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In Our Words, on Our Terms: Critical Narratives of Black Women Doctoral Scholars

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

IN OUR WORDS, ON OUR TERMS: CRITICAL NARRATIVES OF
BLACK WOMEN DOCTORAL SCHOLARS

By

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The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the dissertation has been approved in accordance with university requirements.

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I love and miss you dearly. I hope I'm making you proud.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how Black women doctoral students describe and make meaning of their scholarly identities. Additionally, this study illustrates the negotiations Black women doctoral students make in the maintenance of their scholarly personas and their influence on their doctoral socialization experiences. Using Black feminism as a paradigm, this qualitative narrative study gathered stories from 9 Black women doctoral students in pursuit of the primary research question: How do Black women doctoral students describe and make meaning of their scholarly identities? Findings highlight how co-researchers understood themselves as scholars via Black womanhood and explored the complicating and empowering influence of doctoral socialization. Additionally, their commitment to equity and justice as bridge builders and the new realities they create as a result of their scholarly personas were uncovered. Implications call for academia to emphasize research focused on Black women's lived experiences, increase and retain Black women faculty, and shift socialization practices in culturally responsive ways to align with Black women doctoral students' needs. Collectively, this study offers new approaches to policy and practice to strengthen Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities, graduate socialization, and post-graduate career opportunities.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The doctoral experience is equally a journey of academic and professional development as it is one of personal transformation. Cultivation of a scholarly identity remains a central outcome of the graduate experience and reflects the integration of professional skills, knowledge, and values with an individual's personal and social identities. Scholarly identity is understood as “the ways academics see themselves (and are seen by others) as legitimate, contributing members of their academic field, discipline, and/or scholarly community” (Culpepper et al., 2020, p. 5). Becoming a scholar often emphasizes student's research contributions based on discipline and institution-specific ideals (Inouye & McAlpine, 2017). Yet, scholarly identity is shaped and continuously evolves before and beyond one’s student tenure. Scholarly identity differs from one’s doctoral student identity, which develops within an individual’s doctoral journey. As a result, scholarly identity is influenced by broader socialization practices, yet fostered and defined internally by the individual.

For doctoral students, graduate socialization as a practice is thought to aid in their transition into academia and to strengthen their capacity for success within their respective fields. Socialization into a field of practice is thought to support the success of doctoral students by providing insight into discipline-specific knowledge, norms, values, and practices (Blockett et al., 2016). This process occurs within and is defined by a preexisting broader organizational culture rooted in shared assumptions, ideas, norms, and practices (Tierney, 1997). Therefore, graduate socialization within doctoral study is informed by the dominant higher education culture (Gardner, 2008). Unlike scholarly identity, graduate socialization relies on doctoral students’ interactions with academia’s culture. This requires students to understand and buy into

the hidden curriculum of rules and practices to be successful. Individuals unable to adapt may fail to “fit the mold” of the ivory tower, further complicating an already demanding doctoral journey. But who creates the mold? And how does one mold themselves to “fit” without inflicting harm on themselves?

Despite its potential, socialization practices are systemically and institutionally inequitable and can be harmful to minoritized students (Blockett et al., 2016; Ellis, 2001, Turner & Thompson, 1993). This stems from the construction and maintenance of hegemonic white supremacy, settler-colonialism, and anti-Black racism rooted in the United States (US) higher education system (Anderson, 1988; Dancy et al., 2018; Wilder, 2013). As a social institution, academia is shaped by exclusionary and oppressive ideals, which establish discriminatory policies, practices, and limits access, yet it functions in preserving these values through the construction of knowledge sources that support dominant discourse. With Black and Brown bodies within, yet on the outskirts of rooms of power, dominance is maintained throughout communities and within the walls of higher education.

The effects of these practices, inclusive of graduate socialization, contribute to the poor representation of Black¹ women in academia and subsequent “leaky” pipeline to the professoriate for Black women doctoral students. Black women faculty represented 3% of the professoriate, decreasing to 2% with full-professorship status in 2018 (NCES, 2018). In the same year, the Survey of Earned Doctorates noted that Black women represented 3.1% of doctoral degree recipients (NCES, 2018). This lack of a critical mass of Black women indicates a broader crisis of institutionalized barriers embedded into higher education systems. These practices

¹ Black is used as a racial indicator within this study and encompasses all African-descendants displaced by countless global slave trades.

mirror widespread societal messages that demean, devalue and disjoint the experiences of minoritized individuals, establishing a distinct form of violence against Black women doctoral students.

For Black women doctoral students, existence at the intersections makes them targets of stereotypes, micro and macro aggressions, and discriminatory practices throughout their academic tenure (Dortch, 2016; Harley, 2008). As a result, fostering critical relationships with faculty, staff, and peers is limited and hinders their access to the hidden curriculum. Unwritten expectations inform this hidden curriculum and privilege students privy to its rules (Margolis & Romero, 1997; Patterson-Stephens et al., 2017). Interactions are often steeped in assumptions surrounding Black women doctoral students' admission status and capacity for graduate work (Henderson et al., 2010). The inability to develop networks within the doctoral journey restricts Black women doctoral students' access to knowledge and the development of skills needed to persist. The systemic lack of representation of Black doctoral students and faculty in departments creates further complications with advising, mentorship, and overall validation for these women. Together, Black women doctoral students grapple with feeling like outsiders, tokenized, and isolated throughout their programs (Shavers & Moore, 2019). In maintenance of themselves, many exits without completing their degrees and contribute to high attrition rates. Others graduate, yet, leave with a disinterest in academic careers, and emotional and physical trauma from the journey. To rethink practices that mitigate these challenges, additional study of Black women doctoral students' experiences must be pursued.

In 1636, the US higher education system was established without care for Black women's existence and further well-being (Anderson, 1988; Evans, 2008). For centuries, bias and discrimination barred Black women from access, limited their mobility, and relegated them to

specific disciplines and roles once admitted. From that moment into the present day, Black women continue to find ways to resist being defined, restrained, and erased by White supremacist and patriarchal hegemonic structures. Though dismantling of these structures is a responsibility to be carried by all those existing within systems of oppression, historical progress illustrates that transformation through the lens of Black womanhood is slow and unyielding in academia (Walkington, 2017; Wilder et al., 2013). Every day, Black women doctoral students are weathering harmful academic environments and problematic graduate socialization practices that shape their academic journeys and the broader field; yet many persist.

The enduring nature of systems of oppression tasks Black women doctoral students to employ similar stances for survival reminiscent of foremother scholars. These women are cultivating ways to strengthen their scholarly consciousness through ancestral ways of knowing, self-definition, and resistance to dominant ideology. Often reduced to stereotypical tropes of Black womanhood, little is known about how Black women doctoral students describe and make meaning of themselves as scholars. Within their stories are opportunities for Black women doctoral students to share how they exist in increasingly conscious, liberatory, and self-affirming ways. To increase the representation of Black women in academia at all levels, additional attention must be dedicated to understanding the experiences which support Black Women doctoral students' resistance and maintenance of self. Though relevant, it is not enough to focus solely on increasing Black women doctoral students' matriculation, completion, and transition into careers. Inquiries must explore how Black women doctoral students experience self-definition and meaning-making as scholars in academic spaces. This reality focuses inquiry on the agentic strategies of survival and sites of resistance within Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities.

Statement of the Problem

Black women doctoral students continue to express feeling othered, fatigued, and doubtful of their capacities within their journeys (Shavers & Moore, 2014a). Often isolated, many struggle to tap into pre-existing networks within their departments and institutions due to stereotypes and bias. In the absence of affirming and developmental interactions, Black women doctoral students are often stripped of the benefits of communities of practice, continuous education, and overall healthy graduate journeys. Lack of support coupled with broader unwelcoming messages contributes to high rates of degree attrition among minoritized doctoral students, including Black women (Shavers & Moore, 2014a). Subsequently, many Black women doctoral students express disinterest in careers in academia post-degree completion (Walkington, 2017). Unwillingness to alter and develop new practices in support of Black women doctoral students' liberation normalizes oppressive ideology, creating little systemic disruption, and further maintaining structures of power within academia.

Graduate socialization positions the development of knowledge, skill competency, and the accumulation of social capital as potential mitigators to doctoral challenges (Bertrand Jones & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013; Blockett et al., 2016; Weidman et al., 2001). Many graduate socialization practices fail to consider the influence of race, gender, and class within the experiences of Black women doctoral students. Consequently, these practices often overlook critical negotiations and meaning-making that occur among Black women doctoral scholars to sustain themselves within and beyond the academy. In alignment with beliefs, norms, and practices steeped in white supremacy, academia often dismisses the harm inflicted on individuals holding minoritized and intersectional identities (Dancy et al; 2018; Ellis, 2001). Refusal to acknowledge and dismantle these structures of power inflicts a distinct form of violence on

Black women frequently targeted by oppression. For Black women doctoral students, their journeys inclusive of socialization practices can shape how they see themselves, their scholarly contributions, and aspirations in academia; yet, socialization practices rooted in anti-Blackness, sexism, classism, and other structures of oppression devalue minoritized doctoral students' perspectives and support deficit narratives.

The graduate socialization experiences of Black women doctoral students are well investigated throughout the literature; however, few have sought to understand its influence on their scholarly identities. Culpepper and colleagues (2020) highlighted that individual's interactions with structures within their institutions and beyond, peer and faculty networks, and social identities influence how doctoral students' scholarly identities are formed. From Baker and Lattuca's (2010) work, doctoral students' development as scholars is understood to occur within individual roles and as members of academic communities. Alongside other preexisting personal and social identities, individual and community-specific roles exist collectively and attribute to one's scholarly persona. For example, my role as an undergraduate instructor aligns with my role as a higher education student and collectively informs how I see myself as a scholar. Though acknowledged, few research centers analysis on individuals with minoritized identities (Luedke et al., 2019). Inquiry must be responsive to Black women doctoral students' racialized and gendered existence and its subsequent influence on their scholarly identities.

Scholarly identity exploration can provide insight into Black women doctoral students' resistance to hegemonic beliefs and practices within academia. Without a critical analysis of how Black women in the academy construct a scholarly identity, higher education will continue to position socialization rooted in white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and settler colonialism, as the sole pathway to the professoriate. The decentering of Black women's scholarly identity

development overlooks the influence of race, gender, class, and other intersecting identities on both their academic socialization and identity construction processes. Specifically, a focus on their understanding and identification of a scholarly identity may offer alternative pathways to socialization for Black women. Failure to understand how Black women's engagement with socialization informs their scholarly identity hinders reimagining a more liberatory pathway to degree completion and the professoriate. More importantly, it dismisses the relevance of how Black women's experiences are recognized, understood, and challenged.

Purpose of Study

This dissertation explored how Black women doctoral students describe and make meaning of their scholarly identities. What it means to be a scholar can shape Black women's expectations within their journeys and inform their personal, academic, and career choices. However, when self-definitions and expectations diverge from the dominant norms, values, and practices of academia, Black women doctoral students are faced with choices that positively and negatively inform their paths. Gatekeepers continue to diminish and undermine the validity of Black women's knowledge contributions. As such, this dissertation illustrated the negotiations Black women make in the maintenance of their scholarly personas within their doctoral journeys.

Through this work, I was disruptive in several ways. First, I recognized Black women doctoral students as scholarly experts within academia and beyond in their lived experiences and collaborated with them as co-researchers in the study. Next, my primary interest in Black women doctoral students' self-perceptions as scholars furthers our understanding of their scholarly identity experiences this way offers new pathways for support.. This study supported the movement away from unilateral socialization practices, into bidirectional and identity-centered

approaches (Ludeke et al, 2019). My exploration offers insight into the ways that scholarly personas influence Black women doctoral students' socialization experiences. From their lived experiences, strategies for self-preservation and resistance emerged and broadens our understanding of scholarly identity as oppositional consciousness for Black women doctoral students.

This study turned inward into the self-defined scholarly identity experiences of Black women doctoral students to understand how these women recognize themselves as scholars and the ways their definitions empower them within their doctoral journeys. In contrast to dominant narratives of who and how Black women exist in society, self-definition for Black women is both empowering and an act of defiance (Collins, 2002; Lorde, 1984). Hicks and colleagues (2019) echo “the act of using one’s voice to tell her truth is a radical, symbiotic partnership. It embodies the struggle for liberation in the communal act of telling and listening” (p. 3). Within spaces of self-definition, oppositional consciousness as an awakened state of resistance can be established or better understood. This inquiry highlighted how self-definition offers a space for these women to not only identify what is of value to them, but to integrate their personal, academic, and career choices with their realities and identities. Additionally, stereotypical and prejudicial beliefs which continue to shape the experiences of Black women doctoral students are challenged by their counternarratives.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do Black women doctoral students describe and make meaning of their scholarly identities?

2. How do Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities influence their graduate socialization experiences?
3. What negotiations do Black women doctoral students make in support of their scholarly identities?

Research Design

Qualitative research makes meaning of everyday experiences through a variety of approaches and practices. In application, philosophical beliefs, praxis, and ethical considerations are brought together to reflect social reality from diverse perspectives (Bhachhatarya, 2017; Leavy, 2014). This dissertation employed a storied approach to illustrate the scholarly identity experiences of Black women doctoral students. Stories as a form of qualitative inquiry brought together both phenomenon and method to illustrate the storied lives of individuals and the storytelling process as sources of meaning-making (Amoah, 1997; Clandinin, 2006; McClish-Boyd & Bhattacharya, 2021). Reflection happened through the co-construction of stories between researcher and participant, or in this study, co-researchers. Further, narratives revealed aspects of participants' lives that are concealed from view, but important to the formation of their identity (Bell, 2002). In alignment with Black feminist research, the fundamental relationship between power, oppression, and liberation in co-researchers' interactions can be challenged by this temporal fluidity. Through this process, counternarratives were generated to challenge and problematize socialization practices and dominant conceptualizations of scholarly personas in academia (Amoah, 1997; Etter-Lewis, 1991; Solórzano & Delgado, 2002). For Black women doctoral students targeted by systems of oppression and existing as outsiders within academia, storied methodology can “disclose the ‘other side’ of stories and events rarely or never told“(Etter-Lewis, 1991, p. 436).

Co-researcher recruitment utilized purposive sampling to ensure the women recruited had shared experience with the study's focus (Patton, 2014). Criteria for study inclusion relied on individuals identifying as women of African diasporic descent, noting this identity as relevant in their personal, academic, and/or career experiences. Co-researchers were currently enrolled in a doctoral program and completed their first year of coursework. Enrollment at all institution types and from all academic disciplines occurred. Additional attention was dedicated to co-researcher representation spanning various social identity groups as Black women doctoral students (e.g., age, ethnicity, class). The immersive nature of storied research prioritizes in-depth data collection with participants favored the smaller sample of 9 co-researchers (Patton, 2014). Data collection occurred via documents and in-depth interviews. Co-researchers' personal statements were collected to enhance my understanding of their previous experiences, academic and career motivations. In tandem, co-researchers reviewed their personal statements and reflected via subsequent interviews on their development as scholars.

Two semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions encouraged co-researchers to describe their journeys of scholarly identity consciousness. The first interview focused on individuals' understanding and naming of themselves as a scholar in alignment with the primary research question. The second interview explored the remaining research questions, including negotiations, moments of resistance, and the influence of their scholarly identities within their doctoral journeys. Co-researchers received compensation in the form of a \$40 Amazon gift card for their engagement in both interviews and personal statement submission.

Analysis focused on developing themes and patterns via coding, inclusive of open, in-vivo, and other styles. Black feminist and storied methodologies informed the analysis, emphasizing the influence of individual and sociohistorical context in the restorying process

while placing responsibility and reciprocity at the center of this study (Evans-Winters, 2019; Clemons, 2019). More on the methods I employed for this study is discussed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the scholarly identity perceptions of Black women doctoral students. Moreover, this dissertation sought to understand how their self-definitions as scholars inform their interactions with broader socialization experiences. This literature review provides insight into the sociohistorical and political experiences of Black women in the United States (US), literature on their experiences within higher education, literature on graduate socialization, scholarly identity literature, and literature on Black women's self-definition and consciousness. Additionally, the study's conceptual framework is detailed.

History of Black Women's Exclusion in the US

The social construction of race, gender, and class cultivated interlocking systems of oppression referred to by bell hooks (2013) as White supremacist capitalist patriarchy. Together, these systems shape the interactions of Black women globally (Collins, 2002). More specifically, Black women occupy a distinct social position in the US because of widespread oppression established from chattel slavery. Ownership as property by way of slavery and subsequent labor exploitation stratified Black women into subpar educational structures, poor labor markets with low wages, and stagnant economic growth (Glenn, 1992; Jones, 2009). Furthermore, White supremacy as a system and process racializes and objectifies Black women to establish dominance for the social, economic, and political gain of white people (Paris, 2019).

Black feminist foremothers' scholarship continues to tell stories through the years of the ways Black women weather the enduring effects of systemic oppression. In their analysis often written based on their own lived experiences, they critique the inadequacy of anti-racist and feminist movements to address the needs of Black women. The Combahee River Collective

(1974) coined the simultaneous influence of race, sex, class, and sexual orientation as the function of interlocking systems of oppression that shape Black women's social relations and subsequent domination. Critical legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1998) named intersectionality to describe the strengthened and simultaneous effects of these interconnected systems of oppression experienced by Black women based on the positioning of their social identities, structures, and ideologies to society. For Black women, existence as both Black and woman converge within these systems to maintain power and erect distinct forms of control.

