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More Than a Silhouette: African American Women's Graduate Student Experience

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MORE THAN A SILHOUETTE: AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S GRADUATE
STUDENT EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

MORE THAN A SILHOUETTE: AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMENS' GRADUATE
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African American women have been silhouetted. They have been reduced to a one

dimensional version of themselves and defined by societies White – male hegemonic

background. Currently, limited research exists on the experiences of African American

(AA) women graduate students from an Afrocentric perspective. Despite the increase

enrollment of AA women in higher education, barriers to degree completion still persist

as evidenced by the lower rates of graduation. The lack of AA women in higher

education demonstrates that the literature holds a minority position not unlike that of AA

women in society. Subsequently, the accomplishments, challenges and overall

experiences of these students are missing. To date, both scholarly literature and

educational praxis have dimensional voids in addressing the needs of women of African

descent in the academy. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe and

understand the experiences of African American women graduate students by elevating

their voices. The two mechanisms of Black Feminist Thought: Matrix of domination

and intersectionality were used to understand the women's experiences in the context of

being Black first, gendered a woman second and then the issues that arise from a textured

life where intersections of identity occur. This study addresses the gap in research by not

only drawing attention to statistical outcomes as reported by National reporting agencies

on student academic success but also brings to the surface the lived experiences of AA

women graduate students with respect to how they see their epistemological selves. The

researcher used both a survey and interviews to highlight the ways institutions further

marginalize AA women graduate students. Finally, this study provides recommendations

rooted in the African philosophy of Ubuntu to affirm these women and thus affirm our

own humanity. Recommendations are shared in relation to faculty and staff working with

AA women graduation students, institutional policy and practice, and reconceptualizing

human rights.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represents the work of the candidate alone.

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Rose Anna Laura Jenell
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To all of the Women in my family on whose shoulders I stand, this work is dedicated to

you: some in your memory and others in your honor.

"Her children arise up, and call her blessed" Proverbs 31:28

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Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom

custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Romans 13:7

My acknowledgments will follow the order of this scripture: tribute, custom, fear

and honor. Each part of the legend is unique in contribution to my epistle, may it be alive

to those who read it.

Tribute

This work is dedicated to the woman in this study, the women in my family, the

women in my sphere and the women who will be encouraged and strengthened by its

contents. Someone once said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first

step. I pay tribute to the women who have stepped strong before me and whose lives

have intersected mine either in person or through their scholarly work. Sometimes we

step together in unison, sometimes your steps have set the pace for my own and at other

times my steps have helped others navigate confined spaces. So I pay tribute to the

women on the line as we keep in step. I say to you all: Keep step'n my life is more

robust because of your cadence!

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presence. We spent hours together in communion: Commiserating about life's

challenges; hosting and performing in our version of comedy camaraderie; celebrating

each other's successes and planning our post doc activities. We laughed together and you

let me cry in a safe space while we all trudged forward to a common goal.   I salute you

ladies, you are the sisters that I never had but always wanted.

Custom

As is the custom in graduate school, I recognize my dissertation chair, Dr. Betty Taylor and committee members Drs. Emma Fuentes and Onllwyn Dixon.   Their presence on this journey added to my process in invaluable ways. I have learned how to persevere against all odds and have grown tremendously journeying with them.

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Fear

I give reverence to the Lord who is faithful to his preceding word. It is through Him that I live, move and have my being. It is only through submission to Him that I have been able to unlock the wisdom of the ages.

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Honour

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PROLOGUE

As an African American woman in higher education, I have matriculated solely at predominately White Institutions (PWI) unlike my parents who attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU); my experience leaves a lot to be desired. It has been riddled with questioning of my competence as a scholar by those who are employed to further develop and nurture the same.   I have battled constant questions of the "right to be" in the academic space beyond the undergraduate level and the land mines of limited to no resources to support my personal growth in an Eurocentric, male-dominated environment.

My experience as an African-American women attending predominately White institution is that despite the letter of acceptance, I was never fully accepted, welcomed, accommodated or honored.   My voice was marginalized in these institutions and my identity was compressed in a single silhouette ("angry", "victim", "statistic", etc.). My experiences are conflated as they intersect both racialized and gendered systems that historically have not honored African Americans or women.

In contrast, those in my circle who attended historically Black colleges and universities often talked about the "sisterhood" or "kinship" that gave them strength in tough times and even extended past graduation. This was not my reality and so this study for me in part is cathartic and in part I am driven to leave things better than how I found them. I came to this study with a lot of questions about why we do what we do in higher education: the people, process and politics. While I am not advocating for a reinvented form of segregation in higher education, I am advocating for an alternative view and

support systems that address the challenges of African American women who are emerging as scholars at predominately White institutions.

For too long, being of darker hue has been the basis for othering. It began with slavery, moved on to education, and its presence in employment is eminent. The load is especially heavy for the African American woman-African American first and then a woman second. Constrained by both racial origin and sex what might be referred to as "double jeopardy", "double glass ceiling", and "double minority" I have experienced the workings of multiple forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism and classism, which have multiplicative and direct effect in limiting my status in both educational and professional spheres.

I am a woman of African American descent, whose family hails from the South, the granddaughter of sharecroppers, a first-generation Californian with interests in African American, Judaic, Performance, Deaf, Middle Eastern, and Latin studies; all parts of the complex interweaving of contrasting rhythmic patterns. As an African-American woman, I have undulated attitudes, accents and appearance in a constant bid to do the dance of acceptance.

This choreography has come at great cost: battle scars and wounds incurred by the constant description by persons of authority describing a society that I am not in: the psychological trauma of the double glass ceiling in corporate America where I have had the equal pleasure of dance partners: discrimination on the basis of color first and then gender and reverse discrimination where my success is viewed by persons within my own community as "selling out" or having lost touch with my authentic core.

As part of my world view where spirituality is at its core I explored and manipulated movement principles based on the body, weight, space, time, and energy as I dared to dance with God and the wisdom of my ancestors to transcend difficult situations, systems and invisible boxes, prefabricated in efforts to subjugate Africans in the American situation.

I dance out of necessity.

This is not because I have any rhythmic ability but because it is through dance that I am freed. Dance links my historical heritage to a creative expression that acts as a vehicle to help me see the world and navigate through it. Dancing to my own cadence I embraced Afrocentricity as a world view which placed Africa in the center of historical and philosophical discussions. This non-threatening environment allowed me to enter in and out of the Afrocentric world view in a multidisciplinary approach to living beyond the confinement of the Eurocentric view alone.

Being an African American woman brings with it the blessing and cursing of the dualities of consciousness of being gendered a woman and being of darker hue. I am reminded of a song sung by CeCe Winans. The words reverberate that "you don't know the cost of the oil in my alabaster box". I assert that part of the cost of each woman's oil is the degree and level of trauma experienced over her lifetime. Occurring only in the New Testament of Biblical cannon and relating to spikenard ointment, the alabaster box was used as a saving mechanism in the Middle East. The principal of the story, a woman- Mary, anointed the head of Jesus as he sat at supper in the house of Simon the

leper (Matthew 26:7; Mark 14:3; Luke 7:37). She was ridiculed by onlookers because the amalgamation of her broken box and exposed ointment were the sum total of her life savings: Experiential lessons of trauma and triumph.

Decades removed from slavery and the civil rights movement; traumatization continues. I found that isolation is one of the biggest traumas that African American women in higher education face and is triggered by interactions with faculty and students alike or simply the lack thereof. It comes in the form of taxing physical and emotional stamina, undermining authority, compromising competence, limiting the power that we might conceivably exercise and thus limiting our opportunities for rewards, mobility in organizations and overall self-actualization.

Trauma is only part of my story as it is part of the story of all women and particularly African American women. However, trauma is shrouded in secrecy and denial and is often ignored. Intentionally or unintentionally institutions, faculty and administrators contribute to and recreate harm and trauma in the lives of African American women. The impact of trauma is realized by African American women spanning every age group and socio-economic status.

I too have an alabaster box that has been forged and filled over the better of 40 plus years. "Everything affects [learning and] development, and development is a lifelong process" (Ratey & Galaburda, 2002, p. 17). Leonardo and Porter (2010) assert that college campuses are not safe places for students of color. Not comprising the critical mass of most colleges, students of color are thrust into environments that, at their core are hostile, belittling, and undermining (Leonardo & Porter, 2010; McIntosh, 1988;

Powell, 2012).   The experiences of African American women like myself are conflated

by the intersections of race and gender as well as the stand alone and compounded

traumas because of the same.

African American women who are repeatedly subjected to interlocking systems of

oppression have lifelong consequences.   The hippocampus of the brain is subject to

alteration, leaving one lobotomized-unable to operationalize linguistic, resistant,

navigational, familial or aspirational capital to having complete suicidal tendencies.

Traumatic re-injury creates binaries that proliferate and extend themselves on any

number of newly produced trajectories. The bifurcation of the known into the newly

known is a product of conscious development itself, and is the means of a growing

interrelatedness. This means that without interventions like counseling, mentoring and

supportive social/academic networks the emotional stability, freedom and expression of

African American women is critically at stake.

My story is a story of self –discovery: Exploring and using personal strengths to

successfully navigate an environment that is always imposing and rarely nurturing. As an

emerging scholar, I have sought acceptance, networking, camaraderie and mentoring in

order to advance in the academy. Even as I move forward, I find that there is a void of

understanding, support and resources in the academy for Africa American women who

are similarly situated. This was my impetus to explore sisterhood and community

building in the shaping of scholars who occupy many roles simultaneously.   In the

African American community women have historically been the backbone of the family

and the community at large. Elevating the voices of these scholars strengthens me and my hope is that it will strengthen you.

History really does repeat itself in many ways but our response to it does not have to be the same. Each interaction is an opportunity to grow and gain new perspective by assigning and relinquishing ownership to the proper parties. In response to the system and on behalf of my Sistahs I declare that we are More Than a Silhouette!

MORE THAN A SILHOUETTE

I am more than a silhouette.

More than a dark image juxtaposed a backdrop of Whiteness, power and privilege.
I am more than a statistic.
More than a number to support your diversity claim.
I am more than a body without a name.

I am more than a stereotype.
I get angry, disappointed but I'm also polite.
I am more than a memory of a Nation gone wrong.
I am the barometer of justice, patience and acceptance.

I am more than a nameless, voiceless hue.
I am complex, textured and multifaceted just to name a few.
Not segmented or parceled out for others to view.

Take me whole and unbroken, strong and persistent
Take my pain and laughter; my past, present and future
I am a defender of the weak yet still supple and sweet.

I am more than average.
Extraordinary is my name.
My claim to fame is that I live

Intricate, spicy and sophisticated I am
I am that I am without regret.
I am that I am and nothing less.

CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

African American (AA) women have made consistent strides in gaining access to higher education since the Civil Rights Movement.   Increasingly earning doctorates in a variety of disciplines, however, many AA women attending predominately White institutions (PWI) share the feeling that despite the letter of acceptance, they are never fully accepted, welcomed, accommodated or honored (Swail, 2003). AA women have largely been left out of the discourse in academic circles. When they are included they are marginalized and minimized to one-dimensional beings and defined by outsiders in unflattering stereotypical terms (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010) or flat out presumed incompetent (Gutiérrez y Muhs, 2012). Often marginalized in these institutions, their experiences and voices are muted, and their multifaceted identities are often compressed into a single dimension, ("angry", "victim", "single-mother", etc.) (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; Hill Collins, 2000; M. W. Hughey, 2007; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). These experiences are conflated as they intersect both racialized and gendered systems that historically have not honored African Americans or women (Hill Collins, 2000).

There is limited research on the experiences of AA woman graduate students from an Afrocentric perspective (R. Anderson, 2012; Asante, 1991, 1998; K. O. Cokley, 2005). The void of experiences of AA women is further widened when the presence of additional intersections beyond those of race and gender are present. Further, AA women's experiences overlap social and political oppressions based on a variety of

sociocultural factors yet no major data sets cross reference the two groups.

Background and Need for Study

The history of AA women in higher education in the U.S. is a lesson in resilience. AA women have made consistent strides in gaining access to higher education since the civil rights movement (Collier-Thomas, 1982; Shavers & Moore, 2014). In particular, they have increasingly earned doctorates in a variety of disciplines. The National Center for Education Statistics (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2016) reported that AA women earned 60,948 graduate degrees in 2015 compared to 13,282 in 1977. However, their experiences and voices are often muted by institutional realities that marginalize how they express their multifaceted identities (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Zamani (2003) asserts that, "membership in both marginalized groups [race & gender] often makes AA women invisible in colleges and universities" (p. 6).

Apart from biographical excerpts about a few prominent AA women in education Collier-Thomas (1982) argue that AA women have been left out of scholarly writing, leaving a void of the general history of these women in American. This includes their challenges, accomplishments and overall experiences and therefore pointing to the need for a critical analysis to honor how they construct and reconstruct their epistemological selves in relation to the Eurocentric, male-dominated values in the academy (Dillard, 2000; Stanfield & Dennis, 1993).

More than 10 years apart from each other researchers Johnson-Bailey (2004) and Winkle-Wagner (2015) assert that despite the increase enrollment of AA women in higher education that barriers to degree completion still remain as evidenced by the lower

rates of graduation. Shavers and Moore (2014) believe that overlooking the obstacles that AA women face solely because they are successful in reentering higher education at advanced levels is a "double edged sword", meaning that these women are cut in both directions: entry into the institution and exiting the same. AA women's experiences in higher education are tacit with barriers, such as not being networked, inability to get a mentor, exclusion from information relationships, being given less challenging assignments that may result in less opportunity for development and learning and generally being second guessed at every turn, giving the appearance of incompetence (Crenshaw, 2010; Hughey, 2010).

Shavers and Moore (2014) assert that "the research literature focusing specifically on AA women attending PWIs is infrequent" because often the literature does not delineate among them, their male counterparts or other marginalized people (p. 15). Although, the literature routinely discusses people of color in higher education at the baccalaureate level, Shavers and Moore (2014) contend that the challenges and general research by, for and about AA women pursing doctorates has been largely overlooked in scholarly discourse.

AA women students like their white male and female counterparts need to feel safe and supported to learn (Payne & Suddler, 2014; Shavers & Moore, 2014) . Without these conditions, the mind reverts to a focus on survival (Coogan-Gehr, 2011). When AA women experience comprehensive support that works to mitigate the extraneous cognitive load the likelihood for academic success is greatly increased (Williams et al., 2005). A healthy, safe, and supportive learning environment enables students,

instructors, and even the school as a system to mutually benefit (Murakami-Ramalho, Piert, & Militello, 2008). Schwartz et al., (2003) suggest that environments that contain a critical mass of the marginalized groups as faculty and staff support promote innovation, inquiry, and risk taking. Moreover, such an environment reinforces and enhances the leadership capacity in the academy because competent, excellent, and dedicated educators want to work under such conditions. Given the intersectionality that exists for AA women Zamani (2003) contends that "more attention should be paid to the educational, social, and political positions of AA women in postsecondary education" (p.6).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to add to the body of research by and for AA women in higher education.   This study is a response to the call from bell hooks (1999) to "stir from our psychic slumbers, to rise and rescue ourselves and one-another" through exploring the experiences of AA women graduate students at predominately White institutions with respect to how they see their epistemological selves (p. 236). Presently, scholarly literature and educational practice are lacking depth and scope about the lived experience of AA women graduate students, and, as a result, they lack effectiveness for this population of students.

Significance of the Study

AA women in higher education are engaged in conflicting trends of high enrollment but low graduation rates compared to other women (Winkle-Wagner, 2015). Societal issues of race, gender and intersectionality can affect the academic outcomes of AA women (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). It is important to note that race and gender are intertwined for African-American women, and both are determinants in economic, social, political, and educational status. Not only is research on the experiences of AA women in higher education imperative to countermand racism in the academy but so is using a lens that can explain the complex intersectionality that occurs with this group and the subsequent interaction with interlocking systems of oppression. Additionally, how the academy uses the intersection of race and gender to perpetuate White male hegemony creates an encumbrance for AA women leaving them misrepresented or underrepresented in educational literature.

This study aims to fill gaps in the literature by offering a focused - insider view of the experiences of AA women graduate students in higher education at PWI while cross referencing social and political oppressions with varied sociocultural factors. In so doing the researcher hopes to uncover tools and resources that individuals and institutions can use to shift academic outcomes by positively equalizing the number entering to the number completing terminal degrees for AA women who attend PWIs.

This study also furthers Howard-Vitals' (1989, p. 189) work addressing the recommendations to: (1) examine studies already conducted, focusing on the conceptual frameworks, assumptions of the researchers' methodologies, and conclusions; (2)

highlights what has happened in the research and what is happening to AA women in higher education individually and as a group and, (3) as a study participates in the generation of more knowledge about AA women in higher education.

Research Questions

This study is guided by questions intended to facilitate inquiry about the experiences of AA women graduate students at predominately White institutions. The overarching research question is: How do the experiences of AA women graduate students at predominately White institutions serve to contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their epistemological selves? In addition to the aforementioned question the following four questions serve to unpack African American women graduate student experiences:

1. How do African American women see themselves;

2. How do African American women see the institution;

3. How do African American women experience PWIs;

4. What types of programs and/ support do African American women receive that contributed to their epistemological selves?

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAME

Black Feminist Thought

Many African-American women do not identify with the majority group (White, Eurocentric, Male/ Female) and tend to have their own interpretations of their oppression. They also have different life experiences and views of reality. However, they lack the vehicle to control the things that oppress them. Therefore, Hill-Collins (2000) asserts that a new-separate epistemology is needed. One that gives "greater recognition of the interplay of race, class, and gender in shaping women's oppression"(Hill Collins, 2000, p. 241). Hill-Collins (2000) writes that there is an AA woman's standpoint, and although they can articulate their own standpoints, there is still a need for a separate epistemology- the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge, in particular its foundations, scope, and validity. Anzaldua (1990) simplifies epistemology this way:

> Theory, then, is a set of knowledges. Some of these knowledges have been kept from us-entry into some professions and academia denied us. Because we are not allowed to enter discourse, because we are often disqualified and excluded from it, because what passes for theory these days is forbidden territory for us, it is *vital* that we occupy theorizing space, that we not allow White men and women solely to occupy it. By bringing in our own approaches and methodologies, we transform that theorizing space. (p. xxv)

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) *Black Feminist Thought (BFT)* is centered on the idea of gender and race differences because it is a study of Black women's feminism. For

Collins, the term "gender" has a specific role in the construction of BFT. She puts forth

the convincing argument that everyone has an individual vantage- point of the world

based on his or her specific place in the "matrix of domination" (Hill-Collins, 1990).

Collins (2000) says; "U.S. Black women encounter a distinctive set of social practices

that accompany our particular history within a unique matrix of domination characterized

by intersecting oppression" (p. 23). What she means by this is that no two Black women

experience the exact same oppression; however, since all AA women share intersecting

oppressions they can build a collective standpoint based on shared views and

experiences. In the U.S. the separate oppressions like race, class, sexuality, citizenship,

religion, and gender can intersect to build an even greater domination. For Collins (2000)

in the construction of BFT the two most important and disadvantaging oppressions that

all AA women share are race and gender and it is based on these intersecting oppressions

on which a collective group perspective is built.

Hill-Collins (2000) asserts that attempts to prioritize one form of oppression and

handling the remaining types of oppression as variables, proves wholly deficient to a

marginalized group that has historically experienced oppressive binaries with oscillation:

one form of oppression at a particular time takes a dominant role, only to recede as

another takes its place. Taking the historical example of the human rights movement

relative to African- Americans, and citing feminist Sojourner Truth, Hill- Collins (2000)

points out while AA men would eventually gain legal rights *as men,* this would only lead

to new gendered forms of domination for AA women, obscured by changes on a

particular front. Further, there is a complex circuitry with which ruling parties use

interest convergence to enforce these dualities, for instance the essentialization of the passionate character of AA women by Whites justified their sexual abuse, but an alternate structuring of their essences as irrational was accomplished by keeping the same from literacy (Hill Collins, 2006).

The perceptions of "Blackness" and the "Black Body" (Cruz, 2001; Scruggs, 2011) as property and inferior to Whites continues to be obstacles that AA women encounter as trace evidence of slavery in the United States. Although the sexual cruelty toward AA women is not the focus of this research, not mentioning it would subtract from the overall demoralization, denigration and violation of basic human rights that AA women endured and that continues to lay a backdrop for their objectification and dismissal in society today (Leary & Robinson, 2005).

Historically, sexual abuse of enslaved Black women was partially rooted in a patriarchal Southern culture that perceived all women, whether Black or White, as chattel – property (Jacobs, Child, Jacobs, & Yellin, 2000). As such, property, slave masters raped Black women for sexual pleasure as well as to increase the slave population as a part of the practice of slave breeding, particularly after the 1808 federal ban on the importation of slaves (Turner, 2017). Slave breeding involved coerced sexual relations between male and female slaves, as well as sexual relations between a master and his female slaves, with the intention of producing slave children (Turner, 2017). Beginning in 1662, Southern colonies adopted into law the principle of *partus sequitur ventrem,* by which children of slave women took the status of their mother, regardless of the father's

identity (Santos, 2016). The historical context of Black women's slavery demonstrates the extent to which they experienced the stratification of class, race and gender. In educational environments there is a new domination that exists for AA women as a result of their former slave status and present woman status.

What AA women have experienced is being the bodily producer of "Blackness," of "womanness," and of the "worker" (hooks, 2001b; M. Hughey, 2010; M. W. Hughey, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Rarely have they been producers of anything with a positive connotation. AA women are the wombs of Black/AA men.   A third burden for AA women is created when the White male hegemonic system uses the intersection of race and gender to perpetuate inequality. Part of the status ascribed to AA women is a function of the way that the majority of society marginalizes and demonizes African-American men.

AA men in society tend to get greater coverage in the media and public life generally because of their high disproportionate minority confinement number and the extent to which their "physical prowess" perpetuates the stereotypes of the "stud male" or the perception that "Black men are evil" (Howards & Reynolds, 2013; Oliver, 1989). Current events in 2014-2017 as evidenced by the "Black Lives Matter" protests, numerous articles, speeches, and public outcry surrounding AA men extends to AA women in the role that they play in birthing and raising Black/AA men suggesting by extension that they too are feared, distrusted and the object of continued subjugation and domination.

These perceptions about Black women conflated by the state of being Black in the United States – feared and hated, does not negate their needs or society's responsibility to them. For starters, the history of words, expressions, mannerisms and culture, what Patricia Hill-Collins (2000) sees as "different expressions of common themes", has become the material basis for those inferior half productions of what it means to be human and have rights (M. R. Howard-Vital, 1989). For example, she explains that AA women remain oppressed through the images of "mammies, Jezebels, and breeder women of slavery to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes, and ... welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 6).

Hill-Collins (2000) theorizes that for AA women in higher education oppression of race and gender is countered by: (a) the presentation of an alternative social construct based on African- American women's experiences, (b) a commitment to fighting against race and gender inequality, (c) recognition of women's legacy of struggle, (d) the promotion of empowerment through voice, visibility, and self-definition, and (e) a belief in the interdependence of thought and action.

In BFT, when Hill-Collins argues for self-definition, self-valuing, and for an emphasis on AA culture, what she is advocating for is the organized reclaiming of that which has been produced and a new paradigm comprised of transformed consciousness and ownership of both the product produced and the creative process. In order for AA women to reclaim and execute ownership of their own lives Hill-Collins (2000) asserts

that the continuum of oppression and domination must be addressed. Her (Hill-Collins, 2000) matrix of domination articulates the connections (intersections) between many different types of domination and oppression.

Matrix of Domination.

The matrix of domination in BFT illustrates intersectionality and its relation to domination. Here there is an ideological shift away from the singular Eurocentric model of looking at various systems of oppression separately to understanding them as functioning simultaneously on different axes. This exposes the overlap and dependency of each different system on each other in order to maintain and reproduce acts of subordination over people. The matrix then serves to break down hierarchy with systems of oppression, no longer pitting one against the other, but giving them equal weight. According to Hill Collins (2000; 1990), there are five mechanisms of domination that articulate connections between many different types of oppression:

1. Historical - Domination does not exist outside a history. There is a context of time, space and place. For example: In the U.S. for example domination was codified in the Southern region by redlining- in the 1930s a discriminatory practice by which banks, insurance companies, etc., refuse or limit loans, mortgages, insurance, etc., and the Black codes - codes of law that defined and especially limited the rights of former slaves after the Civil War;

2. Ideological- Thoughts, beliefs, false statements, myths, propaganda that exaggerate certain differences between and among groups of people;

3. Material - Domination requires access (i.e. money, influence and political control) to power (actual, exerted or potential) and the technologies (i.e. media, newspaper, and internet) These are vehicles by which power is exerted;

4. Behavioral- These differences related to sex, sexuality, color, ethnicity, age, gender, economic class or physical abilities that create ways of doing things; and

5. Emotional – This requires situations in which the passion for or the desire to control the "other" is intensified by any threat or perceived threat against the dominator's status.

Replacing additive models of oppression with interlocking ones creates possibilities for new paradigms (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 18). The significance of seeing race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression fosters a paradigmatic shift of thinking inclusively about other oppressions, such as age, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity. In addition, Hill Collins (2000)postulates that AA women are held captive by Western-White male structures of knowledge.

Because elite White men control Western structures of knowledge validation, their interests pervade the themes, paradigms, and epistemologies of traditional scholarship. As a result, U.S. Black women's experiences as well as those of women of African descent transnationally have been routinely distorted within or excluded from what counts as knowledge. (p. 251)

BFT offers marginalized groups new knowledge about their experiences that can be empowering. By revealing new ways of knowing marginalized groups can define their own reality. Collins (2000) emphasizes that BFT serves to reshape knowledge by valuing experience and the subjective, while broadening the identity of the knower, making the location of Black women a legitimate platform from which they can create knowledge.

BFT works to challenge the matrix domination through radicalized thinking that evaluates ideas around knowledge production, producers and consumers. Hill- Collins (1990) suggests that resistance to domination begins with self -evaluation. By examining our own internalized oppressive views of ourselves and others and the role we play as oppressed and oppressor the process of liberation continues by creating a new history along with behaviors and ideologies for successive generations.

Intersectionality

BFT acknowledges the intersectionality of African- American women which originate from a legacy of struggle for AA women in society and addresses their experiences of marginality in higher education (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Hill Collins, 2000). In other words, AA women still do not receive the same rights as their White female or male counter-parts resultant from a history of being denied the right to vote, to hold political office, or to attend particular institutions of education. Hill – Collins (1998; 2000) argues there are two dimensions that have caused the oppression of AA women. The first dimension dates as far back as slavery when AA women worked as

domestic servants in homes of Caucasian men and women. Slavery both created negative images of AA women and a system of devaluation (hooks, 2001b, 2001a). The second dimension focused on the denial of AA women's voting rights, the exclusion of AA women and men from political positions, and the denial of equal treatment in the legal system.

As Patricia Hill-Collins (2000) draws upon the lived experiences of the oppressed, by identifying the interlocking systems of oppression she points to the binaries that proliferate and extend themselves on any number of newly produced trajectories. The bifurcation of the known into the newly known is a product of conscious development itself, and is the means of a growing interrelatedness. What interlocking oppression tells us is that AA women graduate students, experience oppression along any number of vectors, and very often with several such vectors converging their very invisibility and silence may mark their marginalized status. When AA women graduate students are consistently marginalized at every vector and trajectory there comes a point when they are no longer even considered as part of the conversation and lose all ground.

BFT sees marginalization and intersectionality as positions of power and dominance not as positions of inferiority or fragmentation. To be on the fringe of society through a BFT lens means having a wider perspective and greater vantage point than singular vision alone. By bridging pedagogy and theory for audiences receiving little or no exposure to such critical thought (T. M. Harris, 2007), BFT gives agency to AA women who alone are uniquely qualified to interpret their experiences. Despite, the

historical and current difficulties in society for AA women, BFT, provides a way of knowing and understanding what is known; a way to wholly engage in society and emerge as agents of power.

Moses (2010; 1990) affirms the importance of modeling and mentoring for AA women. Learning from history an AA proverb describes a woman's journey beautifully, "I am because you are." Our power lies in our intersections of connectedness. Herein, rests the activism component of BFT in that it resolves that both the transformed consciousness of individuals and the social transformation of political and economic institutions constitute essential ingredients for social change (Hill-Collins, 2000). If we fail to support and uplift AA women in higher education, we all fail, we fail as a nation.

The activism of drawing upon the lived experiences of the oppressed, establishes the political production of new forms of voiced power, the countermanding of the products of one's own image and the seizing of the *knowness* of one's material existence. Therefore, BFT, a production of Patricia Hill-Collins, situated in intersectionality as defined by Kimberlé Crenshaw is a lens that allows the experiences of AA women (race, gender, social status, age, ability, sexuality, etc.) to be viewed in their fullness where the interdependence of experience and consciousness continue to shape the understanding of AA women in higher education by and for the same.

BFT developed because research failed to acknowledge the work that AA women perform, the types of communities in which they live, and the kinds of relationships they have with others. Given that AA women, as a group, experience a different world than

those who are not Black and female (Hill-Collins, 1989), BFT accounts for the matrix of

domination and intersectional perspectives by encouraging these woman to identify,

redefine, explain, and share experiences of racism and sexism that may be unique

(Baxley, 2012; Hill Collins, 2000).

