of these stories. As the themes are tied to the vectors of Black female doctoral experience outlined in Appendix 1, so are the recommendations tied to the themes. Each recommendation is presented in the framework of corresponding vectors situated within the context of Black women's experiences as they relate to the doctoral process. The vectors in this way serve as a framework to house, organize and present recommendations.

Even in the scope of my continuing analysis are hidden and not so hidden remnants of my own oppression which have been given to me by the educational experiences that I have had over the past 30 years. While I present these suggestions for consideration, I am also asking how and why a Black female doctoral student at the end of her process must be the one to initiate the conversation.

Confronting the Historical Implications of Doctoral Study for Black Women

In terms of historical implications of the academy, women told of their experiences in pre-schools (a term meant to signify integrated school settings). These pre-school experiences set the stage for the ways that these women would be co-opted and shunned by an academic system that they were not expected to survive much less master. Hughes (2004) says, "We [Black people] are groomed to succeed in the White middle class school by default when entering public school as the often over-achieving, expectation-exceeding kindergartners in racially desegregated classrooms" (p. 66). The fact that many of these women used images of those who had succeeded before them in academia to propel their own success is evidence for the need to place Black women in a position to become affiliated with other Black women who are or have been successful as doctoral students. For campuses where there are relatively large numbers of Black students, the traditional mentoring arrangements may be feasible but for campuses that have less than their fair share of minority faculty, staff and students, it may prove to be quite a challenge. In these cases, nontraditional methods such as readings, assignments and entire classes that explore the works of Black female Ph.D.s at the home campus and beyond that expose Black female doctoral students to other Black female Ph.D.s will increase the retention of these women just by providing role models as well as opportunities to share in the type of camaraderie that comes from being in informal settings free of agendas, schedules and—well, White people. In these types of settings, there is no longer a need to project something beyond one's gender and race. A Black woman is free to be who she is beyond that identity and not feel the need to validate her existence even at the expense of other Black women.

Moses (1989) eloquently explains what actually happens for Black women once they leave the confines of their culturally rich communities to enter predominantly White institutions.

> Once Black women get to campus they are members of a community that tends to treat them differently than it does Black males, White males, and White females. Isolation, invisibility, hostility, indifference and lack of understanding of Black women's experiences are all too often part of the climate that Black women face on campuses (p. 2).

There is a dual responsibility in the effort to expose Black women to the work or company of other Black women. First, universities which are themselves aware of the ways that Black women may feel hampered by the patriarchal and racially skewed environments present on many campuses, must have the courage to acknowledge that the experience for Black women is unique and worthy of deeper consideration. Even on campuses where the recruitment, retention and success of Black women has begun to shift, it should be acknowledged that it is the means by which conditions of racial and gender oppression were conceived and birthed that continue to plague Black women. It is the fact that there is a subtle but lingering disregard for the thoughts, ideas and presence of women and people of color that grates on the existence of Black women occupying academic spaces daily. There need not be an incremental dose of discriminatory comments for the air to have the bitter taste of White male superiority that can wear on even the strongest of self-esteems.

Second, Black women themselves must demand new information. They must refuse to be fed on the diet of a slave if they are going to sit at the table of knowledge. This is an opportunity for them to think critically about the hand that feeds them or should I say the philosophies that teach them. Black women must question what seems

irreprehensible and disrupt what is seemingly calm. Their birth as scholars and the knowledge holders for future generations depends on their ability to unplug from the matrix and question why reality looks so different through the eyes of this "White" education. Black women must not just ask but demand answers as their academic right to know.

In an effort to address the historical imbalances that have set in motion a legacy of oppression for Black women in academia, I present the following recommendations:

- The academy must share the burden to confront expectations of intellectual ability by exposure to Black female Ph.D.s for all students at every level of the university. This may be as radical as implementing curriculum changes for classes dedicated to the exploration of Black women in education. A less radical but equally as resourceful approach may be to invite annually one or more visiting professors who will provide substantial awareness of Black female identity in academia. Finally, at the very least, opportunities for students to attend workshops, seminars, and other experiences facilitated by Black women should be provided and supported for all students including Black female doctoral students. One of the goals of this recommendation may be to make sure that each Black female doctoral student has had some exposure to a Black female Ph.D. prior to completing her doctoral work.
- There must be internal and external incentives to build mentoring relationships with Black female doctoral students by the best and the brightest among faculty including other Black faculty. Academic culture goes a long way to foster the cultural capital that is considered valuable currency and in such, the exchange

value must be recalculated to indicate priority on the specific ways that Black women strengthen the intellectual fabric of colleges and universities. All stakeholders in student success must become involved in the insuring of success for Black women doctoral students because they contribute to the experiences that drive the success of all students. Actions and statements that validate this position must become a part of the culture of the university rather than the rare exception. Basically, kudos in the form of rewards that have value in the academy should go to those who mentor those least likely to be mentored. Black faculty must be willing to lead in the efforts to champion and channel the academic ability of Black women on the path to the professorate and see it as their birthright for having been granted access to the ivory towers at the expense of many Black women who are still fighting for the emancipation of Black people. Black women must be willing to engage and challenge Black professors armed with a deep understanding of the insecurities fostered by such phenomena as the "Queen Bee syndrome" and "stereotype threat" (Malveaux, 2005, Aronson, Fried & Good, 2001). Universities can make it easier and perhaps even more attractive to mentor Black female doctoral students but the desire to make the effort in light of so many historical records containing misinformation must reside in the hearts and souls of those would be mentors and mentees who channel the courage to ask who hired the D.J.

- The academy and all its constituents must pardon "academic infidelity" and allow a space for "affairs" with life without demanding that Black women "divorce" their academic pursuits. This type of permission should not come in

the form of a request from Black women but a notice. As indicated by the telling of stories by women in this study, life outside of the academy can be as real and demanding as life within. Education around the ways that Black women are tied to their external (outside of the academy) communities is the responsibility of Black women who know best what is expected of them as sisters, daughters, mothers, partners, aunts, cousins, friends, teachers, parishioners and Black women with a debt to pay. Just as the cab driver is quick to point out that the tab continues to run even if the car stops, Black women must own the fullness of their lives so that they may be more fully understood and appreciated. Owning the fullness of Black womanhood means shamelessly acknowledging practices and policies that leave Black women broken in the name of academia. It means proclaiming to those on both sides of the border that we have the right to pass. As a result of this disclosure, academic policies and procedures should begin to reflect a kind of flexibility that allows individuals to navigate doctoral study while also maintaining and attending to the relationships that they say sustain them during doctoral study. Those concerned with the ways that women navigate higher education with all that their gender may imply are likely to find a stake in this discussion. Ultimately, all university stakeholders stand to gain from an academic culture that is forgiving and embracing of our need as three dimensional characters to have our cake and eat it too.