Characterized by Bailey (2018), misogynoir centers Black women's realities by describing the collective influence of racism and anti-blackness. Differentiated from the sexism of misogyny experienced by white women and the duplicit effects of racism familiar to women of color, misogynoir crafts a distinct form of hate only experienced by Black women.

Misogynoir is perpetuated throughout mainstream US discourse and experienced intraracially within the Black community and interracially by external groups (Bailey, 2018). Despite incessant targeting by systems of oppression, Black women are regularly silenced and erased throughout society due to marginalization. In place of their self-defined perspectives, dominant discourse informs stock stories of Black women's personas, bodies, and lives. This attributes to the hypervisibility, yet, invisibility of Black women which Audre Lorde (1984) ascribes to "the depersonalization of racism" (p. 42).

Visibility in society is often through the lens of constructed stereotypes, controlling images, and tropes that shape Black women's identities, how we are treated in society, and who we believe ourselves to be. The effects of controlling images of the mammy, matriarch, welfare queen, and jezebel force Black women to continuously navigate gendered racism (Collins, 2002).

Despite tremendous efforts to change the overall way Black women are regarded in imperialist white supremacist patriarchal capitalist culture, there is no Black woman, no matter how liberated, who does not encounter on some level in daily life efforts on the part of dominator culture to restrict her freedom, to force her into an identity of submission. (hooks, 2013, p. 82)

Collectively, these systems fuel discriminatory and prejudicial practices that enhance Black women's social stratification, support their exploitation, and aid in the maintenance of inequity. Institutional life in higher education maintains the same structures of White supremacist capitalist patriarchy and interlocking oppression familiar to Black women beyond the ivory tower (Ahmed, 2012; Mabokela & Green, 2001). Inside higher education, these systems heavily support beliefs, stereotypes, and practices that structure Black women's knowledge generation. Scholarly identity can serve as a source and site of resistance to these ideas. To understand how Black women doctoral students experience their scholarly personas, one must understand how they slowly emerged as a "marginalized majority" in higher education (Evans, 2007).

Black Women in US Higher Education

The transatlantic slave trade reinforced the influence and structure of racist ideology and oppressive policies affecting the literacy, labor, political engagement, and general self-concepts of Black women in the US (Collins, 2002; Glenn, 1992). Social closure to formal general education, rooted in White supremacist norms and ideas, created obstacles to higher education for the Black community and greater barriers for Black women (Anderson, 1998; Evans, 2007). In the establishment of US higher education in 1636, a new social institution emerged that further privileged white affluent colonial men and enacted violence on Black bodies (Wilder,

2013). Though admission into academia would open for Black women, it never sought to truly liberate them physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Evans (2007) recounts the experiences of Black women collegians from the mid-1800s into the 1950s whose stories of resistance progressed higher education forward. Lucy Stanton became the first Black woman to complete the literary degree in 1850, followed by Mary Jane Patterson, the first Black woman to earn her bachelor's degree from Oberlin College in 1862. Postsecondary pathways for the Black community continued to expand with the establishment of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) via the second Morrill Act of 1890. As collegiate opportunity increased, Black women continued to find themselves within the confines of race, gender, and class marginality at both Historically White Institutions (HWI) and HBCU. Nevertheless, Black women persisted through academia and into the rising gendered demand for educators in the early 1900s.

At the core of racial uplift and social responsibility movements were the voices, leadership, and intellectual activism of college-educated Black women challenging rising anti-Black violence and respectability politics (Cooper, 2017). Formal and informal spaces cultivated by Black women supported their coalescing, shared consciousness and self-definition. In 1921 three Black women, Eva Beatrice Dykes, Georgiana R. Simpson, and Sadie T. Mossell Alexander, became the first Black women to attain doctoral degrees (Evans, 2007). Black women collegians at the time shared collective sentiments of gratitude for the opportunity to pursue education, frustration in navigating the limits placed on their lives, and dedication for scholarly achievement and broader social change. Nearly 100 years have passed since the first doctoral degrees were conferred to Black women, yet the obstacles they faced persist in postsecondary environments.

Contemporary accounts of Black women's experiences within academia continue to highlight their brilliance amid unyielding systemic inequity. The matriculation of Black women graduate students into post-secondary institutions continues to steadily rise, dominating Black graduate student enrollment at 69.4% in 2019 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018). In sharp contrast, only 3.1% of total doctoral degrees awarded were to Black women in 2018 (National Science Foundation [NSF], 2018). These doctoral degrees are frequently conferred to Black women in education and psychology, yet, are least pursued in mathematics and computer science disciplines (NSF, 2019). Gaps in Black women's graduate degree enrollment, retention, and completion signals a need to understand the nuanced ways they experience academia.

Experiences of Black Women Graduate Students in Academia

The multiplicative effects of race, gender, and class oppression shape the experiences of Black women doctoral students situating them as outsiders within academia (Collins, 1989; Walkington, 2017; Wilder et al., 2013). Outsider within status equips Black women with a unique standpoint to observe and analyze power structures as they gain access to historically exclusionary spaces. This viewpoint offers proximity and understanding of whiteness within social institutions like higher education distinct from the experiences of Black men and the white community (Henderson et al., 2010). Through this lens, Black women graduate students balance emergent knowledge of the academy with personal and cultural realities which shape how they engage within their journeys. In this duplicative state of privilege and marginality, many find ways to grapple with and negotiate the endemic nature of systemic oppression within academia.

Despite their student status, institution type, or discipline, Black women graduate students often endure similar challenges throughout their postsecondary journeys due to their

social location. In the study of these wide-ranging, yet shared experiences, Johnson-Bailey's (2004) spotlighted the distinguishing factors which influenced ten Black women to graduate students' participation and retention in their postsecondary journeys. Preexisting experiences and perceptions of barriers within academia, especially at historically white research institutions, impeded several women from applying and starting their graduate journeys sooner. Mentorship and respect from departmental faculty and staff, the presence of Black peer networks, and continuous funding encouraged these women to apply, persist, and successfully complete their degrees. Years later, the literature continues to highlight the ways Black women graduate students persist amid systemic inequity (Apugo, 2017; Grant, 2012, Shavers & Moore, 2019).

Doctoral Students

At the doctoral level, Black women's navigation of racially gendered stereotypes, bias, and marginalization influence their self-perceptions and overall well-being. Within their educational careers, Black women doctoral students expressed having their intellectual contributions questioned by professors, peers, and fellow students (Henderson et al., 2010). This included their admission status which is often associated with affirmative action policies as opposed to their merit and skill. As they looked to hone discipline-specific knowledge and skills, Black women doctoral students were often presumed incompetent in managing the rigor of teaching, research, and scholarship production (Patterson-Stephens et al., 2017). In contrast, when they exceeded the poor expectations assumed by their peers, faculty, and students, they were celebrated or sadly accused of plagiarism. This othering increased their interactions with stereotypes, and discriminatory policies and practices (Shavers & Moore, 2014b). Constantly overlooked and belittled, Black women doctoral students are often left to navigate their journeys in isolation and without support.

Shavers and Moore (2019) developed the perpetual outsider framework to reflect Black women doctoral students' realities with feeling unwelcome and tokenized in their home institutions and departments. In their study, participants recounted negative feelings associated with these environments due to micro and macro aggressive faculty and peer interactions, as well as a lack of or limited professional development opportunities made available to them. Experiences with dismissive faculty have grave effects on Black women doctoral students' journeys by complicating advising experiences, dissertation committee support, and the likelihood of them seeking out assistance throughout their journeys (Dortch, 2016). To combat the emotions and stress that come with being a perpetual outsider, the authors recommend opportunities for Black women doctoral students to focus on their identity, aligning with the importance of Black women's self-definition. Additionally, building support systems in alternative spaces also helped mitigate these barriers (Shavers & Moore, 2019; Minnett et al., 2019).

Relationships are critical to accessing pre-existing networks and resources; however, the process is complicated by perceptions of Black women doctoral students as foreigners within academic environments. Systemic inequities in representation (Walkington, 2017) and the effects of cultural taxation (Gooden et al., 2020) further reduce access to Black faculty and the experience of same race and gender mentorship. Full-time Black women faculty represented 3% of the professoriate in the US at the start of fall 2017 (Gooden et al., 2020). Even when represented within departments, many are overworked, underpaid, and tokenized; despite being tasked to manage high demands for service-based work and support while navigating similar systems of oppression (Gooden et al., 2020; Harley, 2008). Patterson-Stephens et al. (2017) study of Black women doctoral students' barriers and achievements noted the persistence of

challenges stemming from varied experiences with mentorship, the realities of imposter syndrome, and their social locations as Black women. In the presence of these challenges, participants leveraged familial, friend, and peer support to decode the hidden curriculum, manage the demands of motherhood, and motivate them to finish.

Peer relationships and other culturally responsive spaces are frequently relied on by Black women doctoral students to cope and resist harmful academic practices in the absence of faculty support and mentorship (Grant, 2012; Grant & Ghee, 2015, Patton, 2009). Minnett and colleagues (2019) developed a peer mentorship framework from their autoethnography of their experiences as doctoral students at a predominantly white institution (HWI). The framework integrates the body, mind, and spirit by identifying radical coping as a source of resistance of the body to white hegemony, communal *sista* scholarship as the strengthening of the mind and motivation towards individual goals, and authentic holistic self to center the spiritual in showing up fully in shared spaces.

Cultivating internal strategies for support was central to Dortch's (2016) work on Black women doctoral students' self-efficacy. Conversations with people they respected, knowledge of the barriers and strategies they employed, and seeking support helped these women reason through instances of failure and challenge. Study findings highlighted verbal persuasion and vicarious experiences strengthened their self-efficacy and aided in their progression. Though often necessary for survival, coping strategies aiding in Black women doctoral students' persistence often leads to additional fatigue stemming from overachievement and the pressure to hide challenges and vulnerabilities (Shavers & Moore, 2014a). As a result, many Black women doctoral students experience high levels of stress and face subsequent health challenges (Shavers & Moore, 2014b; Woods-Giscombe & Black, 2010). The literature on Black women within and

beyond the ivory tower highlights their capacity to develop strategies for navigating and succeeding in toxic environments; however, much of this success is achieved with little structural support to mitigate widespread systemic inequities. To strengthen graduate student support, academic and graduate student socialization is often referenced as a solution.

Graduate Student Socialization

Academic socialization helps “individuals gain the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for successful entry into a professional career requiring an advanced level of specialized knowledge and skills” (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001, p. iii/3). Graduate student socialization is positioned as a valuable element of racially minoritized doctoral students’ effective transition into academia (Grant & Simmons, 2008; Johnson-Bailey, 2004; Patterson et al., 2017). Likewise, it is situated as a solution to access social and cultural capital necessary for success in the field. Socialization occurs at various stages and shifts in response to discipline skills and institutional needs. Stein and Weidman (1989) conceptualized bidirectional socialization as the incorporation of important student characteristics and their relationships with their educational experiences. A two-stage divestiture socialization process was later identified to account for changes among individuals and organizations via interaction (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). Gardner (2009) differentiated between the two stages of academic socialization; anticipatory socialization and role continuance, by further exploring how individuals develop an awareness of their academic roles via personal experiences.

Further conceptualization of socialization found the process in academia occurs in four stages moving doctoral students from anticipatory, formal, informal, and personal socialization (Twale & Weidman, 2016). The early anticipatory stage is critical to doctoral students’ transition, equipping them with access to norms and practices that shape their subsequent

experiences. Each phase offers students insight into academia that can be utilized to counter obstacles to their completion. Potential benefits aside, socialization processes can be dehumanizing when they fail to acknowledge student's salient identities and force them to acculturate to harmful norms and practices normative in unilateral socialization practices (Antony, 2002; Blockett et al, 2016; Winkle-Wagner & McCoy; 2016).

Consideration of individuals' identities is critical when facilitating graduate socialization experiences for minoritized students. Blockett and colleagues (2016) utilized a qualitative content analysis to explore Black doctoral student's socialization journeys. The study noted the significance of an asset-based approach to the process found to counter marginalization in faculty mentorship, professional involvement, and environmental support experiences. Through an asset-based lens, support structures acknowledge other forms of capital beyond academia that aid in students' accomplishments, including familial and communal support. Similar findings were observed in Winkle-Wagner and peers' (2016) exploration of minoritized students' acquisition of social and cultural capital in a graduate preparation program. Findings highlighted how bidirectional socialization encouraged students to tap into their identities and experiences as resources while developing necessary graduate knowledge and skills. Furthering their ideas, Winkle-Wagner and friends (2020) recently outlined a graduate socialization process that welcomes preexisting social and cultural capital and challenges broader social reproduction. Strategies for connecting various social contexts within and beyond academia are offered to further conversations on more asset-based approaches to graduate student socialization.

Advancing the literature on socialization, Bertrand Jones and Osborne-Lampkin (2013) identified academic preparedness, mentoring, and professional development as essential elements of socialization from the stories of Black women junior faculty in academia. The

overlapping nature of Black women's experiences in academia makes this model applicable to Black women doctoral students' realities. Without access to these elements of socialization, Black women doctoral students' limited socialization can impede their development, retention, and persistence in the academy. Despite its potentially harmful influence on Black women doctoral students, graduate student socialization remains embedded in their journeys and ultimately shapes their construction of a scholarly identity.

Scholarly Identity

Graduate socialization influences doctoral students' identity development as scholars and members of the academy. These interactions can support and constrain one's development and embodiment of scholarly identity. Coming to recognize and embrace oneself as a scholar is influenced through interactions with a broader environmental context. Coffman and colleagues' (2016) qualitative study explored how three current and one former doctoral student developed identities as scholars within a Community of Practice (COP). Findings highlighted participants' challenges with integrating existing identities with their emerging scholarly identities.

Participants described their scholarly identity development as an ongoing process of refinement with no finish line to academic expertise. Time alongside peers and faculty as well as engagement in professional development experiences within the COP helped participants see themselves as scholars. Additionally, the acquisition and application of new knowledge and skills via these interactions validated individual's voices and ideas, further strengthening their scholarly identities. Barriers to their identity construction stemmed from institutional practices that diminished the value of norms, practices, and careers outside of academia.

Leshem's (2020) narrative study observed similar tensions between doctoral students' internal "self" worlds and external "doctoral identity" worlds. Personal and social identities

alongside their relationships with their academic supervisors had significantly positive and negative influences on their doctoral student identities. To combat these challenges, individuals noted access and opportunities to engage in a COP helped individuals overcome identity challenges. Similarly, Culpepper and peer's (2020) ethnographic study found benefit in community engagement in their study exploring how a graduate training program shaped doctoral student's scholarly identities. Co-curricular and curricular experiences, including conference attendance and networking socials, exposed participants to a broader culture of the field. Expanding their networks through these interactions affirmed student's contributions by showcasing the value of their academic expertise in different careers and discipline applications. Foot and friends (2014) found self-inefficacy in the form of inadequacy, fear of the unknown, and lack of validation disrupted the scholarly identity development of doctoral students. Connecting with other students, reflecting on their evolving identities, and professional development experiences supported their scholarly identity development.

The interplay between context and student development as scholars remains consistent in the literature. Theorized through the lens of developmental networks and sociocultural perspectives, Baker and Lattuca (2010) provide an interdisciplinary framework to view how learning influences doctoral students' scholarly identity construction. A developmental network is a community of individuals identified in support of a person's career growth and development. Sociocultural perspectives acknowledge that learning occurs both socially and cognitively, enhancing one's engagement within a broader context. Both approaches combine to showcase the connection between knowledge, identity development, and agency when students interact with institutional, departmental, and interpersonal contexts.

Literature on scholarly identity notes the ongoing strain between existing and emerging scholarly personas for doctoral students. In most of the studies, individual's scholarly identity development benefitted from participation in COP's or other informal networks; yet the literature acknowledges the pre-existing barriers for Black women doctoral students in tapping into these spaces. Though acknowledged as relevant, few studies sought to center students' personal and social identities in their inquiry. In the absence of these pursuits, the need to understand the role of scholarly identity in Black women's experiences, particularly through the lens of consciousness and self-definition is increasingly clearer.

Black Women's Self-Definition

Consciousness and self-definition for Black women remain increasingly relevant due to their subjugated realities and ongoing discrimination in the US and beyond (hooks, 2015). Often understood as an element or pathway to consciousness, self-definition serves to liberate Black women from the confines of internalized oppression. In direct opposition to controlling images and broader ideology of who Black women are, self-definition shifts the way Black women see themselves and can influence the broader community's consciousness. Collins posited (2002)

By insisting on self-definition, Black women question not only what has been said about African-American women but the credibility and the intentions of those possessing the power to define. When Black women define ourselves, we clearly reject the assumption that those in positions granting them the authority to interpret our reality are entitled to do so." Shifting of oneself by way of self-definition has broader influences on Black women's collective consciousness which can ultimately change individual's lives and broader society (p. 114).

In the same text, Collins (2002) further describes Black women's consciousness as reliant on self-definition, self-valuation and respect, self-reliance and independence, and the centering of a changed self to personal empowerment. Within each concept, the ways Black women leverage agency in the pursuit of a more liberatory existence are described. Special attention is called to the ways Black women in academia deepen our understanding of Black women's consciousness via scholarship, despite higher education's attempts to devalue our contributions.