Prior to BFT, researchers deemed the experiences of AA women as inferior to the

experiences of the majority, dominant groups of White males, White females, and AA

males (Guy-Sheftall, 1982; hooks, 2001a; Walker, 1983). The experiences of AA women

in higher education are directly influenced by their racialized and gendered experience,

hence the need for research to explore these complexities. By understanding the nature

of navigating multiplicities of consciousness, institutions of higher learning can become a

source of leadership training by employing interventions that promote psychological

strength, purpose, comfort, and social capital for AA women graduate students. BFT is

intended to empower social change by presenting the experiences of AA women and

identifying the race, gender, and class oppressions.

BFT offers two significant contributions toward furthering our understanding of

the experiences of AA women graduate students at Predominately White Institutions and

the important connections among knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of

empowerment. First, BFT fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how we think about

oppression- an interlocking system or matrix. By embracing a paradigm of race, class,

and gender as interlocking systems of oppression, it reconceptualizes the social relations

of domination and resistance.   Second, BFT addresses ongoing epistemological

discussions in feminist theory and in the sociology of knowledge concerning ways of

assessing "truth". Truth in this context is the experiential reality of AA women that

empowers them to define and interpret their own experiences. Since knowledge is

power BFT is a culturally sensitive lens that supports access to knowledge and therefore

power to AA women who are outside of the White male majority (Coogan-Gehr, 2011;

Ryu, 2009; Simmons, Lowery-Hart, Wahl, & McBride, 2013).

Definition of Terms

Essential to this study is the operationalization of specific terms to provide clear

understanding for the reader. The following definitions elucidate the study:

African- American (AA) - a United States citizen who is described as AA or Black, Non-

Hispanic by the United States Census Bureau. This term will be interchangeably used

with "Black" when quoted from other sources only. The author of this study prefers the

use of AA because the term connotes identifying with a minimum of two cultures

(African and American).

Afrocentrism - is a cultural worldview in the United States that focuses on the history of

black Africans. It is a response to global (Eurocentric/Orientalist) attitudes about African

people and their historical contributions (R. Anderson, 2012; Asante, 2016).

Epistemological - the origin, nature, methods, and limits of human knowledge (Dillard,

2000).

Higher Education - Study beyond the level of secondary education. Institutions of higher

education include not only colleges and universities but also professional schools in such

fields as law, theology, medicine, business, music, and art. They also include teacher-training schools, community colleges, and institutes of technology. At the end of a prescribed course of study, a degree, diploma, or certificate is awarded.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) - The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines an HBCU as: "…any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation." HBCUs offer all students, regardless of race, an opportunity to develop their skills and talents. These institutions train young people who go on to serve domestically and internationally in the professions as entrepreneurs and in the public and private sectors (United States House of Representatives, 1965).

Intersectionality- the point of view of the intersections in peoples' lives in terms of the different positions they hold in relation to gender, race and class and other social categories. Intersectionality is also the process involved in constructing social inequities.

Insider vs. Outsider- "If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive." "Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference…."(Lorde, 1984).

Muted group - are certain groups of people who remain powerless compared to the others. Edwin Ardener, a British anthropologist, introduced the concept. His noted

contributions in anthropology are the studies on gender and found that the studies made by many ethnographers in the society was generalized to the male population and accumulated the finding accepting only one side. The voices of the women and other unheard have been ignored and muted. The narrow perspective to the society ignoring almost half of the population affected the studies and the muted group theory brought a light into the powers of the marginalized in the society.

Other - The defining of one group against another in which "the dominant culture ascribes an undesirable trait (one shared by all humans) onto one specific group of people. Othering reaches beyond defining the self as superior and the other as inferior. Othering has determined the life experiences of groups of people at different times in U.S. history. For example, portraying Native Americans as dangerous savages provided European settlers in the U.S. the rationale to justify killing them and taking their land; portraying African Americans as an inferior race provided the necessary logic to justify slavery and later segregation during the Jim Crow era; and portrayals of Japanese Americans as disloyal were used to justify their internment during World War II.

Phenomenon of Interest – Selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with an occurrence, system or ideology (Creswell, 2012).

Predominantly White Institution (PWI) - is the term used to describe institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment. However, the majority of these institutions may also be understood as historically White institutions in recognition of the binarism and exclusion supported by the United States prior to 1964.

It is in a historical context of segregated education that predominantly White colleges and universities are defined and contrasted from other colleges and universities that serve students with different racial, ethnic, and/or cultural backgrounds (e.g., historically Black colleges and universities, HBCUs). U.S. higher education is rooted in the establishment of the predominantly White college but over time has changed and proliferated (United States House of Representatives, 1965).

Racialization - Processes of the discursive production of racial identities. It signifies the extension of racial meanings to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group.

Spiral of Silence - propounded by the German political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974 the theory describes the process by which one opinion becomes dominant as those who perceive their opinion to be in the minority do not speak up because society threatens individuals with fear of isolation.

White - a United States citizen who is described as White, non-Hispanic by the United States Census Bureau. This term will be interchangeably used with "majority" (US Census Bureau, 2012).

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Restatement of the Problem

African-American (AA) women have largely been left out of the discourse in academic circles. When they are included, they are marginalized or minimized into a one-dimensional being and defined by outsiders in unflattering and stereotypical terms. The void of experiences of AA women is further widened when the presence of intersections beyond those of gender and race are present.

Research on AA women in higher education at PWI is important because these environments are microcosms of a racialized and gendered society (Allen, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Collins, 1986; Faucher, 2010; MacPherson, 2011). "AA women enter institutions of higher education that are characterized by barriers constructed according to race, sex, and class" (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 95). The dominant discourse does not often include the experience of AA women. Their omission from educational research perpetuates the idea that AA women are not a valuable part of the campus climate at predominantly White institutions (PWI) (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

This study will explore the experiences of AA woman in higher education at predominately White institutions by examining their multifaceted identities through a Black feminist thought (BFT) lens. Through a better understanding of student's intersectional experience in higher education, this study has the potential to alter campus

climates by the inclusion of resources and faculty that meet the needs of AA women who live multifaceted realities ensuring that AA women have access to social capital and educational equity (Duncan & Barber-Freeman, 2008; Harris III, 2012) and possibly increasing the graduation rate.

The literature reviewed in this study is set in the context of "othering". African-American women are "othered" in society in general, and in the arena of education specifically (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2000). As a group, they have less education, lower levels of income, and poorer quality of life in general than their Caucasian counterparts. History recounts the atrocities done to AAs and women before the abolition of slavery. Scholar and activist James Baldwin (1965) asserts that we have a responsibility that goes beyond just reading historical accounts.

> History …is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by its many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do…And it is with great pain and terror that one begins to realize this. In great pain and terror one begins to assess the history, which has placed one where one is and formed one's point of view. In great pain and terror, because, therefore, one enters into battle with that historical creation, oneself. (pp. 47–48)

Taking Baldwin's (1965) cues on how to engage history by not merely reading it but looking at it from the experiential point of view of AA women graduate students, the review of the literature will look at how previous scholars have discussed "othering". In

relation to AA women graduate students "othering" is conceptualized in four ways: (1) the racialized other, (2) the gendered other, (3) the educational other, and (4) the intersectional other.

Othering

The backdrop of this study is set with the "othering" that AA women have experienced over time. The literature review examines the systematic subordination of AA women who have relatively little social power in the United States.

The concept of "othering" is integral to the comprehending of a person, as people construct roles for themselves in relation to an "other" as part of a process of reaction that is not necessarily related to stigmatization or condemnation. "Othering" is imperative to national identities and hegemonic practices where admittance and segregation can form and sustain boundaries and national character (Huber, 2011). "Othering" helps distinguish between home and away, the uncertain or certain. It often involves the demonization and dehumanization of groups, which further justifies attempts to civilize and exploit these "inferior" others.

Othering is described and understood as the processes by which societies and groups exclude "others" whom they want to subordinate or who do not fit into their society (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Faucher, 2010; Lorde, 1984; E. Said, 2004). By "othering," I mean any action by which an individual or group becomes classified as "not one of us." Rather than always remembering that every person is a complex bundle of emotions, ideas, motivations, reflexes, priorities, and many other subtle aspects, it's sometimes easier to dismiss them as being in some way less human, and less worthy of

respect and dignity, than we are. The process of "othering" is always also connected to racialization.

Racialization then provides a context for the third pillar of White supremacy to operate. Comprised of orientalism and war, the third pillar of White supremacy establishes societies need to have an "other" who is misunderstood, hated and feared (E. Said, 2004; E. W. Said, 1994) . The logic of Orientalism marks certain people or nations as inferior and posing a threat to the well-being of the empire. The threat then has to be eradicated through military type efforts. This pillar was coined by Edward Said (1994) who identified "Orientalism" as a generic term to describe the Western approach to the Orient. Said (1994) asserts that Orientalism originated in the West and is an artificial categorization of an intellectually stagnant Orient that encompasses a vast body of often degrading Western literature and justifies imperialist Western policies by promoting a sense of inherent superiority over "Orientals." Therefore, according to Said (1994) Orientalism is intrinsically linked with imperialism and culture.

Such divisions have existed throughout human history. This process originates from the basic human tendency to separate one's own group from others, aka, "othering" as soon as one encounters another, different group. Said (1994) asks an important question in regard to the effect of Orientalism:

> Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely
> divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races,
> and survive the consequences humanly? (pp. 45–46)

The answer to this question is no, because of humanity's physical diversity. Difference, just as it causes the creation of distinctions, breeds contempt, and drawing a distinct dividing line between two groups only aggravates this feeling of being different, or in many cases, superior. This, in turn, exacerbates the issue of feeling hostile towards "others," because once one feels superior to another group; the innate desire to control this inferior group inevitably arises. Thus, the result of Orientalism, from a humanistic point of view, can only be negative.

Said (1994) challenges the standard conventions through which the West portrays the Orient. He seeks to give agency and power back to the Orient by dispelling harmful generalizations that have pit the East against the West and separated the Orient from the Occidental. This includes such simplified versions of the Orient promoted by the United States media, where "the demonization of an unknown enemy, for whom the label terrorist serves the general purpose of keeping people stirred up" (E. W. Said, 1994, p. xxvi) is often exploited by those holding the power. Further, Said (1994) argues that this stagnated view of the Orient continued the misconceptions and negative beliefs making the Orient the subject of othering from the West.

The core idea, that one can never escape one's cultural baggage, is reiterated several times in *Orientalism* (E. W. Said, 1994) and in the closing chapter, the author states,

"My principal operating assumptions were – and continue to be – that fields of learning, as much as the works of even the most eccentric artist, are constrained and acted upon by society, by cultural traditions, by worldly circumstances, and

by stabilizing influences like schools, libraries, and governments; moreover, that both learned and imaginative writings are never free, but are limited in their imagery, assumptions, and intentions." (p. 201)

The white/black dichotomy creates a space for "othering." Baldwin (Roediger, 1998), Feagin (2013) and Powell (2012) contend that "White" and "Black" as referents to people are social constructs devised to give power to some (Whites) at the expense of the other (in this case, Blacks). Most Americans generally believe that their society is fair and just, and the legal system frames antidiscrimination law and doctrine with this presupposition in mind. Most critical race theorists (Bonilla-Silva, 1997a, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) believe the opposite is true, however; "othering" for them is ordinary, normal, and deeply embedded in everyday life and institutions. The demonization of AAs has become widely accepted and normalized (Alexander & West, 2012; Alexander, 2011). From songs, rhymes, commercials and nursery stories such as Snow White, to movie roles and stereotypes, job and school criteria, and old-boy informal networks, favoritism for white, European ways exerts a subtle, ever-present force (McIntosh, 1988). The dominate belief system of "hegemonic Whiteness" acts as a barrier for some and protection for others (Cabrera, 2009; M. Hughey, 2010).

Whiteness. Hughey (2010) believes that whiteness is a "racialized hierarchy in which Whites benefit unjustly in every arena of life" (p. 1296). Hegemony conceptualizes Whiteness as a configuration of meanings and practices that simultaneously produce and maintain racial cohesion and difference in two main ways: (1) through positioning those marked as 'white' as essentially different from and superior to those marked as 'non-white', and (2) through marginalizing practices of 'being white' that fail to exemplify dominant ideals (M. Hughey, 2010, p. 1296). Powell (2012) calls the same "color-blind jurisprudence" granting great advantages to some while simultaneously denying it to others (p. 76). This social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group is also known as "white privilege": the right, advantage, or immunity granted to and enjoyed by white persons beyond the common advantage of all others. It exists on an individual, cultural, and institutional level and emanates from the West**.**

Americas' history of "othering" and westernizing by conquest is based a racialized hierarchy in society which Whites unjustly benefit in every arena of life (M. Hughey, 2010, p. 1296). In contrast, people of color are objectified and oppressed on multiple fronts. For persons of color oppression has been a part of what it means to be an American where the ideology and culture were built on a foundation of Whiteness as property (R. Alexander, 2011; Gusa, 2010; M. Hughey, 2010; Kiesling, 2001). The formulation of "otherness" according to Harris (1993), embedded white privilege into the very definition of property laying the foundation for the idea that Whiteness is a characteristic that only Whites possess. Possession was the basis for rights in property

and it was defined to include only the cultural practices of Whites. (C. I. Harris, 1993). Further, Harris (1993) suggests that the idea of White identity and property were synonymous while Black identity was synonymous with being a slave.

> Slavery as a system of property facilitated the merger of white identity and property. Because the system of slavery was contingent on and conflated with racial identity, it became crucial to be "white," to be identified as white, to have the property of being white. Whiteness was the characteristic, the attribute, the property of free human beings. Slavery linked the privilege of whites to the subordination of Blacks through a legal regime that attempted the conversion of Blacks into objects of property. (p. 1721)

Therefore, Whiteness had value and those who possessed it were able to secure business transactions and able to access to opportunities. This logic lurks behind almost every ideology that has supported genocide, colonization, slavery, or xenocide (Feagin, 2013).

Farmer (2003), Takaki (1993) and, Said (1994) all provide examples of the subjugation of different people groups over time. The nexus to this study is the history of African Americans in general and the slave trade in particular. African slaves brought to the Americas were often physically branded on their faces or shoulders. Even after that practice was banned in the United States, less physical, but tangible, legal branding was perpetuated by legislation and legal opinion as those in power worked to define what it meant to be human and not property. African Americans were branded during slavery and still are overshadowed by the branding of inferiority in relationship to the white privileged today. Again, such branding as chattel (one owned) or rightlessness

contributed in no small part to the brutality suffered at the hands of the White elite and

the continued shading of American where Whiteness acts as currency not to be "othered".

Lorde's (1992) definition of "othering" is perhaps the most concise: "the belief in

the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance"

(p.496). African-American women traditionally have been preceded by White men,

White women, and AA men in importance and standing (Lerner, 1973). The aftermath of

"othering" is that affected individuals or communities are prevented from participating

fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live (Ladson-

Billings & Tate, 2000) and it "erodes safety and health for the people of color it targets"

(Crass, 2013, p. 174) setting them on the fringe of society.

Now that the historical foundation for "othering" has been set the literature review

will address four "otherings" that AA women experience:

1. The Racialized Other

2. The Gendered Other

3. The Educational Other

4. The Intersectional Other

The racialized other. Historically, it has been White people who held the social, political, and economic power to "name" and "categorize" people of color and indigenous peoples according to White people's categories of "race".   As a result, in popular, dominant discourse, the word "race" has typically been used to refer to people of color and indigenous people (i.e., people who were seen by White people as 'not like us'/not White) (Dyer, 1997). White-skinned people doing the naming/categorizing may have categorized themselves as "White" (or Caucasian and therefore, superior); or, they may have thought of themselves as people, as "raceless," as "normal," and this "normalcy" was defined by the assumed otherness or "abnormality" or difference. In either case, the position of "White" has remained dominant and self-sustaining.

The United States of American is a nation greatly divided on the basis of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Racism is the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thus the right to supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 1997b; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Omi & Winant, 2006).   Racism is a form of "othering" that defines and secures one's own positive identity through the stigmatization of an "other." Distinctions of race are made for "othering" people into the "not –us." When they are not us they lack something; when they lack something they are "less than us." Further Dyer (1997) contends;

> As long as race is something applied only to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people....The point of seeing the racing of whites is to dislodge them/us from the position of power, with all the inequities,

oppression, privileges and sufferings in its train, dislodging them/us by

undercutting the authority with which they/we speak and act in and on the world.

(pp. 1–2)

Since the abolition of slavery, the whips and chains of slave masters have been

exchanged for the more abstract, covert shackles of economic deprivation, political

negligence, and outsider status (Talley-Ross, 1995) . The oppression that is felt now by

AAs is no longer caused by the visible form of slavery, but is now a societal and

governmental effort to prevent minority groups from succeeding in areas that were

traditionally held by White males, such as education.

Scholars (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007; L. Parker

& Villalpando, 2007) found that the overt racial acts of lynching and Jim Crow were

replaced by today's application, hiring, placement and mentoring practices of African-

Americans. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) assert that "racism is endemic in U.S. society,

it is deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and psychologically and reinforces traditional

ways of thinking and being, which omit the experiences of people of color" and, as a

result, advocate that "narrative research in education be utilized to prove comparable

insights into the education system" (p. 235).

Barnes (1990) asserts that historically the consciousness of racial minorities has

socially, structurally, and intellectually been marginalized. The prevalence of "white

privilege" still places people of color at risk in terms of their ability to openly operate in a

sense of self that identifies in a positive way with a marginalize group (Ladson-Billings

& Tate, 1995). "Children of color regularly experience problems in group identification and low self-concepts as a result of racism" (Moule, 2012, p. 151). People of color in general and AA women in specific did not have property rights until the late 1960's. This exclusion affected the outcomes of everyday life for persons of color and required new strategies to deal with the injustices.

In the 1970s, Critical Race Theory (CRT) developed from the legal ideology of critical legal studies (CLS) to addressed the racism that appeared in the United States judicial system (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Banton et al., (1999) assert that, race is a socially constructed category to identify differences among people, and gender is often determined by biology; but both categories are based on a "set of assumptions and beliefs on both individual and societal levels that affect the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, resources, and treatment" of people (Bell & Nkomo, 2001, p. 16). As a result, studies on race and gender have been viewed through the perspective of the dominant race and gender, the White male experience (Parker, 2005). Double oppression—racism and sexism—was born for AA women when their subordinate status was assumed and enforced by White and Black men as well as White women (Howard-Hamilton, 2003a, p. 19).

The study of Black racial identity attitudes has increased over the last three decades and racial identity is one of the most frequently examined psychological constructs in African Americans (Cokley & Chapman, 2008; Thomas, Caldwell, Faison, & Jackson, 2009). The difficulty that women face is compounded by their "racial profile". Much like the concept of intellectual property referent to creations of the mind,

such as inventions; literary and artistic works; design; and symbols, names and images

used in commerce, however, our racialized and gendered learning institutions are

reflective of our Nations' incessant need to maintain superiority over others by

"defend[ing] the advantages that Whites have because of the subordinated positions of

racial minorities" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 55).

Ladson- Billings (2009) postulates that white privilege is still in effect and can

been seen in the way that the media latches onto and perpetuates negative stereotypes of

women and in so doing minimizes their credibility as leaders and teachers (DeCuir &

Dixson, 2004; McCray et al., 2007. Recently, she (Ladson -Billings, 2009) used critical

race theory to examine the Donald Imus (radio shock jock) incident where AA women

athletes where characterized on air in demeaning and devaluing terms in furtherance of

her argument that AA women are seen as less than human in society.   Ladson-Billings

(2009) compared the Imus incident with another incident the same year where White

lacrosse players raped an AA stripper whose morals were called into question and not

those of the lacrosse players who hired and raped her.

Racial othering creates and fosters hostile environments for AAs. In contrast,

Coogan-Gehr (2011) contends:

Safe spaces afford respite from White privilege; safe spaces are often conceived

in separatist terms, as a space apart from White men and women, where Black

women (and men) may cultivate their own safety, security, and well-being. Safe

space encompasses a strategy of resistance in which Black women physically

locate themselves in a space—such as the home of a friend, a church, or a

community center—strictly with other Black women. Ideally safe spaces allow

Black women the freedom to think, feel, act, and speak in ways not disciplined.

(p. 100)

The demonization of the "other" as it relates to non-White groups is countered by safe

spaces and discourses that offer counter- stories, critique liberalism and emphasize racial

realism. Institutions and communities where Whiteness is decentered shifts the

paradigm to include all people who then have the power to freely code and give meaning

to their thoughts, feelings, actions, and words without the influence of Eurocentrisim.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) applied Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a strategy to

research in order to identify how race influences behaviors, systems, and relationships

within education structures. One of the central tenets of CRT is the sharing of

experiential knowledge. Essential in understanding how race influences education is

ways of knowing that are birthed out of living in and through systems (Evans-Winters &

Esposito, 2010; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Johnson-Bailey, 2004).

 As an ethnographer, an AA woman, teacher, mother and grandmother of AA

women/girls, Ladson-Billings (2009) contends that in order to change the perception of

AA teachers we must view them through their own eyes using the cultural values that

have shaped them. Any time that people are named and defined by those on the outside

of their culture there will continue to be inequities based upon whatever is seen as an

outlier. Understanding the role of the storyteller to the story codifies the perceptions and

images. A few AA women have emerged as agents of power by gathering and sharing

their stories through diverse mediums: Fiction books (Toni Morrison), movies (Alice Walker), and print media (Maya Angelo).

Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 2011 & 1991) points out that AA woman's lived experiences are influenced by both their identities as women and as persons of color. The traditional sociological theory employed to comprehend the status of women in America has been the analogy of race and sex. This analogy implies that AA women are constrained both by their racial origin and sex; what might be referred to as "double jeopardy", "double glass ceiling", and "double minority" from the African-American woman's perspective (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010).

The gendered other. Women have traditionally been marginalized as a "muted group". Noted for his contributions in anthropology, Edwin Ardener's (2005) gender studies found ethnographers made generalizations skewed toward the male population and accumulated findings accepting only one side making the voices of women unheard, ignored and otherwise muted. By definition women- the muted group are powerless compared to men (Ardener, 2005). The male/ female power dynamic was further studied by Chris Kramarae (Kramarae, 2005; Treichler & Kramarae, 1983) , a professor in women studies.

Women. Kramarae (2005) upheld that, communication was started by White men and while speaking, women are considered less powerful than men and subsequently take advantage of women. Studies have shown that men are more likely than women to exhibit a number of personal characteristics that are deemed as naturally beneficial to positions of authority. Therefore, men have a natural cultural advantage to gaining

positions of authority, regardless of relative competency (Pearce, 2000). According to Takaki (1993) some believe that women are not, and will never be, as intelligent and charismatic as men. This narrow perspective in society ignored almost half of the population--women and continues to alienate AA women whose experiences are often misrepresented or solely viewed through a Eurocentric masculine lens that is insufficient to understand their complexity.

Collins (2000; 1990) brings up some important distinctions between what it means to be White and female versus Black and female and notes that gender construction is different for different races. Historically, AA women have never been able to split the spheres of their public and private lives because during the historical vestiges of slavery their personal privacy was non- existent. This poses a problem for AA women and their gender ideology because "the public/private binary separating the family households from paid labor market is fundamental in explaining U.S. gender ideology" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 47).

When women come to social spaces they are facing the most abusive language that works to continually objectify them. Stereotypes of women all over mass media is society's way of reinforcing inferior roles. Women are portrayed as sex symbols in the advertisements for products and relegated to submissive and domesticated positions instead of positions of education and influence. This gendered perspective diminishes women to marginal roles of sexual or emotional symbols. "Objectification is central to this process of oppositional difference. In the either or dichotomous thinking, one

element is objectified as the Other, and is viewed as an object to be manipulated and controlled"(Hill Collins, 2000; Hill Collins & Solomos, 2010). Feminist theory focuses on the oppression of women. Through feminist theory, women can understand some of the struggles of oppression. Feminist theory assumes that all women exist in homogeneity and have similar struggles.

In the United States, "Black feminism emerged in response to the racial oppression" AA women "experienced within the Women's Movement ... [and] ... the sexual oppression they experienced within the Civil Rights Movements" (Peters, 2003, p. 13). The oppression that AA women experienced "often render[ed] them invisible in the eyes of their oppressors" (Peters, 2003, p. 13). Gulbrandsen and Walsh (2012) identified the need to examine how women understand and mediate power between and within the individual and collective realms of women's social movements, situated in individual women's experiences. For this study and in relation to AA women graduate students experiences of power happen within the matrix of domination. Because AA women have a race component in the matrixes employed to subjugate them, their experience with power differs greatly from White women and therefore required a feminist movement that addressed not only their gender but their race as well.

Black Women. African-American (AA) women are not all women and cannot be grouped with other women whose historical legacy does not include oppression based upon race: slavery. "Often White feminists want to minimize racial difference by taking comfort in the fact that we are all women… and suffer similar sexual-gender oppression" (Anzaldua, 1990, p. xxi). AA women have been assigned the inferior half of several

dualities, and this placement is central to their continued domination (Collins, 1986).

Being an AA woman means being described as "strong" and "nurturing", but also,

"belligerent", "seductive", and "aggressive"; all of which are characteristics that don't

appear to be very appealing but seen as a threat to those who operate with a White male

privilege mentality regardless of their race or gender (Hill Collins, 2000; Moody, 2012).

Myths of the Black matriarch limits options and power in society by creating a one-

dimensional image of the AA woman as a mother, loyal subordinate and pillar of strength

for others. Collins (1986) posits that there are several trajectories of binary domination

which have historically converged upon the AA woman. Their voices are such an

example that cannot be silenced by the privileging of any single binary as the primary

oppressor.

Stereotypes of AA women are compounded by stereotypes of women in general.

The stereotypes that women should be submissive, domesticated instead of educated, and

passive have always been reinforced by society (Hill Collins, 2000; Moody, 2012). Now

the domain of education is pushing the reinforcements (Ladson - Billings, 2009). When a

strong, determined, intelligent female makes her way into the classroom, she is labeled as

"angry." "Both black and white women suffer in response to sexist attitudes that

subordinate them. Black women, however, experience the additional burden of racial

discrimination which moves them further away from access to power and protection from

those in power"(Talley-Ross, 1995).

It is generally assumed in our society "that real men work and real women take

care of families" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 47). This causes AA women to be thought of as

less feminine because they have to work outside their homes and are often the primary breadwinners for their families making their construction of the female gender different. "Framed through this prism of an imagined traditional family ideal, U.S. Black women's experience and those of other women of color are typically deemed deficient" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 47). Collins (2000) asserts that AA women's sense of the female gender is forced to be constructed differently than that of White women because of their shared intersecting oppressions of race and gender.

When AA women enter into the "Ivory Towers" their racialized and gendered status makes them a target for institutionalized discrimination. Feminists such as Alice Walker stressed the importance of understanding that AA women experience more intense types of oppression in comparison to White women. Walker (1983) notes that although African- American women faced the same struggles as Caucasian women, AA women experience issues of diversity in addition to inequality. These areas are further compounded when the same women add the additional layer of being scholars in higher education where the dominate group are generally White men. Other AA feminists such as Angela Davis believe the liberation of AA women involves freedom for all people of all races because it would end racism, sexism, and class oppression (Hill Collins, 2000).

Hill-Collins (2000) argues that, AA woman speak from a unique place in history and that the oppression experienced by most AA women is shaped by their subordinate status in an array of either/or dualities. In her introduction to the *Black-Eyed Susans,* Mary Helen Washington (1975) explains:

People other than the Black women herself try to define who she is, what she is

supposed to look like, act like, and sound like. And most of these creations bear

very little resemblance to real, live [B]lack women. (p. ix)

The marginalization of AA women upholds a gender perspective where the Eurocentric

male is the dominant class and women's voices are not valued giving way to the division

or assertion of power among genders and races. The identity of AA woman continues to

be obscured by images composed during enslaved times: Mammies, Jezebels and

Sapphires. These images conflate womanhood for African American women rendering

them oppressed on multiple fronts (Ladson - Billings, 2009).

Seeing through a psychological lens Treichler and Kramarae (1983), suggests

that, though race, gender, sexuality and beauty are social constructs that are salient in

American culture, women's needs are emotionally driven unlike men and thus the

perspective of women differs from men in all aspects. Thusly, race and gender are

contributing factors in the marginality experienced by AA women in the higher

education.

Aiming to offer insight into the distinct raced, classed and gendered experiences

of AA women beyond a traditional Eurocentric, male-dominated, middle class, female

lens, Hill-Collins (Collins, 1998; Hill Collins, 2000) crafted and expanded the study of

intersectionality with her concept of Black feminist thought. BFT focuses on the

oppression of AA women and argues sexism, class oppression, and racism are

inextricably bound together and strives to communicate the multiple oppressions of Black

women (Collins, 1989; Hill Collins, 2000).

"Gender and existence within a patriarchal system are the commonalities between Black Feminist Theory and Feminist Theory; however, it is race that divides them" (T. M. Harris, 2007, p. 56). A sense of belonging can never exist because there is no personal or cultural fit between the experiences of AA and White women (Howard-Hamilton, 2003a). Since "race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States" it must be central to any conversation or investigation where people of color are the prime subjects (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 2000, p. 48).

