

December 2016

Talkin' Back and Shifting Black; Black Motherhood, Identity Development and Doctoral Study

Amber Tucker

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.uwm.edu/etd>



Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education and Teaching Commons](#), [Higher Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tucker, Amber, "Talkin' Back and Shifting Black; Black Motherhood, Identity Development and Doctoral Study" (2016). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1425.

<https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/1425>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by UWM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of UWM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact open-access@uwm.edu.

**TALKIN' BACK AND SHIFTING BLACK: BLACK MOTHERHOOD, IDENTITY
DEVELOPMENT AND DOCTORAL STUDY**

by

Amber Tucker

A Dissertation Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Urban Education

at

The University Wisconsin-Milwaukee

December 2016

ABSTRACT

TALKIN' BACK AND SHIFTING BLACK: BLACK MOTHERHOOD, IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND DOCTORAL STUDY

by

Amber Tucker

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2016

Under the Supervision of Professor Susana Muñoz

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how the context of doctoral study within predominantly white and elite research institutions in the Midwest facilitates identity development among Black doctoral women student parents. This phenomenological study employed Black feminist epistemologies as both a methodological underpinning and interpretive lens to examine how seven Black women doctoral student parents negotiate and made meaning of their intersectional identities.

The six key findings that emerged from this study were: (1) negotiating intersectionality as trauma in childhood; (2) negotiating microaggressions related to invisibility/hypervisibility; (3) negotiating structural macroaggressions as violence; (4) hidden costs of negotiating black womanhood and motherhood at PWIs; (5) negotiating standards of Black motherhood and womanhood; (6) Black doctoral student parent ways of negotiating intersectionality. Analysis revealed that the women's responses to negotiating intersectionality was a dialectical tension between accommodation and resistance. Together, these themes explore the ways in which Black women experience, respond to and perform intersectionality as both identity and experience. Conclusions drawn were that the transmission of Black women's cultural legacy of trauma, survival and resistance from the historical context of slavery informed the development of these identity negotiation tools. This study suggests that the experience of being a Black mother in

predominantly white institutions is a contradictory experience that facilitates both harm and healing. Recommendations from this research for higher education practice, policy development as well as future research areas are presented.

©Copyright by Amber Tucker, 2016
All Rights Reserved

DEDICATION

To
my mother,
my sisters,
my daughter
and Black women everywhere

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES.....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xi
Chapter One: Introduction	i
Statement of the Problem	vii
Purpose of the Study.....	viii
Significance of the Study	viii
Research Questions.....	10
Rationale	11
Theoretical Perspective	12
Assumptions about the Research Process.....	13
Rationale for Feminist Epistemologies and Qualitative Methodologies	14
Research Design	16
Positionality	18
Summary.....	18
Definition of Terms.....	20
Chapter Two: Literature Review	23
Historical Background of Black Women’s Oppression and Resistance during Slavery	25
Historical Overview of Feminism	27
Black feminism	29
Theoretical Framework.....	31
Black feminist theory (BFT)	31
University experiences of Women and African Americans in Higher Education	35
Challenges Facing African American Women in Academia.....	40
Survival Strategies	54
Research Context	58
Part Two: Identity Development.....	65
Facilitators of Black Women’s Identity Construction.....	65
Identity Strategies	54
Theoretical foundations of Identity Frameworks	72

Summary.....	82
Chapter Three: Methodology	84
Theoretical Perspective	85
Philosophical assumptions	89
Rationale	91
Research Approach.....	92
Research Design	96
Data Collection Procedures.....	100
Strategies for Establishing Trustworthiness.....	107
Researcher Ethics.....	109
Informed Consent	110
Research Relationship	111
Limitations.....	113
Delimitations.....	114
Introduction to Participants.....	115
Chapter Four: Findings.....	129
Theme One: Negotiating Intersectionality and Childhood Trauma	130
Theme Two: Negotiating Microaggressions Related to Invisibility/Hypervisibility at PWIs	134
Theme Three: Negotiating Structural Macroaggressions Related to Structural Violence	139
Theme Four: Hidden Costs of Negotiating Black Womanhood and Motherhood at PWIs.....	146
Theme Five: Performing Intersectionality through Standards of Black Womanhood And Motherhood	155
Theme Six: Black Women Doctoral Student Parents’ Ways of Negotiating Intersectionality	165
Summary of Findings	178
Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusion and Implications	180
Overview of the Findings in Relation to Research Questions.....	181
Negotiating Intersectionality and Childhood Trauma	185
Negotiating Microaggressions Related to Invisibility/Hypervisibility at PWIs	189
Negotiating Structural Macroaggressions Related to Structural Violence	193
Hidden Costs of Negotiating Black Womanhood and Motherhood at Predominantly White Institutions.....	198
Negotiating Standards of Black Motherhood and Womanhood	206
Black Women Doctoral Student Parents’ Ways of Negotiating Intersectionality	212

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Research Questions.....	223
Theoretical Discussion	229
Implications for Theory, Research and Practice	236
Recommendations for Practice.....	238
Recommendations for Future Research	240
Study Summary.....	242
Personal Reflection	244
References.....	246
Appendices.....	263
Appendix A.....	264
Recruitment Email for Distribution to Academic Institutions	264
Appendix B	265
Phone/Email Recruitment Script.....	265
Appendix C.....	266
Study Announcement.....	266
Appendix D.....	267
Pre-screening Survey	267
Appendix E	269
Interview Protocol.....	269
Curriculum Vitae	Error! Bookmark not defined.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Intersectional Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (I-MMDI).....	74
Figure 2. Dimensions of Identity, Intersectional Process and Identity Responses	187
Figure 3. Black Women’s Intersectional Identity Development Model (BWIDM)	234

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographics of Participants.....109

Table 2. Frequency of Common Themes.....186

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge the four members of my committee for their time, dedication and support that they provided me during this process. I wish to thank Dr. Doering for contributing her expertise and feedback on various aspects of this research project. I wish to thank Dr. Colbeck and Dr. Irby for their valuable insights, contributions and commitment to ensuring that I produced a quality project. I would like to thank Dr. Dramé for providing the mentorship and guidance to help me navigate this journey. Lastly, I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Susana Muñoz for being an amazing mentor, intellectual guide and friend. You always believed in me and knew what I was capable of, even when I could not see it for myself.

To the women in my life, my mother, my daughter and my sisters: you are the reason that I am here. To my mother, Deborah, it is your story of strength, courage and vulnerability that made me fall in love with Black women. To my daughter, Jada, you inspire me every day to be great. To my beautiful sisters, Ebonie and Jasmine, I am forever grateful for your love and support and providing me with examples of the beauty that lies in sisterhood. To my wonderful team in the UWM Women's Resource Center: you helped me see the gifts that lie within me and inspire me to use those gifts for change. I wish to thank Tori, Zoe, Eva, Gwen, Charmaine, Marielle and Isabella: I am forever grateful for the powerful and amazing human beings with whom I have had the honor of sharing in a sisterhood of solidarity with. To Susan McCarthy, you have given me a wellspring of wisdom, knowledge, love and support that I may not be able to pay back in this lifetime. Finally, to the women study participants who honored me with their stories, without you this dissertation would not be possible.

For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.

(Audre Lorde, 1987)

Chapter One: Introduction

Today, U.S. colleges and universities are placing much more emphasis on student success, recruitment and retention of multicultural student populations (e.g., Cabrera, Terenzini, Pascarella & Hagedorn, 1999; Engle and Tinto, 2008; Pope and Reynolds, 1997). As a result, student affairs practitioners, adult educators, and administrators are looking toward decades of research on college and adult identity development frameworks to gain insight and understanding of the various individual and contextual factors that shape the experiences of minority college students (Evans, Forney, Guido Patton & Renn, 2010; Pope, Reynolds & Mueller, 2004).

The growing concern in graduate education and even more narrowly, doctoral education, has been the surmounting attrition rates of women and minority graduate students and increasing length of time that students who do eventually finish their doctoral degrees, take to do so. National college student enrollment data show steady and significant growths of enrollment for women students over the last 40 years (NCES, 2012). According to the National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES], 2012) women as demographic, represent more than half of the overall graduate student population and earn overall, more masters and doctoral degrees in comparison to men. At first glance, these data seem to suggest that gender equity has been achieved. However, existing research on doctoral degree attainment among women alone, has shown that women doctoral students are a “vulnerable population” and consistently face issues stemming from gender bias and sexism in the academy (Hall & Sandler, 1982; Pasque & Nicholson, 2011). Research also demonstrates that although women earn approximately 53% of all doctoral degrees (NCES, 2011), attrition rate for graduate student mothers is quite high (Lynch, 2008). Even more perplexing is that research uncovered the academic context as a

common site of discrimination for women of color and mothers (Adams; 2009; Drago, Colbeck, et al., 2005; Lynch, 2008; Patton, 2004b; Solórzano and Yosso, 2000; Springer, Parker & Leviten-Reid, 2009; Stanley, 2006; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001).

Collectively, research to date has helped us to understand the challenges and barriers that women face in the academy as women, mothers and doctoral students however; they have been less attentive to the ways in which mothers' race, class and gender identities shape identity the experiences of Black women (Anaya, 2011). Persistent themes within the literature available reveal descriptions of the doctoral experience particularly in predominantly white contexts as racially hostile, isolating and oppressive (Gasman et al., 2008; Patton, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2003; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). To date, there remains a paucity of qualitative research examining the experiences of African American women doctoral students (Ellis, 2001; Williams et al., 2005; Dowdy, 2008; Grant & Simmons, 2008; Tiu Wu, 2013). For African American women however, race and gender are salient aspects of their identity and for many women of color, are irreducible. Yet, among landmark theories of college student development, race and gender are theorized as analytically distinct categories (Cross, 1971; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Phinney, 1990). While some identity models have accounted for multiple dimensions of identity development along race, class, sexuality etc., (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007) few have isolated the impact of race and gender simultaneously on the experiences of African American women (Helms, 1990). Even less have applied these frameworks in relation to Black mothers' experiences in the context of the college environment (Sengupta & Upton, 2011; Nzinga-Johnson, 2013). When factors of race, class and gender are considered, issues of access and equity may be barriers to Black women student parents access and persistence in higher education. The paucity of research in this area demonstrates urgency

for both practical and empirical attention to the ways in which women face multiple marginalities, as mothers, women, and students color experience and navigate graduate school.

In a historical context, understanding the institution of chattel slavery in the U.S. is key to understanding Black women's history of oppression, resistance, social and political activism and struggle and participation surrounding education. Although chattel slavery was maintained as a racist institution, converging systems of domination organized by race and gender shaped the experiences of Black women slaves differently than enslaved men (Davis, 1981). First, although the patriarchal reign of the plantation provided white antebellum women with the benevolent protection of patriarchy from male gaze and harm, Black women as chattel property were released from the "cult of true womanhood" (Davis, 1971). Black women's labor was a necessary exploitation on the plantation, which contradicted Black women's sex assigned role *as women*. Secondly, although Black were viewed as property and not "true women" Black women and girls were vulnerable to cruel forms of sexual abuse, exploitation and violence (Camp, 2004). The protection that ordered harm away from white women was exacted upon the bodies Black women in bondage.

Although Black women's early history with intersectional oppression in a U.S. context was borne of slavery, alongside this emerged the development of Black women's resistance (Camp, 2004; Harrison, 2009). Scholarship on enslaved women's resistance has uncovered subtle and more overt forms of Black women's resistance during slavery. Until the emergence of recent scholarship on the experiences of enslaved Black women, they have been invisible actors in more overt forms of resistance such as leading plantation rebellions, practicing infanticide and martyrdom (Camp). This scholarship has also considered more everyday strategies of enslaved Black women as resistance, such as poisoning the food in plantation kitchens (Davis, 1999) and

secretly maintaining oral traditions of cultural and religious practice through the teaching and caregiving practices (Harrison, 2009). This demonstrates that Black women have repertoire of survival and resistance strategies as part of the Black womanhood tradition (Camp). Black women's role in the maintenance of the slave communities well-being and participation in resistance during slavery underlies the historical base of Black women's social and political activism.

Historically, higher education has been a major pathway to social and economic mobility for African Americans, Black women in particular. This is evident today in the increasing number of African American students enrolling in U.S. institutions and universities today (NCES, 2011). There has even been a hopeful increase in the number of doctoral degrees awarded to African Americans. With the doctoral degree being considered to be the "highest degree of the land" the fact that African Americans, whose educational history began with the denial of literacy, would demonstrate a changing racial landscape in U.S. institutions. When U.S. institutions of higher learning became accessible to women and minorities, Black women flocked to higher education and continued to earn advanced degrees. However, because institutions maintained segregation policies for minorities, Black women were limited in their access to education and selection of degrees by discipline. Because Black women teachers were needed to teach in the racially segregated all-Black schools, Black women were able to gain access to once restrictive institutions of higher education and persisted on to earn doctoral degrees (Perkins, 2009). However, research exploring the experiences of Black students in predominantly white institutions entail a pathway rife with barriers and challenges toward academic persistence and degree attainment.

Until the 20th century, access to predominantly white and Ivy League institutions were limited to Black people (Tillman, 2009). While changes to federal legislation and policy help to increase access and participations for students of color, research demonstrates that African American students experience challenges related to past exclusion practices based on race (Benton, 2001; Harper, Patten & Wooden, 2009). Consistent barriers and challenges such as racially hostile climates, lack of diversity, social exclusion and underrepresentation of same-race faculty are just a few of the factors and challenges that Black students face in academic, particular within the context of PWIs. While there is a history of scholarship available highlight issues and barriers still present today, in America's institutions of higher education there is limited research that helps us to understand how other factors such as the intersection between motherhood and race influences Black women's experiences separately.

With increasing concerns on addressing persistence and retention of college students, there has been a growing interest and development in college student and adult identity development theories (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). The recent development of multidimensional and intersectional frameworks in student development scholarship has helped to illuminate the complexities of intersecting identities such as sexuality, ability, race, gender and class in the lives of people of color while interrogating structures of privilege and oppression (Jones & Abes, 2014). Prominent theorists such as Baxter Magolda (2001), Carol Gilligan (1982), Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, (1986) and Ruthellen Josselson (1997), focused their research on exploring women's identity development through frameworks of moral development, identity status achievement and epistemology (ways of knowing) (in Evans et al., 2010). Although these frameworks provided important and understanding of how college

students make meaning and interpret the world, they were generally applied to the experiences of undergraduate students (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Abes & Jones, 2004).

Early work on social identity development has been challenged because of its tendency to analyze singular aspects of student identity development and homogenous sample selection (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007; Jones & Abes, 2013). Jones' (1997) work on multiple dimensions of identity development (MMDI) among women college students furthered our understanding of the complexities of identity development when dimensions such as class, gender, sexuality are considered. Jones, Abes and Quaye's (2014) work incorporating critical race perspectives deepened our understanding of how social structures and systems influence racial identity development. Although college student identity frameworks have contributed greatly to our theoretical understanding of student experiences through race and gender lenses of identity development (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes, Jones, and McEwen, 2007; Jones & Abes, 2013), models of African American women's adult identity development are scarce (Helms, 1990).

Although analyzing motherhood is, a complex task because it is both an experience, institution, and an identity (McMahon, 1995) it still warrants the availability of an appropriate theoretical framework for students in college who are mothers. Moreover, traditional models and theories of student development that can be useful in understanding and describing the graduate student experience were designed with the undergraduate student experience in mind. Therefore, there is a gap in our understanding of the impact of doctoral education of Black doctoral student mothers from a student development perspective. How then, do we describe the ways in which Black mothers negotiate their identities within the social institution of doctoral education? How do we apply intersectional and multidimensional identity frameworks traditionally designed for

undergraduate student populations in analysis of the experiences of Black mothers in doctoral education? This project specifically addressed these questions with the methodological application of Black feminist epistemology and theories of intersectionality.

Statement of the Problem

Outside of college student development research, only a handful of studies have focused specifically on the experiences of women in their roles as both mothers *and* academics along intersectional axes of identity such as race, class, and gender (Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Sealy-Ruiz, 2013). For example, there is a history of empirical work and scholarship illuminating the ways in which the intersection of motherhood combined with academic work expectations creates contexts of social role conflict and tension for women (e.g., Armenti 2004; Drago & Colbeck, 2005; Evans & Grant, 2008; Kuperberg, 2008; Van Anders, 2004). These works have shown that women are more likely to experience gender bias and discrimination in their highly visible gender roles as mothers.

However, Black mothers remain an understudied segment of the doctoral student population (Anaya, 2011). We now know for example, that two out of five African American women students in higher education tend to be low-income parents (Institution for Women's Policy Research [IWPR], 2013). This means that African American women students in U.S. colleges and universities are more likely to be low-income parents balancing school and work. This also suggests that race, gender, class and motherhood are salient social and structural dimensions of the college student experience (Brown, Watson, 2010; Gildersleeve, Croom & Vasquez, 2011; Holmes, 2008; Patton, 2009; Sulé, 2011; Woods, 2001). Traditional race and gender only based models have yet to consider maternal identity as a social identity given the growing number of women student parents in higher education today. Despite higher education

being a tool utilized by the majority of Black women to gain social mobility, we know less about their experiences as mothers in the context of doctoral study. What is needed is an intersectional approach to identity development that attends to the historical and social construction of Black women's identity development in order to examine the experiences of Black women doctoral student parents.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to address the paucity of qualitative research examining the experiences of African American doctoral women students in higher education (Ellis, 2001; Williams et al., 2005; Dowdy, 2008; Grant & Simmons, 2008; Tiu Wu, 2013). While national quantitative data on graduate student enrollment boasts a growing women student population (NCES, 2014); African American women students still are underrepresented in comparison to other groups. Due to the lack of available research, we know very little about the experiences of Black women doctoral student parents.

Of the few pieces of scholarship that exists, the experiences of African American faculty remain dominant (Nzinga-Johnson, 2013; Sulé, 2011). An abundance of scholarship has highlighted salient barriers to degree persistence and attainment for women in doctoral study such as parental obligations and family planning desires (Lynch, 2008; Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009). However, these studies have yet to examine the nexus between identity and context specifically among African American doctoral student mothers in predominantly white and elite research institutions in the Midwest. On top of challenges related to race, little researched populations such as Black women doctoral students who are balancing work and family may have concerns that need to be addressed (Anaya, 2011). In this work, I argue that what was needed was an examination of the embedded systems of social hierarchy present in the

academic context in order to explain and understand the impact of doctoral study on Black women doctoral student parents' lives and experiences (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Perhaps one of ways in which that the invisible forces of and structures of power become visible are when multiply marginalized identities encounter white cultural hegemony in institutional settings. Therefore, this proposed study emerged from the concern about the lack of research and knowledge available capturing the lived experiences of Black women in doctoral study along intersections of race, gender, class and motherhood.

Significance of the Study

Knowledge collected from Black women about race, gender, motherhood and doctoral study makes a significant contribution to existing research because it decenters dominant ideologies regarding race, gender and motherhood and adds to existing analyses that have traditionally excluded the voices of Black women. It offers to the qualitative paradigm and identity development frameworks, an intersectional analysis of complex personhood. Understanding the context of doctoral study and the impact that it has on women of color as a process of identity development contributes to developing developmental theories about African American women in the collegiate context and offers new ideas to develop supportive programs and policies that address the needs of Black women doctoral student parents in higher education. It also contributes to theories of intersectionality and feminist epistemology.

In addition, this study deepens our understanding about the experience of African American women doctoral student parents in higher education so that higher education researchers and practitioners become attuned to how varying factors related to identity, experience and context can influence the persistence of African American students in predominantly white and elite research institutions. Although the scope of this dissertation was

limited to Black mothers in doctoral programs in the Midwest, many of the issues facing Black mothers in the academy overlap with issues that *all* Black women in higher education face.

This research also offered significant insights to higher education researchers, policy makers, student affairs practitioners, administrators and deans of graduate education about the experiences and needs of Black women doctoral students navigating the academic context. It also has relevance to recruitment efforts of minority doctoral students within graduate education who are searching for ways to attract and retain minority doctoral students. For policy makers and higher education administrators, the implications from this research will help to develop policies, support and practices that increase access and equity for minority student parents in higher education.

Research Questions

The goal of this qualitative phenomenological study was to address the impact of the cultural context of doctoral degree study within predominantly white (PWIs) and elite research institutions (RI) on Black women doctoral student parents' identity development by conducting an in-depth examination of their experiences through an intersectional lens of student identity development. Consequently, the central question that guided the qualitative phenomenological study is, "How does the experience of doctoral study in predominantly white and elite research institutions shape identity development among Black doctoral women student parents?" This study also addressed the following research sub-questions:

1. What is the role of race, gender, class and motherhood in adult identity development among Black women doctoral student parents and what are the most salient facilitators of development?

2. What challenges do Black women doctoral student parents face and what agencies develop in response?

This proposed study emerged from the concern about the lack of research and identity development models available that captures the lived experiences of African American women in doctoral study along intersections of race, gender, class and motherhood.

Rationale

This study was needed because although Black women are making significant strides in gaining access to postsecondary and graduate education (NCES, 2011; 2014), the literature consistently shows that mothers and Black women are still marginalized in the academy (Holmes, 2008). Examinations of social identities can serve as powerful heuristic tools to understand how organizing systems that hierarchize race, gender and class affects the experiences and identity development of Black women within urban college contexts. I am not suggesting that white doctoral student mothers or Black men do not contend with dominant, oppressive social paradigms surrounding class and gender. What I am saying is that because African American mothers have to contend with multiple dominant social paradigms in addition to race, gender and class, the magnitude of their struggles toward doctoral degree attainment is far wider.

Institutions of adult and higher education have become one of the most accessible contexts through which to study adult identity development because they are least permeable to social change. Urban institutions with diversity missions would also be able to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of diversity initiatives by hearing from the perspectives of marginalized groups existing on the axes of multiple and complex social identity locations. The lack of empirical knowledge collected from African American mothers about their experiences in

doctoral study also warranted examination of the ways in which doctoral study influences student experiences and identity formation. This study offered recommendations for policy development and structural supports needed to help mitigate the impact of doctoral study on student identity development.

Theoretical Perspective

Black feminist thought (BFT)

As a feminist epistemology, Black feminist theory is a way of interpreting reality through an examination of social systems and the specific and unique ways in which these social systems intersect to shape the material realities of U.S. Black women. As a theoretical framework, BFT encompasses four key tenets: (a) centering Black women's experiences, (b) intersectional analyses of Black women's intersectional experiences with multiple oppressions, (c) Black women's knowledge as historically subjugated and, (d) a political agenda for Black women's empowerment. These core tenets are critical to the interpretation and understanding the complexity of Black womanhood as both identity and lived reality. Since the overall aim of this study was to center the lived experiences of Black women living in the U.S., it was important that Black feminist epistemologies were selected to analyze, interpret and understand the unique sociocultural, political and historical locations of Black women in contemporary U.S. institutions.

In this work, Black feminist thought methodologically, necessitated a resistance against an empirical urge to employ unitary race or gender categories in the analyses of Black women's lived experiences. It instead encouraged the use of multilayered categories of analysis to account for Black women's intersectional identities and experiences with intersecting systems of power. A framework of intersectionality, a theory couched within Black feminist epistemology and a

legal framework first advanced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), underscores the ways in which multiple dimensions of race, gender and class interact to shape the political and material realities of everyday Black women. Methodologically, it reveals the consequence of flattening the differences in experiences that exist among Black women using single analytic categories such as race or gender to understand and interpret those experiences. Traditional analyses of gender or race are anemic and fail to capture the complexities of Black women's lives.

Intersectionality as a methodological approach, articulates the multiple and often intersecting ways in which Black women experience discrimination as a result of the “interlocking” dimensions of racism, sexism and classism and shifts emphasis away from categorizing experiences in oppression through single units of analysis such as ‘racism’ or ‘sexism’. Intersectionality seeks to uncover the multiplicity of social dimensions that affect Black women, but also the simultaneity of their interactions. While a methodology of intersectionality places the lived experiences of individual Black women at the center of analysis, it also “attends to power and how power operates in everyday life, shaping privilege and oppression, opportunities and constraints” (Abes & Jones, 2014; p. 146). Because the intersection of race, class and gender places Black mothers in a unique position in regards to their experience as students in the academy, using Black feminist epistemology and intersectionality as a guide to inquiry and analysis helped to uncover the complexity and uniqueness or “essence” of Black women's individual experiences without subordinating an exploration of social identity to an analysis of power.

Assumptions about the Research Process

There were several assumptions held prior to beginning of this research that must be stated upfront. The first assumption was that race, gender, class and motherhood social identities

play an integral role in shaping the identity constructions of Black doctoral women student parents. Secondly, institutional contexts shape these experiences differently and add on another layer of complexity in the shaping of identity and experience. Thirdly, Black women may or may not be conscious of the interlocking systems of racism, classism and sexism, but that through their narratives, the omnipresence of these systems would be revealed.

Several tenets found in Black feminist epistemologies guide my assumptions about this research process: (1) knowledge is partial and always historically, politically and socially situated; (2) individuals from marginalized groups possess a specific vantage point of forces of power and domination (3) this specialized knowledge challenges dominant narratives about race and gender (Collins, 1990; Haraway, 2003; Hesse-Biber, 2014). These assumptions informed also the research approach taken, which is described in the next section.

Rationale for Feminist Epistemologies and Qualitative Methodologies

The goal of this research was to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of African American doctoral student mothers. The Black women in this study were considered credible witnesses of their own experiences and their discursively produced narratives were honored as artifacts. What this means is that only Black women can truly know what it means to be a Black woman (Collins, 2000) and the stories that they share will give us insight into the complex realities of a particular group of Black women. BFT was appropriate because it views race, class and gender as intersecting sociological systems of power, domination and oppression that influence and shape the context of Black women's unique realities (Collins, 2000; Dill & Zimbrana, 2009). Simply, a Black feminist analysis with an intersectional theoretical perspective was chosen for several reasons: (a) challenge dominant discourses on race, motherhood, class and gender; (b) center the lives and experiences of women of color, (c) examine broader social

and contexts that (re)produce dominant ideologies, (d) situate the lives of women of color within those contexts (e) and frame this research as a social justice project.

To answer my research questions and address the knowledge gap, I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study utilizing Black feminist epistemology because it specifically focuses on the lived experiences of Black women. Qualitative research was selected for this study because it does not seek to reduce individual characters of participants to a single variable; rather it works to situate lived realities of both me and the other women within a particular context. The qualitative methods used to investigate the lived experiences of Black women in predominantly white and elite research institutions of higher education in the U.S. were grounded in a Black feminist epistemology theories of intersectionality. Intersectional lenses helped to understand the ways in which Black women are sometimes positioned between multiple and subordinate groups of race, class and gender. It also revealed how the experience of racism, classism and sexism is different from sexism experienced by white women or the racism experienced by Black men. This idea was important when exploring the various commonalities among the women, as well as the differences that existed between them.

Lastly, it also helped not just to focus the analysis on Black women's oppression, but also look for opportunities of agency and resistance. Intersectionality, in concert with BFT emphasized the ways in which historical, political and structural dimensions of social reality converged to influence and facilitate identity development among seven Black women doctoral student parents enrolled in doctoral study at predominantly white and elite research institutions in the Midwest. Since qualitative methods emphasize the exploration of lived experience, this approach was appropriate for this particular study, and was useful in interpreting, describing and problematizing the everyday realities of African American doctoral student mothers.

Research Design

The population under investigation in this study self-identified as African American/Black women doctoral student parents. The sample was drawn from doctoral student populations across four urban universities in the Midwest. I conducted 14 oral interviews via telephone, Skype and collected written response interviews from seven Black women doctoral student parents. This study employed qualitative methodologies along with an interpretive research design that drew from Black feminist methodologies. Since Black women draw on their, subjective, lived experiences and situated knowledges as perspectives of truth (Collins, 2000; Stephens et al., 2007), a phenomenological approach was chosen to explore and understand the uniqueness of the women's experiences. A Black feminist methodology revealed multiple and layered truths that were generated from their experiences as Black women, mothers and doctoral students. These uncovered truths enhance and further research about Black women in the U.S.

Since there is limited research on the experiences of Black women doctoral student parents, employing a phenomenological design with BFT as an epistemological underpinning was necessary in attending to the minimally explored lives of marginalized women. Centering Black women in the analysis meant that Black women would be the target population for this study. The participant selection criteria for this study required that the women: (a) be currently enrolled doctoral student in a doctoral program, (b) participating in the childrearing of at least 1 or more one minor children (biological relation not an excluding factor) residing in the home at the time of the study, (c) self-identified women, (d) self-identify as African American or Black and, (e) U.S. born. Women who were adoptive parents, rearing children who are extended family members or are expecting children were also eligible participants. Factors of age and marital status were not criteria used in the selection of the participants.

When permission was granted from my institution, participants were recruited by enlisting help from campus women's student centers and doctoral program faculty and chairpersons in sending out solicitation emails to email distribution lists. Identity-based student organizations and professional groups found through online searches and institutional webpages were also contacted to aid in distribution of study announcement. Announcements were also posted on personal social media sites. The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions related to the experiences of African American mothers in doctoral programs.

Research indicates that predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and elite research universities are common sites of discrimination for women of color (Adams; 2009; Lloyd-Jones, 2009; Patton, 2004b; Stanley, 2006; Solórzano and Yosso, 2000; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Therefore, predominantly white and intensive research (R1) universities were selected as research sites. Permission to conduct the study will be obtained in advanced by the university's institutional review board. Criteria of 'good' qualitative research ensured researcher trustworthiness, credibility, dependability and transferability of findings were used to guide the research process (Creswell, 2013). Methods of data analysis employed in the study followed procedures congruent with tenets of Black feminist epistemology and consistent with qualitative methodologies.

Positionality

As a Black woman, doctoral student and mother currently enrolled in a predominantly white and elite research institution, I am an insider/outsider. I have navigated many white spaces in my life. I can still recall my first encounter with racism at a very young and the first time that a male student made a derogatory statement about my assumed sexual nature. I also have experienced the entirety of my higher education journey as a single mother, first generation and low-income student. I have struggled financially, often working multiple jobs at the expense of my academic achievement. I am a survivor of multiple experiences of trauma and come from a family background of trauma. I relied on my dual insider/outsider status to help me interpret spaces and things that were left unsaid in our interviews. I acknowledged and found it appropriate that my positionality and experiences led to pursue a research topic that was so close to my own identity.

Summary

This first chapter provided an introduction and summary about the state of research related to Black women doctoral students, academic motherhood, and adult identity development. It demonstrated that there was a gap in the literature on Black doctoral women student parents. No research to date has explored this phenomenon through a lens of identity development, so extant bodies of literature on academic motherhood, Black women's identity and the historical and contemporary experiences African American women in the academy were woven together.

The next chapter provides a cursory review of these works and include an in-depth review of the limited research related to the experiences of African American women in doctoral

education. In addition, since there is minimal scholarship on Black women doctoral student parents, I included extant scholarship on motherhood from an academic and nursing science perspective. The third chapter of this proposal consists of an overview of methodology and methodological tools used in exploring the impact of race, gender, motherhood and class on the experiences of African American women in doctoral study at RI PWIs in the Midwest.

Delimitations and limitations of the study are also presented. The last chapter includes a discussion on implications for theory development, future research, and recommendations for policy and practice based on findings along with a conclusion.

Definition of Terms

African American/Black: The use of the terms African American and Black are used interchangeably. They are employed as categories of reference and are used to identify racial identities of those whose identities can be historically traced to a shared cultural and political identity emanating from an African diaspora and descendants of Africans who were forced into a system of U.S. chattel slavery.

Adult Development: ““A process of qualitative change in attitudes, values, and understandings that adults experience as a result of ongoing transactions with the social environment, occurring over time but not strictly as a result of time”” (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000; in Smith & Taylor, 2010; p. 49). The differentiation between student and adult development theories are that these developmental theories and models consider ‘adulthood’ as occurring after college years (~24) and continue on over the lifespan. Whereas, college student development theories and models are limited to analyses of traditional college-aged students between ages 18-21 within the college environment

Black Motherhood Stereotypes: Racist images, stereotypes and myths about Black women emanating from slavery used to justify Black women’s social subordination (Collins, 2000).

Doctoral Study: The use of the word PhD and doctoral student are used interchangeably in this work. Both terms refer to the type of degree in pursuit which is “assumed to be a research degree, and its primary purpose is teaching junior scholars to conduct sound rigorous research” and a process of training whereby “students work under the tutelage of their advisors, learning the intricacies of research, and becoming increasingly independent scholars” (Golde, 2001; p.9).

Intersectionality: Intersectionality is a theory that describes how different systems and structures of power simultaneously interact and shape the daily lives of people of color—particularly Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). It specifically reveals how racism, sexism and classism are embedded in those social systems and structures and advances a way of understanding the complexities of living along multiply marginalized axes of identity.

Motherhood: To represent the complexity of this identity category, mother and motherhood must be distinguished first as an idea and then as an experience. The ‘idea’ of motherhood, refers to an ideological construct emanating from patriarchal gender ideologies (O’Reilly, 2006) that define divisions of labor among men and women. The experience of motherhood is the everyday social practice that mothers engage in, and is distinctly different from the biological conflation of a woman’s role in reproduction and her social relationship to children (McMahon, 1995).

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIS): Institutions of higher education where enrollment among whites is at least 50% (Lomotey, 2010).

Racial Identity: In this work, the definition of racial identity as used in student development literature refers to ““a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group”” (Helms, 1995; in Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton and Renn, 2010).

Shifting: Strategies that Black women use to navigate double axes of gender and race (Jones and Shorter-Gooden, 2003)

Student Development: The definition of development in this work is contextualized through student development theoretical domains. It refers to ““the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in an

institution of higher education”” (Rodgers, 1990c; in Evans et al., 2010, p.6), as it relates to constitutive process of identity formation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Like Celie in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, some [Black] women write themselves free [. . .] other women talk themselves free.

(Collins, 2000; p. 119)

The idea for the title of this study emerged from Black feminist scholar bell hooks (1989) work "Talking Back: Thinking feminist, Thinking Black". hooks emphasizes the importance of "true-speaking" as "an act of resistance" and the concept of "shifting Black" emerged from the title of a book based on a large scale study done with over 400 Black women in the U.S. entitled "Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America" (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004) that reveals the precarity of being Black and a woman in America. The research findings highlight how Black women navigate double marginalities of race and gender and how much of Black women's identity negotiations are impacted by historical and cultural stereotypes of Black women. 'Talkin' back' and 'shifting Black' are two phrases that form the boundaries of the contradictory and liminal spaces of Black womanhood and also refer to the strategies that emerge from these spaces along lines of resistance and accommodation. The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which Black women's identities in privileged spaces bend and fracture notions of privilege.

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a theoretical understanding of the processes of identity construction among Black mothers within the context of predominantly white and elite research institutions in the Midwest. While it has been demonstrated that doctoral study can be challenging for many students, some commonly proposed explanations on racial and gendered experiences cannot account for the differences in the experiences of women students of color, Black women in particular. Further, extant literature on the challenges that

women face when motherhood roles intersect with academic roles, have inadequately captured the experiences of women student parents of color. Subsequently, this study addressed the following question: “How does the experience of doctoral study in predominantly white and elite research institutions shape identity development among Black woman doctoral student parents?”

This study also addressed the following research sub-questions:

1. What is the role of race, gender, class and motherhood in adult identity development among Black doctoral women student parents and what are the most salient facilitators of development?
2. What challenges do Black doctoral women student parents face and what agencies do they develop in response?

This study is concerned with how the structures, context and processes involved in the doctoral student experience impacts identity development among a specific demographic of doctoral students. In this review, I explored the experiences and construction of Black women’s identity through theoretical and historical lenses. The literature review is organized into two sections. The first section begins with an abbreviated history of women’s movement and entrance into higher education. Next, the theoretical framework and major contemporary themes found in the literature describing the challenges related to gender singularly and then intersectional issues along the dimensions of race, gender and class are discussed. The second and last section of the review provides an overview of relevant identity development frameworks drawn from research on maternal and college student development.

The scope of this literature review is not exhaustive in nature; however, it does attempt to contextualize and describe Black women’s experiences as situated within historical, social, economic, political and academic contexts, in order to best understand the intersections of

motherhood, Black women's identity and doctoral study as a developmental process. Although the scope of this dissertation is limited to Black mothers in Ph.D. programs, many of the issues facing Black mothers in the academy overlap with issues that all Black women have historically faced navigating white controlled institutions. In order to construct the research landscape of Black women's identity development, this study is conceptualized within an identity development framework that draws on historical literature and Black feminist theories of intersectionality to explore the social construction of Black women's identity. Because women have a history of intellectual tradition and social activism, a historical overview of Black women's oppression, resistance and participation in education will be discussed in the next section.

Historical Background of Black Women's Oppression and Resistance during Slavery

A history of both U.S. Black women's oppression and the development of resistance strategies for survival can be traced back to slavery. Certainly, the history of Black people did not begin with slavery, but in order to understand the experiences of current day Black women in white controlled institutions, a brief exploration the "peculiar institution" of slavery (Stampp, 1989) was needed. The historical beginnings of U.S. chattel slavery can be traced back to the early 16th century (Blassingame, 1979). The process of enslavement for both African born women and men slaves included the denial of basic needs, forced labor, physical violence and a socialization process into the institution of slavery as a chattel property. This process of dehumanization was justified by the status of property and human capital assigned to enslaved Africans.

Enslaved women however, not only experienced the same atrocities as enslaved men, but additionally experienced atrocities related to their identities as women and sexualized objects.

Camp (2005) notes that Black women in bondage were subject to other cruelties such as sexual violence, forced reproduction and marriage, domestic servitude, violence and abuse at the hand of jealous slave master's wives. As women and mothers, enslaved Black women endured witnessing romantic partners and children be sold off at the whim of the slave master. Not only did enslaved Black women contribute to economic production for slave owners by toiling alongside their male counterparts on plantation fields under harsh environmental conditions, they also were responsible for attending to the domestic needs and well-being of the entire slave community (Davis, 1972). Davis notes that slave women were "essential to the *survival* of the community" (p. 87). This contribution of labor through domestic tasks, servitude and childbearing were additional forms of exploitation and taxation Black women slaves uniquely faced.

Black women in bondage played a pivotal role in the physical and psychological maintenance of the slave community and they also participated in overt and subtle acts of resistance. For example, enslaved Black women resisted by practicing infanticide as refusal to witness their children be born into the cruel institution of slavery (Davis, 1981). Davis notes that "[m]any slave women refused to bring children into a world of interminable forced labor, where chains and floggings and sexual abuse for women were the everyday conditions of life (p. 204). Enslaved Black women also participated in other forms of overt resistance such as leading and participating in plantation rebellions, running away, or taking their own lives as defiance (Davis, 1981; Harrison, 2009).

However, many forms of enslaved Black women's resistance on plantations was less visible. Maintaining a semblance of family structures and providing caregiving under domination and constraint not only formed the context of Black women slaves' oppression, but also provided

opportunities for their resistance. Incoming African slaves were forcibly stripped of any aesthetic and cultural practices brought with them from their previous homelands, but due to Black women's role in community maintenance, they resisted by becoming discrete transmitters of African religious and aesthetic cultural traditions (Harrison, 2009). Also, while domestic work in the plantation kitchen was a common site of Black women's labor exploitation, it also was a site of resistance. For example, some kitchen servants tampered with slave master's food (Davis, 1971). O. Davis (1999) found that the transformation of oppressive spaces such as the plantation kitchen into spaces of nurturing, affirmation and community were acts of resistance. The kitchen space also was a space where enslaved Black women "passed on survival skills to their daughters and helped them develop ways to confront oppressive conditions" (p. 369). The transmission of survival skills has been one Black women's key strategies for both survival and resistance post-slavery. Though the accounts of Black women's resistance during slavery are minimal, Black women's history of oppression and resistance underlie the political base of Black women's contemporary forms of social activism. In the next section, I discuss Black women's participation in social and political activism after slavery.

Historical Overview of Feminism

Mainstream feminist movements of the first and second waves have been charged as being the middle-class white women's movement (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1984). Within the realm of feminist discourse, the 'wave' model is used to describe historical periods of women's protest and activism in the U.S., although it is noted that in employing such a mode to describe time and continuity of women's movement, gender obscures the role that race and class played in the shaping of feminist politick. The first wave of the women's movement occurred during the late 19th century and carried over until the mid-20th century. This period signified "the major

women's rights struggle of the 19th century" (Kolmar and Bartkowski, 2005, p. 62). Since the early movement of both Black and white women around political and social issues of the time, Black women have had a long withstanding relationship to feminist socio-political movements and have held historically different viewpoints about issues related to gender than white women that defied the notion of a 'global sisterhood' organized around gender oppression.

Initially, many first wave Black and white feminists supported the cause of men abolitionists and viewed abolition and woman suffrage as the same movement however; the inherent racism in the early women's movement and sexism in the abolition movement politically marginalized both Black and white women supporters on either front (Davis, 1981). Prominent women's rights campaigners such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for example, dismissed a universal political agenda that would encompass the concerns of poor immigrant and Black women workers. This is most likely due to the notion that the early feminist movement was comprised of bourgeois liberal class white women whose chief concerns were "extending legal, political and employment rights of middle-class women" (Weiner, 1994, p. 145).

While white feminists aligned themselves with their white male abolitionist counterparts, women's suffrage was a greater concern. Davis (1981) concludes that, "it is not surprising that the nineteenth-century U.S. women's rights movement, [. . .] was tied to the abolitionist movement, though not always in ways that successfully married gender and race concerns" (in Tong, 2009, p. 21). However, ending slavery for both men and women was a far greater concern for Black women organizers and they collectively sought out a struggle that encompassed the concerns of poor and enslaved Black men *and* women.

During the 1970's, women experienced more social and economic freedom, and collectively organized around shared political struggles and in parallel to their sisters of the first wave, also took on other sociopolitical issues such as civil rights. The emergence of the feminist agenda during this period was radical and focused on women's right to control their bodies. Major successes included women's increased legal and safe access to birth control and reproductive health services. However, while white women were able to 'liberate' their bodies by gaining reproductive freedoms through increased access to safe forms of contraception, many poor Black, Native American and Hispanic women were subjected to nonconsensual sterilization as a measure of social control (Roberts, 1997). While second wave feminists included in their gender struggles the fight for reproductive freedom, Black women and other women of color fought for reproductive justice (Roberts).

The feminist struggle for gender parity and equality, Black student movement (Biondi, 2014) and civil rights movements' all contributed to an increase in minority and women's access to and participation in education. However, these efforts primarily benefited white middle-class women. While the prevailing theme of the women's movement focused on women's oppression in their roles as housewives as mothers, many of the only jobs available to Black women were those in domestic lines of work. While white feminists challenged unequal divisions of labor based on gender, Black women challenged unfair treatment and discrimination in the workplace because of both race and gender (Collins, 2000).

Black Feminism

Initially, Black women were engaged in abolitionist work and were cooperative with the early feminist movement. However, the failure of the 19th century women's and abolition movement to marry both race and gender concerns led to Sojourner Truth, a Black abolitionist

and women's right activist, speak openly first of the need for intersectional analyses on the Black woman identity. In her infamous "Ar'nt I a Woman" speech (Taylor, 1998) for example, Sojourner argued that unlike White women, Black women cannot separate their race from their gender for disparate race and gender isolated causes. Abolitionists like Sojourner were among the first of Black women to articulate a dialectical Black feminist consciousness and publicly protested against the narrow political agendas of white middle class women and Black male leaders that focused disparately on race and gender issues like voting rights for white women and abolition for Black men (Taylor).

Contemporary Black feminist politics grew out of Black women's "disillusionment" and identity politics within the Civil Rights, Black Liberation and Women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Black women protested that these movements focused on the political concerns of the majority membership i.e., White women and Black males, and overshadowed the needs of women with intersecting identities like poor women and women of color (Collins, 1989; Davis, 1983; hooks, 1984). Black women for example, not only faced sexist oppression in larger society from white males, but also within their own communities from Black males. Consequently, Black feminists formed separate organizations that addressed the intersecting nature of race and gender oppressions that they faced in their everyday lives. The Combahee River Collective (1974) an organizing group of Black women who segmented from these disparate political movements offered this statement as a rationale for the need of a politic that addressed the concerns of Black women:

Black feminist politics also have an obvious connection to movements for Black liberation, particularly those of the 1960s and 1970s. Many of us were active in those movements [. . .] and all of our lives were greatly affected and changed by their ideology,

their goals, and the tactics used to achieve their goals. It was our experience and disillusionment within these liberation movements, as well as the experience on the periphery of the white male left, that led to the need to develop a politics that was antiracist, unlike those of white women, and antisexist, unlike those of Black white men.