- Universities and colleges must do what they can to provide "integrated" or "preschool" or perhaps better stated "pre-global society life" experiences for all

students including Black women in doctoral study. This may be achieved by making efforts to inventory the voices that are privileged as well as those that are clearly silenced in the current academic curriculum. Opportunities to hear examine and engage ontological stances such as African Womanism and Black feminist thought that diverge from the dominant beliefs represented in the U.S. academic culture may better prepare students to locate and articulate their own unique voice among the competing rhetoric present in academia today. If students (especially Black female doctoral students) are not exposed to differing views before they have an opportunity to adopt their academic voice, how can they be sure that the dialect they employ is not that of the oppressive forces that persist like dated fossils in a system designed to support the supremacy of White males. In this light, I am suggesting that more attention be given to as many epistemological views as possible to shed light on the ways that those who do not embrace Western European thought have articulated their thoughts. Careful attention to this recommendation may go further to sway Black women that a campus is truly valuing diversity than the annual MLK parade.

Confronting the Identity Issues at the Intersection of Race and Gender for Black Women

Black women have an identity problem. The problem is that they are at the same time Black and female. These posts (or this post) place them in the juncture of a very political dynamic which unfolds as they articulate what is means to have their race and gender working against them as they stand alongside Black men in some cases and White women in others. I particularly love the way that Hine and Thompson (1998) illustrate the unique positionality of Black women.

> No matter what anyone may say to the contrary, Black women are different. They're different from Black men and they're different from White women. It is true that much of what they have experienced derives from racism and much from sexism. A the same time, however, much of what Black women have experienced and still experience today—both bad and good—involves the blend of their separate identities in a way that chemists would call a combination, not just a mixture. Both race and gender are transformed when they are present together, and class is often present as a catalyst. (p. 316)

The Black women in this study share realities that hold them as examples of how the "combination" of Blackness and womaness merge to create a "not so magic" potion. Perhaps if it were magic, Black women could use it to make them appear when some would rather count them absent, to choose when the choices are all impossible, to know when the knowledge is too painful.

Black women have their own crosses to bear. It is the cross formed at the point where the oppression of her gender meets the oppression of her race. It is the point where she is abandoned by the privilege of Whiteness that falls to her White sisters and the privilege of maleness that falls to her Black brother and she is alone. At various stations of the university dialogue you can find people discussing best practices for finding, recruiting and maintaining the ever evasive concept of diversity. In the minds of many in academia, ethnic minorities, including Black women, have the elusive "it" and are deemed capable of transforming an entire campus community by just showing up. Many a Black woman has been tokenized and exploited to this end.

We live in a time when diversity has become a commodity to be marketed, sold and bought. Individuals believed to posses diverse attributes as well as those needing the goods are willing to barter and bid for opportunities to entertain Blackness and womaness as long as the two remain conflicted and oppressed. What happens when a Black women

is set free in all her greatness? Well, she will probably want to free others and we can't have that.

When I was a little girl, my father was in the Air Force. I remember the smile on his face as he would recall the energy and excitement generated from flying above the earth and craved that feeling for myself. One day, my father acknowledging my fascination with flying, took me to his job where I participated in a simulated flying experience. It was amazing to be inside of the cockpit of a T-38 feeling all the intensity of flying without leaving the ground. In thinking about how universities can support the natural need for communities that fuel self-esteem and generate support for Black women, I envision a simulator where Black women can feel as though they are truly in a community composed of virtual mentors, meaningful cultural exchanges and interactions. Knowing that Black women crave the connection found in opportunities to mentor, it may be important to their persistence to provide purposeful mentoring opportunities as well as times when she can be as complex or as simple as she wishes free of what the academy tells her she should be. Free to accentuate here Blackness or strut her femininity. She must be encouraged to fly without wings.

In an effort to address the inconsistencies that result from a failure to reconcile how Black women live the realities of Blackness and Womaness everyday, I offer the following in terms of recommendations:

- The community that is supportive of Black women is the community that recognizes and celebrates the fact that gender and race collide and reside in Black women in ways that it does not exist in any other group of people. While the competing natures of race and gender fight for academic space, Black

women can't go to places that are for women without also bringing their Blackness nor can they travel in the Black spaces without bringing their femaleness. If the baggage that accompanies this dual positionality prevent her from riding with White women on some parts of the journey or with Black men on others, why not create a section that accommodates all her baggage, her jewelry, and her hats. The reality of this stance is far less trivial than hats and bags. It requires the need to consider the complexities of race and gender when embarking upon studies that seek to explore experiences of Black women. It is about giving due credit to her ability to be either/or as well as both/and. If scholars want to do research that will exalt how Blackness "plays" in the lives of Black women, they are going to have to realize that there is more at work than race. If White women want us to champion feminist epistemologies, they are going to have to understand that our Blackness won't allow us to leave Black men fallen and wounded. We as Black people have come too far for that. What we as Black women want is for White women to encourage us to find ways to celebrate and support our men as we find ways to reclaim our families and for Black men to stand by us when we push the gender ballot because they as our fathers, sons, bothers and partners stand to gain from our emancipation.

- Educational communities and society at large must realize that Black women have much to contribute. Considering the ways that Black women are silenced will take critical and courageous educators who are willing to challenge the status quo. A natural tendency of Black femaleness it that of "caring"

(Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Caring causes us to stay up late and get up early blazing paths where there were none for those who will come after us. If society can find the words to ask Black women to share their stories, the lessons will be rich. Understand that Black women speak in a language that speaks to the soul so that even when her subject and verb don't agree, she is right. She must not be co-opted. It is vital that Black women's epistemologies whether they be from an Afrocentric place or a feminist place be validated. In all the guessing and assuming and presuming, just ask her. Ask her how and why she persists in academia and then brace yourself for her response. Ask her how she survives and then watch her pray for guidance. Ask her if she would endure all that she has endured in the name of education again and listen to her tell you with tears in her eyes—yes. If you are not prepared to listen, you best not ask because Black women have a lot to say and if you're not careful, she might just write a dissertation.

- It is important that those within as well as outside of the academic world honor the sacrifices and choices that Black women make to pursue doctoral study. While many claim to "know" the pain, few really know what it means to battle the urges that plague Black women daily demanding that they "pay the debt." In many raced, cultured and gendered ways, Black women are supposed to be a lot of things to a lot of people—right now. What appears to be a choice that honors only her self may actually be a sacrifice that aligns Black women with the reasons that they were invited to taste the fruits of education in the first place…the uplifting of her race. While well intentioned mothers and aunts are

pressuring Black women to give birth to babies, those in academia are pressuring Black women to give birth to books. Our uteruses are already full with the bastard children of the dominant discourse. The reasons that we vacate our roles as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters are balanced in the ways that we plot and plan to provide "educated service" at the completion of our academic journey.