The educational other. The historical background of educating African Americans (AAs) and women in the United States provides an underpinning for this study. Early on the experiences of AAs in educational settings were marginal at best. "Ones place in the community determined one's specific instruction; most people received their education in apprenticeships, not at institutions", however, there were widespread laws prohibiting teaching AAs to read and write (Solomon, 1985, p. 2). Until the Civil War, AAs did not have a place in society other than that of a slave, one owned by another. As property, slaves were not educated. It was thought that keeping AAs ignorant would ensure their submission and subordination while enslaved.

Revolts by the enslaved community, like that led by Nat Turner in Virginia, frightened plantation owners, who reacted by limiting information and schooling. Persons found educating slaves were subject to fines, physical punishment and even death. Despite the risks, the Quaker community, other abolitionists, and educated slaves remained committed to educating more AAs by secretly offering them tutoring and instruction. The Oblate Sisters Providence was one of three orders of AA nuns in the

northern states to teach AA children (Eisenmann, 1998). Its school opened in the late 1820s in Baltimore and continues today as St. Francis Academy, one of many religious orders that vigorously fought the racial bigotry of those who opposed education for AAs.

Higher education in the United States is rooted in the establishment of the predominantly White college (White and male) but over time has changed and proliferated (United States House of Representatives, 1965). Even though educating AAs was rare and dangerous in 19th century America, some higher education institutions began to provide access: Dartmouth College in 1824 and Oberlin College in 1833. In 1837, Richard Humphreys, a Quaker from Philadelphia, founded the Institute for Colored Youth, which is known today as Cheyney University, the oldest Historically Black University (HBU) in the nation (Eisenmann, 1998). Oberlin College in Ohio began admitting AAs and women in 1833, the first U.S. College to do so. The first "official" AA female graduate was Mary Jane Patterson, who received a BA degree in 1862. The daughter of fugitive slaves, she became the first AA female principal at the Prep School for Negroes in Washington DC. Also in the District of Columbia, Mytilla Minor and Harriet Beecher Stowe founded the Minor Teachers College for AA women in the late 1850s, teaching traditional subjects. Minor taught students skills to provide a service to their race, not for personal "adornment," as was the philosophy of some White colleges at the time.

The 20th century United States brought about crucial turning points for educational access and success of AAs. Feminist scholarship also grew in these decades of enormous social change catapulted by the movement for equal opportunity beginning

with the landmark decision of Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954) and peeking through the Civil Rights Movement (1955–68). In the 1954 Supreme Court ruling (Brown v. Board of Education), it was declared that racial segregation in education was unconstitutional.

Several years later, in 1962, James Meredith became the first AA student to enroll at the University of Mississippi. Violence and riots ensued, causing President Kennedy to send 5,000 federal troops to the campus to intervene. Women experienced similar obstacles, opposition and aggression as AA men in gaining access to the academy.

Women and Education. For women their education, even informal apprenticeships were only to the extent that they would be able to fulfill their obligations in the family hierarchy. "Woman's roles were set from birth, their identities derived from family membership- as daughters, wives, and mothers-and functions performed within the family unit determined women's employment" (Solomon, 1985, p. 2). Women were socialized based upon their relationship to men therefore their education centered on the duties that they would perform relative to the men in their families (S. J. Williams, 2017). This meant that women were endeared as daughters of men, honored as wives of men and respected as mothers of men but apart from the men in their lives they did not have an identity that was acknowledged. "For women more than men education evoked opposition because it gave women identity outside of the family" (Solomon, 1985, p. xviii).

In the late 19th century White woman were no longer content on living in the shadows of men and began the woman's suffrage movement to gain "full citizenship"

including equality to men, the right to vote and the freedom to choose to educate themselves beyond a domestic scope (Eisenmann, 1998). Beginning in Seneca Falls, the movement delegates believed women to be citizens not limited in any way to their roles as wives or mothers. In the language of the founding fathers, they wrote, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men and women are created equal". They rejected European domesticity and its separation of women and men into private and public spheres, respectively.

Education was viewed as the bedrock of civil participation and therefore a principal demand of the women's movement. In 1914 when World War I began, many suffrage organizations shifted their focus to supporting the war effort, although some activists continued to fight for suffrage. The shortage of manpower in warring countries caused women to take on many roles traditionally held by men and changed the dominant idea of what women were capable of doing, giving further momentum to the suffrage movement (Eisenmann, 1998).

While women's suffrage in the US has its roots in the anti-slavery movement prior to the 1860s, they increasingly found that having any support for Black people was a drag in their campaign (Adams, 2015). White suffragettes found it would be better if they distanced themselves from Black women this was particularly true during election years. Adams (2015) quoting Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the founder of the suffrage movement, said that when it was a question of race, the suffragettes would let the lesser question of sex go. But when White women united together combating sexism then race

occupied a minor position. In contrast race and gender are intertwined for AA women, and both are determinants in economic, social, political, and educational status.

Sojourner Truth, an AA woman who had already experienced her own personal struggle toward freedom from slavery, remained unwavering in her support of women's rights.   In 1876, when woman's suffrage was still being debated, Truth addressed the need for AA women to have the same rights as AA men (Adams, 2015). Without equality, Truth contended that men whether White or Black would continue to lord over the women just as they had during slavery. For Black women, access to education was synonymous with women's rights.

African American women and education. The history of AA women in higher education in the U.S. is a lesson in courage, persistence and overcoming adversity (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Johnson-Bailey, 2004; Palmer, Hilton, & Fountaine, 2012; Shavers, 2010; Winkle-Wagner, 2015). For more than 170 years, AA women in the United States have claimed their right to an education and have courageously challenged opposing forces.   AA women were brought to this country for two reasons: to work and to produce more workers therefore opportunities for AA women to receive even minimal formal education were extremely limited (Solomon, 1985).

Many speakers and writers of the time considered "moral education" the appropriate focus for "inferior" AAs and women. It emphasized saving their souls and making them behave better and "staying in their place" (Adams, 2015; Eisenmann, 1998; Solomon, 1985; S. J. Williams, 2017).   "Race uplift" was a widely professed idea of the time and women were considered key to the moral improvement of humanity

(Eisenmann, 1998). Despite the fact that many people believed AA women's education should focus on their "special role" in increasing morality and elevating the race their pursuit of higher education increased over the years (Chavous, 2002; Lerner, 1973; Solomon, 1985; Zamani, 2003).

The Civil Rights movement led to increased student demands for educational equality between Whites and Blacks. In the 1960s, many northern colleges started recruiting AA students but they often failed to foresee the kinds of challenges that AA students and women might face, including isolation and discrimination by faculty and other students. Still, AA students persevered and began demanding AA studies programs, AA cultural facilities, and more AA faculty and staff (Baez, 2000; Dowdy, 2008).

The decade following the Civil War saw the establishment of 24 coed African American colleges with the support of churches, the Freedman's Bureau and African American individuals (Eisenmann, 1998). These included Howard, Fisk, Atlantic and Shaw universities. Some scholars say the "real education" of African American women began with these coed colleges, where they studied the same curriculum as men (Solomon, 1985). In addition, *normal schools* arose to educate ex-slaves to be teachers (Eisenmann, 1998, p. 195). Most AA women who attended these schools were less educated, older and poorer than White college students but despite these circumstances they earned a standard bachelor degree (Solomon, 1985).

The first three AA women to earn PhDs, all in the early 1920s, were Sadie Alexander, from the University of Pennsylvania; Georgia Simpson, from the University

of Chicago, and Eva Dykes, from Radcliffe College. Jane Bollin Offutt was another

source of inspiration early in the new century (Eisenmann, 1998). Despite racism, she

graduated from Wellesley College and Yale Law School, becoming the nation's first AA

woman judge.   This was still a time of segregation in most colleges and universities,

with clear inequalities in the funding of AA and White schools. Schools may have been

separate, but they were definitely not equal.

     Predominately White colleges and institutions. The percentage (<11%) of AA

women in higher education demonstrates that the literature holds a minority position not

unlike that of AA women in society (Coogan-Gehr, 2011). Many of these women attend

Predominately White Institutions (PWI) where Caucasian students account for 50% or

greater of the student enrollment.   However, the majority of these institutions may also

be understood as historically White institutions in recognition of the binarism and

exclusion supported by the United States prior to 1964. AA women students often suffer

from emotional pain, social isolation, or aroused fears of incompetence at PWI (Allen,

1986). In the classroom, gender and/or racial bias may lead faculty to treat AA women

students differently, such as having lower expectations of and for them (Shavers, 2010).

     AA women at mostly PWI, whether students, faculty, or administrators; often feel

isolated and lack role models and mentors (Payne & Suddler, 2014). When AA women

band together on campus they are often seen as "separatists".   If they chose to relate

more to the White group, they were labeled "Uncle Toms".   This in part was due to the

lack of their representation in educational arenas and the need to have the Civil Rights

movement evolve to include women of African descent who were being subjugated at an additional level because of their gender (Solomon, 1985). Sororities Alpha Kappa Alpha (1908) and Delta Sigma Theta (1913) became the haven for AA women during their matriculation because they offered psychological strength, a place of purpose and comfort, and a source of leadership training for roles in society (Eisenmann, 1998).

Because of the scarcity of research on AA students Yolanda Moses (1990), furthered the body of knowledge with her study on AA women undergraduates, faculty and administrators. Some of Moses's suggestions to support AA women students on campus:

- Develop student services reflecting their presence.

- Invite AA women to speak on campus.

- Establish centers for students to meet for social and educational exchanges.

- Encourage AA women students to participate in leadership activities.

- Create a special place for AA reentry women.

Notwithstanding, the increasing numbers of conferred doctorates report by The National Center for Education Statistics (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2016) in a variety of disciplines to AA women (60,948 in 2015 compared to 13,282 in 1977), many share the feeling that they are never fully accepted, welcomed, accommodated or honored (Swail, 2003). This would include research and discourse for and about the experiences of AA women in higher education written by women who hold a similar history and experience as well as academic supports and enrichments necessary to move forward with educational attainments. It is in a historical

context of segregated education that PWIs are defined and contrasted from other colleges and universities that serve students with different racial, ethnic, and/or cultural backgrounds (e.g., historically Black colleges and universities, HBCUs).

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU). Following the American Civil War (1861–65), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were established to become "lighthouses" for AAs who were prohibited from attending predominantly White institutions (PWI). The early establishment of HBCUs included Lincoln University in 1854 and Wilberforce University in 1856 (Eisenmann, 1998) . These colleges provided a safe haven for its students from the racially charged environments and political unrest. AA women's experiences at HBCUs are often more positive and affirming. A Howard university graduate recounting their experience stated,

> One thing you'll begin to realize once you set foot into that first classroom is that you have no excuse for failure. Being that most of my classmates and professors were Black, I knew I was going to at least get a fair chance. Another benefit of attending an HBCU is the fact that most HBCUs have low student to faculty ratios, which means you can try sitting in the front of the class for a change. ("Title III administrators", n.d.)

These colleges addressed the need of AAs to have instruction in a protective environment where professors and workers looked like the students themselves. HBCUs offered students the education opportunities that they longed for but still lacked resources available to Caucasian students at other schools. HBCUs offer all students, regardless of

race, an opportunity to develop their skills and talents. These institutions train young people who go on to serve domestically and internationally in the professions as entrepreneurs and in the public and private sectors (United States House of Representatives, 1965).

HBCUs, are organized toward serving the needs of AA students (both male and female) and validating their worth as students (Albritton, 2012). About 30% of all AA students are enrolled in HBCUs, and a higher percentage of students complete their degrees at these schools. They provide an intellectual and supportive climate that fosters success. Dr. Johnnetta Cole (2001), who became the first AA woman president of Spellman College in 1987, suggests that access to higher education is not enough. Mentoring and succession planning requires that schools retain women and minorities at every level after the academic application process ends (Boman, 2001).

Although access is now available, today, AAs students are still challenged by the historical vestiges of discrimination as well as the barriers associated with socio-economic, cultural and perception factors. Opportunity gaps related to college enrollment and completion persist for AA students with only 11 % being enrolled in postsecondary education, with 1% of the 11% represented by women (Simmons et al., 2013; Coogan-Gehr, 2011). Only 10% of the entire population pursues doctoral degrees and of that AA women make up less than 1% of all doctoral candidates (Ryu, 2009). The nearly 40 million AAs residing in the United States—representing approximately 13 percent of the total population—are three times more likely (24 %) to live in poverty than Whites (8%). What is highlighted by these statistics is the challenge facing institutions of higher

education to attract, support and retain AA students. There are other intersectional factors that influence success like gender, class, family make up, and socio-economic status (Crenshaw, 1991, 2010).

Despite the institutional values espoused in the mission and vision statements of the institutions Dixson and Rousseau (2005) contend that, "race remains a significant factor in society in general and in education in particular" (p. 31). The aim of the educational system is to foster a rich environment in which creativity and innovation can flourish (p. 31). Contrary to this aim, AA students are omitted, devalued and misunderstood in educational settings (Delgado, 1989; Murakami-Ramalho et al., 2008). Using portraiture as their qualitative tool, researchers Murakami, Piert and Militello's (2008) detailed some of the tensions AA students experience in pursuit of their research identities while journeying through doctoral programs. They found that AA students are forced to take on one of three identities: the wanderer, the chameleon, or the warrior. Murakami, Piert and Militello (2008) contend that schools are structured to conform to a hegemonic White construct that denies the existence of AAs and in so doing does not allow for an alternative epistemology. This means that students of have to navigate the rigors of doctoral programs but also develop their own research identity that is based on cultural values that are different from that of the institution.

Murakami, Piert and Militello (2008) reiterate that doctoral students develop research identities through understanding of themselves in light of their personal experience in navigating academic environments. That personal experience or "voice" is critical to understanding the epistemology of AA students as well as central to moving

away from the margins (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). The research identity of students is an amalgamation of their entire lives and eliminating or discounting any part affects the construct.

In 2014-2015 The National Center for Education Statistics (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2016) recorded that of the 100,543 graduate degrees conferred to AAs, AA women received 69,759 which is 7% of the total conferred, compared to White men (542,018) and White women (321,180). The studies by Evans (2007); Shavers & Moore, (2014) and Winkle-Wagner, (2015) all demonstrate that though AA women access graduate school at greater rates than AA men there is still a problem for them to persist until graduation that has not been analyzed and addressed.

Scholars like Jean-Marie and Lloyd-Jones (2011); Hill-Collins, (2000); and hooks (2001b) assert that part of the issue for AA women is the lack of inclusion in academic spaces. Access does not mean inclusion or support. According to Swail (2003) universities in general do not support AA students beyond the letter of acceptance. Support comes in the form of culturally sensitive programs, mentors, learning communities and research opportunities sponsored and funded by the school. Lack of financial resources provisioned for AA women in academic spaces insinuates that there is no expectation for this group to succeed (Brown & Jayakumar, 2013; Jayakumar, Vue, & Allen, 2013; Kramarae, 2005). Further, Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003) highlight that when AA women do well that they are considered anomalies, thus continuing the dominate narrative of incompetence and reluctance to include this group in educational

research. Myopic thinking is resultant in a scarcity in research on this group, their

learning processes, success and subsequently their needs are missed in practice as well.

AA women are rarely discussed in scholarly literature.   When they are discussed

the focus is on retention, (Bartman, 2015; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Johnson-Bailey, 2004)

the needs of undergraduate students, (Allen, 2010; Beasley, 2016; Morales, 2012) hiring,

mentoring (Espino, Muñoz, & Kiyama, 2010; Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010; L.

D. Patton & Harper, 2003) and, promotion practices that continue to perpetuate and

impenetrable glass ceiling for school principals (Angel, Killacky, & Johnson, 2013;

Holmes, Land, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007; Talley-Ross, 1995) and faculty seeking tenure

(Allen, 2010; Carter, 2013; McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007; Peters, 2003).

In fact, at the time of this study (2017) the dean of students of the researcher's

university surveyed its AA students requesting that they share their experience with

university administrators to assist in planning (see Appendix A). The survey did not

include a graduate student option. When the researcher questioned the surveyor, she was

advised that the survey was only intended to capture data from undergraduate students:

> *Dear Graduate Students,*
>
> *The African American Scholars Project is a collaboration of faculty, staff, and*
>
> *students on campus who have come together to focus on the African American*
>
> *undergraduate student experience. We deeply apologize this survey reached you*
>
> *in error. We believe your experience is salient and encourage you to voice your*
>
> *opinions and thoughts to your graduate program directly at this time.*

Wishing you much success in your academic endeavors,

The African American Scholars Project

The above response further demonstrates the need for planning and resource allocation to address the needs of AA women graduate students. By looking at graduate students this study goes beyond Beasley's (2016) study that addressed the diversity and similarities of AA women students in their first year at PWI. AA women college students at all levels of matriculation encounter a dominant culture on PWI campuses that are in constant conflict with Afrocentric values: community building, validation through sharing, empathy, lived experience making meaning and accountability to those who have gone before and those who follow behind (Hill Collins, 2000).

The absence of AA women's perspective in educational literature reveals that the perception of "Black" inferiority in education by the underrepresentation or exclusion of its members is part of the agenda to maintain the "achievement gap" between White and AA students (Horsford & Grosland, 2013). By examining the experiences of AA women graduate students there is an opportunity to highlight success stories as well as investigate tools/ resources used/needed to advance. The perception of "Black" and "woman" inferiority can be dismantled over time with each addition of educational literature that gives an alternative view of the AA experience through an AA intersectional lens. This study increases the volume and depth of literature on the overall experiences, accomplishments, challenges of AA women in the academy from an afrocentric and graduate student's perspective that has been lacking.

The intersectional other. The intertwining of AA male and female lives in the context of patriarchy and economic oppression is an important way of viewing the complexities of the AA woman's existence in these United States, but it is not the only way. AA women have to deal with the stereotypes placed on them for being born a woman, while at the same time dealing with the stereotypes of being an AA woman. The situational context of the intersection of race and gender in higher education additionally creates a third burden for AA women.

Society has grossly neglected the importance of AA women's lives and contributions through racial, sexual, and class oppression, based on the limited amount of research that exists that explores their experiences which are often complex and multidimensional. There is not a great deal of research on the experiences of AA women in higher education through an unfettered lens. However, Howard-Vital, (1989) believes that "the current and developing body of research on AA women in higher education provides groundwork for realizing our history, dispelling myths, relating our experiences, formulating theoretical frameworks, and establishing our identity in higher education"(p. 180).

First highlighted by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, intersectionality is the study of intersections between different disenfranchised groups; specifically, the study of the interactions of multiple systems of oppression or discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991). Holding that the classical conceptualizations of oppression within society, such as racism, sexism and classism, do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of

oppression interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; McCall, 2005).

In, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*, (Crenshaw, 1991) the author's objective is to advance the telling of the lived experience of women of color by exploring the race and gender dimensions of violence against them. Crenshaw (1991) contends that research has failed to consider "intersectional identities" and in so doing male violence against women remains a hidden product of racism and sexism (p. 1243). Further the author notes that in our current discourses, women of color have been conditioned to respond to either their gender or their ethnicity and AA women face additional boundaries not accounted for in traditional forms of gender and race discrimination and cannot be understood apart from one-another.

Crenshaw (1991) maintains that structural intersectionality exists and that multilayered and routinized forms of domination converge in these women's lives, hindering their ability to create alternatives to abusive relationships which perpetuates the cycle. In addition, she (Crenshaw, 1991) argues that resources and interventions to date are not designed to meet the needs of the marginalized, rather, they are constructed based upon the needs of the privileged which means that another underlying component of class continues to go unaddressed.

Not only did Crenshaw (1991) postulate that race adds another dimension to violence in communities of color but she also witnessed the suppression of statistical data in efforts to ally the stereotype threat of justice agencies portraying Brown and Black

men as violent. The inability to access information about these incidents in communities of color further communicates the need for the experiences of women of color to be reported so that interventions can be customized to meet the needs formed from their positions as intersectional women.

Continuing in intersectionality research Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013) emphasize that intersectionality is not only an academic pursuit but it is a praxis that transcends disciplines. They define intersectionality as the unlimited *et cetera* of possibilities of identity and contend that intersectionality is "insistent on examining the dynamics of difference and sameness [that] play[s] a major role in facilitating consideration of gender, race, and other axes of power in a wide range of political discussions and academic disciplines, including new developments in fields such as geography and organizational studies" (Cho et al., 2013, p. 787).

Power struggle. In their 2013 study Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013) argue that intersectionality is linked to an analysis of power. Shields' (2008) suggests that gender has to be understood in context with power relations entrenched in society. Warner and Shields (2013) explain intersectionality as a set of two registers: personal experience and socio- structural dimensions. Key to our understanding is how intersectionality is experienced by the marginalized. According to Warner and Shields *(2013)* individuals may experience discrimination in their own social spheres as well as in the socio-structural levels that influence resources, legal status both based upon real-world systems of inequity that have developed over time.

Levine-Rasky (2011) believes that conversations and research about intersectionality neglected to address a relational approach to the analysis of power. The author asserts that intersectionality implies that dominance is embedded: "(1) as part of a complex, post modem identity formation in which- even at the individual level- oppression co-exists alongside domination; (2) in the emphasis on relationality in which oppression and domination are co-conditional" (p. 239). Rather than focusing on intersections as they appear in marginalized groups, Levine-Rasky (2011), centered her research on the intersection of Whiteness and the middle-class.

Aiming to understand power Levine-Rasky (2011), sought to analyze the enduring inequities that pose a problem of relationality between groups. The author asserts that using a Whiteness lens to view intersectionality is just as essential as using a critical race lens to view it. However, in so doing the dominate position is highlighted and works to exclude a group that has historically been left out of conversations about intersectionality. This inclusion has raised controversy because it recentralizes the conversation back to the group who is already dominating and in power.

When intersectionality is viewed through the lens of Whiteness, Levine-Rasky (2011), found that in social position and of social positioning, whiteness and middle classness reinforce one-anther, whereas "when ethnicity intersects with middle classness, the outcome has contradictions (p. 248). Levine-Rasky (2011), further revealed that anytime that ethnicity entered the picture it was perceived as a deviation from the norm (White-middle-class) and continued the cycle of exclusion of its members from the conversation.

Although, discussions on intersectionality to date have been noted for their integration of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, and other axes of identity Levine-Rasky (2011) contends that today's , "approaches are not aimed at developing a model illustrative of multiple levels of oppression but at showing the episteme of a lived reality that embraces its own complexities" (p. 240). Historically, the Whiteness and middle-class intersection are the creators of the dynamic from which intersectionality was born out of a need to address an oppressed population that has otherwise been ignored. Empazising the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor Hill Collins (2000) said:

> Oppression is filled with such contradictions because these approaches fail to recognize that a matrix of domination contains few pure victims or oppressors. Each individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone's lives". (p. 287)

Consistent with intersectionality by Crenshaw (Cho et al., 2013) Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013) suggest that living is full of "hyphen spaces". The authors propose that four hyphen spaces are maintained in ethnography: insider-outsiderness, sameness-difference, engagement-distance, and political activism-active neutrality and that multiple identifiers are embedded in hyphen spaces. For example, particularly, during election years women of color are asked if they are voting their race or voting their gender—as if they could be divided—it is important to note that race and gender are intertwined for AA women, and that both are determinants in economic, social, political, and educational

status and therefore understanding intersectionality is pivotal to understanding their experience. Those who ask AA women to choose between race and gender ignore the fact that race and gender only partly explain AA women's reality.

Like unto the concept of intersectionality coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013) contend that in ethnographic research the researcher cannot be separated from the research itself. They are intertwined and therefore have an effect on both the researcher and the researched. Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013) found that identity work of the researcher is an integral part of working within the hyphens. Identity work in this context is seen as a way to make sense of the world, an epistemology based on the spaces of connection or disconnect represented by the hyphens themselves.

The authors suggest that hyphen spaces are "a way of emphasizing not only the boundaries but the possibilities" (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013, p. 365). Describing two types of hyphens: linking; to connect words, worlds or meaning and dividing; to create distance, contest meanings or imply relationship breakdowns; the authors critique disengaged scholarship that does not recognize dualities. In so doing they give us yet another way to see the experiences of AA women students. Hyphen spaces: insider-outsider, sameness-difference, engagement-distance, and political activism-active neutrality in conjunction with race, class and gender are essential to understanding the experience of AA women who live hyphenated.

By using the hyphen spaces as defined by Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013) we are able to reframe the experience of AA women from the margin to the center.

Emphasizing the possibilities afforded by these spaces is consistent with Patricia Hill-Collins' (2000) Black feminist thought which works as a form of social activism to liberate AA women who experience interlocking systems of oppression by providing an alternative way to view their experience in their own words further empowering them to ascribe meaning and value.

AA women live through an amalgamated and compressed version of daily persecution similar to traffic jams (Fig.1) stemming from the historical legacy of slavery and current societal fear of their male counterparts because of these overlapping systems of oppression (Hill Collins, 2000). AA women experience cultural values and habits of the dominate group that continue their oppression in higher educational settings.

Stewart's (2002) study described the identities of AA students at PWI as "multiple" and found that students weave portions of themselves through sociocultural situations keeping the large majority of their identity on the periphery. The concept of multidimensional identity constructs that spans social and cultural identities was introduced by Stewart (2002) and is reminiscent of the intersectionality ideology in Crenshaw's work.

The "multiple identity positions" as Steward (2002) calls them are congruent with the understanding of the multiple repressed personas that AA women hold as manifestations of oppression (p. 3). McCall (2005) contends that the lived experiences of AA women cannot be viewed solely through either gender or raced based lenses alone for they tend to value one perspective over the other. Rather, when AA women are viewed as intersectional beings that hold multiple locations of subordination to be heard and

analyzed there is value. "Dimensions across categories" are the intersectional identities that McCall (2005) states do not comply with traditional definitions of race, gender and class. Additionally, McCall (2005) and Stewart (2002) agree that intersectional experiences are only increased when individuals are placed in either greater or more frequent situations of dissonance like being a woman of AA descent in attendance at a culturally White-male university.

Interlocking systems of oppression. AA women's lived experiences in the U.S. are complex, characterized by the intersection of race, gender, and social class. Like roadways, these intersections of AA women include the places where two-lane roads (race and gender), three-lane roads (gender, social status and race), and four-lane roads (age, gender, race and sexuality) that were either divided or undivided met. Many people engage in conversations that discuss various oppressions such as racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism, but rarely do they discuss how these oppressions interact with each other. Essentially intersectionality offers us a way to identify connections among various kinds of oppression; otherwise known as "interlocking systems of oppression" (Hill Collins, 2000).

Figure 1: Four-way intersection typifying the overlapping oppression experienced by AA women.

Due to the nature of intersectionality where the axis of oppression operates on multiple and often simultaneous levels which often contribute to systematic injustice and social inequality a lens is required in order to view persons who live the intersection. Hill-Collins (2000) asserts that AA women experience racism in ways not always the same as experienced by men of color and sexism in ways not always paralleled to experiences of White women. Most individuals prefer to see their own victimization as the most major oppressions and value others as less important. What makes this "interlocking" approach different from the way other feminist conceptualize oppression is that it does not start with gender and then add other oppressions such as race, class, sexual orientation, disability, etc., but it connects them as one system, in which they are all dependent on one-another. Thus, instead of focusing on which system is more

oppressed than the other it focuses on how they interact with various individuals in different situations. Replacing additive models of oppression with interlocking ones creates the possibly for new paradigms. The significance of seeing race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression in higher education is that such an approach fosters a paradigmatic shift of thinking inclusively about other oppressions.

In general, studies that discuss the growing numbers of women at the graduate and undergraduate level seldom recognize or report any differences between White and Black students or even conjecture that differences may exist (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Even when AA women are included in studies, their experiences are often misrepresented or viewed only through a feminist lens that negates their racial component. Review of the literature on the experience of AA women in higher education suggests that AA women are at minimum "double minorities" (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Howard-Hamilton, 2003a, 2003b). Hill Collins (2000) maintains that as long as women of color are subordinated based upon intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality and nation there remains a need for tools to unpack, understand and respond to oppressive acts wherever they crop up.

Not only is research on the experiences of AA women in education necessary to annul racism in higher education but so is using a frame and a lens that can explain the complex intersectionality that occurs with this group and their subsequent connectedness.

Review of Theoretical Framework

When research is based on race and gender outside of the White male majority, culturally sensitive methodologies and theoretical frameworks are needed. Black feminist thought (BFT) is a culturally and experientially sensitive theoretical framework that assists in seeing women of African descent in their true light. Use of BFT addresses the gap in the body of knowledge hear the unique challenges and experiences that AA women emerging as scholars have in their own words. BFT is a lens that allows the experiences of AA women (race, gender, social status, age, ability, sexuality, etc.) to be viewed in their fullness where the interdependence of experience and consciousness continue to shape the understanding of AA women in higher education by and for the same. It is through the BFT lens that this study will give an undiminished voice to the lived realities of AA women graduate students at culturally White institutions.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of AA women graduate students at predominately White institutions and how their experiences are shaped by their intersectional positionalities (Strayhorn, 2013). The concept of intersectionality suggests social categorizations such as race, gender and class are interconnected (Settles, 2006; A. J. Thomas, Speight, & Witherspoon, 2008). Consequently, the experiences of AA women and identity formation are shaped by overlapping and interdependent systems of oppression and discrimination that are interconnected. Essed (1991) developed the term gendered racism to describe the fusion intersection of race and gender in AA women's lived experiences. The concept of gendered racism suggests that AA women may simultaneously experience discrimination based on their identities as AAs and women, not these two separately (Settles, 2006; A. J. Thomas et al., 2008). Greater understanding of the lived experiences of AA women graduate students can aid institutions in supporting their unique needs to honor cultural capital and utilize it to inform educational efforts and institutional practices. Additionally, this study aimed to relate race, culture, gender, and education of AA women graduate students in culturally White spaces with identity as expressed in the epistemological self.