(Combahee River Collection, p. 211)

Both feminist theorizing and social activism historically has failed to reflect the differences in women's realities and lived experiences (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989; Lorde, 1984). Existing outside of 'true' paradigms of race and gender meant that Black women have had to construct versions of womanhood and motherhood that illustrate the complexity of Black women's lives and identities. Black feminist thinkers and activists have long been present in all three 'waves' of women's political movements, however, due to mainstream feminism's neglect of differences and concerns surrounding interlocking sources of women's oppression, Black women have had to define feminism and challenge gender and racial oppression on their own terms. Black women's activism and movement around intersectional issues formed the basis of an intellectual agenda developed by Black women scholars and are rooted in Black women's politics. A discussion of this framework and its utilization in this study follows.

Theoretical Framework

Black feminist theory (BFT)

The theoretical perspective framing this study is Black feminist thought (BFT). According to Patricia Hill Collins (2000) leading scholar of Black feminist epistemology, Black feminist thought is "a specialized knowledge created by African-American women, which clarifies a standpoint of and for Black women" (p. 243). Black feminist theory is an interpretive

framework that is useful for analyzing and understanding the lived social and political realities of U.S. Black women. The use of BFT is necessary because it complicates traditional identity frameworks that do not account for social, historical and political contexts in which U.S. Black women's lives and identities are situated within.

Emphasizing the dialectical relationship between U.S. Black women's experience and thinking, Collins (1986) argued that there are core themes present in Black women's thinking and experience that "rely on paradigms that emphasize the importance of intersecting oppressions in shaping the U.S. matrix of domination": (a) work, (b) family, (c) sexual politics, (d) motherhood and, (e) political activism (p. 251). While motherhood is the theme explored most in detail in this study, other intersections of work, family, sexual politics and activism present in the accounts of these women are assumed to be interconnected with Black women's roles and identities as mothers. The connections made among these themes across accounts is important in uncovering other factors impacting student experience and persistence that may have not been previously considered in research on Black women in the educational context.

As a methodological tool, it necessitates that Black women's experiences are centered in the analysis. This centering allows us to examine Black women's access to power within social and institutional contexts through personal accounts of lived experience. Underlying the core of Black feminist thinking is also an emphasis on intersectionality and Black women's activism and empowerment. Several themes contour Black feminist thinking: (1) concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning (2) use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims (3) ethics of caring (4) personal accountability and (5) intersectionality. The first tenet, concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning suggests that only Black women can truly know what it means to be a black woman. The experience of being a Black woman in U.S. society produces a specialized

knowledge and unique angle or vision on society and oppression because Black women occupy intersecting and contradictory social locations.

The second tenet, use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, suggests that dialogue is used as a tool to demystify individual and collectively shared experiences because of being dialectically positioned between race, class and gender. Thematic elements of Black women's speech and language also contain a struggle and process of self-definition and self-valuation. Black women's speech is a distinct back-and-forth dialogue where the sharing of individual experience is a tool for validation of one another's experience. Black women also use dialogue as a way to find collectively shared meaning in their experiences in relation to the larger Black community and society writ large.

The next tenet, ethics of caring is a process whereby understanding, empathy and caring develops through dialogue, and demonstrates a connectedness and shared experience in oppression. There is an emphasis on the structure of Black women's dialogue based on shared experiences in oppression. This emphasis fosters a capacity for empathy and creates space for emotion in dialogue. Next, personal accountability implies that Black women hold each other accountable for claims being made about experience. These claims are assessed based on her individual ideas and stances on social and political issues.

Intersectionality

As a critical social theory, BFT analyzes the intersectionality of marginalization that U.S. Black women and women from the African Diaspora face in their everyday lives. Intersectionality is a framework couched in Black feminist theory first advanced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). At its core, it emphasizes race, gender and class as constitutive and dynamic

elements of a Black women's identity (Collins, 2000). Crenshaw argues that multiple forms of oppression along the axes of race, gender and Intersectionality articulates the multiple and often intersecting ways in which Black women experience discrimination as a result of the "interlocking" dimensions of racism, sexism and classism. Intersectionality shifts emphasis away from categorizing experiences through single units of analysis such as race or class. As a framework for analysis, it also does not treat experiences in oppression because of gender, class or race as individual or separate systems of oppression but rather, it emphasizes the interlocking nature of these systems.

Intersectionality in identity research has an explicit focus on locating individuals within larger a larger matrix of domination, and an explicit focus on privilege and oppression (Abes and Jones, 2013). Intersectionality speaks not only to the multiplicity of social dimensions that affect Black women and other socially oppressed identities, but also to the simultaneity of their interactions. What this means is that intersectionality research aims to understand is how the micro politics of the person, connect to the macro-politics of the social world. Because Black women are positioned between multiple subordinate groups of race, class and gender, the experience of racism, classism and sexism is different from the sexism experienced by white women or the racism experienced by Black men. This idea is important when exploring the various commonalities among women or African Americans in the academy, as well as the differences that exists along the intersections of race, class and gender. Simply adding on race and class identities is inadequate in exploring the lives of Black women. As both an interpretive and analytical framework, it addresses the complexity of social identities and works to reveal how intersectional systems of race, class and gender within certain contexts and the ways in which these systems are operational in their everyday lives. In what follows, I describe Black

women's intellectual tradition that emerged from their political and social activism during slavery and political movements.

University experiences of Women and African Americans in Higher Education

During the early 20th century, seminaries and normal schools marked the beginning of institutionalized adult learning for women. These institutions would eventually become teacher's colleges (Graham, 1978) and vocational schools focused on making women better wives and mothers. Graham noted that, "[u]nlike men, who were never barred from attending college on account of their sex, women were unable to enroll in any college until Oberlin permitted them entrance in 1837, ostensibly to provide ministers with intelligent, cultivated, and thoroughly schooled wives." (p. 764). Although the rationale for women to attend college during this time was to aid in the development of women it had not, however, stimulated a change in their prescribed gender roles.

Since teaching and nursing were viewed as 'women's work', the social acceptance for women's participation in college was not in direct conflict with societal attitudes regarding women's place in society and, "[d]espite the expansion of opportunities for women's education, its form remained constrained by role definitions and assertions of women's limited abilities" (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994; p. 109). As increases in the variety of content and curricula offerings of adult education became more rampant, higher education became a 'normal' aspect of social life for young adult women. Unfortunately, "society had quite different expectations for women" and thus, college campus life violated canons of the "piety" and "purity" socially ascribed to women (Graham, 1978). This regression of social attitude led to women's historical exclusion from and underrepresentation in some of the more prestigious U.S. institutions of higher learning.

During the 20th century, women's political activism around civil rights in education facilitated the passage of the *Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act of 1972* (National Organization of Women [NOW]), which prohibited sex discrimination in education programs and activities for entities that receive federal funding. The intent of this act was to limit the power of academic programs in higher education that limited the participation of women in collegiate sports. After the passage of *Title IX*, the direct impact to adult education was that women's enrollment in the nation's universities and colleges spiked dramatically (Tong, 2009).

Since then, the numbers of college women students have been on the rise. As of 2012, women as demographic, represent more than half of the overall graduate student population and earn overall, more masters and doctoral degrees in comparison to males. Trends in national college student enrollment data show steady and significant growths of enrollment for women students over the last 40 years (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). Women today make up more than half of college enrollments, and earn more undergraduate and graduate degrees than males (National Education Statistics [NCES], 2011).

African Americans

Historically, higher education has been utilized as a pathway to social and economic mobility for African Americans. The early educational history for African Americans began with their systematic denial of literacy during chattel slavery and continued through educational exclusion and segregation until the mid-1950's (Sulé, 2011). Education was viewed as a tool for racial uplift and social mobility, but these pursuits have been characterized by struggle and acts of resistance. Black women in particular have a long tradition of support for higher education, but have had a distinctly different struggle and trajectory than white women and Black men. Until During the late 19th and 20th centuries, it was believed that education was a tool that could

be used to elevate the social status of Black women and that this social elevation would be conferred to the entire race (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Until the mid-20th century, access to predominantly white and Ivy League institutions were limited. The passing of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* marked a significant transformation in African Americans access to equal education. Due to de facto racial segregation policies, African Americans had to construct their own schools with little support from the state and federal government (James and Jackson, 2007).

African Americans have had to overcome significant barriers to gain access to higher education and Black women in particular have made tremendous strides in higher education. While federal legislation and policy changes helped to increase access and participation in these spaces for minoritized groups, research demonstrates that African Americans still face challenges related to race and racism (Ellis, 2001). The work of Black feminist activism over time has led to increased access for women and minorities in higher education by working to challenge and disrupt male cultural hegemony in academia and produce theories used to analyze the effects of gender and race and in academic settings. However, the literature tells us that women still experience discrimination, bias and oppression along the intersections of race, gender and class social identities in higher education. In the next section, a historical overview of Black women in higher education along with current trends are discussed.

African American Women

Black Women have an intellectual tradition of advanced degree attainment. Due to the denial of literacy and laws excluding and segregating Blacks in education, support for Black women's education has been a long withstanding tradition in the Black community. Because Black women's education was viewed as vital to the racial uplift agenda of the Black community

through their work as teachers, Black women flocked to seminaries and normal schools to obtain education degrees (Smith, Crocco & Waite, 2007). However, until Oberlin College opened its doors to women from all races prior to 1837, Black women were largely excluded from U.S. higher education (Anderson, 2002). Moreover, graduate programs although previously closed to women once opened, still excluded Black women (Perkins, 2009).

As a response, Black women's colleges were established and Black women became deans, established sororities and started national associations for college women and administrators (Thomas and Jackson, 2007). Luminaries like Mary Jane Patterson, the first African American woman to achieve a college degree and Dr. Anna Julia Cooper, the 4th Black woman to earn a Ph.D., have helped to pave the way for future generations of Black women in their higher education pursuits. Between 1921 and 1954, over 60 doctoral degrees were awarded to Black women (Evans, 2007). Black women's access to education has had and continues to have a major impact on the African American community. Black women leaders and educators have historically contributed to the overall cultural wealth of the Black community (Thomas & Jackson, 2007; Yosso, 2005).

Perhaps the social institution most effected by the disparate political women's liberation, Black liberation and Black feminist movements was that of higher education (Biondi, 2012). In fact, early Black feminist scholars' professional positions in the academy have helped to create and sustain Black women's intellectual tradition. Intellectual contributions from the Black feminist movement included the establishment of Women's and Black women's studies, increased representation in faculty ranks and participation in doctoral study (Hull, Scott and Smith, 1982; hooks, 1989; McCluskey, 1994; Christian, 2007; Watkins, 2006).

Current Trends

The current demographic landscape of higher education has changed drastically over the past several decades. Contemporary statistical data has consistently indicated a progressive increase in the number of Black women pursuing and earning doctoral degrees and obtaining faculty and administration positions. Even future statistical projections of Black women's participation in doctoral study look promising (National Council for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014). Despite these advancements in higher education for African Americans and women, contemporary data however, purports a slow, but steady increase in enrollment gains for African Americans (NCES, 2011). Trends suggest that by 2020, Black women will continue to outpace Black males in doctoral degree attainment and enrollment. Over the last 20 years, doctoral program enrollment and degree attainment among African Americans has increased 87% (NCES, 2012). Black women now represent 51% of all Black faculties in U.S. higher education (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education [JIBHE], 2007).

Such evidence gives credence to the notion that both gender and racial equity and parity has been achieved; inspected more thoroughly, data demonstrates otherwise. For instance, Black males have still earned more doctoral degrees over all time (JIBHE, 2014). Also, while white women earned 13, 261 of doctoral degrees in 2013, Black women earned only 1,553 (National Science Foundation [NSF], 2013) of those degrees. Moreover, Black women are severely underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields (NSF). Other research has shown additional barriers beyond race discrimination to academic success for Black women in the academy such as lack of faculty mentoring and support, underrepresentation of same race faculty and overall systemic marginalization (Evans, 2007; McKay, 2002; Meyers, 2002; Moses, 1997). In what follows, I provide a more in-depth discussion of specific

challenges that Black women face in higher education that help to problematize current trends in Black women's doctoral degree achievement.

Challenges Facing African American Women in Academia

There has been a long documented history of the struggle for African American women to claim space in the academy dating back to the 19th and 20th centuries (Collins, 1988; Christian, 1988; Moses, 1989; Hall and Sandler, 1986, 1992; hooks, 1989; Hull and Smith, 1982); however, there is much less research literature available pertaining to the experiences of African American women students in contemporary times. Moreover, in what scholarship that does exist, several major themes that remain persistent across bodies of literature: (a) Black women face challenges related to both race gender and (b) and the ways in Black women resist these challenges. Taken together, these bodies suggest that while African women have made significant strides in gaining access to postsecondary and graduate education, academia still remains a “chilly climate” and doubly problematic for African American women.

Outsider Within

Patricia Hill Collins argued that in academic settings Black woman intellectuals are “outsiders within”. This means that Black women are often marginalized based on race and gender. One example of a qualitative study examining and describing socialization experiences of African American students was from authors Gasman, Hirschfeld, & Vultaggio (2008). They surveyed 67 African American students in education master's and doctoral programs and found that the student's responses were related to concerns and issues surrounding socialization processes and financial support. Some of the students reported feeling isolated due to inability to participate in socialization opportunities that required financial resources. Similar to Bower and Washington's (2003) study, isolating race as a factor while ignoring identity intersections like

gender or class, as this study did, in student experiences only addresses some of the challenges and concerns of African American students.

In another qualitative study (LeMay-Smith, 2014) exploring the experiences of African American graduate women students' educational experiences in relation to goal achievement, the findings suggested that academic achievement and persistence for African American women seemed to be related to their ability to reconcile the privilege identity intersection of doctoral student with their socially marginalized identities outside of academia. This identity conflict is related to the notion of being an outsider/insider within, where the women have rightfully earned their place in academia, but due to their marginalized identity status have troubles with "fitting the mold". What is needed is a holistic approach to studying how the structural dimensions of doctoral study influences the experiences and identities of students of color.

Invisibility/Hypervisibility

Ralph Ellison (1952) infamously wrote of the Black experience as living in a society where Black people are not visible beyond the difference of Black skin, particularly in white spaces. In essence, Ellison alludes to being Black as being invisible as a human being, yet being hypervisible, because of his Black skin. Hypervisibility is a type of attention and scrutiny that is caused by the 'othering' of those whose identities do not reflect the dominant norm. It is a type of surveillance, but without recognition of the identity of the person who stands out due to difference. For Black women this form of everyday racism is compounded by their gender identities.

Stigmatization. Because the institution of slavery relied on racial stratification, which subordinated Black people and justified enslavement, Black skin carries with it a cultural

memory and subsequent stigma of racial inferiority and subordination (Price, Darity & Headen, 2008). The historical stigmatization of Black women's body is best explained in the story of Saartjie (Sarah) Baartman. Sarah Baartman, derogatorily referred to as the "Hottentot Venus", was a South African woman who was kidnapped and sold into exploitative exhibition of her naked body due to European white's fascination with exotic images and sexualized stereotypes of African women (Willis, 2010). Because European whites had never seen a naked Black woman, she became a public spectacle in a human zoo.

Waytz, Hoffman & Trawalter (2014) argue that although Blacks have been dehumanized historically since slavery, whites hold a superhuman bias of Black people. "Superhumanization" bias is a racial prejudice of Black people whereby superhuman characteristics are assigned to represent Black people as "beyond human" often times as attempts to demonstrate how Black people are unique (italicized, p. 2). This concept explains how "popular media often depict Black people as supernatural and magical, capable of extrasensory feats" (p. 2). Consequently, superhumanization myths have been used to justify forms of violence such as slavery and police brutality (Waytz et al.).

On the surface it appears that by characterizing high achieving Blacks as 'magical' is a counter to centuries of denigrating racist views of Black people; however, superhumanization myths really demonstrate the marginalization of Black people as 'others' and is an insidious form of racial prejudice. A smattering of students of color in predominantly white spaces represents symbolically, a structural commitment to equality. Because Black women's identity statuses represent two minority groups, institutions benefit twice over from their presence. Underneath the surface, it has a more insidious intent of masking a historical legacy of exclusion.

When Black women's multiple and intersecting identities are positioned in all white spaces, they are sometimes rendered invisible (Ellis, 2001; Wilkens 2012; Woods, 2001). Ellis' (2001) research confirms the notion that Black women are invisible in the academy through a study exploring how the intersection of race and gender influenced the socialization experiences by contrasting the experiences of Black men and women doctoral students with those of white men and women doctoral students. Across the group of students studied, the major findings were that race was a significant influence on how Black women perceived processes of socialization. The findings also suggested that Black women in particular, appeared to be the most isolated group of doctoral students in the study.

The isolation and marginalization that the Black women cited in this study were related to historical views of Black women as only occupying marginal spaces. It is a process of 'othering' Black women where historically distorted myths and images inform how Black women are viewed as not individual human beings but rather as a divergence from the norm or the different 'other'. Interestingly, many of the women in this study were also parents and noted struggles of concerns that were related to their roles as mothers. Interestingly, motherhood and its contribution to the impact on the experience and perception of socialization practices were not implicated in the findings of this study. A true race and gender analysis would seek to understand how the most salient gendered role in society—that of a mother---plays a much larger role in how doctoral study is experienced along various dimensions of identity. Overall, the findings suggest that that the designation of race is a stigmatizing, isolating and dehumanizing aspect of the socialization process in the academy.

Climbing the Ladder

Despite gains made by Black women professionally, much of the existing scholarship on Black women in the academy has unveiled race and racism as barriers to professional advancement and achievement (Holmes, 2008; Stanley, 2006; Sulé, 2011). For example, in Holmes' (2008) qualitative study "Of African American Women in Academe" Holmes described how the legacy of race and gender perceptions create barriers for African American woman faculty in their climb toward academic and professional success. The women in this study noted racial bullying in particular, as being characteristic of their experiences and their experiences with racism an "occupational hazard" (p. 159).

Other research also revealed that Black women faced challenges of intellectual credibility from both their white colleagues and students in the classroom due to the invisibility of Black women in the academy along with stereotypes that devalue the intellectual abilities of women and people of color (Harley, 2008; Hunter, Hilderson & Hildreth, 2010). Jointly, research suggests that professional socialization for Black women faculty occurs on the margins, and they must use their "outsider-within" status (Collins, 2000) positions as sites of resistance, then we can deduce that these same barriers exist for African American women on the other end. These are important insights to gain so that we can better understand the trajectory of experiences for Black women in the 'pipeline' from graduate school to faculty positions. As the literature demonstrates, the intersection of race and gender creates significant organizational barriers in Black women's experiences in the academy.

“Chilly Climate”

Historically, African Americans have utilized higher education as a tool for social mobility. African American women in particular, have benefitted the most. In Hall and Sandler’s (1983) landmark study on the experiences of U.S. college women students in the classroom, they described the overt and covert gender discrimination and bias that women cited in predominantly white institutions (PWI’s). These experiences made the academic environment a “chilly” climate for women graduate students, faculty and administrators. Decades later, research on academic climate still finds that the social and environmental landscape of academic institutions is still “chilly” for women and doubly “chilly” for women of color (Adams; 2009; Stanley, 2006; Solórzano and Yosso, 2000; Patton, 2004b; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). When assessing the ‘racial climate’, researchers are evaluating and interpreting the policies, attitudes and culture that promote or hinder racial diversity and inclusion.

Over the last 20 years, doctoral degree attainment among African Americans has increased 87%, with African American women earning 65% of the doctoral degrees. At this rate, African American women are even outpacing their male counterparts. At first glance, these statistics seem to suggest that gender and racial equity and parity in the academy have been achieved; however, evidence suggests otherwise when disaggregated by factors of race and gender. While African American women have made significant strides in gaining access to postsecondary and graduate education, academia still remains a “chilly climate” (Hall & Sandler, 1986).

Major themes found in existing qualitative research has shown additional barriers beyond race discrimination to academic success for Black women in the academy like lack of faculty mentoring and support, tokenism, doubt in intellectual ability, and overall systemic

marginalization (Evans, 2007; McKay, 2002; Meyers, 2002; Moses, 1997). Moreover, although African Americans as a collective social identity, constitute the largest minority population being awarded doctoral degrees in fields like education, they are still disproportionately underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields (National Science Foundation [NSF], 2014).

Data gleaned from a large-scale study entitled, “The PhD Completion Project” demonstrated that the lowest rates of doctoral completion were among minority students and women (Council of Graduate Schools ([CGS], 2008). Along the lines of race for example, African American students in 2011 only earned a meager 6.3% of doctoral degrees conferred in the U.S., while whites earned 74% overall (NCES). A major theme found in existing qualitative research has shown that Black women doctoral students in particular, experience marginalization in the academy on both the basis of race and gender. There is also evidence that suggests that doctoral degree attainment among African Americans overall, is progressively slower than Whites (Felder, 2010).

Socialization. Similarly, Gardner’s (2008) work provides an understanding of the psychological impact of the doctoral student socialization process for doctoral students along race and gender intersections. Austin (2002) defines socialization “a process through which an individual becomes part of a group organization or community” (p. 96). In higher education contexts, this concept refers to processes through which graduate students are socialized into their roles as graduate students, future faculty and stewards of their disciplinary field of study. These processes are ongoing and include but are not limited to interactions with peers, faculty, mentors and developmental activities and events (Austin). Approaches to research employ this concept to understand which processes adequately prepare graduate students to be successful

students and faculty (Golde, 2000; Gardner, 2008). These processes vary depending upon institutional, disciplinary and departmental context, as well as by the individual ways in which different students internalize socialization.

The major theme focused on what Gardner refers to as "fitting the mold" for minority and non-traditional students. "Fitting the mold" refers to negative aspects of the doctoral student experience such as structural impediments and feelings of cultural isolation and social marginalization. For some participants in this study, the negative impacts on the students psychological well-being was evident:

I worked really, hard when I was in industry, and of course I suffered a lot of discrimination. I'm a minority, and I'm a woman, and [there are] tons of ways for me to be discriminated against. I worked really, really hard to get myself into a position where I could just be acknowledged and respected and awarded for my own personal contributions and I come here, and I think it's worse". She then added "I just hope I can make it out of here without too many scars.

(p. 132)

The message from this research is clear; the impact of navigating the terrain as a double minority has profound effects on students' psychological well-being.

microaggressions. One of most cited challenges that African American students face are in the form of racial microaggressions (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

Racial microaggressions are "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously" (p. 60). These invisible forms of racism have been argued to cause psychological distress among African-Americans (Sue, Capodilupo &

Holder, 2008). Racial microaggressions can occur in the form of overt racism (assaults), subtle insults or invalidations of racial realities. Solórzano and Yosso's (2000) qualitative study on campus racial climate examined how racial "microaggressions" which are "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color" (p. 60) affects the college environment. The findings from this study suggested that many of the students described experienced covert and overt racial microaggressions in both social and educational contexts. Many of the students that experienced racial microaggressions also indicated how they coped and responded to these microaggressions, which was by creating social and academic "counter-spaces". These subtle acts of racism and racial bias provide clear examples of how hostile racial climates can have deleterious effects on students' educational experiences. This in turn can affect positive constructions of Black women's self-definition and self-valuation (Collins, 2000). Although there are many individual and structural related challenges facing Black women in academia, there is a legacy and tradition of survival and resistance strategies from slavery that Black women draw on to face those challenges.

Motherhood

Research attitudes toward mothering in academia have focused on the tensions women experience between balancing academic workloads and parental obligations. Because women perform the majority of caregiving work in Western society, issues related to childrearing disproportionately impact academic women with children. The inflexibility of structural policies, invisibility as a constituency and lack of available resources are just few of the structural challenges the literature cites as significantly impacting doctoral women's persistence and degree completion (Felder, 2009).

Much of the scholarly research on the gendered experience of motherhood among women doctoral students is informed by feminist theories. Various sociological and feminist approaches to research from the perspectives of woman faculty and graduate students have been utilized as a lens to understand issues of gender oppression and inequity in the academy (Hoschild, 1986; Rich, 1995; Ruddick, 1989). Feminist analyses on the intersection between women's motherhood and academic roles suggest that the academy and motherhood are "greedy institutions" (Coser, 1994) whereby, high demands for time and labor are required for successful role performance in women's roles as mothers and academics (O'Reilly, 2003; Ward & Wolf-Wendel 2012).

Sociological approaches to examining the effects of balancing multiple roles of women have commonly utilized theories of role strain (Goode, 1960). These theories demonstrate how the layering of an additional social role such as employment with family responsibilities creates strain and conflict particularly for women and have been used to explain issues related to gender in the academic context (e.g., Estes, 2011; Lynch 2008; Tiu Wu, 2013). Other research exploring the lived experiences of student mothers often overlap with the work-life balance issues that woman faculty face, the conditions and positionality of women in student roles—woman graduate students in particular—create different conditions unique to the combination of student and mother. Women graduate students for example, report higher levels of dissatisfaction with their experiences in academia while balancing motherhood and graduate school (Lynch). In contrast to woman faculty, woman doctoral students also tend to be much less familiar and take advantage of institutional policies related to family caregiving (Mason & Goulden, 2002).

Other central themes highlighted are the conflicts between family and work (Armenti, 2004; Goulden & Frasch, 2009; Gilbert, 2008; Van Anders 2004; Wilson 2003); gender role conflict and social role incompatibility (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Mason & Goulden, 2002; Ward

& Wolf-Wendel, 2006) and institutional policies and climates that are discriminatory against individuals in caregiving roles (Drago, Colbeck et al., 2005; 2006; 2009). Although there is a growing body of research on academic motherhood, many of these studies have focused on the perspectives of woman faculty (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2006).

babies do matter. Research related to the intersection between motherhood and academic work have revealed that childrearing significantly affects professional advancement and career choice for woman faculty more frequently than males (Mason and Goulden, 2002; Mason, Goulden and Frasch, 2009). For example, in an empirical study by Mason and Goulden (2002) entitled, *Do Babies Matter? The Effect of Family Formation on the Lifelong Careers of Academic Men and Women*, the authors found that that babies do matter, and they matter a great deal more for women than men. Their study demonstrates how gender becomes a barrier for women when it comes to planning and caring for children in the context of academia. These findings confirm other student-to-faculty ‘pipeline’ studies that examine why and when women leave academia between doctoral study and the professoriate.

In a similar vein, Kuperberg’s (2009) longitudinal study found that women’s paths to graduate study are most likely to be interrupted by family planning and formation the likely perception of role incompatibility may deter doctoral women students from prospective faculty positions. Pipeline studies also confirm the notion that the perception of academic study is enough to deter women from (1) having children while in graduate school or (2) deter women from entering graduate study or pursuing academic jobs. Again, these studies contradict gender equity and parity discourse stemming from increased statistical representation of women in academia.

work-life conflict. Balancing multiple social roles such employee, student and spouse has been shown to affect women more so than men because women tend to be primary caregivers within family contexts. As a result, school contexts becomes difficult spaces for woman faculty and graduate students with children to navigate. Stimpson and Filer (2011) and Lynch (2008) both argue that for these reasons, women have higher attrition rates than men from graduate study. More recently, in Tiu Wu's (2013) qualitative doctoral dissertation *Learning to Balance: Exploring How Women Doctoral Students Navigate School, Motherhood and Employment*, Tiu Wu argued that combining motherhood, doctoral study and work creates significant role strain for doctoral student mothers with young children.

This section reviewed the challenges that women in academia face along intersection race, gender, class and motherhood. Black women's legacy and history of resistance aided Black women's survival in slavery and now in institutions that are embedded in oppression. In what follows, I discuss the survival strategies that Black women have used to navigate the barriers and challenges in academia as was discussed in previous sections.

For Black women, the challenge of balancing motherhood in academia are a bit more complex. The history and legacy of slavery and Black women's exclusion from the 'cult of true womanhood' aided in the construction of pejorative stereotypes and myths about Black women that influence the social landscape of Black women's identity struggles. Denigrating images and stereotypes about Black mothers emanating from slavery have been so pervasive that they have demonstrated the power to shape public policy discourse. Johnson's (2010) scholarship on welfare reform policy and its impact on African American single mother's access to higher education sheds light on how the racially gendered ideologies of Black women such as the "welfare queen" shapes the political realities of African American women in higher education.

Early welfare policies not only provided financial assistance to single, poor Black mothers, it also increased access to higher education. Reforms to welfare policy made to reduce the transmission of generational poverty changed its requirements so that recipients would have to participate in wage-earning labor. As more poor Black women joined the welfare rolls, the image of the “welfare queen” provoked a fear in the public policy realm that incited changes directed at single Black mothers. This change eliminated access to higher education for many poor Black single mothers. Collins further explains that “[a]t its core, the image of the welfare mother constitutes a class-specific, controlling image developed for poor, working-class Black women who make use of social welfare benefits to which they are entitled by law” (p. 78). These policy reforms directed at poor Black women demonstrate the stigmatizing effect of being a Black mother.

In a related qualitative case study on Black mothers in higher education, Sealey-Ruiz (2012) describes how a sample of five Black "reentry" mothers struggled for self-definition by resisting dominant stereotypes of Black motherhood by rejecting and resisting against the “Black Matriarch”, “Welfare Queen” and “Black Mammy” images. The Black women in this study rejected these stereotypes, viewed their educational journey as a tool for upward social mobility, and emphasized the importance of education as a way to resist and reject negative stereotypes about Black mothers. Important to note however, is the additional identity work that Black mothers must do as students differs from that of Black men and white women students. Black women student parents constitute 37% percent of college women with children. Among this group of students, they are disproportionately single and low-income student parents (Institute for Women’s Policy Research [IWPR], 2013). Women of color with children face structural barriers to persistence in higher education similar to what the literature reveals about the

experiences of white mothers. However, combined with recent welfare reforms, Black single mothers face additional barriers that are related to class, race and gender (Duquaine-Watson 2007; Haleman 2004; Johnson, 2010).

In a literature review on Graduate Student Mothers of Color (GSMOC), Anya (2011) attended to the ways in which women of color, particularly graduate students' voices, have been almost non-existent in the academic discourse on academic motherhood: "Women of Color experiences [. . .] are stifled on university and college campuses by the dominant, White cultures socially constructed ideals of gender roles and ethnic/race assumptions" (p. 14). Collectively, these analyses help to understand the challenges and barriers that women face in the academy as mothers, women and doctoral students however; they have been less attentive to the ways in which mothers' race, class and gender identities shape identity the experiences of mothers in graduate school (Anaya, 2011). Collectively, these data suggest race, gender, class are salient social and structural dimensions of the student experience (Brown, Watson, 2010; Gildersleeve, Croom & Vasquez, 2011; Holmes, 2008; Patton, 2009; Sulé, 2011; Woods, 2001). However, there is minimal scholarship examining the experiences of African American woman doctoral student parents (Nzinga-Johnson, 2013).

Black women faculty have cited increased stress due to expectations from peers and faculty to cater to their needs in ways that exceed the obligations of their faculty work. Women inside and outside of education have historically resisted against racially gendered stereotypes and images emanating from slavery and racist ideology to construct positively integrated racial and gender identities. Because African Americans have used higher and adult education as a strategy to gain economic mobility and racial uplift, the struggle to fight for self-definition and

self-valuation against gendered and racist identity myths and images in the context of U.S. education remains a persistent identity struggle.

Survival Strategies

Race and gender related issues are central and persistent themes highlighted in the literature on Black women in higher education. Although these issues are often barriers to professional mobility, academic success and achievement, Black women have a long history in creating strategies of resistance to cope with and adapt to contexts that perpetuate racial and gender oppression. Some of these strategies include the use of faith and spirituality (Thomas and Hollenshead, 2001), rejecting racist and gendered stereotypes of the Black woman identity and replacing them with positive constructions (Collins, 2000). One coping strategy related to identity development is that of consciousness shifting. Dubois first coined the concept of shifting consciousness or “double-consciousness” in his canonical work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Dubois described the plight of Blacks in American society as being dual and conflicting and wrote that:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s souls by the tape of a world that looks on in an amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, who dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

(p. 8)

The original concept of double-consciousness described the tensions and alienation that stem from the existential identity dilemma of not possessing a “single-consciousness” but instead

a conflicting awareness of oneself as African American on the one hand, and the cultural exclusion from society as an American on the other. While Dubois did not interrogate how Black women learned to navigate white society as African Americans and as women, Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) in the book *Shifting: The double lives of Black women in America* employed Dubois' concept as a strategy that Black women use to navigate white and Black America beyond racial "two-ness". They instead found that Black women in the U.S utilized shifting between multiple consciousness as a survival strategy to avert negative images and stereotypes. "Shifting" in their work was used identify the different ways in which Black women variably resist and accommodate their identities in navigating exclusionary spaces. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) found that,

In response to this relentless oppression, Black women in our country have had to perfect what we call "shifting," a sort of subterfuge that African Americans have long practiced to ensure their survival in our society. Perhaps more than other group of Americans, Black women are relentlessly pushed to serve and satisfy others and made to hide their true selves to placate White colleagues, Black men, and other segments of the community.

(p. 7)

Similarly, in Brown and Watson's (2010) study "Understanding the Experiences of women doctoral students", they cite issues of racial climate in college environments at predominantly white institutions [PWI's] to negatively impact the experiences of students of color in their study. Interestingly, the findings also revealed that the African American women doctoral students in the study grappled with issues related to the intersection of race and gender. The women in this study developed coping strategies such as "shifting" identities, akin to what

Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) and Dubois (1903) argue are necessary in order to persist despite hostile racial climates. The findings are consistent with other research on African American students attending white institutions in that students struggle with fears of stereotypes (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Although research and history tell us that Black women have historically struggled against race and gender oppression in the academy, scholarship on the experiences of Black women also details the ways in which they employ strategies that seemingly imply compliance with the status quo, but actually resemble strategies of survival and resistance.

Mentoring

While Black women are left to their own devices to navigate contexts of oppression, external strategies like developing supporting relationships with faculty mentors and peers can help to mitigate the burden of navigating the academic environment and serve as a form of resistance against organizational barriers and systemic oppression (Henderson, 2010). Research has shown the critical role that mentoring opportunities and relationships play in fostering positive experiences and academic success for African American women in doctoral study (Patton & Harper, 2007). In Patton's study (2009) "My sister's keeper: A qualitative examination of mentoring experiences among African American women in graduate and professional schools", the findings suggested that positive mentoring relations with African American woman professors and administrators help Black women cope with oppression.

Likewise, in *Lifting as we climb: African American women's education experiences in the Ivory Tower*, Reddick's (2012) mixed-methods dissertation examined the experiences of 102 African American women in doctoral programs. The purpose of this study was to examine the social and educational experiences of African American women in doctoral programs in the last

decade in order to understand how students experience doctoral education. The study demonstrated that Black women *do* persist and can be successful in doctoral programs and that mentoring by African American woman faculty contributed to their ability to persist. It confirmed what other studies have illustrated about how critical it is for Black women to support each other, especially faculties who have made it through the ‘pipeline’. African American woman faculty mentors also serve as community “othermothers” (Collins, 2000) to African American graduate women because this kind of nurturing and support is reflective of the kinds of relationships that Black women experience with mothers and other women in the Black community.

Although Black students in predominantly white institutions are underrepresented, finding support through mentoring relationships has been shown to increase persistence among Black students (Crisp and Cruz, 2009). In the article, “Learning to read each other: Black woman graduate students share their experiences at a White research I institution” Williams, Brewley et al. (2005) examined the experiences of Black women graduate students at a White Research I institution. They found that mentoring received from Black woman professors contributed to student persistence. Holmes, Land & Hudson (2007) also found in their study exploring the mentoring relationships of Black women faculty at predominantly white institutions that mentoring increased their ability for professional mobility regardless of the level of mentoring.

Mentors for African American women are critical to ensuring that they are able to not only ‘interpret’ the social environment of academia, but that they also pass down knowledge about ways to navigate them. Interestingly, academic motherhood studies also demonstrate the low visibility of parenting faculty perpetuates the reputation of the institution as being ‘unfriendly’ to families (Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009). For Black women doctoral student

parents, it could be assumed that not only might they have difficulty in finding same raced mentors, but also difficulty in finding faculty mentors who are also Black women and mothers.

Research Context

Doctoral Education

Since the establishment of graduate education in the U.S. during the 19th century, the doctor of philosophy degree (PhD) has been the highest academic degree granted in U.S. PhD programs were initially structured after German universities and requirements and curricula in some contexts still mirror its German ancestry today. It traditionally was designed as teaching degree for aims of professionalizing the professorate (Noble, 1994). Doctoral programs are typically apprenticeship models where a student works closely with a major professor while taking coursework and the goal of this apprenticeship is for doctoral students to study under a field expert and acquire foundational disciplinary knowledge. Doctoral students are socialized around the historical cultural and hegemonic norms of European education by faculty in their departments and programs.

The culmination of the PhD is the production of a dissertation that contains independent research undertaken by a doctoral student. The dissertation is “an intensive, highly professional training experience” where the successful completion of the dissertation “demonstrates the candidate’s ability to address a major intellectual problem and arrive at a successful conclusion independently” (Council of Graduate Schools [CGS] 2005; p. 21). The dissertation is then evaluated by faculty members in the student’s field of specialization based on the student’s ability and capacity to make an original and significant contribution to the ‘wall of knowledge’ in the relative field of specialization.

The concern with doctoral education in both research and practice in more recent years has been the “hidden crisis of attrition” (Lovitts & Nettles, 2000). The nature of doctoral degree programs is variable and are arranged by discipline, field and institutional context. Recent attention has been placed on the success and attainment of PhD as an attempt to mitigate the high rate of dropouts and non-completions among Ph.D. students (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992) due to the attrition rates hovering around 50% (Lovitts, 2001). Contributions to these understanding—factors that contribute to completion and persistence—is important given the investment of time and economic resources to attain the highest degree in the land. Research attitudes toward doctoral student attrition and retention problems emphasize social integration as mitigating factors (Golde, 2000; Lovitts, 200; Tinto, 1993).

Just as students embark on a journey of doctoral study for many reasons, their experiences and personal outcomes also vary. Doctoral students are socialized into both academic discipline and institutional contexts but this process of socialization is internalized differently for individual students. Empirical approaches to studying the doctoral experience that do exist are categorized as (a) completion and attrition studies (Bowen and Rudenstine, 1992; Council of Graduate Schools, 2008; Golde, 2005); (b) socialization processes (Austin, 2002; Gardner, 2007; Bower and Washington, 2003); (c) mentoring studies (Patton, 2009; Reddick, 2012; Golde, 2001) and (d) identity experiences along gender and race (Ellis, 2001; Espino, Muñoz & Kiyama, 2010) Council of Graduate Schools, 2012; Lovitts, 2001).

Some of the theoretical perspectives that been useful in studying the experiences of doctoral students are difficult to apply the experiences of women student parents of color in doctoral study. Platform studies that focus on gender only have shown that although women’s increased access and participation in doctoral study has grown significantly over the last several

decades, the academy is still organized around gender and racial hierarchies that privileges white men over women. Earlier research has revealed the contradiction between the record numbers of women in doctoral study and the increasing rate of number of doctorates awarded to women and the reasons that differentiate their departure and time to degree completion than men (Mason et al., 2004).

Latino and African American students in particular have disparate educational experiences on their paths toward the doctorate than white male students as racism and intellectual inferiority myths negatively affect the experiences of women and students of color (Nettles, 1990). Attainment of the coveted PhD remains a journey of uphill struggle for women and students of color (Little, 2014). In a qualitative dissertation *The Ph.D. as a Contested Intellectual Site: A Critical Race Analysis of the Personal and Institutional Factors that Influence the Persistence and Retention of Academically Successful Black Doctoral Students* Little (2014) argues that,

The doctorate has functioned as a form of *white status property*, which has resulted in the exclusion of Blacks and other marginalized groups and has precluded them from being perceived as originators and disseminators of knowledge. Buoyed by inferiority and cultural deficit claims, the academy, and more specifically certain dominant education theories have systematically moated and excluded constructed ‘Others’ from the Ivory Tower’

(original emphasis, p. 15)

Stated differently, studies of persistence and retention offer little understanding of the struggle to obtain the coveted Ph.D. beyond personal attributes such as self-efficacy, academic

ability and individual resilience while making connections to the role of race and racism and the collective struggles of African Americans in higher education. Culturally, PhD holders are granted elite status. Dominant assumptions about Black inferiority are contradicted when African Americans pursue and obtain the ‘coveted’ PhD.

A report from the Council of Graduate Schools (2008b) cites that, "While completion rates for all students may be lower than optimal, the ‘failure to complete’ problem is notably more serious among students from underrepresented populations: both women and minorities” (p.1). The very context of doctoral education must be taken into account as an influence on the construction identity especially since its initial design was based on the exclusion of women and people of color. Through a more critical lens, the institution of education and its intersection with institutions of race, class and gender leads to questions of access, equity and equality for minorities and women.

Structural Violence

The concept of microaggressions has been used to describe a slight or insult enacted by an offending person or symbol (Sue, 2010). In the taxonomy of, racial microaggressions, “macroaggressions” are differentiated as environmental microaggressions that occur at the structural rather than the interpersonal level (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Sue, 2010). Although the concept of microaggressions covers the subtle ways in which minorities experience interpersonal forms of violence such as racially gendered invalidations, assaults, and insults, they do not fully capture various forms of prejudice and discrimination or describe the impact or toll that they have on people who experience them. One way to help understand macroaggressions in an institutional context is through a lens of violence. Carraway’s work (1991) categorizes types of violence produced within institutions. Carraway argues that in understanding the situation and

conditions that perpetuate inequalities in the lives of minority groups we must first broaden our definition of violence:

By considering some of the other types of violence perpetrated globally against women of all colors—including economic violence, cultural violence, legislative violence, medical violence, spiritual violence, emotional violence, and educational violence—we can begin to organize and sustain a substantial defense (p. 1306).

Carraway's definition allows us to consider the most visible and obvious forms of racism as an *example of violence*. Unlike the various forms of microaggressions that occur at the interpersonal level, individuals are not always visible perpetrators at the environmental or structural level (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). Viewing experiences within the context of historically white institutions as violence reveals the complex and different faces of oppression (Young, 2004). Using violence as a frame, it places emphasis on the impact that institutional and systemic oppression has on minorities located within U.S. institutions.

The Trauma of Doctoral Study

Institutions are a product of their histories and Black people in the U.S. have a historical relationship to institutional violence (Farmer, 2009). On slave plantations, the omnipresent threat of being physically beaten with a whip, maimed and the addition of sexual violence for Black women was a persistent reality (Davis, 1981; White 1985). Post-slavery lynching, political disenfranchisement, racial segregation, educational segregation, Jim Crow laws, forced sterilization, and police brutality are examples of institutional violence that Black people have suffered state sanctioned, structural level violence. Emerging research has worked to highlight the affective dimensions of oppression. Concepts such as "racial battle fatigue" which describes

the cumulative psychological and physical effects of racial microaggressions (DeGruy Leary, 2005) and "post-traumatic slave syndrome" which describes the historical spiritual, psychological, behavioral and emotional injuries emanating from slavery experienced by African Americans (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007) empirically demonstrate how the experience of racism, prejudice and discrimination impacts psychological well-being.

Truong & Museus (2012) studied the psychological impact of encounters with racism among 26 doctoral students of color at predominantly white institutions. They found that the doctoral students of color possessed extensive repertoires and strategies for coping with racism and racist encounters within their institutional contexts. These coping strategies they argue, demonstrated a taxonomy of responses to the traumatizing effects of racism. Such strategies included both internal and external mechanisms. The internal responses included: (a) utilizing social support, (b) avoiding racist environments, (c) engaging in religion and spirituality, (d) seeking treatment, (e) achieving as resistance, (f) advocating for peers of color, (g) relieving stress through hobbies, (h) reflecting on racism and, (i) preparing for racist encounters. Some of the external mechanisms, which they defined as "controlled response". These responses included (a) suppressing reactions, (b) strategic maneuvering, (c) soliciting intervention, (d) switching advisers, (e) transferring out. Overall, the significance of these findings captured participations responses to racism from non-deficit perspectives, and instead contextualized them as acts of interventions taken by students to manage their psychological well-being. They also important related back to Carraway's notion of reframing acts such as racism as violence to underscore the impact that it has on students from marginalized groups in white controlled spaces.

These perspectives emphasize the interactions between student and environment however, there has been relatively little theorizing that connects historical perspectives to the current

experiences of social identity development within the context of doctoral education. The proliferation of models and theories of student identity and experience over the last 40 years has also traditionally focused on the undergraduate experience, thereby leading to a lack of literature and theories appropriate for examining the doctoral student experience. In the next section of this literature review, I move beyond the research context to explore the literature surrounding identity development.