- Those who desire to foster the success of Black women in doctoral programs must not underestimate the role of other Ph.D.s in inspiring excellence in Black female doctoral students. Guides who know well the academic culture regardless of gender or ethnicity are well suited to provide the type of socialization necessary to prepare Black women for the demands and expectations of life in the academy. Equally important as providing knowledgeable successful mentors for Black women is the need to provide them with and support their need to mentor others. The womanist ethic of caring compels many Black women to "give back" (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). This passion cannot be quieted except by doing that which she feels compelled to do. While working on my fourth chapter, I was asked by members of a Latina student organization to participate in a panel featuring women of color who are working toward the doctoral degree to help inspire other women of color to pursue this goal. Despite all the practical reasons (no time, no time and did I mention no time) that I should have said no, I said yes as fast as my fingers would type the word. I have yet to regret that choice although the price I pay is substantial.

Confronting the Reality of Responsibility and Relationships for Black Women

For the Black women in this study, relationships and responsibility went hand in hand. The affiliation between the two were reciprocal and the women responded to questions about relationships in terms of what they felt they owed to others (which also included self) as well as what was "needed" by them. This section provides a unique opportunity to gain perspective on the support systems that include Black women and how they see their role in those networks. The four micro themes that emerged from this portion of the study include aspects of spirituality, community responsibility, the impact of emotional, physical and intellectual distance on relationships, and the ways that Black women envision support.

In response to the multiple ways that Black women envision support networks and their role in them, the following recommendations are offered:

- All of the entities concerned with the success of Black female doctoral students need to gain a better understanding of what Black women mean by "support". Surprisingly (or not) the Black women in this study spoke of their need for support that felt like guidance, authenticity, encouragement, caring and empathy. These are all feelings that are generally associated with emotions which are not directly tied to the clinical, sterile communities found in many institutions of higher education. If learning and social communities offer "support" to Black women without consideration for how she understands support there may be a tendency for misunderstanding and incongruence between what is expected and what is given. This may be interpreted on either end to be failure which could ultimately lead to disappointment and disillusionment with the doctoral process.

Many of the women in this study are aware of the notions which are widely held in society citing the strength and tenacity of Black women as their primary strengths. The findings of this study point to a need to deconstruct the images held of Black women as pillars of strength which may be responsible for failure of many systems to engage them with the kinds of support that they seek and desperately need to be successful as doctoral students. In educational communities, practical support may translate to caring peer and faculty mentors, opportunities to gather and share experiences with other community members, and "welfare checks" (this may need some explaining): In Student Affairs, a welfare check is made by members who want to assess the status of an individual for whom there has been concern expressed. The individual for whom concern is expressed is usually engaged by one or more individuals who are prepared to gather information about how best to meet any needs determined to exist as a result of the check.

- Practical support may also include funds provided to support professional and educational development that will address socio-cultural issues as well. In the social communities, practical support may mean having family and friends taking on more responsibility for the sustenance of responsibilities in relationships that may traditionally have been incurred by the woman needing support. It may be incremental words or deeds that inspire, motivate and challenge Black women to be her best self. Ultimately, the most important thing to remember about practical support for Black women is that they know what they need and establishing congruency between what Black women request and

what they actually receive in terms of support is a matter of effective communication which is all about reciprocity.

- In terms of spiritual development, many of the women in this study were at different stages but one overarching point remains that spirituality is important in the lives of many Black women. Institutions that want to support the success of Black women need to understand that spirituality is about a personal relationship with a "higher power" that women conceive to provide various things at certain points of their lives. Just as physical relationships are constantly evolving, spiritual relationships for these Black women were expressed in terms of evolution where they changed based on the experiences of the women involved. Support for the spiritual development and growth of Black women is critical to their success. In terms of the specific role of educational and social communities for this aspect of relationships, the most important thing may be to create space for this development to occur. Creating space may include the sanctioning of specific physical spaces for spiritual enhancement daily or monthly but it may also include the recognition of the fact that spirituality is essential to Black women so much so that many of them incorporate it into their identity. Any attempt to ask a Black woman to separate from her spiritual identity may result in feelings of loss and disengagement. Primary responsibility for seeking space for spiritual enhancement rests with Black women themselves. As Black women become more aware of their spiritual needs, it is important that they make the time and seek the space to explore their own spirituality which may enhance overall identity and impact success as doctoral students.

Ultimately, there is a need to look at students holistically as too often student development models focus on one aspect of identity (Braskamp, Trautvetter &Ward, 2006).

- The idea of educational fulfillment for Black women in this study was tied to more than personal career development. Understanding that Black women in doctoral programs might view their educational enlightenment as enlightenment for their entire community is important for those in the academy to decipher early as Black women matriculate through the program. Many of the women in this study felt compelled to contribute to the uplifting of their communities and viewed their education and the potential for "educated service" that resulted as a vehicle to achieve that end. The compelling need to contribute to community empowerment through education for many Black women in not optional but a mandatory cultural imperative that is communicated through the teaching and learning of cultural history. In terms of what this means for the educational success of Black female doctoral students, there may be times where personal success or likewise personal failure is tied to community success or community failure. The academic community may motivate Black women's success by invoking their commitment to community and being respectful and mindful of the overwhelming sense of debt that is felt as a result of contributions made by numerous Black people who worked throughout history to ensure academic opportunities for Black women. While Black women themselves are often aware of historical figures who contributed their careers and in some cases their lives towards the emancipation of Black people, it is often not the kind of

knowledge that is distributed, cultivated or celebrated in formal educational settings including early school experiences. Years of having Black leaders literally ignored by the same society that now claims to value and celebrate the contribution of Black women may feel inauthentic and hypocritical. Colleges and universities that foster this notion must be aware of the natural suspicion that may follow from this line of thinking and engage Black women in the process of recognizing those community leaders that are and have been important to them. Accurate historical portrayals of individuals and events via socio-cultural programming and classroom exchange may help to alleviate misinformation and provide accuracy around information that holds great pride and motivation for Black women that view themselves as the next leg of a race begun by community leaders who were also Black and or female (as opposed to "saving all our love" for MLK). In addition to the valuing of specific community members who are significant in the lives of Black female doctoral students, the valuing of the concept of "community" in general is key to establishing a climate that values Black women. Emphasizing community building and coalition building will provide greater cultural congruity than promoting the more European concepts of individuality and competition. While the air of competition may be difficult to combat just based on the nature of doctoral study and economic principles channeled by this process, it may be possible to supplement processes that feel competitive with others that feel community-based. For example, the idea of preliminary exams for doctoral students has the ability to induce anxiety and generate stress. These processes are a part of the

competition-driven aspects of doctoral study that could be supplemented by community-based forums where members at various stages of the doctoral process can gather and share their experiences with each stage of the process. This type of sharing celebrates the community concept as well as providing practical support that may decrease the stress and tension associated with this very demanding and academically rigorous process. Other innovative means that infuse Afrocentric principles such as community responsibility and truth may help Black women to locate themselves in the academic process and therefore feel empowered by it.