Several scholars have explored this agentic state of being and the value of self-definition in the lives of Black women in higher education. Robinson and colleagues' (2013) narrative study on Black undergraduate women's self-definitions shed light on the complexities of attending HWI. Findings noted the many often conflicting ways they experienced being "the only one" and strength throughout their collegiate careers. Strength was also the basis of understanding Black women's self-perceptions in Jones and associates' (2020) exploration of the Strong Black Woman schema. Their study showcased these women's ability to redefine traditional viewpoints of strength and replace them with ideas that maintain their health and well-being. The proximity of self-definition to resistance and oppositional consciousness makes it relevant to this study's focus on Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities as sites of empowerment.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the scholarly identity perceptions of Black women doctoral students. Moreover, this dissertation seeks to understand how Black women doctoral students' self-definitions as scholars shape their graduate socialization experiences. This study bridges the viewpoints of Black women through Collins' (2000) Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Bertrand Jones and Osborne-Lampkin's (2013) model of essential components of

socialization to establish a foundation for understanding scholarly identity. Scholarly identity consciousness for Black women doctoral students is interpreted through the interplay of each component to create the conceptual framework seen in Figure 1. At the center of the conceptual framework is the distinct, yet overlapping, social and personal identities that shape the individual identities of Black women doctoral students (Abes et al., 2007). This core locates experiences by way of participants' memberships in various social groups extending beyond their racialized and gendered experiences. Additionally, it highlights personal characteristics deemed salient to the individual inclusive of personality traits like being hardworking, skillful, or funny. These personal identities may exist beyond social membership and could further expand our understanding of scholarly identity.

In tandem with Black women's identities and shared consciousness, scholarly identity is shaped by socialization experiences within and beyond the academy. Bertrand Jones and Lampkin-Osborne's (2013) socialization model indicates academic preparedness, mentorship, and professional development as essential elements aiding in Black women junior faculty's success. Interaction among these three elements influences individuals' experiences within each segment as well as in their overall socialization. Our shared reality as Black women within the context of academia makes this model an appropriate addition to the conceptual framework (Walkington, 2017). Academic preparation is the formal scholastic experiences of students held at all facets of their post-secondary experiences. These may include the influence of experiences with advising, discipline selection, institutional type, and other elements that support or hinder student's socialization as scholars. Mentoring for Black women scholars strengthens their networks and creates pathways for professional engagement. The relationship exists between junior faculty and senior faculty within the model; however, this can expand to include peer-

based mentoring, mentoring beyond their programs, institutions, and career interests alongside other non-traditional forms of mentorship.

Professional development encompasses activities that include casual and formal workshops, training, and skill development experiences. Participation helps strengthen individuals' understandings of broader norms, practices, and values as emerging scholars. Activities may include participants' engagement in webinars, training conferences, and other opportunities that strengthen participants' perspectives within their discipline of interests. Additionally, professional development may occur informally via engagement in a research team, publication experiences, serving as a teaching assistant, and more. These elements combine to house socialization experiences which may inform the barriers and opportunities that exist in developing a scholarly identity. Interaction among these three elements influences individuals' experiences within each segment as well as within their overall socialization. The conceptual framework employs these three elements to understand the perspectives of Black women doctoral students within these experiences. Moreover, it helps interpret the influence of each element on a student's perception of self as a scholar.

Surrounding Black women doctoral student identity and their socialization experiences are components of BFT. Coined by Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Black Feminist Thought (BFT) is a perspective and way of knowing centered on the social location of Black women. Black feminist epistemology is informed by the scholarship of countless Black feminist foremothers (Combahee River Collective, 1979; Cooper; 1892, hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1984) and leans on Black women's personal and collective interpretations of experience as affirmation and sources of knowledge generation. Black Feminist Thought functions within this study as a paradigm, ontoepistemology, and informs elements of the conceptual framework. Paradigmatically, it

recognizes knowledge as being socially constructed, influenced by structures of power, inequity, and requiring social change. As an epistemology, BFT created an Afrocentric feminist approach defined by the following four dimensions: 1) lived experience as a criterion of meaning, 2) the use of dialogue to assess knowledge claims, 3) the ethic of caring, and 4) the ethic of personal accountability. Black Feminist Thought offers an epistemic lens and the elements of the Matrix of Domination to the framework. Black Feminist Thought as epistemology centers on individuals' lived experiences as the primary well of knowledge and understanding of the world, inclusive of their scholarly identities.

The Matrix of Domination outlines the function of structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power as interconnected systems of control in Black women's lives. As a tool of analysis, Collins' (2002) also incorporates the ways they oppose domination within each realm. The structural domain is comprised of broad, interlocking social institutions which are organized to increase Black women's subjugation. These structures include education systems, government agencies, and corporations. Due to its systemic and historic nature, resistance to the structural domain for Black women often occurs outside of social institutions despite their increased access to these organizations. The disciplinary domain manages power in support of Black women's subordination through policies and practices rooted in surveillance and evolving bureaucracy. Resistance strategies within this domain often emerge from inside organizations. The hegemonic domain bridges the functions of other domains by justifying Black women's oppression through dominant ideology and culture. By making stereotypical and discriminatory discourse appear common, this domain actively shapes consciousness. In opposition, Black women's self-definition contributes to subjugated knowledge and aids in their further resistance. Finally, the interpersonal domain operates in the everyday interactions

between people. Within this domain, creative ways to resist occur individually and in strategy with others.

Inclusion of the Matrix of Domination focused analysis on the negotiations participants make in interaction with these structures embedded within their socialization experiences emphasized by the essential components in the model. Additionally, the placement of Black women doctoral students' social and personal identities at the center of the framework incorporates broader experiences that shape participants' self-concepts through the matrix. With this lens, the maintenance and/or reduction of participants' scholarly identities amidst structures of oppression are made more apparent. By encompassing Black women doctoral students' identities and experiences within these components of BFT, this study sought to make clear how participants describe and make meaning of their scholarly identity as a form of oppositional consciousness and its influence on their socialization experiences. The culminating interactions of identity, essential elements of socialization, and BFT contributed to the conceptual framework to enhance our understanding of Black women doctoral students' existence as scholars.

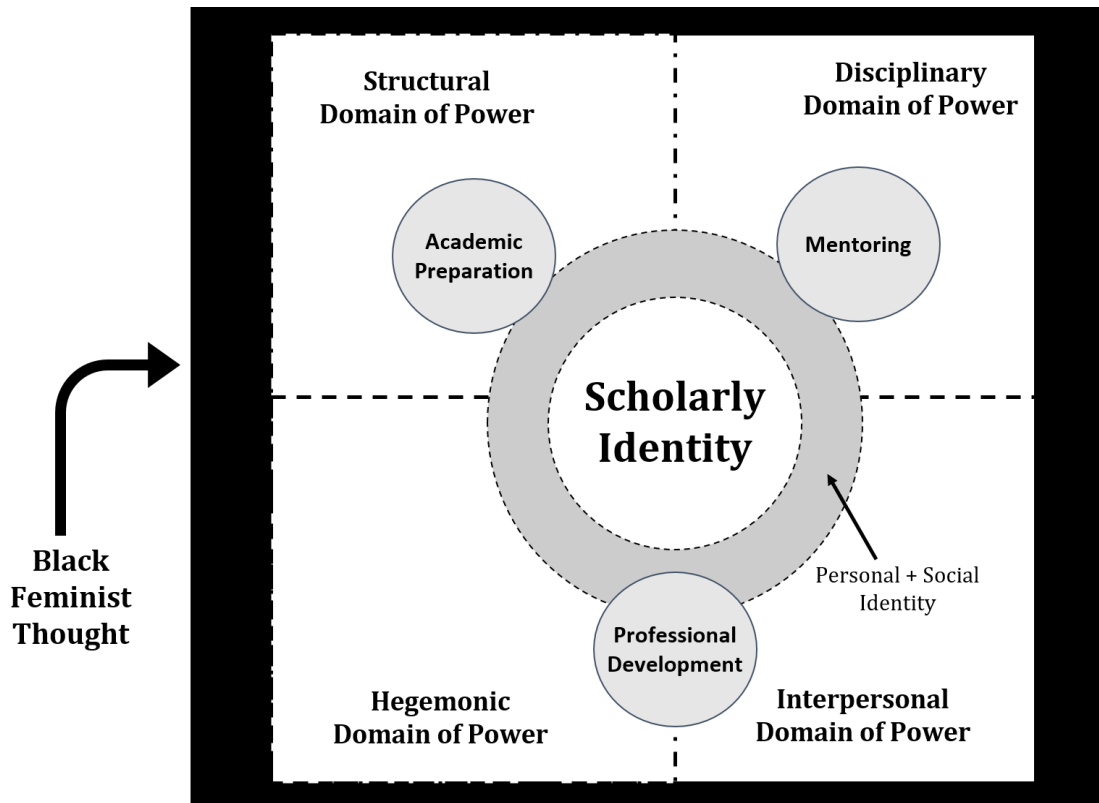


Figure 1

Model of Black Women Doctoral Student Scholarly Identity

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The power of self-definition is of longstanding importance in Black women's everyday lives (A.J. Cooper, 1892; Collins, 2002; Cooper, 2018; hooks, 1989). Within academia, much can be gained from a critical exploration of this journey for Black women doctoral students in their development of a scholarly identity. For Black women doctoral students, becoming a scholar is made even more complex due to their race and gender social locations. These social locations speak to the ways that Black women's identities position them at the intersections of interlocking systems of oppression and subject them to harm. Additionally, their social location is situated in the sociohistorical and political experiences of Black women in the US and is deeply rooted and ever-present today. This shared reality informs the distinct ways Black women experience and see the world (Collins, 2002). Therefore, a methodology that forefronts the interpretation of experiences from multiple standpoints while acknowledging and disrupting hegemonic power structures within Black women's stories is essential for this study.

Qualitative research was established to understand everyday experiences and counter positivist "scientific" approaches to research. Rooted in the social sciences, qualitative inquiry aids in the meaning-making of everyday interactions through a variety of practices (Bhattacharya, 2017; Patton, 2014). In contrast to its quantitative counterpart, qualitative research is often framed as a responsive, increasingly more just approach to understanding phenomena in the everyday world. Yet, qualitative approaches to research and subsequent interpretations of the social world often are presented primarily from a euro-centric lens (Bhattacharya, 2017; Evans-Winters, 2019). Such paradigms often seek to frame research "on"

communities as opposed to “with and alongside” them, failing to interrogate systemic ills and delaying disruption (hooks, 2015). Historical accounts note the physical, mental, and spiritual violence perpetrated on Communities of Color by the white gaze in qualitative research through capitalism predicated on anti-Black racism, settler colonialism, and orientalism (Paris, 2019). Though a vehicle for making meaning of experiences, qualitative research when pursued with ill-intent, prejudice, or unexplored bias by researchers and broader social institutions can support deficit-based portraits of minoritized communities and further reason dominance.

The complex nature of experience is understood via qualitative research as it brings together theory, method, and analysis shaped by the inquirer’s social location in pursuit of varied truths (Bhattacharya, 2017; Leavy, 2014). Storytelling, as a way of knowing, theorizing, and disrupting, remains a cornerstone of the function and preservation of culture in minoritized communities (Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). A distinguishing characteristic of culture is the way members collectively understand their relationship with the world, often through story structures (Khurshid, 2019). In the sharing and retelling of stories, global south onto-epistemologies inclusive of Black feminism (Combahee River Collective, 1977; hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1984), Chicana feminism (Anzaldúa, 1987), and indigenous knowledge (Smith, 2012) brings together beliefs about reality and knowledge that disrupt and decolonize dominant discourse. In doing so, storied methodology privileges the storyteller by leveraging their accounts as sources of interpretation of experience (Nadar, 2019). For minoritized communities, stories challenge objectivity by amplifying the subjective. This practice of storytelling in the Black community is deeply rooted and operates as:

A tradition based on the continuity of wisdom, and it functions to assert the voice of the oppressed. Storytelling is not merely a means of entertainment. It is also an educational

tool, and for many, it is a way of life. For others, it is the only way to comprehend, analyze, and deal with life (Amoah, 1997, p. 84).

Stories in research are powerful in their capacity to problematize master narratives as sources of knowledge (Nadar, 2019). Within academia, grand narratives collude with other societal practices to signal who, what and how epistemic knowledge is cultivated and deemed valid which further attribute to the devaluing of Black voices. By amplifying the subjective, storytelling challenges objectivity.

Despite its inherent presence and central practice in Communities of Color, story as a research methodology is often understood through the western, eurocentric, hegemonic lens of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry was conceptualized in the social sciences, specifically in education, as an approach to elicit teachers' experiences (Clandinin et al., 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The approach makes several ontological and epistemological assumptions inclusive of humans leading storied lives and interpreting shared and heard stories via multiple perspectives which influence experience (Bell, 2002, Kim, 2015). Narrative reflects a way of knowing and in research exists as both a phenomenon and method. As a methodology, it relies on individual storytelling to inform inquiry, requiring increased consideration for ethical behavior throughout the research. Data collection primarily via interviews and observations requires the researcher and participant to co-construct stories based on the inquiry. Consistent negotiations to safeguard individual's experiences and maintain the wholeness of stories shared are expected. Though these aspects of the approach contribute greatly to qualitative research, narrative inquiry falls short in interpreting social reality through the lens of minoritized communities.

As forefronted in this text, storytelling as an oral source and form of meaning-making for minoritized voices continues to give life to new ways of approaching qualitative research. Solórzano and Delgado (2002) conceptualized counterstory as a methodology to privilege the stories of the silenced and offers a tool to reveal, analyze, and disrupt racially dominant discourse. These recollections may be shared from others' interactions as a composite counterstory (Griffin, 2016) or personal lived experiences (Baker-Bell, 2017). Rooted in telling stories of Latin-American endurance, testimonio as a methodology uses individual and collective consciousness as resistance and social change (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Alongside other storied methodologies, testimonios function as personal narratives (Sanchez & Hernandez, 2021) and co-created stories (Gibbs, 2020) in which the researcher serves as an outside ally throughout the process.

Storied methodology, through the aforementioned iterations, problematizes perceptions of what, who, and how research is conducted. These choices privilege multiple epistemic realities, make room for culturally relevant “data” sources, and redistribute power to the narrator. Finally, storied research not only changes those who interact with the storytelling process, yet encourages broader transformation in the presentation and types of stories shared (Etter-Lewis, 1991; Solórzano & Delgado, 2002). Deep value exists in the creation of these methodologies which echo marginalized realities; however, Black women's sociopolitical and historical truths require an approach that “articulate the particularities of Black women's experiences without translation or apology” (Boylorn, 2021, p.1).

Black women have a longstanding history as theory generators, researchers, and scholars in everyday and academic spheres, yet aforementioned academic roadblocks limit the creation, recognition, and accessibility of methodologies fixed on their realities (Few et al., 2003;

McClish-Boyd & Bhattacharya, 2021; Winters-Evans, 2019). Born out of necessity and ingenuity, Black women scholars continue to create new research possibilities in the absence of relevant methodologies. In response, *sista circles* (Johnson, 2015), Black feminist memory work (Ohito, 2020), Black feminist-womanist storytelling (Baker-Bell, 2017), and other methodologies offer new ways to approach research alongside Black women. McClish-Boyd and Bhattacharya (2021) describe the inception of a Black endarkened feminist narrative inquiry bridging Black Feminist Thought and womanism into a storied methodology for Black women with the promise of forthcoming publications to inform data collection and analysis.

This study decentered narrative inquiry as the dominant source of doing storied research to further disrupt settler colonialism, white supremacy, and ensuing epistemic violence on Black women in academia. Instead, I pulled from Black feminist understandings and methodologies in what Jones-Royster (2000) refers to as “traces of a stream” to imagine a Black feminist counterstory methodology. In this conceptualization, this research illustrates how Black women doctoral students conceptualize and experience their scholarly identities. Black women doctoral students’ counternarratives create spaces for “talking back” while presenting oppositional truths to academic experiences which frequently fail to account for the influence of race and gender within their journeys (hooks, 1989). For Black women who are pushed to the margins, creating counterstories can be liberatory in its creation of “their own sphere of theorized existence, and thus remove themselves from the marginalized position to which the dominant society has relegated them” (Amoah, 1997, p.85). The following sections provide an outline of the research design including an overview of Black feminist methodologies, interpretations of a Black feminist counterstory approach, and a review of the conceptual framework. Following, a

description of the study's setting, co-researcher characteristics and recruitment, data sources, and analysis plan is described.

Black Feminist Methodologies

Black feminist methodologies exist to counter hegemonic research practices and more accurately reflect Black women's stories. Described as remembering and daughtering by Evans-Winters (2019), methodologies hinged on Black women's ways of knowing and doing encourage "questioning, resisting, and deconstructing universal truth claims, grand narratives, and essentialism, while simultaneously, walking in and exposing our own contradictions" (p. 139). Black women's positions within multiple social groups shifts how they experience oppression and thus necessitate a stance of resistance that can strengthen the re-presenting process of research in a way that reflects their lives (Baker-Bell, 2017). This remains essential for Black women doctoral students whose scholarly identity journeys are further complicated by their multiplicative statuses. Black feminist methodologies serve as a gateway to interpreting Black women doctoral students' resistance in its incorporation as ontoepistemology and conceptual framework in this study.