Research Design

The basis of this qualitative study is uncovering the lived experiences of participants as a means of creating and sharing meaning. Because experiences are based

on both known and unknown variables, Creswell (2012) believes that qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem where exploration is the purpose. This qualitative research study will capture narratives and experiences in order to: (1) provide nuanced details about AA women graduate students at predominately White institutions; (2) leverage my own experience and postionality as the participant researcher representing the primary research instrument; and (3) create deeper meanings of phenomena revealed through the process of inquiry and analysis (Creswell, 2012).

This researcher used a survey followed by qualitative interviews to collect more comprehensive data in hopes of providing a broader perspective of the experiences of AA women graduate students. This broader perspective includes the intersectional identities of AA women graduate students is influenced by simultaneously occupying several marginalized positions in society (Delgado, 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Mertens, 2007).

This study transitioned from survey to interview to capture the complexities of the matrix of domination and intersectionality in two main ways: (1) adds understanding of how AA women graduate students might conceptualize a single categorical identity (such as race) dimension using multiple identities (race, ethnicity, gender, culture, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, etc.) and (2) reveals nuances of data that sometimes appears static and simplistic (Harper, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The research design for this study was modeled after Awad's (2007) study, which included a survey based on the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) (Vandiver, Cross, Fhagen-Smith, Worrell, Swim & Caldwell, 2000) followed by semi-structured

interviews. According to Awad (2007), the CRIS has an updated nigrescence model that accounts for the stages of Black identity formation (6-categories: pre-encounter assimilation, pre-encounter mis-education, pre-encounter self -hatred, immersion anti-white, internalization Afrocentricity and internalization multiculturalist). Awad (2007) used the CRIS (Vandiver et al., 2000) survey to help guide participants in answering questions where there was varying levels of agreement with a statement. Using the CRIS (Vandiver et al., 2000) Awad (2007) found that there was salience between identity and positive academic outcomes when students were aware of societal discrimination factors. Like Awad's (2007) study, the current study also sought to locate participants feeling, opinions and perceptions along a continuum to better understand how their racialized identities affected their academic experiences (Fowler, 2014).

A survey as a preliminary course of inquiry provides data that explains phenomena in the context of everyday life. Surveys afforded the researcher information about the knowledge, feelings, values and behaviors of participants (Fowler, 2014; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).   Although surveys provide one level of data- trends or patterns, deeper meaning can be determined through the use of narrative storytelling.

Narrative storytelling can be found deep in the cultures of people of African descent in the U.S., and Indigenous cultures around the world.   Narrative storytelling also occupies a significant place in history of feminist movements globally (Delgado, 1989; Lawrence, 1992). In the case of narrative storytelling among people of African descent in the US, the narrator functions "as an organic individual"(Beverly, 2007, p. 549) harnessing the power of social change by centering the lived experience of the

storyteller (Reinharz, 1993). Through narrative storytelling power can be analyzed. In recognizing that humans use stories to understand the world and our place in it, stories are embedded with power— the power to explain and justify the status quo as well as the power to make change imaginable and urgent. A narrative analysis of power encourages us to ask: Which stories define cultural norms? Where did these stories come from? Whose stories were ignored or erased to create these norms? And, most urgently, what new stories can we tell to help create the world we desire (Delgado, 1989; Reinharz, 1993) ?

Research Setting

The research setting for the study was the University of San Francisco (USF). The participants in this study all came from USF therefore the researcher made the decision to name the institution rather than use a pseudonym in hopes that the research findings would inform the policy and practice of this Jesuit institution and in so doing start the change in other institutions like it.

With the emergence of diversity initiatives on university campuses, Brimhall-Vargas, Fasching-Varner, and Clark, (2012) contended that diversity is a term relegated to funding needed to increase racial demographics. According to Clark (2012), "diversity in educational settings is generally understood as the body of services and programs offered to students, faculty, and staff that seek to ensure compliance with non-discrimination and related policy and law" (p. 57). Although USF prides itself in being diverse as indicated in the paragraphs that follow, the enrollment numbers alone do not reveal the types of experiences different students from different backgrounds have. As

the researcher I looked not only at the enrollment numbers in naming USF a PWI but also the formation, history, and current practices and institutional culture that still suggest that the university operates as a homogenous institution despite the diversity (ethnic, racial, ability, and immigration and sexual orientation status) of the student and faculty populations (Templeton, Love, Davis, & Davis Jr, 2016).

Lyke (2013) posits that each institution, including USF, defines and maintains its own ideology around diversity. This is highlighted in USF's mission, diversity program mission, diversity statement, and values and goals. Interpreting diversity as property, Lyke (2013) asserts often institution policy makers establish campus procedures that are congruent with the hegemonic view of whiteness as property that ultimately further marginalizes students of color and limits their inclusion in transforming campus culture. Taylor (2000) suggests an institution "must openly identify oppression and struggle against it more explicitly. How? By keeping race at the center of its agenda'' (p. 540). Otherwise, by promoting its diversity by predominantly focusing on diversity in terms of the percentage of ethnicities enrolled, they inadvertently affirm their identity as a PWI.

The researcher argues USF has culturally positioned itself as a PWI by promoting its diversity on its website and on various platforms such as social media, billboards, etc. The institution states:

USF is ranked 107th on the list of national universities in the 2017 U.S. News and World Report and has been on the Corporation for National and Community Service's President's Honor Roll for six years in a row. Rooted in service, the

university is classified as a community-engaged institution by the Carnegie

Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Furthermore, it is one of five

universities in the nation to be honored as a 2012 Higher Education Civic

Engagement Award recipient (University of San Francisco, n.d.-a).

This institution was chosen because it is located in a culturally and ethnically diverse

city, the student population was accessible to the researcher, and the campus is relatively

diverse and has a social justice focus. San Francisco's visitor guide describes the city as,

"home to a little bit of everything ("San Francisco Travel | Visitor Information," n.d.)."

The university's website describes the campus as a diverse school with the student racial

make-up being 5% African American, 19.6% Asian, 29.3% Caucasian, 16.3%

International, 19.2% Latino/Hispanic and 5.8% Multi-race (University of San Francisco,

n.d.-b).

The university is nestled on the hilltops in a historical area of San Francisco. As

part of the Jesuit order, USF subscribes to the six Ignatian values: (1) Magis (the

challenge to strive for excellence), (2) women and men for and with others (pursuing

justice, and having concern for the poor and marginalized), (3) cura personalis (respect

for the individual person), (4) unity of heart, mind & soul (whole person development),

(5)Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam (for the Greater Glory of God), and (6)forming & educating

agents of change coupled with the University's motto *Cura personalis* "care of the

whole person" has recruiting appeal to students from all walks of life (University of San

Francisco, n.d.-c). When the question "why attend the University of San Francisco" was

placed in the Google internet search engine the top 3 reasons that students chose to attend

USF appeared (University of San Francisco, n.d.-d):

1. Amazing location that is the hub of banking, technology and marketing.

2. Caring faculty with small class sizes.

3. Prestige of the University.

The university's total student population is 10,797 (6,782 undergraduate and

4,015 graduate students). Most of the student body is domestic students with 17 percent

classified as international students. AA students make up about seven percent of the

graduate student population. The university's student body has 6,806 (63 percent)

women and 3,991 (37 percent) men (see Figure 2). Graduate students make up 37

percent of the University's student body with AA students representing 7 percent of the

graduate student population compared to 36 percent for their White counterparts.
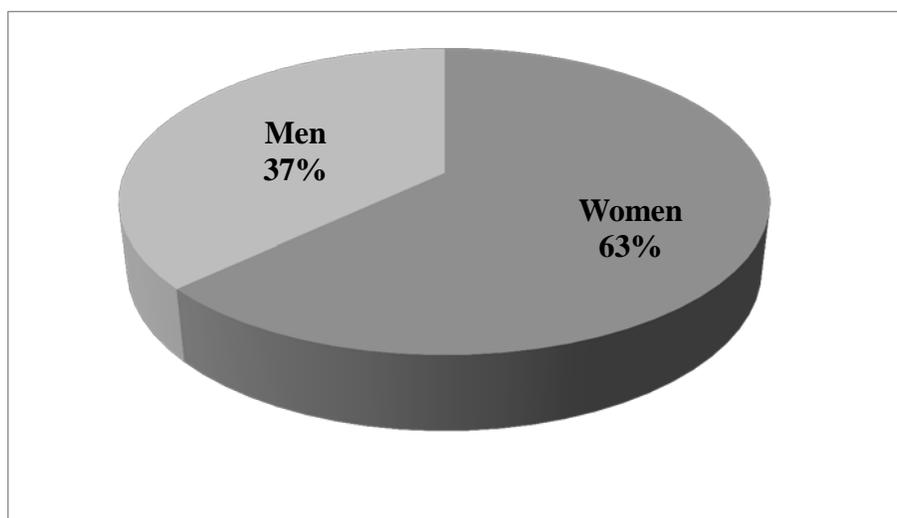
Figure 2: Percentage of Graduate Students according to gender at the University of San

Francisco.

The University of San Francisco has five schools: Arts and Sciences, Education, Nursing & Health Professionals, Management and Law. Table 1 represents the graduate degrees available at the university by school.

Table 1

Graduate Degrees available at the University of San Francisco

School	Masters Degrees	Doctoral Degrees
Arts and Sciences	Asia Pacific Studies, Biotechnology, Analytics, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Computer Science Bridge, Energy Systems Management, environmental Management, Economics, Fine Arts: Writing, International Studies, Public Leadership	NA
Education	Organization & Leadership, Catholic Education Leadership, International and Multicultural Education, Learning & Instruction, Special Education, Human Rights Education, Higher Education & Student Affairs, Educational Technology, Marriage & Family Therapy	Organization & Leadership, Catholic Education Leadership, International and Multicultural Education, Learning & Instruction, Special Education
Nursing & Health Professionals	Behavioral Health, Public Health, Dual Degree Programs for MS Public Health and Behavioral Health	Clinical Psychology Nursing Practice: Executive Leadership, Family Nurse Practitioner, Executive Leadership, Population Health Leadership
Management	Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Public Administration, Non-Profit Administration, Global Entrepreneurial Management, Environmental management, Dentistry, Business Administration	
Law	Urban & Public Affairs, Legal Studies in Taxation, Public Administration	Juris Doctorate

There are 2,603 women graduate students, of these 188 (7 percent) are AA women (see

Figure 3 for a demographic breakdown). The racial identity of 218 women graduate

students unknown. At the University of San Francisco White women outnumber AA

women graduate students approximately 15:1 (see Figure 3).
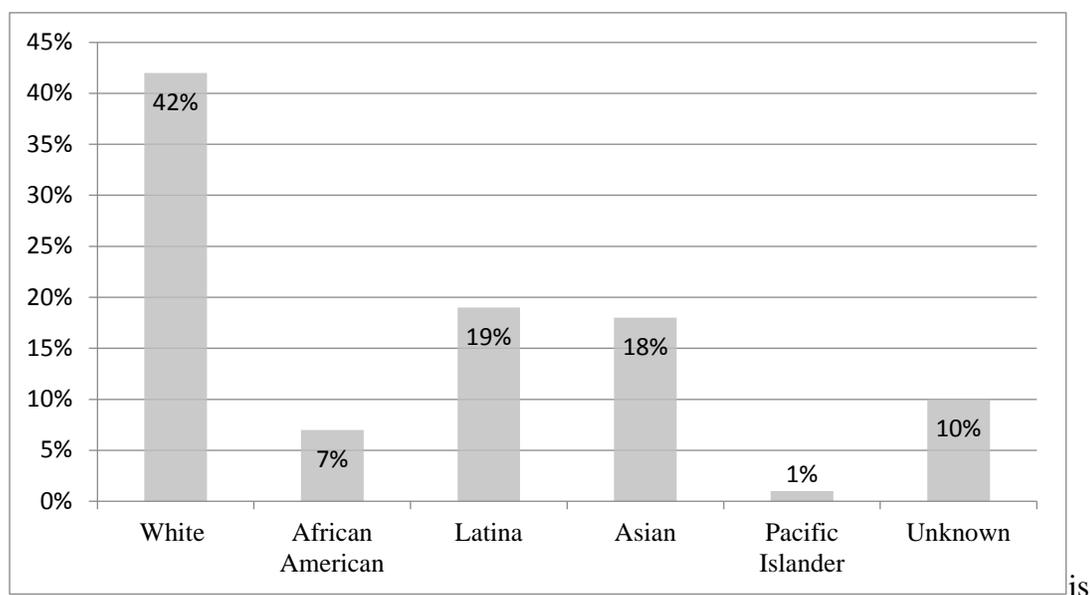
Figure 3: Women graduate students at the University of San Francisco.

The USF retention and graduation rates are moderate at this university; however, AA

students are listed as one the highest groups to not persist to graduation.   For this study

graduation rates were based upon student's completion status as of August 2015. NCES

(2015) reported that AA graduate students at USF have a 26 percent progression rate. For

the 2014-2015 academic year; 1,537 AA students obtained graduate degrees (master's

and doctoral degrees combined) from USF.

Participants

As defined by Rappaport (1987), phenomena of interest are "what we want our research to understand, predict, explain, or describe" (p. 129). What are phenomena? In the simplest sense, phenomena refer to the ways in which previous actions or events influence the lives and behaviors of a particular person or group. Such is the case with AA women who historically have been oppressed and dismissed within a White hegemonic system that privileges the experiences of White men (Alexander, 2011; Allen, 2010; Cabrera, 2009; Hughey, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

In 2012, AA women made up 12.7 percent of the female population of the United States but held only 8.5 percent of the bachelor degrees earned by women (Guerra, 2013; Ogbu, 1994). In 2015 the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 401,000 AAs obtained doctorate degrees compared to approximately 5.2 million of their White counterparts. AA women are one demographic that has been excluded or marginalized in academia (Evans, 2007). To be AA and a woman is to be a part of at least two vulnerable populations who have experienced interlocking systems of oppression, related to race, gender, and socio economic status (Matthew, 2015). The experiences of AA women are shaped by structural intersectionality that manifests in multilayered and routinized forms of domination that converge in these women's lives, hindering their ability to create alternative realities thus perpetuating the destructive cycle (Crenshaw, 1991). AA women who pursue graduate degrees at PWI are not exempt from the systemic oppression that often exists with the race and class dynamic(Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Acceptance into graduate programs for AA women alone does not mitigate their

experiences rather they are exacerbated within a euro patriarchal system that presumes their incompetence solely on the basis of race and gender (Gutiérrez y Muhs, 2012).

AA women who are enrolled or were enrolled in graduate programs at USF, a PWI, were the focus of this study. The researcher recruited participants who met the following criteria for the phenomenon of interest explored in this study: 1) identified as African, African American (including Domestic, International, and Mixed-Race/Ethnicity) or Black; 2) identified as women; and 3) were currently enrolled in or a recent graduate (5-10 years) from a professional program (master's or doctorate) at USF.

Participants ranged in age from 27-61 years of age (M=45, SD=11.06). The spectrum of family composition for participants was equally wide ranging from single - never married with no children, single - never married with God-children, in a relationship – dating, dating with children, married with adult children to divorced and remarried.

Of the 15 participants 13 were AA women who reentered the education environment after having a minimum of 3 years separation prior to enrolling into graduate school. This cycle persisted for participants who were at the doctoral level. In many cases there was a 3-5year gap between having the master degree conferred to enrolling in a subsequent doctoral program.

Figure 4 illustrates the participant mix of AA women as it related to their graduate study status in the spring of 2017.

Participant Status

■ Current Students   ■ Recent Graduates
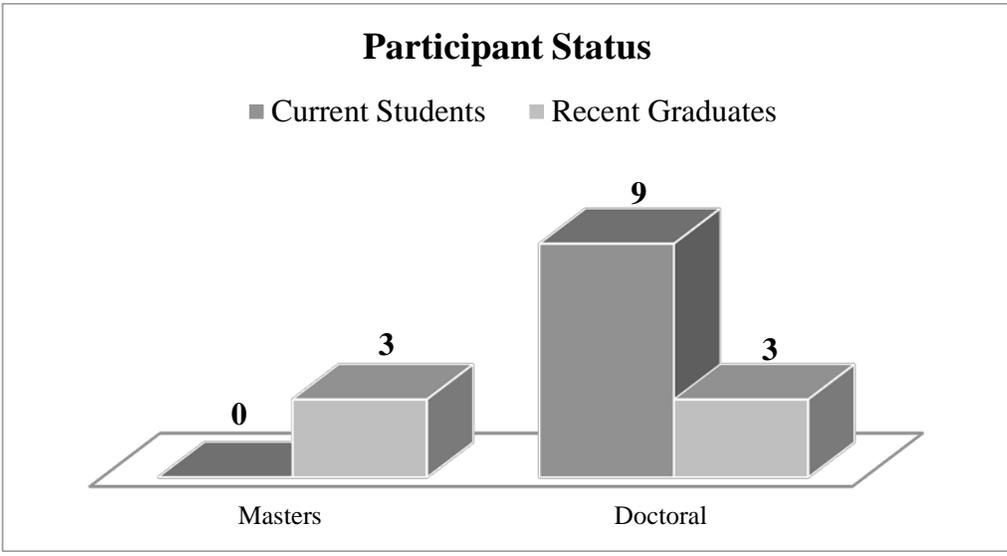
Figure 4: Participant student status in Spring 2017.

Survey data indicated that participants (n=15) progressed in three fields of study:

Education (n= 12), healthcare (n=2), and business (n =1).

Academic Disciplines

■ Education

■ Healthcare
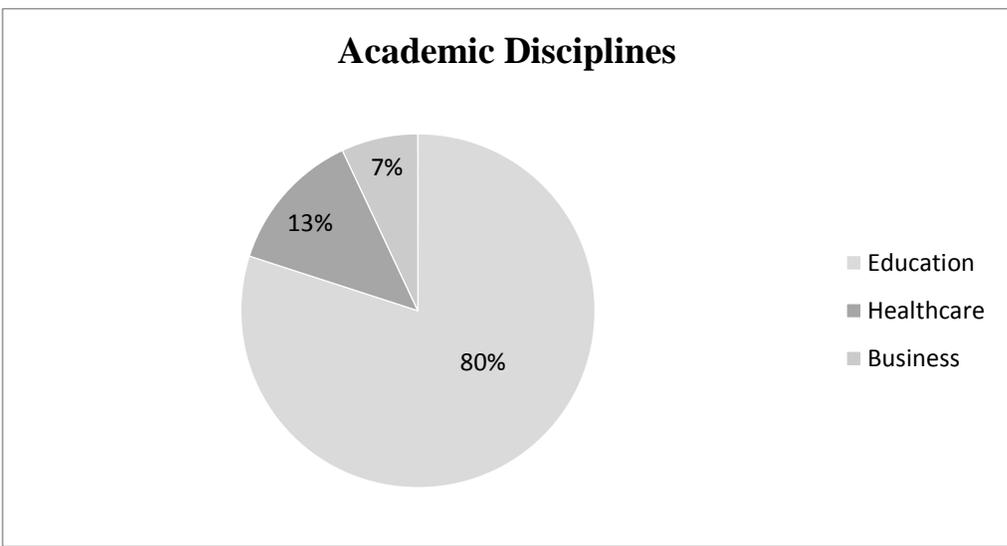
■ Business

Figure 5: Participant research discipline.

The participant snapshot of this study in 2017 is consistent with the NCES (2015) report

where education, healthcare and business were among the highest 3 concentrations of

conferred degrees.

In order to protect the identity of participants as well as document the richness of their graduate student experiences, pseudonyms were mutually agreed upon between the researcher and participants (see Table 2). This additional step was taken to protect the identity of participants and honor their trust. Although additional participant information was available the researcher deemed it too identifying. Only general descriptors are provided in this study to give the reader a better understanding of responses in relation to participants.

Table 2

Participant pseudonyms and general demographics

Pseudonym	Student Level	Age	Marital Status	Birth Order	Children
Affirmer	Doctoral Student	27	Single	Middle Child	0
Amalgamator	Doctoral Student	43	Single	Youngest Child	0
Authenticator	Professional	47	Divorced/ In a relationship	Eldest	6
Beautiful Beast of Burden	Doctoral Student	61	Married	Youngest Child	3
Curator	Masters Student	43	Married	Eldest	3
Educator of Others	Doctoral Student	54	Divorced/ In a relationship	Only Child	1
Flagship	Doctoral Student	53	Married	Middle Child	3
Initiator	Masters Student	32	Single/In a relationship	Eldest	0
Integrator	Doctoral Student	59	Married	Eldest	2
Resilient One	Professional	53	Single	Eldest	5
Revolutionary	Doctoral Student	34	Single/In a relationship	Youngest Child	0
Servant of All	Doctoral Student	52	Single	Eldest	0
Work in Progress	Doctoral Student	29	Single	Eldest	0

Note. *N* =13. Participant list only includes women who completed both the survey and interview.

Participants were recruited using both purposeful sampling as the primary method and snowball as a secondary means. Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in explanatory qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases or the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The term explanatory qualitative research implies that the research in question is intended to explain, rather than simply to describe. Using this technique the researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study (Patton, 2002). For this study, the researcher focused on one particular subgroup. This is also known as a homogenous sample. This study was intended to explain the experiences of AA women graduate students who were currently matriculating at USF or graduated in the last 5-10 years through a Black feminist thought lens. The researcher also relied on the initial participants to act as secondary recruiters to reach out to others who also met the criteria. The goal of the secondary recruiting (snowball) was to increase the response rate and allow for the collection of data from a wider group of participants that may not be known to the researcher and is particularly useful in cases where the population is hidden or difficult to enumerate (Fink, 2013; Fowler, 2014; Orcher, 2007). This is the case with AA women who pursue graduate degrees at PWI and who are small in number (Ryu, 2009).

Population

According to a 2011 report by American Council on Education there were 54,363 AA women matriculating in graduate programs, from 1998 to 2008. Figure 6 illustrates

the relationship of AA women at PWIs to AA women graduate students at PWIs and

HBCUs and AA graduate students in general.

African American
Women Graduate
Students @ PWIs

African American
Women Graduate
Students (PWIs
and HBCUs

African American
Graduate Students
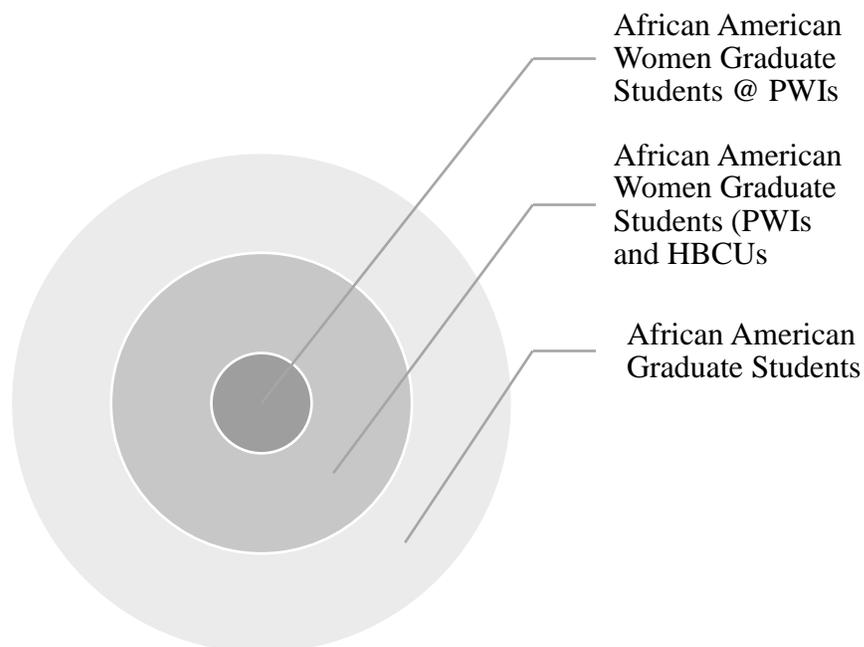
Figure 6: Relationship of African American Women Graduate Students @ PWI

to African American Graduate Students as a Whole

AA women continue to pursue advanced degrees in increasing numbers (Ryu, 2009).

Increasingly graduate school enrollment numbers for AA women outnumber those of

AA men and are concentrated in education as a discipline (Schwartz et al., 2003).

The latest data available from the NCES (2015) reveals of the total number of

women (1,525,815) who were enrolled in US colleges and universities offering master's

and doctoral programs in the fall of 2015, 204,275 were AA women.   This number

represents a steady upward trend of AA women pursuing advanced degrees over a decade

(2005-2015).   In other words, the number of AA women who started graduate studies

consistently increased between 2005 and 2015. However, the statistics that focus on

enrollment rates alone do not show if and how these women progress to graduation.

A preliminary report entitled *Digest of Educational Statistics* from the U.S.

Department of Education (2015) highlighted data on AA women graduate students

enrollment rate in higher education for the 2014-15 academic year. The data showed an

increase in enrollment rates over 3 decades (1976 to 2015) in comparison to completion

rates. At USF 39 AA women entered 2010 graduate cohorts with only 44 percent

graduate degrees conferred in 2015 (a five-year period). Although there is a variegated

normal time to completion for graduate programs there are still numerical discrepancies

suggesting that there are other variables interfering with academic success for AA

women. In 2015, more AA women were enrolled in graduate programs than any other

non-White group: AA (17 percent), Hispanic (9 percent), and Asian (7 percent). The

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), reported that between 2014 and 2015,

AA women earned 66 percent of all associate degrees awarded to AA students, as well as

64 percent of bachelor's degrees, 70 percent of master's degrees and 66 percent of all

doctorates awarded to AA students. Furthermore, NCES reported that the percentage of

U.S. graduate degrees conferred to students who are AA increased from 4 to 13 percent

from 1976 to 2015, while the percentage of graduate degrees conferred to White students

among decreased from 89 to 69 percent.

There are 3,026 4-year colleges and universities in the U.S. with approximately 500

offering graduate programs. The NCES (2015) reported that almost half of the master's

degrees conferred in 2014-2015 were concentrated in two fields of study: business

(185,000 degrees) and education (147,000 degrees); and two-thirds of the doctorates

conferred were in health professions and related programs (71,000 degrees) and legal

professions and studies (40,300 degrees.) However, AA women continue to pursue

education related graduate degrees (Schwartz et al., 2003) and in recent years are earning

degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Sample

The sampling objective was to have at least 10 participants that completed both

the survey and also elected to delve deeper into their experience by sharing their stories

in an interview. Figure 5 illustrates the enrollment versus graduation rates of AA women

at USF between the fall of 2005 and fall of 2013 and the enrollment and continuation

rates between the fall 2013 and fall of 2016. The School of Education at USF charts out

the master's program over a 2-year period and a doctoral program over a 4-year period.

In general, institutions define enrollment as students adding classes to their student

schedule along with paying associated fees and graduation/completion as have a degree

conferred. There is a decline in the number of AA women graduate students who enter

programs at USF and those that complete them. At USF 39 AA women entered 2010

graduate cohorts with only 44 percent graduate degrees conferred in 2015 (a five-year

period).
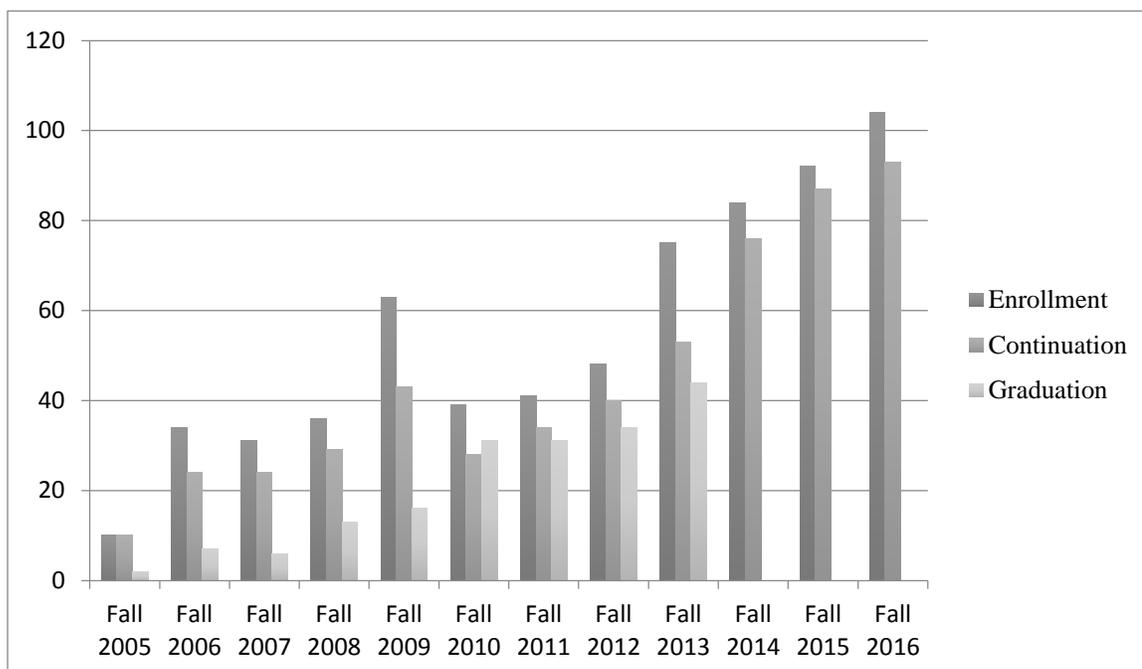
Figure 7: AA women graduate school enrollment, continuation and graduation trends

Although there is a variegated normal time to completion for graduate programs there are still numerical discrepancies suggesting that there are other variables interfering with academic success for AA women. Also illustrated in Figure 7: AA women graduate school enrollment, continuation and graduation trends, is the drop off of AA women graduate students from fall enrollment to fall of the following year. This is also known as student continuation.