Part Two: Facilitators of Black Women's Identity Construction

This section of the literature review describes identity in relation to Black motherhood and identity development theories found in college student and adult development domains. It is first necessary to provide an abbreviated version of the discourse on Black motherhood from an historical perspective, in order to uncover the gap in the literature in the field of higher education where identity development theories are constructed. The purpose of this portion of the literature review is to reveal how the examination of the construction of identity for Black mothers necessitates an intersectional framework emergent from the paradigm of Black feminist epistemology.

Black women's Identity Construction under Slavery

In order to understand the sites of intersection along the lines of gender and race for Black women in the academic context, it is important to recognize how intersecting systems of power present in the larger sociohistorical context shape the lives and experiences of mothers through the omnipresence of negative stereotypes, myths and images of the Black woman identity. Black women historically were not granted benevolent sexism, or a positive attitude toward women that reflects dominant stereotypical myths about women's inferior status.

The surveillance and scrutiny of Black women's maternal identity is historically tied to systems of racism, patriarchy and slavery. During slavery, Black women were needed to reproduce as many children as possible in order to reproduce the labor force (Roberts, 1997). Enslaved Black women's most important role during slavery was not in toiling away in the plantation fields but on maintaining the slave economy by reproduction. Black women's procreation then was done under surveillance as a way for slave masters to protect and capitalize

off their investments. Dorothy Roberts explained that in her groundbreaking text *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty* that,

The ban on importing slaves after 1808 and the steady inflation in their price made enslaved women's childbearing even more valuable. Female slaves provided their masters with a ready future supply of chattel. Black procreation not only benefitted each slave's particular owner; it also more globally sustained the entire system of slavery. Unlike most slave societies in the New World, which relied on the massive importation of Africans, the slave population in the United States maintained itself through reproduction. (p. 24)

Historically, Black women held no true autonomy over their wombs or children and were in fact encouraged to reproduce (Roberts). While the 'cult of true womanhood' encourages reproduction among white women (Friedan, 1963), Black mothers are stigmatized as being sexually promiscuous and irresponsible (Harris-Perry, 2011; Moynihan, 1965; Collins, 2000). Because Black women's bodies are no longer under control of white male ownership, society has taken up the task of surveilling Black women's reproduction. Beyond slavery reproduction for Black women, especially poor Black women with multiple children, is viewed as socially irresponsible and to blame for the reproduction of Black poverty, criminality and educational underachievement (Moynihan, 1965).

Trauma

Black women have historical legacy of victimization and trauma transmitted through generations from slavery (DeGruy Leary, 2005; Eyerman, 2001). For the purposes of this review,

I use the definition of trauma as put forth by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS, 2014):

Individual trauma [that] results from an event, series of events, or set of experiences that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing.

(p. 7)

A common approach to theorizing of trauma among children is to view the social conditions (i.e., dangerous neighborhoods, absent parents, exposure to violence, drug and alcohol use among parents, etc.) as circumstances that precipitate trauma (e.g., Morris, 2016; Saxe, Ellis & Brown, 2016) or evidence of cultural pathology. Other perspectives underscore the negative developmental and behavioral outcomes prevalent among children with trauma backgrounds (e.g., Ringel and Brandell, 2012; Saxe et al., 2016). Thus, the purpose of trauma theorizing is to find appropriate frameworks that help children and adult overcome physical and psychological trauma (Steele and Malchiodi, 2012).

However, for Black women, race, gender and class oppression converge to foster social conditions that shape the types of trauma that Black women face differently than white women or Black men. The history of U.S. Black women's trauma can be traced back to the context of slavery, where Black women were subject to sexual violence and abuse. False myths of Black women's unconstrained sexuality combined with their status as property made Black women more vulnerable to sexual forms of violence and sanctioned their abuse (Davis, 1971). During slavery, crimes of rape and sexual violence committed against Black women by white slave owners or Black slaves were not treated as crimes (Broussard, 2013). In contemporary research

on trauma, Black women are rarely discussed beyond race-based pathologies or analyzed outside of micro level social and economic contexts. For example, in Kendall-Tackett's (2005) work on women and trauma, women's exposure to trauma is depicted as a pathological condition of economically distressed communities.

Trauma literature also purports that Black girls are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse in ways that different from Black boys and white girls (Kendall-Tackett, 2005; West, 1999; Williams, 2008). Not surprising then, in Morris' (2016) study on Black girls and their schooling experiences there were common histories of sexual trauma. According to Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) "[c]hildhood sexual abuse is a trauma that many African American girls must endure, and it often cripples their healthy development" (p. 348). In relation to Black women's experiences, the very same systems of power that relegated African slaves and descendants to servitude and subjected them to abuse are present today in shaping conditions of oppression today. The experience of trauma related oppression then, is historical. Framing trauma experiences among marginalized groups as a byproduct of historical relations of power that shape every day experiences, must be taken into account rather than individual or social circumstances that facilitate trauma.

Black feminist theory adds further depth to these findings by underscoring the importance of linking history to contemporary reality for Black women. Research confirms that there is a tenable link between the prevalence of sexual violence experienced among Black girls and the cultural legacy of sexual violence Black women endured during slavery (Camp, 2004; Collins, 2000; Gray White, 1999; Morris, 2016; Roberts, 1997). The theoretical framework of this study urges the importance of locating Black girls and Black women's experiences within sociohistorical frames. Incest and sexual abuse are not normative experiences for Black women,

but there is a historical legacy of sexual abuse and exploitation dating back to slavery that makes the experiences of Black women's sexual trauma appear to be a normal condition of Black womanhood and their stories less likely to be heard.

Stereotypes

Stereotypical images of Black women permeate popular culture, and public policy. Claude Steele (1995, 1997, and 2001) argued that African Americans often feel at risk of confirming negative stereotypes surrounding the Black identity and termed this as “stereotype threat”. Steele defined “stereotype threat” as “the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype”. The consequences of this risk are developing an anxiety around performance, particularly in college settings. This anxiety eventually diminishes the ability to perform to the best of one's ability.

Perhaps the most salient and pervasive cultural stereotypes associate with Black women's identity are those associated with Black women's motherhood roles. In *Storming Caesar's palace: How Black mothers fought their own war on poverty* Orleck (2005) explains how the *Aid to Families with Dependent Act* (AFDC) of 1935 or commonly referred to as welfare, systematically excluded and abused single Black mothers in particular because the social welfare system was designed to support white mothers. When Black mothers gained access, AFDC became negatively associated with stereotypes of Black mothers that depicted them as lazy, unwilling to work and reproductively irresponsible (Collins, 2000). Orleck notes that this change led to a “system that denied recipients any right to privacy, [and] ordered state workers to barge into homes at all hours” (p. 95).

In Dorothy Roberts' groundbreaking work *Killing the Black Body* (1997), Roberts explained that three stereotypes in particular relate to identity of Black motherhood: the mammy, the welfare queen and the "super strong" Black mother. The "super strong" Black mother is a more contemporary image, glorifying the self-sacrifices of Black mothers who "place their needs behind those of everyone else, especially their sons" (Collins, p. 174). This archetype suggests that Black mothers naturally draw on reservoir of strength to tower against adversity and oppression. The harmful message embedded in this image is that this strength is viewed as unfeminine and counter to the 'cult of true womanhood'. Melissa Harris-Perry (2011) further notes that "the construct of the strong black woman does not arise from empirical observation of who Black women really are. Instead she argues, it is a racial and political construct emanating from the expectations of African American communities and from the needs of the nation that frame black women in narrow ways" (p. 393).

Another trope of Black motherhood is the image of the Black "mammy". The mammy image is an archetype emergent from slavery, that depicted a characteristically unfeminine, obese, dark-skinned woman with a large broad nose, scarf-covered hair, whose virtuous strength was attributed to her role as the caretaker or 'mammy' in the white families' household. This stereotype depicted Black mothers who exuded more pride and pleasure in her domestic servitude for the white family than in her own home.

Finally, the welfare queen is an image of an impoverished single Black mother who has more children than she can afford and relies on the government for financial assistance. This image advanced first by the Moynihan report (1965), prompted the development of policies and legislation that would ameliorate and discourage the matriarchal structure of the Black family. These pejorative images are particularly damaging to Black women because they justified the

second class citizenry of Black women, who were seen as underserving of full person or womanhood.

impact of stereotypes. Societal stereotypes about certain groups, particularly among African Americans has been shown to impact identity development and consequentially academic performance among Black students (Steele, 1997). Roberts (1997) notes that "Not only were Black women exiled from the norm of true womanhood, but their maternity was blamed for Black people's problems. Contrary to the ideal white mother, Black mothers had their own repertory of images that portrayed them as immoral, careless, domineering, and devious" (p. 10). An example of the impact of racially and gendered based stereotypes is found the Moynihan Report (1965), an official government document:

In essence, the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is so out of line with the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male, and in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well.

(United States Department of Labor [DOL], Office of Policy Planning and Research, p. 29)

This official government document demonized Black women in their motherhood roles, particularly single Black mothers. Moynihan argued that because the African American familial structure was matriarchal, this contradicted the 'normal' social structure of American society. Moynihan's matriarch thesis presupposed that the matriarchal structure of the Black family structure led to a "tangle of pathology" which was responsible for the dissolution of Black marriages, illegitimate births, and retarded social progress and "impose[d] a crushing burden on

the Negro male” (p. 29). He further argues that Black mothers were responsible for the disintegration of the familial structure of the Black family and can be blamed for their persistent dependency of welfare. Black mothers have been blamed as the central cause of the social and economic decline of the Black family and community (Harris-Perry, 2013).

Theoretical foundations of Identity Frameworks

With increasing concerns on addressing persistence and retention of college students, there has been a growing interest and development in college student and adult identity development theories. Landmark theories of student development are centered on intellectual and moral development and these frameworks provided important and understanding of how college students make meaning and interpret the world (e.g., Perry, 1968; Kohlberg, 1981). However, much of this research focused on white males from privileged backgrounds (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010).

Traditional identity theories place high salience on psychosocial, epistemological and moral development as an integral aspect to identity formation (see e.g., Chickering, 1969, Chickering & Reisser, 1993, Erikson, 1980; Marcia 1980; 1993, 1994; Josselson, 1966, 1994), so understanding how adults reconcile multiple identities (i.e., ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation and ability) to form a coherent identity (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2000) is critical to holistically exploring the developmental process of adults. Gardner (2009) further argues that in attempts to understand the doctoral student experience, doctoral student identity has been excluded from discussions on student development.

Social Identities

The social aspect in social identity development determines how the individual and society evaluates and makes judgments about themselves and other people (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Abes, Jones & McEwen 2000). It also explores how individuals develop self-concepts. Since social identities are constituted of internal conceptions of self and externally imposed perceptions, the examination of them can serve as powerful heuristic tools to understand how students experience learning in social contexts. Thus, race and gender ideologies are important to understand because Black women struggle to construct positive identities against these racially gendered stereotypes. Since constructs of race, sexuality, class, gender, ability, inform the cultural and social contexts in which our identities are situated, we must pay attention to the ways in which this constructs oppress, constrain or empower certain groups over others. One way to understand how these constructs manifest in the material realities of adults is to examine how stereotypes ‘threaten’ the development of a self-defined identity (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Collins, 2000).

Gender Identity Development

Research related to women’s cognitive identity development is found within landmark theories of college student development. These historical bodies of literature are centered on intellectual and moral development and these frameworks provided important and understanding of how college students make meaning and interpret the world (e.g., Perry, 1968; Kohlberg, 1981). However, much of this research focused on white males from privileged backgrounds (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). In response to women’s absence from dominant identity development discourse, prominent theorists such as Baxter Magolda (2001), Carol

Gilligan (1982), Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, (1986) and Josselson (1997) focused their research and scholarship on exploring women's identity development through frameworks of moral development, identity status achievement and epistemology (ways of knowing) (in Evans et al., 2010).

women's ways of knowing. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's (1986) work on developing a framework of women's development was transcendental in the field of adult development theory in that it was particularly, "concerned 'how women know what they know' (p. 106). Their groundbreaking work approximates the cognitive transitions that women move through as they begin to develop individual agencies in their learning demonstrated the differences between men's and women's learning experiences. Through their extensive research, they developed five epistemological perspectives on how women know and view the world:

1. Silence—a position in which women experience themselves mindless, voiceless, and subject to the whims of external authority. (They are passive, feel incompetent, and are defined by others.)
2. Received knowledge—a perspective from which women conceive of themselves as capable of receiving, even reproducing knowledge from the all-knowing external authorities but not capable of creating knowledge on their own.
3. Subjective knowledge—a perspective from which truth and knowledge are conceived of as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited.
4. Procedural knowledge—a position which women are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge.

5. Constructed knowledge—a position in which women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing.

(p. 335)

In Luttrell's (1989) work on *Working-Class Women's Ways of Knowing: Effects of Gender, Race, and Class*, Luttrell argues "women do not have a common understanding of their gender identities and knowledge" (p. 44). In contrast to Belenky et al.'s findings, this study reveals that not all women experience being a 'woman' the same way. The intersection of race, gender and class creates differences between Black women and white women's claim to knowledge. While Belenky et al. purposively sampled women who were rearing children from social service agencies in their study because "parenthood initiates an epistemological revolution" (p. 35) they were not attentive to how the intersection of race, gender and class shapes identity development of women and mothers. This concept nonetheless informs this study by asking, what are Black mother's ways of knowing, race, gender and class in relation to their experiences and identities?

Racial Identity Development

Since race and racism affects the ways in which African Americans navigate the social learning environment, there has been an increase in the development of models of racial identity development and uses in examining the student experience. Existing models and theories attending to racial identity development in student and adult development research worked to reveal the ways in which negative stereotypes surrounding racial and ethnic identities impact self-perceptions in the context of the college environment (Torres, 2009). Most of these theories

are based on William Cross' (1971; 1991) model of racial identity development for African Americans (Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1990) and reflect the notion that the development of a "healthy" identity is achieved when African Americans internalize a healthy, positive image of themselves and their social group. Cross and Fhagan-Smith (2001) conceptualized a more contemporary model of Black identity development over the lifespan as a linear progression through stages. This contemporary model reflects the salience of race in terms of "nigrescence" which is the process of "becoming Black". Within this model, there are four progressive sectors associated with nigrescence, with the highest stages of development as the achievement of a healthy Black identity.

Similarly, Atkinson, Morten and Sue's (1998) model of racial and cultural identity development (RCID) described the role that race has in the identity formation of an individual through five stages: (a) conformity, (b) dissonance, (c) resistance and immersion, (d) introspection, and, (e) synergistic articulation and awareness. Identity achievement in this model was depicted by a healthy identification with and internalization of one's respective racial identity. However, while these models nuance understanding of racial identity development, they focus on singular aspects of identity such as race or gender and view identity development as a linear process.

Intersectional Identity Development

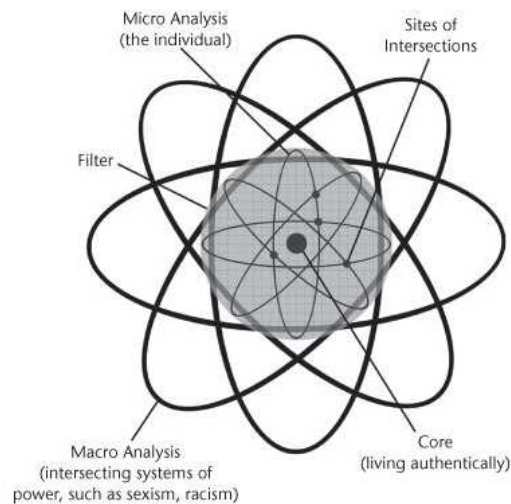
Scholarship building on the traditional frameworks of identity development have been able to push the limitations of prior to move beyond singular categories of analysis. The most appropriate identity framework for this study is a framework that analytically, examines the intersections of multiple identities and the ways in which these identity intersections influence multiple domains of adult identity development among Black mothers. In the field of higher

education research, an intersectional approach to identity development allows for a more complex analysis than singular analytical categories such as race or gender.

intersectional model of multiple dimensions of identity. The intersectional model of multiple dimensions of identity (I-MMDI) by Abes, Jones, and Quaye (2013) is one such recent and more nuanced model of identity development. Utilizing Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and Deborah King's (1988) work as a foundation, scholars of intersectional research and analyses attributed core characteristics of intersectional work that (a) centers the lived experiences of people of color (b) complicating identity and examining both individual and group identities; (c) exploring identity salience as influenced by systems of power and privilege and unveiling power in interconnected structures of inequality; and (d) advancing a larger goal of promoting social justice and change (Abes and Jones, 2004, 2007; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Reynolds and Pope, 1991).

Based on their previous model of multiple dimensions of identity development (MMDI), this model is bound by tenets of intersectional research and analyses emergent from the work of Black feminist thought. The nuance of the MMDI is the situation of individual identities within larger structures of inequality. This model analytically, captures the influences of both individual (micro) and structural (macro) dimensions on individual social identities (see figure 1). The core of this model locates an individual's core sense of self or personal identity within a particular social context. This identity is internally constructed and surrounded by intersecting personal identities such as sexual orientation, race and gender.

Figure 1. Intersectional Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (I-MMDI)



The core of this model locates an individual's core sense of self or personal identity within a particular social context. Identity is viewed as being internally constructed and surrounded by intersecting personal identities such as sexual orientation, race and gender. Surrounding the meaning making contexts are intersecting systems of power such as sexism and racism, which shapes the meaning making process of social reality. Intersectional scholars are particularly interested in how contextual influences on identity such as stereotypes and structural dimensions of power and oppression shape the ways in which individuals interpret social reality. The novelty of this framework is that it emphasizes identity construction as a fluid, dynamic and ongoing process and provides a richer understanding of how students perceive relationships between their personal and social identities while being particularly attuned to context.

In this framework, the core places the lived experiences of people of color at the center of examination with attention to structural dimensions of social reality rather than individual identities. The core is depicted in relation to the interactions among the context and the salience of social identities is determined and varies by social context. Core identities are internally constructed and surrounded by intersecting personal identities such as sexual orientation, race

and gender. The social context is depicted as the filter that links context to the development of social identity and meaning making. In parallel with intersectional theories, the filter, or meaning making context, is shaped by structures of privilege and oppression, which influence identity salience and meaning-making capacity. How one comes to understand privilege and oppression is determined by positioning within contexts where race and racism for example, is apparent.

Exploring the permeable influences of power and oppression within the context of doctoral study will provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of how Black women in their roles as mothers and doctoral students make meaning of their personal and social identities. For example, if an African American woman experiences both sexism and racism, then the salience of race and gender identities may become more apparent.

maternal identity development. Much of the scholarship on the maternal identity is found within nursing research and feminist scholarship (Fouquier, 2011; Mercer, 2010; Ruddick; Rubin, 1984). Rubin's historical work on maternal behaviors framed maternal development as goal oriented tasks toward accepting and adapting to the maternal role. The original aim of maternal development theory in the field of nursing was to aide nurse practitioners in caregiving for pregnant women (Rubin, 1967). Building on the work of Rubin, Mercer (2004) on the other hand offered a re-conceptualized framework of maternal theory and termed it Maternal Role Attainment (MRA) with the related concept of development, Becoming a Mother (BAM). Mercer defined maternal identity as a "maternal role attained" whereby a woman's ability to be successful in her motherhood role required the integration of other social roles. Mercer also saw maternal development as a set of both behavioral and cognitive processes that were measured in conceptual stages: (a) attachment, (b) competency and (c) acceptance.

In the feminist domain, Sarah Ruddick's (1989) work spoke to the epistemological development of mothers. In her book, *Maternal thinking: toward a politics of peace* she argues that maternal work, "demands that mothers think, out of this need for thoughtfulness, a distinctive discipline emerges" (p. 24). This work adds to existing scholarship on adult identity development because it purports that the act of mothering is an intellectual enterprise. This means that through a mother's childrearing activities, a certain way of knowing develops and this is, "maternal thinking". What is instructive from Ruddick's work is that women not only construct knowledge through their maternal roles and requires a special way of thinking, but that they strategically apply that knowledge in their daily practices. Although these bodies of literature situate the social identity of mother within social, political and historical frames of references, the discussion and analyses offered reflect perspective accounts of middle class white women (Fouquier, 2011).

Some research has examined maternal identity development along the intersections of race and class (Abrams & Currans, 2010; Elliott, Powell, & Brenton, 2013; Fouquier, 2011; Sawyer, 1999). For example, in Abrams and Currans (2010) study on Black motherhood and the intersection of poverty and post-partum depression among low-income ethnic minority mothers, they explore the ways in which women negotiate their maternal identities in the intersecting context of poverty, race and psychological health. The findings suggest that despite the theorized negative interaction between motherhood, race and poverty (Moynihan), Black mothers do resist racial stigma surrounding their maternal identity and construct an alternative discourse of "good mothering". What this study demonstrates are the *psychological* effects of grappling with positive identity construction in a society where the Black woman identity is dehumanized and devalued.

Another example is Sawyer's (1999) work "Engaged mothering: The transition to motherhood for a group of African American women." In this study, Sawyer described the transition to motherhood from the perspective of African American women by employing maternal identity development theory as an analytical framework to understand how African American women describe their transition to motherhood and the degree to which perceptions of racism "facilitate and inhibit a healthy transition". The findings were consistent with current descriptions of motherhood from maternal role attainment theory (MRA), but also add to this theory the important context of racism, stereotyping and negativity faced by Black women.

Likewise, in Elliott, Powell, & Brenton's (2013) qualitative study, "Being a good mom: low-income, Black single mothers negotiate intensive mothering" the authors find that Black mothers embrace and perform "intensive mothering" in the absence of social supports for their children. Because there are very few positive images of Black motherhood available, Black women are left to draw on Eurocentric representations to inform identity construction. Dubois argued that this is the double consciousness or "two-ness" that African Americans experience when attempting to reconcile two cultures that are "warring ideals". "Intensive mothering" is a dominant, Eurocentric ideology that evaluates mothers based on the degree of intensity in which they engage with childrearing practices. However, because Black women's history of mothering in a U.S. context has been historically constrained by slavery, and is devalued and denigrated as cultural practices due to emergence of myths and stereotypes surrounding Black women's identity, the study of Black women's maternal practices cannot be understood as divorced from historical, political, economic and social contexts.

In sum, these studies demonstrate the identity struggle that Black mothers face when dominant cultural ideologies surrounding motherhood intersect with their racial, class and gender

identities. This creates the conflict that Black women face, not only in defining themselves as Black mothers while resisting negative stereotypes and stigma, but also feeling pressured to adhere to dominant scripts that are meant for white and middle class mothers. Although these studies examine Black motherhood through a social science perspective, it decouples the historical context of Black women's maternal practices emanating from slavery. Nonetheless, it helps us to understand how Black mothers grapple with constructing their identities against negative images and stereotypes of Black mothers in the larger social context (Moynihan, 1965).

Summary

This review indicates that there are scarce bodies of literature that address the experiences and identity development of Black women doctoral student parents in academia. Due to this scarcity, tangential bodies of literature were drawn upon to make connections between identity development, motherhood and Black women's experiences in doctoral study. The most appropriate identity framework for this study is a framework that analytically, examines the intersections of multiple identities and the ways in which these identity intersections influence multiple domains of adult identity development among Black mothers. In the field of higher education research, an intersectional approach to identity development allows for a more complex analysis than singular analytical categories such as race or gender. The intersectional model of multiple dimensions of identity (I-MMDI) by Abes, Jones, and Quaye (2013) is one such recent and more nuanced model of identity development.

As noted in this review, Black women doctoral student parents are invisible in the literature and as a population of study in research on students in higher education. As a group, they may encounter barriers in doctoral study that are unexplored due to their invisibility in both research and academic contexts. Black women have a historical legacy of oppression, resistance

and intellectual tradition in white controlled spaces, yet very minimal research and literature has attended to the experiences of Black mothers in predominantly white and elite research institutions. This study provides such a contribution by advancing identity frameworks to include Black women's sociohistorical legacies in the theorizing of their identity development. In the next section, I will discuss the methodology, theoretical framework, methods and procedures of data, collection and analysis. I will also provide a discussion of the ethical considerations, methods used to ensure trustworthiness of the data as well as limitations to the study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to understand how gender, race and class impacts the identity development of seven Black women doctoral student parents enrolled across four predominantly white and elite research institutions (R1) in the Midwest. This chapter begins with the research questions explored in this study and prior assumptions in the research process. I also discuss the rationale for choosing the research paradigm and design for this study, and methods that were used in data collection and analysis. Within this discussion, I provide a description of the participants selected, the setting where the research took place, a statement of positionality and reflexivity, and end with ethical considerations for research. The next section will detail the methodology framing the study, as well as a justification for its selection. The central research question guiding this qualitative feminist phenomenological study was: “How does the experience of doctoral study in predominantly white and elite research institutions shape identity development among Black women doctoral student parents?” This study also addressed the following research sub-questions:

3. What is the role of race, gender, class and motherhood in adult identity development among Black women doctoral student parents and what are the most salient facilitators of their development?
4. What challenges do Black doctoral women student parents face and what agencies do they develop in response?

Black feminist epistemology demands that the production of research be *for* Black women rather than *about* Black women (Collins, 2000). While there is at least a minimal body of qualitative research investigating the experiences of African American women in higher education, there is even less that have adequately explored the experiences of Black doctoral

women student parents. To address this gap and add to our understanding of the experiences of Black mothers in doctoral study, I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study with feminist epistemology as a methodological underpinning. For the purposes of data collection, interpretation and analysis, Black feminist theory was interwoven throughout this project. I applied tenets of BFT design in the development of interview questions, the interview process, in the analysis and write-up of the findings. Next, I discuss Black feminist theory more in-depth.

Theoretical Perspective

Black feminist thought (BFT)

The theoretical perspective framing this study is Black feminist epistemology. Black feminist epistemology is an interpretive framework that is useful for analyzing and understanding the lived realities and "specialized knowledge" created by African-American women (Collins, 2000). It urges an analysis of how structural mechanisms work against women of color. Hamilton (2003) posited that in "[s]electing appropriate theories for understanding the needs of African American women should [. . .] be based on their cultural, personal, and social contexts, which clearly differ significantly from those of men and women who have not experienced racial and gender oppression" (p. 20). In this way, BFT is a framework for understanding the complex personhood of Black women and also theoretical intervention to resist flattening of experience and identity that results from single issue analyses of race or gender.

As a critical social theory, BFT analyzes the intersectionality of marginalization that U.S. Black women and women from the African Diaspora face in their everyday lives. At its core, it emphasizes the salience of race, gender, sexuality, and class as constitutive and dynamic elements of a Black women's identity (Collins, 2000). As an interpretive framework for this

study, the use of BFT was necessary because it complicates traditional identity frameworks that do not account for both social, historical and political contexts in which U.S. Black women are situated within. Furthermore, since Black women's social identities embody these intersecting axes, it is a worthwhile venture to examine individual accounts of Black women in order to make explicit how social institutions permeated by power and ideology affect individual lives. Simply stated, accounts of Black women and their governing epistemologies makes available, alternative accounts of truth and perspectives on social reality.

For the purposes of data collection, interpretation and analysis, I drew on methodological tools from Black feminist epistemology and tenets of intersectionality. These constituent elements as outlined here help to understand and interpret Black women's identity constructions as they occur in various responses to the multiply intersecting oppressions that influence the social realities of Black women. In methodological application, Black feminist theory provides several tenets to guide this empirical examinations of Black women's lived experiences: (a) valuing of concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning; (b) recognize the importance of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims; (c) ground the research relationship in an ethic of caring, (d) and be personally accountable for representation of the women's accounts.

The first tenet, concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning, proposes that only Black women know what it means to be a Black woman. This means that the women in this study were treated as credible witnesses of their experiences. How the women made meaning and interpreted their realities were accepted in this project as truth claims and artifacts of knowledge. The second tenet underscores understanding and interpreting how Black women make meaning of their experiences through discursive production. The importance of dialogue

is that Black women affirm or refute truth claims about what is said or what is considered to be accepted truths about their lived experiences.

In the interview process, the researcher takes a dialogical approach where connections to participants are made through the sharing of wisdom and personal accounts with experiences. Rather than just listening, the interview is structured so that the conversation is a process of listening and speaking. The third tenet allowed for an emphasis placed on individual uniqueness, appropriateness of emotion and development of the capacity of empathy (Collins). This means that when Black women enter in dialogue with each other, there is an intimacy and connection formed through a historically shared connection to oppression. This connection is made explicit when Black women affirm each other's discursive production of experience by empathizing and expressing emotionality and care when one another is talking. The last tenet, (d) ethic of personal accountability simply suggests that Black women hold each other accountable for what they say and do. Black feminist scholars for example, are held accountable by other Black women for producing scholarship that reflects the lived realities of Black women.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality, a feminist framework, methodology and analytical tool first advanced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and subsumed under Black feminist epistemology, views dimensions of race, gender and class as mutually reinforcing, simultaneously interacting systems of oppression that shape the social, political and material realities of everyday Black women. This concept emerged out of the scholarship from Black feminist schools of thought and other women scholars of color who found that traditional feminist 'gender only' analyses of oppression failed to help us understand how the ways in which gender intersects with other

identities and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and discrimination.

Intersectionality shifts emphasis away from categorizing experiences through single units of analysis such as race or class. It also does not treat experiences in oppression because of gender, class or race as individual or separate systems of oppression but rather, it emphasizes the interlocking nature of these systems. Intersectionality research speaks not only to the multiple layered dimensions of social identity among women of color, but also reveals the different forms of discrimination and disadvantage that occur as a result of intersecting identities. For example, a middle-class white woman may experience discrimination based on gender, but a poor Black woman may experience discrimination based on her race, gender and social class. For Black women, social class stratification is tenuously linked to the subordinated social identity status of Black people. Because Black women are positioned between multiple subordinate groups of race, class and gender, the experience of racism, classism and sexism is different from the sexism experienced by white women or the racism experienced by Black men. This idea was important when exploring the various commonalities among women in this study, as well as the differences that existed along the intersections of race, class and gender.

To be clear, intersectional research *is* about identity. It reveals how the micro politics of the person connect to the macro politics of social reality. Therefore, its overall aim in the final analysis was to uncover how various systems and structures of oppressions interact to shape unique experiences for Black women (Dill, McLaughlin & Nieves, 2007). By centering the lives of Black women and interpreting their experiences through a framework of intersectionality, then together made this a study for Black women about privilege, power, oppression and identity. These frameworks and emergent methodological tools complicated

understandings of identity by examining individual identities without detachment from social group membership. Taken together, intersectionality in concert with BFT (Crenshaw, 1991) emphasized the ways in which historical, political and structural dimensions of social reality and experiences with structural inequalities converge to influence and facilitate identity development.

Philosophical assumptions in Qualitative Feminist Research

The ontological assumption in qualitative research regards reality as subjective and multiple. In this view, knowledge and reality is situated and socially constructed through a series of negotiated, mutually socially constructed meanings (Merriam 2002). In this paradigm, what truths can be known and who can be considered a ‘knower’ is viewed as subjective, relative, and complex. Interpretations of truths and realities are also then multiple, layered and complex. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand and interpret these meanings through observations and interviews. Qualitative research designs build on theoretical assumptions of the interpretivist paradigm where emphasis is placed on situating the researcher and the participants in complex and multiple contexts of political, social and historical realities. It also recognizes differential power levels between researchers and participants and understanding the role of the research as one that interprets and describes the realities of individuals as they are given to them (Hesse-Biber, 2013). One way to uncover these truths is to extrapolate the feelings, attitudes, perceptions and meanings from the individuals situated within these multiple and complex realities, either through face-to-face conversations or direct observation. The aim of qualitative research then, is to uncover the hidden and multiple truths that are produced by different individuals located in multiple and their perspectives on reality.

There several theoretical assumptions aligned with the qualitative interpretivist

paradigm: (a) knowledge and perspective is always partial and situated within historical, social and political contexts, (b) reality is individual and mutually socially constructed. These assumptions at the forefront of the research process while also drawing on BFT as a methodological tool, means that this research is inherently critical qualitative research (Merriam). While the nature of this research is qualitative, I approached this study with a number of philosophical assumptions associated with Black feminist epistemology and intersectional research and analyses. First, although this study treats constructs such as race, gender and class as social variables, they were assumed as socially constructed categories, rather than biological constructs. On the one hand, Black feminist thought asserts that because material conditions and experiences of individuals from oppressed social and economic castes are shaped by socially constructed categories of difference and used to uphold social hierarchies, then they must be employed as categories of reference. On the other hand, an intersectional analysis examines the political, historical and social system that influences their construction and the modes of power used to uphold them.

Additionally, BFT assumes that Black women occupy a distinct social location due to the intersections of race, class and gender while an intersectional perspective presumes that social identities are multiple, interacting, fluid and dynamic. As a result, Black women have both individual and collective experiences that are shaped by this location, but this does not mean that locations and identities are stable and unchangeable. In this paradigm, Black women are assumed to have developed individualized and distinct standpoints, which are forms of specialized, oppositional knowledge. This does not mean however, that all Black women are assumed to be conscious of this knowledge or even the forces of oppression under which this knowledge is formed. However, research uncovering this knowledge is important because it not

only challenges dominant narratives on race, class and gender but also offers an alternative perspective on power and privilege.

Rationale

Despite the methodological strengths of quantitative research, this study did not seek generalizable findings with large sample sizes; rather it sought to gain a nuanced understanding of lived experience through individual accounts. Therefore, by examining experiences Black women doctoral student parents who are currently persisting in doctoral study, we can gain an in-depth understanding of what is happening and how it is being experienced. Since Black women draw on their multiple, subjective, lived experiences and situated knowledges as perspectives of truth (Collins, 2000; Stephens et al., 2007) the phenomenological approach was chosen to explore and understand the uniqueness of their lived experiences and the multiple truths that are generated from these experiences as an attempt to enhance and further research about Black women in the U.S. This focus on lived experiences as described by individuals as they have experienced is parallel to the principles of Black feminist epistemology in that it too focuses on the lived experiences and situated realities of Black women. Thus, since there is limited research on the experiences of Black women doctoral student parents enrolled at predominantly white and elite research institutions, employing a phenomenological design with BFT as an epistemological underpinning are necessary in attending the minimally explored lives of marginalized women. These research aims are also congruent with principles of Black feminist thought (BFT), which places emphasis on uncovering the subjugated knowledge of individual Black women as a social justice project in order to empower Black women. Employing BFT in this study allows for the investigation of Black's women identities while also critically analyzing the interaction of these systems and how Black women's identities are

shaped by them.

Research Approach

Qualitative Methodology

The most commonly used designs that I found used in research investigating the lives of Black women are qualitative in nature (Few, Stephens & Arnett, 2003; Mullings, 2000; Hamilton 2003; Patton, 2009). The stance or theoretical orientation of guiding this research is best described as critical qualitative research. Qualitative researchers in general, acknowledge personal biases and presumptions about their perspectives on truth, reality, research ethics and relationship to the phenomenon and participants involved in the research process. Merriam (2009) notes that “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 13). Therefore, the purpose of qualitative research is to describe, understand and interpret phenomenon as it experienced and articulated by from the participant’s perspective and the selected methodology is phenomenology.

A qualitative approach combined with BFT will offer this research process a rich description of these complex social realities, as well as the flexibility in selecting tools available to collect data, perform analyses and interpret data as best fit for exploring the lived realities of a socially marginalized group. BFT in research and practice also emphasizes recording the everyday, lived experiences of African American women by asking questions that are attentive to race, gender and class social identities as well as forces of power that shape them. This attention to socially situated and multiple lived experiences and emphasis on problematizing everyday lives is therefore compatible with Black feminist perspectives and intersectional research and analyses.

Despite the methodological strengths of quantitative research, this study did not seek generalizable findings with large sample sizes; rather it sought to gain a nuanced understanding of lived experience through individual accounts. Qualitative research methodology was appropriate for this particular study because the overall goal of this research is to understand how the experiences of doctoral study impacts everyday realities of a subordinated group and the ways in which power and privilege shape the everyday lives Black women doctoral student parents.

Phenomenology

As a science, phenomenology is both descriptive and interpretive in nature, and emphasizes the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of human experience in natural settings. Researchers are the “instrument”. Thus, the main intent of phenomenological research is to understand and “interpret” the nature or “essence” of human experience by asking open-ended questions about ‘what’ participants experience and ‘how’ they experienced it (Patton). The Husserlian approach which is one that is focused on the essence of lived experience and concerned with interpreting the “texts” of human life (Husserl, 1970) was used as a philosophical guide in approaching the interpretation of the interview transcripts.

Qualitative methodology lends itself to several lines of inquiry, but for the purposes of this study the qualitative approach of Husserlian phenomenology was used in the overall research design. The intellectual tradition of phenomenology can be traced back the work of Edmund Husserl (Husserl, 1990; Wallace & Wolf, 1998). Phenomenological approaches in qualitative research aim to get at the “essence or essences” of lived experience (van Manen, 1990). Two branches within this philosophical discipline are descriptive and interpretive phenomenology. The Husserlian perspective views the structures of experience as a matter of

“situated consciousness” (Wallace & Wolfe, 1998) as described through in-depth first person accounts. Husserl’s notion of “back to things themselves” was aimed at exploring uncovering the “pure” universal aspects of phenomena, which could then be generalized to a set of universal “essences” of experience (Husserl, 1970). This generalization was a focused extrapolation of the subjective through objective means, and was meant to be conducted using the rigor of scientific method.

A key tenet or method of phenomenology is phenomenological reduction, or “epoche” where the researcher puts aside or suspends of their personal preconceived notions, judgments and biases judgment about what is real in order to reach deeper levels of reflection (Creswell, 2007). This exercise is undertaken through conscious reflectivity and “[w]ith belief temporarily suspended, consciousness itself becomes heightened, allowing the researcher to intuit or see the essence of the phenomenon” (Creswell, p. 7). Bracketing in this sense requires the researchers to depart from what is known in order orient themselves toward a “third way of seeing” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945).

Feminist perspectives on Phenomenology

Within the feminist paradigm, phenomenology as both a philosophical stance and a scientific method has been viewed as incompatible or “an unsuitable partner” (Tuana, 2006) because traditional “philosophical narratives do not offer a universal perspective, but rather privilege some experiences and beliefs over others” (Tuana; in Olkowsi and Weiss, 2006; p. vii). Other contentions have been with the inability of phenomenological method to account for gender (Oksala, 2006), and the notion of bracketing, where some have argued that it is impossible to ignore one’s suppositions, knowledge and judgments about the world.

Consequently, investigating the lived realities of women becomes problematic when gendered experiences are viewed as universal and do not account for difference.

On the other hand, some feminist scholars view feminist appropriations of phenomenology as necessary and productive although it is “a limited and flawed enterprise” (Simms & Stawarska, 2013; p. 11). Jansen and Davis (1998) for example, argue that “[i]nterpretive research is an excellent method for feminists to use to increase their understanding of how women view their experiences” (p. 293). Other scholars view the emergence of a tradition of feminist phenomenology that would facilitate the ability of feminist scholars to strike a balance between what is considered a “long tradition of concepts created by males who have taken the male world-experience as the norm and as the foundation for their epistemological practices” and women’s gendered experiences. (Simms & Stawarska, p. 11).

While this dissertation did not claim to operate from within the tradition of feminist phenomenology, it did adopt what is considered a feminist and critical stance toward phenomenological approaches. It was not my intent to eschew attributes of phenomenological method; instead by interweaving feminist method and epistemology as will be discussed next, it allows me to “work within and through the worldview of [my] time” (Tuana, 1989; in Hesse-Bieber 2012; p. 7). As such, I adopted a ‘phenomenological attitude’ instead of adhering to methods that do not parallel the concerns of BFT.

Also, because I am working within the space of a “dominant Eurocentric, masculinist paradigm of research” (Tuana, 2006) which focuses heavily on “scientific rigor” and the setting aside of assumptions about the world (bracketing) which BFT inherently contradicts, means that I had to ensure that I provided “rich and thick descriptions” of what was experienced and how it was experienced as the women shared with me. Since the women drew on their lived experiences

as situated knowledges, it was a point of departure from traditional knowledge validation processes that made working through and within the dominant paradigm of phenomenology a dialectical process.

BFT also contextualizes the relationship between the knower (subject) and the known (truth), complicates the notion of “bracketing” because it assumes that as a member from an oppressed group, I share a collective consciousness and are linked to other Black women by common challenges or issues that arise from living as a Black woman (Collins, 2000). This linkage was necessary in establishing intimate bonds between the women and me. It was also critical in creating a safe space for Black women to tell their stories about experiences and issues concerning Black women that affirmed, validated and honored their personal truths.

Research Design

According to Dill and Zambrana (2009) intersectionality encompasses four theoretical interventions, and two of which are applied here to the sampling strategy: (a) centering the lives of people of color and other marginalized identities and, (b) an exploration of the complexities of individual identities as well as social group identities, while being attentive to in group variations. While purposive sampling is chosen was the sampling strategy in this study, other sampling methods were employed such as snowball sampling, where participants recommended potential individuals to participate in the study (Marshall, 1996). Phenomenological approaches in qualitative research aim to get at the “essence or essences” of lived experience. Therefore, it was necessary to work with a small group of women who have similarly shared experiences as Black women, doctoral students and mothers.

Recruitment

Establishing rapport with individuals at each institution was necessary in finding

“gatekeepers” to the participants at each institution. After IRB approval from my institution was granted, I sought access to eligible women who met sample inclusion criteria. I prepared an email script and announcement for the study with my contact information and sent them graduate program representatives, faculty and department chairs. I also contacted cultural student affairs offices such as Black cultural and campus women centers of and asked them to distribute the study announcement.

In addition, Black/ African American student organizations listed on organization web pages were contacted. I sent emails to web-based professional networks such as *Sisters of the Academy* (SOTA), an organization an educational network of Black women in higher education and utilized online platforms (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), to solicit participants and or ask for referrals. After initial contacts were made with interested students, a technique of snowball sampling was used, wherein a participant was asked to refer others who have similar experience to participate in the study. Since this study did seek to generalize, recruitment of the women did not rely on other sampling techniques such as random sampling. An initial pre-screening survey was sent to interested participants to ensure that the women met the sampling criteria outlined in this study.

Participants

Because phenomenological investigations require in-depth work with participants in order to understand the “essence” of a lived phenomenon, the number of desired participants needed for the study was small (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2015). The initial sample goal for this qualitative study was ten to fifteen women (Creswell, 2013). However, due to lack of response from half of the initial group that responded to study recruitment emails with interest, the remaining seven that gave consent were selected to participate in the study. The sampling

strategy chosen to guide this study involved the use of purposive sampling. Using purposeful small sample sizes are also consistent with phenomenological approaches in qualitative research (Patton, 1990). Combined with the call from BFT to center Black women in the analysis, it was critical that a small sample of Black women form the constitutive the sample on the basis of shared identity.

However, to honor the diversity of Black women's lived experiences and perspectives, inclusion criterion was designed such that heterogeneity of experience was maintained. To that end, the inclusion criteria required that the women were: (a) currently enrolled in a PhD or EdD program, (b) participating in the childrearing of at least 1 or more one minor children (biological relation not an excluding factor) residing in the home at the time of the study, (c) self-identified women, (d) self-identified as African American or Black and, (e) U.S. born. Women who were adoptive parents, rearing children who are extended family members or are expecting children were also eligible participants. Factors of age and marital status were not criteria used in the selection of the participants. Introduction to participants and demographic information are described in detail in chapter four.

Context

Four public, predominantly white and elite research universities were selected as research sites. Two of the campuses are located in urban areas, and the other two are state flagship universities located in predominantly white suburban areas. To identify appropriate research contexts, I used the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) querying tool to search for institutions who met the following criteria: (a) defined as urban, research public institutions (b) located in the Midwest (c) had a current population of Black women graduate students enrolled. Due to ethical considerations, the institution in which I am

enrolled was not suitable as a research context because there was a very small number of Black women PhD students (n=42) and I would not have been able to promise anonymity to participants in the study. Since Black women are underrepresented across all the majority of U.S. urban research and elite institutions (NCES, 2012) selecting more than one research site allowed for a greater degree of anonymity granted to participants.

Research Sites

Midwest University 1 is a state flagship university founded in 1817 and is located in a suburban area of the state and has a diversity mission stated on its website. Of the faculty demographic information available, over 50% of the graduate population is white while approximately 10% of the population is African American. Women graduate students comprise about 45% of the graduate student population. According to IPEDs data, there are 326 full-time Black women graduate students.

Midwest University 2 is an urban, public research institution and was established in 1868. It is located in the downtown area of mid-sized urban city with six extension sites. According to its website, it has a mission of diversity and vision of community engagement with the urban community. 7% of the faculty is African American and 68% are white, whereas 14% of the graduate population is Black or African American, while 54.2% are white. According to IPEDs data, this university has 356 full-time Black women graduate students.