Onto-Epistemic Influence

Patricia Hill Collins' Black Feminist Thought (2002, BFT) introduced four epistemic dimensions which serve as lamplights in this study: 1) lived experience as a criterion of meaning, 2) the use of dialogue to assess knowledge claims, 3) the ethic of caring, and 4) the ethic of personal accountability. The first dimension's emphasis on lived experience as a criterion of meaning stems from Black women's need to create counter sources of knowledge and validation within their lives. In turn, BFT, in alignment with storied research, finds truth in everyday interactions with the understanding that structures of oppression function to overlook and silence

their contributions. As the second dimension, dialogue serves as a vehicle for truth assessment through the shared connection between both listener and orator. Similarly, storied methodology within this study relied on conversation as the primary source of meaning-making of Black women doctoral students' scholarly journeys. Collins (2002) notes that for Black women "new knowledge claims are rarely worked out in isolation from other individuals and are usually developed through dialogues with other members of a community" (p. 260).

In tandem, knowledge is understood within an ethic of caring noted in the third dimension. Described as talking with the heart, the ethic of caring "suggests that personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy are central to the knowledge validation process" (Collins, 2002, p. 263). Interactions throughout the research process will encourage these practices and place significance on co-researchers' body language and voice inflections as sources of meaning (Evans-Winters, 2019). The final dimension, the ethic of personal accountability, indicates that individual values are not distinct from knowledge validity and must be responsible for their perspectives. Intuitively, claims made by people of high moral and ethical character are deemed more credible by this theme. This theme provides an understanding of how and why certain relationships influence Black women's perceptions as scholars. These onto-epistemic principles provided a lens for collecting and analyzing how Black women doctoral students self-define themselves as scholars.

Framework

In addition to its ontoepistemic application, Black feminist methodology anchored this study's conceptual framework. Collins' (2002) Matrix of Domination outlines the systemic function of systems oppression in the lives of Black women in the US. Central to this study, the Matrix of Domination also illustrates how Black women negotiate and find empowerment within

these domains. Collins (2002) identifies the following four interrelated domains of power: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal as functions of structured domination. The structural domain functions to organize oppression, while the disciplinary domain manages this power. The hegemonic domain exists to justify oppression alongside the interpersonal domain which controls everyday interactions and individual consciousness. Each domain operates in the maintenance of Black women's subjugation, however, strategies for resistance have emerged within each realm.

The Matrix of Domination is experienced by Black women as a spectrum, differing in the intensity of the oppression based on individuals' social locations. Through this lens, Black women doctoral students' scholarly identity negotiations are better positioned for interpretation.

Research Questions

This study utilized a Black feminist storytelling approach to understand how Black women doctoral students experience the naming of themselves as scholars. Additionally, I looked to interpret the relationship between their scholarly identity experiences and other graduate interactions. To guide this study, the following research questions were identified:

1. How do Black women doctoral students describe and make meaning of their scholarly identities?
2. How do Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities influence their graduate socialization experiences?
3. What negotiations do Black women doctoral students make in support of their scholarly identities?

Participants as Co-Researchers

In this research, I viewed participants as collaborators in the remembering and retelling of their stories and referred to them as co-researchers. These Black women doctoral students not only offered their stories as sources of meaning but also engaged in their own analysis through the re-storying process that furthered the study's purpose. To refer to them as participants felt out of alignment with their active contributions and engagement in this process. Instead, I disrupted the assumption that participants exist in passive ways in the process and embraced Black feminist approaches to study-based relationships (Bhattacharya, 2007; Clemons, 2019).

Co-Researcher Selection

Co-researcher selection utilized purposive sampling to identify Black women doctoral students whose experiences align with the research interest. Additionally, criterion sampling helped identify co-researcher-rich cases representative of Black women's varying social location (Patton, 2014). Co-researchers self-identified as women of African diasporic descent and listed this identity as influential in their personal, academic, and/or career experiences. Additionally, individuals were enrolled in a doctoral program and completed their first year of coursework.

First, this study's focus on the racialized and gendered experiences of Black women required co-researchers to identify within this community. Second, this study centered on Black women's identities within the scholarly identity process. Thus, it benefited from speaking with Black women who noted this identity as important within their everyday experiences. Third, scholarly identity is situated within the broader context of doctoral study, requiring registered status as a doctoral student. Enrollment at a specific institutional type was not a determinant for study inclusion as this inquiry looks to share diverse stories of resistance and agency in Black women doctoral students' scholarly journeys. Though of varying histories and often serving

dissimilar student populations, historically white institutions (HWI) and minority-serving institutions (MSI) function within the broader system of academia which remains rooted in white supremacy norms, practices, and ideas. Academic disciplines may cultivate distinct practices and values which can shape doctoral student development; however, this study remained open to all disciplines in an effort to portray broad scholarly portraits. Black women doctoral students' scholarly identity experiences based on institutional type and academic discipline are possibly unique, yet, not critical in the investigation of their negotiations within these systems. Finally, completion of individual's first-year increases exposure to graduate socialization practices and enhanced their ability to reflect on their identity development as scholars. Through these strategies, a representative pool of Black women doctoral students was identified for this study.

Co-researcher recruitment occurred via targeted email communication with community insiders and culturally-based organizations. Community insiders are individuals who have access to the study population due to their roles as professionals, peers, or members of a personal, academic, or professional community. Outreach to culturally-based professional and informal networks were leveraged for recruitment. Additionally, information was shared via social media on Twitter, Facebook, GroupMe, and Instagram. An overview of the study, inclusion criteria, compensation, and contact information were made available in the email (see Appendix A). During recruitment, I identified 15 Black women doctoral students representative of various social identities, disciplines, institutional types, and enrollment statuses for the study sample. Interested individuals were required to submit a questionnaire before final selection.

Data Collection

Questionnaire and Reflection

I used an electronic questionnaire to gather demographic information including Co-researcher's ethnicity, institution, degree program, enrollment status, and other details (see Appendix C). The questionnaire gave co-researchers access to review and submit Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent for this study. Beyond their identities as Black women, the form solicited other salient identity descriptors. Information collected helped ensure that a breadth of Black women doctoral students' experiences was represented in the study. Upon completion and review of the questionnaire, inclusive of consent in this study (see Appendix B), 15 women who qualified were invited to serve as co-researchers. After soliciting confirmation for study participation and scheduling the first interview, nine women continued with the process as co-researchers. Additional research plan details, including confidentiality practices, timeline, and instructions, were shared with co-researchers at this juncture.

Personal statements used for admission into their doctoral programs were requested from co-researchers to gain insight into their backgrounds and scholarly motivations. This information provided insight into individuals' early understandings of their scholarly identities. To encourage further reflection, co-researchers were asked to read their personal statements before their first interview. As Bell (2002) noted and reflective of the narrative approach, this process looks to engage co-researchers in "the temporal notion of experience, recognizing that one's understanding of people and events changes" (p. 209). Information gathered from these documents informed future interview questions and data analysis.

To promote equitable power distribution, co-researchers shared their expectations for study engagement inclusive of our relationship within and beyond the study, conversation

content, and level of participation. A lack of awareness of power dynamics within the researcher and co-researcher relationship may result in inaccurate restorying that not only dishonors the methodology, but also the person (Bell, 2002). At any point within the process, negotiations for adjustments were made on behalf of the co-researchers' needs.

Interviews

The in-depth interview is a primary data source in story-based methodology as it affords researchers a detailed collection of stories. Co-researchers engaged in two semi-structured interviews to allot time to discuss the primary and secondary research questions. The duration of interviews ranged from 55 minutes to a little over 2 hours and relied on open-ended questions to support co-researchers' reflections. Questions encouraged individuals to share stories or detailed descriptions of interactions. The first interview focused on the conceptualization of their identity as a scholar, inclusive of critical moments which shaped their perceptions and understandings of themselves and academia before and within their doctoral journeys. Reflections from reading their personal statements were incorporated to consider how their scholarly identities have evolved from their doctoral application.

The second conversation explored potential shifts as a result of their scholarly self-concepts. Interview questions centered on the negotiations they make as a result of how they see themselves as scholars. Further dialogue inquired about their scholarly identity's influence on their graduate socialization. Socialization experiences incorporated academic preparation, mentoring, and professional development interactions within students' doctoral journeys in alignment with the conceptual framework. Co-researchers received compensation in the form of a \$40 Amazon gift card in exchange for their study engagement.

Data Analysis

Following the data collection process, interview recordings were professionally transcribed. Once transcribed, all data sources were reviewed and cleaned for errors before the start of the analysis. Per Black feminist counterstory methodology, transcription maintained authenticity in voice, body language, and other forms of expression (Clemons, 2019). Interview content was shared with co-researchers via transcript for confirmation of accuracy and an opportunity for them to make any adjustments to statements before analysis completion. Finally, individuals selected or received a pseudonym for reference to increase anonymity. Qualitative data analysis software NVivo 12 was used to aid in the meaning-making process. A folder for each co-researcher was created within NVivo to house their personal statements, interviews, and memos.

First and second cycle coding supported the progression of initial understandings of the data into categorized themes. First, using provisional coding a priori codes were identified from the literature and researcher knowledge of the experiences of Black women doctoral students (Miles et al., 2015). These included elements of the conceptual framework, common barriers, and resistant strategies like professional development, mentoring, imposter syndrome, advising, finances, and family. Codes developed created an early coding framework that was revised throughout the process. Additionally, coding focused on descriptive, emotion, and in vivo coding. Combined, this cycle's coding strategy seeks to categorize the data while capturing co-researchers' feelings in their specific words (Miles et al., 2015).

Second cycle coding brought together themes into pattern codes observed throughout stories (Miles et al., 2015). The addition of subcodes reflected the nuanced understanding of the co-researchers' experiences and supported distinctions among shared experiences, including

specific references to their scholarly identities. Feedback from co-researchers collected after transcription review was incorporated into the theme generation process. I engaged in analytic memoing for reflection throughout the process to support the co-constructed nature of storytelling research (Baker-Bell, 2017). Participant-specific memos were written immediately following one-on-one interviews with content added and continuously consulted throughout the analysis. Additionally, separate memoing provided space for me to process my social location and its influence on the interpretation and restorying process.

Conceptual Framework in Data Analysis

Introduced in the previous chapter, the conceptual framework (see Figure 1) focused on challenges and potential resistance within Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities. Socialization practices, inclusive of interactions within and beyond academia, surround individuals' scholarly identities; however, emphasis is placed on the essential elements of socialization as meaningful sites of development for Black women in academia. As a result, analysis centered on the ways other socialization practices beyond academia influence Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities. Additionally, a priori codes were developed for academic preparation, mentoring, and professional development to ensure inquiry considered these experiences. The Matrix of Domination brings together these elements via a lens for multilevel analysis which helps me consider how the domains specifically and collectively shape these women's experiences.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research utilizes trustworthiness to demonstrate standards of credibility and accuracy within the process and subsequent findings. Also referred to as validity, the quality of research is determined by a set of practices that support the representation of the phenomenon

being studied. Several techniques were used to strengthen this study's trustworthiness inclusive of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Patton, 2014). Credibility is the study's believability as opposed to transferability which highlights the ability for replication in an alternative context. Confirmability notes that findings are based on co-researchers' experiences and not the researcher's sole interpretations and biases. Finally, dependability ensures the process is well documented and can be followed with ease by others. It is important to note, these techniques for determining trustworthiness and validity are subjective, fluid, and may require shifts based on the inquiry similar to the overall qualitative process.

Bhattacharya (2007) forefronted the differing interests between researchers and participants, which may require alternative ways of achieving trustworthiness that veers away from the objective, and formal practices. Member checking in this study supported credibility by showcasing a systematic negotiation of the data in which co-researchers were empowered to shape the telling of their stories. Co-researchers had the opportunity to review and edit interview transcripts and personal statements before data analysis for errors or misinterpretations. Additionally, findings were shared in written form to incorporate their feedback throughout the research in ownership of their stories. Tensions may naturally arise through the co-construction of stories between researchers. To address these challenges, experiences and broader stories identified as potentially harmful or of expressed concern by co-researchers were not included in this study. Collaboration in this way aligns with critical and Black feminism approaches to trustworthiness which are strengthened by co-researchers input and researcher reflexivity (Clemons, 2019; Creswell & Miller, 2000)

Reflexivity is both a technique and state of being which enhances the researcher's ability to consider how their social location influences the research process (Ohito, 2020). Reflexivity

acknowledges researcher subjectivity by exploring and disclosing how my biases, beliefs, and assumptions influence the study, inclusive of one's interest, interpretations, and conclusions (Valandra, 2012). The influence of power differentials within the researcher co-researcher relationship is also centered via reflexivity. Collectively, the process furthers confirmability and transferability. As an insider researcher, meaning one who holds membership in the community of study, an increased level of reflexivity was tasked of me as I sought to co-construct stories with fellow Black women doctoral students (Few et al., 2003; Patton, 2014). Journaling documented reflection on my thoughts, feelings, and assumptions throughout the research process. Due to my dissertation's focus on scholarly identity, reflexivity began at the start as freewriting reflections to create a space for interpretation alongside my conceptualization of this study. Following each interview, I memoed to document my emotions and interpretations of interactions with co-researchers.

In support of trustworthiness, peer debriefing engaged a small group of individuals who existed beyond the scope of this study to monitor and critique the data collection and analysis process (Chambers, 2011). Immersion in the "field" and extended engagement with collecting and "sitting with the data" further enhanced trustworthiness. Data collection methods and analysis looked to create rich, thick descriptions of co-researchers' experiences and further confirmability. Finally, triangulation connected the study's literature, interviews, personal statements, memos, and other points of data to represent an in-depth understanding of individuals' experiences.

Role of the Researcher

I entered this research with personal experiences and assumptions of what it means to be a scholar due to my positionality as a Black woman doctoral student in the midst of my own

complicated scholarly story. Though framed as a potential hindrance to the research process, I embrace what Evans-Winters (2019) describes as benefits of Black women researchers who “bring our lived realities into the research process” (p.17). With increased reflexivity, an open heart, and spirit, I am humbled to share the storying process with co-researchers as “we [Black women] tell our stories to illuminate the paths we travel and to share humor, courage, and wisdom in this liberation struggle” (James & Farmer, 1993, p. 31).

Developing my scholarly identity continues to be a journey of unlearning, reclamation, and liberation. Throughout this doctoral journey, I fought the urge to choose another research topic out of fear of doing “me-search” or being narrowed down as another “race scholar.” Though never said outright, I somehow got the message. Ironic, but not surprising, these concerns did not exist until I started my doctoral journey, danced with doctoral socialization and better understood the functions of academia. At some point, I started to believe that I lacked the knowledge, skills, and overall persona to be a “scholar.” Thoughts of what I did not have consumed me until I began to remember who I am and where I come from.

I am a cis *Blackwoman* who was raised in a predominantly Black middle-class community in Miami, Florida. With African American familial roots in the Deep South and an immigrant lineage by way of Barbados, resistance and “talking back” is in my blood. My scholarly identity was nurtured with love by a mighty enclave of Blackness filled with family, neighbors, teachers, and lots of random “grown folks” along the way. My mother would begin college, yet never finish, while my father became a proud graduate of a local HBCU. Though the greatest champions for my educational success, I started to recognize how the Black women in my life often had to place their dreams and aspirations on pause for the betterment of their families and communities. Mothers, grandmothers, aunts, cousins. Through their lives and my

growing understanding of the world's treatment of Black women, I found myself invested in the stories of Black women and broader racially and ethnically minoritized communities.

Our familial scholarly story is part academic achievement, yet, mostly developed beyond the walls of formal education. Together, my parents made clear early in life that they were invested in my academic success, and that college was always an option. I never second-guessed the opportunity or ability to go. As I moved through higher education, eventually becoming a student affairs practitioner, I continued to connect with Black women in all spaces whose experiences always left me curious. In many ways, my research interest was born from their stories. “Remembering,” has lately brought back early memories of a young scholar Brittany (Evans-Winters, 2019). She was (and still is) introverted, yet full of life on stage competing in oratorical contests with Maya Angelou’s latest. Rememberings help recall the Black women literary masterpieces that graced my eyes and moved through my body as a child into adulthood. Somehow, truthfully, these memories got lost through the years of being a higher education student, practitioner, and scholar, sorted in my mind, only to be remembered recently when I most needed them.

As I learned more about the graduate socialization experiences of Black women, (re) engaged more with literature centered on Black women, and worked closely with Black scholars, my curiosity grew regarding the ways we as Black women survive and resist the harm of higher education. I will never forget wrapping up my first semester of teaching in this doctoral journey. Somehow, I was left in the classroom with the one Black woman I had the joy of having between both of my course sections. Our conversation was filled with laughter and shared memories of Miami, and then she turned and asked me “Do you ever get tired?” Surprised, I did not have an answer for her. She would later describe that tired referred to me having to exist as the “only

one” in spaces, enduring apparent disrespect from students, yet showing up every day with a smile and commitment to the role. Interactions like this would continue with Black women in other classes and spaces. With time, I found ways to be more truthful for them and me.