Instrumentation

The researcher is considered to be the primary research instrument in qualitative research because unlike quantitative research, which relies on mathematical models, theories, and hypotheses to measure, control and/or manipulate variables, qualitative research entails the researcher examining and interpreting phenomenon of interest by

using a particular coding method (Creswell, 2012; Rappaport, 1987). The researcher

adopted the same perspective while conducting this study. Two additional instruments

were used: An adapted version of Cross's Racial Identity Scale (Vandiver et al., 2000)

and semi-structured interview questions from Schwartz, Bower, Rice, and Washington

(2003). Participants completed a survey comprised of closed-ended questions, choosing

from predetermined options where most of the potential answers were known by the

researcher. Next, participants had the option to engage in semi-structured interviews to

further unpack their experiences and explore emergent themes from the survey.

      Cross's Racial Identity Scale. The Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) is one of

the most seminal works on Black racial identity (Vandiver et al., 2000). The Cross

Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) is a 40-item self-administered scale developed to measure

racial identity attitudes of people in the United States. More specifically, each identity

type measured in the CRIS reveals unique racial perspectives as to how people identify

themselves in relation to their racial group. Cross first articulated nigrescence theory: the

process of becoming Black (Black racial identity development), in 1971 and revised his

original theory in 1991. The subsequent development of the CRIS yielded an expanded

model of nigrescence.

      Black racial identity encompasses a set of attitudes held by individuals of African

descent, and includes how these individuals view (a) themselves as Blacks, (b) other

individuals of African descent, and (c) individuals from other racial and ethnic groups.

These attitudes have been linked theoretically to a number of important outcomes

including academic achievement (Ogbu, 2004) and psychological well-being (Vandiver

et al., 2000; Whittaker & Neville, 2010). The study of Black racial identity attitudes has increased over the last four decades and racial identity is one of the most frequently examined psychological constructs in AAs (Cokley, 2005).

Cross (Cross, 1998; Vandiver et al., 2000) developed the tool over a 5-year period and identified 6-categories (pre-encounter assimilation, pre-encounter mis-education, pre-encounter self -hatred, immersion anti-white, internalization Afrocentricity and internalization multiculturalist) to describe the complex nature of their racialized identity.

While this tool has been used primarily in the field of psychology, widely in studies at Historically Black colleges and Universities (HBCU), minimally at Predominately White Institutions (PWI) it has not been used on the isolated group of AA women graduate students attending (PWI) who by definition have an intersectional experience. This study attempts to fill this gap in the literature.

Interview Guide. Schwartz, Bower, Rice and Washington (2003) developed the interview guide used with their permission in this study (see Appendix E). Their goal was to explore and understand the experiences of AA students in graduate school. In their mixed method study the use of the interview guide was preceded by two surveys in hopes of gaining a better understanding of the experiences of current students, and the obstacles and barriers for future students so that they could be eradicated. Five themes emerged from the surveys and were the basis of the focus group discussion where the interview guide was used: Education, sources of encouragement and support, career aspirations, interpersonal relationships and self-perceptions.

Despite the major changes in society and in social institutions, including colleges and universities, race, according to the women in this study, was the greater challenge and often, the largest obstacle to success. The study revealed that all women had consistent characteristics contributing to their success: "a strong sense of self, manifested in self-reliance, self-confidence, and self-determination and they were all connected and engaged learners" (Schwartz et al., 2003, p. 264).

Schwartz et al. (2003) suggests that more variables exist and are part of student success at the graduate level and that the quality of life for AA women is understudied. Using Schwartz et al.'s (2003) interview guide the current study attempted to describe and explain variables that impacted the epistemological process of AA women in graduate programs at predominately White institutions.

Data Collection Procedures

The data included survey responses and participant interviews. The data was transcribed, organized, coded, reviewed for emergent themes, and finally, analyzed and interpreted. The form, content, and process are based on Creswell's (Creswell, 2012, 2015) recommended standards.

Data collection was conducted in two stages: Stage 1: The survey was sent out to AA women graduate students at the University of San Francisco and Stage 2: The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with all participants who choose to continue using questions developed by Schwartz et al. (2003). The combination of

survey and interview allowed for the extraction of rich data to support claims made around the experiences of AA women in master and doctoral programs at USF.

Stage 1: Survey. The survey called AA women graduate student experience (AFRAM GRAD EXP @ PWI), consisted of 50 questions: 10 general demographic and qualifying questions and 40 questions adapted by permission from the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) (see appendix D). Cross' (1998; 2000) survey consisted of 40 questions, for this study 10 demographic questions were added. Permission was granted for the use of Cross' (1998; 2000) original survey as well as the adaptation of the instrument for this study.

An introductory letter was emailed to the identified sample using the panel function in Qualtrics. This letter included an introduction to the researcher, the purpose of the study and a description of the methodology. The researcher gained informed consent by providing participants with:

- An explanation of the purposes of the research and the expected duration of the participation;

- A description of the procedures to be followed;

- A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the participant;

- A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained

- A statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled and the

participant may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

- The background of the researcher.

The survey was administered online using a secure survey service named Qualtrics allowing participants to complete it at their leisure. Qualtrics is a self-service cloud-based online survey, reporting and analysis tool made available to all USF faculty, staff and students. The researcher generated a link that was emailed out to participants identified as meeting the preliminary criteria: 1) identified as African, African American (including Domestic, International, and Mixed-Race/Ethnicity) or Black; 2) identified as women; and 3) were currently enrolled in or a recent graduate (5-10 years) from a professional program (master's or doctorate) at USF.

Information was provided to participants regarding the scope, process and risk involved to gain informed consent before beginning the survey. Participants were able to opt out at any time by simply closing the web browser. After launching the survey, participants were assigned a unique ID code generated by the computer. Because this unique identifying number was only tied to an IP address it provided anonymity to participants who chose not to self- identify to participate in the qualitative interview portion of the study. At the end of the data collection window (21 days), the survey was closed and the data downloaded for coding.

Stage 2: Interview. At the conclusion of the survey, participants were offered the opportunity to share their story in an additional interview. Thirteen women participated. Once the survey data was collected, the researcher followed up with participants who consented to be interviewed by sending out an email to request an interview time. Interview participants were asked to be available for a 60- minute session. Interviews took place on a voluntary basis, and participants have the opportunity to withdraw from the interview at any time.

Schwartz, Bower, Rice, and Washington (2003) provided an interview guide that consisted of six semi-structured questions. Although, the interview questions were pre-formulated they were open-ended. Participants were able to freely answer and discretion was given to the interviewer to expand the study by asking follow up questions (Creswell, 2012). Schwartz, Bower, Rice, and Washington (2003) examined the experiences of AA women in a graduate school of education at a large, predominantly White, research university in the Southeastern United States. The current study also attempted to understand the experiences of AA women in graduate programs albeit at a predominantly White, research university on the West Coast of the United States in various academic disciplines.

Combined the closed survey format of the CRIS (2000) instrument and Schwartz, Bower, Rice and Washington's (2003) interview guide allowed the researcher to predetermine the questions around particular theories and factors, while the open-ended interview questions gave participants the opportunity to further explain and deepen their responses (Creswell, 2012).

Ultimately, the current study allowed the researcher to provide detailed descriptions, multiple perspectives, and varied interpretations of how multi- axial realities of othering influence the educational experience of AA women.   The researcher followed guidelines approved by the university's institutional review board to maintain confidentiality of participants' electronic records.

Data Analysis

Demographic items from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the results reported as frequency distributions (e.g., respondent's age and distribution of respondents among educational levels). Tables and figures were employed to present patterns illustrating participants' characteristics.

The three main parts of the survey instrument: Characteristics, attitudes and experiences, contain 4, 40, and 3 individual items, respectively.   Characteristic (4) and experience (3) items are considered to have correct responses– similar to the items on a traditional test (see Appendix X). Consequently, each item was scored and the derived item scores will be averaged to provide two new variables – the degree of racial identity characteristics and the degree of attitudes of cultural acceptance. Values for these two scores can range from 0 to either 2, for characteristics, or 5, for attitudes. These two scores are the sources of information for deriving the answers to the research questions, which probe the extent of a racialized identity.

Figures and tables were used to illustrate the patterns of participants' responses to items, overall. Individual item analyses (e.g., means and standard deviations) were used

to determine the levels of agreement with an Afrocentric vs. Eurocentric perspective. Comparisons of participant characteristics and agreement levels will be conducted using t tests, and correlations. The researcher paid attention to the observed effect sizes due to the restricted nature of the sample. The ability to generalize beyond this set of respondents is very limited.

The researcher reviewed the interview data set and organized it based on research questions. For example, content of a participants' interview was coded by RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4. Once grouped by research questions, the data was coded for emergent themes.   Coding was done to gain understanding into the epistemological selves of these women as categorized by: "Knowledge/Skills," "Attitude/Behavior," and "Action". During this stage of coding and organizing, more in-depth analysis and interpretation took place. Finally, a concept map was created to group and analyze the themes from each research question. After this stage, the relevant literature was connected to the research questions in order to guide the analysis.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher submitted a proposal for review of this study to the University of San Francisco's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) prior to participant solicitation, survey administration and conducting interviews. In order to meet Creswell's (2012, pp. 22–23, 148, 210–211) recommendation on ethics of research for safeguarding the physical, social, and emotional well-being of individuals from whom information is obtained by researchers

through experimental designs and interviews, the researcher fully disclosed all aspects of the research process and assure the confidentiality of research data.

The researcher took steps to carry out the research in a manner designed to cause the least disruption to the life of the participant as possible. Initial interview questions were structured and pre-planned to guard against leading participants. More questions arose during the interview process and the interviewer was sensitive to avoid asking leading follow-up questions. Rather, only clarifying questions were asked. Precautions were taken to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

The emergent nature of in-depth interviews made it more difficult to let potential research participants know what to expect from the interview process. However, since such ambiguity was inevitable, the researcher prepared for it by (a) letting potential research participants know what the research was about; (b) explaining how the interview process would develop; that is, new questions might be asked based on the responses from the research participant and as the knowledge of the phenomena developed; and (c) reassuring potential research participants that they had right to withdraw at any time from the interview process.

Using research designs of any sort, researchers grapple with the issue of bias or the potential distortion of research outcomes due to unintended influences from the researcher as well as research participants. This may occur when the researcher, who also meets the sample criteria, works to connect with participants to establish comfort and rapport prior to asking emotionally charged interview questions. Given the researchers' background and sample size the study is still needed. Rather than these being

weaknesses they added to the rationale and impetus for studying this population. This is a particularly critical issue in qualitative research where researchers take extraordinary efforts to establish strong relationships with their participants in order to delve deeply into the subject matter. Because interviews tend to be more personal in nature, they can include greater disclosure and self-expression. For example, greater disclosure may require: (a) a stricter adherence to data protection and participant confidentiality; (b) researcher transparency: letting the research participant know how what they have said is interpreted; and (c) specific permissions from participants to report quotations and other personally identifiable information and/or facts.

All participants had the opportunity to choose pseudonyms. Participation in the survey and subsequent interviews was considered informed consent. Additionally, participants who chose to go on to do interviews were provided with an additional description of the research purpose and methodology. Every effort was made to keep the research process transparent. Finally, the researcher accounted for her own positionality in relation to the study. By describing the researcher's background and keeping a reflexive journal, this researcher intends to address the bias that most assuredly permeates the socially dependent nature of qualitative research. According to Creswell (2012) introspective reflexivity – along with peer debriefing and triangulation – add considerably to the credibility and usefulness of studies.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study as outlined in the IRB application process. (See Appendix A for the IRB application and Appendix B for the IRB's approval.)

Background of the Researcher

As a participant researcher my background plays an important role in understanding first-hand participant experiences.   As an African American woman I have experience in attending these types of schools and have an affinity for the lived experiences of women at different stages of their identity development that is often situated and only defined by the whiteness that surrounds them. (Davis, 2015; Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003; hooks, 1994).

I am a 43-year old woman of African descent whose family hails from the South, the granddaughter of sharecroppers, a first-generation Californian, the youngest in birth order, a leader in my faith community, a criminal justice training manager in Northern California, an emerging scholar, a local governmental consultant on cultural competence in health care, and a family woman. These characteristics make up my intersectional identity living the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) as an intersector and boundary spanner (Ambrose, Rutherford, Tashchian, & Shepherd, 2014).   I am never just one of these identities alone but the amalgamation of them all. I live and thrive in the spaces that are created by the overlapping of each layer of identity.

As a researcher I brought to this study a desire to account for and describe the experiences of women of African descent who have the lived experience of being one who intersects and transcends society's invisible borders. The literature demonstrates our voices are not heard merely because of our number not comprising a critical mass on most campuses (Coogan-Gehr, 2011). Although, I grew up in a multicultural area in the East Bay, the schools that I attended on both the West and East coast were predominately

White. Currently, I am pursuing a doctorate in education at a private institution on the West coast that is considered a culturally White institution.

According to the research, AA women often feel isolated and marginalized by their Caucasian counterparts while attending culturally White institutions. I experienced this as well as isolations from staff, faculty and the institution as a whole who were neither aware nor prepared to address the complexities associated with, "studying while black and a woman beyond the undergraduate level".

As an AA woman who matriculated in these settings I want to honor AA women by documenting how students in master's and doctoral programs construct and reconstruct their epistemological selves in relation to the Eurocentric, male-dominated values of the academy (Dillard, 2000; Stanfield & Dennis, 1993). It is my hope that this study will give PWIs something to think about when recruiting graduate students and strengthen the overall position of AA women in the academy by increasing the volume of discourse by and about them.

Delimitations

Though, this study has the potential to uncover challenges facing AA women in higher education and inform institutional practices for others who struggle with similar circumstances there are some restrictions to be noted. This study included only the challenges, accomplishments and overall experiences of graduate students, excluding faculty, administrators and general university staff. Previous studies focused on AA faculty/staff and their experiences seeking tenured track positions or promotional opportunities (A. M. Allen, 2010; Espino et al., 2010; Henderson et al., 2010; L. D. Patton & Harper, 2003). The aforementioned maybe a factor in student perceptions and experiences of the University however, the researcher believed that the effect of their presence and influence can be evaluated through the eyes of the students. By focusing on AA women graduate students the study has the opportunity to reveal experiences that are often overlooked or discounted.

Limitations

This study has the potential to uncover challenges facing AA women graduate students and inform institutional practices for others who struggle with similar circumstances even though the size of the study is small (15 students). Additionally, the responding population size meeting the criteria of (1) AA (2) women and (3) currently in or completed a masters/doctoral program at a predominately or culturally White institution may inhibit the ability to make predictions regarding the AA women's experiences in higher education, thereore, the findings may not be generalizable,

however, the findings and conclusions can be a stringboard for further study and research particularly into the practices and environments of private institutions.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to add to the body of research by and for AA women in higher education. This was accomplished by answering the question: How do the experiences of AA women graduate students, who attend institutions that are imbued with whiteness, serve to contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their epistemological selves? Answering the preceding research question resulted in giving voice to AA women graduate students who matriculated at USF.

The aim was to increase the body of knowledge around the intersectional experiences of AA women that shape their graduate studies; their view of the academy and their view of their epistemological selves. The graduate student experiences of the AA women who participated in this study were informed by historical narratives that juxtaposed Blackness with Whiteness; "womaness" with "maness" and cultural wealth with the formal education.

Throughout the data collection process, participants juxtaposed society's negative stereotypes around their personage to words or thoughts of affirmation that were in stark contrast. It is this contradiction that informed the women's' participation in this study and allowed the researcher to identify the following generative themes: Dark but lovely; Movin' on up; Academic obstacle course, and Rite of passage.

Revisiting a the cultural movement of the 1960s (Black is Beautiful) where Black consciousness proponents attacked what they saw as traditional White values, Dark but

lovely reengages in the fight for an equal perception of the Black body (physically, collectively and mentally) to help undo all the negative ideas brought about by a history based in white supremacy. Historically, AAs endured slavery which was the first of many obstacles experienced in the U.S. An obstacle course then is a series of physical, mental and emotional challenges an individual or team must navigate usually while being timed. As it relates to the academy, AA women have traversed courses: balancing full time work and family responsibilities; scaled the successive academic levels carrying community members on their backs and jumped through program hoops with the aim of testing speed and endurance. While some would see these tasks daunting AA women see them as rites of passage. As a generative theme, rites of passage play a central role in AA women graduate students socialization, demarking the different stages in their individual development, as well as relationship and role to the broader community. I will discuss the generative themes and additional subthemes that come out of participant interviews in order to understand their experiences in greater detail.

Following a participant overview, the findings are presented in the same sequence as the supplemental research questions in chapter one to uncover how participants view themselves, their challenges, accomplishments, and overall experiences in light of societies racialized, gendered, educational and, intersectional stigmas. As mentioned in chapter three, participants were assigned pseudonyms. The pseudonyms were words or phrases that the participants used to describe themselves during the interview (see Table 2). To convey participant experiences in their own words and honor their trust, they will be referred to by their pseudonyms throughout the remainder of this study.

Participant Overview

An invitation to participate in the study was sent out to the phenomena of interest: 23 participants identified as meeting the following criteria: 1) identified as African, African American (including Domestic, International, and Mixed-Race/Ethnicity) or Black; 2) identified as women; and 3) were currently enrolled in or a recent graduate (5-10 years) from a professional program (master's or doctorate) at USF. Of the 23 invited to participate, 15 women completed a quantitative survey, 13 completed the survey as well as shared in a qualitative interview, and 2 women started the survey but did not progress to completion (only completed surveys were tabulated). The following participant information was derived from the survey.

Survey Findings

A total of 15 AA women graduate students who attended or graduated from USF participated in the current study. Participants completed two sections as part of the administered survey: background information questions and the CRIS (Vandiver et al., 2000). The following background information was collected: graduate level (Master, Doctorate, post doctorate professional); income level, age, family construction, academic class standing, and grade point average.

To investigate self- perception of AA woman doctoral students the CRIS (Vandiver et al., 2000) used in this study consisted of 40 items across eight subscales. Five subscales (40 items) were the focus for the present study and represent the following nigrescence identities under examination: Pre-Encounter Assimilation (PA; 6 items), Pre-Encounter Miseducation (PM; 5 items), Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred (PSH; 5 items),

Immersion–Emersion Anti-White (IEAW; 5 items), Internalization Afrocentric (IA; 13 items), and Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive (IMCI; 6 items).

The Pre-encounter attitudes reflect either low race salience (e.g., assimilation) or negative race salience (e.g., miseducation, self-hatred). Assimilation attitudes reflect a preference for a national identity label (e.g., American) rather than an ethnic label (e.g., African American). Mis-educated attitudes assess acceptance of the negative stereotypes about African Americans, and self-hatred attitudes reflect a negative view of the self because one is African American. The single attitude under the Immersion-Emersion theme—that is, anti-White—that the CRIS measure reflects a strong, negative emotional response to the dominant culture in the socio-historical context of the United States. Finally, the two internalization attitudes reflect Black self-acceptance: Afrocentric attitudes assess the degree to which individuals believe that African Americans should live by Afrocentric principles, whereas multiculturalist inclusive attitudes assess Black self-acceptance alongside a willingness to engage with other cultural groups.

Table 3

Sample Items from the Cross Racial Identity Scale

Subscale	Item
PA	I think of myself primarily as an American and seldom as a member of a racial group.
PM	Blacks place more emphasis on having a good time than on hard work.
PSH	I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black.
IEAW	I hate White people
IA	As Black Nationalists, we must work on empowering ourselves, and not on hating others.
IMCI	I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, which is inclusive of everyone (e.g., Asians, Latinos, gays, lesbians, Jews, Whites, etc.).

Note. PA: Pre-Encounter Assimilation; PM: Pre-Encounter Miseducation; PSH: Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred; IEAW: Immersion–Emersion Anti-White; IA: Internalization Afrocentric; IMCI: Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive.

Table 3 provides a sample item from each CRIS subscale examined in this study. The Assimilation (PA) items describe a pro-American identity; the Miseducation (PM) items focus on negative stereotypical views about African American people; and the Self-Hatred (PSH) items describe an anti-Black, self-hating identity. Internalization Afrocentric (IA) items describe a person's dislike and distrust of Whites, while maintaining Black empowerment and success based on the work of Blacks. The Multiculturalist Inclusive (IMCI) subscale describes Black self-acceptance and the acceptance of other cultural groups. All items are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

The six-factor model depicted in Table 3 represents the global dimensions of pro-American, characterized by the Pre-Encounter subscales, and pro-Black, represented by the Anti-White (IEAW), Afrocentric (IA), and Multiculturalist (IMCI) subscales. It examined the CRIS by nigrescence stage constructs: Pre-Encounter, Immersion–Emersion, and Internalization and tested the presence of the pro-race and anti-race

constructs. Pro-White was represented by PA items, and anti-White was represented by

items on the Anti-White subscale. IA and IMCI items represented the pro-Black

construct, and the anti-Black construct was reflected in the PM and PSH items these were

all identified by Vandiver et al. (2002) with IEAW and IA combined representing one

factor instead of two.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics (N=15)

	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Cross Racial Identity Scale	2.64	3.56	1.64	4.06	1.70
Internalization Afrocentric	2.64	3.30	1.60	4.16	1.60
Immersion–Emersion Anti-White	.229	.458	.672	.508	.565
Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive	2.28	3.00	1.00	3.25	1.00
Pre-Encounter Assimilation	3.03	4.31	3.00	5.00	3.20
Pre-Encounter Miseducation	1.47	1.33	.504	1.00	2.60
Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred	1.59	1.60	.541	1.00	2.40

Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 4. As can be seen, Pre-Encounter

Assimilation means are highest and most of the other means are in the range of .20 to 2.6.

This means that in selecting responses to the survey questions participants minimized

their racial identity in favor of their identity as an American and an individual. Thusly

participants: (1) Emphasized the commonalities of African Americans and the rest of

American society, (2) believed in working within mainstream structures to change these

systems and achieve life goals, and (3) stressed the importance of social interaction between Blacks and Whites.

Working within the Black feminist thought framework, I compared the overall scale score of the CRIS with that of the subscales for the participants (see Table 5). All of the participant responses on the CRIS show that the subscales are related.

Table 5

Correlations among Cross Racial Identity Scale subscales

	CRIS	IA (13)[a]	IEAW (5)	IMCI (6)	PA (5)	PM (5)	PSH (5)
Cross Racial Identity Scale	1	.77(**)	.69(**)	.27	-.06	.025	.43
Internalization Afrocentric	.77(**)	1	.51	.09	-.43	-.10	.08
Immersion–Emersion Anti-White	.69(**)	.51	1	-.10	-.29	-.06	.23
Internalization Multiculturalist Inclusive	.27	.09	-.10	1	.16	-.53(*)	.15
Pre-Encounter Assimilation	-.06	-.43	-.29	.16	1	.12	-.11
Pre-Encounter Miseducation	.03	-.10	-.06	-.53(*)	.12	1	-.07
Pre-Encounter Self-Hatred	.43	.08	.23	.15	-.11	-.07	1

Note. $N = 15$. Correlations below diagonal are based on 39 items, and correlations above diagonal are based on 5 items per subscale. [a]Parenthetical numbers indicate number of items on subscale. [b] Reliability estimates based on five items per subscale. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Results from the two-tailed T test that I conducted showed significance at both 0.01 and 0.05 alpha levels. The two-tailed test allots half of the alpha to testing the statistical significance in one direction and half of the alpha to testing statistical

significance in the other direction. Regardless of the direction of the relationship the researcher was open to examining for the possibility of the difference in either direction. Based on the statistical output ($p = 0.01$ & $p = 0.05$, two-tailed) and a 99% and 95% confidence level respectively where 0 was contained within lower (-.532) and upper (.930) points, the null hypothesis was retained. There is no difference amongst the subscales.

Moving from data provided by the survey, generative themes from the interview provide greater context for the reader to situate the numbers as they relate to the graduate student experience of these women.

GENERATIVE THEMES

How do AA Women see Themselves?

The interconnectedness and intersection of participants' race, womanhood (gender) and education were the loci of understanding during the interview process. By race I refer to AA women who historically have been oppressed and dismissed within a White hegemonic system that privileges the experiences of White men, as providing the foundation for the social construct of Black racial identity. Rather than focusing on the dominate narratives (White male hegemony) to understand participant experiences this study places the experiences of participants.

Dark but lovely. Dark but lovely is a metaphoric counter narrative for how participants see themselves. Phenotypically dark opposed to a White hegemonic society. Not dirty, shameful or void of aesthetic beauty but lovely- "optimistic," "powerful," "an asset," "bold," "strong," "intelligent," "resilient," "diligent," "human," "brainy," "extraordinary," "beautiful," "capable," and "responsible" are all descriptions shared by participants.

The participants in this study have a strong racialized identity: Black or African women whose ancestors experienced a diaspora as a result of slavery. Black racial identity refers to a set of attitudes held by individuals of African descent, and includes how these individuals view (a) themselves as Blacks, (b) other individuals of African descent, and (c) individuals from other racial and ethnic groups. Participants in this study see themselves as Black. In this regard, the *Curator* sees herself as being "most used and neglected." She continued saying, "as AA women we are often blamed for the state of the men, for the state of communities, for the state of this and that; the upbringing of boys and, children or the neglect of that." These realities that AA women have experienced have been linked theoretically to a number of important outcomes including academic achievement (Ogbu, 2004) and psychological well-being (Cross, 1998; Whittaker & Neville, 2010).

What is Black: Race, culture, consciousness, history or heritage; a shade darker than brown; the opposite of white? Who is Black? Although, in America, being Black has meant having African ancestry, the *Affirmer* commented that she gets "frustrated"

and "irritated" thinking about what it means to be Black in America. Additionally she said,

> It is sad that I have to be aware of myself as a Black person. Even in schools it is
> sad that I always have to hold that consciousness of how my Blackness moves
> through a space. That is the world that we live in *(Affirmer).*

Work in Progress said, "I will always be African or Black operating in an American context. I will always have to be working to progress in this system." Feeling "misunderstood," "underrepresented" and "ignored" by persons in authority the *Educator of Others*, *Flagship*, *Servant of All*, *Affirmer*, *Resilient One* and *Authenticator* developed a system of beliefs, values and ways of construing the world –epistemologies consisting of a stable network of interconnections or cognitive matrixes that affect and determine their responses to situations that arise while navigating PWI The *Authenticator* did not relate to the term African-American. She noted:

> I am a British born Black woman so I'm not American. In my opinion the term
> African American is used to force assimilation. We don't do that with other
> folks. Like, it is not ok for us to just be African or to be Black. I feel like it
> speaks to the Diaspora.

Although, an American identity did not resonate with this participant, she still experienced challenges that were consistent with other Black women in the study. Further, the *Authenticator* said,

I didn't realize and I learned this in some of the readings and in community with other Black women at USF. I did not understand the depth of anti-Blackness until this program. You know I understand racism, I understand sexism, I understand BFT or at least I felt like I did. But I don't know that I understood the depth of anti-Blackness and what that means in America. This isn't just racism and then there is the anti-Black racism that permeates everything even and especially in communities of color which then happens when there aren't experiences for Black folks because we're Mexican and we want to work with our own community but that's like exclusion and excluding.

The *Authenticator* was thankful for having been exposed to the literature on anti-blackness that provided a vocabulary to describe her experiences. She noted that this was one of the "benefits of being in the program." She continued, "even prior to the devaluing of Black lives I have been learning and researching to help Black students figure it out and not get caught up in the system." The system that the Authenticator spoke passionately about was the school to prison pipeline where a large number of persons most of whom have brown and black skin and are from underserved communities consider their normal plight – from school to incarceration. This knowledge and stereotype threat of being Black in American contributed to the women feeling beleaguered.

Although participants generally felt oppressed, *Resilient One* and *Educator of Others* characterized themselves as "resilient" despite the fact that White male

hegemonic ideologies of the PWI clashed with their own. In addition, *Resilient One*, calling herself and similarly situated women "game changers" felt as though counter narratives were necessary in order to code and explain without compromising or minimizing their experiences.