- Many of the women in this study described a change that occurred in their intimate or close relationships due to distance. There were at least three different kinds of distancing that can occur including physical distancing that may result from the physical relocation of women to places where they do not have direct physical access to those in their support networks. The second kind of distancing that may occur while Black women pursue doctoral study is intellectual distancing. As the gap between the level of formal education held by Black women and those in their academic or social communities increase so does the inability to relate and retain the closeness that is often based on shared intellectual space. The final aspect of distancing that occurred for Black women in this study during their doctoral experiences was a lapse in the ability to relate to others on an emotional level. Black women in this study were on both ends of this disability but in all cases the impact left them feeling a great sense of loss. Emotional distancing as opposed to the other two felt less controlled in that

women could experience this without continuing their education or moving away from their communities. Emotional distancing therefore may be the most devastating as it is the one aspect of change in our relationships where we feel the least control. Many of the women in this study spoke of control as being something that is very important to them. As Black women, many of us like to have options and the fewer the options, the less control we feel that we actually have. The idea of changes in our relationships with significant others including our concepts of a higher power that we were neither prepared for nor expecting was disconcerting and daunting as we approach one of the most academically demanding times of our lives. Although changes in the ways that we are Black women take care of ourselves during doctoral study are also important, the findings of this study did not expound on those themes in the same way that it did for changes in our relationships with others. The most important thing that those concerned with the success of Black female doctoral students can do in this regard is honest and open sharing with Black women about some of the ways that she may experience change in her relationships with self and others as she enters and proceeds through doctoral study. This candid honesty will better prepare women to navigate the changes that may occur in relationships and allow them to prepare those with whom they have intimate or close relationships for those changes as well. The most important thing that this type of preparation may provide is an opportunity to make an informed decision. Opportunities for pre-doctoral counseling may provide these options as well as dialogue during orientation sessions aimed at socializing new or potential students to the culture

of graduate school. At the very least, universities may want to consider that many Black women are among the first to attempt doctoral study in their families and so their access to information about the process and its potential impact on their lives will be limited. Offering opportunities for incoming Black female doctoral students to meet openly in non-threatening environments with other individuals who might be able to shed light on the racial and gendered aspects that will impact their lives in light of the decision to pursue doctoral study may feel like the most "caring" thing that a community can offer.

Summary of Recommendations

The theme for the 2006 NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators) conference is "Individual Commitment, Collective Action." I borrow this theme in summary as it drives the energy behind these recommendations and makes clear the fact that we all play a role in the success of Black female doctoral students. Individual actors including faculty, administrators, community members and Black women themselves must become aware of their part and commit to moving collectively along a path that acknowledges the essential work to be done and the urgency of that movement. No one player holds the key for success of Black female doctoral students. Like an orchestra, our ability to make beautiful music depends on each entity, holding stake in the success of Black female doctoral students, knowing their respective part and listening for how it compliments the others. The intricacy of listening is not a skill that can be mastered by studying student development theory. It is cultivated by authentic "caring" and fostered by sincere efforts to understand the experiences of Black female doctoral students at the intersection of race and gender.

CONCLUSIONS AND
THE EMERGENCE OF A BLACK WOMANIST IDENTITY MODEL

Chapter 6

Introduction

This study has attempted to situate the experience of Black female doctoral students as it pertains to relationships within the greater context of the doctoral experience. First, I introduced a problem that had significance in terms of global, educational and personal perspectives. Second, I detailed the process by which I came to extract the specific experiences of Black female doctoral experiences and explained how I made sense of those experiences by delegating themes on both the macro and micro levels through a process of analysis. Third, I shared how the theoretical lenses chosen for this task helped to shape the process and what it provided in terms of structure. Fourth, I provided literature that supported the fact that academic conversations about Black women are emerging. Fifth, I shared detailed information about the specific methods employed in this study including the selection of participants. Sixth, I presented the themes found in the study using specific excerpts from the data to support the existence of those themes. Finally, I embarked on a discussion about the implications of the themes for higher education including in theory and practice.

In the discussion chapter, specific recommendations were provided to guide the work done by social and academic communities that want to enhance their support of Black women's success in doctoral programs. Black women themselves were included in the list of those who share responsibility for building supportive communities that enhance the success of Black female doctoral students. This study commenced from a

specific Afrocentric "place" that provided means to incorporate the cultural aspects of me as the researcher which include both my gender and my race (Reviere, 2001). Specifically, the components of critical ethnography which supported this qualitative study provided space to question, disrupt and ultimately restructure ideals of Black womanhood and how that identity merges with education for Black female doctoral students (Madison, 2005).

Initially I asked what specifically are Black female doctoral students doing to take care of the relationships that are responsible for taking care of them during the doctoral process. I believe the initial question has been addressed by the data supporting this study. Black women are performing. As a matter of fact, they are masters of the craft and have spent their entire academic lives learning their role. They know what is expected of them in raced roles, gendered roles and academic roles. In each instance, they listen for the cues and wear the "mask" (Ward, 1997). It has become more apparent to me through this research that the Black female doctoral students who participated in this study were initially willing to temporarily suspend the intimacy of their relationships outside of the academy in return for the educational attainment they believe will enhance their communities of Blacks and women. They were willing to sacrifice much in terms of time with loved ones in order to "play their part" in the intellectual liberation of Blacks and women. I use the past tense explicitly here because I believe that participation in this study created an opportunity to reflect on the various relationships each woman held and how they have changed over time and distance.

The asking of certain questions created an opportunity for the women in this study to reflect on the process that had meant the deterioration of some relationships and the

strengthening of others. Furthering this critique, I consider how Hudson-Weems' (2001) model of Africana Womanism and Collins' (2000) model of Black Feminism might respond to the findings in this study. The women in this study continue to credit relationships within and beyond the academy with friends, mentors, partners, children, ancestors, parents and others for helping them survive. So how do Black women manage intimate relationships during the doctoral process? They do it certainly, because failure to manage relationships would mean sure academic death for the Black female doctoral student. What many fail to understand is that when Black women become doctoral students, they must fall in love with academic pursuit. They must nurture this intimate relationship with the academy with all the intensity and passion that they did for other relationships in the beginning. They must learn to enjoy the company of insight and the sweet caress of wisdom. They must be open to the intellectual whispers that shamelessly call on us in the middle of the night. If we don't, our romance with the academy will end in divorce. This marriage to the academy provides us an opportunity to provide for our people just as marriage to a wealthy partner provides increased family resources. In a divorce, we lose more than our house or our car. We lose our chance to repay the debt that we owe to those who made it possible for Blacks and women to gain an education.