Midwest University 3 is situated within the context of large urban city located in the Midwest and was founded in 1982. It is a large urban research university with over 8,000 graduate students and lists a mission statement of diversity on its website. According to published data, women comprise over 50% of the doctoral student population, whereas African

Americans comprise less than 10% of the total graduate student population. According to IPEDs data, there are approximately 347 full-time enrolled Black women graduate students.

Midwest University 4 is a state flagship, major research university. It was established in 1862 and is located in the state's capital, a midsize suburban city. According to its website, it too has a diversity mission for enrollment. According to published student enrollment data, there are currently 101 Black women PhD students, 1332 white women students and 1532 white PhD students.

Data Collection Procedures

Pilot study

In January of 2014, I conducted a pilot study with two Black women doctoral student parents who were not participants in this study in order to gain feedback on the interview protocol and structure of the research interview.

Screening demographic questionnaire

Prior to conducting the study, I created a screening questionnaire for potential participants (Appendix B). The questionnaire asked basic demographic information such as gender, institution where currently enrolled, number of children, marital status and year in program.

Interview procedures

Interviews were conducted between April and October of 2015. the interviews were spaced at least two weeks apart. In phenomenology, the primary tool for data collection is the in-depth interview (Patton, 1990). Each individual interview was structured using the three

interview series (Seidman, 2013), with the written responses to the blog reflections counting as one interview round. Each individual woman participated in two conversational interviews with open-ended questions that lasted approximately 60-90 minutes over the phone and Skype.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the “key instrument” (Patton) who uses open-ended research questions aimed at capturing participants’ points of view through an examination of the constraints of their everyday life through interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). Therefore, feminist in-depth interviewing is a particularly important method for feminist researchers because it is “issue oriented” (Hesse-Biber, 2104, p. 189) and focused on several key themes: (a) listening, (b) co-creating meaning (3) reflexivity (4) sensitivity to difference (Hesse- Biber, 2014). What makes in-depth interviewing particularly feminist is the interest in “uncovering the subjugated knowledge of the diversity of women’s realities that often lie hidden and unarticulated” (p. 184). This method was congruent with BFT that has research aims to uncover the subjugated knowledge of Black women through dialogical practices that are imbued with an ethos of care.

Therefore, to better understand the lived experiences of Black doctoral student mothers, I drew upon discussions collected from a series of three feminist in-depth interviews with seven African American doctoral student mothers. Few, Stephens & Arnett, 2003 identified a conversational technique that they used in interviewing Black women, which they have referred to as “sister-to-sister talk”. Sister-talk is “Afrocentric slang to describe congenial conversation or positive relating in which life lessons might be shared between Black women” (p. 205). I utilized this method as a way to negotiate and transcend boundaries of difference between my position as Black woman researcher doing qualitative research with other Black women. It allowed us the ability to engage in dialogical, collaborative theory building about our own lives

while promoting an ethic of caring (Collins, 2000) as sisters who share a collective experience as an oppressed group (Few, Stephens & Arnett, 2003).

To gain a better understanding of the process of identity development among the mothers, I asked questions related to their experiences as Black women, mothers and doctoral students. The questions explored in this study drew on theoretical interventions of intersectionality research during data interpretation and analysis (Appendix D). Instead of asking questions that required the women to immediately fragment their identities as African Americans, women and mothers, I asked, “So tell me about yourself”. I then probed where necessary, about their backgrounds, and current personal statuses.

The first round of semi-structured interviews consisted of an introduction to the study, general demographic questions and their experiences as Black women and mothers in society writ large. The second interview focused on their present experiences as Black women doctoral student parents at the institutions they attended. I asked questions like: “How has being a Black woman/mother on this campus shaped your experiences?” The intent of these questions was to find out about the women from an aspect of identity development and how they view their experiences as being shaped by race, gender, motherhood and doctoral study and what aspects of their experiences facilitated processes of development.

The blog

Few, Stephens and Arnett (2003) offer specific recommendations for conducting qualitative research with Black women and urge a contextualization of self during data analytic and presentation steps. In order to do accomplish this, I constructed a password protected blog space in an online environment. I requested that they create their own login and usernames

using the pseudonyms that they had given me during data collection. The women were able to view and comment on each other's blog postings because the blog was important to the building of a sense of community.

The purpose of the third interview was to allow the mothers time to reflect or elaborate more on interview questions and also engage them in practices of self-reflexivity by asking critical follow-up questions. Engaging women in a research practice such as self-reflexivity also fosters agency, whereby the mothers were afforded the power to decide how their voices will be (re)presented and analyze their initial responses. It was reflective in nature, and I asked the mothers to describe how they made meaning of their identities in relation to their experiences. In this way, all of the women were authors of their own experiences and identities. Lastly, blogging as a Black feminist practice is a form of resistance where in an all-Black women constructed space, Black women can openly critique institutions of power and engage in identity work outside of the white and male gaze.

Merriam (2002) posits that in qualitative research data analysis is simultaneous with data collection. This means that the initial analysis begins with the first memo, journal entry and reflections from the first interview. The next section will describe in detail how research documents were transformed into data for the purposes of analysis.

Data Transformations and Analysis

This study centralized gender, motherhood, class and race, and drew from literature and Black feminist writings on the identities and experiences of Black women in the academy. To be clear, utilizing analytical categories of race, gender and class through an intersectional lens is not an additive approach to examining oppression among the multiply oppressed (Crenshaw,

1995). Simply adding race to categories of gender/and/or class is not enough. Systems of racism, sexism and classism are multiply interacting and necessarily dependent on each other. Therefore, “it is impossible to confront one type of oppression without confronting them all” (Lorde, 1998). To gain a better understanding of the process of identity development among the mothers, I asked questions related to their experiences as Black women, mothers and doctoral students in 14 individual 60 to 90 minute recorded interviews while avoiding treating their experiences as discrete parts of identity. I also kept a field journal to record initial thoughts, feelings and responses that I experienced during the interviews. All documents included in the analysis (research journal, memos, verbatim transcripts) were imported into a web-based qualitative analysis program, dedoose©.

Audio data was first transcribed verbatim and then transformed into data sets. Moustakas (1994) outlined a systematic approach to conducting phenomenological data analysis on data collected from the interviews and written reflections. ©. After the data was imported into dedoose©, they were coded, analyzed and organized according to four principles associated with phenomenological method: (a) epoche, (b) horizontalization, (c) phenomenological reduction and elimination (d) imaginative variation, and (e) synthesis (Moustakas, 1994). In practical application, these principles are broken down into seven steps and are described as follows:

- (a) Describe in full detail personal experience with phenomenon (epoche)
- (b) Develop a list of non-repetitive, non-overlapping significant statements (phenomenological reduction)
- (c) Turn significant statements into larger themes (clustering of meanings to form themes)

(d) Write a description of “what” of the participants’ experiences, including verbatim examples (textural description)

(e) Write a description of “how” the experience happened (structural description)

and,

(f) Write a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating textual and structural descriptions (synthesis of meaning and essences).

(Creswell, 2013; pgs. 193-194)

The first step is bracketing which is a reflexive process where I journaled my initial thoughts, feelings and responses that I experienced during the interviews. An example excerpt from my journal is presented below:

Participant #6

Interview 1

10/7/15

It is interesting that across the women-- myself included--that we all have experienced some sort of trauma in our lives from incest, to neglect and abuse. When Rhea began to cry, I had been so familiar with these very emotional and intimate moments that I reflexively give the women the space to give their testimonies. I asked Rhea how she felt about the interview at the end and she stated that she felt that it was important that people of color were given the space to testify. This type of dialogue where she testified and times where I bore witness or where I testified and she bore witness was therapeutic to the both of us. This kind of dialogue with Black women—or the kind of dialogue that happens between the oppressed—is the kind of dialogue that promotes and fosters healing. It is the ‘truth-telling’, bearing of the soul, testifying that we often do behind closed doors. In the black community—at least the one that I knew—and how I was raised—was that you do not go around telling the secrets of your family. I was socialized into believing that it was unacceptable to share these very intimate and shameful details

of what happened in our families' homes' because protecting ourselves and each other from racially related injuries gave race a bit more weight than everything else.

As I read each line of the transcripts, I created memos in ©dedoose that contained my reflections and judgements about what was being said. The second step of analysis included highlighting significant key phrases and coded under major themes or identified as “parent codes”. Codes used in the analysis emerged from significant phrases and terms from within the text, the theoretical framework and key literature used in the conceptual framework. I identified “child-codes” which were concepts that emerged from the data. The next steps included a summary of what the women experienced (textural) and a summary of how (structural) it was experienced. Six thematic categories emerged from the textural and structural summaries and were to help understand the “essences” of their experiences.

After data transformation and importation into dedoose©, the next steps—coding, analysis and organization—was done by first developing overarching and broad themes drawn from theoretical postulations discussed at length elsewhere. Bodgdan and Biklen (1997) discerned that,

[a]nalysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what you will tell others.

(p. 175)

Since BFT is an analysis of power and oppression, Collins (1993) argues we need “[. . .] new categories of analysis that are inclusive of race, class, and gender as distinctive yet interlocking structures of oppression” (p.2). In order to do this Collins asserts, “we must see the connections between these categories of analysis and the personal issues in our everyday lives”

(p. 3) and focus on structures of oppression and power rather than individual identity traits. These connections were analyses of institutional, symbolic and individual dimensions of oppression so, data were coded and organized in relation to four major categorical themes used in intersectional research: (a) identity (Black women), (b) categories of difference (race, class, and gender) (c) processes of differentiation (racialization and gender) and, (d) systems of domination (racism, sexism and patriarchy) (Dhamoon, 2010). All of these are goals and methodological considerations of intersectional analyses, so I was attuned to them as I begin the inductive aspect of the analysis.

Additionally, transformed data was imported into a web-based data analysis system, so steps outlined above were performed within an online context. This step was useful leaving “audit trails” which is documentation of activities and decisions made in the research process (Creswell, 2000). Audit trails can be useful in meeting one aspect of trustworthiness in qualitative research. The next sections will describe in detail, measures taken to ensure trustworthiness, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study.

Strategies for Establishing Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, there are standards of validation and evaluation that are used to judge the quality of research or “assess the accuracy” of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants” (Creswell, pgs. 249-250). Credibility in qualitative research is defined as, “the faithfulness to the description of the phenomenon in question” (Koch & Harrington, 1988; in Ryan, Coughlin & Cronin, 2007, p. 743). Lincoln & Guba (1985) outline several criteria: credibility, which establishes whether the results are credible or believable; transferability, which is the degree to which results can be generalized or transferred to different research contexts; dependability, which is a measure of the degree to which the findings are

dependable; and confirmability, which is the degree to which the results could be confirmed by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2013).

One way the first criteria, credibility, was met was through triangulation. Triangulation in research is using multiple and different sources of evidence, methods or theories. According to Denzin (1978), the purpose of triangulation is to broaden the perspective of the observational gaze used to view the phenomenon. All journals, memos and notes were used in triangulation of data. Triangulation was obtained by applying feminist theory and college student development identity frameworks as theoretical lenses. Few et al. (2003) also suggest that in conducting qualitative research with Black women, either asking the same question different ways or collecting multiple sources of nontraditional data because Black women's knowledge has been historically suppressed. To uncover these hidden knowledge(s) and meanings I asked the women to answer questions from multiple angles.

In addition, peer debriefing, often used in critical paradigms, was another way to ensure credibility. Peer debriefing involves the use of someone who is familiar with my research topic or has experienced the phenomenon personally. From January of 2015 to August of 2016, I participated in a qualitative research group with peers and one faculty member. One of the members of this group had experience with this topic and was able to provide feedback throughout the analysis phase. The role of this group was to ask critical questions about methodological decisions in made in the research process, the organization of codes, construction of themes, and interpretation of data.

Yet, another way credibility was achieved was through member checking a process whereby, I presented initial findings from data analysis and interpretation to the participants. This was done via email where verbatim transcripts were sent to the women electronically and

they in turn were able send back comments and feedback on interview transcripts. This exercise helped to provide accurate and authentic accounts of the participant's voices. It also provided them the power to share in the construction and representation of their narratives. Taken together, these techniques were used to establish credibility.

Dependability and confirmability of the findings was achieved by the use of external auditing and keeping documented evidence of the research process. Techniques such as keeping an accurate trail of decisions made in the research process, triangulation of methods, sources, theories and data, and self-reflexive journaling, all were techniques used to establish dependability and confirmability. Lastly, transferability of findings was achieved by providing "rich, thick description" when describing the experiences of the women exactly as they were shared with me. Detailed descriptions also ensured authenticity in representation, so that others may transfer the knowledge and information from my study to other research contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Researcher Ethics

Hesse-Bieber (2014) defines ethics as "moral principles or rules of conduct", and as applied to research ventures, it means that the researcher(s) is conscious of, and pays particular consideration to social mores and values surrounding human conduct when conducting research. Within the feminist research paradigm, feminist researchers pay particular attention to issues of power and authority (Hesse-Bieber). One practice in feminist research is the notion of reflexivity, where the researcher turns the researcher lens back onto oneself as an attempt to acknowledge the privileged relations between research participants and oneself. This was an important awareness I maintained throughout the study because as a researcher, I had power over whose voice was included or silenced, and how those voices were (re)presented in the final

write up of my research.

This kind of authority is a representation of the power that researchers have in the production of knowledge through the representation of others' voices and experiences. Black feminist scholar bell hooks (1988) offers a profound discussion on authority and representation: "When we write about the experiences of a group to which we do not belong, we should think about the ethics of our action, considering whether or not our work will be used to reinforce and perpetuate domination" (p. 43). This was instructive to me because, even though I am a Black woman conducting a study with other Black women my status as the researcher afforded me the privilege of (re)presenting their voices. Adhering to the BFT methodological tenet of personality accountability, I was cautious and conscious of how I (re)presented the voices of women so that they reflected the women as they saw themselves.

Informed Consent

A proposal was sent to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to obtain approval to conduct human subjects research at the institution where I conducted the research. Upon agreeing to do the interview, all of the mothers were asked to give oral informed consent due to the long-distance nature of the interviews. They were notified that they may withdraw from the study at any time. For the purposes of this study, the names of the women and institution in which their experiences are qualified, were omitted to protect the anonymity of both since personnel associated with the research context may view this study.

Anonymity was guaranteed to the women at the onset of each individual interview, and I asked them to select their own pseudonyms in place of real names. In addition, direct references to any individuals, students or personnel, affiliated with the institution were not included in data presentation in order to protect the women. All data gleaned from interviews was saved on my

personal, password-protected laptop, which was kept in my possession and backed up in an online data storage cloud service.

There were minimal risks associated with this study. One potential risk to the participants sharing knowledge that may implicate individuals within their institutions as behaving or responding to the student's needs in an unethical or unjust manner. The risks associated with knowledge sharing of personal experiences was minimized by adhering to promises of participant anonymity and confidentiality in publishing of the findings.

Research Relationship

Collins (1986) posits “one role for Black female intellectuals is to produce facts and theories about the Black women experience that will clarify a Black woman's standpoint for Black women” (S16). Therefore, it was imperative as a Black woman entering into a dialogical relationship with other Black women who were similarly biographically situated, to examine how my identity influenced my perception of the participants and informed assumptions about their lived realities. As a mother, a Black woman and doctoral student enrolled at a R1 PWI, my epistemic vantage point is that of an “outsider/insider” (hooks, 1988 Collins, 1968). This vantage point was an “epistemic advantage” and therefore privileged way of seeing the structural dimensions of power that shape the realities of Black women. However, it also recognized that my way of “seeing” was informed by academic training in research and methodology. Subordinating neither vantage point to the other allowed for a measure of partial objectivity (Haraway).

Lastly, since I was interested in Black doctoral student mothers as a community of discourse, and even though I am both a Black mother and doctoral student, there were differences, in both biography and experience. This informed the degree to which I was an

“outsider”. I am also for example, a first generation college student, and a single parent. I grew up in an urban inner city within a family structure that was maintained by the welfare system. I have both witnessed and personally experienced interpersonal violence and trauma over the course of my life. I was not on the college-track during my high school years, and due to the lack of economic resources available, I never entertained college as a viable option. I worked during most of my high school years to lessen the economic burden for my mother. After I became a mother, I supported myself and my daughter through a series of low-wage paying jobs. After enrolling into college at the age of twenty-three with a three-year old child, I never would have imagined that my educational journey would have taken me this far.

I have experienced many challenges along the way as a Black woman and mother navigating the structural dimensions of higher education. I have often struggled with issues of childcare, scarce financial resources and struggling with time-management and self-care. I have been validated and also invalidated by these experiences. These experiences have very much shaped the mother and woman that I am today; the intersection of race, class motherhood and poverty are constituent parts of my identities. During my educational journey, I became curious as to how other Black mothers from similar and different social backgrounds negotiated and navigated the social and psychic spaces between their identity intersections and their educational contexts. This led me to my current research inquiries regarding the role of race, gender, class and motherhood in the context of doctoral education.

My own personal assumptions about the research process prior to conducting this study were that (a) the discourses of the women would reflect collective and individual elements of shared experiences as gendered, classed and raced women, (b) the individual accounts of the women would reflect aspects of the social and structural dimensions of power, privilege and

oppression; (c) my own positioning in the research process would not disempower the women in any way. I assumed that the narratives of Black women would uncover hidden truths about the ways in which structural dimensions of doctoral study contribute to the maintenance and production of privilege, power and oppression. Through the analysis, I was able to contribute to existing and provide new knowledge about Black women's public and private identities.

Limitations

Through this research process, several limitations of this study emerged. First, included in the study design was a private, password protected blog space for the women to reflect and respond on their own time to reflection questions related to overall meanings they assigned to their identities, challenges they faced, and aspirations and hopes for the future. Because the women were already juggling multiple roles, the blog was an additional time commitment that many of the women struggled with. One of the women noted that she did not have time for the blog since she was working and helping her son prepare college admission applications. Research on Black women's participation in digital spaces has shown it to be a counter space where Black women can contest power freely (Brock, 2012). It is noted that this tool was not used as a standalone method of collecting evidence but rather as a third round in the interview process.

Second, while qualitative research does not seek generalizability, it is noted that the findings only represented a small sample of Black women attending public, research PWIs in the Midwest. Future research could expand the institutional characteristics to include PW liberal arts or Ivy League institutions. Findings from the interviews with only Black women resulted in a revised identity development model based on Black women doctoral student parent's experiences and its application to other students of color should be analyzed carefully. Lastly, the

assumption of this research was the women would speak more directly related to balancing their motherhood and doctoral student identity, but instead factors related to their race, gender and class identities more broadly were more salient.

Delimitations

The findings from this study are not generalizable to large populations of Black women doctoral student parents across the U.S., but the results from this study could be generalizable to (a) Black women attending private, predominantly white and elite universities; (b) Women of African descent (foreign born) with children in doctoral study and (c) Black doctoral women student parents who have finished their degrees. While bodies of extant literature on the experiences of African Americans in higher education, academic mothers, student experiences at predominantly white and elite research institutions and the experiences of doctoral students are vast, the scope of this literature was limited to a narrow focus on Black mothers in the context of doctoral study. Also, Black feminist epistemologies used in this work limited the population of interest to Black women.

Introduction to Participants

Seven African American mothers pursuing doctoral degrees at predominantly white institutions across several states in the Midwest were purposefully selected as participants for this study (Patton, 1990; Merriam 2016). That following analysis is based upon 14 individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews and written responses to a series of reflection questions related to the lived experiences and identities of African American women student parents at predominantly white institutions in the Midwest. All of the women who participated in audio-taped semi-structured telephone and Skype interviews self-identified as African American women, mothers and doctoral students at various stages of their doctoral careers across various disciplines. Table 1. is a categorical display of the women's background information according to pseudonym in alphabetical order. The table lists their ages, number of children, ages of their children, marital status, sexual orientation, year in program, and field of study.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

*Name	Age	Number of children	Ages of children	Marital status	Sexual orientation	Year in program	Field of study
Assata	38	6	1, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15	Single	Heterosexual	PhD candidate	Literature
Fatima	39	3	7, 9, 15	divorced	Heterosexual	2 nd year	Educational policy
Keanna	24	**2	1	single	Bisexual	2 nd year	Educational Psychology
Naimah	28	2	6,2	married	heterosexual	Completed	Political Science
Rhea	46	1	18	separated	heterosexual	PhD candidate	Organizational development
Tayo	42	2	13, 18	divorced	Heterosexual	Phd candidate	Literary Studies (Poetry)

Zaya	34	2	4 months, 4 years	married	heterosexual	completed	Educational- Instructional Technology
------	----	---	----------------------	---------	--------------	-----------	---

(*) All names are pseudonyms

(**) Has one child, is pregnant with second

Each woman was given a pseudonym in an effort to protect individual anonymity and confidentiality of her responses. All seven of the women were currently in pursuit of a doctoral degree (PhD) at the time of the study and two of the women (Zaya and Naimah) have since successfully defended their dissertations. The ages of the women ranged from age (24-46). The number (1-6) and range of ages of their children (gestation-21) varied. Of the seven women participating in this study, two were divorced, three were married and two were single. Each of the women's profile describes their background and demographic information in narrative detail.

Fatimah

Fatimah is a 39-year-old African American woman and mother to three children: ages seven, nine, and years old fifteen. Fatimah describes herself as a Black feminist and social activist and is very involved in social justice movements. As a child growing in a single parent home after her parents divorced, Fatimah was catapulted from childhood to adulthood very quickly. Fatimah shared that she started taking care of her siblings at the age of seven years because her mother often worked two jobs and that "she never remembers being a child". Fatimah also grew up in impoverished neighborhoods because of racial segregation, redline housing, and witnessed many young girls turn to prostitution as a way to survive their harsh economic environments. Fatimah stated that she once saw marriage as a way out of her circumstances. Fatimah had her first child before completing her bachelor's degree and got married when daughter was seven years old. She is currently divorced.

Fatimah attended high school in one of the most elite high schools in her city. As a first generation college student, Fatimah has always done well in school. Fatimah shared a time when she was in school that a teacher took note of her strong academic ability and wanted to enroll her in a gifted and talented program. Fatimah's mother refused to sign them, but her teacher signed them instead. Fatimah has always done well in school because she was not only academically gifted, but she saw it as a way out. After completing high school, Fatimah later obtained two associates degrees prior to attending an HBCU where she received a bachelor's degree in history. Fatimah's initial career goals were to become a high school teacher in history. While pursuing her bachelor's she participated in a program that prepared undergraduate students for graduate school and was inspired to attend graduate school.

Prior to college, Fatimah helped to start a farmer's market in her community. Interestingly, Fatimah admitted that food justice has always been important to her because she once witnessed her mother begging for food from her boyfriend. Fatimah cited the catalyst for pursuing higher education was through her work as an activist when she realized that she needed both organizing skills and a doctoral degree "to be taken seriously as a social activist." Fatimah also has always wanted to be a professor because she loves teaching and learning. She stated that if it were not for the undergraduate program that prepared underrepresented students for doctoral study that she did not know if she would be here. Fatimah wanted to go into public policy because she was frustrated with current administration in K-12 schools and the underserving of minority students. She also and feels connected with her initial career aspirations of working in K-12 public schools but, at the policy development level. When she becomes a professor, Fatimah wants to design courses on the history of Black women. At the time of the study, Fatimah had just completed her master's level work and was advancing to doctoral level.

Tayo

Tayo is a 42-year-old African American woman with two children: one daughter who is 13 and a son who is 18. She identifies as a Black feminist, mother, scholar and Black Buddhist. Tayo was married for 20 years and is currently going through a divorce. After initially beginning her PhD program at the age of 25 and taking time off to stay at home with her young children, Tayo has recently returned to complete her PhD. She is currently a dissertator in a literary studies program at an urban research university in the Midwest. Now that she is no longer taking classes and writing her dissertation, she has relocated back to the east coast. At the time of the interviews, Tayo was working across several colleges as an adjunct instructor while writing her dissertation. She also cares for a teen-aged nephew who resides with her full-time.

Tayo is originally from the east coast, and described her cultural environment growing up as “very kind of 70’s Black Power” and noted "growing up around a lot of Black feminists". Tayo described her family’s economic background as being working middle class, with her father being a principal of a high school on the east coast for pregnant girls and her mother working as a dean at a community college. As a child, Tayo remembers her first positive messages around the intersection between motherhood, doctoral study and work from her mother’s friend who was a single mother that received a PhD. Another positive message came from her best friend--a mother and doctoral student—who insisted that she consider having a baby in graduate school because she was married. As a married student, Tayo described her economic positioning while married as middle-class, and noted that she did not have many of the class struggles that she witnessed other graduate students having.

Tayo completed her undergraduate degree at a private research university and became inspired to attain a PhD after obtaining her master's degree in literary studies and teaching in high schools on the east coast. She also credits her love of English and literary studies to growing up reading Black women's literature:

My mother, when the Color Purple came out, I read it young and she gave me Tony Morrison, so I grew up reading Black women's literature, and then the idea that I could do this for my living, what? It was perfect for how I was raised, for what I was into, I loved English, I loved reading. So that's how I was drawn to it.

Along with the cultural knowledge, that Tayo's mother was able to pass down to her through Black women's literature; Tayo was also advantaged educationally through her parent's access to social capital:

I was just around people who were always reading. When I say reading, my parents had a serious library. Now I'm thinking about it as a kid, like it seemed like thousands of books, it couldn't have been thousands, but we had a library and the only thing in it was books and chairs to sit in to read your books.

Tayo's son, who is currently in college himself, also has inherited his mother's love of reading and writing. She explained:

[M]y son is majoring in English in college now and he reads constantly. So I just come from a reading kind of family. But to be able to do this for a living is unbelievable. It is such a gift.

Collectively, Tayo's social class background and access social capital was the catalyst for her pursuit of advanced higher education degrees and source of transmitted social capital for her children as well.

Keanna

Keanna is a 25-year-old African American woman with a one-year-old toddler and is currently pregnant with her second child. Keanna attends a large, research university in the Midwest and is currently enrolled in an education and psychology program. Keanna identifies as bisexual and is not married; however, she is in a long-term relationship with her children's father with whom she lives. She is a first generation college student and is currently in the 2nd year of her doctoral program. Keanna is employed as a graduate assistant at her university to subsidize her education. Keanna was raised along with her brother in a single-parent home by her mother and described her economic background as working class. Although Keanna is biracial (white mother, Black father), she now identifies as a Black woman. Keanna explained how she came to identify more concretely with her African American heritage:

I identify as Black. When I was a whole lot younger, I think I identified more as biracial because I was being raised by my white mom. She had a color-blind ideology in the sense that we're all equal and we don't see race and we love everyone because we're all human. I think she was trying to do it in a very positive way in terms of treating everyone equally, but then when I went to college and kind of got generally involved with Africana studies, the problems with color-blind ideology and how that impacted my racial identity came out in terms of me not necessarily being able to think of myself as an African-American girl. I went through adolescence not seeing myself as Black, but I was

obviously not seen as white by my peers. I also did not feel comfortable being around [B]lack peers in the same way, because I was always in classes with white students.

The messages that Keanna received from her mother around race and "color-blindness" while although contradictory to the paradigm of Africana studies of which Keanna later adopted, she still feels that it contributed positively to her overall identity development:

So I never had the racial socialization around be careful around police or people may not like you because you're Black until I brought home incidents of like oh, this white boy on the bus called you a nigger and then she went to the school and [realized] that it was racialized [and] it wasn't a conversation. But in saying that, she did foster really positive like broad self-esteem for me, which has been helpful because I thought about this as I got older, I never really had the sense that because I was Black I would be held back from doing anything even as I got older. I was like yes, I'm a Black girl, because my mom was always like you can do anything and there wasn't necessarily the message of you're going to have to work twice as hard because the world sees you as Black. I think that's because she didn't have the same socialization; she was operating in the world as a white woman, and it wasn't relevant to tell to her [B]lack child or biracial children.

Interestingly, for Keanna, identifying as a Black woman is a conscious choice. She explained, that because her research focus is on the political racialization of African American women combined with her personal political stance that identifying as a Black woman is "something that I think in my everyday life, it makes the most sense."

Zaya

Zaya is a 34-year-old African American woman who is currently pursuing a PhD in instructional and educational technology and is employed as a literacy program coordinator. At the time of the study, Zaya had two children ages four years and four months. Zaya stated that she has been married to her high school sweetheart for five years. She described her family background as growing up in the Midwest and being raised as an only child to divorced parents. Zaya lived across 6 different states as a child primarily because her mother worked for an airline company. Prior to her doctoral work, Zaya completed a master's in business administration (MBA) and went in the corporate world for work but, later transitioned into education. Zaya decided to wait until after she finished her undergraduate work to have children and had first child at the age of 30. While Zaya was 15 years old, she discovered that her mother had an issue with drugs and was sent to live with a family friend with whom she lived with until she graduated from high school. Despite this, Zaya was able to one attend of the top three high schools in city and was involved in a lot of extracurricular activities. Zaya noted that she still has a relationship with high school counselor and cites this as the only reason she went to college. Zaya stated that she "felt like education was her way to get out of the mess that was going on."

Rhea

Rhea is a 46-year-old African American mother of one son who is finishing his last year in high school. At the time of the interview, Rhea was going through a divorce after 25 years of married and is currently raising her son as a single parent in a predominantly white suburb. Rhea works full-time as an outreach coordinator in an academic department at her institution to help

subsidize education, while pursuing a PhD in educational policy part-time. At this stage of the doctoral process, Rhea was in doctoral candidacy.

She completed both her undergraduate and master's degree at different institutions in the state. Rhea was twenty-six years old and married at the end of her undergraduate degree when she had her son. After having him, she began working but was not able to finish her undergraduate degree. After working at the university and later in the K-12 public schools as a teacher, Rhea decided to go back to school to complete her degree. During this time, she participated in a program that prepared underrepresented students doctoral study by engaging them in research projects. Rhea's undergraduate research project was on the African diaspora in Brazil and became inspired to pursue a doctoral degree when she realized the social impact that research had on the community.

Similar to some of the other women, Rhea's background experiences have not been unmet by trauma. When Rhea reflected on her childhood, she became emotional. Rhea stated that "Ok, there's trauma everywhere." Her account reflected *transgenerational trauma*, which are stories of trauma transmitted through generations (Schwab, 2010). She shared that both her mother and father were alcoholics and remembered a few instances when her parents would often come from a night out drinking, put a steak in the broiler and forget to turn it off. Rhea remembers waking up to black smoke. Rhea also shared that her father was abusive to her mother and brother. Eventually her parents divorced, which catapulted Rhea's mother into poverty. She recalled times from her childhood when her family went without heat in her home. Because of these experiences, social class is a salient piece of Rhea's identity. Unlike a few of the other women, Rhea is not a first generation college student.

However, similar to many of the women, Rhea's prior schooling was in the context of predominantly white schools. She describes growing up as middle-class with both of her parents until their later divorce and being one of the first African American families to move into a predominantly white neighborhood. Painfully, Rhea recalled memories of her and brother's experiences integrating the suburban schools where they grew up. She remembers a time witnessing crosses burning on lawns in her neighborhood. Rhea's father and uncle started their own construction business, which afforded Rhea's family a middle class upbringing. While Rhea cites a seemingly a childhood reflective of the American ideal, her stories are interwoven with struggle and uplift. Rhea noted that although her childhood reflected multiple strands of trauma, she was socialized around values of education from her mother and grandmother at an early age.

Assata

Assata is a 38 year-old, single African American single woman from the Midwest and is currently pursuing a doctorate in English literature and African American studies. Assata is single and has six children: one, six, seven, twelve, thirteen and fifteen. Initially, Assata's career goal was to become a construction worker because growing up, all she ever saw were construction workers, which Assata internalized as alternative social script for womanhood. Assata notes, "She had always felt that what men could do, women could do." Assata reflects that when she saw men whistling at women, it inspired her to be a construction worker so she could whistle at men. She also recalls "wanting a man who drank beer all day and played video games." Prior to motherhood, Assata describes herself as not having any major ambitions because she did not come from a place where people had goals. Interestingly, while Assata notes

that she did not grow up with adults who seemed to have a sense of purpose or life goals, the earliest memories that she has of her mom are her books. Assata's mother maintained employment throughout her childhood; she worked as a pre-school teacher, taught bible study classes and later worked helping people whose homes were in foreclosure. She also witnessed her mother take 20 years to earn a bachelor's degree. On the other hand, Assata's father never seemed to obtain employment. Growing witnessing the reversal in gender roles—her mother worked while her father did not—possibly shaped Assata's contradictory perspective on normative gender scripts.

Like some of the other women, traumatic experiences during childhood shaped their perspectives on education and motherhood. She expressed that she growing up she felt loved but that some the traumas father experienced translated into maladaptive parenting experiences. Her dad's mother for example was a prostitute, and his sister and other men molested her father. Also like Fatimah, Assata was molested as a child. Assata grew up with very strict messages surrounding the vulnerability of young girls around men, witnessed drug addiction and people constantly going to jail.

Currently, Assata is a doctoral candidate at a large research university in the Midwest and works as a graduate assistant, which covers her cost of tuition and pays her a stipend. She previously attended undergraduate school in the Midwest where she participated in a research program that prepared undergraduate students for doctoral study by engaging them in research. Assata was inspired to pursue doctoral study because of participating in this program. Assata noted that she applied to seventeen colleges and was accepted to fifteen. She was not however,

able to attend the institutions of her choice because she did not know how to apply for financial aid. Assata selected her program because it offered family housing and financial support.

While Assata may not have been afforded the social capital to navigate the financial costs of higher education, she has gained the cultural tools of being educated in white spaces. Assata spent her formative years in predominantly white boarding schools and she notes that these experiences have provided her with the linguistic capital to “tell a story”. During her prior years of schooling, Assata once wrote a story about her father and his crack addiction. She gained awards and financial scholarships for her writing, but she was not aware that higher education required more knowledge than being able to write a story. Similar to Fatimah’s experience, although she experienced trauma and came from an impoverished background, she had access to elite institutions for education.

Assata currently works in a writing center and teaches courses at her institution. Assata was diagnosed with ADHD while completing coursework, which led to difficulty in being successful as a student, and is now working with a therapist and counselor to help her with her writing and organization skills. Assata shared with me that she never imagined having six kids, but felt vulnerable and wanted companionship and protection. However, once she became a mother she fell in love with it and it inspires her dissertation work which on African American motherhood in contemporary literature.

Naimah

Naimah is a 28 year-old, African American woman who is married with two children, ages 6 and 2. She has been married for three years. Naimah was born and raised in a large city in the Midwest and played basketball in high school and college. Naimah initially wanted to pursue

a degree in journalism during her undergraduate career and become an investigative reporter after graduation. Naimah described her family background as growing up around a lot of Black women and women of color, and started to ask questions around Black women as political subjects. She stated as being interested in social movements and the role that Black women have played in them.

As an undergraduate student, Naimah realized that only way to make a career out of her passion was to pursue a PhD, but she was unsure of how to attain one. Her family pushed her to go to law school because they were uncertain about her ability to become financially stable with a career in journalism. She felt a lot of pressure from this and had to push to justify a career as a social scientist. At the time of the study, Naimah had just completed her doctoral degree program in political science and had obtained a post-doctoral position at an institute on the east coast.

Summary

The purpose of these biographical profiles were to provide an understanding of the contextual filters that shape and influence how the participants in this study make meaning of their lives and identities as Black women, mothers and doctoral students. It also demonstrates the intertwinement of how race, gender and class inform their identity constructions and perspectives on motherhood and doctoral study within the context of predominantly white institutions in the Midwest.

Across all of the women in this study, their lived experiences as Black women and mothers are tied to their reasons for pursuing doctoral study and the focus of their research agendas. For example, Assata and Fatimah while in different disciplinary fields of study, are using an angle of Black motherhood to frame their dissertation work. Another interesting

similarity is that Assata, Naimah, Fatimah, Keanna and Tayo are using their work and presence in the privileged context of white academic spaces to engage in counterhegemonic work by producing scholarship and research for and about Black women. Also, several of the women are also using their status as academics to engage in community organizing or entrepreneurial ventures that benefit the Black community. Despite some of the traumas present in the women's background experiences, education has been a way to cope with these experiences and also are salient influencers on their perspectives on motherhood.

Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of seven Black women doctoral student parents as they relate to identity development. Seven women were recruited from predominantly white and elite research institutions (R1 PWIs) in the Midwest. They agreed to participate in individual semi-structured interviews and provide written responses related to research questions in a blog format. The overarching question guiding the study sought to uncover how Black women's perceptions and responses of their lived realities as Black women, mothers and doctoral students. The primary question guiding inquiry was, "How does the experience of doctoral study in predominantly white and elite research institutions shape identity development among Black doctoral women student parents?" This research also addressed the following sub-questions:

- (1) What is the role of race, gender, class and motherhood in adult identity development among Black women doctoral student parents and, what are the most salient facilitators of development?
- (2) What challenges do Black doctoral women student parents face and what agencies do they develop in response?

The first sub-question sought to explore the complexity of their experiences along lines of race, gender and class and the ways in which they made meaning of those experiences. The second sub-question sought to explore challenges related to their multiple social identities and identity strategies that they developed as a response. In what follows, I provide an overview of the major and minor themes that emerged during analysis.

Overview of Themes and Sub-themes

The following section explored and described themes that emerged during analysis of the individual transcripts from the individual interviews with the seven women and written blog reflections. Themes gleaned from findings captured the lived experiences of Black women doctoral student parents along lines of race, gender and class and coming to terms with what it means to be a Black woman, mother and doctoral student at a PWI. The themes explored are as follows: (1) negotiating intersectionality as trauma in childhood; (2) negotiating microaggressions related to invisibility/hypervisibility; (3) negotiating structural macroaggressions as violence; (4) hidden costs of negotiating black womanhood and motherhood at PWIs; (5) negotiating standards of Black motherhood and womanhood; (6) Black doctoral student parent ways of negotiating intersectionality. In what follows, I present findings gleaned from individual interviews using Black feminist theory as an interpretive lens and analytical framework.

Theme One: Negotiating Intersectionality and Childhood Trauma

The first emergent theme described how the women's childhood experiences socialized them into their intersectional identities along the lines of race, gender and class. Most of the women cited experiences that contained overlapping, intersectional traumas. Data analysis revealed that their family histories and personal experiences in racism, poverty, loss, and sexual violence were layered on top of societal messages they received about what it meant to be a Black girl.

Early Socialization of Race, Gender and Class

Rhea's story set the stage and introduction for this section describing how Black women become socialized into their multiple and intersecting identities. Rhea's excerpt included the explicit use of the word "trauma" to describe the socializing messages she received around race, class and gender. Rhea began by sharing how her family was thrust into poverty after her mother and father divorced:

So, my parents divorced when I was 11. In addition, our economic class changed dramatically. My dad didn't put any money in to helping us. But we were poor; my mom was struggling. I mean we had to leave the house in order for the divorce to happen. And then we stayed with my aunt and for at least a month, or a couple months. Then we moved back into the home when the divorce was finalized because my mom got the home, but that was IT. So we were poor. Sometimes we did not have heat, we didn't have proper clothing, and we didn't have money for school lunch sometimes.

During this recounting, Rhea began to cry quietly. After a brief pause, she then moved into discussion of her experience integrating in a predominantly white school district. Reflecting back, she recalled burning crosses in their neighbors' yards and being called "nappy headed" by some of the white children on the bus. Despite her experiences in trauma, Rhea's step-grandmother who she described as a "strong Black woman" seemed to play an intervening and influential role in emphasizing the importance of education in Rhea's life.

Naimah's story of socialization into Black girlhood echoed Rhea's. Due to a divorce, Naimah's mother moved in with her sister in a predominantly white suburb which meant that Naimah had to attend the nearby all white school. Because Naimah's mother was not in an

economic position to move elsewhere and switch Naimah's school, she was forced to confront racism within the context of school early on. Like Rhea, she described a time during childhood when her mother was thrust into a harsh economic reality after her parents separated and experiencing racism:

In middle school, my parents separated [. . .] their relationship fell apart, and my mom packed all of our stuff in bags and we drove all the way back up north. We had no way to live, [. . .] we were staying in my aunt's living room, and I am going to this all white school neighborhood school. I was there for less than a year before students started to write "nigger" on my locker. After that experience, I remember the day that happened, I started leaving school in the middle of school whenever I saw it and I was walking all the way home. When you live in the suburbs, blocks are not like city blocks. It was a long trek. However, I had to let my mom know and she felt bad because of what was going on with her and my dad because they were separating and we had to stay where we were. I told her I could not go back there.

Naimah's excerpt reflected several impactful incidents that occurred in her childhood. Naimah's first socializing messages around race and racism occurred within the context of a predominantly white school. Even though both Naimah and Rhea received societal messages about Black girlhood through personal experiences with racism, they also observed their own mother's struggles in Black womanhood with divorce, single motherhood and economic distress.

Another socializing aspect of the women's experiences included sexual trauma. During our interviews, several of the women shared their family's history with sexual trauma or their

direct personal experiences with it as a child. Assata shared a powerful story beginning with her family's history of trauma and then disclosed her own personal experience with sexual trauma:

I grew up around family who were very protective. As children, we were not allowed to sit on men's laps or allowed to wear tight clothes because it left us vulnerable in many ways. One of the boarders that lived molested me in our home. I knew that my uncles loved me dearly, but they had a lot of self-hate. One of my uncles sold me to the neighborhood drug dealer. I did not know about sex trafficking at that young age.

Experiences with racial and sexual trauma often times can propel young girls into adulthood although they are still children.

Fatimah echoed this and gave an intersecting account of growing up in poverty, segregated housing, witnessing teen pregnancy and prostitution and a personal experience with sexual trauma. She was also the first on both sides of her family to attend college. Like Assata, Fatimah candidly shared her childhood experience with sexual trauma as a precursor to her background story:

I was raped at the age of five by a sixteen year-old. Really soon after that I had to look out for my little sisters and eventually my other little sister and little brother. It was also an abusive situation. It was always waking up . . . I do not know what to liken it too, but it was not joy. Being a girl always meant that I always had to be in protection mode. Either protection of my siblings or protection of myself from somebody being able to think something about me.

For Fatimah, Black girlhood "wasn't joy". Fatimah also described her childhood as "*a loss*" and viewed womanhood "*as a burden*" because she was forced to grapple with the loss of

innocence of her childhood. Fatimah's socializing experiences are multi-layered and complex. Not only did Fatimah have to grapple with sexual trauma, she also dealt with economic deprivation and racism in school. As one of few Black and poor children in the class, Fatimah described school as being "painful". Combined with her background experience with sexual trauma, Fatimah was forced to negotiate intersectionality at an early age. Across the majority of the women's cases, their stories demonstrated how young Black girls are sometimes denied their right to innocence and protection from harm and pain.

This section highlighted how additional developmental tasks of grappling with sexual violence, economic distress can be layered on top of the identity work they do in negotiating socializing messages related to Black girlhood. Because identities are constructed at the individual level and at the institutional level, in the next section, I go beyond the construction of Black women's identity through background context and explore the interaction between identity and context. In what follows, I present the women's experiences with intersectionality within the context of doctoral study.

Theme Two: Negotiating Microaggressions Related to Invisibility/Hypervisibility at PWIs

Across the women's accounts, I found a consistent pattern in their experiences with subtle forms of discrimination or prejudice related to their race, gender, motherhood and class identities. There are three sub-thematic statements that constitute the theme Intersectionality experienced as microaggressions: (1) *invisibility* (2) *hypervisibility*, and (3) *stigmatization*.

Hypervisibility

Three of the women cited feeling like the one that stood out due to difference. Assata for example cited an experience she had as instructor of an undergraduate course:

I had one experience, one man who kept asking me what I teach, how long I have been teaching it and what my background was. I do not remember the exact questions he was asking or the vague ones, but I remember that the very blatant one was "are you qualified to teach?" [. . .] So repeatedly, I had to prove myself.

What Assata describes here is an experience of being invisible. When she was asked blatantly by a student "*are you qualified to teach?*" it suggests that because Assata is one of very few Black women instructors in her institution it makes her hypervisible, but also vulnerable to scrutiny, not as just being an instructor but being a *Black woman instructor*.

As a student, Fatimah felt the hypervisibility attached to her status as Black mother. She explained,

There are many professors that I haven't dealt with yet at all, but they've done that magical think right, where I'm an amazing human and sometimes I feel like, just grade my paper and give it back. I'm really not that amazing and I just don't want to be a poster child for whatever, I just don't want to be that. I've heard comments like, "how could you not turn your paper in on time? She got 3 children and she turned her paper in on time."