It is with absolute acceptance and confidence that participants embrace their identity. *Flagship* said, "my experience has been that it is not the color of our skin that has been the challenge for us, that's been the challenge for other people." *Work in Progress* furthered the conversation by addressing not only the confidence she had in her Black identity but also how that identity is often compressed into a single category with other groups.

> I do recognize that there are differences in the experiences of Black women in higher education at PWI that get overlooked because of the assumptions of who we are and the percentages of who we are, we often get lumped together with very different experiences and points of reference. This is also a cultural issue of the University. It is systemic about the University as a whole and is showing itself in the graduate program but a general claim can be made about undergraduate Black students as well- The University does not care about us. I could count on one hand the number of Black women that I had in class.

The *Affirmer* expressed her satisfaction with what the school offered (i.e. social justice focus and commitment to diversity) though she had this to say, "it is a good school however, a lot of the organization needs to reassess their values. They have their mission

and their vision but it is not aligned with how they practice." For th*e Affirmer* this was a deciding factor in her withdrawal from USF's doctoral program and subsequent enrolling into a HBCU.

Eleven out of thirteen participants had a positive outlook on their "Blackness." Figure 8 reflects the positive alignment that participants expressed when asked about their racial identity as Black or African American.
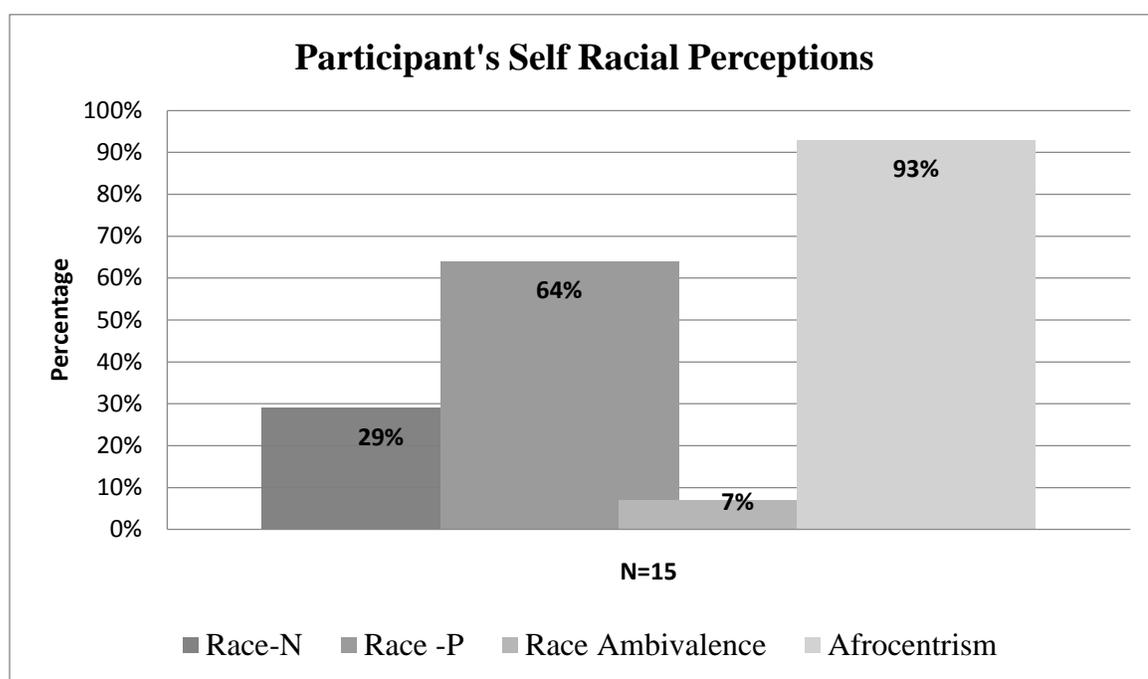
Figure 8: Participants feelings and perceptions about their Blackness.
Note. Race N=Negative View, Race P= Positive View

Participants had a positive race salience as indicated by their CRIS responses to questions about positive/negative feelings about being Black and whether or not they viewed the world through an Afrocentric lens (see Figure 8). Ninety-three percent of participants placed an importance on Afrocentrism in their daily lives. This may seem contrary to the descriptive statistics reported on Table 4, however, it is not. Participants

code switched amongst tools (survey and interview). As a participant researcher my insider status created an environment where participant codes were inherently understood and data variations expected. The data recorded in Figure 8 represents the importance that participants place on race and its' relevance to their daily lives. Although some participants had either negative or ambivalent perceptions about their race (N= 4 & 1 respectively) the majority (N=13) hold to a cultural worldview that focuses on the history of Black Africans. This cultural worldview is often "layered"; "multifaceted" or "intersecting" for participants. The *Alamgamator* said,

> We, Black women are more than just one-dimensional. We are whatever is
> needed in the moment for whomever or wherever we are serving. This is why we
> can and often do think in terms of generations. In part, it is because our men have
> been abandoned, are on drugs or overly incarcerated and we have had to raise our
> sister's, daughters' or extended community members' children. We don't have
> the luxury of just thinking about ourselves!

Like the *Amalgamator* the *Servant of All* sees herself as a servant with the responsibility to watch out for others. In this regard she said,

> I see myself as a servant of the community somebody to help the people. Not just
> AAs but mostly. My goal is to set out to serve AAs and if others are served in the
> process then, Halleluiah, but my main goal is to help the people.

The above examples illustrate how participants see the world. Their view is centered on the belief and value of life that lies in the interpersonal relationships between people in their community.

Participants' view of themselves in relationship to the world around them is often depicted as an intersectional perspective. Not only do participants view the world in layers but also themselves.

Intersectional. Describing her own intersectionality the *Integrator* equated her being with musicality:

There is a singing. There is a way in which music and the arts are an inherent part of what makes me human. That is a part of being a woman of African descent even most particularly a woman of African descent in the new world versus in Africa.

For the *Curator*, her intersections were most apparent in relation to her familial role. She said,

As a woman I see myself as the keeper of families as a person who is the natural teacher of my children, heart and soul of families. The carrier of all of these things, which makes it stressful and hard. It sometimes means that the system stops when mom, the woman is not there in the picture. I see myself as powerful and needing to be flexible and prepared. I am the curator for the culture, the children, the families and that is responsibility. As an AA woman (intrinsically

linked: AA and woman) I see myself as the mother of all the keeper of all the

memory: The heart and soul of communities (common ties).

Sharing in the complexities of intersectionality is how participant *Beast of Burden* got her

pseudonym. "I see myself as someone who is always carrying the burdens of everybody,

my race, the white race and everybody else." Continuing in thought the *Integrator*

questioned what others saw as they looked at her. She said, "one sees oneself as whole

but you do see layers?" It is these layers that provide texture, context and nuances for

these women. Without acknowledging their existence and understanding the role they

play in participants lives a large part of their identity remains missing.

Speaking about the larger body of AA women who have attained graduate degrees

the *Curator* expressed her African pride in knowing that "there are Black women who

have started colleges and opened schools, homes, hospitals, clinics, and law firms." This

participant believed that additional encouragement and support would come from these

women if she herself knew how to find the circles that they moved in to gain access to

their wisdom. Overwhelmingly participants expressed being proud of their African

heritage, connection to ancestral roots and a responsibility to past, present and future

generations.

Participants felt an obligation to their community. The *Integrator* used the term

responsible to capture her commitment. She said, "as an African American woman I see

myself as responsible, responsible for more than just myself. Responsible for bringing

others along. Responsible for the next generation. Responsible for being an exemplar for

others in my same racial and gendered category. I see myself as a peer and companion

concurrently; a leader and a learner.*"* Continuing in commitment to her community the *Curator* discussed her custodial efforts to younger generations. She remarked, "as an African American woman I see myself as an educator who has a responsibility of bringing young men and women to a place of being able to take care of their communities." In addition, to her custodial responsibilities *Resilient One* feels a responsibility to foster hope in her community. She said, "as an African American women I see myself as a strong nurturer and responsible for the perpetuation of life as it pertains to future generations."

To the contrary, the *Revolutionary* felt as though too much was expected of her. To that end she proclaimed, "I am tired of having this much responsibility!" This is true for participants who were conflicted about wanting to effectuate change in the world but not be seen as solely responsible to make things happen in their communities. In order to progress as a Black woman in America, whether American or British born participants saw education as a way to change their situation. For these women change of situation equated to access and choices resultant of economic freedoms associated with the educated.

What does it mean to be successful? For the AA women in this study success is partly defined by and through educational attainment. Although, they acknowledge that many of their ancestors accomplished a lot without formal education, there was still an agreement among the women that formal education is important and therefore each of them made it a priority. Academic matriculation was not only the process for participants to move through course work at different grade levels but it was also seen as a way to

achieve upward mobility. Therefore, the theme "Movin on Up" emerged as participants experience with the system of education and the institutions that offered formal learning opportunities. This theme will be further explored in the next section.

How do AA Women see the Institution?

     Movin'on up. Seeing the institution as an elevator of one's status the *Integrator* said, "there is privilege associated with access to learning and resources." In agreement, the *Revolutionary*, concluded, "I think that I have always been told that in my life education was the key for me to move my life beyond what it was that my family has experienced over the years." With this in mind, in 1975 the Columbia Broadcast System (CBS) aired The Jeffersons one of the longest running sitcoms with a primarily African American cast. The lyrics to "Movin' on Up" (Barry & Dubois, 1975) in the opening credits for the show sum up how participants see the institution:

> *Well we're movin' on up,*
>
> *To the east side.*
>
> *To a deluxe apartment in the sky.*
>
> *Movin' on up,*
>
> *To the east side.*
>
> *Now we're up in the big leagues.*
>
> *Gonna get my turn at bat.*
>
> *As long as we live, it's you and me baby.*
>
> *Ain't nothin' wrong with that.*
>
> *Fish don't fry in the kitchen.*

Beans don't burn on the grill.

Took a whole lotta tryin',

just to get up that hill.

The pie in the lyrics is representative of the American Dream – material acquisition in which freedom demonstrated by the democratic process where, rights, liberty, opportunity and equality is encompassed in the opportunity for all to enjoy upward social mobility with few barriers. The women in this study perceived the institution- a program of education beyond secondary education, as a means of advancement.

Education: A vehicle to move from one socio–economic status to another where opportunity presents itself like a "turn at bat" in the game of baseball. In this simile every player on the team has an opportunity to try and hit a homerun. For participants, education provides access to the big win. Reflecting on her upbringing the *Flagship* stated; "we have always been told that education will propel us. You see it in other cultures where education separates the classes and the people who have more education are able to go further in life." While *Educator of Others* told how attending the institution changed the landscape of the women in her family.

My grandmother came from a sharecropping family in Texas with only a 3rd grade education before she married young. In order to care for her children after divorce she relocated to California and kept other people's houses. She rented a large flat in the Fillmore and rented out the extra rooms to people who worked in the shipyards for additional income. Not only did she work as a housekeeper but she rented out rooms to make extra money. She went back to school and

graduated high school at the same time as her youngest son. She kept going to school and eventually became a nurse. She always believed that education was the way. In turn, even after my mother married right out of high school she too determined that education was the way to a better life. She continued her education to become an industrial mechanic. It was so rare that a Black woman could come out of the trades (1950s). She believed in education too. We went from a one-bedroom apartment to a two-bedroom house after my mother got that degree so clearly education was the way to move up in life. Within six months after she graduated our lives changed so it proved to me that education was the way.

Though, study participants viewed their attendance in the institution as "leverage" to advance, and as "qualifying" them in society's eyes. They also viewed it as obstacle laden.

Participants described their experiences Movin' on Up like an episode of National Broadcasting Network's (NBC) *American Ninja Warrior* where students are the competitors who face challenging race, sex and class obstacles both in course qualifying and department/ institution qualifying rounds (semester to semester of enrollment). After they traverse an obstacle, they encounter a new one. In other words, every phase of their quest to earn their "the degree" involves challenges. According to the Initiator, AA women who "successfully" complete courses and advance to graduation feel "confident," "strong" and, "doubly accomplished" "because they have been put through a lot of obstacles and still came through them." The *Affirmer* said that "space dictates meaning

and what you bring into space can ultimately dictate the meaning of that space." In this regard, The *Affirmer* intended to alter the White space of the PWI by her attendance. She said,

> The significant memories that stand out for me would be the community the cohort that I entered in with. A lot of them were AA. A lot of them were working class who were in their professions and had been in their professions for 10 years or longer. That was really significant to me especially since I am a young Black woman in pursuit of a doctorate. That was fulfilling to see at a PWI them going forth and taking on the academy in the ways that they were doing it. I then was determined to leave my mark too.

"Leaving a mark" was a euphemism for the imprint that the Black students left in the culturally white space, said *Amalgamator*. She added that "Black students give the appearance of pepper in a room of salt. We rarely attend classes where Black professors are present or are in class with other Black students."

In contrast to how the women positively see themselves they offer to the reader insight into how they experience culturally White spaces. The *Amalgamator* who describes herself as a "culinary princess" said,

> In the world of academic seasoning I often felt like a speck of pepper in an institution of salt. You can't blend in even if you want to. You always stand out. It was not that I wanted be White. I like my flavor. I enjoy what my Blackness brings into a space but I just don't want to have to defend, explain or justify it.

Many participants were left saddened, tired and longing for community as they navigated through USF as graduate students. In the next section I share these AA women experienced culturally White academic spaces.

How do AA Women Experience PWIs?

Recounting the Black women's slave experience, the *Affirmer*, *Curator* and *Authenticator* commented on how their physical appearance and intelligence was over-sexualized and used to make academic programs more desirable by applicants who were looking for "diversity." The *Affirmer* talked about the sadness that she felt about always having to be aware of her Blackness and holding in her consciousness how her Blackness moved through spaces. She said that it was a burden that she felt always having to explain herself or her world view that was shaped by different experiences. Yet, being a Black woman in a PWI, participants dictated the meaning as a "double accomplishment." In reflection, the *Initiator* said,

> I think that being a woman and adding being Black brings with it. It made my
>
> situation a little different obviously than some of my White classmates. I just
>
> think that the whole going through school that there was not support or maybe I
>
> just did not know where to go to get support. I just didn't feel as supported.

This duality stemmed from: 1) going after an advanced degree in general with all the rigor and demands that are part of the process for any student and, 2) surmounting the specific "complications" that they felt being Black women in spaces that have been traditionally occupied by White men.

Academic obstacle course. Participants in this study experience the University of San Francisco as an advanced obstacle course with hidden pitfalls, hurdles and treacherous terrain. *Flagship* believed that the obstacle course that Black women experienced was due to a lack of cultural understanding from the dominate group. She commented, "I could tell that they hadn't had a lot of experiences with students of color." "Lack of interaction with persons of color that required the dominate group to adapt and adjust in their thinking and behavior", according to the *Amalgamator*, "created a somewhat hostile educational environments where I was always expected to adjust to keep peace or sustain the status quo."

Hidden pitfalls. "Isolation" according to *Work in Progress* was one of the pitfalls. In tandem with *Work in Progress* the *Affirmer* said*,*

> I don't feel challenged. I felt as though a lot of great AA in the grad program at USF were simply being overlooked. When they were acknowledged they were glorified not so that they could get credit but always so that someone else could parade their intellect and get credit for it because they had worked with professor so and so.

Another pitfall expressed by the *Revolutionary* was when an in class discussion went south and micro aggressive statements were normalized. *Revolutionary* experience a classmate making this remark, "people aren't racist if you are experiencing this it is because of something that you did and you need to pull yourself up by your bootstraps." When challenged neither the instructor nor the Department Chair at the time addressed the unrest that the comments created in class. *Educator of Others* put it this way,

It is difficult to be in that kind of space when you see professors and administrators behaving in the same very traditional higher education way. All of the traditions that we fight against they participate in and so it is hard to understand that kind of behavior when words are said but the deeds don't follow through.

According to *Revolutionary*, she was told not to address racial issues in class. This is problematic particularly since as the *Authenticator* put it,

USF an institute calls itself out for social justice and seeing the level of engagement around Black education being really minimal I think it makes me feel like if not me then who? So I think that I have become more unapologetic about that. I was more when I started the program interested in multicultural education and diversity and like making sure that things are made better for all students of color but after conducting the research and realizing, understanding anti-Blackness and understanding how that plays out especially in school systems, I think that I have become much more like I don't care about my advocacy. I used to feel like Black kids or like any kids and all kids should have… versus now I'm like advocating for Black students, and that could be partly because of the political climate of the country.

This institutional behavior was unexpected and therefore a pitfall for participants who were expecting a social justice environment where there was a demonstrated commitment to compassion and justice for all people.

Hurdles. *Educator of Others* said that one of the major hurdles in the program "was the pushback that was totally baseless and subjective in ways that left me questioning what the professors' reason was for being at the university." While *Flagship* said that she had to jump over the hurdle of being presumed incompetence by faculty. She said, "Just because I was a woman of color there was an expectation that I would not be able to keep up." Implicit bias and academic profiling were so apparent in graduate school that when asked if there were significant memories about their graduate experience, *Resilient One* said that some of her biggest memories were "realizations of how little people understand about being outside of the predominate culture in an academic setting."

Treacherous terrain. Some of the treacherous terrain was comments by faculty and other students, *Work in Progress* said, "that was definitely disheartening as a student in the class and in having colleagues in the class and hearing negative feedback about them that had racialized components." "Some are saying that I should not be in this program because I and Black and others are asking me who I think that I am." When laid alongside other colleagues, *Educator of Others*, described the inequity she experienced opposed to Caucasian students:

> I watched how other Caucasian students zoom right through certain course
> sequences and also get approvals and when I asked myself as well as other
> students who were qualified and fit the same criteria but would not get approved
> for the same course sequence or get the same exception. I saw this over and over
> again and for me it was quite disturbing.

For *Servant of All,* it was not just being a Black student surrounded by a White context that had its challenges but it was being monolingual as well. In her program there were more Latino students and faculty seemingly connected by language and culture than AAs. In her frustration about the disadvantages of not having an identifiable native culture, language or land she said:

> Do I need to speak Spanish to get some help? I know that in my master's program and now in my doctorate the Spanish speakers seem to get a lot of attention. I'm monolingual so does that mean that I should not get the same*?*

Despite, her frustration, *Servant for All,* recognized that the immediacy of her anger when she did not feel supported by the institution kept her away from a possible larger community and connection with Hispanic women in the program who too were experiencing similar trials to degree completion.

Just like students had to make their grades in order to progress to degree completion, the women in this study graded the institution based upon their experiences within it.

Making the grade. If the participants in this study were to qualify their experiences in graduate school at USF four students would have given the university a C letter grade.

Academic grading in the United States commonly takes on the form of five letter grades. Traditionally, the grades are A, B, C, D, and F — A being the highest and F, short for failed, the lowest. For graduate students a C grade is equivalent to an F (failing) since

only As and Bs are counted in graduate programs. When participants were asked to grade their experiences as graduate students using a standard academic grading system with A representing the best experience and F representing the worst experience 40 percent of participants were ambivalent about their experiences at PWI. *Resilient One* said, "overall my experience as a graduate student was very void of cultural nuances that I could relate to as an AA woman." Participants at USF did not have an A experience which would have been minimally typified by feeling welcomed, accepted, and supported.

Describing her outsider status in the institution, the *Affirmer* said, "I'm sought after for the good and positive but also attacked because of who I am (a young Black woman) and what others think about that. It is a burden." *Work in Progress* describers her outsider status in the simplest of terms, numbers. Black women in higher education not comprising a critical mass she said,

> I do recognize that there are differences in the experiences of Black women in higher education at PWI that get overlooked because of the assumptions of who we are and the percentages of who we are we often get lumped together with very different experiences and points of reference. This is also a cultural issue of the University. It is systemic about the University as a whole and is showing itself in the graduate program but a general claim can be made about undergraduate Black students as well- The University does not care about us. I could count on one hand the number of Black women that I had in class.

With one goal in mind The *Beautiful Beast of Burden* said, she was only in school to "find the credentials in their world to make them listen to what [she had] to say so that they can understand [her] world." Feeling like "outsiders" or "imposters," the *Authenticator* and the *Revolutionary* talked about having to continually convince themselves that they belonged in the academy. Feeling a sense of belonging in the academy was essential to the *Authenticator* who credited the women in her circle for their support. She said,

> If I did not have you all I don't even know what my experience would have been like to even be like are you feeling this way to or is it just me because imposter syndrome is already and then to be in a PWI and have that kind of amplified because it was a diverse space.

Notwithstanding, the success as defined by having completed an advanced degree the *Revolutionary* still had some doubts as to whether the struggles in the journey were worth it. Sharing her emotional melee she said,

> I think that I still deal with not knowing if I should have done this in the sense that I am tired of having this much responsibility. I don't want to be on these classes no more, I guess you would call it imposter syndrome stuff but at the same time I can remember where I was in undergrad and at the beginning of my master's program and having the sense that I was being alone in it.

They commented about being plagued with the imposter syndrome. Despite external evidence of their competence, those exhibiting the syndrome remain convinced that they are frauds and do not deserve the success they have achieved. Proof of success

demonstrated by previous degrees, admittance into their current graduate program or professional attainment is dismissed as luck, timing, or as a result of deceiving others into thinking they are more intelligent and competent than they believe themselves to be.

In commenting on a quote by James Baldwin, *Servant of All* said, "they (the institution) want to measure you on how White you can be. The Whiter you are the more successful you are. You want to stay Black then there are going to be some issues." Participants felt measured by an "invisible ruler" that seemingly was only applied to them or other Black women.   Considering the diverse world that we live in *Flagship* was taken aback by the insensitivity that she experienced and the seeming reluctance for professors to step beyond stereotypes that have been perpetuated to subjugate Black persons. She said, "Maybe not in the classroom but in your work environment you've experienced people of color that were not your stereotypical people of color that you expect people to be like. Just because I was a woman of color there was an expectation that I would not be able to keep up. There was an underlying sensibility that I had about it but it was clearly there for some of the students." According to *Flagship* her family provided that "underlying sensibility." In contrast she saw it provided to her White counterparts by faculty.

In general, the women in this study possessed personal drive and determination that was not contingent upon anything that the institution might afford. Nonetheless institutions have a variety of programs and systems that are constructed to aid in students' learning.

What Types of Programs and/ Support do AA Women Receive that Contributed to Epistemological Self?

The architectural design of a school (aka:support) contributes to student learning by encouraging and guiding students in their development of intellectual and pro-social skills necessary for student success.   Participants identified family, faith, friends, teachers, financial, and other students as sources of support. Figure 6 illustrates that students perceived the "best source" as other students which appeared more frequently than other sources. Of the 15 study participants 100% felt that the camaraderie and community of other students aided in their academic success. Below are some excerpts about the camaraderie and community of other students. *Educator of Others* speaks to the tight knit community she made in the program:

> In my program I really made friends quickly with folks who were likeminded and were interested in social justice and equity issues. My peers are going through the same thing they can reach out to me for support. Folks that I hear from and go to for questions and support. So for me that community is tight knit and supportive.

Similarly, *Authenticator* mentions how her community provided much needed support;

> When melt downs would happen or the end of the semester and you are overwhelmed it was little thinks like texts that were random but super supportive like "bout to lose my mind" and "naw girl you got this" was really, really helpful.

Flagship discussed the importance of knowing that she was not alone in the process;

Just knowing that we are going through the same thing and that I could reach out has made a difference.

Integrator enjoyed learning in community and becoming enlightened through her peers;

There also were ah haw moments that I had in interacting with my cohort members as a part of any program that I had been involved with where I just marveled at the brilliance of the people who were part of my cohort and learning with me and what they were teaching me through my interactions with them

While the *Affirmer* felt that the process of coming to campus and sitting in classes rather than just working remotely or online aided in building her support system;

I feel as though it was the community that I was a part of on Campus, they encouraged me to keep pushing and staying in the program.

In all the above prose examples, it is clear how important the circle of woman and other students was in providing support, a sense of place, validation, etc. As *Work in Progress* shares, "your classmates become your glue."

All of the sources of support that were perceived by participants are illustrated in figure 9.

Sources of Support

	Other students	Faith	Financial	Teachers	Family	Friends
■ Frequency	15	4	5	2	12	10
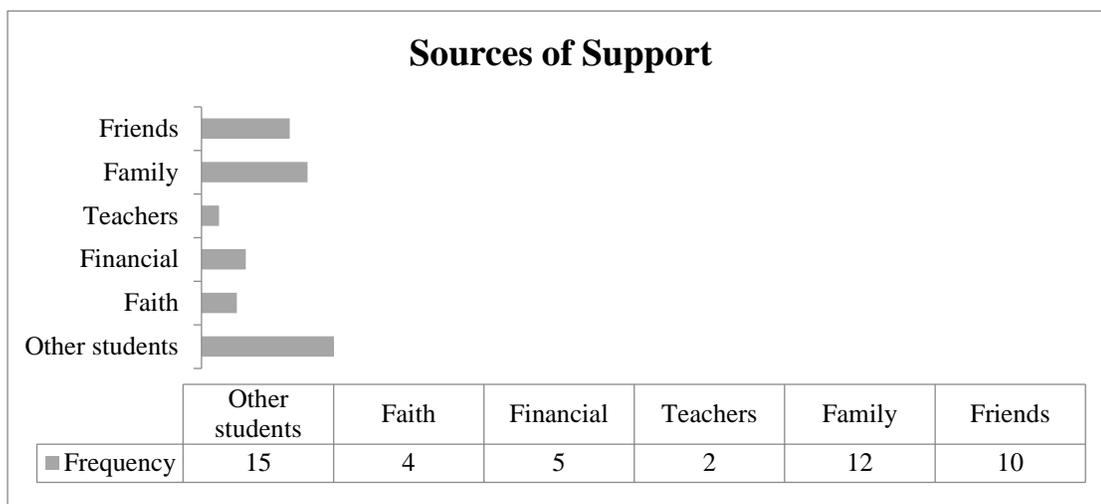
Figure 9: Best sources of support perceived by participants.

Although AA women attributed much of their success as graduate students to support received outside of the classroom (i.e. family and friends), students spent considerable time interacting with other students who further made them feel accepted and valued. Students ranged from spending one hour a week to 15 hours a week in "sisterhood" activities. On average students spent approximately 6 hours weekly (SD = 3 hours & 42 minutes) in relationship with other women working in solidarity toward their graduate degrees.

The students felt supported when they were surrounded by others who shared a way of knowing that focused on the history of Blacks with a diasporic past. As *Educator of Others* shares, the power of sisterhood became a powerful part of their process or experience:

> For me when I think of sisterhood I tend to think about a sorority kind of thing
> and it's not that I'm not youthful or that I don't have youthfulness about me or
> commune with other women who are youthful but a womanhood is so grounded.

There are so many responsibilities in womanhood and lots of those

responsibilities go un-thanked. They just do. I want to be in community with

women who are in their womanhood who often just do things just because it is the

whole part of them.

For *Beautiful Beast of Burden* she was intentional about describing the students who were

most supportive to her:

The Black people helped the other Black people along. I don't mean to sound

racist but that is how I felt, they kept things going, especially my husband he was

there when times got really, really bad.

Apart from her husband and child the *Integrator* remarked:

I also have to have very strong and powerful women connections so my

expectations around what I would be looking for in a life partner and what I'm

looking for in my friends which critical for me is might be very different from

what other people might want. I am a believer in the context of being a woman. I

see it as being valuable, having responsibilities, powerful, spiritual. I see it as

more than, as a human that you can be human but as an AA or woman there is

more to you. It's not making not being male or not AA less than but it just feels

like there is more, more connection, grounding.

The whole of AA women is the sum of all of their parts which include their families,

friends, communities and spirituality. How participants see and understand the world is a

direct reflection of all of their parts including the supports encountered or desired along

the way. Understanding that they are not merely travelers in this life without

responsibility the women in this study are active participants in seeking information and

gaining understanding in how things work. To that end, their epistemologies are engaged

in scholarship and community building.

Epistemological self. Support whether received or withheld contributed to the

women's understanding of themselves. Surrounded by positive Black women in

Academia and in her faith community, *Affirmer* said, "my epistemological self has a

brown face with a smart mind."   For participants their epistemological selves were

described as in solidarity and community with like-minded women who are

"accountable" for themselves, "responsible" to others and destined to make a positive

contribution to their family and community at large. The *Integrator* said that the support

from her peers allowed her to, "gain a type of language and theoretical framing that was

immensely helpful in stepping back and understanding the ways that [she had] operated

in[her] life and the ways that [she wanted] to operate." All participants spoke about the

support that was provided by family, friends and their Black communities that

encompassed other graduate students in their cohort, spiritual communities and

organizations that they were members of.   In rehearsing the support that she received, the

Curator commented, "there were no banners or parties, just words of encouragement that

I was doing the right thing and to stay on track." This was also true for the *Amalgamator*

whose aunt told her to "F.O.C.U.S.: Follow one course until successful." These are just

two examples of verbal affirmation and encouragement that participants received.

Support ranged from simple words of encouragement like, "you got this", "I'm in your corner," "so proud of you and all that you have accomplished so far, " "praying for you," "you are in the first in our family," "I wish that I could have done something like this," " keep pushing," "wow- that's amazing" to tangible expressions of love, time and forgiveness that manifested in " tell me how I can support you," "what do you need me to do," "I know that you are in school so I cooked dinner," "I picked up the kids so that you can focus on studying," "Mom, I can take care of myself," "your next tank of gas is on me," "don't worry about that family obligation we all know that you are in school" and "here's some change to help you a little."