One of the gifts of this study is the ability to build a new model of Black female doctoral student development including the aspects that emerged as significant in this study. This new model may provide the foundation to establish criteria that will enhance doctoral study for Black women, all women and eventually all doctoral students. The model takes into account the vectors of experience for Black female doctoral students as first posited by this study in the review of relevant literature. Revisiting the original

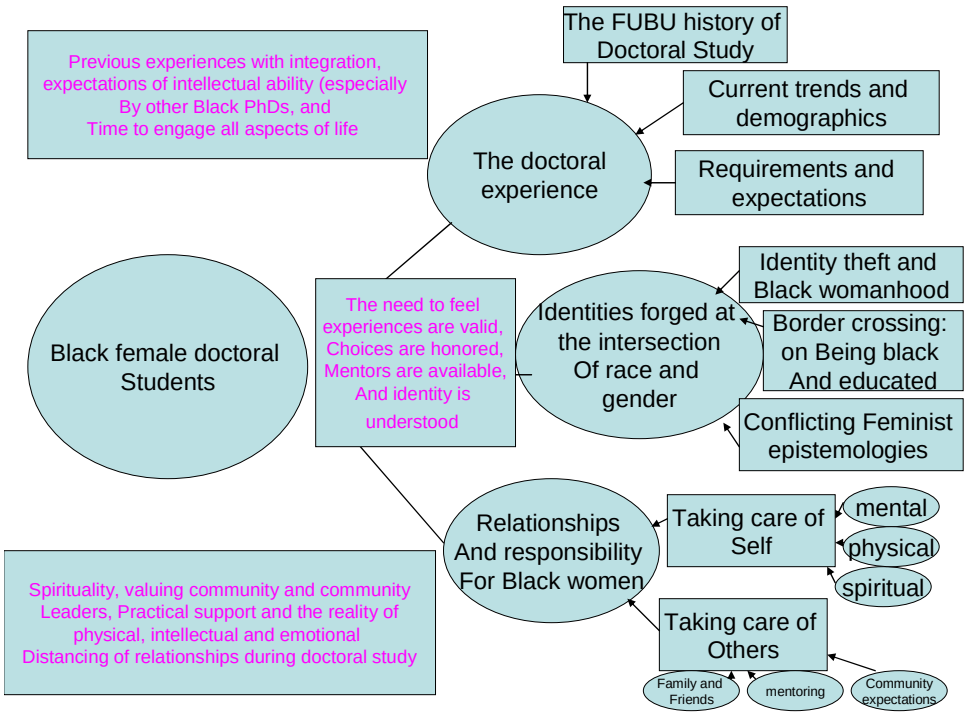
vectors as discussed in Chapter 2 and presented in Appendix 1, provided an opportunity to discover what was new knowledge, in light of Black female doctoral students, what is missing, and what has yet to be done. All aspects of this discussion are vital to the ensuing research and development of models that discuss Black female doctoral students.

Looking at the vectors and the findings from the perspective of Collins (2000) and Hudson-Weems (2001), I see the need for a new model to guide a more holistic understanding of the Black female doctoral student. According to the women in this study, there is a need to represent experiences at the intersection. As Black, female, doctoral student, we need aspects of Black Feminism to help us resist the colonization associated with our own socialization as Black female scholars in a historically racist and sexist system (King, 1995). We need to understand how the political savvy of Black and White women merged to provide new academic opportunities and forged the environment to claim our right to intellectual prospects, as Black women, for females where there had been none (Collins, 2000). This is a vital piece of our ability to survive academia. Equally as important is the need to have our experiences resonate within a cultural framework.

Africana Womanism speaks to our "Blackness" in ways that Black Feminism does not. In Africana Womanism, we find validation for our "ethic of caring" (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). In Africana Womanism, we don't have to "dilute" our Blackness with the fact that we are women. It is safe to delight in the fact that Blackness is smart, creative and essential. Even as we let down our "nappy hair" and refuse to apologize, we realize that Blackness does not fully encompass who we are and what we bring—thus, the birth of the Enlightened Black Womanist Model.

In Enlightened Black Womanism, there is room to be as female and as Black as we wanna be. We, as Black women, can refuse to be sorted as either/or because it is more comfortable to divide us into neat boxes that at times keep us from our White sisters and at others deny us the camaraderie of our Black brothers. Within the new model, we can be both to the extent of our own individual experiences with each aspect of our development as women who are Black and Blacks who are also women (Willis & Lewis, 1999). In essence, this model, frees us from need to choose because it acknowledges the "both/and" aspects of who we are and what we experience as a result of who we are in academia.

Prior to fully exploring the model of Enlightened Black Womanism, there is a need to understand what new knowledge contributed to the understanding that present perspectives of Black womanhood were insufficient to fully capture our essence. The following diagram uses the original vectors to illustrate how and where the new knowledge (represented in fuchsia) fits into the paradigm of Black female doctoral students. Understanding that new knowledge emerged paves the way for frameworks that will yield greater appreciation of how Black women navigate the vectors of their academic, raced and gendered experiences as relational beings who have ties to others within and beyond the academy.



This diagram displays in fuchsia the major themes that emerged from the data for each vector of experience and provides an opportunity to compare them to the literature that existed prior to commencing this study.

Finally the delivery of a new model incorporates the knowledge made available by this study as well as the givens provided by previous knowledge about Black women and their intellectual development. The new model gives birth to three specific qualities that may emerge for Black women during the doctoral process based on the findings of this study. The unique qualities reminiscent in this model, if incorporated into their overall identity, assist in allowing Black women to successfully manage intimate relationships with self and others during the doctoral process. Thus the model of an Enlightened Black Womanist captures the intricacy that is the intersection of race, gender and intellectual development.

Model of Enlightened Black Womanist

As a result of the struggle to be and become enlightened or educated, Black women must come to terms with what it means to be or be in the process of becoming Black and be or be in the process of becoming female in academic spaces that resist both. Her response to the incongruity of conflicting identity models is reconciliation at each stage which creates at least three unique qualities at the intersection for Black female Ph.D. students. Reconciliation in one realm of identity may aid in the development of conflict in another resulting in the circular, ongoing process represented by this model.

The opportunity to resolve identity conflict arises for each woman according to her own exposure to issues that challenge her gender, her race and her scholarship. The challenges may vary but her response is always based on reconciliation so that she can incorporate the identity as a part of herself. The identity qualities that emerge, help Black female Ph.D. students manage relationships within the academy and beyond during their doctoral process. The three qualities are empathy, "race uplift" as a tool, and the ability to shift in and out of performance mode.

Black female doctoral students may develop an ability to have and/or demonstrate empathy or "caring" for the condition of multiple oppressed populations at the same time. This is unique in that she can develop empathy for groups that are diametrically opposed to each other as well as for groups that fundamentally oppose those in which she holds membership. As she becomes aware of oppression, she is able to feel that the oppression is the true culprit and that suffering is the victim. This mindset allows her the freedom to build relationships based on the common goal of diminishing oppression even when there are no other common factors for relationship building, hence the fact that Black, straight,

women have been among the strongest allies in the fight for gay rights in America (Madison, 2005).