Invisibility

Conversely, Tayo offered more than once positive sentiments about her institution, but also explicitly mentioned experiencing misrecognition:

Sometimes in a classroom, little things, you know like I told you before about large groups of people confusing the three black women in the program, even though we all look completely different, like I don't even get it. Talking about 7 inches of height,

maybe 8-inch difference, very different shapes, and they would really just like call us interchangeably by each other's names. Nope, I'm not [her]. So that's not even a micro-aggression, that's deeper than that. But those are people who really didn't know me.

Tayo noted on one hand that there were "little things" that happened like being misrecognized for one of the other two Black women in her program but stated "that's not even a micro-aggression" on the other. While not a wholly disconfirming statement due to Tayo's classification of the experience as "little", her observation was accurate in relation to what the other women described. What was evident in this sub-theme was how Black women's intersecting race, class and gender identities making them visible and vulnerable to judgement by racially gendered stereotyping and also invisible in ways that deny their individual uniqueness as human beings.

When I asked Rhea about how she felt her experiences as a student were shaped by her status as an employee and a mother, she noted that she rarely brought either up at work. She also felt that her status as a part-time student made her invisible to the faculty in her department:

They [faculty] don't really see you as a legitimate scholar potentially. Therefore, they don't recognize you as a student at all. That's why we, I stopped saying I was a student because it didn't add up to anything, like an assistantship or something. I can't afford to do an assistantship and I need to work full-time but it was like, I was just kind of interesting I think because I see how, yeah I'd been there for a while in different settings at the university and how it should be or should be well, for what I call serious students versus who are workers doing school on the side.

When she stated that the faculty “don’t really see you as a legitimate scholar” or a “serious student” when you are a working and/or part-time student, it suggested that Rhea is not only invisible but also ‘hidden’ by her status as a part-time student and employee. Because full-time students are seen as serious students, their experiences eclipse the legitimacy of students who are not full-time. In the next section, I present how the women described being shamed for Black motherhood, which was an aspect of stigmatization related to their visibility as pregnant Black women.

Stigmatization

During our interview discussions related to their experiences as Black mothers at their respective PWIs, the majority of the women seemed to describe grappling with racialized and gendered assumptions about their reproductive behaviors. These assumptions were related to the visible aspects of their identity, such as maternity and race. Keanna for example, described how she initially was excited about becoming a mother but how a negative comment from an ex-boyfriend provoked feelings of shame:

When I first got pregnant, even though I read papers that had conversations around black motherhood is wonderful and valiant and amazing and all of these sorts of things, it was a hard thing for me because I was being seen as a black single mother stereotype even though I was in a long-term relationship.

[. . .]

It was still very, very difficult for me and it was actually interesting because an ex-boyfriend of mine when he found out I was pregnant, he felt entitled to ask me why I didn't get an abortion, did I not want to get married, what was I doing with my life. It was

an interesting thing because he said “*you can become a Black single mom, if that's what you want to be.*”

An aspect of stigmatization includes social shaming of behavior. What is troubling and painful here is that Keanna was initially excited to become a mother. Despite the historical negative stereotypes and imagery surrounding the institution of Black motherhood, she did not internalize them and in fact approached motherhood feeling like it was “*wonderful and valiant and amazing.*” Our discussion continued with Keanna explaining why she and her boyfriend had not gotten married yet, which suggested that Keanna still felt the effects of shaming that she received.

Assata recounted a collection of shaming comments over the years during her pregnancies:

When other women have seen me pregnant over the years, other academics, older academics, I can tell that there is a lot of disapproval, I have dealt with many disrespectful comments, such as, “we're going to invest in birth control for you or that was an interesting choice, why don't you wear a wedding ring to look more respectable?”

For Assata, the painful part of the perceptions and attitudes toward her sexuality are that they are coming from everywhere and women in particular. Not only must she contend with navigating doctoral in a predominantly white institution, she must be the receptor for negative comments related to her visible maternal status. In what follows, I describe the women's experiences through a frame of macro-level intersectionality.

Theme Three: Negotiating Structural Macroaggressions Related to Structural Violence

The following sub-themes explore microaggressions from a structural perspective and attempt to highlight them as more overt forms of racism and are considered in this section as acts of violence. One of the participants, Naimah stated, “We need to rethink the way that we frame violence.” Thus, several interrelated concepts to violence are used to interpret and describe how the women conceptualized their experiences with institutional racism as a by-product of structural oppression. The sub-theme (1) vicarious racism, describes indirect or secondhand experiences with racism through other people or from the environment, (2) silencing as violence, describes the ways in which Black women’s voices are silenced and suppressed and (3) the trauma of doctoral study, explores the affective dimensions of their experiences.

Vicarious Racism

In speaking with the women, a common theme of experience with indirect or what Truong et al. (2012) term as "secondhand" or "vicarious racism" emerged across the narratives. Rhea for example, also works at her institution and in describing the racial climate noted that *"It's a very racist place."* When I asked her to tell me about what she has observed in her experiences she spoke about the structural embeddedness of racist practices:

We have a system-wide office of equity and diversity, and the person that is running that, is sort of running it like a plantation. She is a Black woman [. . .] but the students, she just doesn't relate to the staff of color, like not giving them a chance to do what they're doing, and the president absolutely loves her, so he won't get rid of her. We have complained about her to the president. I think it's a very toxic environment because they have tried to do diversity in a corporate way, kind of have these corporate diversity people.

Strikingly, Rhea explicitly used the word “plantation” to describe the institution's office of equity and diversity. She further observed a Black woman as upholding the institutional culture or 'plantation politics', which implies a system of labor exploitation and racial stratification. Rhea also described another experience of how racism can be vicariously experienced through policies and practices:

Every time somebody gets robbed, they send out these crime alerts and often the suspect is black male, but that's about it, that's all they can describe, Black male with whatever, jeans on or something, and that like creates a sense of terror on campus. So last year and the year before, the faculty, staff and students organized this crime alert forum, to let the president know that this is creating a fearful environment by not providing any good information about the criminals, which is probably about 5 people.

Fatimah described her perceptions of the challenges and the lengths that Black women faculty at her institution will go to minimize microaggressions:

I've also seen Black women professors get taken advantage of, and there's a fear to that. I've had professors over the years, one professor I had would write almost a virtual bibliography on the board before she started teaching, and I always get in the classroom and I always caught her writing the thing on the board, so one day I asked her why she did it, and she said that students, specifically white men, always challenge her when she teaches, so instead of her constantly being asked, what book did you get that from or where did that come from, she just writes in on the board and you go do all of the research you want to about my lesson, and I never saw a non-Black woman professor have to go through that.

Both Fatimah and Rhea did not experience racism directly, but they did experience it vicariously through observation. Rhea observed racial tokenization in hiring practices and racial prejudice in campus safety alert policies. Fatimah observed Black women professors, due to a history of experience in being assumed as intellectually inferior, have a reflexive response to expected racial discrimination. Vicarious experiences of racism are nonetheless impactful especially because they give messages to the observer that they are vulnerable to the same acts (Truong).

Meanwhile, Keanna observed racist attitudes from the students whom she supervises in their fieldwork as a part of her graduate assistantship:

I had students, the first week before they started mentoring, I said learn your student's names. You would think in humanizing or getting to know anyone, you get to know their names. In fact, I might have just met somebody in church and I'm embarrassed if I don't remember their names, but I had two or three of them come back and I'm doing checks and they're telling me their stories about mentoring, the struggle and how their kids just don't pay attention. I am like what are their names? One of my students, who was mentoring a Black girl was like "*honestly I don't know her name and I'm glad I didn't remember it because it was such a bad experience that when I left I just didn't want to even think about it anymore. So not knowing her name probably helps with that.*" I was just like oh my god, do you hear yourself? So not being able to react with like, do you hear yourself, but having to frame it, again accommodate, even though nothing in me agrees with what he just said.

What Keanna witnessed from this student was an example of the ways in racism and violence relies upon a process of dehumanization. When the student Keanna was supervising stated

"honestly I don't know her name and I'm glad I didn't remember it because it was such a bad experience that when I left I just didn't want to even think about it anymore so not knowing her name probably helps with that", it suggested that his cognitive dissonance was useful in depersonalizing racism. It was striking when Keanna noted how she had to “accommodate” by not being able to remark about how disturbing she found the student’s statement. Keanna, like the professors that Fatimah observed, perhaps anticipated racist encounters and hoped to minimize them by insisting that the students learn the names of the children they were working with. Also, similar to Tayo, Keanna’s accounts did not implicate her institution as a racially hostile place as some of the other women noted. However, it appeared that this experience was affective and stood out as a racialized event.

From what we can see presented here, the women experienced psychic violence in physical spaces through observations, policies or practices. Even though we think of violence as physical acts of brutality, the experience of indirect racism is just as impactful, especially for students who also have direct experiences with other injustices. In what follows, I discuss more direct experiences with these injustices.

In this section, I demonstrated how prevailing stereotypes of Black women erase identity and humanness and function as an ideological form of violence. In what follows, I describe another form of structural violence, silence.

Silencing as Violence

The majority of the women shared stories, which indicated in some ways how their voices were silenced and suppressed by the environment or individual actors. Fatimah for example, described how she felt silenced in the classroom:

So if we talk about (my favorite topic) parent involvement in school K-12, we'll sit and we'll have actual teachers, actual administrators, talking about lack of parent involvement, especially among parents of color. There are parents in the room, but nobody speaks from the parents' standpoint. So when I do try to speak as a parent of children in the public K-12 system, I'm privileged so I can't speak. Because I'm educated, so they're not talking about me, *but you are. You are talking about me.*

When Fatimah stated that "*So when I do try to speak as a parent of children in the public K-12 system, I'm privileged so I can't speak*" she appeared to be describing the violent ways in which structures that reproduce white power and privilege and reinforce her inferior status as a Black woman and mother through silencing. What Fatimah described was an intimidation tactic, a dehumanizing one that rendered her invisible in a way so that she could not speak.

Naimah similarly noted an experience with being silenced in the classroom:

What I found interesting was there were students that were from [the same] department in the class [taught by a faculty] who loved what I was doing. He just wouldn't give me the time of day to let me speak, he would just move on, whereas the other students, he would spend all of this time on. That was really clear to me. I don't know if it was clear to other students. I was the only black person in the class. That's when I also realized that you need to get done with this class with a good grade, you can't fuck around. I just decided I needed to stop because it wasn't worth it.

Her reflection was an example of the conflicting marginalization and hyperinvisibility that many of the other women spoke of feeling. As the only Black woman and student in her class, Naimah felt targeted. To be one of few or the only minority and not be acknowledged is silencing.

Whether this professor's actions intentional or unintentional, this less subtle form of microaggression is nonetheless dehumanizing.

Taken together, this section suggests that despite the persistent and variable forms of violence that they grapple with consistently, Black mothers' survival in predominantly white institutions requires strategic identity negotiations. In the next section, I describe the affective dimensions of violence, or the cost that the women in this study pay at the expense of their adeptness at survival.

The Trauma of Doctoral Study

This finding emerged when one of the women explicitly stated feeling "traumatized" by her experience in her all white department. As I reviewed the women's transcripts a noticeable pattern of the women using words to describe their experiences as being "abusive", "violent", "traumatizing" and feeling "beat up". This was similar to what Truong et al. (2012) found in their study with doctoral students of color and the impact of encountering every day racism. Keanna for example, described how she felt "beat up" by her experience in being a graduate student teaching assistant: "It was a very interesting experience to me because [. . .] I was like I feel like when I leave every day, I feel like I've been beat up."

Meanwhile, Tayo who is taking classes in Black studies and English spoke about how she dealt with the persistent racism in her English department by seeking refuge in the Black studies department. While she spoke of having a positive feeling in both spaces in general, she interestingly had conflicting feelings:

When I went into the English department more formally, I had already been taking classes there, so it was a very, very smooth transition. I already had my home department,

and then I did both. That was fantastic. Although the first class I took in English was actually pretty traumatizing.

In the majority of the women's cases, it appeared that their background experiences with racism seemed to make them perhaps more vulnerable to the impact of the subtle and overt forms of prejudice and discrimination that they experienced at their institutions. It was also evident in their interpretations that the women experienced racism and discrimination related stress as a consequence of their minority statuses in their institutions.

In another way, Assata described the impact of socialization as an abusive, painful alteration of identity, or in essence, a stripping of the sense of self:

Going through academia took those pieces from me. That is where the violence came through to me, was academia. *It's a very violent place.* It will strip you of everything, because it's a place where people are sanctioned to give you criticism and feedback first of all, but it's also a place where folks don't look like you in the literature, issues are not about you in the literature and it's a violence at the equivalent of when you talk about the difference between emotional abuse or mental abuse and physical abuse, physical abuse is the abuse that you can see but the emotional/mental abuse they say is more dangerous because it's insidious.

People don't even know they're being abused, and that's how I feel about academia or school period, that it's the type of abuse that you don't see and so it's like cancer or any other disease that will get inside of your cells and become a part of you, it kind of mutates, and you're not even aware of it, it's changing you and you're not even aware of the changes. And not changes in a good way. It is definitely malignant, but it's

rearranging your DNA, in a way that's going to harm you and benefit others and that's what I feel, that the disease is going to rearrange your DNA in a way that is going to harm you but keep the disease going, keep it living, and that's how I feel that these school systems and even academia, that they are insidious and they sneak inside of you to the very core of you to the point you can't tell you from it or you from someone else of your gender, and that's why I'm committed to being a part of your work and speaking so much, because this is our way of getting back in and helping people rearrange themselves to speak back against whatever that disease is.

Structural violence in the academy for some of the women in this study appeared in the description of their experiences in many forms. Violence from their perspectives and own words is “abusive”, “painful”, “traumatizing” and “strips you of your sense of self”. Unfortunately for these women, it was also a part of their normal every day experiences in the academy. In what follows, I focus on the women’s social roles as mothers, and present how the women perceived in their own words, the overlapping intersection of their roles as Black mothers and doctoral students.

Theme Four: Hidden Costs of Negotiating Black Womanhood and Motherhood at PWIs

In this theme, I described the women’s perceived identity related challenges related to the conflation of their social roles as mothers and doctoral students. This theme emerged when I asked the women which intersections of their identities complemented each and which aspects of their identities they felt were conflicted. The majority of the women not only described the conflicts they faced, they also spoke frequently of the toll that it took on their lives, identities and relationships.

In what follows, I explore this major theme through three sub-themes related to the major theme of academic, personal and cultural taxation on Black mothers: (1) Black womanhood tax, which describes the unique burdens associated with being a Black mother and, (2) Cultural tax, which describes the cultural burden of being a Black woman in doctoral study, (3) financial burden, which relates the economic stress of balancing motherhood and doctoral study and, (4) psychic and physical costs, which describes the psychic and psychological costs of keeping with the demands of balancing multiple roles.

Black Womanhood Tax

The majority of the women cited issues of role conflict and discord in interpersonal relationships with romantic partners and family members due to them being pulled in multiple ways. Across many of the women's accounts, what remained salient was the ways in which combining academic work and motherhood interfered with their ability to feel efficacious as mothers and/or as doctoral students.

Two of the women mentioned how the competing demands for their time between work, school and motherhood created tensions in their domestic relationships. Rhea for example, mentioned that being a wife and doctoral student was particularly challenging, and part of the reason why she was going through a divorce was due to contradictory expectations between her family, work and student life:

That's part of why I'm not going to be with my husband. That's why I'm divorcing him.

Because there's no support there and actually jealousy. I'm not spending attention on him which is kind of weird to me. If I'm doing the laundry or something, or cleaning the house, that's not really something that's carving away out of our relationship, but if I'm

working fulltime and as you know I also consult on the side doing program evaluation so we can send our son to a school and... so I don't know. I'm always working. And I also spend time with my family. But its slow going and it does create conflict and tension because you are focusing on something for a moment [other than your marriage].

Rhea also noted a consequence of being viewed as a “good employee” and “good mother” which she tended to subordinate to her role as a partner in her marriage. Being pulled in so many different ways however, led Rhea to realize that gendered scripts were responsible for her marital discord. She further elaborated,

I see a lot of [challenges women face] coming from the 1950's. Trying to have the image of the perfect woman with dinner at home waiting for you. I'm like Black women never had that! Are you kidding me? Most white women never had that, they were working too. I think there is a larger societal conversation that hates women working in general. Like if they're working outside the home, somehow that's not working for the family and the idea that dads can't be nurturers adds to it.

It appears from Rhea's statement that her husband did not view Rhea's work outside the home as complimentary to her role as a wife and mother. As Rhea states, because many Black women are not afforded the luxury of not working, desires to conform to gender scripts are contradictory to material reality.

In Zaya's case, she described feelings of role conflict in her roles as both wife and mother. She perceived her role as more taxing because she attempted to balance them all equally:

I'm not comparing life of a single mom or a married mom and saying that one is easier than the other, what I am saying is where you would think that having your spouse at

home may lighten it here, no, because they don't do it like you do it, so when you come home, it's like you take that time for yourself, it's at a huge expense, because when you come home, now you have to catch up on the stuff that that person didn't take care of like you thought they will while you were gone. So it's kind of double work, you pay the price of going out, even if it's just for an hour, because you come back and you think the kids are asleep in bed and you get to go right to sleep. No. You actually still need to feed them, still put them to bed, he might want some sex. It's like what? No.

For Zaya, the conflict she appears to be experiencing in balancing her multiple roles are because she places high value on her social roles as a mother, wife and student. At first blush, it would be easy to assume that Zaya's perception of role conflict would differ from what the women who are balancing children and school alone because she has a partner. However, Zaya has an additionally competing role of spouse, which arguably adds to the perception of role conflict.

Cultural Tax

Historically, the Black community has valued Black women's education as a tool for racial uplift. Attached to this value is also carrying the burden of being a pioneer and trailblazer. In this section, I described the ways in which the women in this study faced unique challenges related to the 'cultural burden' of carrying the intellectual and cultural tradition of Black women in education. Fatimah discussed feeling obligated to be a pioneer:

For me, I'm the only person in my family to ever even attempt a PhD on either side. On one side, I'm the only person to have a bachelor's degree, and so there's that. Then there are communities I come from, there's that. Then there are children in the family and in the

community I come from and then there are other students. So all of it feels like a brick on my shoulders, like a stone right on my back, and I'm thinking so what happens if I don't?

Fatimah's quote illustrates the pressure that she feels to succeed as a pioneer: *"So all of it feels like a brick on my shoulders, like a stone right on my back, and I'm thinking so what happens if I don't?"* Perhaps Fatimah feels burdened by the pressure of being only one in family to pursue a PhD and her expectations of herself to be a pathbreaker for other Black students. Not only does she feel pressured to not just finish, but also perform at an exceptionally high level.

Another example of how Black mothers are uniquely and culturally taxed is from Rhea who works in a professional role at her university supporting Black students. As a student support professional, she is often called upon to help students navigate the racially hostile campus climate in addition to their academic needs. She recalled an example of how Black students perceived being silenced and marginalized in their classrooms: *"undergraduate students would come up and complain about how they felt treated in the classroom, not being able to raise their hand, not being selected to speak or the professor not knowing how to deal with their ideas and engaging them."* Rhea also spoke about making sure in her work role, that she was visibly available to the students when they needed her for social and emotional support but also spoke of the penalty or tax she pays by being attentive, accessible and supportive to students:

For one, I do not put enough time in my doctoral work, and I have to change that. What I've been able to do is get bursts of work done and then otherwise it's all about putting out fires for the projects that I'm working on for work and trying to be responsive, because students will come in. Even though I am not an advisor in the department, you build relationships and it is important to maintain that for retention and even to make our

department relevant I think. So students will come in and talk about a class that might have bothered them or something, so that's why I try to make sure I'm there at least most of the time of the week for a couple of hours in the office.

Rhea explicitly noted that her doctoral studies are suffering because of her internalized obligation to the students, but she perhaps she knows that by not supporting their success as Black students that they might not succeed. However, Rhea pays a tax for her presence and it is affecting her ability to persist. The consequence however, is that Black women are taxed in multiple ways when this work is combined with outside work and other domestic labor as was the case in Fatimah's example. In the next section, I describe the financial costs that some of the women incurred because of combining motherhood and doctoral study.

Financial Burden

Some of the women described facing financial burden while juggling multiple roles. The financial tax that Assata paid for example, illustrated the dilemma of balancing the economic needs of her family with the level of funding she was receiving from her graduate assistantship:

It's isolating. It's humiliation at times because what I live off of as a graduate student, it can barely sustain an average graduate student, so someone with a family size as big as mine, I'm always dealing with things, like I can't register for school because I'm behind on my rent and university housing and so there is a hold on my account. Those are normal things and the department finds out that you're late registering so everybody has to write an appeal letter for you because you're late. Those are the things that I'm dealing with on a regular basis. They're humiliating, they're scary, demeaning, but at the same time, with me going through it, I can raise awareness and let people know that when

you're trying to recruit, if you really mean it, you're serious about recruiting for diversity, then when you recruit someone like me, I can't live off the same funding packet you give everyone else, not because I'm special, but because I won't be able to live. There are a lot of conversations that happen that wouldn't happen if I didn't exist. A lot of people didn't anticipate someone like me. They never would have been able to imagine it.

The unequal exchange of labor here is that while Assata provides a source of labor for the department she must cope with the fact that she is barely able to pay her rent or provide for her children with the level of compensation that she receives for her labor. Her work supports the institution, but she feels unsupported by her institution. When Assata stated, *"I can raise awareness and let people know that when you're trying to recruit, if you really mean it, you're serious about recruiting for diversity, then when you recruit someone like me, I can't live off the same funding packet you give everyone else, not because I'm special, but because I won't be able to live"* she appeared to be describing an expectation that the stipend she receives for her work as a graduate assistant is enough to meet the financial demands of her family of six children.

On the other hand, Zaya was aware that there was financial support available to alleviate the necessity of combining paid employment with doctoral work, but that these opportunities were limited for Black students. The financial taxation that some of the women faced illustrates the dilemma of balancing the economic needs of their families with their doctoral work:

I also do feel like Black women who had children in this process have another interesting socioeconomic challenge because, this is making a very broad assumption, I don't really have any data, but I would go on a limb and say if you're an African-American woman in

this process, you probably don't have the same financial support that maybe some of our non-Black counterparts have, financial and family support with your children.

What Zaya was describing were the differences she perceives in her experiences as a Black mother navigating doctoral compared to what white mothers may experience. Whether this is statistically confirmed or not, the fact that Zaya *felt* that there were pre-existing financial barriers for Black students is significant because she internalized this in ways that caused her to push herself until it affected her health. From what Zaya shared with me about her socioeconomic background, it was not one of material wealth or economic privilege. Being in a space where whiteness and class privilege are dominant, Zaya perceived that her white counterparts had both race and economic privilege, which made their experiences less challenging. In the next section, I present the ways in which the women described feeling 'burdened' by carrying on Black women's legacy of education. Some of the women discussed the physic and physical impact of juggling multiple roles. These findings are presented in the following discussion.

Physic and Physical Costs

Some of the women in the previous section described feeling pressured to perform both roles successfully in order to be both 'good mothers' and 'good students' simultaneously. Sometimes the internalization of the pressure led to physical depletion and other times the stress was described as depression. Zaya elaborated on how she experienced severe stress related consequences of juggling multiple and competing roles:

After I became a mom, working in the evening is really what happened. I would be my normal wife, mom, professional in the daytime, student by night and on the weekends is how it worked out. Closer to the end, when it came time to that writing portion, it was

very difficult. I had the benefit of working on campus too. I had an office that I could get away and go to, and I just so happened to have one that was in the 24-hour library. So I would literally go and spend the night in my office to try and write because it was the only time that I could break away from life, because I had a baby under a year, I'm nursing which is also a full-time job, so even I was home trying to work, when she woke up, it would just be the natural dynamic of the house for her to come to me. So in order for me to work and think and without interruption, I would have to literally go away. I don't recommend it, it's not healthy, I passed out one time. I had to go and have all of these tests with the neurologist and have a MRI. It was exhaustion, pushing yourself so much without rest, without whatever you need to do to recharge. That caused me to take a step back and figure out a better way to make sure that I was taking care of me first and then everybody else and then working on school.

Zaya worked so hard to the point of endangering her health in order to perform the unrelenting tasks of marriage, motherhood and doctoral study. Consequently, she pushed herself to exhaustion and was hospitalized.

Tayo on the other felt the pressure to 'be perfect' out of fear of fulfilling a negative stereotype of Black intellectual inferiority (Steele, 1997):

I'm trying to get over this kind of perfectionist impulse. It's debilitating. So I'm trying to just crank out evil, nasty, funky drafts. I think part of the kind of don't embarrass your family kind of thing. You can't send people writing that's not polished and that's not how this is going to get done. That kind of attitude is not helpful for me. So it's one I'm trying to kind of get over now. Of course your first draft is rough and horrible, but yeah,

this has been a real problem for me. I went to a writing boot camp in January and it was helpful in terms of just staying, get the ideas out first, then wrestle with it, and let somebody look at it. This is racialized where it's almost like I can't let white people see me not be perfect, but it has caused me tremendous pain and problems and sentence-level craziness. I'm still struggling with it, but I'm getting better.

What Tayo's quote illustrates here is an internalization of feeling pressured to not just do well, but also be the best. Similar to what Zaya described as feeling pressured to do well that she endangered her health, Tayo expressed a sense of pain associated with consuming her time worrying about if she will be seen as not good enough. The findings in this section demonstrated some areas where Black women's experiences overlapped with those of other doctoral students who are white mothers or Black males, while some areas were distinctly different and related to their identities as Black women and mothers.

Theme Five: Performing Intersectionality through Standards of Black Womanhood and Motherhood

This overarching theme described the ways in which the women drew on external images of Black womanhood to construct their own definitional standards of Black womanhood and motherhood. Related sub-themes emerged during review and analysis of the women's transcripts and captured how the women negotiate their motherhood identities with intersectionality. They are: (1) performing black motherhood as survival, (2) performing black motherhood as resilience and, (3) performing black motherhood as resistance. The first theme described how Black women view their roles as preparation of Black children for survival. The second theme described their values and standards for motherhood performances and the last theme explores

how the women perform their motherhood as a subversive strategy of resistance to counter oppression.

The following presentation describes how the women negotiate understandings of what it means to 'be' a Black mother. The idea that Black motherhood is a performance emerged when one of the women expressed:

I was actually asked this question, who was my role model and I was like dang, I really didn't have any until I got to college and they were my professors, and I'm still close to them. In college was when I really started thinking about how I see these beautiful, wonderful black women and I do not necessarily feel natural in my skin and being a black woman, I do not feel like I do it correctly. (Keanna)

Although many Black women are raising their children in spaces of privilege, have access to (some) resources, developed intellectual tools to articulate acute diagnoses of intersecting oppressions, they are not immune to feeling pressured to conform to gender, race and class social scripts. In what follows, I explore various ways the women articulated performing motherhood as a counterbalance to negative perceptions of African American mothers and binary constructions of ideal motherhood and womanhood as being western, white and middle class.

Performing Black Motherhood as Survival

Some of the common themes in the women's accounts related to their desires to protect their children from some of the pain and traumas that they experienced themselves as children. For the purposes of this section, Lorde's (2008) definition of survival is used to frame this discussion: "for survival is the ability to encompass difference, encompass change without

destruction" (in Byrd, Betsch, Cole & Guy-Sheftall, p. 25). Thus, the primary goals reflected in Black maternal behaviors and attitudes toward childrearing often reflect themes of protection for survival. Some of these very same themes emerged from the women's discussions on their experiences and views on motherhood. Assata for example, spoke generally about how unfavorable social conditions require a different communication technique, centered on protection and survival of Black children:

Our whole communication style is different and that is intimidating. So I always give an example to my fellows in school, there is a "Johnny do you want a cookie?" model.

Timmy, do you want to share a cookie with Johnny? Those are polite commands.

Whereas, we come from a background where there is no Timmy do you want to share a cookie? Our background is, duck, run, come here. Our commands are not gentle because our lifestyles and our backgrounds require something more aggressive. If you are coming from a background where there is gun violence, where people are dying, where folks are being riddled with police brutality, there can be nothing gentle about the command. If I tell my son, ask him, do you want to duck right now because it looks like there is shooting that is incompatible with the situation because people fall, and there is so much at stake. Therefore, we bring that same type of urgency and that same type of tone and intimation to our practice as students.

When Assata stated, "*Our commands are not gentle because our lifestyles and our backgrounds require something more aggressive*" her statement illustrated a strategic cultural communicative strategy (Scott, 2013) of Black mothers to command authority and assert power. As Assata

suggests, in environments where harm or danger is present, this strategy is necessary so that commands are taken seriously and responded to without question.

Fatimah also mentioned a common theme of survival as a major emphasis of Black women's childrearing practices:

Motherhood is common. Having children is common. However, it is rare in my family and in the neighborhoods; I grew up in for you to critically look at being a mother. You're on autopilot, you're on survival mode. Most mothers I know are on survival mode.

She later provided an example of how her performance of motherhood is overshadowed by the need to protect her daughter:

I have a 16-year-old daughter, and there are some things that she went through that I forgot all of my learning. I don't think my initial reaction to it would have shown anybody that I knew anything, that I learned anything about feminism or anything because my initial reaction to responding to what she went through which was being sexually active was her reputation. I immediately went to her reputation and I knew I hated it when that happened to me, when I was nothing but my reputation. That's immediately where I went with my daughter and I had to check myself. When the reality of the fact that you are responsible for this little person until they are 18, when that hits, sometimes that scholar will go right out the door. I had to go back and be like let me tell you what I'm meaning to say. But immediately my first response was, your reputation is shot.

Fatimah explained a contradictory concern of many Black mothers in socializing Black daughters for survival. When Fatimah shared with her daughter about her personal experience

with sexual violence, it appeared that her initial reaction was out of fear and need to protect her daughter from potential victimization. Another interpretation would suggest that Fatimah is still processing the trauma of childhood assault and that her sense of alarm was more about her being sexually vulnerable and her duty of protection as a mother than about sexual morality.

Zaya on the other hand, expressed her need to protect her much younger daughters from harmful messages that could impede their development of a healthy self-concept and sense of self-worth:

I think all of those messages [about skin color] have basically funneled me into this place where I'm super protective and very decisive and deliberate on experiences that I allow her to be exposed to. Even the people that I allow them to be around, because in my own experience, your own family can be the ones that tear you down to the floor, and if it's a family member whose lifestyle, for instance, if there is a family member's lifestyle that I don't really agree with, there is no way that I'm leaving my children with you, and that is exactly the case with my father's side of the family. I won't even leave my children with my father by himself, not because I'm afraid he's going to be hurtful or he's going to physically harm them, he has perspectives and I have to be there to help redirect the conversations sometimes, just because his perspective is not where I want my girls to go through.

Zaya appeared to view herself as a buffer and filter to negative messages that her children may encounter from school and family. This strategy of mothering is one that she feels is necessary to overall psychological well-being of her daughters.

What was described here was how the women negotiated intersectionality with the reality of raising children and developed strategies for motherhood as an outcome. As result of Black women's marginal existence between race, class and gender paradigms, raising children who will eventually occupy these marginal spaces means socializing them for survival. While this section describes the ways in which Black mothers perform strategies of survival, the next section explores how the women develop strategies of self-reliance that facilitate resilience.

Performing Black Motherhood as Resilience

The study design included a blog space for the women to write, reflect and respond to questions that centered on the women's identities as mothers. Their postings were viewable to each other and they were able to respond to one another's postings. I asked the women to fill in the blank to the question, "*Black mothers are . . .*", and their responses included descriptions of how they both perceive Black mothers as a social group, how they perceive themselves and how society perceives them. Keanna viewed broadly, that mothers are resilient because of their ability to juggle multiple roles, but also views resilience in a culturally specific way unique to Black women:

Resilient. I think this applies to most mothers, in that women tend to shoulder the brunt of childcare responsibilities, but I also think there is something to specific about this notion of resilience as it relates to Black mothers.

She further explained:

I think we face challenges that relate uniquely to our experiences as Black mothers and I think we weather a lot of storms and have to find a way "out of no way" [. . .] or "make our own way"

For Keanna, being a Black mother had layered meanings. The first was doing maternal work in a way that would counter the deficit-based narratives of Black mothering as being culturally degenerative. The second meaning she described was embodying a maternal ethic of carrying on cultural tradition of Black women's resilience in the face of oppression.

Assata similarly stated that [*Black mothers are*] *Judged and often go unappreciated and unsupported by society. The mothers I know, however, are resourceful, wise, and resilient*" and Naimah connected the themes of resilience and survival as a necessary to Black women's existence. What was presented here were various ways these mothers negotiated past experiences with intersectionality with their intersectional identities as Black women and mothers. The next section explores another way in which the women described a cultural standard for performing Black motherhood, that of resistance.

Performing Motherhood as Resistance

Literature from Black women scholars suggests that while Black women carry with them a legacy of struggle in oppression and that there is also a long tradition of both nurturing and resistance accompanying this struggle (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1970; White, 1999). The majority of the women that described an awareness of the social stigmas surrounding Black motherhood also spoke of ways in which they resisted against stigmatization through the instilling values, nurturing, claiming public ownership of their children or engaging in activism as "community othermothers". The theme of performing Black motherhood and womanhood undergird the ways in which they negotiated meaning of their maternal roles with their relational social identities. While the above sections explored themes of survival and resilience, this sub-theme explores how the women describe their mothering strategies as acts of resistance against oppression.

Fatimah's political concerns informs her scholarship, motherhood and community work. The following is an example of how she negotiated her personal motherhood role with community activism as a form of resistance:

When it comes to activism, I always have Black mothers in mind. You can't talk to me about any topic where I'm not looking at the angle of how this affects mothers. But at the end of the day, the Black man you're fighting for is somebody's son. Everything we do affects mothers. I don't understand how people don't see that.

Accompanying Black women's collective history in combating multiple dimensions of oppression through their communal roles as mothers is an ethic of caring. Collins argues that "[e]xperiences both of being nurtured as children and being held responsible for siblings and fictive kin [. . .] can stimulate a more generalized ethic of caring and personal accountability among African-American women" (p. 189). Fatimah's resistance was demonstrated in the ways in which she took on the concerns of the Black community as a mother and activist. As discussed in Fatimah's participant profile, she spent much of her adolescence being responsible for her younger siblings. This experience, combined with Fatimah's micro level and macro level experiences in oppression no doubt facilitated her communal ethic of caring and determination to use her education and maternal role in a socially responsible way.

Assata described how she uses the passing down of values as a way to stimulate social consciousness and ethic of caring in her children as resistance:

The way that my resistance comes out is in the way that I mother, the issues that I address as a mother, my goal is not just to keep you alive, get you to college, get you married and make you a good citizen. My goal is activism about mothering and is activism in my

home and activism in the way that I parent my children. It is not just going out in the world and change the world; we have issues in our own family. How do we solve these issues? These are the weekly conversations we are having.

Contained within Assata and Fatimah's narratives are examples of how some Black mothers empower themselves and their children by locating their activism and in the everyday work as mothers. Framing this activism and resistance is also an ethic of care. Assata for example, acting out of worry about the transmission of intergenerational trauma instills moral values that both accommodate and contradict mainstream ideas as both a form of resistance and survival. Since the external social world historically has been a place where Black people were denied dignity and humanity, the "homeplace" is a site that Black mothers could construct to offer protection from the injuries of racial oppression, class exploitation and sexual domination (hooks, 2007).

Keanna also spoke about the importance of demonstrating nurturing as an ethic of caregiving work and resistance:

I think one challenging thing is this idea that the image of Black mothering in American society isn't always loving/positive. And so I've thought about the fact that when folks in my program and in this Ivory Tower see me loving on my baby girl or reading to her or doing things that plenty of Black mothers do with their babies, but folks don't assume we do with our babies, I think of it as like a resistant move. And I don't think of this as much if at all when I'm surrounded by Black folk or Black people in my lab...but with others, I do. Knowing that I am presenting a positive, loving image of Black motherhood.

Contradictorily, she also struggles with conforming to mainstream cultural ideals of ideal motherhood and class:

I [view myself as] the mom that does things, like my daughter had a swim lesson this morning, and she was absolutely atrocious and I wanted to be like I'm tired of this, be appreciative or at least be civil, quit screaming. So to them I do too much over the top. They would be fine with the daycare facility. On the other hand, I'm surrounded in my graduate school world with stay at home white mothers where just the man works and they're all at home with their babies and they eat seaweed for snacks, and I'm like seaweed for real? I brought Cheez-Its. Is that okay if my child has processed cheese? So I feel interestingly inadequate in both spaces. There is not a lot of comparison between the two. They don't really overlap.

. . . not to mention *I'm trying to be a seaweed mom*, so I'm trying to be cheerful all day and read books and do puzzles and everything else and read and be fun and go to the botanical gardens.

Keanna's quote "*not to mention I'm trying to be a seaweed mom*" forms the basis of this discussion surrounding the discussion of creating alternative standards for Black motherhood. The overlap of Keanna's race and class identities and her awareness of the pathologizing images of Black motherhood leaves Keanna to feel like she is "*interestingly inadequate in both spaces*". The challenge for Keanna is the struggle with conforming to class standards and not feel inferior, while also making it a point to publicly demonstrate affection toward her daughter. Although Keanna was aware of the difficulty in standing upright in a "crooked room" (Harris-Perry, 2011) on the surface she perhaps feels like she is constructing an image of Black motherhood that publicly contradicts the image of Black single motherhood as culturally deficient. The crooked

room is palpable for Keanna, and she adjusts by negotiating negative external images with internal constructions of what it means to be a ‘good Black mother’.

The narratives from the women commonly addressed common themes of struggle, resilience, resistance illustrated by the ways they described their mothering work like making sure their children value their own culture and education, are protected from social, physical, psychological and emotional harm and are socially conscious. Although this section explored themes of struggle related to their mothering work, the next section explores how some Black women's identities are visible through themes of struggle related to processes of identity construction. In what follows, I offer a presentation of how the women described unique ways of negotiating intersectionality.

Theme Six: Black Women Doctoral Student Parents’ Ways of Negotiating Intersectionality

Several sub-themes emerged from the interviews that described the strategies that the women developed to negotiate power: (1) ways of seeing, (2) accessing power, (3) creating safe spaces, (4) talking back, (5) shifting and, (6) embracing Black womanhood as resistance. The first theme highlighted how the women articulated an oppositional way of knowing and seeing power resulting from their experience as individuals existing outside of mutually constructed overlapping discourses of race, gender and class. The second theme spoke to the agency of Black mothers. The third theme described how the women found created safe spaces within relationships and in the contours of their mind. The fourth theme highlighted how the women discursively responded to power. The fifth theme spoke to how the women described strategies of accommodation they utilized to safely navigate spaces and the last theme spoke to the ways in which the women claimed power by choosing their places of marginality as a basis for resistance

and self-actualization. Collectively, these themes spoke to the ways in which these women constructed their identities around themes of power, struggle and survival as a method of navigating multiple contexts of oppression.

Seeing Power

In this section, I described how the women use their social identity positioning as a site to theorize intersecting and complex realities of Black womanhood, motherhood and doctoral study. The majority of the women articulated a consciousness of the oppressive systems of power that are dominating forces in Black women's lives. Fatimah for example, theorized about the effects of racial and gender hierarchies in relation to her personal experiences:

If you look at Black people in the colony within the United States and then you look at the way single mothers are treated and stomped all over, that we were a colony within a black colony. We are aware of what is happening to us and we are able to talk about the meaning of what is happening to us, a lot of us just don't. So part of my life around activism affords us spaces to do that. So every time I go home, I'm looking at the young girls with children and I'm listening to them talk and I'm like you know what's happening to you. There is a way of acting like you don't have any choices or acting like you don't have any control. Life has beat you up so bad you feel like you don't have any decisions but you do. Just like when I was going through it, I did not have a language for it. It was so messed up.

It appears here that Fatimah possesses both an individual and collective consciousness of the situation of Black women. The struggle for language also appeared to be integral to the development of an awareness of power. When Fatimah stated "*when I was going through it, I did*

not have a language for it. It was so messed up” it also confirmed the notion that embedded in the struggle of coming to critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) is also a struggle for language (hooks, 1989). Although many Black women are aware of the effects of systems of power on their realities, finding a space to cope with these effects and a language to describe that awareness can be a struggle. For Fatimah, claiming a Black feminist identity marginalizes her from the women and men in the Black community:

When I say I've been a feminist my whole life, I mean it. But I wouldn't ever say it because why do you want to be a feminist? So I would never say it out loud. I come from a very old fashioned family on both sides. I wouldn't say it out loud, but I know the way I spend my life is aligned with the stuff I'm reading on black feminism. The way I was interrogating what I was experiencing while I was experiencing it. Black feminism gives me a framework of kind of hey girl, you matter.

Importantly, Black feminist thinking has seemingly helped Fatimah grapple with constructions of Black womanhood and motherhood. The contention that Fatimah noted in claiming a feminist identity is an exemplar of what Black feminist theorists have attributed to as Black sexual politics (Collins, 2004). Confronting male dominance and contesting gender ideology has been problematic for Black women in garnering political concern within the Black community. The struggle for Black women's concerns are unfavorably viewed as aligning with ‘white women’s politics’ and an abandonment of the Black political struggle (Bambara, 1970; Davis, 1981; Betsch, Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003). Although Fatimah keeps her feminism private from her family, she does engage the world with in her everyday life to empower herself. Fatimah also discussed how coming to a Black feminist consciousness allows her to persist:

Black feminism gives me that pep talk when I don't think I can do it anymore. [. . .] But I find hope in motherhood and I find humanity and feminism. I don't know what would glue my life together if wasn't for feminism. It is literally the glue of it all, my academics, my activism, my motherhood, and the ways I deal with womanhood when I feel like for so long this ideal of womanhood is not what I was thinking about.

Clearly, Fatimah engages her feminist identity in her everyday life as a Black woman and mother as sites of power and resistance. It also allows her to rehumanize herself, reject hegemonic ideas of womanhood, and find hope in a marginal reality. These are considered here as strategies of resistance toward oppression.

Some of the women discussed a “dual consciousness” or the ability to see themselves as white society views them, which appeared to be important in learning how to navigate white spaces. Assata reflected:

I think part of the reason why people see us as competitors is because for one, they already underestimated us as being equals, so when they see that you have children they underestimate you, they see that you're Black they underestimate you, they see that you're a woman they underestimate you, and so I think because their standards were already so low, but we show up and we show up sincere, passionate, hungry, we show up with a hustle that they've never seen before because whatever our backgrounds are, and it disorients people, it throws them off, it creates some type of dissonance between what they understood and now what they're perceiving as a new and different reality.

The threat that comes in for us is where we threaten the status quo, because if we're there, that means that we're pushing and lobbying for different rules and different culture,

expanding the culture to include our voices, to include tools and strategies that bring more people like us in and so yes, that does make us a threat.

What Assata's quote illustrates is how occupying multiply subordinate statuses shapes her perception that encountering racism and sexism is routine. In this way, Assata anticipates being underestimated and threatening to the status quo. It made me wonder how being in white controlled spaces and anticipating everyday microaggressions affects her mental wellbeing. No doubt that her experiences discussed in earlier sections justify her perception, but I am curious as to the long-term consequences of operating in what appears to be survival mode.

Naimah also articulated how she uses her way of 'seeing' power to navigate her institutional context:

I don't care what you do, there are going to be those imbalances of power, whiteness is going to appear and function in different ways and how you navigate that matters. I walked in like, there are going to be folks that are going to use their power in violent ways. To assume that just because you are entering an area and to assume that the power and balances don't exist there is just ridiculous, so I felt that I walked in knowing, I didn't have a utopic impression of what being a part of the department or in those circles meant. I knew there were politics there as well and wherever I end up I am going to have some other coworkers and their politics might be fucked up too. You just have to figure out how to navigate that and what you are willing to engage in or not.

When Naimah stated "*so I felt that I walked in knowing*" it affirmed much of what Black feminist scholars view as Black women's ways of knowing power arises from marginal spaces of social location. What Naimah "walked in knowing" was how to navigate power in white spaces,

most likely because of her background experiences attending schools in predominantly white environments and dealing with racism.

Rhea also spoke of how she is able to 'see' racial attitudes cloaked in niceness or the hidden curriculum of whiteness:

I just see it as a culture difference and it is around power, racism, and maintaining white supremacy in general, but that is everywhere. It is just different and it articulates itself or manifests differently in different cultural contexts throughout different regions in the US.

The women's oppositional thinking was not only limited to white power, it also included critiques of Black society and class stratification. Tayo for example, only experienced class marginality after she recently divorced from her husband. She stated that:

Because of my precarious class situation, because I'm now a single mother, I'm just identifying more with those young people setting cars on fire. Whereas before, I think I was much more conservative and into respectability politics. [. . .] Now I can see, and even when people were critiquing before, I could see the critique but I didn't accept the critique.