As a scholar, my worldview makes me critical of the ways structures silence, overlook, and misconstrue reality. This makes everyone's truth and experiences different. I am sensitive to the ways that Black women are often narrowed down and limited in their representation, yet, recognize that these realities may not be a part of everyone's stories. Though there may be similarities in our scholarly journeys as Black women doctoral students, this research is not solely centered on my truth, nor does it seek to validate my experiences. Instead, I look to share divergent narratives of Black women doctoral students' lived experiences, inclusive of my own. My commitment to telling stories of Black women's scholarly identity experiences is rooted in making pathways to the professoriate more affirming and stable for those who choose to travel. The realities of Black women doctoral students deserve a seat at the table and I intend to make room.

Limitations

Limitations of this study existed due to methodological choices. First, this design was anchored in a responsive storied methodology suited for Black women. Though this is not personally perceived as a shortcoming, it is necessary to note that the research design is fluid and guided by multiple theoretical sources of inquiry as a result. This is in response to the limited literature available outlining how to frame, gather, collect and analyze a Black feminist storied methodology (Baker-Bell, 2017; McClish-Boyd & Bhattacharya, 2021). Additionally, the need to establish deep relationships in storied research with co-researchers increases the number of interviews, depth, and overall time spent collecting data for the researcher (Clandinin, 2006;

Patton, 2014). To remain present amid the study of stories requires additional emotional labor that without consideration, may overwhelm me and the research. As a result, I needed to clearly define what I am seeking to study about scholarly identity within the co-researchers' lived experiences. Without this clarity, the study's purpose could easily be lost, overwhelmed by stories that have no direct relation.

CHAPTER 4

CO-RESEARCHER PROFILES

The purpose of this study was to explore how Black women doctoral students describe and make meaning of their scholarly identities. I also aimed to understand how their self-definition as scholars influenced their choices and broader doctoral socialization. I centered their lived experiences by utilizing Black feminism as a lens to view their agency and negotiations within their doctoral experiences.

Nine co-researchers offered insight into their lives through personal statements and two individual interviews with me. All nine co-researchers identified as Black women noted the salience of this identity within their everyday experiences and were currently enrolled in a doctoral program beyond their first year of coursework in the US. Co-researchers encompassed varying doctoral degrees, disciplines, enrollment statuses, geographical locations, and institution types to further complicate monolithic concepts of Black womanhood in academia. Scholars brought wide-ranging personal and professional experiences inclusive of industry-specific corporate roles, social services, higher education administration, and faculty instruction. All but one co-researcher worked full-time in their respective industries before enrollment in their doctoral program. From a social identity perspective, co-researchers' identities were expansive as cognitively diverse, queer, mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, first-generation college students, Caribbean, southern, northern, educators, scientists, and much more.

Personal statements submitted for doctoral admission were analyzed to understand their perspectives of self, the doctoral degree experience, and scholarly goals. Two one-on-one semi-structured interviews explored their formal and informal academic experiences across their lifespan, with an emphasis on their doctoral experiences. Additionally, conversations explored

co-researchers' perceptions of scholarly identity, their self-definitions as Black women and scholars, and their relationship to their academic journeys. The demographic questionnaire and interview protocols are available in Appendices C and D.

Stories of Black women are often limited in scope and/or depth due to the functions of systemic oppression. Historically, systemic oppression has influenced inaccurate representations of Black women, reinforced stereotypical images, or even presented false narratives about their achievements or successes within academia and beyond. To counter these misrepresentations and contribute divergent narratives of Black women, this chapter offers insight into the scholarly journeys of nine Black women doctoral scholars. Each scholar's narrative presents highlights of their lives as Black women and the connection of this identity to their daily lives. Insight into their collegiate experiences, inclusive of their doctoral journeys, is also shared. Finally, salient identities for each scholar are described to note their influence within their everyday experiences.

Aisha

Aisha is a 30-39-year-old English scholar and lifelong lover of literature. She is a self-proclaimed Southern woman who takes pride in being an aunt, daughter, friend, and educator. When reflecting on her identity as a Black woman and scholar, she noted that “the Black and the woman have always been, whereas the scholarship has...has come later. But every opportunity since the day I realized I was a Black woman has been shaped by it. I don't know. I don't know anything else.” Aisha's love for literature led to her pursuing multiple English degrees focusing her research interests in African American literature. Prior to pursuing her doctorate, she worked full-time for nearly 10 years as a tenure track instructor at a community college. Her passion for teaching and love for students is a strong motivator for her as a scholar. She explained, “I want to

be with students. Students are my people. I love them first. I love them most and so if I can finish and go back...that is what I'd like to do.”

For her doctoral journey, Aisha intentionally sought out an HBCU to experience a more culturally responsive curriculum, mentorship, and overall scholarly development. Challenges with funding at another HBCU forced her to switch institutions and programs within her first year. Aisha’s doctoral journey continues to be complicated by gaps in curriculum offerings and mentorship by Black women faculty despite her efforts to align her experiences with her needs as a scholar. She credits her doctoral journey for exposing her to new content and new ways to think about her work as well as reinforcing the type of professor she does and doesn't want to be.

As she begins to wrap up course work, Aisha looks forward to returning to academia in a tenure track faculty role. She admitted, “I want to put this degree to work. I am not somebody who got a Ph.D. to work for profit. I am somebody who like I said, I love school. And so I am a teacher. A professor if you want to make it fancy, but I want to go back and do what I was doing. That's why I got the Ph.D.” When asked if she considers herself a scholar, she agreed that she is a “critical thinker, a lifelong learner, and a hard worker,” all terms she used earlier to describe a scholar; yet, she refused to fully embrace her brilliance, noting that she’s “brilliant sometimes.”

Cici

Cici is a 30-39-year-old hip-hop scholar and “*professional Black girl*.” Her identity as a scholar with a literary and teaching background sits alongside her Northern persona raised by “around the way Black women,” Black womanhood, and her new identity as a mom. Her desire to tell Black stories, interest in being a faculty member, and support from a mentor-led her to pursue her doctorate. Exposure to hip hop as a scholarly field as well as opportunities to produce, write, and present research shaped her identity as a scholar during her master’s program and

helped her realize that her scholarly interests are not solely situated in academia. Existing both within and outside of academia has become central to Cici's scholarly persona by strengthening her learning alongside other scholars and being recognized for her expertise by the broader community.

Prior to enrolling in her doctoral program, Cici served as an instructor at different post-secondary institutions where she was exposed to the politics of academia and felt like she “always stood out as a result of being the only Black person on faculty, or didn't necessarily fit into my often older white colleagues notion of what or who a professor is.” Academia, inclusive of its low wages and the general politics of the academic job market, encouraged her to explore nontraditional ways to produce scholarly work and increase her income without sacrificing her well-being as a Black woman. Enrolling in a non-traditional doctoral program allows her to focus on her career which led to her current role curating scholarly work for a local organization. As she moves through dissertation writing, she admires her growth as a scholar in “having the ability to take a leap of faith and pursue a non-traditional route of engaging with popular culture research.” She credits her journey's success to the representation of other Black women who made a unique lane for themselves because their work also sits within and outside of the academy for making it possible. When considering the future, Cici imagines a scenario where she will return to academia in the future as an adjunct faculty member to maintain access to both the non-academic and academic spaces that she's come to value as a scholar.

Cleva-Janae

Cleva Janae is a 20-29-year-old critical engineer education scholar who made it clear early on that she “likes to defy authority.” She prides herself on being outspoken within academia and beyond as a scholar in small and big ways, from how she is addressed by name to

publicly challenging guest lecturers unapologetically. Her interest in engineering and now, engineering education, began after attending an engineering camp in high school and recognizing she loved optimization. As an engineering education scholar, she was cautious to take on the label due to it not being widely accepted as an engineering degree. “It was to me like accepting another marginalized identity. I already got Black, I already got woman, I already got southern, I already got first-gen, I already got low SES...it’s like, and then you want to add engineering education as an engineer into that. I’m like damn how many more...like I don’t know if I can take too much more Jesus.” For several years, she navigated isolating racist and sexist work environments as one of the only Black women in the industry. Despite being discouraged by her white male coworkers to do so, she left and enrolled in a doctoral program full-time.

Within the first year of her doctoral journey, Clevea Janae found herself stereotyped as an angry Black woman, exploited, and misrepresented by program faculty despite receiving several grants, creating a class, producing publications, and winning academic awards. Attempts to “stick it out” took a toll on her mental and physical well-being. With support from a mentor and her well-earned credentials, she successfully transferred into a new program at a different institution. Despite these barriers, Clevea Janae is focused on creating equitable access and change within engineering education. “I like to consider myself a critical and reflective scholar who is all about transformation. So, I want to be critical. I want people to also be critical with me. I want to be able to reflect on things that I am doing. And I also want to be able to reflect on things that other people are doing that are...that are working for me. And I want to be able to transform in whatever way we need to transform to be able to move forward together.” Her research aims to amplify stories of minoritized communities in her discipline.

She credits her doctoral journey for her scholarly development by giving her “the language to communicate, things that I've always felt, ways of knowing that I've always known” and the ability to conduct and present research, write and manage grants, and publish. As Clevea Janae moves through coursework, she aspires to use her talents as a scholar in both traditional ways as a future faculty member and in non-traditional ways as a media mogul.

Eboni

Eboni is a 30-39-year-old education leadership scholar and former K-12 teacher. She “comes from a really close-knit family” and takes lots of pride in being an aunt, sister, and daughter. Additionally, her spirituality as a Christian is important to her. As a child, she spent evenings attending local school board meetings because her mom served on the board for several years. This interest in education and her love of school as a student ignited a passion for educational advocacy for children and eventually led to a six-year career as a K-12 teacher. She admitted, “I just get really passionate about making sure that kids have what they need. Like, I really love children. And I feel like we set them up for failure when they don't have what they need to be successful early in life.” Her frustrations with poorly funded school districts and overall education inequity led her to pursue her doctorate. Eboni’s bachelor's and master's degrees were purposely pursued at the same HBCU and she committed to receiving her doctorate from the same institution type.

Currently enrolled in coursework at a different HBCU, Eboni is thriving in her program thanks to developmental faculty, like-minded and supportive peers with similar career interests, and opportunities for field-related professional development. Enrollment in her program continues to enhance her identity as a scholar and builds on her career expertise as a former teacher who understood firsthand “what kids don’t have.” Despite appreciation for her program,

Eboni wishes she had access to a mentor within her experience to offer direct support. Developing research and policy that is accessible to individuals beyond academia is most important to her as a scholar and continues to motivate her to finish her degree. She plans to one day become a school district superintendent and researcher whose work leads to policy change that results in equitable educational access and experiences for children.

Love

Love is a 20-29-year-old abolitionist scholar studying criminal justice whose “plan in life is to liberate people.” She was raised in a Black and Hispanic household and identifies as queer, a partner, and a daughter. Love’s family is filled with multigenerational college-educated Black women, including several with doctorates. As a child, she attended academically rigorous predominantly white schools where she often struggled with isolation and self-doubt due to cultural disconnects with teachers and peers. Love vowed to attend an HBCU for undergrad where her passion for social justice and transformation was ignited via courses and co-curricular learning that wasn’t white-centered. She noted, “It was one of the first times that that like, people were speaking my language.” She is deeply motivated as a scholar by her love for community and the call to transform structures of oppression. In alignment with her community-centered scholarly identity, she spent several years working in a social service capacity with local organizations prior to enrolling in her doctoral program.

As a doctoral student, Love sees herself as a “full-time agitator” and is often frustrated by academic and social practices that limit progress and change. As a scholar, she describes how her identities shape her research offering “I just feel like I'm always implicated, and because of being like, a systematically marginalized identity, it's like, in a negative way. That I'm always like, implicated, and I'm always like, personally invested in the work.” Mentorship by community-

oriented faculty and connections to like-minded peers within her program continues to support her development as a scholar. Love remains uncertain about a career in academia despite enjoying teaching and recognizing the value of her research contributions.

Nessa

Nessa is a 40-49-year-old scholar-practitioner in higher education. She identifies as a first-generation college student, living with disabilities. Throughout her educational career, she was always a “really smart kid” with deep support from her community. She credits growing up in a racially Black and Brown community for centering Blackness early in her life and exposing her to concepts like Juneteenth and Black scholarship throughout K-12. Heavy co-curricular involvement during her undergraduate experience exposed her to careers in student affairs and later motivated her to pursue graduate education with an emphasis on obtaining a doctorate. She acknowledged, “For me, it was the ultimate challenge. It was the...it is the ultimate test of my commitment to formal education. It is the thing that scares me the most and intimidates me. And that's why I have to do it.”

After completing her master's degree, Nessa worked for several years as a student affairs practitioner in a variety of functional areas. She researched several programs, yet, opted to attend the program housed at her institution of employment. Her research interest, referenced as “me search,” centers on the lived experiences of Black students and is greatly informed by her reality as a student and observations of Black students on campus. Despite being faced with unexpected health obstacles within her doctoral journey, she remains committed to defending her dissertation soon and credits the support of fellow peers and her advisor to her persistence. As a Black woman scholar, it is important that her doctoral journey is done in a way that values “resetting and prioritizing yourself over the things that are going to go on whether you are there or not

anyway. Like for me, that's what I would like to think of as Black, the emerging Black woman, right?" Nessa plans to continue her career as a student affairs administrator in pursuit of becoming a Vice President of Student Affairs.

Sendi

Sendi is a 20-29-year-old higher education scholar inspired to create equitable and just spaces for Black students, faculty, and staff in postsecondary settings. She describes herself as a daughter, sister, and first-generation college student. After securing a multi-degree fellowship, Sendi attended an HWI as an undergraduate student where she navigated isolating campus environments filled with racialized and gendered micro and macro aggressive interactions. Her scholarly interest in race and equity is deeply personal, being reared in an Afro-Latinx household that often-centered conversations on the politics of race and Black history in the US. She reflected, "I have always thought about race and what it means to be Black in the US. So that probably is why I'm so fascinated with it. I've always asked these kinds of questions from my upbringing." Sendi worked for several years in human resources, securing a graduate degree in the field prior to enrolling in her doctoral program.

Despite being fully funded by her doctoral fellowship, Sendi worked full-time the first few years of her program to offset the additional costs of the doctoral journey. This resulted in her feeling "really removed as far as like research opportunities, because I wasn't in the program during the day" leaving her to miss out on valuable formal and informal scholarly interactions with faculty and her peers. She credits interactions with peers and Black faculty for her development as a scholar. As she finishes her coursework, she wishes that course curriculums and interactions with faculty were more helpful in developing her scholarly interests in the realities of Black students.

Though unsure, Sendi is interested in continuing to do research on the experiences of Black students within higher education and is open to pursuing a career in academia alongside other opportunities. “I’m really, like really focused on environments that don’t add to the stress that I already have of being a Black woman and going through life. Like I just I really want to be in environments that are cultivating my development and giving space or you know, provide space for me to have a voice. So that’s important for me to think about my career aspirations.”

Shelly

Shelly is a 30-39-year-old new mother, wife, and daughter who happens to be a first-generation STEM scholar reared in the western US. Confident in who she is, what she brings to the table, and what she will accomplish, Shelly is focused on finishing her degree and “getting to the work” of her research. Her early interest in science was championed as a child, particularly by many of the Black women elders in her family. She explained, “My perspective was very different when you’re sitting at the feet of all that wisdom of, you know, you’re going to go to college and you’re going to do something great and so instilling me doing well in school.” An early love for math and science coupled with encouragement by Black scholars, and exposure to different careers in STEM via her work as a STEM educator positioned her to pursue a career in the sciences and subsequent graduate degrees in the field. Shelly worked in higher education facilitating STEM pipeline programs which offered her continued exposure to the field, strengthened her network, and continued to prepare her for her doctoral journey.

After receiving her master’s degree in a similar field, Shelly was accepted and fully funded to attend a top-ranking doctoral program in her discipline. She continuously deals with “so much bias” within her journey from both faculty and students yet refuses to let people “acting a fool” distract her from her scholarly goals. Shelly remains focused on her research

production offering “...when I view myself like as a scholar, my own identity, I feel like quality matters to me. I'm not going to do it just because it makes other people feel good for me to do busywork.” She is currently finalizing her dissertation research and sees the barriers, though difficult to deal with, as steppingstones to the real work of focusing on Black women’s maternal health. After graduation, Shelly plans to explore post-doctoral opportunities in both industry and academia to “build my skills before I come back to, you know, fight this fight, again, at a different level.”

Zaria

Zaria is a 20-29-year-old chemical engineer who sees herself as a chemist. This is due to the negative personas and interactions she’s had with chemical engineers, noting “...chemical engineers, what I've noticed is that they think that their way is the right way. There's nothing else. So, everything someone else says is wrong. And so they like belittle you or like...they don't like have an open mind.” Born and raised in the Caribbean, Zaria credits her rigorous K-12 schooling for preparing her for a career in STEM and making her collegiate transition easy in comparison to her peers. Following her undergraduate experiences, she immediately pursued her master's within a similar discipline at another institution. She was encouraged to apply to her doctoral program by her advisor who secured a new role at the institution and secured funding for her as a student. Despite being unsure about moving into a new wheelhouse, Zaria trusted that her advisor, who too is a Black woman, had her best interest at heart.”...I didn't really want to be a chemical engineer. I never thought of that option before. It was only when my advisor spoke about chemical engineering that I had to think about it a lot, and how it would benefit me towards my end goal.”