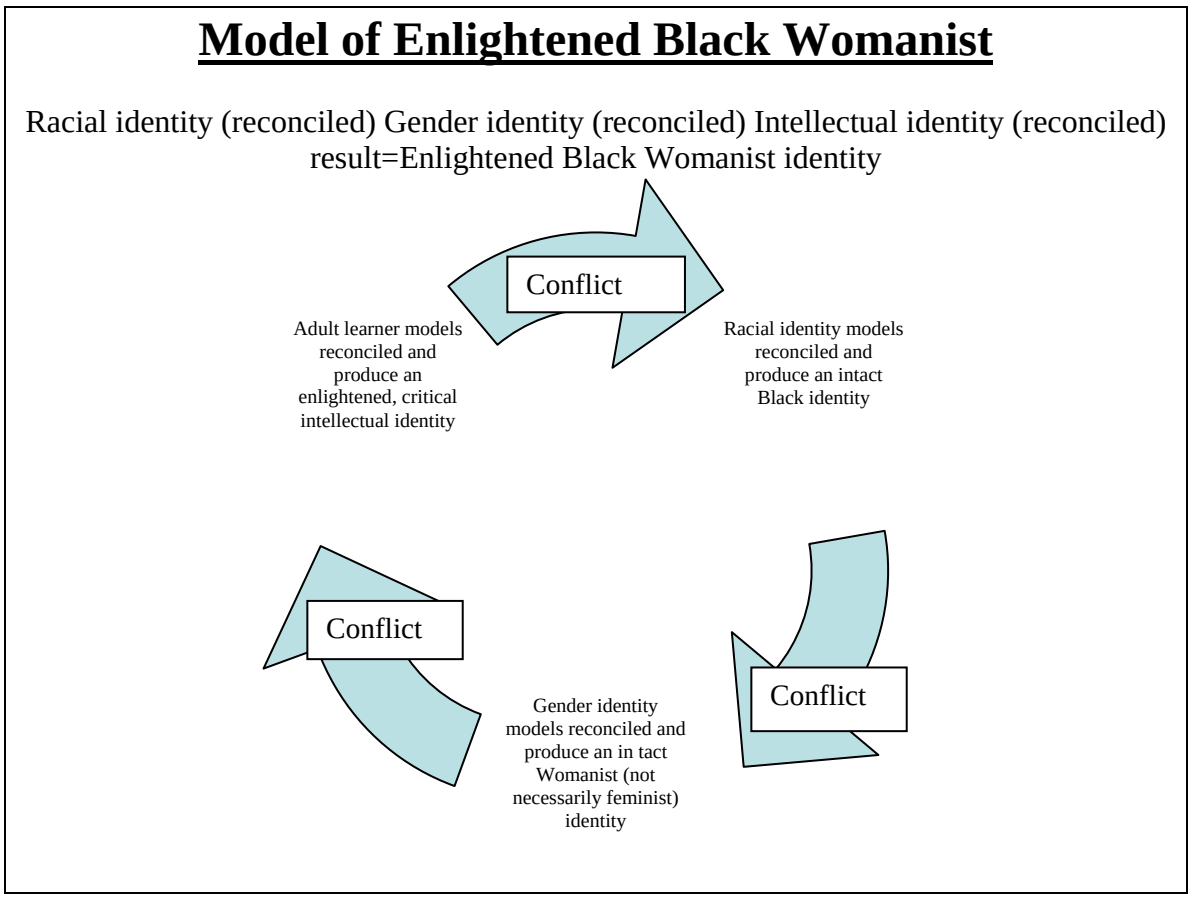
In addition to empathy, the development of a concept of education as a vehicle with the means to facilitate the emancipation of her community on a micro or macro level drives that ability and will of Black female doctoral students to manage intimate relationships. In such, her education belongs to her people (Blacks and women) and her persistence to that end is directly related to her belief that her education positively impacts the status of her community (Harris, 2003). Building on the "race uplift model", Black women continue to carry the hopes and needs of her community as the motivation for her own persistence in education (Perkins, 1989). In this complicated rubric of sacrifice there is a "means justifies the ends" philosophy that Black women develop to "rationalize" the temporary or long-term distancing that occurs as a result of her academic pursuits. Black women Ph.D. students are able to turn away from important relationships because they see themselves as border crossers with a limited day pass to an academic world that most people who live in their social world will never possess. If she can gather the knowledge, smuggle it back undetected and live to tell about it, she will have secured another piece of Western cultural capital for the Black women in the pipeline that will need it to carefully "mask" their own performances and cross the border one day.

Finally, the development of specific skills that allow Black female doctoral students to manage relationships within academia as well as those within her social sphere simultaneously enhance her shift in and out of relational roles (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). This shift requires that she "switch codes" effectively and efficiently as

not knowing when or how to channel the correct "persona" or "performance" could prove fatal to life in either domain (Madison, 2005). Most Black women must do this absent adequate personal role models for the type of shift that must occur to be seamless in her performance. The idea of shifting from one performance to the other is intensified as many Black women understand that the degree of change that is expected in environments that often intersect and overlap can be extreme (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). The very ideal of being a thermometer gauging the climate and producing a reading that validates what others feel rather than a thermostat regulating the temperature in any given setting causes incongruence and confusion as a critical intellectual being. Thus she must eventually learn that one of the many of audiences to be satisfied by her performance is "self."

In the following model of Enlightened Black Womanist, individuals are engaged in three separate yet interrelated processes. Each process of development represents one dimension of identity for Black female doctoral students. Race, gender, and intellect are demonstrated as interdependent phases that occurs simultaneously. The conflict boxes in this model represent individual circumstances where Black women have the need to come to terms with who they are and how they are perceived based on a particular aspect of their identity. For example, as women, we undergo certain "coming of age" rituals that challenge and confirm what we know and think about what it means to be a woman (Bettie, 2003). As we question new information, we experience a discomfort that is represented by the idea of "conflict" prior to reconciling that information as either useful or not. So the phases of development are not linear but cyclical. In this sense, as we learn, we create new opportunities to resolve "conflict" maintaining a constant state of

development within this model. We are always on the path to being or becoming enlightened Black women.



Just like the women that participated in my study, this model yields itself to aspects of both Afrocentricity and feminism. It provides a way of thinking about Black female doctoral students in a more encompassing way. In response to the marriage of the concepts of Afrocentricity and feminism in my study, I am proposing to use the term "Black Womanist" to capture the complex dynamics of this study and how they relate to the ever changing nature of life as a Black woman in the doctoral process. I am introducing Hill Collins to Hudson-Weems and asking them to yield their collective voices to this new model. I am asking them to sanction a stance that borrows from both

of their perspectives and builds on it. I am asking their blessing in this marriage because I find it difficult (if not impossible) to locate myself fully using one or the other of their respective models. Finally, a model that is FUBU (for us by us) that is also "Black woman user friendly."

This new model is designed to be used to enhance understanding of how adult learner, gender, and racial identity models unfold in the lives of Black female doctoral students. In this respect, it is necessary to acknowledge Cross's (1995) model of Psychological Nigrescene which chronicles the stages of transformation "from one of non-Afrocentrism to Afrocentrism to multiculturalism" (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 74). It is also prudent to know where Black women reside in accordance to traditional models of gender development such as Josselson's (1987) theory of identity development in women and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1978) Women's Ways of Knowing (Evans et al., 1998). Finally adult learner models such as Perry's (1968) model of intellectual and ethical development may help to establish clear paths of development along the intellectual continuum for Black women (Evans et al., 1998).