When Tayo spoke of "*respectability politics*" she was describing an understood set of moral rules and values that marginalized groups use to demonstrate how their social values are align with mainstream values. Within Black communities, these values are used to self-police behaviors and promote assimilation toward dominant norms. Until Tayo came to see herself as the image of what Black respectability politics denounced—Black single motherhood—she came to 'see' how this line of thinking was attached to a larger system of power.

Interestingly, when Tayo stated “*Now I can see*”, it spoke to the idea that Tayo’s development of an awareness of social class did not occur until she was economically disadvantaged and a single parent. Tayo’s background did not include experiences with trauma and she spent her formative years in private, religious education. Perhaps the layers of privilege that she described as being present as an adolescent shielded her from events that were present in the other women’s lives that sparked an earlier development of a critical consciousness.

In this section, I explored how the women understood and ‘saw’ power from within marginal spaces. In the next section, I discuss how the women also resist power by finding spaces of safety.

Creating Safe Spaces

A majority of the women spoke of the importance of being bound to a community of Black women. Collins notes that the importance of Black women’s relationships is to serve as safe spaces where Black women can affirm their identities, rehumanize themselves and truly listen to one another. Tayo and Zaya provided two powerful examples of how shared consciousness between Black mothers are important to Black women’s well-being. Tayo described how being a mother creates instant intimate community with other Black mothers:

Like without really even thinking about it, the way that [being a Black woman] affects my motherhood---I think we were talking about this earlier, this kind of instant community with other Black women—it’s you know, sometimes when I talk to my White girlfriends, they’re just like, they’re jealous. Because they see it. They know there’s something so profound and rich between us. Black women who meet just like sitting

at—buying a pair of glasses right? Then you’re like best friends and you got this like shared history so quickly.

Zaya spoke about how she sought out nurturing and affirming relationships with other women as a method of coping:

Having somebody to talk to about things that I’m going through or just hear me out, be a sounding board, is really the way I cope with stuff. So I had my professional person that is a little more advanced than me or people who are in the process with similar lifestyles, that would be like I said that one person in my cohort, I still have girlfriends that I know from longer, just long-time friends that can kind of relate.

Although in an earlier section the women consistently cited feelings of loneliness and isolation due to underrepresentation, some did take action to construct social networks with other women to minimize the impact. Some of the women’s strategies were overt forms of resistance. In the next section, I described how the women asserted their voices as resistance.

Talking back

Some the women described how they used their voices as tools of resistance or in essence, how they talked back to hidden power structures, in classrooms and in everyday interpersonal interactions. Throughout much of Fatimah’s testimony for example, she spoke of her vulnerability as a humanizing effort against stereotypes of Black women. Speaking in this way interrupted social prescriptions and imagery of Black women’s inordinate strength and signified a refusal to be ‘othered’. She stated in one of her blog reflections “I speak up and I speak out. I’ve been known for it most of my adult life.” Conversely, Fatimah also noted the danger in ‘talking back’ in certain spaces. “But in this space, my children are particularly

vulnerable to fall-out from my voice.” Perhaps Fatimah’s experience with and knowledge of dominating forces of power led to internalization of a fear that her children will be harmed in some way by her talking back.

Assata’s coming to voice story also included a struggle for language. In her reality as a single Black mother to six children, she found cultural prescriptions of motherhood contradictory:

So when I started looking at this literature, it gave me a context and it gave me history and it gave me a framework and language that empowerment to be able to push back. So then I was able to say, yeah, I felt oppressed as a mom. You all got me, but how I’m going to get you back is that I’m going to raise my children in a way that makes them aware.

For Assata, being in a privileged space as a single mother to six children perhaps forces her to confront contradictions between her social reality and cultural views on motherhood. While Black motherhood can be a site of empowerment for some women, it can be source of oppression for others (Collins). Assata’s quote also illustrates a struggle for language that is centered on finding the strength to confront these contradictions head on without fear of evaluation and judgement. Perhaps Assata’s coming to voice story is more about being fearless in admitting to herself that motherhood under those conditions is oppressive. What Assata resists is further internalization of dominant ideas surrounding motherhood that render her powerless.

Sometimes when the women talked back, it was a refusal to be silenced and accept a position of invisibility. Naimah for example, shared how she used her voice in class to interrupt and challenge privileged ways of thinking and speaking:

So as we're talking I know I'm bringing up examples, because that's what I do. I think it got to the point where how could the white girl say what she's saying right now? She can't speak to experience, and that's what it came down to. For example, I'm citing stuff, and she wanted to push back on it but she can't give an example. She wants to talk about theory, she doesn't want to talk about experience. I'm like okay, that's when white women get to enter. They can say they know, because they can theorize about it, but when I give you examples and it makes you uncomfortable because we're talking about real realities, poverty, then you're like okay that's cute, but this means more. [. . .] I was calling her out for being able to talk in theoretical ways and what that means for her privilege.

As I have described throughout the overall theme of Black women's identity development, there is a dialectical relationship between oppression and agency; while structures of power (re)produce social conditions that are embroiled in inequity, it also provides the context for the expression of individual power. In the next section, I move on to a discussion of how the women embraced their marginal identities as resistance.

Embracing Black Womanhood as Resistance

The findings presented in this section explored how the women grappled with a marginal reality, and chose this marginal space as resistance (hooks). Through a lens of power, this section describes how the women find and claim power in marginal spaces. Although Tayo's ex-husband is still present in their children's lives, her social reality means taking on full financial and physical responsibility for their children's needs. Strikingly, Tayo also shared that she remained in what she described as a toxic marriage because she did not want her children to grow up in a

single parent household. Claiming that she is a single parent is contradictory to the vision of motherhood and womanhood that she created for herself:

It's interesting you know, whenever I say to my ex-husband, you know, I'm a single mother, he gets really angry, no you're not. I'm like yeah I am. I'm divorced and I'm raising my children by myself, like what are you talking about? You are not a single parent! He can't deal with that.

Clearly, Tayo claimed marginality despite her ex-husband's attempt at denouncing it because she *feels* marginalized. Interestingly, Tayo appears to be claiming ownership of power that she found in the liminal space of single Black motherhood.

As an identity strategy, some of the women also appeared to draw on their marginalized statuses as Black mothers to push back against dominant paradigms in class discussions. Naimah for example, explicitly described how used knowledge from her personal experience as a Black mother in class discussions:

So I would just bring up Black mothering in general as an example to kind of push the class to think differently about how we are talking about something. It almost felt like when I did it, they didn't say anything, because either they couldn't say anything or they didn't understand the connection between experience and theory or anything. I was empowered by it.

Keanna also described how she drew strength from publicly claiming her marginal identity as a Black woman:

I'm becoming more comfortable in defining myself as a Black woman and whatever that means for me as I'm getting older and as a mother as well. I think that [being a Black mother] situates me in the black community differently and with more respect because I'm raising my little Black girl and I'm taking care of her. I'm still in school, I'm paying my bills, I'm maintaining a strong relationship and living with my partner and we're a family, so I think that means something as well.

For Keanna, being a Black mother in school and maintaining a nuclear family structure is resistance. It was interesting that Keanna stated that she is “becoming more comfortable in defining myself as a Black woman and whatever that means” because she stated in earlier discussions that she has grappled with her racial identity because she is bi-racial. I suspect that because Keanna views the Black maternal identity as a prescription of strength and perseverance that she draws on this image as motivation. Contradictorily, drawing on the “strong Black mother” stereotype has been discussed in the literature as perpetuating Black woman’s ‘otherness’ but for Keanna it is a tool for survival.

Accessing power

This theme described how the women use their proximity to power and imaginations to re-define and negotiate alternative realities. An example of their expectations was the recurrent theme that their degrees would lead to economic mobility. Rhea, Tayo and Keanna envisioned the possibility of their degrees as being able land them careers—not just employment—with a sustainable wage. Rhea for example, was particularly concerned about financial independence since her son was soon heading off to college. Working at university and being a student herself, Rhea was very aware of the financial burden of being a single parent to a college student.

Similarly, Tayo, a recent divorcee, had been working adjunct positions across several different colleges simultaneously to help support her family. Tayo also saw her degree as being the catalyst for opening up doors to academic jobs that would provide her with financial independence.

Some of the women also felt that their degrees meant access to power and authority. For Tayo, having a PhD meant financial independence, power and individual and social significance:

The meaning of my degree has changed over time. Initially, I went to grad school to escape the teaching rut I'd found myself in after teaching three years of high school after undergrad. Later, I fell in love with my subject matter and wanted to contribute to my field. I left my program to become a full-time mother, a mistake for which I continue to try to forgive myself. I became financially dependent on my ex-husband and my self-esteem was challenged in the process. Now I want my degree to contribute to my field "For My People," to fulfill myself as human being, and to establish economic security for my family and myself. My degree means Freedom. It means authority.

Some of the women made meaning of their research and degrees as resistance and contributing to social change. Naimah stated:

I want to be an example for my young Black girls who are living in a society that tells them that they are void of innocence and their lives do not produce important theoretical interventions into the social and political world. I want to be a part of adding to Black women's intellectual history opening up a path for my girls and others to see themselves and their purpose in reshaping public discourse.

She further added,

I believe strongly in my research agenda and its ability to not only add to existing scholarship, but transform the ways that my students understand race, class, gender, and systems of inequality that we are all actively implicated within. I want to travel, grow, enhance, and bring others along in the process.

For these women, they perceived their journeys as transformative and having the power to transform society, themselves, uplift our communities and empower their motherhood. In this section, I have shown that these women's identity work is a tenuous relationship of marginalization and empowerment and series of negotiations between the self, community and society. The women's accounts provided an understanding that within contexts of oppression there lies opportunities for agency and resistance.

Summary of Findings

In review, the six key findings that emerged from this study were: (1) negotiating intersectionality as trauma in childhood; (2) negotiating microaggressions related to invisibility/hypervisibility; (3) negotiating structural macroaggressions as violence; (4) hidden costs of negotiating Black womanhood and motherhood at PWIs; (5) negotiating standards of Black motherhood and womanhood; (6) Black doctoral student parent ways of negotiating intersectionality. Together these themes explored the lives and experiences of Black mothers as they negotiated their identities within larger structures and systems of power.

The main goal of this study was to understand the ways in which the experience of doctoral study at predominantly white and elite research universities in the Midwest influenced identity development among seven Black women doctoral student parents. Although the

women's experiences were varied, data analysis indicated that experience and context was an important influence on identity development. Expressions of race, gender and class social identities did not appear to be divorced from social systems of power. Further, their varied and sometimes common experiences during childhood, motherhood and doctoral study appeared to be a reproduction of the historical legacy of struggle of Black women within institutions. These women adapted their identities as negotiation strategies that reflected themes of survival and resistance.

This study employed Black feminist epistemology and theories of intersectionality as a way to gain a deeper understanding of how specific experiences and contexts over time and place socialize Black women around their intersectional identities and the identity strategies they develop as a response. The findings demonstrated how Black women negotiate intersectionality in their everyday lives and how they internalized intersectional processes. Negotiating intersectionality across time and space was a prerequisite to the development of a way of knowing power and coping strategies embedded in themes of resistance and survival. A better understanding of the experiences of Black women doctoral student parents as students and Black women may help university administrators, faculty, and student affairs practitioners make decisions about policies, programs and services that will aid in the persistence journeys of one of the most increasingly growing populations in U.S. academic institutions.

Seven women were individually interviewed twice, and then asked to provide written responses to reflection to questions I asked in a blog constructed for the specific purposes of this study. Data collection took place from April 2015 through September of 2015. All of the interviews were conducted via Skype or telephone, audio recorded and transcribed by a

transcriptionist and me. All interviews, field notes, journal reflections and blog responses were included in the data analysis. Overall, the stories shared by the seven women were a reflection of the interactions between systems of power, social identity, experiences and context. Through the telling of specific experiences, the women's stories revealed how intersectionality can be 'lived' as both identity and experience and influence perceptions of and responses to power.

Chapter Five provides a theoretical discussion of the findings in relation to the literature and a model of Black student mothers' identity development. The chapter also included a discussion of implications and recommendations for future research and practical implications for faculty, administrators and student affairs practitioners in higher education. Lastly, I provide a personal reflection of how I was transformed through and by this research journey as a researcher.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of Black women doctoral student parents and identity factors that facilitate identity development. In order to understand and capture the "essence" and complexity of their identities, these women's stories were used to provide insight and build understanding of what it means to be a Black woman, mother and student. Through three-round, semi-structured interviews with seven Black women doctoral student parents attending predominantly white institutions in the Midwest, this study sought to answer the question "How does the experience of doctoral student in predominantly white and elite research institutions shape identity development among Black doctoral women student parents?" The discussion also addressed the following sub-questions:

(a) What is the role of race, gender, class and motherhood in adult identity development among Black women doctoral women student parents and, what are the most salient facilitators of development?

(b) What challenges do Black women doctoral student parents face and what agencies do they develop in response?

This study is rooted in Black feminist epistemology with a theoretical framework that embodies issues related to intersectionality. The purpose of these theoretical lenses were to identify the ways in which power, privilege and oppression is operational in the lives of Black women and their identity development trajectories are shaped by these forces. Simply, what it means to live along intersections of race, gender and class are highlighted in my work with seven Black doctoral women student parents.

In this chapter, I first offer a discussion of the themes presented in the findings in relation to the literature and Black feminist theory. Second, the most salient contexts through which their identity negotiations occurred is presented. This last chapter summarizes discoveries and conclusions drawn from findings that emerged from the overarching research question guiding this study. Lastly, I provide a discussion on the implications for future research and conclude the chapter with a personal reflection on the research process.

Overview of the Findings in Relation to Research Questions

The current findings broadly show that throughout the course of Black women's lives, their identity development trajectories are neither constant nor stable and represent a dialectic shifting between agency and oppression. Evidence of these identity negotiations are represented through their behavioral responses through interactions with others and perceptions of their

experiences. The first theme, “negotiating intersectionality as trauma in childhood” revealed how the women were socialized into their intersecting and multiple identities and through specific experiences beginning in childhood to their current contexts of doctoral study. Their accounts have varied but common themes of intersectional experiences that collide with being Black, being a woman, and being a Black woman. The second theme, “negotiating microaggressions related to invisibility/hypervisibility” illustrated how the women developed specific strategies in their practice of intersectionality in everyday life. The third theme, “negotiating structural macroaggressions as violence” The fourth theme, “hidden costs of negotiating Black womanhood and motherhood at PWIS” explored how the women faced additional challenges as intersectional beings due to their colliding identity statuses.

The fifth theme, “negotiating standards of Black motherhood and womanhood” explored how the women internalized socialization processes and adapted their identities as Black women and mothers as result of negotiating intersectionality. The final theme, “Black doctoral student parent ways of negotiating intersectionality” describes the ways in which these identity adaptations were visible through the performance of their academic and maternal identities. The women’s consciousness of self in relation to power was visible through their articulated ways of knowing. A major component of how the women made layered meanings of their experiences and responded to power as a shaping force was related to the frequency of their experiences with mechanisms of socialization (see table 2).

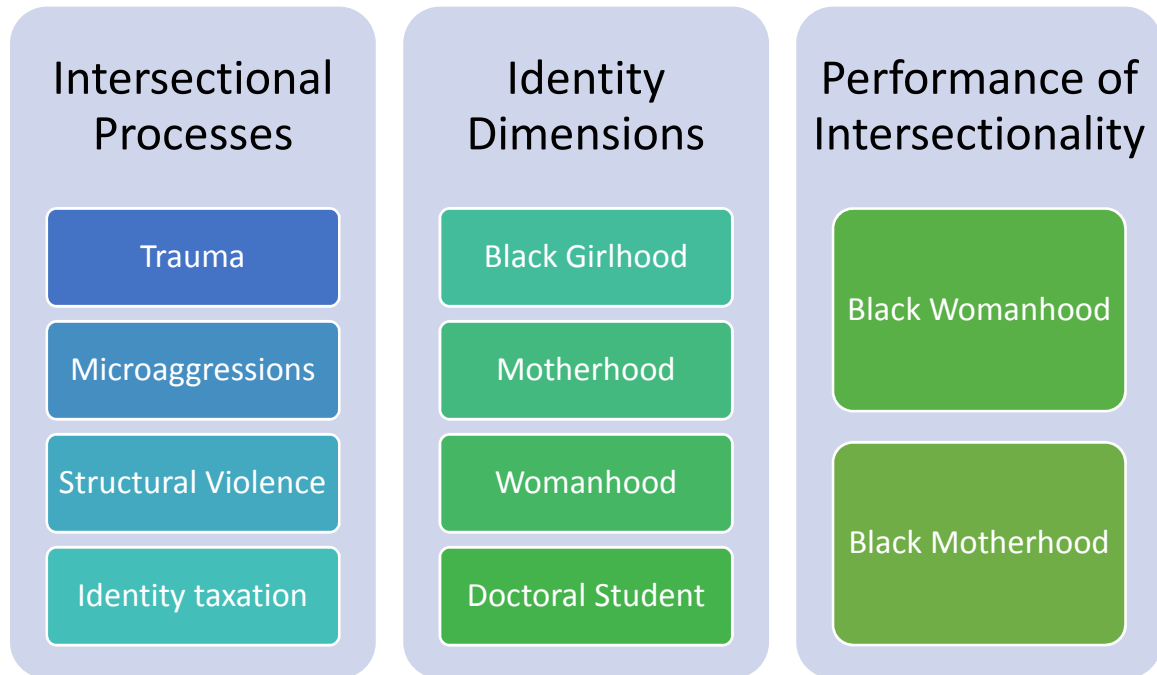
Table 2. Frequency of Common Themes

*Participants	Intersectional Processes	Childhood Trauma	Microaggressions	Structural Violence	Identity Taxation
Fatimah		X	X	X	X
Assata		X	X	X	X
Rhea		X	X	X	X
Keanna			X	X	X
Zaya		X	X	X	X
Tayo			X	X	X
Fatimah		X	X	X	X

*pseudonyms

Figure 2 visually illustrates the identity dimensions shaped by socializing, intersectional processes and the roles through which the women performed intersectionality. The first column illustrates the intersectional processes that facilitated Black women's identity development. The second column highlights the identity contexts through which identity negotiations occurred. The third column illustrates identity strategies that resulted from negotiating intersectional processes across multiple identity contexts and the last column captures the ways in which Black women enact intersectional identities.

Figure 2. Dimensions of Identity, Intersectional Process and Identity Responses



A common answer to the overarching research question, “How does the experience of doctoral study in predominantly white and elite research institutions shape identity development among Black women doctoral student parents?” was that because Black are socialized into intersectional identities through specific experiences, they face persistent negotiations of their identity. Persistent negotiation in turn, shaped the ways in which the women negotiated their identities in different contexts and made meaning of their experiences as Black women, mothers and doctoral students. Findings suggest that identity development among Black women is non-linear, cumulative and occurs over time. The interaction between context and identity on multiple identities was made visible through the ways in which they negotiated intersectional processes within specific contexts. The last theme addressed the behavioral strategies and behavioral adaptations the women developed as a result.

Negotiating Intersectionality and Childhood Trauma

A major finding was that trauma in the lives of Black women can be intersectional. Rather than isolating race and gender as antecedents of trauma (Sue et al. 2008; Truong, 2010), this research found that viewing trauma as intersectional allows for inclusion of trauma as a socializing process. The literature has shown that due to being positioned at multiple margins of oppression, childhood can be a vulnerable and painful time for some Black girls (e.g., Morris, 2016; Sears, 2010; West, 1999). The emotion that some of the expressed while recounting their stories was evidence of the affective dimensions of oppression and aligns with the bodies of psychological literature describing ways in which psychological stress, physiological damage and emotional distress results from personal experiences with oppression (Carter, 2007; Daniel, 2000). Their stories represent the temporal and spatial fluidity of trauma or the ways in which Black women experience intersectionality as oppression across contexts and time. Six of seven the women cited experiences that contained elements of overlapping and intersecting forms of trauma: (1) racial trauma, (2) sexual trauma, (3) poverty as trauma.

The Trauma of Black Girlhood

Rhea for example, painfully shared how her family was thrust into poverty after her mother and father divorced: “Sometimes we didn't have heat, we didn't have proper clothing, and we didn't have money for school lunch.” Rhea’s quiet sobbing as she shared this story underscores the affect that poverty has on Black children. In fact, she still carries this pain with her and it appeared to be the impetus for attaining a doctoral degree. Approaches to research on the effects of poverty on children often link adverse health, psychological, health, educations and physical outcomes (American Pediatrics Association, 2016; Brown, 2005; Evans, 2004). Rhea

also recalled the personal memory of being called “nappy headed” while riding the bus and her brother witnessing a burning cross on a neighbor’s yard. For Rhea, the experience of witnessing physical abuse and violence, living with alcoholic parents and later living in poverty, all were traumatic experiences of their own accord, which makes them difficult to categorize in terms of salience. However, the impact of economic poverty was palpable for the majority of these women. According to the National Center for Education (NCES) data, in 2013, 39% of Black children were living in poverty.

Naimah similarly shared an experience where she witnessed her family be thrust into an insecure living situation after her parents divorced. Left with no place to live, her mother migrated to the Midwest and settled in with a relative. Living in a predominantly white area meant that Naimah would also attend the neighborhood school. One day she found the word ‘nigger’ was written on her locker at her school and silently refused to return to school. Ashamed, Naimah refused to return to school. Not only is racism painful, but also is the realization of poverty. While research illustrates the impact of racial prejudice and discrimination during early school years (e.g., Kozol, 2005; Tatum, 2003) this research has not accounted for the prevalence of intersectional oppressions that Black girls must negotiate in their everyday lives.

Another issue that emerged and coupled with other forms of trauma was the experience of sexual violence. Their experiences were consistent with the literature citing that more than half of Black girls experience sexual trauma before the age of 18 (Black Women’s Blueprint, 2011). Two of the seven women experienced sexual abuse during childhood. Both Fatimah and Assata’s stories reflect a braiding of their experiences where sexual trauma, racialized

experiences and economic poverty were present. Assata explained how as a young girl she received overt messages from her family about not being “allowed to sit on men’s laps” or “wear tight clothes” because it “left [girls] vulnerable in many ways.” Despite this socialization around the vulnerability of young girls, a boarder that lived in her home molested Assata and she was also a victim of sex trafficking. She cited that she “didn’t know about sex-trafficking at that young age.” It was painful to hear Assata’s family history and personal experience with sexual trauma.

Interestingly, Assata’s gender socialization was for protection against sexualization by men, not an uncommon experience for many young girls. Black children, Black girls in particular do not have the luxury of childhood. Part of the racial and gender socialization for Black girls is for survival (Collins, 1991). Messages about gender appropriate behavior are implied messages about young girls and women somehow assuming responsibility or blame for sexual victimization if they do not abide by cultural scripts by suppressing any behavior that would emphasize their sexuality. Overall, this finding suggests that dimensions of race, class and sexuality cannot be separated from the study of sexual trauma among Black girls. While only two of the seven women mentioned experiencing sex-related trauma, all seven of the women negotiated experiences in childhood related to their intersectional identities during their schooling years.

The accounts from Fatimah, Assata, Zaya, Naimah, Rhea and Keanna all contained additional elements of racism and economic poverty and as discussed above, some with sexual related trauma. Conversely, one of the women did not cite experiencing any form of trauma related to race, class or gender in childhood. Yet, for the other six, the trauma they experienced

was intersectional. Collectively, these women's stories illustrated the ways in which oppression is prevalent in the lives of Black girls and how they can be vulnerable to multiple forms of trauma at the same time. This idea also illustrates how at a very young age, Black girls are socialized into intersectionality and learn to negotiate different and often complex forms trauma as part of identity development.

Not all Black women in the U.S. experience trauma, but certainly Black children as a social identity group are vulnerable in multiple ways. As such, this study found that Black women's identity development involves the process of negotiating socialization around intersectional identities and overcoming histories of trauma as a part of their everyday lives. The overlap between intersecting and sometimes conflicting systems of power can create complex experiences in oppression that are sometimes not always apparent. However, the affective dimensions of oppression such as shame, humiliation, pain, and anger present in the women's stories confirm that economic poverty, racism and sexual abuse and exploitation are traumas present in the lives of some Black girls (Morris) and are a result of being socially located across intersecting systems of power.

Understanding trauma through a lens of intersectionality and oppression as a lived experience deepens our understanding of not only the complexity of intersectionality but also how children are socialized into systems of power and domination. Most often, this socialization intersects with their early schooling years. It is important that these micro accounts are not viewed as individual experiences with victimization; instead it is critical that the broader social context and conditions under which these experience occur be examined as injuries from oppression.

Not all Black girls and Black women experience girlhood and womanhood as painful, however it is necessary that we understand how simultaneous systems of oppression *affects them*. The importance of viewing trauma as an aspect of identity development is that it illuminates the imprint of intersectionality and oppression upon the lives of Black girls and women. To view the following experiences as trauma is also to view them as *injuries from oppression*. Together, their stories illustrate the ways in which intersectionality was manifest in their early experiences.

Lastly, this research also confirmed past ideas that the academy is still a “chilly climate for Black women” (Hall and Sandler, 1986). The findings presented demonstrate the ways in which the women perceived microaggressions on multiple levels due to interactions between their multiple identities and the academic context. This confirms reported findings from Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso’s (2000) research on the experiences of African-Americans at PWI’s and reported feelings of invisibility as a result of marginalization. Several of the women in this study discussed feeling invisible, standing out due to difference, and ‘othered’ because of stereotypes and social stigmatization surrounding Black mothers. Extending beyond Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso’s research, marginalization due to being one of few Black women made them feel othered, but being one of few Black mothers made them vulnerable to discriminatory and prejudice remarks based on their racial and maternal status inside and outside classroom settings.

Negotiating Microaggressions Related to Invisibility/Hypervisibility at PWIs

Hypervisibility

Notions of hypervisibility speak to broader historical ideas of the surveillance of Black bodies during slavery and being “outsiders within” in current day white controlled contexts. For many of the women the experience of surveillance outside the historical context of slavery

occurred within their institutions where their raced and gendered bodies stood out in relation to the dominant norm. Both Fatimah and Assata shared this similar experience of being "hypervisible" within classroom spaces. Assata shared an experience as a graduate assistant instructor when a student asked her "are you qualified to teach?" Assata as an individual instructor also was rendered invisible in this instance because assumptions about her individual intellectual attributes that make her qualified to teach perhaps, are masked by assumptions and stereotypes of Black people being intellectually inferior (Steele, 1997, 1999). Her experience is also consistent with findings from literature that demonstrates the issues that Black women faculty have teaching in predominantly white institutions where they are not seen as being credible, qualified or deserving of being there (Harley, 2008; Hall and Sandler, 1986; Collins, 2000). Conversely, while Fatimah was not treated with scrutiny, she was made visible in ways that affirmed her difference from the cultural norm and "outsider within" status. She explained that some professors treat her like she was "an amazing human" and "a poster child" for Black mothers because of how well she was performing academically. She further described a specific incident when a professor who was chastising students for late work submissions stated in front of the entire class, "how could you not turn your paper in on time? She got 3 children." Exceptionalism of Black students is problematic in that it views students like Fatimah as being 'different' from the collective Black population. It reproduces narratives that if Black students were more like Fatimah, they too could be 'successful' by gaining access to white spaces.

According to Wenninger and Conroy (2002), African American women are more visible and equally isolated due to both racial and gender differences. The structural systems that violate Black women's lives extend beyond the classroom environment to the broader campus context. Assata's story reflected how her visibility as a single mother with six children led to a visit from

the state social worker because of a complaint of neglect brought against her. Assata described how these assumptions of neglect are related to her larger body size and the fact that she has six kids. She commented, “they can’t see me as a Black woman getting a PhD with so many kids because they’ve never seen it before”. As Assata pointed out and this research confirms, because the women are unable to be seen beyond tropes of Black womanhood and motherhood, people “stick me into narratives that they know.” Being a PhD student in an elite research university offered Assata no protection from unwarranted visibility. The stigma attached to poverty, welfare and Black motherhood made Black women like Assata very visible as a progenitor of pathology and cultural degeneracy (Moynihan, Orleck, 2005). What Assata and Fatimah shared made clear was the social reality for Black single mothers at white universities; not only are they visible and subject to scrutiny as Black mothers, they are simultaneously rendered invisible as individual human beings. Next, I discuss the ways in which the women’s academic contexts render them invisible.

Invisibility

Some of the women discussed how they were seen only as Black women, with no regard to individual difference in identity or misrecognized. Both Rhea and Tayo discussed ways in which their environmental contexts rendered them invisible. Tayo, who reflected less on negative experiences at her institution, did mention there were “little things” that bothered her like being misrecognized as one of the other two Black women in her program. She described experiencing being referred to by names of other Black women in her program. She commented, “that’s not even a micro-aggression, that’s deeper than that. But those are people who really didn’t know me.” Being in a space where Tayo is noticeably one of very few makes her invisible as an

individual Black woman. Although subtle, the messages that are conveyed by being ‘mistaken’ for other Black women who possess visible differences in phenotypic attributes is a misrecognition of Black people as all being the same. With no regard to individual identities, Black people in all white spaces is an affront to the normalness of white exclusive spaces and the abnormality of Black bodies in those spaces.

Rhea on other hand, described how she felt invisible not as a Black mother, but as a student due to her employee status at the university. What Rhea described here is a particular mode of invisibility attached not just to her identity as a Black mother and woman, but also as a working student. Being a Black woman means being everywhere yet nowhere. It means that being Black in white spaces is a common experience and being a woman in all male spaces a common experience, but being a Black woman troubles space and distorts conceptions of who ‘belongs’ in certain spaces. Not all doctoral students are privileged to not have to work and focus on doctoral study full-time.

Stigmatization

Some of the women described a particular form of microaggression, racial stigmatization. In describing their experiences related to their race, class, gender and motherhood identities, the majority of the women seemed to describe being stigmatized in ways specifically related to their maternal status. She commented how during her pregnancies she received negative comments based on assumptions that she was unwed. A faculty member for example told her “we’re going to invest in birth control for you” and suggested that she wear a wedding ring to appear “more respectable”

For Assata, the painful part of the perceptions and attitudes toward her sexuality are that they are coming from everywhere. Not only must she contend with navigating doctoral in a

predominantly white institution, she must also find ways to avert stigmatization and persistent shaming surrounding her sexuality and reproduction. What Assata's experience does represent is how historically, Black women have never been able to exercise full autonomy of their sexuality without white public surveillance and scrutiny.

Across the women's stories, what can be gleaned are insights about how Black women's bodies and sexuality are stigmatized and constantly under public scrutiny. Based on Fatimah's, Assata's, Tayo's and Keanna's reflections, negotiation of identity among Black women challenges binary thinking of race, sexuality and identity because the experience of intersecting microaggressions transcends experiencing isolated race, or gender only microaggressions. Black women's maternal physical presence in white academe not only troubles normative frames of identity, but also queers space (Andalzúa, 1987). What the women seemingly experienced is a form of racism intertwined with gender. These microaggressions when experienced on among intersectional aspects of identity become *intersectional* microaggressions. The convergence of multiple microaggressions leads to both a hypervisibility and invisibility *simultaneously*. Black mothers' visible presence in white controlled spaces makes them particularly vulnerable to both racial and gender microaggressive acts. It is as Esse (1991) coins, a form of "gendered racism". In this next section, I describe how the embedded and permanence of racism within their educational environments foster symbolic and interpersonal forms of violence.

Negotiating Structural Macroaggressions Related to Structural Violence

Across the accounts, the women's experiences were related to various forms of social injustices, experienced through messages from various spaces and individuals and packaged in

many forms. Two of the women explicitly described their experience as being “violent” while another described her institutional context as racist. At the structural level, racial microaggressions are transmitted through symbols social practices, social codes for behavior, physical symbols and images. Collectively, they are racially prejudiced actions, words, symbols and behaviors work to normalize the everyday, ordinariness of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013). Put another way, structural violence refers to the ways in which institutional policies, practices and culture disadvantage and harm individuals within these structures (Galtung, 1969). Not only is the climate “chilly” for Black women, it can be a violent one as well. Assata for example commented: “Going through academia took those pieces from me. That is where the violence came through to me, was academia. It’s a very violent place” She further explained that,

People don't even know they're being abused, and that's how I feel about academia or school period, that it's the type of abuse that you don't see. It's like cancer or any other disease that will get inside of your cells and become a part of you [. . .]

Keanna also described how she felt during her teaching experience in predominantly white classrooms “I feel like when I leave every day, I feel like I’ve been beat up.” When taking into account some of the women’s experiences with trauma, their perceptions of the academic climate as being “violent” suggested that this shaped the way they embodied their experiences.

Silencing as violence

In the context of predominantly white institutions, where Black faces and voices are most likely to be very few in numbers, the social context of the institution can be a violent force in structuring the experiences of minority students. Historically, the silencing of enslaved Black women during slavery was used as a tool of oppression (Broussard, 2013). If Black women were allowed to speak about the atrocities of slavery which included sexual violence, torture and

murder, then it could potentially humanize them in ways that made the institution of slavery unjustifiable (Broussard). Audrey Lorde (1984) views speaking truths from marginalized positions as subversive to the “tyranny of silence”. For subordinate groups, remaining silent—even a self-imposed silence—reveals a particular danger, fear and vulnerability to harm. In this section, I described how the women experienced the complexity of silence, both self-imposed as an act of protection and survival, and imposed silence as a form of violence. The theme of silence is also central to feminist inquiry because of women’s historical silencing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; hooks, 1989; Spivak, 1988).

To be clear, silencing as discussed in this section refers to behaviors, interactions and messages from the environment that disempower or flat out deny Black women the right to speak out in opposition. Silencing then, is the use of power by the dominant group to deny acts of speech to socially subordinated groups. Three of the women shared stories, which indicated in some ways how their voices were silenced and suppressed by the environment or individual actors. Fatimah described being silenced by her peers in the classroom because she often drew from personal experience as a mother to engage in discussion. She commented that “when I do try to speak as a parent of children in the public K-12 system, I’m privileged so I can’t speak” she appeared to be describing the violent ways in which structures that reproduce white power and privilege and reinforce her inferior status as a Black woman and mother—through silencing. What Fatimah described was an intimidation tactic, a dehumanizing one that rendered her invisible in a way so that she could not speak. When Fatimah spoke out in opposition, it was an attempt to self-define her racial, gender and economic reality rather than accept what was being imposed upon her.

Naimah similarly noted an experience with being silenced in the classroom by a professor who she noted, “just wouldn't give me the time of day to let me speak” and she noticed that the other students who were not Black did not share a similar experience. She stated that it became really clear to me. I don't know if it was clear to other students.” The classroom space can be a particularly violent space for women of color. When marginalized students speak up and speak out in white spaces it disrupts attempts at completely invalidating, muting and erasing a gendered, racial and class reality that stands in contradiction to the worldview of whites in power. By being ignored by the faculty in her classroom, Naimah was rendered invisible and silenced at the same time.

Vicarious Racism

Three of the seven women described racially discriminatory and prejudiced messages that they received indirectly from the campus or via other people. These experiences happened within the contexts of their classrooms, departments or workspaces. Rhea for instance, in describing her campus climate, stated that it was “It’s a very racist place”. Rhea discussed an institutional practice she considered to racist:

Every time somebody gets robbed, they send out these crime alerts and often the suspect is black male, but that’s about it, that’s all they can describe, black male with whatever, jeans on or something, and that like creates a sense of terror on campus

Similar to Rhea witnessing tokenization and exploitation of Black women at her institution, Fatimah also indicated observing exploitation of Black women faculty and commented that she has seen “Black women professors get take advantage of”. One incident she described in particular, was of a Black woman professor “who would write almost a virtual

bibliography on the board before she started teaching”. Fatima asked the woman why she took the time to do that before each class, and the professor indicated it was to preempt expected challenges to her credibility and authority she often received from white male students.

The Trauma of Doctoral Study

In the majority of the cases, the women verbalized affective dimensions of structural oppression. For several of the women, negotiating persistent macroaggressions and navigating hostile academic contexts did not come without psychological consequence. In several of the women’s perceptions of the academic climate were consistent with findings from Truong and Museus’ (2012) study that the experience of pervasive racism among Black students at PWI’s triggered symptoms of racism-related trauma. However, the complexity of the women’s colliding identity statuses complicates race only related studies of trauma in doctoral study. The women used words like "violent", "abuse", "traumatizing" "painful" and Assata compared her experience to having cancer. Rhea described a hypervigilance, also a trauma response, in detecting potential threats or harm from race related interactions. She stated that she constantly asks herself, "are they coming for me?" and has "a paranoia about how white folks can be passive aggressive and wonders if they are going to attack or undermine." Emerging research has worked to highlight the affective dimensions of oppression. Concepts such as "racial battle fatigue” which describes the cumulative psychological and physical effects of racial microaggressions (DeGruy Leary, 2005; Smith) and "post-traumatic slave syndrome” which describes the historical spiritual, psychological, behavioral and emotional injuries emanating from slavery experienced by African Americans (Allen & Danley, 2007) empirically demonstrate how the experience of racism, prejudice and discrimination impacts well-being. Importantly for the women, speaking the pain

and emotion of injustice is a humanizing effort and is a driving force in their intellectual and social activism.

In the majority of the women's cases, it appeared that their background experiences with racism seemed to make them perhaps more vulnerable to the impact of the subtle and overt forms of prejudice and discrimination that they experienced at their institutions. Although changes in legislation (e.g., *Brown v. Board*, 1954) and laws have now made historically all white and all male educational institutions accessible, there still exists visible symbols of exclusion and violence. Space for marginalized groups is a site of identity struggle, and for the women in this study being in white controlled spaces means also entering into an abusive relationship with the academy. In this section, I attempted to demonstrate was how micro accounts of prejudice and discrimination connect to structural mechanisms of oppression and power. By framing structural level microaggressions as characteristic of violence (Farmer, 2004), it allows us to see the cumulative impact of coping and navigating multiple forms of injustice.

Hidden Costs of Negotiating Black Womanhood and Motherhood at Predominantly White Institutions

This finding confirmed research that demonstrates the growing presence of Black women significantly high doctoral degree attainment has not come without cost (Mabokela, 2001; Ellis, 2001; Fasching-Varner et al, 2015; Holmes, 2007; Patton, 2009). These findings also confirm much of the research on issues for mothers in academia (Acker and Armenti, 2007; Castañeda and Isgro, 2013; Mason & Goulden, 2009). However, the intersections of race, gender and class had a different impact on the experiences of these women. Balancing multiple roles of motherhood, employee, spouse and doctoral student are challenges for many doctoral student mothers (Lynch, 2008; Grenier and Burke, 2008; Mason, 2009). However, this research shows

that the challenges discussed where “hidden taxes” (Padilla, 1994) imposed upon the women as a result of their colliding race, gender and class identity statuses. These identity taxes appeared to add on a dimension of burden and stress to their existing workloads. In our interviews, the women described experiences in which they faced additional burdens to their work, family and school roles. While the last section located Black women's labor within a complex webbing race, gender, class and motherhood, this section provides descriptive accounts of the ways in gender was made salient in certain aspects of social roles as romantic partners and mothers.

Black Womanhood Tax

Although the women cited instances where analysis did not allow for the fragmentation of their intersectional identities, there were some experiences that made gender more salient. Early socialization around gender for girls includes a learning around gender roles, specifically in relation to being a wife and mother. Specific expectations related to both race and gender roles appeared to intersect and create conflict with the women's pursuit of doctoral degrees. Some of the women stated explicitly material costs they paid for combining work, doctoral study, marriage and motherhood. Rhea for example, discussed that the competing demands between her work and school life created conflict in her marriage and eventually was a factor in its dissolution. Rhea shared that “I'm always working. And I spend time with my family. But its slow going and it does create conflict and tension because you are focusing on something for a moment [other than your marriage].” Black women since slavery have performed labor both outside inside the home, so it is not surprising that Rhea prioritized both her work and family roles. However, performing the highly gender role of mother and spouse in combination with meeting the demands of work and doctoral study generated the hidden tax of role strain (Goode, 1960).

Zaya on the other hand, noted that the cost of combining work, marriage and mother was a “kind of double work” and that “you pay the price of going out, even if it's just for an hour”. Zaya in this instance faced also experience role strain trying to meet the demands of work, family life and doctoral study. Strikingly, she Zaya did not appear to locate the source of her role tensions within gender scripts in the expectations surrounding doctoral study and work. It appeared that because of Zaya’s background in trauma, loss and pain she finds dignity and value in her roles as a response to the systemic effects of racial and economic oppression that she experienced during childhood. Therefore, what Zaya perceived as challenging was the labor that she performed outside of the home rather than expectations around her roles as spouse and mother. In this view, Zaya’s perceived role tensions were not from difficulties in juggling multiple roles but from the awareness that expectations between work and school interfered with her abilities to feel efficacious in them. In fact, all of the women cited in some way, the importance of their roles as mothers and all of the women maintained employment while pursuing their degrees.

Three of women expressed feelings of guilt due to them attempting to meet expectations surrounding their doctoral student roles. This confirms research on the ways in which cultural expectations of academic work combined with those of motherhood lead to women feeling overwhelmed and guilty when engaging in work outside of parenting (Gilbert, 2008) and difficulty in maintaining work-life role balance (Goode, 1960; Marks and McDermid, 1996; Stimpson & Filer, 2011). In this view, the gendered norms and expectations surrounding motherhood creates internalized identity conflicts for women who try to be ‘good mothers’ and ‘good students’ simultaneously (Cohen Miller, 2014; Estes, 2011; Lynch, 2008; Tiu Wu, 2013). For Black women, being a good mother is a cultural expectation measured by how much self-

sacrifice and self-reliance she embodies. Because Black women face averting persistent myths and negative stereotypes surrounding Black motherhood, they will often go to extreme lengths of sacrifice to be seen as a good mother. In addition, because Black students are faced with identity myths of being intellectually inferior, they will go through great lengths to be seen as a good student. The danger of these two standards of achievement for Black women is that they add to the dimensions of work that Black women must do like recovering and healing from traumas and coping with persistent negotiation of intersectional power.

Cultural Tax

Clear themes of the burden of care work, or “othermothering” emerged from the major theme of taxation. In some way, all of the women were motivated in their work and school lives by desires to give back to their communities. Assata for example, discussed that she was starting a business that would benefit Black mothers, while Zaya stated that she was working for an organization that worked to promote positive self-image in Black girls. Tayo explicitly stated that she wanted her work to be “For my people”. With a similar sentiment as Assata, Zaya and Tayo, Keanna saw her research as something that would counter the negative stereotypes and images of Black women. Also motivated by desire to contribute to the Black community, Rhea discussed how she saw herself as a factor in promoting retention among African American students on her campus in her administrative work and Fatimah felt obligated to be a model for young girls in the community from where she came. The internalization of an Afrocentric ethic of caring brought an extra layer of responsibility and appeared to add stress to their existing workloads. Fatimah described the pressure to persist for the benefit of her family and community as “like a stone right on my back”. In this way, while these women perceive themselves to be “trailblazers” for their cultural community, they also carry the weight of Black struggle. In

essence, Black women's upward climb through the vehicle of education is more of a collective struggle than an individual journey. Although empowering, it is a burden that falls unequally on the shoulders of Black women.

Although Black mothers shoulder the burden of caregiving unequally, this culturally centered ethic of caring and personal accountability has been a sustaining force for the Black community since slavery. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) argued that there is a long history of African American cultural traditions of Black mother's political activism centered on caregiving and that historically Black women's activism has been tied to a communal ethic of caring and moral responsibility to sustaining Black life. In other words, Black women sometimes are motivated to act politically as a result of possessing a sense of responsibility and ethic caring for community members, especially in hostile environments. All of these cases demonstrated that the activation of the women's activism was stimulated by their experiences living as Black women under contexts of oppression.

Conversely, the women's obligation to contribute to the Black community adds an extra layer of burden to their existing workloads. Literature demonstrates that Black women in academia often take on a role of surrogate mothers because the social academic environment is unsafe for Black students (Graham, 2013; in Nzinga-Johnson; Shaw, 1994). Because Black women are socialized into these highly gendered, culturally specific roles of work, Black women face an extra level and burden of care differently than Black men and white women do as parents and doctoral students. Black mothers pay this "cultural tax" when they are in positions that allow them to uplift the Black community.

Financial Burden

Stress related to class appeared across five of women's accounts. Two of the women viewed their financial burdens as negatively affecting their experiences. Zaya although married, felt that the lack of financial support available to her was related to the socioeconomic stratification of Black people. She commented that being a Black student meant "you probably don't have the same financial support that maybe some of our non-Black counterparts have". The stress associated with the perception that Black students have limited opportunities is an internalization of a larger assumption that PWIs are inherently racist.