As she wraps up her first year, Zaria continues to navigate highs and lows within her doctoral journey. Entering into a new field continues to challenge her scholarly identity, despite her catching up on new information independently to be successful. Additionally, experiences of mistreatment and isolation continue to shape an already challenging experience. Zaria refuses to deal with rude interactions from peers and faculty included much like her advisor. “My advisor, she reminds me of my mother because my mother is also a very strong person, and she won't accept disrespect from people. So I think my advisor as well as taught me a lot to like, stand my ground for the things.” Keeping an open mind, which is central to how she describes her scholarly identity, has helped her gain access to valuable professional development experiences. After Zaria receives her doctorate, she hopes to work in industry and develop a research office in her home country.

A summary of individual co-researcher demographics is available below in Table 1. The table offers a brief profile overview to support the findings outlined in Chapter five.

Table 1*Co-Researcher Demographic Table*

Pseudonym	Age Range	Ethnic Background	First Generation Status	Bachelor's Area of Study	Master's Area of Study	Doctoral Area of Study	Degree Type	Stage in Doctoral Program	Doctoral Degree Institution Type
Aisha	30-39	Black	Yes	Humanities	Humanities	Humanities	PhD	Enrolled in coursework	HBCU
Cici	30-39	Black	Yes	Social Sciences	Humanities	Humanities	PhD	Passed qualifying/comprehensive exam, working on dissertation proposal	HWI
Cleva-Janae	20-29	Black	Yes	Natural and Applied Sciences	Natural and Applied Sciences	Natural and Applied Sciences	PhD	Enrolled in coursework	HWI
Eboni	30-39	Black	No	Social Sciences & Humanities	Social Sciences	Social Sciences	EdD	Enrolled in coursework	HBCU
Love	20-29	Afro Latina	No	Social Sciences	Social Sciences	Social Sciences	PhD	Enrolled in coursework	HWI
Nessa	40-49	Black	Yes	Social Sciences	Humanities	Social Sciences	PhD	Defended dissertation proposal, collecting data and/or finalizing dissertation	HWI
Sendi	30-39	Afro Latina	Yes	Business	Business	Social Sciences	PhD	Enrolled in coursework	HWI
Shelly	30-39	Black	Yes	Natural and Applied Sciences	Natural and Applied Sciences	Natural and Applied Sciences	PhD	Passed qualifying/comprehensive exam, working on dissertation proposal	HWI
Zaria	20-29	Caribbean	Yes	Natural and Applied Sciences	Natural and Applied Sciences	Natural and Applied Sciences	PhD	Passed qualifying/comprehensive exam, working on dissertation proposal	HWI

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of this Black feminist storytelling study was to describe and make meaning of Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities within US higher education. Black feminism was utilized as both the framework and methodology to better reflect Black women's lived experiences in narration (Baker-Bell, 2017). Through this approach, Black feminism offers a way to understand the world via Black women's perspectives (Collins, 20002), as well as a guide for the collection and interpretation of their stories (Evans-Winters, 2019). The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do Black women doctoral students describe and make meaning of their scholarly identities?
2. How do Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities influence their graduate socialization experiences?
3. What negotiations do Black women doctoral students make in support of their scholarly identities?

As outlined in Chapter 4, purposive and criterion sampling identified nine Black women co-researchers for this study. All co-researchers, also interchangeably referenced as scholars, identify as women of African diasporic descent, and deemed this identity influential within their everyday lives. Co-researchers were enrolled in US doctoral programs beyond their first year of coursework in various types of programs and institutions. Personal statements for doctoral admission and two semi-structured interviews with co-researchers were used to identify study findings. Outlined in this chapter are four findings identified in alignment with the research questions through data analysis. These findings include: 1) Rooted in Black womanhood, 2) In

Contrast to Academia, 3) Bridge Building Personas, and 4) Imagining New Possibilities. In Rooted in Black womanhood, findings illustrate the primary ways Black womanhood influences these women's academic realities and shapes their scholarly identities. The next section, In Contrast to Academia, highlights how co-researchers come to understand themselves as scholars through interactions with academia that often contradict their realities. Following is Bridge Building Personas, an exploration of how these women's scholarly identities task them to navigate and shift oppressive systems rooted in white supremacy from their vantage points at the margins. Finally, this chapter ends with Imagining New Possibilities, which explores how the complications of systemic oppression task co-researchers with envisioning different realities for themselves.

Rooted in Black Womanhood: *Walking the Path They Have Created*

Who Black women doctoral students are as scholars deeply inform how they interact with academia and shape the choices they must make. The following themes reflect the nuanced nature of scholarly identity within the storied lives of these nine co-researchers. The centrality of Black womanhood within the scholarly journeys of all nine co-researchers became increasingly apparent through their accounts of formidable learning and developmental experiences. Black women's strength, capacity to persist, and ability to find ways to thrive were typically connected to Black womanhood. For several women, descriptions of their scholarly selves were deeply rooted in their understandings of broader Black womanhood. Black womanhood is the embodiment and expression of holding the intersecting identities of "Black" and "woman". Through observation, lived experience, and reflection, co-researchers articulated how they came to know these identities and began to connect this awareness to their scholarly personas. Additionally, they articulated how their scholarly identities as Black women were better

understood through the representation of Black women role models. Finally, co-researchers reflected on the importance of and how they stay connected to community as a means of remaining true to themselves as Black women scholars.

Being A Black Woman

Co-researchers' reflections on the meaning of being a Black woman scholar and the ongoing influence of these identities on their doctoral experiences noted the salience of their race and gender within their daily lives, inclusive of their academic selves. Aisha, a literary scholar, reflected on her identity as a Black woman and how this shapes her everyday experiences, sharing:

When I move in spaces throughout rooms and places... I know that is the first thing people see about me, and then it's the first thing I will see about somebody. And then they assign whatever they feel they ought to assign. I think between, you know...media—and I'm not talking exclusively about social media, but television, social media, radio—all of these things kind of shape and manipulate our ideologies. And our ideologies affect the way we perceive people... affect cultures and behaviors that we think we'd like to adhere to. And I think, as a Black woman, that comes along with a lot of connotations that I feel when somebody meets you: you either fall into or you defy [these ideologies], and you go against, as if Black womanhood works in binaries when there is more than one way to be a Black woman.

As Aisha reflects on being a Black woman, she highlights how central this identity is in how people view her and the value they place on her based on dominant social thoughts. These ideas can be burdensome to Black women who want to exist in different ways yet find themselves limited by stereotypes or tropes. All co-researchers admitted to grappling with these

intersectional identities, but they also articulated a deep connection and great honor in their identities as Black women. Eboni, an education scholar, described an admiration for her Black womanhood, expressing:

I am proud to be a Black woman. I feel like it's this elite club of just, like, people that just know how to get stuff done. I don't know how else to describe it besides that. Um, you know, people just don't know, this is something—I don't wanna use the word 'magical' because I feel like it's a cliché. Like everybody always says that—but no, it is. I feel like when I see a Black woman doing, doing big things, I'm like, “yes, girl!”

Despite wanting to resist the cliché language of magical, referencing the adage *Black girl magic*, Eboni's excitement over seeing Black women move through the world and excel can only be described in this way for her.

For many women, the connection and love they have for being Black women are directly linked to their upbringing, familial lineage, and surrounding community. Examples of Black womanhood were commonly described as identifying experiences with mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and other women throughout their lives. Shelly, a 30-39-year-old STEM scholar, described how the legacy of Black womanhood within her family remains foundational to her life and informs her everyday reality:

For me, I come from a very large family and a large family of Black women. And I was raised in... a Black community [during my first five years]. So, for me, I take a lot of pride, a lot of joy, a lot of just framing of who I am and the way that I see myself, my identity as a Black woman... it's like the center of who I am. So that is kind of like the center of like, you know, my ground state, as I pursue and change and move and do all these different things.

Shelly further explained how centering her Black womanhood, inclusive of the historical truths of this identity, provides motivation and direction for her life. Specifically, she described having “a lot of joy [...] and pride” in being part of a “legacy of women” whose histories involve “being an enslaved descendant and still being able to capture the talent, the quality, and the gifts” in spite of the “interruption of slavery.”

So for me, it's my, my roots is how I would identify them, and there's a lot of joy and joy and pride in that, and just coming from a legacy of women, being an enslaved descendant, and being able to still capture the talent, the quality, and the gifts, despite having the interruption of slavery. But being able to build those things back up, you know. It was a...it was a part of the history, but not the totality of who I am, and who I come from.

Carrying the legacy of enslavement, as well as the capacity to persevere and thrive, not only motivates Shelly every day, but deeply informs her approach as a Black woman scholar.

Most co-researchers' sensemaking as Black women often occurred through the contributions of other Black women, who were frequently referenced as sources of inspiration due to their resiliency. Clevea Janae, an engineering education scholar and self-proclaimed disruptor, shared:

Being a Black woman is everything and nothing at the same time. It's like, it's everything because we are such amazing [people] and I fucking I hate the word resilient, but I got to use it because we got to be resilient in this space. ... We're resilient, we're powerful. We're still loving after all the shit that we take on, we're still loving. We're still caring, we're intelligent. We're creative. We're everything.

Though a point of great pride, resiliency within Black womanhood was often a source of conflicting emotions for several scholars. Clevea Janae further emphasized this tension, saying:

It's like when I think of a Black woman, I think of, like, creation. I think empowerment. I think of... someone who is doing something for other people, even if it means that they have to give of ourselves. And it's not always a good thing that we have to give of ourselves because, you know, I should give to you from my overflow. I shouldn't have to pour from my cup, you know? But if I have to pour from my cup, I will, because if you running low, I gotta make sure that you good too, you know? And I think that we always have this sense of community. And we're usually vocal...like it's like we just have a presence. Like, Black women have a presence.

These social messages that pressure Black women to be strong, caring, and supportive can place limits on how Black women show up in all spaces. As co-researchers reflected on how they understood Black womanhood, this idea of being able to navigate and recover from harmful environments was connected to their scholarly identities. Zaria, a 20-29-year-old chemist and scholar, recalled the “sparkle” and “creativity” that Black women contribute to spaces, but she became emotional when considering its influence within her journey holding two intersecting identities:

So being those two minorities [Black and woman] in my field, it makes me want to be more successful every day. Especially on days when I feel like I want to quit or drop out. [Voice quivers] That identity keeps me there. Because it'll be like, if I fail or something, it'll just be like, me living up to their status quo. Like I'm not good enough, or I'm not meant to be here. So that identity keeps me motivated to continue.

While many grappled with its negative effects, several co-researchers referenced resiliency as a key element of Black womanhood and a source of empowerment for their challenging academic journeys. Like other scholars, tapping into the shared strength of Black womanhood supports Zaria's capacity to navigate oppressive spaces that signal to her that she does not belong. Cici, a hip-hop scholar, explained how she also pulls from the lineal strength of Black women for daily guidance and described how this shapes her identity as a scholar:

Being a Black woman reminds me of the resilience of, not only our ancestors, but other Black women who have contributed amazing things to this world. You know, reminds me to kind of keep them in the forefront. And if I wasn't in academia, I don't know if I would have been exposed to the stories of other Black women. And so. I think as a writer, because I identify more as a writer than academic, my job is to, like, tell stories and highlight, you know, what Black people are doing.

For Cici, Black women's stories serve as a source of motivation, shaping how she identifies as a scholar and the work she commits to doing. Likewise, she explained that her scholarly identity is influenced by her Black womanhood:

I think it happens naturally, right? Like, being informed and shaped by my identity as a Black woman happens naturally because of my experience as a Black woman, or you know, Black young girl. That is how I got introduced to hip hop and... specifically with hip hop, being that it was created by Black and brown folks. It's like, um, you know, like, I don't want to look at it as gatekeeping but protecting. When we see a white person doing hip-hop studies work, we kind of question like, okay, do you know what you're talking about? You know, is it authentic? But I feel like, as a Black woman, I have an insider perspective into hip hop as a culture, which enhances my research identity.

Gazing at Black Women Scholar Role Models

The stories of other Black women, inclusive of their strength and contributions, are powerful sources of meaning-making for Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities. For many of the women, observing their cultural norms and values in practice through other Black women scholars often challenged dominant representations of what it means to be a scholar. Cici shared how these dominant representations of scholars "often make us feel unworthy, or less than, or incapable of, or that it doesn't align right with the identity that we have." For the Black women in the study, this reality was critical as many expressed an inability to separate their identities as Black women from their scholarly personas. Love explained, "I just don't separate my identity from my area of study at all. Like, I feel like things remind me of my experience with family members being incarcerated all the time, my experience with police all the time... it's just no separation for me." This tension between their personal and scholarly selves increases the need and influence of Black women role models within academic spaces.

Every scholar referenced other Black women as a valuable representation of who they could be within academia and beyond. When thinking about Black women academics she admired and felt a deep connection with, Cici expressed how their presence makes room for her as a scholar:

I feel like I'm walking the path that they have created. And I just feel so blessed that they have, like, opened, you know, they have put their feet in the ground and made sure to leave their footprint as they walk. To say, you know, come on younger Black [women], come after me... by creating a space for you to come after me.

These women were often faculty, administrators, and academic peers at and outside of their institutions; however, some came from other important areas within their lives. Clevea Janae

recalled being able to see herself while taking classes with a Black woman professor who casually embodied multiple identities throughout their interactions. When reflecting on her professor's scholarly identity, she shared:

And she was like, writing books, she was having babies[...] it was important for me to see that, as a scholar, you can have multiple identities under that. So, she was like a book writer, she would do stuff in like a policy. [...] She was having babies, like, she was married, she was taking care of her mama. Like, it was so much that she was doing, and it was so encouraging to me because it's like, okay...I can be myself, I can do all the things that I want to do and be and still be a scholar.

Where embodying a scholarly identity is important, many co-researchers expressed valuing other identities as mothers, aunts, friends, and church members. They described these representations coupled with their scholar identity as necessary to their persistence. After navigating challenges at another institution, Cleva Janae found herself in a new program under the advisement of a Black woman faculty member. Through the research community established by her advisor and her overall support, Cleva Janae noted how her advisor's presence and approach to her academic career influenced her:

Now, I feel like I can be critical. I feel like I'm learning the politics of engineering, education, and grad school in general, but also learning how to still be myself and speak out against stuff that I feel like is wrong. Like, my advisor is very much about that. My advisor will go to bat for me, she will go to bat for any of her students. She does not care what that means for her career. And I feel like having an advisor like her makes me want to be an advisor. It makes me want to be a professor because I see that, she can be herself,

she can stand up for what's right. She could do critical research, and she could still get paid. You know, that's heaven right there

Seeing her advisor advocate on behalf of others and challenge practices inspired Cleva Janae to consider a career in academia. As someone who values being able to advocate openly but has faced repercussions for speaking out, this representation of a Black woman in academia was just what she needed. She explained:

I didn't know that I needed it. But you know, it's like, when you get what you need, then you just, like, yes, this is [...] what I was missing the whole time. And now I know, I could be a scholar. I know I could be an engineer. I know I could be an engineer educator. I know I could do whatever it is that I want to do [...] and I can also be myself.

The 3 C's: Community Cultural Connections

In many ways, Black women role models serve as an extension of co-researchers' communities and help ground them in their cultural values. These values within academia are frequently undermined or overlooked yet remain central to how scholars identify and see themselves. Maintaining connections to communities, especially those filled with Black women, was important to several scholars as they navigated academic spaces. Shelly shared:

Like for me...even though I'm a scientist here, I still have other older women that I can call to talk to, to, like, vent and they can build me back up. [...] So, making sure that you're connected to other definitely for Black women, we have to be connected with other Black women they need. We need to have Black women that are behind us, that are in line with what we're doing. But also, Black women that are older than us, that have years and years of experience and can make sure we're not taking things too seriously, taking it to heart, living our life and remembering who we are and principles that are

going to keep us going, regardless of what the challenge is and may have. For me, I would think staying connected [is important]. It's not about people having the same experience. But people who, at least... like and mean well for you.

Community was frequently referenced by all scholars as being central to their scholarly identities. Additionally, community was often a reflection of spaces and people who do not exist within the ivory tower, as Shelly and other co-researchers recounted their stories. Continuing to immerse oneself in Black communal connections, Black entertainment, and music helped counter the negative effects of academia and mainstream socialization for co-researchers. Love noted the power of socialization via a white-dominant society within and beyond academia.

First of all, academia is like, it's... its own world. And I think a lot of people just make that their world. But then also, white people are different. And they do things differently. So, I feel like there... there can be pressure to just... because we're socialized amongst them, and by them, and so all of that makes it easy to lose yourself. So yeah, stay connected and stay connected to, like, yeah, your people. Do it.

Being surrounded by whiteness resulted in self-doubt for some co-researchers who felt their peers were potentially more prepared for their doctoral journeys and academia overall based on the peers' knowledge and experiences. Remaining connected to community often helped co-researchers see their social and cultural capital in an asset-based capacity. Cici recalled in referencing her fellow doctoral students:

Yeah, no, they, they probably were, you know, read more books, or, you know, things of that nature, right. And, so, in terms of, like, my own understanding, it's me reminding myself that, my life experiences are valuable to my scholarship, my community's

experiences are valuable to my scholarship, but it doesn't have to just come from a textbook, right? Our creative and cultural expressions are valuable to my scholarship. Reminders of what scholars bring to the table often help them make meaning of their scholarly identities. Co-researchers' scholarly work is often deeply connected to their cultural backgrounds and subsequently shapes where and how they gather and make meaning of their research. Aisha further explained these ideas:

And we think information and sources have to come from kind of a white space, right. They have to come from the databases, they have to come from JSTOR, EBSCOhost, and all of these places in that time. Those places are fine, too. But like, as especially in my field, like if I was to look at folklore, then my great aunt is valuable. You know what I'm saying? Or then my brother's friend who spent 20 years in jail. And so, being a scholar is recognizing that the opportunity to learn can be found in all things and people.