Those who know a little about student development models, know that they are sometimes useful and other times not. They may enhance or complicate the understanding of individuals as they progress through life adhering to and diverging from various aspects of each model. They are to be used cautiously with Black females as they represent a way of thinking about Black women as the "other." In such, they are not inclusive and require the addition of a framework that pulls on the usefulness of each model as it relates to Black females in doctoral programs. As a hybrid of existing models that did not fully yield to all aspects of race, gender and intellect, this model takes all into

consideration and urges us to be holistic in our view of Black women in doctoral programs. Used to critique and question assumptions about Black women that have been based on models of whiteness and maleness, this new model will lead to the greater likelihood of expanded understanding of Black women's needs, their experiences and Black women themselves at the intersection.

Implications for Future Study: Questions that Remain?

This study has had profound impact on the understanding of the doctoral experience for Black women. In many ways, it validated information previously known such as the relevance of spirituality and the importance of family and friends to the support networks for Black women (Watt, 2003). In addition, it helped to introduce some new information such as the specific ways that Black women envision "support" and the fact that Black women are "longing to tell" their stories. Consequently, this study helped to emphasize the gaps that remain in knowledge that will enhance the understanding of how Black women achieve success in doctoral programs. There remains much to learn about the experience about Black women as they are the ultimate in complex identities and ontology. The following three options were presented by women who participated in this study and may serve as a starting point for expanding this discussion through future research.

1. Future studies may include very specific (cookbook) techniques and best practices for survival in various doctoral environments based upon the empirical study of women who have navigated those terrains. (I revisit the possibility of such a project as the women in this study relentlessly called for "positive" examples of success stories in managing relationships and doctoral study at the same time).

2. A study comparing and contrasting the experiences and overall progress of Black female doctoral students with specific roles and responsibilities such as parenting young children may help to highlight the intricate details on how responsibilities shape, impede, or impact progress
3. Exploring how Black men, White women and eventually other populations of doctoral students manage doctoral study might provide some intriguing implications to present next to these findings on Black women that would either support or challenge the gender and racial implications acknowledged in this study.

The Final Task

Making the Research "Useful" to Other Black Women in the Pipeline to Doctoral Study

This study is the culmination of work done with and by Black female doctoral students to shed light on the significance of their experiences as doctoral students who hold marginalized raced and gendered identities. The materials presented here are a result of a community of scholars who collaborated to share information for the benefit of those in the educational community as well as Black women themselves. The final task of this research is to reach beyond academic and somehow translate into a language easily digested by Black women in the pipeline. As the researcher, I offer the following performance auto-ethnographical piece in a partial effort to fulfill my promise to make this research "useful" to a wider constituency knowing that I expect to use various mediums to smuggle this knowledge across the borders.

Anticipating the end of this relationship (at least as a student), I am less concerned with "divorce" from the academy and more concerned with providing rescue-breathing to

the intimate relationships that I have neglected during my "affair" with higher education. I know that this statement is grounds for divorce but I am praying that my divorce from doctoral study will open the door for a new enhanced and more respectful relationship with academia. This time I will be a full partner rather than an infatuated girl sneaking away to spend every waking moment in the presence of this my academic lover. This time, I will enter the relationship with my eyes wide open to the ways that I (and those that I love) may be abused and misused. If I choose to continue the "affair," I will do so knowing that my family, friends, and spiritual life may not be so forgiving. I will need to challenge my own assumptions about what it means to have more than one lover. I am eager to see how I will behave as a mature academician capable of making choices that honor my race and my gender and lessen the chances that those I care most about will "divorce the doctor."

In the following spoken word performance piece, there are several references and images that are meant to depict and imply other images and experiences. For example, the references to "interpreters" are meant to indicate those who have information about how to navigate academia that could (if it were made available) aid in the success of Black female doctoral students. "Chilly waters" are meant to indicate the academic climate for women in general and Black women in particular that has been deemed "hostile" due to the racial and gender discrimination embedded in the doctoral process. This performance as a spoken word is symbolic of Black women finding their collective voices in academia and resisting the mandate that they be silenced. This poem is about reclaiming the Black, female, intellectual voice that has previously been unheard before assumptions are made about what Black women are capable and incapable of achieving.

I offer this spoken word performance piece as a sample of how this study may be embodied and displayed to the greater society. As with all art, it is open for interpretation and discussion.

Wait (Can I get an interpreter please?)

By Dana Murray Patterson

10-05

Wait before you open that book and close your mind. There are voices that haven't been heard yet. Faces that haven't been set yet among the chosen few. Black women that wade like misfits through the murky chilly waters of academic culture trying to pretend that they are swimming. Even as the light around them is dimming they continue to keep pretending that to be Black and female is somehow to be Black or female.

Wait. Before you look the other direction as mentors and friends turn self-righteous backs and dividends on willing protégés and embrace the other in order to fulfill their own perceived intelligence quotas. There are Black women straddling the identity fence because they can't decide if is better to be despised for their blackness or deemed invisible as a woman hence they sit on a fence that tears at their reality since to be a woman rarely means there's a Black she and to be a Black one is to have been born as a native son.

Wait. Before you look injustice squarely in her blue eyes and proclaim that we should realize how "things must change." The only thing constant is change. So she's not really insane. It's just that Black Barbie don't exist and my head hurts thinking about this

Liberal consciousness giving way to self-gratification that excludes the emancipation of women who are not White enuff and Blacks who are not male enuff.

Wait. Before you believe another little White lie told at the expense of a big Black woman who knows more than she should and cries more than she would……if this story were not true. Students before they had classrooms and scholars before they were legally allowed to, they fight an unseen enemy in an undeclared war, dying undeserved deaths facing an uneven score.

But wait. Black women are changing things. Their destinies, their minds, their agendas, their time. Their protocols, their boundaries, their limits, their wants and needs. Their hearts, their souls, their hair, their clothes. Their style, their walk, their sound, their talk. Their there, there. See? Black women are changing things.

Wait. Before you decide that Black female scholars are just an anomaly, listen to my mommy and my sistahs as they spit their academic souls and brace yourself for the fire that burns cold. They are breaking us off a piece of their reality and if we are not strong enough, we will choke on the rhetoric of their identity mistaking it for a lump in our collective throats.

Wait. Before you challenge her commitment. Just follow her to a place where every one speaks to her in a strange dialect and the interpreters are all off duty now. I said the interpreters are all off duty now. Those who know won't tell and those who tell don't

really know. Those those Black people with White souls who have forgotten how they got here. Those those women in men's clothes who have forgotten to make the rough path clear for the prodigal children of slaves who refused to be lost in the middle passage just to get us here.