Beautiful Beast of Burden said that she was encouraged when other students came to her aid and comforted her in moments when she cried uncontrollably as a result of the academic pressure and uncertainty of her readiness for the program.

It looked like telling me my emotions were validated. It was ok to be nervous. It was ok to cry. It was ok to be stressed out because people had done it before and we were going to make it. I was told just to hold on and that I was going to make it you are going to make it, we were going to make it.

Educator of Others, *Servant of All*, *Revolutionary*, *Amalgamator*, *Work in Progress* and *Integrator* received institutional supports in the form of educational benefits from employers or scholarships. *Integrator* said, "my family has always been amazing. When I was doing my doctorate the first time my sister actually gave me financing to assist me in getting through the program." Apart from isolated cases with faculty who took a personal interest in a particular student like the Initiator or their

research assistants, *Educator of Others*, *Amalgamator* and *Revolutionary*; participants felt like the institution represented by the faculty, administrators and staff was cold, unwelcoming, or discouraging. "Being aware of systems," the *Curator* said, you can rarely if ever ask the system to offer support to you. Especially when the thing that you are doing does not jive with what the system expects of you as a woman or a Black woman or person of color." The *Resilient One* was one of two students who mentioned having experienced positive support from faulty, "I think that the positive encouragement and support that I had from my professors was because I specifically did speak to culture in my dissertation process they were fascinated by the approach that I was taking which was different from the usual clinical perspective."   Even with this positive support *Resilient One* shared that she had to often "educate" her committee and her class peers on Black culture indicating, "it was amazing to me how often when we were having class discussions that there was seemingly no understanding of any perspective other than White culture."

   In fact, looking back at the experience as a whole or points along the way participants shared what they wished would have happened and the support that they wished that they would have received from the institution. Participants voiced their concerns and recommendations revealing four themes: Faculty, academic advising, orientation and ceremony and sponsorship.

   Faculty. In terms of faculty representation campus the *Affirmer* questioned: Why there weren't more Black professors or just teachers even if it was adjunct positions?" While the *Revolutionary* chose to focus on the racial composition of the

students in class with her. She said, "A learning community of people that look like you is really important. The system is so big that even those who are saying something are not heard." Concurring on the need for a critical mass of Black students that would help her feel safe and accepted, *Resilient One* said,

> I think that there weren't enough faces that looked like mine and their weren't enough opportunities for me to step outside of the dominate ways of coping to just be with people that understood me culturally where I did not have to make excuse or explain it constantly or be the educator or representative of Blackness in the room.

Not only was there not a lot of AA women in *Resilient One's* classes but she also commented on the curriculum itself. "There was nothing that was built into the curriculum that has a flair or flavor for the AA community." She felt that either having more Black people or a Black perspective would have helped her feel more at home. *Educator of Others* expressed that there is more to supporting Black students than giving them financial aid. Like *Resilient One, Educator of Others w*anted more thoughtfulness in the way that institutions served AA women. To that end she explained:

> Caring for others is not just writing a check but it is following up with them to make sure that all of their needs are met holistically.

Second to having AA represented more in the faculty and student populations was the need to have better academic advising.

Academic advising. *Flagship* provided a blueprint for what good academic advising entailed. She said, "I think that support for me would have been more of making sure that I took the right coursework in to move forward in the timeline that I gave myself. I felt like I would have conversations with some of our professors and some of them were a lot more forthcoming with what the expectations were and what you should be able to accomplish in a certain amount of time. Others, I felt like it was almost as though they themselves did not remember what it was like to go through this process."

In conjunction to the challenges that *Flagship* experienced with general program academic advising *Resilient One* experienced a different twist of course specific guidance. She desired to have "feedback on (her) papers that would lead (her) down different paths which would help support where (she) was coming from." In irritation with professors who were not timely either in their work product or in meeting appointments *Work in Progress* said,

> It should not be a program where only the squeaky wheel gets the oil and who has time to be the squeaky wheel? All of my colleagues worked and take into account that we are in the Bay Area but some traveled to school on teaching weekends or for appointments.

Servant of All expressed discontentment with the care and concern about her progress by those in advisory roles. She said,

> For me support is someone who knows what you are going through and will give you encouragement and will ask you about it and will let you vent then say 'that's

enough now get your ass back to work, don't get stuck here in your vent mode

cuz you have work to do.'

The above participants' expressions centered their disappointments on faculty

interactions and unknown or unclear processes. Therefore, participants pointed to areas

where a simple overview or orientation would have helped them in the program.

Orientation. Addressing the need for some type of "onboarding" into the

institution, Work in Progress said:

Support for me would have really looked like what it would have liked to be a

first-time graduate student and what should orientation have looked like if I am a

working adult, Working parent, just out of undergrad. If I carry any of those

identities, what should we be addressing for you? How do we sign you up

automatically for the different resources and supports that you may need or give

you optional forums that you can sign up for that are University-wide. A true

guidance system whether it be a checklist, a mentor, a buddy system, an advisor

or counselor all of/ or any one of those things that you do see in undergraduate

programs.

For participants it was not only their entrance into the institution that was notable but also

their exits. The Amalgamator said, "It is important for me to celebrate in community with

others who understand the journey that I have been on or at least honor my dedication to

it." Ceremony and ritual were important components to the *Amalgamator* as well as to

Work in Progress who explained:

Ceremony. The other thing that stuck out for me that was quite odd was commencement. My commencement was in May 2017. Where we are in the School of Education, all the things that just recently happened and even in the 2 years that I was in the program that there would have been a better person to talk about those things during graduation. It calls into question the decision that are being made at the administration level to bring in speakers to talk to educators and policy makers who are supposed to be the next generation to change the world had no thought process as to what that would look like. Even on our deis the president- white, catholic male; the provost- white, Jewish, male and at the time we had our interim Dean, a female of color (which was awesome) non-Abrahamic tradition but then like between the board of trustees and others on the rostrum, I remember looking at them walking across the stage and thinking that it seemed weird. They were not representative.

Not only was it important for participants to have ceremonies and rituals that were representative of people in their communities, their culture and their beliefs, moving forward it is important for them to have ongoing support in the form of sponsorship or endorsements.

Sponsorship. For *Resilient One,* "It also looked like showing me ways where after I finished my official school process I could continue the work that I was doing. Ways in which I could build my project that would allow me to break it apart and parts of it or all of it. Ways in which I could focus on sections of it for publications, etc."

The *Authenticator* said that after the initial department welcome where all students were greeted upon starting their first semester in the program that the institutional support waned. Participants in this study generally experienced aloneness described as being "left to fend for themselves" and expected to know things about the process and politics of the institution without the benefit of being "mentored," "guided" or "coached." In reflection about her ways of understanding the institution, *Servant of All* said, "I know that part of it is that I am not very demanding. I do like to work things out for myself and I don't ask for much help but, Damn It! you should offer, right, like I'm paying you for these directed study units. You could shoot me an email every once in a while."

Lack of support, negative support and being ignored were considered part of the participants' process even if it was not part of the actual graduate study process. The *Amalgamator* regarded this as the Black woman's academic rite of passage.

Rite of Passage. Participants viewed graduate studies as a "rite of passage" or "an academic middle passage" where only the strong and determined survive. Receipt of "negative support" was a common theme amongst participants. Participants all shared testimonies of being ill-treated, presumed incompetent by faculty and negative interactions with non-Black students in the program. The *Integrator* was bolstered by the negative support. She said that it "spurred," "propelled" and "motivated" her "to prove those who were "othering" her and to go deeper in her studies.

When asked about the positive support received *Educator of Others* said that the somewhat hostile and belittling interactions with faculty, students and staff at USF

proved to be positive in that she grew stronger every time she pushed back. However, she

contended that there need to be a change in the faculty if negativity persisted. She said,

"If you don't believe that students are of high value and are going to go out and do

service in their community, society and really change the paradigm of how education

looks, then why are you here if you are not here to help with that?" Admittedly, to

Educator of Others, *Work in Progress*, *Servant of All*, *Revolutionary*, *Authenticator*,

Amalgamator, *Flagship*, *Curator* and *Integrator* the challenges and obstacles did not feel

good or positive at the time. Strength is a commodity held in trust in the collective AA

community.

The *Curator* noted, "we don't set our families to the side as we study, rather they

come to school with us, they provide for us the motivation to push forward despite the

challenges that we face."   "Strength" and "resilience" were themes that defined the ways

that participants came to know the origin, nature, methods, and limits of their knowledge.

The *Affirmer*, *Revolutionary*, *Amalgamator*, Resilient One, *Servant of All* and the

Authenticator accredited being Black women in White spaces as ultimately the

contributing factor in their ways of knowing.   It is through "holding consciousness of

how their "Blackness" moves through spaces" that the *Affirmer* described the

illumination of their challenges and accomplishments; and sorrow and celebration as

distinctly valuable tools to dictate the meaning of that space.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Racial/ethnic identity is seen as a combination of personal attitudes and

experiences with both majority and minority groups. As such, Black women are often

only defined by the Whiteness that surrounds them. The data shows that the social construct of identity plays a part in the outcomes of AA women graduate students. AA women graduate students perceive their experiences through a lens shaded by white male hegemony at PWI. Participant experiences ranged from being ignored to being targeted to answer for any social problem that involved Black people around the world.

The experiential student outcome was consistent. Age, family composition, socioeconomic status and employment status were seemingly not determining factors in the treatment of participants. From the participants' standpoint it appeared that the age old adage of discrimination on the basis of race or gender (matrix of domination) still persists and that one's ability to navigate the hidden minefields will determine continued success for these and other AA women.

One of the most salient findings was the role that these women played for each other, the strong relationships and support systems that were formed despite their surroundings. In speaking about the wealth of community of support she received, *Work in Progress* said, "Hands down I think that is one of the beautiful things about the Black community". Calling the community of women, "Black Girl Magic Crew", *Servant of All* said: "You create your own network. I created my own network. We encouraged each other", illustrating the camaraderie she had built with other Black women in her program.   Explaining it as a "collective" the *Affirmer* connected her community to a specific Bay Area City. Here she reflected on what made her community of support special. She said,

My Oakland community is a collective of Black women made up of artists, educators, policy makers and you have it. A very creative collective of Black people engaging in critical Black thought. This collective of women that I am a part of outside of the Black Female project emphasizes viewing the Black woman as a God figure.

To the *Affirmer* it was important to elevate Black women above white traditional roles that had oppressed them. *Servant of All* knowing the *Affirmer's* position on Black women wanted to address the "Black woman as a God figure" depiction. She said,

I have a lot of discussions about feminism cuz I'm not feminist. I think with feminism you're trying to get me to downgrade. Women are superior to men. They are stronger than men and smarter than men. They are more powerful than men. They can change the world better than men. So if I want to be equal to a man I am asking to be downgraded. So, I am qualifying me answer to say that as a woman I see myself as strong and capable to able to change the world. As an AA woman I see myself as endowed with even more skills than even a regular woman cuz Black women are more powerful. They have been trying to destroy Sistahs for a thousand years and it ain't worked and that's why they are pissed now. Black women are Gods.

Despite the challenges of being AA women, participants see themselves as women of value and with a responsibility to contribute to the greater society by creating other ways of understanding the world. The women in this study all describe different levels of their engaged social justice activism- speaking out against oppressive activities

to participation in public marches and rallies; all with the eternal hope that by sharing their experiences they are contributing to making a world, without the practice of "othering," that is shared by all people and held in trust for future generations.

The *Affirmer, Amalgamator, Authenticator, Beautiful Beast of Burden, Curator, Educator of Others, Flagship, Initiator, Integrator, Resilient One, Revolutionary, Servant of All and Work in Progress* were participants in this study. The findings reveal that their experiences as Black women graduate students in a culturally White and traditionally male space (USF) was mixed with both excitement for the pursuit of scholarship and disdain for what they felt were unnecessary and contradictory institutional practices such as isolation, lack of sponsorship and support, dearth of cultural representation in faculty, staff and curriculum, and poor advising. These were seen by participants as another way to discount, ignore, marginalize and uphold stereotypes (i.e.: breeder women, angry black woman, mammy, jezebel and intellectually incompetent) about Black women. Although, the women gained an understanding about themselves through their academic paths much of what they learned was how to create community among other women for support, recognition and encouragement. Their perseverance despite the challenges that they faced and ability to band together to overcome them and progress to graduation was a sustentative finding

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter 5 captured the findings from both the survey as well as participant interviews. Generative themes: Dark but lovely; Movin' on up; Academic obstacle course, and Rite of passage were elevated during participants' storytelling. This was all in efforts to describe and understand the experiences of AA women who matriculate (d) at the University of San Francisco, a culturally White institution on the West coast.

The academy perpetuates and reflects the culture and values of the larger society. Although, AA women are objectified in the academy; self-valuation, self-definition, and knowledge validation from life experiences replace stereotypical images (mammies, Jezebels, angry Black and breeder women of slavery) that AA women have been subjected to over the years (Collins, 1991, 1998; Smith, 2015). Speaking about the complexities inherent in Black women's lives Audrey Lord said, "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives" (1984, p. 138). The findings in this study speak to multiplicity of issues that face AA women in culturally White academic spaces. It also highlights their struggle in numerous ways to countermand domination and oppression.

The women in the study evaluated their own internalized oppressive views of themselves and others; the roles they played as the oppressed and oppressor and their process of liberation by becoming a creator of new history. Participants felt dominated and oppressed by White culture and faced with these issues they resist by using language

and ideas to describe and explain the depth of oppression they experienced and their advocacy and protest efforts. Domination to the women in the study implies not only the exercising of power and influence over them as AAs or women but also the exertion of historical and ongoing marginalization because of their race or gender.   For these women the domination-resistance pair takes a myriad of forms.

Counter-stories are one type of resistance to domination that is in keeping with the theoretical frame of Black feminist thought (2000) as a method to give "greater recognition of the interplay of race, class, and gender in shaping women's oppression" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 241).

While reflecting on their experiences gaining entry into, progressing through and graduating from a culturally White institution, participants told counter-stories (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; L. Parker & Villalpando, 2007). Counter-storytelling is a means of challenging the beliefs of the majority and giving AA women graduate students in the academy an opportunity to communicate their own experiences in their own words (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Life stories from AA women graduate students prompt us to reflect on and understand different standpoints in the contexts of their everyday lives (Fuertes, 2012).

What did we learn from the experiences of the participants in the study that served to contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their epistemological selves?   We learned that AA women graduate students in the study see themselves as complex and interconnected. We learned that they were constantly reminded that they are in a world and institution that does not recognize, honor or uphold

them. We learned that they are spiritual. We learned that they are dedicated to serving others. We learned that they are not alone.

Ubuntu

In keeping with Afrocentric thought, the findings and recommendations will be discussed in relation to "Ubuntu," what it means to be human. A Zulu maxim provides perhaps the simplest definition of Ubuntu: "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*," which means "a person is a person through other persons" (Samkange & Samkange, 1990).

Samkange and Samkange (1990) highlight the three maxims of Ubuntuism which shape this philosophy: (1) To be human is to affirm ones humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and on that basis, establish respectful human relations with them; (2) If and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life; and (3) A principle deeply embedded in traditional African political philosophy: The king owes his status, including all the powers associated with it, to the will of the people under him.

In the following sections I will use Ubuntu to illuminate the stories shared by the participants in relation to the research question: How do the experiences of African American women graduate students at culturally or predominately White institutions serve to contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their epistemological selves? In addition, I elucidate how women in the study experienced the five mechanisms of the matrix of domination (historical, ideological, material, behavioral, and emotional) and intersectionality as exposed by Patricia Hill-

Collins'(2000) Black feminist thought theoretical frame in order to highlight their recommendations to further resist domination in the academy for AA women.

In Black feminist thought Hill- Collins (2000) emphasizes all three levels as sites of domination and as potential sites of resistance. Each participant in this study has a unique personal biography made up of concrete experiences, values, motivations, and emotions. No two women occupy the same social space; thus no two lived experiences are identical. Relationships for these women were freeing and empowering as seen in their stories of support and camaraderie with other women in their programs.

These women's accounts emphasize the power of self-definition and the necessity of a free mind, to rearticulate the standpoint of AA women as a group and offer individual AA women the conceptual tools to resist oppression. The cultural context formed by the experiences and ideas that are shared by participants also gives meaning to individual accounts and constitutes a second level at which domination is experienced and resisted.

Each woman's lived experience is rooted in several overlapping cultural contexts--for example, race, social class, age, gender, education level and family composition. The cultural component for these women contributes the epistemologies used in thinking and acting, group validation and evaluation of thoughts and behavior of self and others. For example, *Servant of All's* Black Girl Magic is one participant's culture of resistance, developed in cultural context and represents a subjugated. The existence of these

women's friendships and women's circles points to Black women's culture of resistance as expressed through their relationships with one another.

Domination is also experienced and resisted on the third level of social institutions controlled by the dominant group, namely -schools. These culturally White institutions immersed study participants into the specialized thought representing the dominant group's standpoint and interests. Again, quoting the *Resilient One,* she said, "it was amazing to me how often when we were having class discussions that there was seemingly no understanding of any perspective other than White culture."

While such institutions offer the promise of knowledge transfer that can be used for AA women's empowerment and social transformation, they simultaneously require docility and passivity. Participants felt pressured to replace their Afrocentric ways of knowing with the White culture. As these women struggle Lorde (1984, p. 123), suggests "the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us."

Women in this study navigate the space between oppression and resistance where the goal is not to merely survive the matrix of domination but live as an integral part of society where responsibility is shared. The presence of these AA women graduate students in culturally White spaces suggests that there is always choice, and power to act, no matter how austere the situation may appear to be. Because these women view

themselves as responsible for generations, they contend for individual and collective change.

AA women see themselves as interconnected. In addition to historical narratives dominant in our culture concerning AAs, the associated life experience accompanying age and family composition help to shade the prospective of participants. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. To be human is to affirm ones humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and on that basis, establish respectful human relations with them (Samkange & Samkange, 1990). It also speaks about our interconnectedness and interdependences as people and the way they relate, think and act together as one people, created in one universe.

The women in this study cannot be human all by themselves, and when they have the Ubuntu quality they are ordinarily seen or known for being humble, generous and selfless, which are qualities that are in direct relation to their treatment of others. Participants saw themselves as living and acting in tandem with others and the universe, in the sense that they are intrinsically connected as people, and what they do affects others in the world including nature.

While sharing is incorporated within Ubuntu it is only one of the multiplicities of virtues within the Ubuntu domain, as such persons coming in contact with study participants were not expected to burden themselves with knowing everything or having all the provisions for life's journey. All that was needed was the desire and dedication to

be on the journey together. Participants saw an obligation to extend themselves selflessly to make sure that provision was made for all. Participants demonstrated these virtues in the emotional and material support that they provided for other women in their cohort as well as classmates, faculty and other university staff that they encountered without the expectation of any form of payment in return. In so doing, they fostered harmony and the spirit of sharing amongst members of the academic community.

AA women experience the institution as a rite of passage. Rites of passage usually involve ritual activities and teachings designed to strip individuals of their original roles and prepare them for new roles. Such is the case for AA women. The academy tries to strip AA woman of their multiplicities, compressing them into a single dimension and demanding that they conform to a White male worldview in order to excel. Commenting on her experiences *Servant of All* proclaimed,

> Whiteness is real! I absolutely don't believe that everybody is prejudice. I know that systems are racist. Be proud of yourself for surviving in a racist system. Social Justice is what our university (USF) tries to purport itself to be, but it is still a racist institution. They let you in but really only want to measure you on how White you can be. The Whiter you are the more successful you are.

Baldwin (1984) asserts that American history is the only one where color is a factor. Prior to the establishment of the Americas people had a racialized identity that was born out of a sense of culture (i.e. Italian, African, French, etc.). Further, Baldwin (1984) contends that "White" and "Black" as referents to people are social constructs devised to give power to some at the expense of the other. Despite the "othering"

throughout American history, AA women are not daunted by adversity, resistance and controversies that surround them. They view it as part of the cycle of life that makes them stronger and more resilient than their White woman counterparts. Through self-exploration AA women emerge with a stronger sense of personal responsibility in all aspects of their lives – stretching all the way out to the larger world of which they are a part. With positivity AA women embrace the challenges that come with the academy. Scholar bell hooks in describing the challenges and opportunities of the academy said,

> The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom with all its limitations remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility, we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (1994, p. 207)

While Ubuntu is a worldview, there are certain outward characteristics that reflect the internal belief that we are all connected, most notably the traits of compassion and justice. If and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life (Samkange & Samkange, 1990). Crass (2013) posits that when wealth is chosen over the life of a human being then that choice erodes safety and health for the people it discards, and then works on everyone else, thereby leaving no one safe . Preservation of life is not only physical but also extends to Black women's emotional and intellectual life faculties. AA women in the study were faced time and time again with the choice

between wealth over life. Each time choosing life these women banded together to get through the rigors of graduate study, take care of families, stay gainfully employed, deal with tragedy like the death of a loved one or a co-worker, survive family illness, progress without institutional support, and a host of other trials. One participant called it being the "beast of burden for all"-an AA woman created to carry heavy emotional and psychological loads or to perform other heavy work like carrying the destiny of her entire race and gender on her back simultaneously.

Despite having the weight of the world on their shoulders, the participants in this study, all of whom were AA women graduate students shared the personal traits noted in persons living an Ubuntu life: welcoming, hospitable, warm, generous and willing to share. They were open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable, affirming of others, did not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they had a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole. These qualities are life sustaining conduits. In contrast *Flagship* said that the dominate culture chooses wealth over life by choosing to challenge and villainize Black women;

> They have been challenged by who we are and the color of our skin. As African American women we have not been challenged by that in the sense that as an African American person everybody has concerns individually but as a whole, and as a group we do not have struggles about who we are. It is people on the outside who struggle with who we are.

Study participants know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are, therefore they do not participate in the Western practice of othering. The quality of Ubuntu gives AA women graduate students resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them.

AA women experience PWIs in community. If the community thrives by including all the unique perspectives brought out by these women then everyone thrives but if those same perspectives are discarded or omitted then the reverse is also true, all are shortchanged by their omission. Ubuntu therefore also means; I am what I am because of who we all are collectively. The spirit of Ubuntu has not been evident to the participants in the study, this includes: respectfulness, helpfulness, caring community, sharing, trust, selflessness, etc. on the part of the institution.

Ubuntu puts the personal gains of AA women graduate students in a larger context – the context of something greater than us, some transcendent cause. The personal gains of AA women graduate students, whether mental gains (such as education-movin' on up) or physical gains (such as money and status), inevitably benefit the greater community and make it a better place for everyone.

Thus, AA women with Ubuntu share their gains of wisdom or wealth with their neighbors. Participants called it both "giving back" and "paying it forward". Closing the circle of past-present and future participants, acknowledged the struggle of community members and ancestors who had gone before them and made it possible for their present

achievements. Paying it forward, participants are agents of change that are making a way for the generations that are yet to come.

This is no different than the Christian ethic that 10 of the 12 participants ascribed to, which values respect and justice as the highest human good. In Leviticus 19:18, the scripture says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," commanding us to recognize the inherent humanity in each other. In the Gospels, Jesus reminds his followers not only to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with your entire mind, and with all your strength," but also that the next greatest commandment is that "you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31). In the scripture, loving God with everything we have leads to "Ubuntu" – the respect and compassion that we have for each other within a community. The end result, however, remains the same – study participants possessed Ubuntu. They were welcoming, compassionate, and affirming towards all people even though the same was not always reciprocated by the institution (persons, policies and practices).

Implications

The women. Gzech (2007) and Farmer (2003) challenge conventional thinking within human rights circles and expose the relationships between political and economic injustice, on one hand, and the suffering and illness of the powerless, on the other**.**

"Because human rights violations are usually symptoms and signs of deeper pathologies of power, anthropology, sociology, history, political economy, and

other 'resocializing' disciplines have important roles to play if we are to understand how best to protect human rights" (Farmer, 2003, p. 20).

What does to mean to be human? Isn't education considered part of the human right equation? It should be universal: existing or available for everyone; indivisible: impossible to separate and transportable: ability to carry from one place to another.

Human rights research, aid and advancement are part and parcel of what it means to be concerned with the rights, provisions and accommodations of those who fall into the category of our otherness (AAs and women).   By allowing the continuance of social exclusion based solely upon the benchmarks set by White- male politicians and leaders, AA women are prevented from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This sets AA women on the fringe of the academy and pushes them to seek solace in other disciplines that do not recommend or require formal education to advance. When the second maxim of Ubuntu-choosing the preservation of life over wealth are not met, material deprivation of education and healthcare is the most common result of this exclusion (Suarez-Orozco & Baolian Qin- Hillard, 2005). Ensuing and insuring for AA women poverty, emotional and psychological trauma, and diseases resultant from being ignored and omitted from the research. The consequence is catastrophic damage to lives, health, and psyche.

The institution. In concept, the University of San Francisco with its "Change the World from Here" slogan embodies the idea of transforming social conditions that perpetuate violence-systems of oppression, exploitation, domination, and state violence through the vehicle of education. As Jesuits, the University strives to build the personal and collective capacity of students and facility to respond to trauma and support accountability.   Essentially the slogan and the ideology that it conveys is the spirit of Ubuntu in written form. Change is an active process that must go beyond just words.

A recent article by Templeton et al. (2016) highlights the policies, practices and procedures of inclusion and the mission of the university. The study used a rubric to measure inclusion based on a three point set of criteria (equity, sustainability, and mission-alignment), the authors analyzed four common statements in which inclusion policies for traditionally marginalized students and students of color were contained: university mission statement, diversity program mission statement, diversity statement, and values/goals statements. Revealed in the study was the incongruence between the diversity program mission, diversity statement and the mission of the university with values/goals statement. This tension reflects the practice of institutions of higher education to draft policies that reflect inclusion language for diverse populations (African Americans, women, reentry students, etc.) without making the necessary structural changes that impact values, attitudes, and practices.

One woman, the *Affirmer* in the current study felt that she could no longer continue at USF. Shortly after her interview she transferred to a HBCU where she perceived that she would receive greater support. In her final interview comments she

said although, "I was working on my third degree. I felt like I was going through the motions. I would always ask myself why there weren't more Black professors or even teachers in adjunct positions?" Continuing her reflection and projecting both a hope and recommendation for USF she stated, "It is my hope that USF opens their eyes and begins to reassess hiring processes" so that students can see themselves in the faculty and staff that surround them at this level. She recommended that USF reassess the needs of AA graduate students as well as work to propel them forward instead of only serving the university as the reciprocity of interest convergence.

When institutions do not embody the spirit of Ubuntu, change will not occur from the academic halls. Rather, it forces students out of the academy and subsequently narrows the experience of all students. If narrowing continues, institutions revert back to segregated spaces limiting the exchange of ideas and thus learning.

"Each one, teach one", a phrase generated during slave times, represented the responsibility that learned slaves had to teach others as a way of rising above their situation. We can learn from the ladies in this study (descendants of slaves) about USF and by extension other PWIs that have missions and vision statements that are incongruent with their programs and practices. We know what has not worked and therefore we have a springboard into change that could decenter Whiteness and move the collective consciousness of our institutions to truly be inclusive.

The world. Moses (2010; 1990) affirms the importance of modeling and mentoring for AA women. Learning from history, an African proverb describes a woman's journey beautifully, "I am because you are." Our power lies in our intersections of connectedness. In order for true social change to occur both the transformed consciousness of individuals and the social transformation of political and economic institutions are essential ingredients (Hill Collins, 2000). If we fail to support and uplift AA women graduate students, not only does the institution fail but we all fail.

Biblical cannon states that we, people, are living letters that are read by all (2 Corinthians 3:2). A letter is a type of artifact. An artifact is an object made by a human being. According to the Ubuntu philosophy to be human is to affirm ones humanity by recognizing the humanity of others conversely to be inhumane is to discount the humanity of others. The academy has a hand in the developing epistemologies and in turn creating human artifacts by either recognizing or dismissing the accomplishments, challenges and overall experiences of AA women graduate students. Therefore the lived stories of AA women graduate students who attend PWI are artifacts (Fuertes, 2012) .

> The most expressive 'cultural artifact' of any given period will be an exact reflection of who the person is. It will be a portrait of that person in America at that particular time. Who they think they are, what they think America or the world to be, given the circumstances, prejudices and delights of that particular America. (Jones, 1963)

When artifacts-AA women are obscured from view and excluded from the discourse, only the dominate ideology resonates in the earth. *Resilient One* felt that the

world was moving in reverse. In recent conversations she talked about being born in 1964 and having no rights as an AA until the Civil Rights Act of 1964, passing then only because women's rights were included, granted her rights based on her gender first and then her ancestry second. Her closing remarks were a sobering. Given the political and racial climate and the seeming trajectory of the current administration, "I may die without having rights as a Black woman."

Choices contain power. Choosing Ubuntu re-centers the experiences of AA women grad students as a means of evaluating our humanity as individuals, an institution and globally. In order to add to the body of knowledge about AA women graduate students in light of the research contained in the preceding chapters, I pose three recommendations.