For Aisha, shifting from dominant ways of understanding data within her discipline further validated non-traditional scholarly perspectives. For several of the Black women doctoral scholars, seeking out spaces filled with scholars from shared racial/ethnic and gendered backgrounds and/or shared interests further aided in their understanding of self. These opportunities often come by way of non-traditional professional development experiences or via engagement with other scholars' work. A key moment in the cultivation of Cici's scholarly voice came by way of exposure to non-traditional writing by a scholar:

Reading his work, and I could hear a regular, like, a regular Black man's voice, and he's writing in everyday language, like he's cussin. And it still was scholarly, it still was well put together well researched, and it was scholarly. And I was like, wow, how can I do

that? Like, how can I keep my authentic voice? And not feel like I have to sound like, whatever, white scholar, through an email, you know what I mean?

Grounding in this manner helps Black women doctoral scholars recognize and embrace that they are in the academy, but not *of* the academy. With this understanding, Black women doctoral scholars are better able to acknowledge their scholarly personas in a way that supports their development. Additionally, staying immersed in community supports their self-definition by providing culturally congruent examples which help them exist more fully in academic spaces. Lastly, being rooted in Black womanhood motivates them to persist by remembering that their scholarship and contributions are bigger than academia and are influenced by who they are and where they come from. As scholars encounter treacherous academic environments, remembering the beauty of their Black womanhood and communal outlook often helps them move beyond these interactions. Shelly's recount of mistreatment and bias within her STEM scholar journey is an example of how situating oneself in community is an important way that Black women scholars persist in harmful academic environments. She said::

For me, I feel like it's special because I had to make sure I reconcile the fact that just because people have a perspective doesn't make it true. And in fact, the fact that I am a Black woman should make it more meaningful to me when I make these benchmarks because I'm not just making them for me. My benchmark is a celebration of an entire village, it brings joy to more than just me, I'm not doing it alone. And by knowing that I'm not doing it alone, that's what makes it special. That's an opportunity for joy.

Knowing the impact of her scholarship and that she moves through isolating academic spaces with her community is powerful. Shelly reiterated, "At the end of the day, me being a Black

woman, you know, raised in a village is why I got this far. That gave me the resilience I needed. I didn't learn that at no [university].”

In Contrast to Academia: *The Intersections of the Intersections are Stressful*

Co-researchers often made sense of their scholarly personas through interactions with academia. These moments, whether via formal socialization practices like presenting at a conference or informal experiences like studying with peers, showcased how Black women doctoral students exist in academia in contrast to dominant norms and practices. From these interactions, Black women scholars articulate how their overlapping identities create unique perspectives in academia. Furthermore, contrasting experiences encourage co-researchers to reflect on the evolution of their scholarly identities within their doctoral processes. These contrasting interactions help co-researchers understand how their interests and needs relate and differ from those observed within their departments, institutions, and their broader field. Contrasting experiences that separate their perspectives from those frequently represented in academia further support their understanding of what it means to be a scholar and how these varying definitions shape their doctoral experiences. For Cleva Janae, what it means to be a scholar is centered on “the formal messaging” which includes “being able to think critically, being able to analyze, being able to produce new knowledge. To me, that is all scholarship. Like, all this other stuff, the informal messages, they're more political.” Cleva Janae went on to describe how her identities othered her in relation to her field, explaining:

Which is why it's usually a problem for scholars like me because I'm not white, I'm not male, I'm not middle class, I'm not a part of the original group that started engineering or that actually came in and was like, “Hey, we're gonna make engineering this discipline, and we're gonna hire these type of people and create this type of environment. And this is

what's gonna be our definition of professionalism. And this is going to be our definition of scholarly identity and all the other stuff.” So I feel like, because I don't know what they are raised knowing, it makes me an outsider within the engineering context.

Cleva Janae’s exposure to academia helped her differentiate between formal and informal messaging regarding who is a scholar and what a scholar produces. Through these interactions, she also acknowledges how broader structures marginalize her scholarly identity development as a Black woman and limit her access to dominant knowledge within her engineering discipline. Academic engagement frequently exposes how inequitable systems function in the lives of Black women doctoral students and creates tension within their scholarly journeys. Love recognized these practices early throughout her doctoral journey, sharing:

I feel, you know, [the program] asked you to come in and have the long-term vision, but then you come in and it's like you're indoctrinated almost. And so, it's not super creative. There's not a lot of room for expression in doing your own thing out the gate, which is funny, because that's what you asked me for to get here.

As an abolitionist emotionally tied to her scholarship like many of her fellow co-researchers, being limited in this capacity is difficult, but Love deems it necessary. She explains, “I've learned a lot. I wanted the education...like, we need to have, you know, a certain level of education. But it's just interesting how that plays out.” Countless negotiations are made within Black women doctoral scholars' journeys, inclusive of the choice to pursue a certain level of education.

Feeling like an outsider within academia and feeling limited in how one can exist as a scholar remains a shared reality for several co-researchers. Though potentially harmful to their identities as Black women and perceivably working against their self-interests, buying into the

academic system does provide validity to one's identity as a scholar. When asked if she identified as a scholar, Nessa grappled with the conflicting emotions of pursuing her degree as a means of legitimacy. "I think of myself as a scholar, primarily because I'm in a credentialed program, right? And I struggle with that a little bit...because what I realized is that one can be a scholar and not be formally educated in a particular subject matter, right?! And so, but I also realize that, for the things that I want to accomplish in the world we live in today, that only happens in that credentialed degree program." Nessa describes how being granted access to the title of scholar via the ivory tower is a source of affirmation and credibility for her identity. Additionally, she notes how this differs from the granting of one's scholarly identity for individuals not formally educated in academic systems. "I've done everything that they've asked of me. I've demonstrated the level of analysis and innovation around my topic. And I have shown myself to be a subject matter expert, right? Even if it's just on my little slice of the world, you know. So yeah, when I think of it, I think of it as being almost legitimized, right, by a formal degree program." Despite recognizing that scholarly personas do emerge beyond the ivory tower, Nessa still contends with the need to gain access to formal representations of scholarly identity via the doctoral process. Where access to the ivory tower may offer a pathway for scholarly credibility, Nessa's reflection highlights the inequity that exists for individuals at the margins who are denied access or must grapple with further complications once granted.

This reality does not take away the pursuit of a doctoral degree, inclusive of socialization experiences, as Black women are both complicating and empowering their scholarly identities. When considering her identity as a Black woman and scholar, Shelly was reminded of instances where she could not simply exist in her Black womanhood due to her peer's responses to her identity. She recalled:

[Being a Black woman] is an essential part of who I am, but I find that this identity in my space is a point of contention... a point of negativity under the cloud of being around so many people who devalue who I am. Who make comments... might make a comment about my hair, my skin, my outfits, my whatever, which are part of my expression of my identity as a Black woman. From, you know, having braids, and they don't know the difference between braids and dreads. Or asking me to teach them how to do their hair like mine or things like that. So, for me, it's become a situation by being in this state of what I feel is isolated, because there are not people that look like me in my day-to-day life. And most of those individuals are ignorant to what it means to be a Black woman. Shelly's reflections highlight how micro-and macro-aggressive interactions make her already isolating existence as a Black woman doctoral student in a highly competitive program more difficult. Though a source of great pride, she goes on to share how these experiences force her to respond differently in support of her identity as a Black woman scholar.

My identity ends up being something I have to protect. I have to now guard, I have to fight to make sure that I continue to be my authentic self, you know? Something now that I have to wrestle and grapple with in order to ensure that I'm continuing to honor who it is, what makes me, me as a Black woman. And also having the hats of, you know, Black woman scientist or Black woman STEM cell biologist, or Black woman in maternal-fetal health and research. So having all these other labels and identities attached to me. But it's kind of like, the fight is... I'm supposed to worship those labels more than the center of who I am. Why does one have to be better than another when it comes to my identity in the space of being a doctoral student?

Prioritizing specific values and practices, as well as needing more culturally responsive interactions within their doctoral journeys, greatly influence Black women doctoral students' graduate socialization experiences and directly shape their scholarly personas. In particular, these factors create contrasting experiences that complicate and empower co-researchers within their doctoral careers.

Complicating and Empowering Socialization Experiences: *It's Hard to Know*

What You Don't Know

Academic Preparation

Utilizing Bertrand Jones and Osborne Lampkin's (2013) Essential Elements of Socialization, experiences with academic preparation, mentorship, and professional development were emphasized to understand the tensions that exist within these women's doctoral experiences. When considering academic preparation interactions within co-researchers' doctoral journeys, several scholars recalled course-related experiences that were distinct due to their identities as Black women. Courses were described as prime environments for graduate socialization, as they provided doctoral scholars a space to acquire and exchange knowledge, cultivate relevant skills, and strengthen their overall scholarly personas. The majority of co-researchers expressed having complicated experiences within classroom spaces, whether via interactions with faculty and peers or tensions with the course curriculum. These barriers within their coursework were typically connected to their Black womanhood. Being at a "high profile" institution in "such a competitive field" made Shelly's academic preparation experiences as a Black woman increasingly more difficult. She recalled being constantly disrupted and questioned by peers throughout her journey:

There's not a week I go by where someone is [not] reminded that I'm Black... and I'll just be doing work or seminar. I think when I was taking classes it was at its worse, I believe. Just because, you know, when it was my turn to present or do the assignment for my group or a cohort, people would interrupt me more. It would be to the point where... I couldn't even get through my presentations in the time that was allotted to me. I can't even get through those slides.

In her everyday academic experiences, Shelly is faced with micro-and macro-aggressive exchanges that signal to her that she does not belong in these spaces. Shelly goes on to describe in detail how the targeted questioning by her peers while presenting throughout the semester created a toxic learning environment for her in a specific class. These interactions not only amplified how different her journey is as a Black woman doctoral scholar, but allowed her peers to experience how her identities created contrasting socialization experiences. Where other students were able to focus primarily on their scholarly development via the course content, Shelly was also tasked with navigating bias and discriminatory behavior from her peers. Though taxing and unfair, she saw these and other similar interactions as an opportunity to strengthen her scholarship, sharing:

People have used me being a Black woman against me...and it's special because, in spite of their perspective, I feel like I have taken that and use it against them. In the sense that, you know how people are going to treat you, you know what people may or may not say. You know, for me, when I'm defending my science, is that gonna hurt me to read more? Or to double-check and make sure I have my ducks in a row? No! Like, it makes me sharper.

Instances of frustration due to conflicting interactions within course environments were also expressed by four other scholars. Co-researchers' annoyance with course curricula falling short in naming the functions of white supremacy and centering white-dominant ways of knowing within their disciplines further complicated their academic preparation. Overlooking the contributions of Black and Brown peoples generally left scholars feeling shortchanged by their programs and impeded their scholarly development. Aisha specifically sought out an HBCU experience with the hopes of more culturally responsive interactions, inclusive of curricula, yet, remained disappointed in course offerings, syllabi choices, and overall faculty connections.

Sendi shared how many of her courses overlooked the Black experience, making little to no room in the curriculum for this perspective. The lack of inclusion of these stories creates tension for her due to her scholarly identity:

Because I'm a Black woman, I'm always wanting to explore issues that Black people are experiencing in higher education. That is my biggest interest in research and academia. So, I'm constantly wanting to see that in the curriculum. And I don't want it to just be one module, or a couple modules, or I can implement that in my final paper and apply whatever is being taught. I want that to be the center of the curriculum for every class, but I know that's a lot to ask... I've been learning about white people's experiences my whole life and education. [Sarcastic] So yeah, too much to ask.

Using sarcasm to express her frustration, Sendi's desire to have curricula center the Black experience is too great of an expectation within her educational career. In its absence, Sendi and many other scholars must take on the additional work of educating themselves, as opposed to courses regularly incorporating these perspectives into learning opportunities.

Similarly, Love was unwilling to deal with the erasure of minoritized communities within her studies and instead took full responsibility for her learning by curating an independent curriculum to meet her needs:

I take in so much time and effort to educate myself...because there's nothing new under the sun. And even if I'm, like, a minority voice in the classroom, I'm not the only one in the world and there are people who have been doing this work... I'm always educating myself on history and also what's going on now... that's, like, a lot of independent study.

Learning about various topics with an emphasis on minoritized perspectives is an active part of Love's doctoral studies. While admirable and necessary for her own scholarly development, she later acknowledges how independently educating herself in this way complicates her socialization:

I have to work so hard to ground myself in that [independent study] and be bringing that into the classroom. I don't get to spend my time on the practice part. Or yeah, like what I'm actually interested in, which is relationships and what this means for people's lives.

Because we can't even get past, I don't know...it's like...we have the conversations about structural racism, but we're not... it's not...there is like no evidence of it. It's not actually brought into our approach and like the theories that we look at.

In the absence of curricula that address systemic oppression, Love takes on the additional labor of educating herself, and eventually others, as a self-proclaimed “disruptor in class.” This added work not only reduces the capacity for progressive course discourse led by instructors but also limits Love's ability to deepen her understanding and skill development to inform her practice. She explains, “I have to spend so much time being a knowledgeable agitator that I don't get to focus on, like, my stated research interests, which are still my interests.” Where academic

preparation within and beyond the classroom is identified as being relevant to Black women's doctoral socialization, interactions with faculty are just as important.

Faculty Interactions and Mentoring

Engagement with faculty throughout co-researchers' doctoral journeys catalyzed and disrupted their scholarly development. These interactions varied based on the co-researcher and ranged from everyday course interactions to transactional advising and long-standing mentor-based relationships. All scholars articulated an appreciation for faculty interactions that challenged their perspectives on content and forced them to rethink their approaches to different topics, but few scholars had consistent developmental interactions with faculty that moved beyond course and advisor responsibilities. Challenges with fostering meaningful relationships with faculty within Eboni's doctoral experience heavily shaped her doctoral socialization. She recalled feeling unsure of next steps and opportunities for growth without the intentional and consistent support of faculty mentorship:

I feel like I've already kind of went into this silo of...like, I'm just gonna do me. And then if a professor mentioned something like, oh, yeah, that's helpful...thanks! So, I feel like I'm starting to, like, seclude myself because I don't have a mentor. I've never had one. I don't know how to go about, like, saying to someone who might feel like I got it all together, hey, I really would like your guidance.

Key developmental moments, including finding an internship and progressing her dissertation research, are further complicated due to Eboni having to figure out best practices without adequate and informed support. In response to not knowing how to establish mentor-based relationships and seeing the assistance her peers received, Eboni isolated herself within her department, further limiting her access to information and continued socialization:

It's hard to know what you don't know. And it's hard to know, like, what you need to share to get you to the place where you want to be. ... maybe that's because I don't have a mentor. But I think I think that's what's been challenging. It's like, I just always have to send like, one-off questions to professors versus having somebody that could potentially guide me in, like, these are the choices you can make to help you get to those points.

Despite attending an HBCU and having access to same-race and same-gender faculty connections, Eboni struggles with moving beyond transactional interactions to established mentor connections. She believes she is overlooked by faculty due to her high-level of academic achievements, which creates the perception that she does not need hands-on support, a scenario that has followed her throughout her educational career.

The lack of overall developmental interactions with faculty was also a source of similar frustration for Aisha, a former tenure track instructor with a strong sense of what she needed from her doctoral experience: “It definitely made my attitude a little stank about it. ... I feel like there's no one, no one is...no one matches my vibe with getting it done...getting it done decently, with getting it done professionally.” Issues with identifying a mentor within her experience stemmed from faculty lacking the necessary expertise to support her doctoral research on Black literature and/or the work ethic to meet her needs regarding deadline management, assignments, and communication style. She too hoped that enrollment at an HBCU would help counter the prevalent academic issues of limited Black faculty or faculty whose scholarly expertise falls short when exploring Black experiences typical at HWIs; yet she quickly discovered that to be untrue: “I went to an HBCU to get better from Black scholars, but the African American scholar, it's one in the English department. There's only one. Why is there only one at an HBCU?”

Despite being exposed to a wide range of faculty due to her flexible degree requirements, Aisha was frustrated that only one of these faculty members was Black.

Graduate socialization experiences with faculty regularly shift for Black women doctoral scholars due to their intersecting identities. Multiple scholars faced ongoing micro-and macro-aggressive interactions throughout their programs. For Shelly, this behavior heightened her understanding of how her relationships with faculty and mentorship needs differ due to her identity as a Black woman scholar:

One difficulty in developing mentors is just because of the fact that I'm a Black woman and them not being able to interact with me in a healthy way. Right? So, one issue can definitely be, like, their own unconscious bias. I'm not going to be able to be mentored properly by somebody who wants to touch my hair, make comments about like, I look younger than my age. You know what I mean? Those typical Black person comments, I don't have time for that...because you're distracting [us] from what we need to do because you're trying to practice having Black people around you. ... then once I get to the people who aren't weird, during our normal interactions, then I have to deal with...do you have the kind of expertise or humility that if you don't know something, you'll just say it?