Wait. Before you charge another Black woman admission to a show she doesn't care to see, consider that the price she pays is not just her fee. Writing IOU's to her family, she borrows time that she has no means to pay back still she she she……. the interpreters are all off duty now. Checking her own pulse becomes the theme that reminds her of her humanness but how the hell does she keep on doing this and what has become of her Blackness? Can't she give you back this educated service? You placed it on her cervix but the children that she births hurt too much.

Still we can't afford to wait because our sisters are smoking crack and and and our children will not grow back and and and our mothers are dying slowly, yet you steady trying to show me that I am not strong enough. Our men act like they hate us as they physically and mentally rape us. Don't they know their greatness helped create us? Still we watch their backs so faithfully and we lift them up so gracefully. Silent prayers where self-esteem used to be.

Rising to an academic call that forces us to walk tall and won't let us think small in this White mans world and all you see we can't afford to fall. We are obliged to heed the call. Can't you hear them? The ones that had to die, just so we could make it, are the

same ones that provide strength when we feel like we can't take it. That's why we refuse to sleep when others do and we are handing this diversity challenge back to you. We got too much got damn work to do.

Nursing babies while writing books. Nursing egos while fighting off dirty looks. They question our right to even be here. Oh, I suppose it's still not clear. We are intellectual masterpieces, the academic game didn't create us but it needs us. I'll go ahead and say this just in case this message reaches places that aren't yet gender racist. I can't believe I even have to say this. I am a Black woman. Now can I get an interpreter please? My grandparents already paid the damn property fees. I need to know what others know and I feeling a sudden urge to disrupt this show. As I sit with my daughters on this front back row. An interpreter's attention, I think I need one, oh hell, never mind, I'm already done. Already got what you said I couldn't have. Already been where you said there's no path. Already running when you thought I could not walk, already singing although I just learned how to talk. Already doing what I know I have to do and already using the information I just gave you.

But

Wait. There are voices that haven't been heard yet and faces that haven't been set yet among the chosen few. Just wait….. because they…..I mean we….. have a story too.

My prayer now is that this study rises to the purposes for which it was conceived and birthed—*Dana Murray Patterson*

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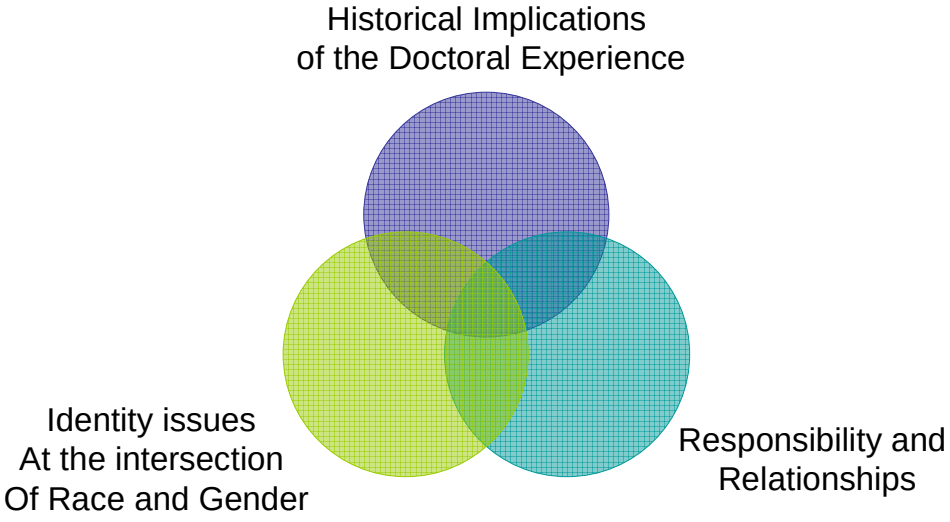
Appendix 1

Three vectors of experience for Black female doctoral students



Appendix 2

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
CONSENT FORM
Divorcing the Doctor: Black Women Doctoral Students and their
Intimate Relationships during the Doctoral Process

Researcher: Dana Murray Patterson, PhD candidate, College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling Psychology, Washington State University
Phone: (509) 335-0580

Researchers' statement

I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When I have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.' I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

This study will use qualitative methods to examine how Black women in this study face the challenge of managing relationships as doctoral students. Participants in this study, including myself as researcher/participant will be asked to submit to three individual interviews and one cumulative focus group session. Each participant will be asked to journal their thoughts and feelings in regards to the experience which may provide additional data and validity during the analysis of data.

Using critical ethnography and autoethnography to deconstruct misunderstandings resulting from traditional male and white oriented representations of Black women's experiences, this study employs an Afrocentric theoretical framework to illustrate truth from a cultural perspective. The findings may have implications for theory and practice involving Black female doctoral students.

The goal of this study, then, is amplify the voices of five Black women who are also doctoral students in order to disrupt and deconstruct traditional understandings and provide a foundation for developing orientation, mentoring and support networks for African American women based on empirical research and contemporary theories which are grounded in cultural reality. These frameworks may enhance the likelihood of the ultimate success of Black female doctoral students. This study has the additional goal of being of use to Black female doctoral students by providing insight and validation that Black women's experiences are significant and relevant.

PROCEDURES

During the study, you may be asked to discuss your experiences as it relates to managing intimate relationships during your doctoral study. No questions will require you to share information about your (or anyone else's) sexual activity or relationships. You will be asked to participate in a series of three individual interviews which should take no more than about 90 minutes each and a 90 minute focus group with the other four participants in this study. You will additionally be asked to record your thoughts and feelings related to this process in a journal and submit that journal to the researcher at a designated time in the study. You may refuse to answer any question or participate in any portion of the study in which you are not completely comfortable. Each individual interview and the focus group will be taped recorded to aid in transcription and coding of the data. Photographs may be taken to aid in the presentation of the data but your name or other identifying information will not be associated with photographs or data used in the presentation of this study.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

The risk for participation in this study is minimal as care will be taken to protect the identity of each subject but there is a low risk for personal and academic scrutiny for participation in a study that seeks to challenge traditional assumptions about Black women's academic experiences in light of cultural theoretical frameworks.

Should any participant experience personal of academic scrutiny for participation in this study, she will be directed to appropriate supportive networks (i.e. counseling) and encouraged to examine options available to her, If at any time, a participant suspects that she may be at risk for experiencing any risk, means for terminating participation will be available.

OTHER INFORMATION

This study is being conducted to meet requirements of doctoral study and any information obtained will be used for that purpose. All data will be treated as confidential. Those who will have access to the data include the researcher and the chair of the doctoral committee (Dr. Kelly Ward) as needed. Subjects may refuse to participate or may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have general questions about the research, I can ask the researcher listed above. If I have questions regarding my rights as a participant, I can call the WSU Institutional Review Board at (509)335-9661. This project has been reviewed and approved for human participation by the WSU IRB. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____

Printed name of subject Signature of subject Date