Assata on the other hand as a single mother, stated that she felt humiliated living off of a graduate assistant wage because is "always dealing with things" due to her family size. She specifically cited stress from not being able to register for school from being behind on her rent in university housing. Fortunately, for Assata, her campus has family student housing. As a graduate student with six children, Assata shared that she can only afford to live in family housing. Working as a graduate assistant on campus, Assata needed to maintain enrollment for employment and student housing. Because her graduate assistant stipend was not enough to support her family, it proved to be a barrier to her persistence. She shared:

It's isolating. It's humiliation at times because what I live off of as a graduate student, it can barely sustain an average graduate student, so someone with a family size as big as mine, I'm always dealing with things, like I can't register for school because I'm behind on my rent and university housing and so there is a hold on my account.

She importantly added that,

you're serious about recruiting for diversity, then when you recruit someone like me, I can't live off the same funding packet you give everyone else, not because I'm special, but because I won't be able to live.

Research suggests that students living on campus are more likely to graduate (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015). Living on campus is ideal for any graduate student because of the close proximity to resources and classes. However, because Assata's main source of income is from a graduate assistant stipend, the cost of living expenses for a single mother with six children appeared to exceed what she earns. As Assata poignantly noted, if institutions are "serious about recruiting for diversity" they need to consider the needs of students with dependents in their funding packages.

Assata disclosed that she is also receiving food stamps, which is what she described as "humiliating". While financial support from graduate assistantships are meant to support students so that they can important socialization tools to prepare them for future academic careers and decrease the amount of time spent in doctoral studies, most of these stipends are insufficient in meeting living costs—particularly for first-generation college students with dependents (Gardner, 2103; in Holley and Joseph). Institutions that recruit graduate students with families must be aware of the extra financial burden that accompany them on their journeys. In the next section, I describe the psychic and physical costs that some of the women experienced as a result of juggling multiple roles.

Physic and Physical Costs

Two of the women shared how keeping up with demands of school, work and family taxed them psychically and physically. Tayo stated "Show me a mother in graduate school that

isn't depressed" and Zaya described how in attempting to keep up with the rigor of doctoral study combined with being both a new mother and wife she pushed herself to physical limits that endangered her health:

After I became a mom, working in the evening is really what happened. I would be my normal wife, mom, professional in the daytime, student by night and on the weekends is how it worked out. Closer to the end, when it came time to that writing portion, it was very difficult. [. . .] So in order for me to work and think and without interruption, I would have to literally go away. I don't recommend it, it's not healthy, I passed out one time and I had to go and have all of these tests with the neurologist and have the MRI and all of this stuff, but it was exhaustion, pushing yourself so much without rest.

Differently experienced yet related, several of the other women described mental taxation. Fatimah disclosed feelings of depression as Tayo mentioned. Another woman felt that the stress of working with students, going through a divorce and helping her son prepare for college impacted her persistence. The pressure of academic success at elite research institutions combined with navigating daily microaggressions and motherhood no doubt tax Black women psychologically, and to their limit as Zaya's statement reflected. Because Black women have a history of persistence and many Black women adopt the mythic trope of the "Black superwoman" as a measure of Black womanhood. Research has also show that embodiment of this myth of Black women's 'unshakability' can lead to deleterious health, physical and psychological outcomes. Although Black women have a tendency to take on too much and not ask or accept assistance (Beauboeuf-Lafont, 2009) their continued persistence in contexts that are hostile also makes them less visible as being vulnerable or in distress (Jones and Shorter-

Gooden, 2004). Given Zaya's background experiences in trauma, her response perhaps was accepting and modeling the 'strong Black woman' discourse as an alternative standard for Black womanhood. Because the Black maternal identity is a pillar of Black society, Black women find validation and valor in performing sometimes-overwhelming tasks of caring for the entire community. The consequence however, is that Black women are taxed in multiple ways when this work is combined with outside work.

The women's stories are consistent with research that finds financial insecurity as a commonly cited burden among student parents (Institute for Women's Policy Research [IWPR], 2012). The weight of economic insecurity are all stressors and barriers to persistence, but combined with the additional burdens associated with childrearing and doctoral study there are common threads of similarities experienced by white women and Black men doctoral students. However, because Black women student parents are disproportionately single mothers, or expected to financially take care of family members as Tayo described, navigating daily microaggressions in the context of predominantly white, elite research institutions, are added layers of stress. Particularly for single Black mothers, pursuing a doctoral degree at an elite research institution can be empowering; however, feeling financially burdened by the cost of attending these institutions are also discouraging and potential factors impacting persistence. In the next section, I describe how the women's internalization of their experiences facilitated identity negotiations in their roles as Black mothers.

Negotiating Standards of Black Motherhood and Womanhood

The findings of this study build upon the historical literature regarding Black women's adaptations and response negotiating identities that fall outside of the "cult of true womanhood"

and race paradigms under contexts of oppression (Davis, 1972; Jones, 1982; White, 1995). These identity negotiations as a marginalized ‘other’ often stimulated a generalized ethic of care viewable through Black women’s caregiving practices (Collins). This finding explored how the women constructed for themselves definitions and standards of Black womanhood and motherhood or in essence, negotiated expressions of Black motherhood identities attached to social systems of power. As the women reflected on personal experiences as women and mothers, I became intrigued by the ways in which the women’s approaches to mothering reflected a historical set values and maternal ethics that enslaved Black women also practiced (Camp, 2009).

In the majority of the cases, the standards and ethics of motherhood also revealed the many ways in which motherhood was a self-actualizing base for empowerment (Collins). In contrast to the historical Moynihan Report (1965) which advanced negative stereotypes of Black motherhood and depicted Black maternal practices as culturally deficient, the majority of the women adapted their own versions and values of motherhood that were culturally and socially significant in response to the dominant prescriptions of Western white womanhood.

Resilience

All of the women discussed various ways in which they made meaning of and negotiated their identities as Black women and mothers within contradictory spaces of privilege and oppression. Another finding demonstrated how the women’s maternal roles were a protective factor that countered some of the negative aspects of their experiences as Black girls and women. This finding demonstrated that for many of the women, education had transformative power and gave them hope for their individual and children’s futures, which in turn facilitated their

resilience as doctoral students. Three of the women explained how the intersection of motherhood and doctoral study proved to be challenging, but saw little separation between their parenting and academic goals. Fatimah for example, stated that her “children enhance her scholarship, not get in the way of it”. She further divulged that her doctoral studies instead “got in the way of motherhood”. Assata also noted that her research reinforced her efficacy as a mother:

Everything that made me feel disempowered or ashamed when I went out in public, now they're my crown. My accomplishments are definitely my crown, but my children, when you see what I'm doing in terms of my research and is replicated six times in the forms of my kids, it reinforces what was happening in my research.

Keanna echoed this and noted the importance and salience of her identity as a Black mother. She expressed a sense of cultural pride in knowing that the Black women inherit a legacy of struggle, and knowing this seemed to motivate her to persist and be resilient. In fact, Keanna communicated that being a mother made her manage her time and school work more efficiently and gave her a unique insight on the research that she was doing within her field. She stated that she was “enriching her daughter’s life” through the tools and knowledge that she has gained in her doctoral program.

An interesting factor in these women’s motivation and resilience was the ability to combine their academic training with their ways of knowing as Black women and mothers. In fact, six of the seven women pursued research topics that were related to race, gender and class. In this way, being able to connect their roles and experiences as Black mothers to their research topics fostered resiliency in their doctoral study pursuits and enhanced their efficacies as

mothers. These findings align with the enslaved Black women and men's belief in the transformative power of education (Harrison, 2009). While many of the women's accounts reflected the challenges and conflicts that they faced because of combining their motherhood and doctoral student identities, they also saw it as complimentary to their work as doctoral students. For these women, being resilient meant modeling for their children a way to transcend boundaries of economic and social disadvantage through educational attainment and instilling knowledge and tools that would help aid them in their own survival.

Survival

Because Black mothers historically were unable to protect their children and loved ones from the cruelties of slavery, one of Black women's major contributions to Black society is to bear the burden of protecting and watching over each other, men and children. Literature from Black women scholars suggests that while Black women carry with them a legacy of struggle in oppression, that there is also a long tradition of both nurturing and resistance accompanying this struggle (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1970; White, 1999). For Fatimah and Zaya, their experiences with sexual and racial trauma informed their parenting strategies. When Fatimah learned that her 16-year-old daughter had become sexually active, I believe what she shared was in essence, a trauma response. She stated, "Meanwhile I was raped at 5 and never had my virginity, and this is what I said to my daughter. All that stuff I learned went right out the door when it was my daughter." Gender socialization for young girls historically has included instilling moral respectability and sexual responsibility. However, this socialization for Black daughters is less about conforming to social scripts of 'true womanhood' but more about dispelling the negative stereotypes surrounding Black women's sexuality (Collins, 1991, 1994). This idea challenges

stereotypes generated during slavery and advanced in policy reports and rhetoric that depicts Black motherhood as culturally deficient. It instead aligns with historical literature on the institutionalized rape of Black women during slavery and the work of enslaved mothers to protect their daughters from the unsolicited male gaze (Roberts, 1997; White, 1995).

The performance of motherhood as survival, particularly among mothers who are healing from past histories of trauma not only means understanding the vulnerability of Black girls to multiple of oppression, but also promoting positive and healthy race, class and gender identities. Some of the women performed motherhood out of desire to nurture and protect their children from the injuries that they themselves experienced as children. Zaya's maternal goal was to protect her daughters from internalizing harmful messages surrounding standards of beauty and instilling them concepts of self-love. Zaya stated, "I think all of those messages [about skin color] have basically funneled me into this place where I'm super protective and very decisive and deliberate on experiences that I allow her to be exposed to." As stated in her profile, Zaya was the recipient of internalized oppression on behalf of her family because of her brown skin. For many Black girls, mainstream values of beauty reflect a societal value of light skin and straight hair. For Zaya, teaching her daughters to love their brown hues and hair texture was important so that they would development healthy self-concepts. Since gender, sexuality and race are inscribed on Black women's bodies, much of the work that Black mothers do is preparing their daughters to exist in world in which her identity will render her vulnerable to multiple forms of oppression. Simply, it means socializing Black girls around their intersectional identities and the instilling an awareness of the systems of power that shape their everyday lives.

Even though Black women may have little control over the intersectional processes that shape their everyday realities, they find ways to resist. Examples of how the women utilized their performance of motherhood is explored in the following section. This is important in understanding the political nature of Black motherhood and the pathways of resistance created by its performance.

Resistance

Three of the women articulated the ways in which they engaged in resistance work through childrearing practices. For example, Keanna explicitly stated that she worked to challenge denigrating images of Black motherhood by demonstrating affection for her daughter in public spaces. She stated that when she publicly shows affection toward her daughter or engages her developmental activities that promote healthy development that “I think of it as like a resistance move”. For Keanna, countering stereotypes of Black motherhood is important. Particularly because in navigating predominantly white environments as a Black mother, she has a heightened awareness of racial ideologies that her peers and instructors hold about Black motherhood.

Assata exercised resistance through instilling values and facilitating awareness of racial and class systems of stratification. She commented, “You all got me, but how I'm going to get you back is, I'm going to raise my children in the way that makes them very aware.” Conversely, Naimah defined her maternal practice as a necessary resistance, particularly because she is raising a Black daughter in predominantly white spaces. She admitted however that her daughter at a young age is very aware of the function of power in those spaces, but expressed that, “I just want her to be a kid. I want her to feel like she can be innocent and not always have to be aware

of things.” All of the women appeared to negotiate external standards of womanhood and motherhood with their own personal values of mothering, which enabled their resistance.

Together, all of the women communicated desires to protect and nurture their children. The women’s stories were infused with meanings of self-efficacy, dignity and power and examples of the “motherwork” or reproductive labor that women of color engage in to ensure their children’s survival and individually challenge systems of oppression. Conversely, the themes captured in their narratives are not prescriptions of womanhood and motherhood for Black women. Rather, these are examples of adaptations to the Victorian ideal of womanhood that have been filtered through prisms of race, gender and class. Finally, the belief that their doctoral pursuits transcended individual desires of success complicates and pushes against the meritocratic culture of doctoral study. Instead, their educational goals translated into communal and familial contributions and seemed to be a common factor in how they made meaning of the interaction between their racial, gendered, classed, doctoral student and motherhood identities. In the final theme, I discuss the ways in the women negotiate intersectional systems of power.

Black Women Doctoral Student Parents’ Ways of Negotiating Intersectionality

This theme illustrated how Black women negotiate multiple identity statuses in margins that are located between race, gender, motherhood, class boundaries and act from those spaces. Although Black women’s political realities are bound by intersecting systems of domination, they developed various strategies to navigate those systems. This aligns with Harrison’s (2009) work uncovering creative resistance strategies of enslaved Black women in the antebellum south. Those strategies included ways of seeing and accessing power, creating safe spaces, talking back, shifting and embracing Black motherhood as resistance. The ways that the women responded to

intersectionality were varied and mixed. Some of the women who cited instances of resistance for example, also discussed ways in which she engaged in accommodating behaviors. Even though some of the women had prior experiences negotiating their identities in predominantly white institutions they did not always resist or conform to power. These inconsistencies speak to the complexities of negotiating identities under intersecting systems of power. In this way, identity negotiation is not always viewed as resistance nor conformity, but rather adapting strategies of resistance and survival.

Seeing Power

All seven of the women in their own way described an awareness aware of the effects of systems of power on their realities. The findings suggest that the ability to ‘see power’ also includes the struggle for language to articulate what it is they are seeing. Power is viewed both as a function of domination that leads to the subordination of another group (Collins, 2000; Freire, 1970; 2000) and also the ability or capacity of an individual to act in response to power. Rhea and Naimah for example, discussed the importance of being able to see power explained her “outsider” perspective on power. Rhea for instance commented, “I think I’m just aware of [power and racism], so I don’t if I’ve just been normalized to that.” Naimah also articulated an awareness of power and how viewed it critical to being able navigate institutional contexts: “to assume that just because you are entering an area and to assume that the power and balances don’t exist there is just ridiculous, so I felt that I walked in knowing.” When Naimah stated “so I felt that I walked in knowing” it affirmed much of what Black feminist scholars view as Black women’s ways of knowing power arises from marginal spaces of social location. What Naimah “walked in knowing” was how to navigate power in white spaces, most likely because of her background

experiences attending schools in predominantly white environments and dealing with racism. Several scholars have argued that understanding Black women's thinking is the key to understanding how Black women have historically survived, confronted, resisted and coped with oppressive structures of power (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989; Lorde, 1984).

Being able to 'see' power was critical to being able to navigate it. In connection to the larger theme of Black women's identity development, it appeared that when the women were describing aspects of who they were, it included locating themselves within the larger social contexts and confronting contradictory discourses surrounding race, gender, motherhood, doctoral study and class. Tayo for instance, commented that "now I can see". This statement was related to a change in consciousness on her viewpoints of womanhood now that had become a single mother. Importantly, Black women's standpoint has been critical in not only uncovering injuries caused by oppression, but also in the development of strategies of resistance and survival.

Across our interviews, the women spoke about the struggle of being a Black mother, woman and doctoral student. Through their struggles, ways of knowing power emerged. The women appeared to be describing and Dubois (1903) coined a "double consciousness" was the development of an awareness, a critical conscious of the contradictions between self and society. Thus, contradictions once revealed, stimulate an oppositional way of knowing. For the majority of the women, their experiences as Black women and mothers facilitated a development of their ways of oppositional ways knowing. Therefore, being able understand power from both inside and outside the margins of society is a helpful tool in navigating culturally hegemonic spaces.

Accessing Power

Sears (2010) in her work on the identity work of Black girls within organizations of power, highlights the importance of imagination in the process of transcending systems of oppression. In another vein, Alice Walker (1983) saw oppression as enlarging the realm of possibility for Black women rather than as a constraint. This finding emerged when I asked the women to respond in their blog reflections to the question “What does pursuing a doctoral degree mean to you?” and they stated it meant freedom, economic mobility, authority, being an example to young Black girls, empowerment for other Black mothers. Zaya and Tayo both spoke about their degrees in relation to freedom:

It also presented a possible degree of freedom, that's how I saw it, really not just a degree in academic career but really a degree of freedom so that I could have this present parenting sort of lifestyle that I think is the most important thing to me.

Tayo echoed this and commented in her blog, “My degree means Freedom. It means authority”.

An interesting finding was that six out of the seven women were pursuing research strands that centered Black girls or women. While they all were motivated by different reasons to persist, it seemed as if being able produce knowledge by and for Black girls and women was a salient factor in their reasons for persisting. Assata shared the same sentiment and wrote, “*It means I can produce research that helps empower other mothers--especially mothers of color.*” For, Fatimah she saw her degree as establishing legitimacy as an activist and give back to the Black community. Fatimah wrote initially that she wanted to pursue a degree in K-12 education but she changed her mind when she “*had a series of experiences that made not having a Ph.D. a burden when it came to what I wanted to do with my life and for my community.*” Fatimah already was doing work on behalf of the Black community and for Black mothers specifically,

but she realized that she was not able to access grants or resources for the work that she was doing because she did not have a PhD. Fatimah's quote suggests that these women are all motivated to pursue their degrees for different factors, but what they have in common is the how their personal identities are the basis of their political concerns.

Another interesting finding was that the majority of the women discussed centering their children as the primary beneficiaries of the merit, social and personal value they believed their PhDs held. This is consistent with findings from Edin's (2011) study on low-income single mothers, where she found that poor women often centered their children in their own desires, dreams and hopes for the future. Similarly, several of the women noted the importance of their children witnessing them pursue and accomplish their degrees. Keanna and Zaya both shared the belief that it was important for their children to see them persist because it would positively shape their children's educational values. Zaya also saw it as a way to attain a career that would allow her to spend more time with her children. Negotiating the meaning of her degree as "freedom" to mother the way she wants is most likely due because of Zaya's childhood experience of having an absent mother due to drug addiction. Importantly, Zaya sees her degree as transforming her motherhood, to one that allows her to center her children.

Next, I describe how the women created safe spaces within the contexts of relationships with other Black women.

Creating Safe Spaces

Another recurrent theme that emerged from the women's discussions on power was the idea of community in the context of relationships with other Black women. Collins (2000) notes that the importance of Black women's relationships with one another is to serve as safe spaces where Black women can affirm their identities, rehumanize themselves and truly listen to one

another. As doctoral students in privileged spaces, the women are “outsiders within”. For some of the women, they shared feelings of isolation and loneliness which appeared to be related to their “outsider” marginal positions as Black women and mothers in culturally homogenous contexts. Four of the seven women consistently cited examples where they felt they had earned their invitations to privileged spaces but they had to do the work on their own in finding and building communities. Zaya spoke about the importance of having a shared sisterhood as a method of coping: “having somebody to talk to about things that I’m going through or just hear me out, be a sounding board, is really the way I cope with stuff.”

Similarly, to address her feelings of loneliness and isolation, Fatimah joined an online community of women of color in academia and like Assata started an affinity group. In Fatimah’s blog reflection, she stated that one of the challenges of her experiences was not being around other Black women and that she “created spaces on line and that helps so much, but...I’m not going to lie. This is a painful set of experiences.” If institutions are truly committed to diversity and inclusion, they must do more than bring more students of color to their campuses. These women’s initial motivations to pursue doctoral study appeared to be part of their journeys in seeking healing and empowerment. A sense of belonging and community has been essential to Black women’s survival and institutions where there are very few Black women must make greater efforts to create safe spaces. As Broussard notes (2013), to recover from the wounds and injuries of oppression, Black women need the space to tell their own stories, name pain and find ways to heal themselves. Programmatic efforts between departments and student affairs practitioners that bring marginalized groups together are necessary in helping students like these women cope with the daily microaggressions and social role conflicts they face. As Collins (2000) posits, Black women have always talked back as resistance, but only in spaces where safety was

felt. Black women's consciousness is such a safe space where 'talking back can occur', which shows the interconnectedness between Black women's thoughts, discussed in the next sub-theme and their stories of creating safe spaces as presented here. Next, I discuss how the women talked back as acts of defiance and resistance to forms of power.

Talking back

bell hooks (1989) argues that for women of color, "coming to voice is an act of resistance" (p. 13). It becomes resistance when language is used to confront, challenge and interrupt dominant forms of knowing. Naimah for example, described how she centered her experiences in class discussion as an act of resistance:

So I would just bring up black mothering in general as an example to kind of push the class to think differently about how we are talking about something. It almost felt like when I did it, they didn't say anything, because either they couldn't say anything or they didn't understand the connection between experience and theory or anything. I was empowered by it.

In feminist theorizing of women's identity development, "coming to voice" connotes a rejection of ideological prescriptions and dominant discourses of womanhood and asserting subjectivity (Gilligan, 1993). Framed as a claim to power, asserting voice is an act of moving from a position of silence to one of self-definition. For the majority of the women, "coming to voice" involved a process of 'talking back' to dominant discourses and privileged ways of knowing, refusing to be silent, invisible and challenging authority. Some of the women's coming to voice stories were not so much about 'finding' their voices, but finding language to describe their oppression and also empower themselves to break their silences. Assata noted that, academic literature "gave me the language and empowered me to be able to push back. So then I

was able to say, yeah I felt oppressed as a mom.” This confirms with what hooks (1989) sentiment that rather than “finding a voice”, Black women have always talked back, but structures of power have worked to silence and suppress them. During slavery for example, if Black women spoke out about injustice, not only would their voices not be heard, but that the punitive consequences could result in their own physical punishment or worse yet, their children being sold or harmed due to their actions (Broussard, 2013; Shaw, 1994, White, 1999).

The women talked back in defiance to dominant discourses that were contradictory to their lived realities and experiences as Black women and mothers. Speaking in defiance or ‘talking back’ is a strategic way for the marginal and oppressed to assert the power that lies within voices and words. In relation to the larger theme of identity negotiations, that the women described the strategy of using voice as interventions to power are conscious acts of resistance.

Shifting

In the majority of the cases, the women possessed an implied general awareness of stereotypes of Black mothers, which informed their responses to perceived microaggressions. As an identity strategy, some of the women performed accommodating behaviors as a negotiation strategy. Tayo mentioned an experience while in the context of her institution where her hands swelled during pregnancy and she was unable to wear her wedding ring. Provoked by fear of being seeing as pregnant and unwed, she decided to wear it anyway. This aligns with findings from the study conducted by Gildersleeve, Croom & Vasquez (2011) in which they found that Black and Latino students “navigated hostile academic environments by adopting socialization rules and norms”. Shorter and Gooden (2004) found this similar coping strategy of engaging in accommodating behaviors as recurrent theme in Black women’s lives and termed it “shifting”.

The fact that Tayo decided to wear her ring despite discomfort was an accommodating strategy that she used to avoid being seen as the “single Black mother” trope. The women’s heightened perceptions and awareness was a response to the social environment and consistent with trauma literature that shows hypervigilance as a lasting effect of trauma (Ringel and Brandell, 2012). The women were already aware of their ‘otherness’ as Black women on their campuses, but the added layer of visible maternity as Black women was a trigger for being stigmatized on the basis of their identities as Black mothers. The convergence of these social stigmas position Black mothers in a way that makes them vulnerable to *multiple* stigmatization. For these women, shifting was an identity strategy to manage stigma (Goffman, 2002).

One of the women described a different form of accommodation through silencing her body and voice. Assata described how she accommodated her use of voice and assertiveness in order to appear less threatening:

So what I've learned in these environments it's not about cussing people out, it's not about checking them. That's a skill set that is important at home because at home, again, it's about who's wittier, it's about who's stronger, it's about how you can shut people up. Here, it's about strategy. So I've learned a lot.

Strikingly, Assata while shifting her identity to navigate her institutional context not only muted her voice, but her behavior. In this way, both Assata and Tayo self-imposed *a silence of the body*. Silencing the body in this way also can mean compromising one's identity and overall sense of self as a way to manage stigmatization and stereotype performance.

One of the women, Zaya, noted how she imposed a self-silence when speaking with her adviser who had made some disparaging remarks about Black people. Although silence is argued to be a method of coping with persistent racial and gender microaggressions for Black women

(Jones and Shorter-Gooden, 2003), it is also tied to a legacy of developing strategies for survival. For Zaya, the consequence of ruining her relationship with her adviser who seems supportive despite her racial biases was possibly more of a larger consequence than quietly accepting her discriminatory statements. Because marginalized students are offered little protection from the social environment in predominantly white students, strategies such as silence are key tools of both resistance and survival. Importantly, the women in this section were conscious of the various ways in which their interactions with students, advisors and faculty stifled their voices and chose to remain silent, perhaps out of fear of consequence. Because the majority of the women had prior experiences with racism as children, this strategy was most likely one that has proven to be the safest because they are aware of the consequences of not remaining silent.

Embracing Black Womanhood as Resistance

As doctoral students in privileged spaces, the women's accounts that they are "outsiders within". "Outsiders within" is a term coined by Collins to illustrate how Black women in academia are relegated to the outer limits of academic spaces and excluded from social participation. She argues that Black women are invited and admitted to privileged spaces but are not seen and not heard. Through a lens of power, this section describes how the women find and claim power in marginal spaces. The majority of the women claimed ownership of their marginal identities as acts of subversion, and two of the women expressed feeling "privileged" in some ways as a Black woman and mother. Tayo for example, interestingly appeared to claim ownership of power that she found in the liminal space of single Black motherhood, which is subversive to the "respectability politics" and Black middle class womanhood scripts that she been socialized and adhered too much of adult life. As noted earlier, she found a deep connection

to the social justice issues that were hidden from her due to the identity privileges she was afforded during childhood. The idea that a shift in social location—one of privilege to liminality—fostered a paradigm shift in Tayo’s thinking is important in understanding how Black women’s awareness of power is an aspect of identity development.

Keanna also noted how she was “becoming more comfortable in defining myself as a Black woman.” Conversely, Fatimah expressed struggling to publicly claim a feminist identity because it was not socially acceptable in patriarchal structures of the Black community. However, she admitted that she found “hope in motherhood and humanity in feminism”. For Fatimah finding space to claim power within these marginalized identities also allowed her to rehumanize herself, reject hegemonic ideas of womanhood, and find hope and possible healing in a marginal reality.

In summary, the data suggested that existing in marginal contradictory social locations facilitates a unique standpoint on self, reality and community (Collins, 2000). All of these sub-themes relate to Black women’s ways of grappling with and negotiating intersectionality. These negotiations emerged from an understanding of how systems of power and domination are at work in their everyday lives (Anzaldúa, 1987; Belenky, Clinchy et al., 1997; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989). Findings further suggested that persistent negotiations with power across time and space and the struggle for self-definition pushed the women to think critically about their experiences. This overall theme is important because it helps us to understand how structural mechanisms working against Black women foster their oppression, but also how it might foster ways of thinking, enacting and responding to behavior that aid in Black women’s persistence.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Research Questions

How does the experience of doctoral study across four predominantly white and elite research institutions shape identity development among Black doctoral women student parents?

It was evident in this study that contextual factors characteristic of predominantly white and elite research institutions along with prior oppression related experiences, had a profound impact on identity development among the women in this study. Most of the women would agree that their experiences as high achieving students in childhood were motivational factors for pursuing doctoral study. Almost all of the women would also agree that there were psychologically impactful experiences that they experienced in childhood or young adulthood that also contributed to their academic aspirations. For example, while one of the women was coping with her mother's absence due to drug addiction, school was a distraction and method of coping. Many of the women although not explicitly articulated, were able to utilize their educational journeys to foster a personal sense of empowerment and overcome past traumas. A commonly stated belief was that their degrees had personal and social significance and were motivated to persist by their desires to provide economic stability for their families, be role models for their children and contribute to the well-being of the Black community.

The most salient identity contexts were their roles as doctoral students and mothers. Although not specifically mentioned, their prior experiences in negotiating intersectionality and power enhanced their vulnerability to discrimination and marginalization. This struggle for a self-defined identity was most visible when interactions were invalidating, discriminatory, or traumatizing and part of their healing and empowerment was finding ways to overcome challenges as doctoral students and be efficacious as mothers. Some of the women were

vulnerable to reliving past traumas through their experiences in hostile environments and identity construction for the women appeared to be intentional and facilitated by desires to move beyond pain and legacy of their individual struggles.

The women most often struggled for self-definition, healing and empowerment. For some of the women, doctoral study and the development of a maternal ethic for their childrearing practices was a part of their process for overcoming childhood traumas and transcending societal barriers related to race, gender and class. In addition, by reconceptualizing and transforming the Black motherhood, these identity dimensions were contexts of empowerment that created opportunities for resistance to the power structures that influenced their daily lives.

Sub-question (a): *What is the role of race, gender, class and motherhood in adult identity development among Black women doctoral women student parents and, what are the most salient facilitators of development?*

The complexity of identity development for Black women included persistent negotiation of intersectionality across time and space. As was expected from what the literature reported, it was difficult to isolate race, gender and class as isolated dimensions of the women's identities. Most often, the women related their experiences and challenges as being related to being Black girls, mothers and Black women. For example, some of the women mentioned experiencing different and complex forms of trauma in childhood (a) racism, (b) sexual violence and, (c) poverty. Like Black women's identities, trauma is intersectional. This finding was an unexpected contextual influence on the identity development of the women in this study. As the women shared painful memories from childhood, intersectionality began to reveal itself as processes of socialization that shaped how the women made meaning of their multiple identities later in

adulthood. For example, although not explicitly mentioned, all the women appeared to be motivated to pursue doctoral study not only because they had been academically successful during prior schooling years, but also for personal empowerment and in pursuit of social justice.

During childhood, some of the women were not only socialized around their multiple identities but also gained an awareness of power and structures of inequality as young Black girls. Using this tacit knowledge as a lens, the women combined their academic training with understandings of power and saw their journey doctoral study as possessing the potential to dismantle some of these structures. One of the women for example, stated that she “have been navigating white spaces all my life” which meant that she had prior knowledge of what it meant to be a Black woman in white educational spaces, yet she noted that being a *Black woman* doctoral student at her institution was still a challenging experience because she felt alone and isolated.

As this research finds, isolation and loneliness because of underrepresentation for students of color at predominantly white institutions is a significant barrier to success. However, it appeared that isolation and loneliness was a metaphor for the women with trauma backgrounds to heal from trauma. The experience of trauma has an isolating effect and it made sense that the women perceived their experiences as isolating. Beyond the academic necessity of the women’s ability to find and build community as a factor of persistence, it also appeared that Black women centered networks are a vital part of the process of recovery and healing from past intersectional traumas unique to being a Black woman. While doctoral study was not specifically sought out by the women as a space of recovery, this research found common that doctoral study among Black women who have experienced trauma related to their race, class and gender identities was a

‘road map’ to the healing process. This means the women potentially negotiated meaning of their experiences in doctoral study with the end goal of personal empowerment as a part of the healing process.

An interesting challenge to the findings was institutional racism as a salient influence on the women’s experiences although the experiences they described were related to combinations of their race, class and gender identities. It was difficult to only centralize racism as the only influential system, but Black feminist theory allowed for diversity in perspectives and interpretations of power from the women. For example, issues related to social class were particularly salient for some of the women, but the majority of this discussion implicated race as being responsible for challenges.

One disconfirming statement was that although one of the women felt like she was the only Black mother in her program, most of the challenges she experienced were not related to race. However, she did describe experiences that she had external to her institutional climate that were related to her identity as a Black mother. What this means is that racism for most was a salient contextual filter for the women, whether they were conscious of or not, more so than patriarchy or social class stratification as was assumed. Although the women named racism, this did not mean however, that their experiences were organized by race only or that gender was not a salient identity dimension for these women. This was evident when the women described specific experiences where they were subordinated and marginalized by their identities as Black women and mothers in their academic environments and external communities. What it did suggest, was that the overtness of institutionalized racism can mask other power systems like class stratification and patriarchy.

Sub-question (b): What challenges do Black women doctoral student parents face and what agencies do they develop in response?

This sub-question sought to address the perception of challenges and barriers for Black women doctoral student parents at PWIs and the agencies that they developed in response. For the majority of these women, navigating the climate and context of predominantly white institutions was not a new challenge and as the literature suggests, linked to a historical legacy of struggle for equity and access within educational spaces for Black people. As expected and the literature also reveals, specific challenges such as issues of isolation, exclusion, racism, invisibility/hypervisibility, stigmatization, silencing, discrimination, social, emotional, financial and physical taxation, role conflict and grappling in general with persistent micro and macroaggressions were mentioned. Overall, despite these adversities, the women had aspirational hopes that their degrees would position them better economically, give them social credibility, model values of education and persistence for their children and be socially impactful. Most of the women would agree that although their experiences are tumultuous and that they saw their journeys as characteristic of Black women's historical struggle and legacy of survival.

Most of the women would agree that navigating persistent, subtle microaggressions accompanied their experiences in their institutions and the interaction between their identities as Black women and mothers and their institutional context as being responsible for these experiences. Being a Black mother was the most salient identity dimension when accounting for the negative experiences that some of the women cited and many of the issues that the women encountered were feeling invisible, yet hypervisible, isolated, 'othered' and stigmatized. For

many if not all, the lack of representation of Black women and faculty with children led to them feeling marginalized and lonely.

When grappling with work/family balance, another challenge mentioned was the lack of institutional supports available for student parents. Some of the women also reported course scheduling, finding support networks constituted of other parents, receiving mentoring that occurs outside of the classroom context or having their wisdom from personal experience validated as barriers and challenges to persistence. Another specific challenge for some of the women was finding safe spaces and support systems to validate their experiences and help cope with daily encounters of microaggressions. The women mentioned the importance of having community and networks of other Black mothers, but also cited having difficulty establishing them.

The agencies that the women developed were a direct response to oppression and manifest in the survival strategies that they developed to navigate institutional contexts. In essence, they are ways of knowing and doing that are essential for negotiating power and surviving oppression that can be utilized across various spaces. These identity strategies reflected shifting agencies of self-reliance, accommodation, resistance, resilience, ethics of caring, and survival. There was no consistent negotiation strategy utilized across the women's accounts, which is understandable since each woman's story and experience varied. While the women cited experiences of victimization and vulnerability to oppression, they did not enter the academy identifying themselves as victims. What did remain consistent was that the women's responses were strategic, in that they are calculated by risk and reward for engaging in a particular identity strategy.

Though the women's experiences reflected structural mechanisms of oppression at work in the context of PWIs, they used their marginalities to resist marginalization. They often negotiated these spaces of domination by adopting identity strategies of resistance and survival to empower themselves. For example, two of the women worked to establish student parent organizations and groups after experiencing isolation and invisibility as a parent. Several of the women empowered themselves by developing their own standards and ethics of motherhood that were grounded in Black social, political and cultural norms and values. The majority of the women in different ways, pursued research strands that were extensions of their identities and experiences as Black women and some of the women engaged in activist work outside of their institutions. For one woman, being a doctoral student offered the social credibility necessary to gain access to resources and spaces where they could participate in social justice work.

Together, the identity work of these women was critical to their persistence as students and efficacies as mothers. For the majority of the women, using wisdom gained from thinking critically about their social locations to engage in strategic identity practices to navigate institutional powers, performing activist work and the development of a Black maternal ethic of survival and resistance, along with embracing their marginalized identities as Black women were examples of their agencies, and appeared to be aspects of identity development.

Theoretical Discussion

In relation to this study's goal of tracing Black women's identity development, the findings from this research necessitated an understanding of the *genealogy* of Black women's identity construction. Through a lens of Black feminist theory, a genealogical model of identity development must locate U.S. Black women's experiences along axes of race, gender and class

across time and contexts. The Intersectional Model of Multiple Dimensions (I-MMDI, Jones and Abes, 2013) was initially used as a guiding framework to demonstrate the dynamic relationship between experience and identity development and also the interaction between structures of power, privilege, oppression and identity. Through this framework, identity is represented as consisting of a core or personal identity, surrounded by the context, which encompasses multiple and intersecting social identities and their relative salience. Within this model, contexts are viewed as shifting and determine how salient social identity dimensions of race, gender and class are to one's core sense of self. This model attempts to provide an understanding of how individuals 'know who they are'.

Limitations in applicability of this model emerged when their experiences suggested identity construction as not just occurring through shifting contexts, but also across time. To account for this limitation, I relied on Black feminist epistemology and a theory of intersectionality as an analytical lens to situate experiences within a more stable context as a starting point for identity development rather than a central core. This was done in contrast to the existing I-MMDI that positions the core as an authentic representation of self and center of development. I also found that identity development, although understood as fluid in existing models, is also interactive, dynamic and shifting. This became apparent when the women's perceptions shifted and varied dependent upon the interaction between their identity and the larger macro context of intersecting systems of power.

Because Black feminist frameworks of intersectionality emphasize centering the experiences of Black women and socio historical contexts of oppression, the experiences of the women were centered and connected to historical and often hidden structures of power. For

example, a few of the women mentioned constructing identity strategies to avert denigrating stereotypes of Black women and mothers, yet not all of these women name race or racism as responsible for these experiences. As a major influence on identity negotiation, the origins of these stereotypes precluded the women's identity construction. This means that the historical construction of these stereotypes are also included in the genealogy of Black women's identity development as they internalize them and negotiate them with external presentations over time and across contexts.

Core

Centering experiences at the core rather than personal identity as depicted in the I-MMDI allowed for the structural exploration of U.S. slavery and its residuals as a cumulative and significant socializing aspect of identity development for U.S. Black women (DeGruy, 2013). A Black feminist theoretical model of identity development would necessitate the inclusion of early experiences with systems of power as leaving indelible imprints on the women's psyche. The challenge to a Black feminist interpretation, which emphasizes the influence of macrosystems of race, gender and class, was that majority of the women mentioned race and racism as being constant.

However, elements of intersecting power structures such as gender and class were interwoven in their narratives and undoubtedly shaped how they made meaning of their experiences. To account for this, another layer of context was needed to allow for the discussion of the sociohistorical influence and permanence of racism without subordinating gender or class. Layering the historical influence of slavery as being an omnipresent and permanent context of influence on the women's mean-making capacities alleviated this theoretical tension. The

permanence of the residual effects of slavery are inherent in Black women's socio-politically defined realities. Similarly, DeGruy argues that

[w]e rarely look to our history to understand how African Americans adapted their behavior over centuries in order to survive the stifling effects of chattel slavery, effects which are evident today.

Other scholars of enslaved Black women's history for example, also make similar connections between slavery and identity development of Black people (Camp, 2004; Harrison, 2009). The inclusion of slavery as an omnipresent contextual influence on the construction of Black women's identity adds an additional macro level layer previously unconsidered in racial identity development models (Atkinson, Morten, and Sue, 1998; Cross, 1991). Rather than coming to a racial consciousness, slavery as a context, facilitates an understanding of Black women's oppression through intersecting systems of power. The relationship between the trauma of slavery as a contextual influence and Black women's identity negotiations across points in their development helps us to understand the salience of racism without ignoring the influence of gender and class systems.

Filter

Because the majority of women's stories all included some aspects of trauma experienced in childhood, Black girlhood is also included as a significant shaping force in the development of a meaning-making filter. This study found that Black girls early on are socialized into their intersectional identities through processes, which troubles notions of an authentic core sense of self. This socialization informs the meaning-making of power and perception of the relationship between their social identities and inequality. Since Black women's marginal identities exist

outside of cultural ideals of ‘true womanhood’ this too means that Black girls identities also exist outside of ‘true girlhood’ norms. Importantly, the societal moral obligation and duty to protect girls (read: white girls) and women from harm has historically precluded Black girls vis-à-vis slavery. Thus, the meaning-making filter is one that is shaped by the sociocultural influence of slavery and the historical construction of Black girlhood.

Further, intersectional processes strip Black girls of the development of an authentic, true sense of self and complicates race and gender as social identities. The complexity of social identity for Black women is a salience of race that also contains multiple layers of girlhood and womanhood. Combined, Black women’s identity work begins in childhood, in a third space within the contextual influences of oppression where decisions about survivability and resistance inform the construction of the meaning-making filter. Similar, yet different from what Sears (2010) found in her work on Black girl’s identity development “imagining” Black girlhood is nearly impossible without a model of Black girlhood and womanhood development that views identity construction as a coming to knowing self through a series of identity negotiations in a permanent context of slavery that is reproduced through experiences and institutions.

One of the women in trying to make meaning of her childhood experiences with racial, economic and sexual trauma stated that she didn’t “know what to liken it too, but it was joy”. Her statement suggested that background experiences in negotiating persistent intersectional processes reflected the ways in which Black women’s identity development trajectories exist outside of normative frames of development. It necessitates resistance against the urge to theorize Black women’s identity development utilizing normative prescriptions of race, gender and class. The notion that the women had such early experiences with trauma and other forms of

oppression complicates the concept of an authentic core sense of self where personal attributes, characteristics and identity are represented, an important concept in early versions of the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI, Abes et al., 2007).

Identity Salience

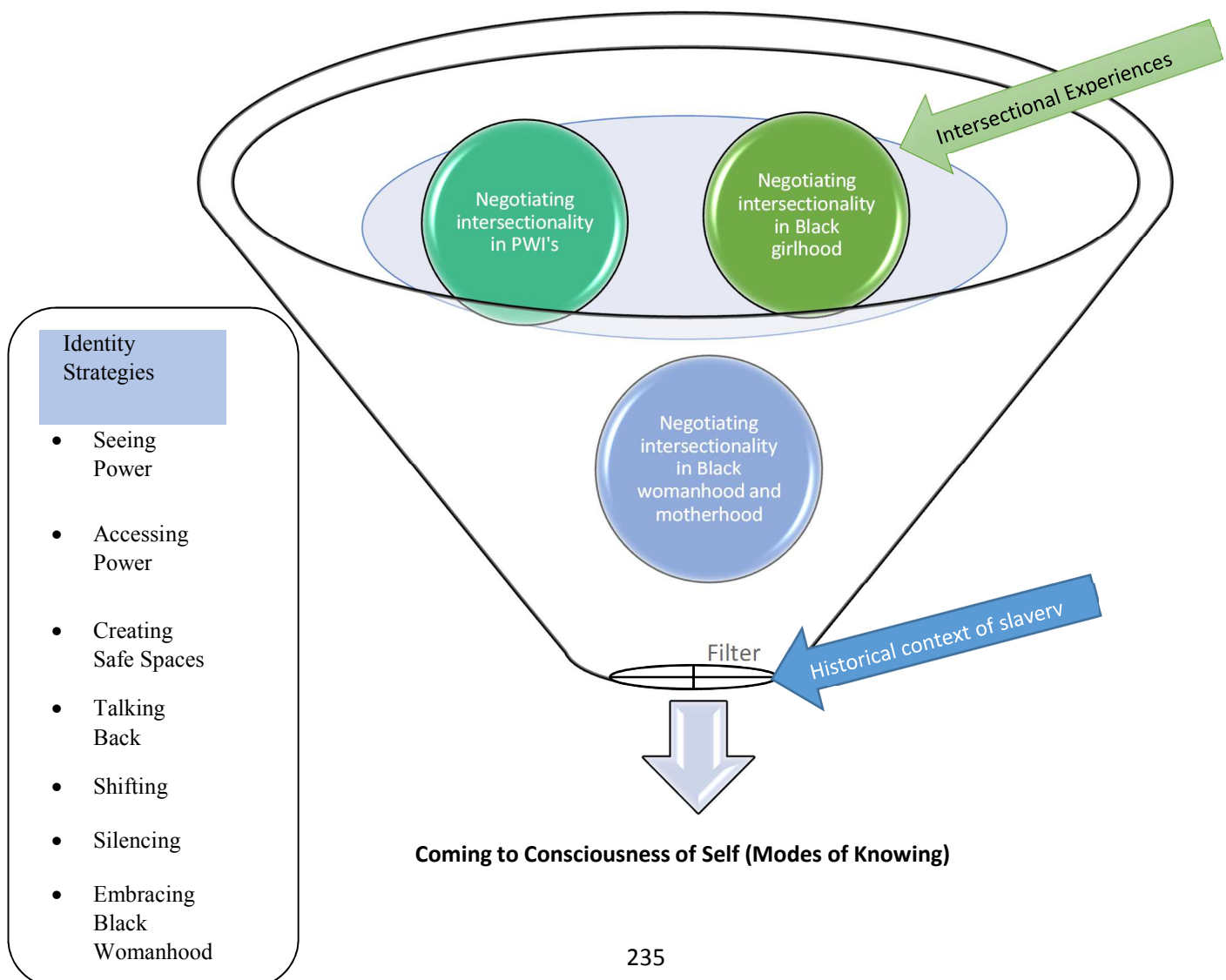
The women rarely mentioned experiencing challenges that were related to race, class or gender only dimensions of their identity, which made it difficult to locate a particular salient dimension of identity. Interestingly, race was explicitly mentioned as a crosscutting aspect of their experiences. Although the majority of the women reported experiencing various forms of racism and microaggressions related to a racism, this research revealed that the ways in which it impacted the women was unique to their identities as Black women and mothers. The complexity of the interaction between race, gender, class, motherhood and context demonstrated how the salience of social identity is complicated by one individual inhabiting not just multiple identities, but also the dynamic interaction between these identities and the system of power omnipresent in a particular context.