Recommendations

Powell (2012) suggests that it is not enough to provide programs like affirmative action to supplement existing systems (White male hetero normative). Rather, a structural change is needed to protect all. The literature offers a wealth of support for the argument that AA women are objectified and oppressed on multiple fronts in society at large and in the academy in particular (K. Crenshaw, 1991; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Morris, 2007; Morrison, n.d.). One scholar said that being White means never having to think about it (Baldwin, 1984).

I am because you are. Third, we need AA woman to support one-another. Those who are in administrative and faculty positions should seek out and mentor other women who are different stages of study. In addition, we need faculty of all races to see their future in the students. We need faculty that is invested in the students' success because they see the success of the student as vital to their wellbeing and success. Those in power must continue to recognize the humanity in the people they lead, and must continually affirm the dignity of others. It is particularly imperative for those in leadership roles to develop Ubuntu because they have an impact not only on the people they lead, but on other whole communities. Thus, recognizing that they are "a person only through other persons" allows them to work for a transcendent cause, lead courageously, and enact justice on behalf of others.

Paradigm shift. The first and maybe the most profound recommendation is that PWIs like USF think about what it means to be an AA woman graduate student enrolled in the university. What policies and practices are in place to lessen the cognitive load of graduate students who are "SWBW" "studying while Black Women"? How can university administrators contribute to the success of Black women? What types of scholarship and sponsorship opportunities are available and how do these women find them?

Research suggests that the practices of many faculty reflect inherent, covert stereotypes about AA women students. Racism is intrinsic when it is assumed that it is only through White thinkers that thought can be understood or be philosophical (Lynn & Dixson, 2013, p. 52). As a result students face marginalization because of their race or

ethnicity and also because of interrelated characteristics like gender, class and sexuality. These structural, organizing factors ultimately determine educational access, opportunity, and one's general well- being in institutional settings.

Institutional support. Second, AA women graduate students need institutional support. The support systems that promote academic achievement of AA women graduate students fails to ignite the social change that is needed for AA women to be successful. To combat the "stereotype threat" facing all Black students, Institutions and faculty need to provide the kind of support that enables AA women graduate students to sustain a critical anti-racist/white position and thrive.   This includes acknowledging their positionality as human beings, as AAs, as women, as adult learners, as reentry students, as community leaders, etc.

Additional institutional supports that may lead to a more positive AA women's graduate student experience include but are not limited to: (1) Developing student services that reflect their presence; (2) Invite African- American women to speak on campus (modeling); (3) Establish community spaces for students to meet for social and educational exchanges; (4) Encourage and support African- American women graduate student participation in leadership activities; (5) Create a special place for African- American reentry women.

Become invested in students. This study illuminates the critical and unrecognized need for faculty to acknowledge their own racial identity and how this affects their relationships and expectations of AA women graduate students. For the United States to benefit from cultural diversity, its learning communities can no longer fail to educate, mentor, sponsor, coach and promote AA women or maintain complicity in race, gender and economic privilege among students and faculty.

Conclusion

Black college students who attend predominately White institutions (PWI's), encounter institutional actors and structures lacking of support for their cultural identity and result in them feeling less academically supported (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; M. Parker & Flowers, 2003). Most of the research on African American women at predominately White institutions was done in the 1980s by Jacqueline Fleming and Walter Allen (1986). One of their findings remaining consistent with the participants in this study thirty- seven years later is that; African American women often suffer from emotional pain, social isolation, or aroused fears of incompetence at predominately White colleges and universities.

The new frontier is inclusion not diversity. While policies and practices at colleges and universities have shifted as a result of changing times and the courts—even as the Supreme Court reviewed admissions policies during its 2015–16 term—virtually all institutions are making efforts to accommodate a more diverse pool of incoming students. Even the most selective institutions are redoubling efforts to ensure that their faculties and students are more representative; at the same time, the concept of inclusion

has grown to embrace not only race and gender, but also sexual orientation, age, and disability (Toner, 2016). Super diversity-the proliferation of diversities is not the answer when laid alongside a White standard. There are potential dangers in the current climate where rhetoric such as, "We going to make America great again" (slogan of the 2016 Trump presidential campaign and subsequent presidency term commencing in 2017) has become a euphemism for Whiteness. It appears that with all the talk of diversity that pendulum is swinging severely to the right in an effort to re-center and refocus on White people and what has happened to them while negating the suffering and dehumanization of people of color at their hands.

In summary, the third maxim of Ubuntu asserts that those in power, position and privilege are only there at the will of people under them. It infers that the structure and balance of power can change at any given time and therefore it is important to honor all people. Ubuntu-person is a person through other people; affirms one's humanity only through the recognition of an "other". Not as defined in Chapter 3 where othering has a negative connotation but redefining it to honor and celebrate the difference and uniqueness in persons around us.   This othering is not a call for subjugation but a demand for human interaction where the 'other" becomes a reflection for our subjectivity.

This idealism suggests to us that humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me simultaneously, interaction by interaction. This means that we are in a constant state of curation, creating each other and sustaining each other to be human. The third maxim

suggests that we belong to one another and have a responsibility to participate in our creations: We are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am. The 'I am' is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on relationship with others.

Future Research

This study did not delve into the emotional impact of graduate education on African American women. Does pursuing an advanced degree take the heart out of AA women as they study and do the work? How much of whom they are is edited out? These are all questions that the current study did not address. Each participant had a story about what they clung to and discarded during their assent in the ivory towers. Investigating who AA women are becoming and what influences those choices can further help us understand ourselves through the mirror that is their lives.

Personal Reflection

I came to this study interested in how being immersed in culturally White environments affects African American women. Having attended these academic institutions my entire life, I wondered if my experiences were an anomaly. I heard that students who attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities or were part of Greek organizations felt more at home: wanted, accepted and part of something special. This was not my experience and so I wondered if my experience was representative of a larger group of women who are similarly situated.

For me I knew that my relationship with God was essential to my success in navigating all areas of life, yet I was not certain that this was the same for all. This study has changed me. In part because I now know that I am not alone in my experience and in part because the experience has made me stronger, more determined and focused.

In Romans 8:28 of Biblical cannon it is written, "And we know that *all things work together* for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." This sentiment sustained me during my studies. Whenever things went crazy with the process or the people, I remembered that this was part of the *all things* that scripture talked about. They were working for my good. I believe that we are all instruments in the hands of God. I emerge as a scholar with my own sharp edges removed resultant of my interaction with staff, faculty and administrators who were often abrasive, dismissive, cold and callus. On the other hand, my journey was contextually lined with African-American women who have provided guidance, love, support and

wise counsel. In keeping with Afrocentrism I call these women regardless of age my "Sistahs".

Finding other Sistahs in the process and being privileged to share our lives with one-another left an indelible impression. At times broken and others in full victory we each became more determined to see our goals achieved as well as each-others'.   I have always been a cheerleader for others. During this process I became more so an activist. If one of my Sistahs struggled I was invested and determined to find a solution. All for one and one for all.

We all have a call and an appointed time to execute that mission. The study interview process and subsequent conversations with my Sistahs revealed the level of focus that each of us now has. Pressure has a funny way of causing you let go of the unessential to press forward. Like the Biblical story of Esther who was called upon to stand and go against the political climate of the day in order to save an entire people, I too am called to dismantle injustice and light the way for others to follow. My hope and prayer is that this body of work serves to expose and ultimately dismantle academic environments that are culturally White.

I am blessed. I am blessed to experience both hatred and love from others. These extremes are my reality. I grow increasingly comfortable living in the extreme places that my journey takes me into. What this study has shown me is that I can achieve greatness. Greatness not as defined by the outside world that is always clamoring for me to submit to its approval but my own self defined masterpiece. This masterpiece is full of color and yes, there are even white spaces on the canvas that provide contrast.

Letter to My Sistahs

Thank you, for what you endured so that my voice might be free. It has taken a long time and I am excited about the liberties that I now have because of you. Although, history has recorded some of your journey I know that the half has never been told. Therefore, I want to take the time to honor you if nothing else than with just my words. I hope that they are enough to express my indebtedness to you. I have words because you were not silent and opened up uncomfortable spaces so that I could years later stand as an African American woman here at a predominately White institution; unafraid, unfiltered, unhindered, whole and entire lacking nothing. It was your voice that gave birth to my own agency. It is this solidarity that I take great pride and pleasure in. Thank you for being a part of my story. May we continue to curate and ambassador change together.

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Appendix A: African American Scholars program group survey

Dons **Apps**
STUDENT/ALUMNI

Bridget Love <bhlove@dons.usfca.edu>

[USF] Share Your Experience at USF
3 messages

African American Scholars Program Group <deanofstudents@usfca.edu>   Fri, Feb 10, 2017 at 1:00 PM
Reply-To: mebeasley@usfca.edu
To: bhlove@dons.usfca.edu

View this email in a web page

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO | Student Life

Dear Students,

A group of students, staff, and faculty have come together to develop a comprehensive strategy to build a more equitable and inclusive campus environment that enhances the recruitment and success of current and future African American students at the University of San Francisco. They need the voice of the African American student experience to assist in their planning and sharing with university administrators.

The survey is anonymous and will take no more than seven minutes. Please make sure your experience is counted as we work to implement programming and resources this coming fall.

Take the Survey Now »

Sincerely,
African American Scholars Project Strategy Group

Survey Administered via Qualtrics

Class Standing

❍ Freshman
❍ Sophomore
❍ Junior
❍ Senior

Are you a transfer student?

❍ Yes
❍ No

Ethnicity

❍ African American/Black
❍ African/Black
❍ Bi-racial
❍ Other _____

Are you an out-of-state student?

❍ Yes
❍ No

Do you receive financial aid to attend USF?

❍ Yes
❍ No

Are you a first generation college student?

○ Yes
○ No

How satisfied are you with your social life at the university?

○ Extremely satisfied
○ Very satisfied
○ Satisfied
○ Not very satisfied
○ Not at all satisfied

How many activities/programs do you participate in per semester?

○ 4 or more activities
○ 2-3 activities
○ 1 activity
○ I do not participate in campus activities

How often do you interact with students from your racial group?

○ 4 or more times per week
○ 2-3 times per week
○ Once per week
○ I do not interact with students from my racial group

What have your experiences been like as an African American/ Black student at USF?

○ Very positive
○ Positive
○ Neither positive nor negative
○ Negative
○ Very Negative

Provide an explanation for you answer above.

How often do you feel your ethnic identity as a student is values/appreciates by USF?

○ Very Often
○ Often
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Not at all

Please provide an explanation for your answer above.

How important was a racially diverse student body in your decision to attend USF?

○ Extremely important
○ Very important
○ Important
○ Not very important
○ Not at all important

How many courses have you taken that address aspects of African American culture, identity, history, and politics, etc.?

○ None
○ One
○ Two
○ Three
○ Four or more

How likely would you participate in a one-year themed community (living with other Black identified students and participating in cultural and social activities)?

○ Extremely likely
○ Very likely
○ Maybe
○ Not very likely
○ Not at all likely

Please a short answer to help us understand your response.

How likely would you participate in a one-year living learning community (living with other Black identified students and taking a 4-unit African American Studies course each semester)?

○ Extremely likely
○ Very likely
○ Maybe
○ Not very likely
○ Not at all likely

Please a short answer to help us understand your response.

How likely would you participate in a one-year living learning community (living with other Black identified students and taking a 2-unit African American Studies course each semester)?

○ Extremely likely
○ Very likely
○ Maybe
○ Not very likely
○ Not at all likely

Please provide a short answer to help us understand your response.

Overall, what do you think USF could do to improve the experience of current and future African American/Black students at USF?

How would you describe your connection/relationship with African American faculty and/or staff at USF?

How important is it to you to take courses from African American faculty?

○ Extremely important
○ Very important
○ Important
○ Not very important
○ Not at all important

How important is it to you to have African American faculty or staff as mentors?

○ Extremely important
○ Very important
○ Moderately Important
○ Not very important
○ Not at all important

How satisfied are you with the academic advising you have received?

○ Extremely satisfied
○ Very satisfied
○ Satisfied
○ Not very satisfied
○ Not at all satisfied

When seeking advice about your academic or planned professional career, would you prefer to consult with an academic success coach of your own race or faculty advisor of your own race?

❍ I definitely prefer to consult with someone of my own race
❍ I slightly prefer to consult with someone of my own race
❍ I have no preference regarding consulting with someone of my own race
❍ I slightly prefer to consult with someone who is NOT of my own race
❍ I definitely prefer to consult with someone who is NOT my own race

Have you ever considered leaving USF?

❍ Yes
❍ No

If yes, please explain why you considered leaving and why you chose to stay.

How much do you feel a sense of belonging on this campus?

❍ I feel a very strong sense of belonging
❍ I feel a sense of belonging
❍ I feel neither a sense of belonging or sense of estrangement
❍ I do NOT feel a sense of belonging
❍ I feel a strong sense of NOT belonging

De-selection Response

African American Scholars Program Group <deanofstudents@usfca.edu>   Tue, Feb 14, 2017 at 11:30 AM
Reply-To: mebeasley@usfca.edu
To: bhlove@dons.usfca.edu

View this email in a web page

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO | Student Life

Dear Graduate Students,

The African American Scholars Project is a collaboration of faculty, staff, and students on campus who have come together to focus on the African American undergraduate student experience. We deeply apologize this survey reached you in error. We believe your experience is salient and encourage you to voice your opinions and thoughts to your graduate program directly at this time.

Wishing you much success in your academic endeavors,
The African American Scholars Project

Appendix B: IRB APPLICATION

**UNIVERSITY OF
SAN FRANCISCO**

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

APPLICATION FOR IRB REVIEW OF NEW RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

If you believe your study meets the criteria for expedited review or full IRB review, complete the following form and upload this document to the online IRB system in Mentor.

1. RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Provide, in lay terms, a detailed summary of your proposed study by addressing each of the following items: Clearly state the purpose of the study (Usually this will include the research hypothesis) The purpose of this study is to describe and understand how African American women experience higher education at predominately White institutions in light of their multi-axial realities. Background (Describe past studies and any relevant experimental or clinical findings that led to the plan for this project) African American Women have largely been left out of the discourse in academic circles. When they are included they are marginalized and minimized to one-dimensional beings and defined by outsiders in unflattering stereotypical terms (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). This includes: Challenges, accomplishments and overall experiences. There is a need for data collection on African American female scholars in their own words. Need for a critical analysis to honor how they construct and reconstruct their epistemological selves in relation to the Eurocentric, male-dominated values in the academy. Both scholarly literature and educational practice are lacking depth and scope about the lived experience of African American (AA) female students, and, as a result, they lack effectiveness for this population of students and therefore there is a need to provide and sustain a culture where African American women can succeed. In addition, there is a need for critical analysis to honor how AA female students construct and reconstruct their epistemological selves in relation to the Eurocentric, male-dominated values in the academy. Research plan (Provide an orderly scientific description of the intended methodology and procedures as they directly affect the subjects) This study will adapt Awad's (2007) study design of structured survey and interviews. Respondents will be asked to answer closed questions choosing from predefined options where most of the potential answers are known. Respondents will have an option to add content and opt in to be interviewed further unpacking their experience and exploring emergent themes from the survey. Mixed method approaches are the best method to understand students' conceptualizations of their own identities especially when those students are on the cusp of several of society's margins (Delgado, 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Mertens, 2007). This methodology is an intersection of methods that uses both the tools of the privileged (quantitative) and the marginalized (qualitative) to inform (Cook & Williams, 2015; Mertens, 2007). The quantitative to qualitative flow reveals the complexity of intersectionality in two main ways: (1) it adds understanding of how students might conceptualize a single categorical identity (such as race) dimension using multiple categories (race, ethnicity, gender, culture, socioeconomic status and educational attainment), and (2) it reveals changes, development, and nuances to what sometimes appears static and simplistic (Harper, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). A quantitative survey as a preliminary method of inquiry makes it possible to provide data to explain the frequency of these phenomena in the context of everyday life. Surveys afford the researcher information about the knowledge, feelings, values and behavior of participants (Fowler, 2014). Qualitative interviews will follow the surveys- All data can be situated in a narrative. Narrative storytelling can be found deep in the cultures of African descent in the U.S. and indigenous cultures around the world, and also has a place in history of the

feminist movement (Delgado, 1989; Lawrence, 1992). In these cases the narrator functions "as an organic individual"(Beverly, 2007, p. 549; Reinharz, 1993) harnessing the power of social change by making their lived experience center stage.

Give the location(s) the study will take place (institution, city, state, and specific location)
Professional and academic associations will provide the setting for this study. SOTA is an African American woman's academic and research organization whose membership consists of matriculating master and doctoral candidates as well as professionals who have completed terminal degrees. NGWCC advocates for girls and women of color by addressing and discussing historical and societal perspectives about them. In addition, NGWCC is a sponsor of the Hawaii International Conference on Education (HICE) and SOTA hosts' annual writing and research retreats to further the development of scholars.

Duration of study project
April through September 2017

2. PARTICIPANTS

2(a) Participant Population and Recruitment

Describe who will be included in the study as participants and any inclusion and exclusion criteria.
The criteria for study participation are: (1) African American (2) female and (3) currently in or completed a masters/doctoral program at a predominately White institution. This study does not include African American female faculty, administrators or staff who may be present at PWI.

What is the intended age range of participants in the study?
22-60

Describe how participant recruitment will be performed.
The researcher joined Sisters of the Academy (SOTA) and National Girls and Women of Color Council Incorporated (NGWCC) to gain access to the memberships. Additionally, members of these organizations will be asked to refer potential participants who meet the criteria to the researcher.

Do the forms of advertisement for recruitment contain only the title, purpose of the study, protocol summary, basic eligibility criteria, study site location(s), and how to contact the study site for further information?   X Yes ☐ No
*If you answered "no," the forms of advertisement must be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to their use.

2(b) Participant Risks and Benefits
What are the benefits to participants in this study?
Participants are able to voice to perspectives that have been missing in the academy and in so doing inform future practices, tools and resources. The participants will be offered any guidance on navigating and succeeding in higher education, based on researcher finding through review of the literature.

What are the risks (physical, social, psychological, legal, economic) to participants in this study?
Participants may experience some psychological discomfort when asked to describe personal experiences in relation to their educational process that may be traumatic.

If deception is involved, please explain.
NA

Indicate the degree of risk (physical, social, psychological, legal, economic) you believe the research poses to human subjects (check the one that applies).
X MINIMAL RISK: A risk is minimal where the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, in and of themselves, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

☐ GREATER THAN MINIMAL RISK: Greater than minimal risk is greater than minimal where the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. **If you checked "Greater than Minimal Risk"**, provide a statement about the statistical power of the study based on intended sample size, design, etc. to test the major hypotheses)

2(c) Participant Compensation and Costs

Are participants to be financially compensated for the study? ☐ Yes X No If "yes," indicate amount, type, and source of funds.

Amount:	Source:	Type (e.g., gift card, cash, etc.):
NA	NA	NA

Will participants who are students be offered class credit?   ☐ Yes ☐ No   X N/A

If you plan to offer course credit for participation, please describe what alternative assignment(s) students may complete to get an equal amount of credit should they choose not to participate in the study.
NA

Are other inducements planned to recruit participants?   ☐ Yes X No   If yes, please describe.
NA

3. CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA SECURITY

Will personal identifiers be collected (e.g., name, social security number, license number, phone number, email address, photograph)?   ☐ Yes X No

Will identifiers be translated to a code?   ☐ Yes X No

Describe how you will protect participant confidentiality and secure research documents, recordings (audio, video, photos), specimens, and other records.

All participants will have the opportunity to choose pseudonyms. Raw data and any notes will be kept under the direct control of the researcher when in use and locked away when not in use.

4. CONSENT

4a. Informed consent

Do you plan to use a written consent form that the participant reads and signs?   X Yes ☐ No
   *If "no," you must complete Section 4b or 4c below.
If "yes," describe how consent will be obtained and by whom.

Participation in the survey and subsequent interviews is considered informed consent. Additionally, participants who choose to go on to do interviews will be provided with an additional description of the research purpose and methodology.

An introductory letter will be emailed to the identified sample using the panel function in Qualtrics. This letter will include an introduction to the researcher, the purpose of the study and a description of the methodology. The researcher will gain informed consent by providing participants with:

- An explanation of the purposes of the research and the expected duration of the participation;
- A description of the procedures to be followed;
- A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the participant;
- The participants will be offered any guidance on navigating and succeeding in higher education, based on researcher finding through review of the literature.
- A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained
- A statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled and the participant may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

- The background of the researcher.

At the conclusion of the survey, participants will be offered the opportunity to share their story in an additional interview as part of the qualitative portion of the mixed methodology. The 30- minute interviews will take place on a voluntary basis, and participants will have the opportunity to withdraw from the survey or interview

4

at any time.

If the participants are minors under the age of 18 years, will assent forms be used? ☐ Yes   ☐ No   X N/A
If "no," please explain.

Upload to the online IRB system the consent form(s) that the participants and/or parent/guardian will be required to sign, and the assent forms for children under the age of 18, if applicable.

Note: All consent forms must contain the following elements (quoted directly from Office for Human Research Protections regulations, available at: http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm#46.116). The IRB has consent templates containing all required elements, and we ask that you use these templates.

If you believe it is important to create your own consent form, you are free to do so but please ensure that your consent form has each of the following elements and indicate you have done so by checking this box:

☐ I have chosen to create my own consent form and have ensured that it contains the 8 essential elements listed below:

(1a) A statement that the study involves research, (1b) an explanation of the purposes of the research, (1c) the expected duration of the subject's participation, (1d) a description of the procedures to be followed, and (1e) identification of any procedures which are experimental;

(2) A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject;

(3) A description of any benefits to the subject or to others which may reasonably be expected from the research;

(4) A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject;

(5) A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained;

(6) For research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to whether any compensation and an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs and, if so, what they consist of, or where further information may be obtained;

(7) An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject; and

(8) A statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled."

4b. Waiver of documentation of written informed consent (Complete only if answered "no" to 4a)

The regulations allow instances in which the IRB may waive the requirement for documentation of informed consent, that is , the collection of a signed consent form. If you are requesting a waiver of written documentation (signed) of informed consent, please answer the following questions:

Will the only record linking the participant and the research be the consent document and the principal risk to the participant would be from breach of confidentiality?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

 Do you consider this a minimal risk study that involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of research (see 2B above for definition);?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

 Explain why you are requesting waiver or modification of documentation of written (signed) informed consent and how you plan to obtain consent.

4c. Waiver or modification of informed consent (Complete only if answered "no" to 4a)

The regulations also provide an opportunity for the IRB to waive the requirement for informed consent or to modify the informed consent process, provided the protocol meets the following criteria:

    (1) The research involves no more than minimal risk to subjects (see 2b above for definition);

    (2) The waiver of alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects;

    (3) The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration; and

    (4) Whenever appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after participation.

If you are requesting a waiver or modification of informed consent (e.g., incomplete disclosure, deception), explain how your project meets the requirements for waiver or modification of informed consent, as outlined above. .

Appendix C: IRB APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

IRBPHS - Approval Notification

To: Bridget Love

From: Terence Patterson, IRB Chair

Subject: Protocol #786

Date: 03/29/2017

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your research (IRB Protocol **#786**) with the project title **Focused: African American female students' perceptions of and experiences in higher education at predominately White Institutions. A mixed methods study.** has been approved by the IRB Chair under the rules for expedited review on **03/29/2017**.

Any modifications, adverse reactions or complications must be reported using a modification application to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS via email at IRBPHS@usfca.edu. Please include the Protocol number assigned to your application in your correspondence.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP

Professor & Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

University of San Francisco

irbphs@usfca.edu

USF IRBPHS Website

Appendix D: Cross Racial Identity Scale

PsycTESTS

Cross Racial Identity Scale
Version Attached: Full Test

Instrument Type:
Rating Scale

Test Format:
Each subscale has 5 items and all items are rated on a 7-point rating scale (1 for strongly disagree to 7 for strongly agree).

Source:
Supplied by author.

CROSS SOCIAL ATTITUDE SCALE

Instructions: Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your own thoughts and feelings, using the 7-point scale below. There are no right or wrong answers. Base your responses on your opinion at the present time. **To ensure that your answers can be used, please respond to the statements as written, and place your numerical response on the line provided to the left of each question.**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. As an African American, life in America is good for me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. I think of myself primarily as an American, and seldom as a member of a racial group.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
3. Too many Blacks "glamorize" the drug trade and fail to see opportunities that don't involve crime.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
4. I go through periods when I am down on myself because I am Black.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
5. As a multiculturalist, I am connected to many groups (Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Whites, Jews, gays & lesbians, etc.).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for all White people.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
7. I see and think about things from an Afrocentric perspective.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
8. When I walk into a room, I always take note of the racial make-up of the people around me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
9. I am not so much a member of a racial group, as I am an American.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
10. I sometimes struggle with negative feelings about being Black.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
11. My relationship with God plays an important role in my life.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
12. Blacks place more emphasis on having a good time than on hard work.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
13. I believe that only those Black people who accept an Afrocentric perspective can truly solve the race problem in America.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
14. I hate the White community and all that it represents.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree

         1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. When I have a chance to make a new friend, issues of race and ethnicity seldom play a role in who that person might be.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

16. I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, which is inclusive of everyone (e.g., Asians, Latinos, gays & lesbians, Jews, Whites, etc.).
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

17. When I look in the mirror at my Black image, sometimes I do not feel good about what I see.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

18. If I had to put a label on my identity, it would be "American," and not African American.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

19. When I read the newspaper or a magazine, I always look for articles and stories that deal with race and ethnic issues.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

20. Many African Americans are too lazy to see opportunities that are right in front of them.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

21. As far as I am concerned, affirmative action will be needed for a long time. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

22. Black people cannot truly be free until our daily lives are guided by Afrocentric values and principles.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

23. White people should be destroyed.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

24. I embrace my own Black identity, but I also respect and celebrate the cultural identities of other groups (e.g., Native Americans, Whites, Latinos, Jews, Asian Americans, gays & lesbians, etc.).
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

25. Privately, I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

26. If I had to put myself into categories, first I would say I am an American, and second I am a member of a racial group.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

27. My feelings and thoughts about God are very important to me.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

28. African Americans are too quick to turn to crime to solve their problems.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree

<div style="text-align: right">1 2 3 4 5 6 7</div>

29. When I have a chance to decorate a room, I tend to select pictures, posters, or works of art that express strong racial-cultural themes.

      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

30. I hate White people.

      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

31. I respect the ideas that other Black people hold, but I believe that the best way to solve our problems is to think Afrocentrically.

      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

32. When I vote in an election, the first thing I think about is the candidate's record on racial and cultural issues.

      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

33. I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, because this connects me to other groups (Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Whites, Jews, gays & lesbians, etc.).

      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

34. I have developed an identity that stresses my experiences as an American more than my experiences as a member of a racial group.

      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

35. During a typical week in my life, I think about racial and cultural issues many, many times.

      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

36. Blacks place too much importance on racial protest and not enough on hard work and education.

      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

37. Black people will never be free until we embrace an Afrocentric perspective. ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

38. My negative feelings toward White people are very intense.

      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

39. I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black.

      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

40. As a multiculturalist, it is important for me to be connected with individuals from all cultural backgrounds (Latinos, gays & lesbians, Jews, Native Americans, Asian-Americans, etc.).

      ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Appendix E: PERMISSION TO USE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Dons Apps
STUDENT/ALUMNI

Bridget Love <bhlove@dons.usfca.edu>

Seeking permission to use your research questions

Bridget Love <bhlove@dons.usfca.edu>   Fri, Dec 2, 2016 at 11:22 AM
To: rschwart@coe.fsu.edu, bower@coe.fsu.edu, rice@coe.fsu.edu, washingtonc@midlandstech.edu

Good afternoon:

I am a graduate student at the University of San Francisco in working on my dissertation that focuses on the experiences of African American women in higher education at predominately White institutions I found your article:

> 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. *The Journal of Negro Education, 72*(3), 252–268.
>
> https://doi.org/10.2307/3211247

I am writing to ask for permission to use the research questions (Survey II) as outlined. I will cite your work using APA 6th edition.

Thank you in advance,

Bridget Love
Doctoral Candidate
USF School of Education
International and Multicultural Education

Dons Apps
STUDENT/ALUMNI

Bridget Love <bhlove@dons.usfca.edu>

Seeking permission to use your research questions

Schwartz, Robert <raschwartz@admin.fsu.edu>   Fri, Dec 2, 2016 at 1:01 PM
To: Bridget Love <bhlove@dons.usfca.edu>
Cc: "Bower, Beverly" <Beverly.Bower@unt.edu>, "Rice, Diana" <drice@fsu.edu>

Sure, and thanks for asking!

Good luck with your research. I am sure we would be interested in your findings.

Bob

DonsApps
STUDENT/ALUMNI

Bridget Love <bhlove@dons.usfca.edu>

Seeking permission to use your research questions

Charles Washington <washingtonc@midlandstech.edu>   Fri, Dec 2, 2016 at 1:17 PM
To: Bridget Love <bhlove@dons.usfca.edu>

Bridget:

You might want to contact Robert Schwartz and I suppose that I would go along with his decision.

Respectfully,

Charles Washington

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