In this study, I found it impossible to disentangle the women's experiences and the contextual levels of influence on their articulations of self-definition without understanding how the historical context of slavery stripped precluded Black girls and women from the 'cult of true womanhood'. The genealogy of Black womanhood's identity development must begin with the historical construction of Black girlhood, vis-à-vis slavery and focus on the complex ways Black women come to a consciousness of the self through a series of negotiations and adaptations of race, gender and class across time and space. Since consciousness of self is important to understanding how the women viewed their identities and experiences through a holistic lens that

captures the complexity of the interactions between race, gender and class, a revised I-MMDI model with a Black feminist interpretation is presented on figure 4. Important to note that the findings call for a model that does not emphasize race, class, gender salience but still capture the complex ways Black women negotiate experiences across spatial and sociohistorical contexts.

Figure 4 is a revised configuration of the I-MMDI in relation to Black women's identity development.

Figure 3. Black Women's Intersectional Identity Development Model (BWIDM)



As depicted in the model, Black women's identity development as a genealogical project is filtered through the sociohistorical constructions of Black girlhood and womanhood. This model is meant to not focus solely on slavery as a context, but to understand the complexity of Black women's identity as well as understand the genealogy of the processes that shape and influence identity construction for Black women. This configuration also demonstrates the permanence of the influence of slavery and how it reproduces contexts that shape specific experiences in oppression like trauma and racism. It further foregrounds race without subordinating gender and class. Race is not prominent as a social identity, but rather a reproduction of a social identity and historical system of power that uniquely shapes the oppression of Black women.

Implications for Theory, Research and Practice

The present study has strong implications for theory, research and practice in higher education institutions in the U.S. First, methodological tensions in intersectionality revolve around the difficulty in integrating identity research with tenets that foreground macro level structures of power in the analysis. A revised model of the I-MMDI applied to Black women's identity development such as the one presented in this research, alleviates the tensions of whether to subordinate identity to structural analysis (Abes and Jones, 2013; Berger and Guidroz, 2009; Collins, 2000; Dill and Zambrana, 2009). By overlaying slavery as a more stable context and positioning Black women's identity development therein, it makes explicit connections between structural inequality and individual experiences. It also resists splintering and fragmenting Black women's race, class and gender identities when racism is a persistent theme in participant experiences and gender becomes less salient than as was expected.

In the case of this research, the women never spoke of themselves through lenses of race or gender only, but complex combinations of both. This is not to say that race is more or less salient for some Black women. However, even when explicit articulations of intersectional identities are not apparent, slavery and Black women's identity construction under the context of slavery helps us to understand how categorical references of race and gender require a more complex overlay of context to analyze identity. Lastly, as intersectional research is an analysis of oppression, it brings about a methodological challenge of what forms of oppression are viewable through a structural analysis. Analyzing oppression is theoretically possible, but challenges to researching oppression as observable data is a difficult challenge. By tracing genealogically, the antecedents of oppression that shape the lives of Black people specifically, slavery as a macro context helped to understand trauma as transcending individual experience and as being related to sociopolitical realm that produces experiences in trauma. It also helped to complicate dominant narratives of trauma and reframe them as a collective experience in oppression tied to the experience of slavery, which helped to move this analysis beyond pure forms identity research into a macro, sociohistorical context.

Lastly, this research has strong implications for the study of trauma itself. Rather than viewing individuals as sharing common experiences in trauma that are related to environmental and social conditions, it shifted the lens of analysis to a broader view of a social group with a common history and legacy of trauma from slavery. It also revealed the ways in which the legacy of trauma from slavery is reproduced in various forms through interactions with institutional contexts. For example, rather than viewing the experience of sexual trauma as unique to specific cultural communities and economic contexts, analyzing Black girlhood and the accompaniment of sexual violence as sociohistorical phenomena and reproduction of the trauma of slavery

provides a more sophisticated analysis. Understanding how Black girls were stripped of their childhood and ordered as permissible sites of sexualization during slavery, allows for a collective and more nuanced approach to the study of Black girlhood and trauma.

Lastly, approaches to studying persistence and retention of Black students in college settings could gain insight from this research. The persistence and motivation factors found among the women in this study were uniquely tied to their ability to engage in research that would benefit their cultural communities. It was also tied to the fact that the women located their activism in pursuing research topics that were related to Black women. Although embarking on a journey of me-search, the process of integrating personal identity with academic tools and training to produce new knowledge may be frowned upon due to Eurocentric knowledge validation processes in the academy, it was a notable motivation factor for the women to finish their degrees. Their work and research were extensions of their identity. The calls for new knowledge on how to support Black students compels the support for students who seek healing, activism and personal growth and development through meaningful research. Acknowledging this research as valuable by exposing Black women doctoral student parents and Black students in general to research of this particular form is a model of persistence for marginal students who may not be able to locate themselves within the context of higher education.

Recommendations for Practice

Administrators, faculty and student affairs professionals in higher education settings may view practical interventions to the challenges and barriers that Black women doctoral student parents face related to systemic oppression as an impossible task. However, this study raises several recommendations for practice. First, this study supports the recommendation that

doctoral program representatives, administrators and faculty when recruiting Black women doctoral student parents to predominantly white institutions, must provide prospective Black women doctoral student parents with the opportunities to speak with other Black women similarly situated about their experiences. As a part of their new student orientations, providing this vulnerable population of students with the opportunity to dialogue with other Black women about their experiences and strategies of persistence is a valuable resource. Another recommendation is a handbook, complete with resources related to childcare to be available for Black women entering into doctoral programs.

Further, admissions policies and funding opportunities that acknowledge the increased financial need of Black women doctoral student parents are needed to support them in their persistence. In much of the research that broadly examines the experiences of doctoral students, financial barriers are persistently cited. As this research illuminated, doctoral student parents have financial obligations that extend beyond individual needs and their financial situations are often precarious. They are often times receiving welfare, a humiliating experience for some, to supplement the meager financial packages they are given as a support. For the women who experienced the trauma of poverty during childhood, being thrust back into similar economic conditions is reliving economic trauma. Hopes for transcending economic barriers through the pursuit of a doctoral degree was a factor of persistence and motivation to pursue doctoral degrees, so not having the financial means to support families may prove to be deterrents from doctoral study or create barriers to persistence.

Several of the women mentioned course scheduling, affordable daycare, academic spaces that were family-friendly as barriers. Policies that support pregnant and parenting

students like priority registration for classes and absence policies that are flexible are examples of immediate policy actions that can be taken to support student parents. Lastly, Black students coping with persistent micro and macroaggressions is psychologically and emotionally taxing as this study found. Another recommendation for policy changes is the provision of mental health services and counseling on college campuses, specifically for doctoral students of color. These are needed so that Black students can have the psychological and emotional support services available to help them survive their journeys in PWIs. Framing the provision of services for doctoral women student parents in general as a *Title IX* compliance issue may allow for the financial investment in institutional supports and policy changes needed to remove structural barriers to persistence for pregnant and parenting students.

Two of the women established their own student parent groups and networks because none was available at their institution. As these women already face issues of invisibility due to their race and gender status, being invisible as a parenting student is an additional structural barrier. The development of programming within departments and the division of students that supports both the development of the student and their children is a way to address this structural barrier. Specific programming for parenting Black women students could be developed through collaborations from campus women's and cultural student centers to promote visibility.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings from this study raised questions additional questions not asked in this research. The fact that the women who experienced background trauma during childhood were

also school aged, suggested that more research is needed on the impact of trauma on the educational experiences of Black students.

In addition, the experience of racism early in the women's schooling experiences troubles myths of Black women's perceived educational success and persistence. Black women are a statistical majority in U.S. institutions and out earn their male counterparts in degree attainment, particularly at the doctoral level. As the women cited in their accounts, their identity constructions involved persistent negotiations of power, most often within educational institutions. While current research is focused on the achievement gap of Black boys and men, more research to learn from Black women's models of persistence and how that knowledge can be applied to understanding Black boys and men's educational journeys toward academic achievement.

Lastly, more research is needed to understand not only the violent histories (Farmer) of U.S. institutions, but also specifically which policies and practices allow them to reproduce these histories of violence, particularly against marginalized students. By framing the women's experiences with structural macroaggressions as violence, the hope is to unveil the double standards that sanction the struggles of Black students in PWIs as normative.

One way to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of this population is to do more comparative studies of Black and white students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU's). In addition, more insight in general can be learned from the persistence and institutional supports of Black students at HBCU's and the transferability of these practices and supports to PWIs. Lastly, longitudinal research could be done tracing Black women's identity development post-doctoral degrees. More research could examine whether initial

aspirations and hopes that the women held for their degrees were actualized post-degree.

Knowing the career pathways of these Black women whose research were ground in generalized ethics of community care and development could also be inspiration for prospective Black women undergraduate women students who might not have considered pursuing doctoral degrees.

Study Summary

Intersectionality as it is understood, is an analytical framework for understanding the complex and cumulative effects of discrimination and oppression that cut across multiple dimensions of social identity. The women's whose stories contributed rich data for this study, are examples of how Black women live intersectionality in their everyday lives. Using a research design of phenomenology and Black feminist epistemology as a theoretical underpinning, this study was conducted for the purpose of understanding the identity development trajectories of Black women doctoral student parents at PWI's. This research asked, "What are the lived experiences of Black women doctoral student parents?" The findings led to a historical understanding of the genealogical complexity of Black women's identity and the ways in which Black women come to know who they are through a complex series of identity negotiations over time and space. The women's background experiences in childhood were an important contribution to this study as it demonstrated how Black women come to learn to negotiate power through intersectional processes early in life.

College student development research has yet to include childhood as a significant context of development as this research focuses on discrete experiences in the college environment. Black women have a history of lived experience and cultural legacy of

womanhood, motherhood and participation in education that precedes their entrance into the academy. If adequate understandings of Black women's identity as located within the collegiate context are to be developed, then these cultural legacies must be observed and included in any analysis of the role of race, gender and class in Black women's educational experiences.

It was found that Black women's responses to negotiating identity within historical structures of power was a dialectical tension between accommodation and resistance and that this tension produced modes of knowing and responding to power unique to Black women. Observations of these negotiations were done through analysis of the women's articulations of their identities and experiences in their roles of Black mothers and doctoral students, two salient identity contexts presented in this study.

Significant research findings show that for Black women doctoral student parents navigating PWIs, the ability to come to consciousness of self in relation to overarching systems of power is critical in maintaining dignity and retaining a positive image of the self. This study also gave an understanding of the core identity strategies that was informed by their ways of knowing and aided in their persistence and survival in the academy. These strategies included, ways of seeing, accessing power, talking back, shifting, silencing, and creating safe spaces. The significance of these strategies were that they formed a tool kit of survival for Black women doctoral student parents navigating PWIs. The findings resulted in a revised model of the I-MMIDI that captured the essence of Black women's experiences related historical identity development that is applicable in studying the experiences of Black women across historical contexts.

Personal Reflection

Though this research journey I was transformed. I learned as much about myself as I did the women who honored me with orations of their lived experiences. When I initially wrote my findings, I injected my own voice as a way of validating the women's experiences; until I realized that I was privileged and had the power of authoring stories of their lives and reducing their experiences to observable patterns of data. In all the sections where I included my own voice, I eliminated it and began to understand that my voice was not omitted from this project. In fact, it was the omnipresent voice re-telling the story of these women's lives. As I began the first interviews with the women and asked them about their childhoods, I came to see how some of them contained painful memories. These recounting of pain triggered painful memories from my own childhood that I had long since pushed to the recesses of my mind. Through my process of socialization in doctoral study, I thought the academic environment was no place to grapple with pain from the past or the present. The women disclosing intimate details of their lives, trusting that I would use their stories in the pursuit of social justice, and challenging dominant narratives of Black womanhood made me confront this pain. I did struggle at first with knowing how to respond to expressions of pain during the interviews when one of the women cried; I wanted to interject with my own personal experience of similar pain, but I decided that the silence that responding with anything other than care or empathy was necessary.

To me, this project was not a therapy session for the women, or me but it did have a therapeutic component. I realized that a cultural legacy of Black women seeking healing in unconventional spaces and finding safety and comfort in the dialogical embrace that Black women share, empowered me to view our pain as part of our identities. This established a

solidarity and intimate bond that was formed through sharing our stories. I sought out counseling to help me deal with surfacing of the painful memories of ghosts that haunted me from my past. What I did not expect was how seeking counseling for my own pain would help me complete this project. There were times after interviews where my wounds were so fresh, I cried and refused to write for weeks. It also helped me to make sure that I was not so clouded by my experiences and pain that I could write objectively, but empathetically about these women's lives.

Some of the women who agreed to do this project asked me to promise that their stories would be told as way to disrupt dominant narratives of Black womanhood and motherhood. As Broussard (2013) notes, Black women for centuries have been told to suffer in silence. We are no longer silent. Our pain was revealed in our writing, reflected in our fierce love and commitment to raising the kind of human beings that we want to live in this world with. It is motivating us to carry on of the legacy of Black women who have historically utilized the educational system as an act of resistance against systemic oppression. Because of these women's stories, I am forever changed.

References

- Abes, E. S., & Jones, S. R. (2004). Meaning-Making Capacity and the Dynamics of Lesbian College Students' Multiple Dimensions of Identity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(6), 612-632. doi:10.1353/csd.2004.0065
- Abes, E. S., Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2007). Reconceptualizing the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity: The role of meaning-making capacity in the construction of multiple identities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48, 1-22.
- Abrams, L. S., & Curran, L. (2010). Maternal identity negotiations among low-income women with symptoms of postpartum depression. *Qualitative Health Research*, 1049732310385123.
- Adams, U. (2009). *The impact of academic climate on black women's experiences in higher education*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3362713).
- Alfred, M. V. (2001). Success in the ivory tower: Lessons from Black tenured female faculty at a major research university. In R. O. Mabokela & A.L. Green (Eds.). *Sisters of the Academy: Emergent Black Women Scholars in Higher Education*. (pp. 57-79). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Anaya, R. (2011). Graduate Student Mothers of Color: The Intersectionality between Graduate Student, Motherhood, and Women of Color in Higher Education. *Intersections: Women's and Gender Studies in Review Across Disciplines*, (9).

- Anderson, J. D. (2002). Race in American higher education. The racial crisis in American higher education: Continuing challenges for the twenty-first century, 3-22.
- Armenti, C. (2004). May babies and post tenure babies: Maternal decisions of women professors. *The Review of Higher Education*, 27(2), 211-231.
- Austin, A. E. (2002). Preparing the next generation of faculty: Graduate school as socialization to the academic career. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73(1), 94-122.
- Bassett, R. H. (2005). *Parenting and professing balancing family work with an academic career*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N.R., Tarule, J.M. (1997). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. Basic Books.
- Benton, M. A. (2001). Challenges African American students face at predominantly White Institutions. *Colorado State University Journal of Student Affairs*, 10, 21-28.
- Biondi, M. (2012). *The Black revolution on campus*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Blassingame, J. W. (1972). *The slave community: Plantation life in the antebellum South*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (1997). *Qualitative research for education*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bowen, W. G., & Rudenstine, N. L. (1992). *In pursuit of the Ph.D.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton

University Press.

Brock, A. (2012). From the blackhand side: Twitter as a cultural conversation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56(4), 529-549.

Brown, L., and Watson, P. (2010). Understanding the experiences of female doctoral students. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 34(3), 385-404.

Byrd, R. P., Cole, J. B., & Guy-Sheftall, B. (Eds.). (2009). *I am your sister: Collected and unpublished writings of Audre Lorde*. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.

Bambara, T.C. (1970). *The black woman: An anthology*. New, NY: Washington Square Press.

Camp, S. M. (2005). *Closer to freedom: Enslaved women and everyday resistance in the plantation South*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E., & Hagedorn, L. S. (1999). Campus racial climate and the adjustment of students to college: A comparison between White students and African-American students. *Journal of Higher Education*, 134-160.

Castañeda, M., & Isgro, K. L. (Eds.). (2013). *Mothers in academia*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Castle, J. B., & Woloshyn, V. (2003). Motherhood and academia: Learning from our lived experience. *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, 5(2).

Cohen Miller, A. S. (2014). *The phenomenon of doctoral student motherhood/mothering in*

- academia: Cultural construction, presentation of self, and situated learning*. (Order No. 3621085). (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Collective, C. R. (1986). The Combahee River collective statement: Black feminist organizing in the seventies and eighties. Kitchen Table.
- Collins, P. H. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of black feminist thought. *Social problems*, S14-S32.
- Collins, P. H. (1994). Shifting the center: Race, class, and feminist theorizing about motherhood. In E.N. Glenn, G. Chang & L.R. Forcey (Eds.). *Mothering: Ideology, experience and agency*, (45-65). New York: Routledge.
- Collins, P.H. (2000). *Black feminist thought knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. (Rev. 10th anniversary ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Coser, L. A. (1974). Greedy institutions: Patterns of undivided commitment (p. 3). New York: Free Press.
- Council of Graduate Schools in the United States. (1977). The doctor of philosophy degree: A policy statement. Washington, DC: Author.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crisp, G., & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990 and 2007. *Research in Higher Education*, 50(6), 525-545.

Cross Jr, William E., and Peony Fhagen-Smith. "Nigrescence and ego identity development:

Accounting for differential Black identity patterns." (1996).

DeGruy, J. (2005). *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*. Portland, OR: Joy Degruy Publications.

Dhamoon, R. K. (2010). Considerations on mainstreaming intersectionality. *Political Research Quarterly*, 1065912910379227.

Dill, B. T. (2009). Intersections, identities, and inequalities in higher education. In B. T. Dill & R. E. Zambrana (Eds.), *Emerging intersections: Race, class, and gender in theory, policy, and practice* (pp. 229-252). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Drago, R., Colbeck, C., et al. (2005). Bias against caregiving. *Academe*, 91(5), 22-25.

Elliott, S., Powell, R., & Brenton, J. (2013). Being a Good Mom Low-Income, Black Single Mothers Negotiate Intensive Mothering. *Journal of Family Issues*, 0192513X13490279.

Ellis, E. M. (2001). The impact of race and gender on graduate school socialization, satisfaction with doctoral study, and commitment to degree completion. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 25(1), 30.

Estes, D. K. (2011). Managing the student-parent dilemma: Mothers and fathers in higher education. *Symbolic Interaction*, 34(2), 198-219. doi:10.1525/si.2011.34.2.198

Evans, E., & Grant, C. (Eds.). (2008). *Mama, Ph.D.: Women write about motherhood and academic life*. NJ: Rutgers University Press.

- Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., & Guido-DiBrito, F. (2010). *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice*. John Wiley & Sons
- Eyerman, R. (2001). *Cultural trauma: Slavery and the formation of African American identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Farmer, P. (2009). On suffering and structural violence: A view from below. *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 3(1), 11-28.
- Few, A. L., Stephens, D. P., & Rouse- \square Arnett, M. (2003). Sister- \square to- \square sister talk: Transcending boundaries and challenges in qualitative research with Black women. *Family Relations*, 52(3), 205-215.
- Fouquier, K. F. (2011). The Concept of Motherhood among Three Generations of African American Women. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 43(2), 145-153. doi:10.1111/j.1547-5069.2011.01394.x
- Friedan, B. (1963). *The Feminine Mystique*. London. Penguin.
- Gardner, S. K. (2008). Fitting the mold of graduate school: A qualitative study of socialization in doctoral education. *Innovative Higher Education*, 33(2), 125-138.
- Gasman, M., Hirschfeld, A., & Vultaggio, J. (2008). "Difficult yet rewarding": The experiences of African American graduate students in education at an Ivy League institution. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1(2), 126.
- Gilbert, J. (2008). Why I feel guilty all the time: Performing academic motherhood. *Women's*

- Studies in Communication, 31(2), 203-208.
- Gildersleeve, R. E., Croom, N. N., & Vasquez, P. L. (2011). "Am I going crazy?!": A critical race analysis of doctoral education. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 44(1), 93-114.
- Goldberger, N. R. E., Tarule, J. M. E., McVicker, C., & Belenky, M. F. E. (1996). *Knowledge, difference, and power: Essays inspired by "Women's Ways of Knowing."*. Basic Books.
- Golde, C. M. (2000). Should I stay or should I go? Student descriptions of the doctoral attrition process. *The Review of Higher Education*, 23(2), 199-227.
- Goode, W. J. (1960). A theory of role strain. *American sociological review*, 483-496.
- Graham, P. A. (1978). Expansion and exclusion: A history of women in American higher education. *Signs*, 3(4), 759-773.
- Grenier, R. S., & Burke, M. C. (2008). No margin for error: A study of two women balancing motherhood and Ph. D. studies. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 581-604.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist studies*, 575-599.
- Harley, D. A. (2008). Maids of academe: African American women faculty at predominantly white institutions. *Journal of African American Studies*, 12(1), 19-36.
- Harper, S. R., Patton, L. D., & Wooden, O. S. (2009). Access and equity for African American students in higher education: A critical race historical analysis of policy efforts. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 80(4), 389-414.

Hayes, E., & Flannery, D. D. (2000). *Women as learners: The significance of gender in adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. Yale University Press.

Henderson, T. L., Hunter, A. G., & Hildreth, G. J. (2010). Outsiders within the academy: Strategies for resistance and mentoring African American women. *Michigan Family Review*, 14(1).

Holmes, S. L. (2008). Of African American Women in Academe. *Journal of Thought*.

Holmes, S. L., Land, L. D., & Hinton-Hudson, V. D. (2007). Race Still Matters: Considerations for Mentoring Black Women in Academe. *Negro Educational Review*, The, 58, 105-129.

hooks, b. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. South End Press.

hooks, b. (2000). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. Pluto Press.

Henderson, T. L., Hunter, A. G., & Hildreth, G. J. (2010). Outsiders within the academy: Strategies for resistance and mentoring African American women. *Michigan Family Review*, 14(1).

Hull, G. T., & Smith, B. (2007). *The Politics of Black Women's Studies*. In Norment, N. (Ed.). *The African American studies reader*. (2nd ed.) pp. 187-198. Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press.

Hull, G. T., Bell-Scott, P., & Smith, B. (Eds.), (1982). *All the women are White, all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave: Black women's studies*. Old Westbury, NY: Feminist

Press. Jansen, G. G., & Davis, D. R. (1998). Honoring voice and visibility: Sensitive-topic research and

feminist interpretive inquiry. *Affilia*, 13(3), 289-311.

Johnson, V. D. (2010). Impact of race and welfare reform on African American single mothers' access to higher education. *Journal of Black Studies*, 40(6), 1041-1051.

Jones, S. R. & Abes, E. S. (2013). *Identity development of college students:*

Advancing frameworks for multiple dimensions of identity. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2013). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: Fundamental elements and issues*. New, NY: Routledge.

Jones, C., & Shorter-Gooden, K. (2004). *Shifting: The double lives of Black women in America*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2000). A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity.

Kendall-Tackett, K. A. (2005). Handbook of women, stress, and trauma (No. 30). Psychology Press. *Journal of college student development*, 41(4), 405-414.

Kuperberg, A. (2009). Motherhood and graduate education: 1970–2000. *Population research and policy review*, 28(4), 473-504.

Koch, T., & Harrington, A. (1998). Reconceptualizing rigour: the case for reflexivity. *Journal of*

advanced nursing, 28(4), 882-890.

Legislative History of Title IX. (n.d.). National Organization for Women (NOW). Retrieved

LeMay-Smith, O. (2014). *A study of educational experiences and goal attainment among*

African American female graduate students. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from

ProQuest Dissertations & Theses. (Order No. 3628716).

Lomotey, K. (Ed.). (2010). *Encyclopedia of African American Education* (Vol. 1). Los Angeles,

CA: Sage.

Lynch, K. D. (2008). Gender roles and the American academe: A case study of graduate student

mothers. *Gender and Education*, 20(6), 585-605.

Magolda, M. B. B. (1998). Developing self-authorship in graduate school. *New Directions for*

Higher Education, 1998(101), 41-54.

Magolda, M. B. B. (2008). Three elements of self-authorship. *Journal of College Student*

Development, 49(4), 269-284.

Mason, M. A., & Goulden, M. (2002). Do Babies Matter? The Effect of Family Formation on

the Lifelong Careers of Academic Men and Women. *Academe*, 88(6), 21-27.

Mason, M. A., Goulden, M., & Frasch, K. (2009). Why graduate students reject the fast track.

Academe, 95(1), 11.

McCluskey, A. T. (1994). Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?: Reflections on the Role of

- Black Women's Studies in the Academy. *Feminist Teacher*, 8(3), 105-111.
- McMahon, M. (1995). *Engendering motherhood: Identity and self-transformation in women's lives*. Guilford Press.
- Mercer, R. T. (2004). Becoming a mother versus maternal role attainment. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 36(3), 226-232.
- Middleton, A. (2006). Mothering under duress: Examining the inclusiveness of feminist mothering theory. *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community*
- Espino, M. M., Muñoz, S. M., & Kiyama, J. M. (2010). Transitioning from doctoral study to the academy: Theorizing trenzas of identity for Latina sister scholars. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 804-818. *Involvement*, 8(1).
- Murphy, B. L., & Cloutier-Fisher, D. (2002). Balancing act: motherhood and graduate school. *The Great Lakes Geographer*, 9, 37-47.
- O'Laughlin, E. M., & Bischoff, L. G. (2005). Balancing parenthood and academia work/family stress as influenced by gender and tenure status. *Journal of Family Issues*, 26(1), 79-106.
- O'Reilly, A. (Ed.). (2006). *Rocking the cradle: Thoughts on motherhood, feminism and the possibility of empowered mothering*. Toronto, CA: SUNY Press.
- Orleck, A. (2005). *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black mothers fought their own war on poverty*. Boston: Beacon Press.

- Patton, L. D. (2009). My sister's keeper: A qualitative examination of mentoring experiences among African American women in graduate and professional schools. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 80(5), 510-537.
- Perkins, L. M. (1983). The impact of the “cult of true womanhood” on the education of Black women. *Journal of Social Issues*, 39(3), 17-28.
- Price, G. N., Darity, W. A., & Headen, A. E. (2008). Does the stigma of slavery explain the maltreatment of blacks by whites?: The case of lynchings. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 37(1), 167-193.
- Reddick, B. L. (2012). Lifting as we climb: African American women's education experiences in the Ivory Tower.
- Pope, R. L., & Reynolds, A. L. (1997). Student Affairs Core Competencies: Integrating Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills. *Journal of College Student Development*, 38(3), 266-77.
- Rich, A. (1995). *Of woman born: Motherhood as experience and institution*. New York: Norton.
- Ringel, S., & Brandell, J. (2012). Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory. Practice, and Research, 1-3.
- Roberts, D. (2014). *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty*. Vintage.
- Ruddick, S. (1995). *Maternal thinking: Toward a politics of peace*. Beacon Press.

- Sawyer, L. M. (1999). Engaged mothering: The transition to motherhood for a group of African American women. *Journal of transcultural Nursing*, 10(1), 14-21.
- Saxe, G. N., Ellis, B. H., & Brown, A. D. (2015). *Trauma systems therapy for children and teens*. New York, NY: Guilford Publications.
- Scott, K. D. (2013). Communication strategies across cultural borders: Dispelling stereotypes, performing competence, and redefining black womanhood. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 36(3), 312-329.
- Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2012). Learning to resist: Educational counter-narratives of Black college reentry mothers. *Teachers College Record*.
- Sears, S. D. (2010). *Imagining black womanhood: The Negotiation of power and identity within the Girls Empowerment Project*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Sengupta, A. S., & Upton, Y. L. (2011). Identity development in college women. In Nicholson, S. E., & Pasque, P. A. (Eds.). *Empowering Women in Higher Education and Student Affairs: Theory, Research, Narratives, and Practice from Feminist Perspectives*. (pp. 231-246). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Schwartz, R. A., Bower, B. L., Rice, D. C., & Washington, C. M. (2003). "Ain't I a Woman, Too?": Tracing the Experiences of African American Women in Graduate School. *Journal of Negro Education*, 252-268.
- Simms, E., & Stawarska, B. (2013). Concepts and methods in interdisciplinary feminist

- phenomenology. *Janus Head*, 13(1), 6-16.
- Smith, W. A., Allen, W. R., & Danley, L. L. (2007). "Assume the position... you fit the description": Psychosocial experiences and racial battle fatigue among African American male college students. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51(4), 551-578.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers college press.
- Solórzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial micro aggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 60-73.
- Springer, K. W., Parker, B. K., & Leviten-Reid, C. (2009). Making space for graduate student parents: Practice and politics. *Journal of Family Issues*, 30(4), 435-457. *Academe*, 95(1), 11-16.
- Stampp, K. M. (1989). *The peculiar institution: Slavery in the ante-bellum South*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Stanley, C. A. (2006). Coloring the academic landscape: Faculty of color breaking the silence in predominantly White colleges and universities. *American educational research journal*, 43(4), 701-736.
- Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 69(5), 797.

- Steele, W., & Malchiodi, C. A. (2012). *Trauma-informed practices with children and adolescents*. New York: Routledge.
- Stimpson, R. L., & Filer, K. L. (2011). Female graduate students' work-life balance and the student affairs professional. In Nicholson, S. E., & Pasque, P. A. (Eds.). *Empowering Women in Higher Education and Student Affairs: Theory, Research, Narratives, and Practice from Feminist Perspectives*. (pp. 69-84). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Stubblefield, H. W., & Keane, P. (1994). *Adult education in the American experience: from the colonial period to the present*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Sulé, V. T. (2011). "How Race Matters". In Nicholson, S. E., & Pasque, P. A. (Eds.) *Empowering Women in Higher Education and Student Affairs: Theory, Research, Narratives, and Practice from Feminist Perspectives*. (pp.147-162). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Taylor, U. (1998). The historical evolution of black feminist theory and praxis. *Journal of Black Studies*, 29(2), 234-253.
- Thomas, G. D., & Hollenshead, C. (2001). Resisting from the margins: The coping strategies of Black women and other women of color faculty members at a research university. *Journal of Negro Education*, 166-175.
- Thomas, V. G., & Jackson, J. A. (2007). The education of African American girls and women: Past to present. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 357-372.

- Tillman, L. C. (2009). *The sage handbook of African American education*. Sage.
- Tiu Wu, A. (2013). *Learning to balance: Exploring how women doctoral students navigate school, motherhood and employment*. (Doctoral dissertation) Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. (Order No. 3556422)
- Tong, R. (2009). *Feminist thought: a more comprehensive introduction* (3rd ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Van Anders, S., M. (2004). Why the academic pipeline leaks: Fewer men than women perceive barriers to becoming professors. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 51(9-10), 511-521.
- Watkins, V. (2006). New Directions in Black Women Studies. In N. Norment (Ed.), *The African American studies reader* (2nd ed., pp. 229-239). Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press.
- Weiner, Gaby. (1997). Feminism and Education. In Halsey, H. A. et al (ed). *Education, Culture, Economy and Society*. London: Oxford University Press. (pp. 144-153).
- West, T. C. (1999). *Wounds of the spirit: Black women, violence, and resistance ethics*. New York: NYU Press.
- Williams, M. R., Brewley, D. N., Reed, R. J., White, D. Y., & Davis-Haley, R. T. (2005). Learning to read each other: Black female graduate students share their experiences at a White research I institution. *The Urban Review*, 37(3), 181-199.
- Wilson, R. (2003). How babies alter careers for academics. *Chronicle of Higher Education*,

50(15), A1-A8.

Wolf-Wendel, L., & Ward, K. (2014). Academic Mothers: Exploring Disciplinary Perspectives.

Innovative Higher Education, 1-17.

Wolf-Wendel, L.E., & Ward, K. (2006). Academic life and motherhood: Variations by institutional type. *Higher Education*, 52(3), 487-521. doi: 10.1007/s10734-005-0364-4

Woods, R. L. (2001). Invisible women: The experiences of Black female doctoral students at the University of Michigan. In R. O. Mabokela & A.L. Green (Eds.). *Sisters of the Academy: Emergent Black Women Scholars in Higher Education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Wenniger, M. D., & Conroy, M. H. (2002). *Gender equity or bust!: On the road to campus leadership with women in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.

Appendices

Appendix A

Recruitment Email for Distribution to Academic Institutions

Hello:

My name is Amber Tucker and I am a doctoral degree candidate in Adult and Higher Education Leadership at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I am conducting research for a dissertation study that investigates the process of identity development among African American mothers who have advanced to doctoral degree candidacy across institutions in the following states: Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois.

I am looking for African American mothers in the dissertation stage of their doctoral degree programs. I am writing to ask for your help in recruiting participants. I've already been in contact with the (institution name) IRB to inform them of my research activities. If you would be able to forward the study announcement flyer to your graduate student email listservs, it would be of great help.

What this study involves: This is an exploratory dissertation study that consists of three 60-90 minute interviews about the experiences related the identities of Black women who are PhD students and mothers.

Eligibility Criteria: Participants must be dissertators across the following higher education institutions in the Midwest: Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois, and participating in the care-giving/rearing of at least one minor child (under 18) who resides in the home. Expectant mothers and women rearing non-biological children (adoptive, foster children, etc.) are welcome.

The announcement flyer is attached if you would like to disseminate it to your listservs.

Anyone interested in the study may contact me directly.

Appendix B

Phone/Email Recruitment Script

Hello - My name is Amber Tucker and I am a PhD candidate from the department of Administrative Leadership at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I'm emailing about your interest in participating in my research study based on your responses to the pre-screening survey that you took. A bit about me. I am also an African American doctoral student and a single mother to a teenaged daughter. I am enrolled in a higher and adult education leadership program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. My field of specialization is in higher education studies, with a particular focus on college/adult student identity development, with a minor emphasis on women's and gender studies. My experiences as a first generation college student and Black woman raising a child while navigating academia has lead me toward exploring how our identities as Black mothers and women are shaped by our contexts.

Simply put, this is a study about the Black women's identity development and their experiences as Black women, mothers and doctoral students at their relative institutions. I am particularly concerned with the identities and experiences of African American women doctoral student parents across predominantly white and elite research institutions in the Midwest. Based on your responses to the pre-screening survey, it appears that you are eligible to be in this study because you either have identified or have been identified as a Black woman doctoral student and mother with at least one minor child in the home. The only other eligibility criteria for participating in this study would be that you are enrolled at one of the following universities: (list selected institutions).

If you are still interested in being a participant in this study, you will participate in three interviews. The first two interviews, scheduled at your convenience, will take place over the phone or via SKYPE. The last interview is a reflection interview, and I will ask you to reflect on the entire interview and experiences and respond to a few questions that I will pose in a community blog forum that only you and the other women will have access too. I will then transcribe this information to use in the data analysis.

Again, your participation is voluntary. You can choose to accept or decline my invitation, or drop out at any point or time during the length of the study. If you would like to participate, we can go ahead and schedule a time for me to talk with you to give you more information. If you need more time to decide if you would like to participate, you may also call or email me with your decision. Do you have any questions for me at this time?

If you have any more questions about this process or if you need to contact me about participation, I may be reached at (contact information)

Thank you for your time.

Appendix C

Study Announcement

IRB#: 15.263 Approval Date: 03/09/15

Title of Study: Talkin' Back and Shifting Black: Black Motherhood, Identity Development and Doctoral Study

SEEKING:

AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHERS

ENROLLED IN DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAMS

FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

EXPLORING YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A BLACK MOTHER

AND PHD STUDENT

Study Overview: This is a study about the identity development and experiences of African American doctoral student mothers enrolled in higher education institutions in the Midwest. I am interested in your overall experiences as both a Black doctoral student and a mother at your institution. Please note that all information provided will be kept confidential.

What this study involves: This is an exploratory dissertation study that consists of three 60-90 minute interviews about the experiences related the identities of Black women who are PhD students and mothers.

Eligibility Criteria: Participants must self-identify as a woman, African American/Black, be currently enrolled in a doctoral program across the following higher education institutions in the Midwest: Wayne State, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and University of Madison-Wisconsin. They must also be currently participating in the caregiving of at least one minor child (under 18) who resides in the home. Expectant mothers and women rearing non-biological children (adoptive, foster children, etc.) are welcome.

Anyone interested in the study should follow the link to a short screening survey: (link to survey). I will be in contact with you shortly after taking the survey.

Appendix D
Pre-screening Survey

Q1 Please note that the information provided below will remain confidential and will only be used to help determine your eligibility to participate in the study.

First Name

Last Name

Email Address

Number where I can be reached

Preferred Method of Contact: (Phone or email)

Q2 Are you currently a PhD student AND rearing children in your home (or are an expectant mother)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q3 At which institution are you currently pursuing your PhD?

Q4 Sex/Gender

☐ woman

☐ man

☐ Transgender/non-binary

Q5 How far along are you in your program? (e.g., 1st year, dissertator, etc.)

Q6 Race/Ethnicity

☐ African American/Black

☐ Asian/Pacific Islander

☐ Hispanic Latino

☐ Multiracial

☐ Native American/American Indian

☐ White

☐ Not Listed (Please Specify) _____

Q7 How many children do you have (including step-children, non-biological, i.e., adoptive, foster children, relatives) AND/ >OR <are expecting?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ 11
- ☐ 12+

Q8 What is your current relationship status?

- ☐ Single, never married
- ☐ Married without children
- ☐ Married with children
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Living w/ partner

Q9 5. How many children (under the age of 18) are currently living in your house?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 +

Q10 Field of Study or Area of Research

Q11 Would you like to be contacted for follow-up regarding prospective participation in the study?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Appendix E

Interview Protocol

Study Title: **Talkin’ Back and Shifting Black: Black Motherhood, Identity Development and Doctoral Study**

Pre-Interview Script: Explain the following details of study as scripted below.

Purpose of Interview: The purpose of this study is to understand how the experience of doctoral study in an urban context shapes identity development among Black doctoral student mothers. The central question guiding the qualitative study is: “How does the experience of doctoral study in predominately white and elite research institutions shape identity development among Black doctoral women student parents?”

(1) Guarantee confidentiality of participant’s responses: (Ensure anonymity in future presentations and publications of data).

(2) Consent form (handout). Read aloud and ask participant to sign consent form.

(3) Format & length of Interview, i.e., what can the participant expect? (One-on-one, semi-structured, audio-recorded in depth interviews. Each interview will last appx. 90 minutes each; Interview questions are segmented into themes).

(4) Discuss potentiality of contacting participant for after interview procedures.

Ask participant if there are any questions before beginning interview.

Begin audio recorder now (Record start time): _____

Part I: Identity

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. How has your background shaped the way you view yourself?
3. What messages have you received about your identities (as a Black woman, class positioning, mother, doctoral student)?
4. In your opinion, which identities complement each other? Which of them conflict?
5. What does it mean to be a Black mother?
6. How has being a mother shaped your experiences in your community? With other Black women?
7. In which ways do you feel oppressed? In which ways or contexts do you feel privileged?

Reflection Notes by Interviewer:

Part II: Experience

1. What led you to the decision to pursue a doctoral degree?
2. Tell me about your experiences as a doctoral student at your institution.
3. What is a typical day like for you?
4. Tell me about an experience that you have had or witnessed related to race, class or gender in the classroom.
 - a. How did you respond?
5. How has your identities shaped your relationship/interactions with your advisor?
 - a. Other faculty?
 - b. Your Peers?

Reflection Notes by Interviewer:

Part III: Reflections (to be done via blog forum)

Reflection/Wrap-up questions

1. What does it mean to you that you are pursuing a doctoral degree?
2. How would you compare your experience in doctoral study as a Black mother to other white women or Black women pursuing doctoral study without children?
3. What advice would you give to Black female parents who intend to pursue graduate study at this institution?
4. Is there anything I didn't ask about that you think is important for people to know about your experiences?
5. What are your plans for the future?

Reflection Notes by Interviewer

- Closure
- Thank you
- reassure confidentiality
- ask permission to follow-up _____

Amber S. Tucker
astucker@uwm.edu
Administrative Leadership
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

- PhD in Adult & Continuing and Higher Education Leadership, 2016
Dissertation: *Talkin' Back and Shifting Black: Black Motherhood, Identity Development and Doctoral Study*
Chair: Susana M. Muñoz

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

- M.S., Higher Education Administration, 2010

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

- B.S., Educational Policy and Community Studies, 2007

TEACHING AND RESEARCH INTERESTS

Higher Education Policy	Critical Race/Feminist Theory
College Student Identity and Development	Qualitative Research Methods
Women's and Gender Studies	African American/Black Studies

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Seminar Instructor, McNair Undergraduate Research Program

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Summer 2012-2015

- Theoretical Framework and Methodology
- Feminist Qualitative Inquiry: Data Collection and Analysis
- Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods

Instructional Co-facilitator, Higher Education Administration M.S. Program

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Spring/Summer 2015

- **AD LDSP 795:** Women and Leadership in Education, Online, 3-GRAD
- **AD LDSP 797:** Student in the Collegiate Context, F2F, 3-GRAD

Adjunct Professor, Department of Sociology

Cardinal Stritch University

Fall 2016

- **SOC 301:** Sociology of the Body, F2F, 3-Undergrad

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

September 2015 – Present

Assistant Director, Women's Resource
Center
University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee
Milwaukee, WI

August 2012 – September 2015

Coordinator, Graduate Student
Development
University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee
UWM Graduate School
Milwaukee, WI

January 2011 – August 2012

Intern, Research Administration
University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee
UWM Graduate School
Milwaukee, WI

July 2010 – January 2011

Intern, College Administration
University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee UWM
Graduate School
Milwaukee, WI

October 2000 – December 2010

Paraprofessional Teaching Assistant
Milwaukee Public School System
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

PUBLICATIONS

Tucker, A.S. (forthcoming). "I am not Superwoman": Black Motherhood, Online Blogs and Resistance Discourses". (JSTOR: Departures in Critical Qualitative Research, 2017).

Manuscripts in Progress:

Tucker, A.S. (forthcoming). "There's Trauma Everywhere": Understanding Black Doctoral Student Parents Ways of Negotiating Intersectionality". (Review of Research in Education)

INVITED PRESENTATIONS, KEYNOTE SPEECHES AND PANELS

Tucker, A.S. (2014). *Africology Graduate Student Seminar Series* (presenter).

Tucker, A.S. (2013). "*Feminist Qualitative Research Methodologies*". Ronald E. McNair Baccalaureate McNair Scholars research symposium, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (presenter).

- Tucker, A.S.** (2013). *Peer Review Workshop*. Ronald E. McNair Baccalaureate McNair Scholars research symposium, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (presenter).
- Tucker, A.S.** (2014). “*Decolonizing the academy: The struggle for equality in Black and Chicana Women’s Studies programs*”. Association for the Study of African American Life and History. Peabody Hotel. Memphis, Tennessee.
- Tucker, A.S.** (2014). “*I’m going to become this sorcerer. I’m going to create this knowledge*”: *Exploring intellectual agency among graduate student mothers*”. Association for the Study of Higher Education. Washington Hilton. Washington, D.C.
- Tucker, A.S.** (2014). “*Like why aren’t you staying home with this baby?*”: *Maternal Intellectual Development*. Wisconsin and Midwest Women’s, Gender, and LGBTQ Studies Conference. UW-River Falls. River Falls, WI.
- Tucker, A.S.** (2014). “*Disentangling Black Studies, Black Women’s Studies, Women’s Studies and Chicano/a Studies: A case for a higher synthesis*”. National Triangle African American Colloquium of History Conference. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Chapel Hill, North Carolina.
- Tucker, A.S.** (2012). *Graduate Women’s Roundtable*. National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL), University of Maryland – College Park, College Park, Maryland.

HONORS AND AWARDS

University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

- 2015** Pi Lambda Theta National Honor Society for Educators
- 2014** Greater Milwaukee Foundation Cecile M. Foley Education Scholarship Fund Amount: \$1,200
- 2013** Russell D. Robinson Adult Education Scholarship. Amount: \$3,000
- 2012** Singer Scholarship. Amount: \$3,000
- 2011** Ziemer Scholarship. Amount: \$13,000

UNIVERSITY & COMMUNITY SERVICE:

University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

- 2015** **Member, African American Faculty & Staff Council**
- 2015** Member, Women’s Advisory Committee
- 2014** Judge, Undergraduate research symposium
- 2013** Member, Graduate Student Advisory Council
- 2012** Member, Chancellor’s Best Place to Work Initiative
- 2011** Member, Veteran Student Advisory Council
- 2011** Member, UWM Women’s Issues Working Group
- 2011** Judge, Undergraduate research symposium
- 2011** Student Representative; University Search & Screen Committee