True for many scholars, bias and discriminatory practices limit Black women scholars from making initial connections with faculty. Shelly's frustration with navigating these interactions in the hopes of finding someone who can manage their bias while possessing the skillset to support her scholarly development is an ongoing struggle within her graduate socialization.

Filled with countless stories with faculty that impeded her ability to connect with them sincerely and move towards mentorship, Shelly recalled one specific conversation with her

Principal Investigator (PI), a white woman. After recognizing that “everyone is colorblind,” she connected how “the training, the mentorship, the type of advice” she gets as a Black woman doctoral student is different, prompting her to tell her PI:

... you have to be able to stomach the fact that I'm a Black woman. And you need to be able to sit there and listen and recognize that they're [her white peers] not going to ask the same questions that they would ask you or other students, and you need to be able to handle that. Like, I need you to know that now. I can't have you fall apart in the middle of a presentation or in the middle of a committee meeting because you just now realize that I was Black. I can't have you late to the game, late to the party, because then you're not going to be thinking in a way or supporting me in a way that is allowing me to be my full self.

Relationships with faculty that fail to center and acknowledge how Black women's identities shape their doctoral journeys create additional work for scholars. For Shelly, it is a constant indication of her inability to be her authentic self, an ongoing message that she's received from other faculty interactions and throughout the backdrop of academia, noting:

It can be challenging sometimes working with faculty because a lot of them just want you to be and think exactly like them rather than you be your own person. So, it's kind of like they just want to reproduce themselves. So, they'll give you advice based on what they needed when they were in grad school. For me, that's going to be a big deal! Because I'm like, you're giving me advice on science and if you're like, Shelly, you don't have to do those experiments. Yes, I do. Because, when people ask me, did I do them?... maybe in your white body, you could say that you didn't and that would be okay. But if I stand up there as a Black woman, that's gonna be a huge problem. They're gonna come for me.

You know what I mean?! They're gonna, like, rip me apart. Because it's like you're being lazy.

Though filled with challenging interactions with faculty and limited mentorship opportunities for most scholars, several co-researchers thrived amid active faculty engagement and mentoring. Much of Cici's doctoral trajectory was shaped by her access to mentorship within her master's experience, which prepared her to confidently seek out those interactions later within her doctoral journey. She recalled having her research interest critiqued by older colleagues at her job at a local community college who described her work as "the fun stuff" and therefore, unworthy of the academic canon. Working closely with a faculty member who later became a mentor, helped counter these negative interactions: "[My mentor] validated my scholarly identity, not that I needed validation, but because he was interested in learning more about the topic and interested in teaching a course that included a component."

Cici goes on to describe how this faculty member's shared interest in her research, as well as the incorporation of non-traditional media as text, created space for her scholarly identity:

That allowed me to be like home for my dissertation. I could do a movie, or TV show or an album in a literary text. I don't have to just do literary texts. Right. ...I think that he allowed...he showed other people in a program like, this is a serious field, right? The study of Black woman's cultural text is a serious field.

Though already validated by way of Cici's scholarly interest, the centering of these texts by her faculty mentor increased its exposure within their department and overall credibility.

For Clevea Janae and Zaria, empowerment by way of faculty interactions came in relation to their advisors, who happened to be Black women. Both spoke endlessly about the influence of their representation and how their personas empower them to bring more of themselves into their

doctoral journeys. When thinking about her advisor and another minority faculty member, Zaria shared, “She, for one, pushes me a lot. So, I get a lot of support from her. I think there's one other professor, but he's also a minority...that's one thing. I can't say the same for the other professors, but at least the minority professors who interact with me, they push me to be greater and they always affirm to me that I am capable of doing these things.”

Though tasked to navigate the everyday effects of academia from the margins, some Black women doctoral students are experiencing healthy, supportive mentor-based socialization with faculty who often share racial and gendered identities with them. In these relationships, many are finding critical sources of care that help them evolve as scholars and endure the ever-present toxic cultures in their departments, institutions, and fields. Alongside faculty interactions and mentorship, professional development opportunities provide co-researchers space to strengthen their skills and enhance their scholarly identities.

Professional Development

Engagement in professional development offered scholars a space to see themselves differently while cultivating relevant skills for doctoral success. Both Love and Zaria served as teaching assistants (TAs) within their doctoral journeys and found the opportunity as a source of validation to their scholarly personas. When asked to recall moments when Zaria felt like a scholar, she remembered being stopped and thanked by a former student in a course where she served as a TA. The student credited her support with helping her successfully pass the class, leaving Zaria to realize these are the “things like that make me think that I'm actually doing something productive in my doctoral program.... I'm still doing my duties TA duties and stuff which are like impacting others.” Zaria found empowerment beyond the dominant publishing of papers as markers of achievement via her TA responsibilities.

Love recalled being extremely nervous as a TA the day she was responsible for leading course content after sharing with the faculty instructor that she was open to becoming a professor. After intentionally crafting the day's curriculum, which included students watching a documentary and discussion, she was amazed by the successful classroom session.

Yeah, people were very engaged. I was really excited. And I guess, the part of me that felt like a scholar is that I'm like, this makes me feel so good. Like, it's very affirming for me when I'm able to articulate stuff...because there was a time I could not say these words. I could not string together an argument where people can understand me. I, like, I still do sometimes get lost in my words, or like, lose my train of thought and stuff. But I feel I'm way better now at making sense. And just through educating myself, I have a lot more of a toolbox to pull from. I'm just more knowledgeable.

Ironically, TAs in classroom spaces were a source of conflict for Love, who often struggled with her inability to uplift various perspectives within her coursework. When given the opportunity to lead course instruction, Love presented course material in a way that countered her negative TA experiences, showcasing her deep knowledge on the topic and aligning with her scholarly identity.

Doctoral scholars are often limited in their access to different professional development experiences; however, Clevea Janae gained early access to hands-on research experiences, grant writing, and course creation opportunities within her first two years of her doctoral program. Clevea Janae credits her professional development participation in helping her “realize [her] creative side,” which, for a scholar with both traditional and non-traditional research and career aspirations, is valuable. She realized:

Now with my research, I'm like, I know people are interested in this. They've just never seen it done in research and I want to be the one to do it. So yeah, I'm trying to figure out like creative ways, too. And I love that I'm with my advisor now because we're doing stuff like ethno dramas... So, I feel like I'm really in the right space now to be able to do that.

These professional development experiences helped Cleva Janae imagine creative ways that she can contribute via her research. Though exposed to a variety of professional development opportunities, this “creative stuff” with her new advisor continues to challenge her to think non-traditionally about her scholarly work in comparison to the traditional work she engaged in early in her doctoral career.

During the same conversation, Cleva Janae was asked to read her personal statement submitted for doctoral program admission and reflect on her overall development as a scholar. Cleva Janae's scholarly journey continues to be increasingly important to her after enduring ongoing barriers that forced her to change institutions. As she sat with her accomplishments, skill development, and overall scholarly growth via professional development experiences, a large smile formed across her face. As it slowly disappeared, she paused and offered:

It makes me feel a little angry [reading her personal statement] because I'm looking at all of the stuff that I did in my previous program...in my first year with the scholarships. My second year was more of my community service-type stuff and yet I didn't feel appreciated there...I just, I didn't feel like I was really appreciated, or valued, or understood in my previous program. ... it just makes me a little angry...like, going back and reading it. ... I'm like looking at this like...I know that I was doing scholarly stuff. But yeah, I felt like I wasn't valued as a holistic person.

Though immersed in a large variety of professional development experiences, Cleva Janae quickly realized that her participation was undermined. She describes attempting to engage in different spaces in an effort to be “scholarly,” only to come away feeling devalued as a full-person. Like Cleva Janae, several scholars described experiences where they actively pursued highly encouraged socialization experiences only to realize these interactions deemed valuable by academia often shortchange their development and chip away at their existence in unhealthy ways. Despite engaging in a wide range of professional development, Cleva Janae now looks back on her experiences with feelings of anger, which sometimes overshadow the accomplished and proud emotions one would consider when viewing her scholarly achievements.

When congruent and culturally responsive to co-researchers' scholarly identities, professional development experiences can be transformative to an individual's socialization. For Cici, these experiences were critical during the early stages of her doctoral journey. Thinking about her time spent with other scholars via a professional development experience, she shared:

So, to engage with other folks who are interested in pedagogical practices that I'm interested in, and also research practices that I'm interested in, and then to be in a physical room with like-minded folks definitely felt affirming. And we got to learn together...like, that was definitely a career-changing and life-changing experience to share space with other like-minded scholars. And then to be taught by teaching artists and other actual academic professors who are in the field. Yeah, that was definitely a moment where... I [not only] felt like a hip-hop scholar, but I felt like, alright, I got more work to do.

Sharing professional development spaces with colleagues inside and outside of academia boosted Cici's confidence and motivated her to continue to develop her work. Through co-researchers'

stories, the conflicting nature of socialization experiences for Black women doctoral students is better understood. For many, experiences with academic preparation, faculty interactions and mentorship, and professional development are rarely ever solely empowering or complicating to their scholarly development. Progression through co-researchers' doctoral journeys, including interactions with socialization practices, inclusive of research and conference presentation, course instruction and direct mentorship, increases their ability to understand the evolution of their scholarly personas.

Evolving and Embodying Scholarly Identity

Casting oneself upon the backdrop of academia promotes reflection of who one is as a scholar and how the overall journey towards embracing this identity emerged. Though faced with both complicating and empowering experiences, co-researchers referenced how their identities as scholars continued to shift via these interactions. Additionally, these interactions helped make clear how specific co-researchers see themselves as scholars and the experiences that promote and hinder the embodiment of this identity. Understanding what it means to be a scholar, as well as how one sees themselves within this identity, helped co-researchers to acknowledge their own development while embracing their distinct standpoints as Black women doctoral scholars. Sendi recalled key experiences throughout her doctoral program which boosted her confidence in her scholarly capacity and supported her reflection of her overall growth, sharing:

During my graduate program, it's been a few moments, just...moments where I just realized, like, I can do this, like, I definitely have what it takes. ... I can't pinpoint a moment...but getting certain grades on some of my papers, umm, presenting at [professional conference name], just moments where I realized, "Ohh, I got this, I could do this, like, I have what it takes."

Successful engagement in specific socialization experiences supported Sendi's ability to embrace herself as a scholar within her field. Additionally, it continues to expand her personal definition of a scholar and how that may influence her career choices. After reading and reflecting on her statement of purpose used within her doctoral application, Sendi realized that her focus as a scholar at the time was on her tangible contributions inclusive of research and practice solely within academia. Through her interactions with peers, academia, and a greater understanding of how to position her research beyond the ivory tower, Sendi now recognizes her capacity to make a broader impact on society and her evolutionary scholarly persona. She said, "I think my understanding of what it means to be a scholar is definitely evolving and changing. Even what I thought about what it meant to be a scholar yesterday is different than it is today, as I'm evolving and growing into myself."

For Eboni, her lack of research experience made it difficult for her to fully accept herself as a researcher and scholar. Instead, she chose to redefine what it means to be a scholar to better align with where she is at the moment, describing herself as a "budding scholar." She continues to wrestle with embracing the term scholar, interchanging it with researcher, until she shares "I'll say yes, I'll be a scholar. But I don't see myself as a scholarly researcher, because I feel like I haven't done enough work to say that I am this established, scholarly researcher versus just like a person that's like, you know what? I'm gonna sit here and read this." Eboni acknowledges the importance of practical experiences in helping her move beyond reading critically into hands-on research as a scholar. Self-definition as "budding" mirrors her scholarly persona despite her limited research experiences. She continues, "Like, you know, I feel like I'm still growing," yet she deals with self-doubt due to not having formal educational titles, publications, and other overly-represented forms of scholarly capital. She explains:

So, I think sometimes I, like, discount myself because I don't have the role or the title, even though I have the knowledge. Yeah, so yeah. I'll say I am a scholar, but I do at some points feel like, wow, this sounds weird. I'm not, I don't wanna say the word 'worthy'. But I'm not, I am not fitting for that role yet...because I have not been published. I haven't done any, like, actual research to say, this is something I could put on my resume, so to speak.”

Access to opportunities to develop as scholars within academia appears relevant to Black women's scholarly identity journeys. These included the ability to serve as teaching assistants, actively engaging in research within a team or directly with a faculty member, attending discipline- or research-specific conferences, or informally presenting research talks to classes. Despite being in a doctoral program and bringing rich educational experiences, Eboni struggled to fully embrace her scholarly identity due to the absence of these opportunities. Within Clevea Janae's reflection, her participation in graduate socialization experiences helped her see herself as a scholar within her journey

So, I do describe myself as a scholar, mainly because I feel like...like, if you would have asked me in my first year at [her institution], I probably would have said no. But having gone through the experiences that I've gone through, having published, having won awards, having written grants, like, I'm like...Yes, I am, like advancing knowledge in this particular space, I am intellectually contributing in this particular space. And I do identify as a scholar now.

She goes on to describe an interaction with her “super nice” qualitative professor who calls her and her peers “emerging scholars.” Clevea Janae acknowledged how she pushed back on this identity, seeing her scholarly self as evolving. “I am a scholar. [...] I'm not like trying to be a

scholar. I'm like a scholar, who is developing, you know?" As co-researchers navigate interactions within their journeys, they are often required to challenge the ways individuals characterize them as scholars. Despite describing her instructor as being amicable, Cleva Janae actively disagrees with her assessment of her scholarly identity. Where the definition of both emerging and developing can appear synonymous, Cleva Janae understood her instructor's usage of emerging to mean that she could not yet claim a scholarly identity. Reflection of her participation in socialization activities deemed to be "scholarly," encouraged her to consider her scholarly evolution and embodiment, taking on a different identity than that given to her by academia.

Experiences within academic culture help co-researchers see themselves as scholars and reimagine that self-concept in a way that feels more authentic to their values and personas. Zaria describes how differentiating herself from other chemical engineers as a chemist is something she "feels strongly about," sharing, "I never say I am a chemical engineer, I say that I'm a chemist." She goes on to describe from her experiences that chemical engineers "think their way is the right way" and that they "belittle you." In opposition and to better connect with her scholarly identity, she "strongly" refuses to identify within this academic community, noting:

I feel like it makes me more of a personal person. ... But I think...like another take would be if I identify as a chemical engineer, I'd be like a *different* chemical engineer. Like trying to change the way that people think about chemical engineers. But I don't think I've gotten to that stage as [of] yet, because all of the rooms I've been [in] makes it very difficult for me to identify as a chemical engineer.

With the continued reflection of her evolving scholarly identity, Zaria recognized that her interest in identifying within the chemical engineer community is based on a desire to change the

culture. Additionally, she acknowledged her ability to create change is limited to where she is within her journey, making it a challenge to embrace this identity. Despite these feelings, her evolving identity as a scholar continues to call for her to put herself out there in new ways. She explains:

I try to involve myself in more activities or try to volunteer in roles that, like, there can be representation, and I can involve myself in stuff. So, I think that's a shift because before I never really wanted to be involved. I was a little shy and I felt like I wasn't good enough. But a shift is me putting myself out there to be involved in activities like that. That's the shift that I've seen since I've been here. And I think it's more so provoked by me seeing how we don't have any representation and we don't have a voice. So that pushes me more to involve myself to be that voice.

Embodying a scholarly identity is highlighted as an ongoing process for several co-researchers who were able to make meaning of their growth and development through the reflection of their journeys. In these moments, scholars negotiated how they saw themselves in comparison to the broader academic cultures which are often composed of different institutions, yet function as similar systems for Black women doctoral scholars.

Black Women Scholars...It's an Experience

Being a Black woman scholar creates different expectations for doctoral students that can encourage and hinder development. Throughout our conversations, co-researchers made connections between their identities and their everyday academic realities. Co-researchers managed conflicting emotions when reflecting on the influence of their Black womanhood and scholarly personas. Additionally, scholars explored how the overlapping of both identities informs their research approach. While valued deeply by many scholars, being both a Black

woman and scholar forces scholars to navigate harmful environments that create self-doubt about their capacity. Sendi consistently articulated the pride that she had in her identity as an Afro-Latina and its influence on her life and scholarship. Despite these emotions, she, too, grappled with the overlapping of these identities within academia:

As a scholar, as a researcher, as an academic, as a student, I think that I question my intelligence. And, by contrast, what I can contribute to...how I can contribute to scholarship a lot more because I'm a Black woman. You know, there's a lot of stereotypes about Black people. Like, I feel like I have to work extra hard to prove myself to others, and to myself, that I have what it takes...that, you know, I can contribute.

Though successfully managing a full-course load on a multi-year fellowship, negative depictions of Black women and the Black community contribute to self-doubt within Sendi's scholarly journey. Additionally, academic culture influences how Sendi sees herself as a Black woman scholar by invalidating the work of scholars with shared identities and interests.

And then also just not seeing enough Black women who are producing research in some of the more revered journal articles, journal publications, has really been like discouraging for me. Especially Black women who are studying what I want to study and this issue of racism and discrimination, and Black students and higher education, issues of and access and persistence. Really important work being done by Black scholars that, I think now, are starting to get a little bit more attention, but not as nearly as much attention as I need it to be able to pull inspiration from what they're doing.

Collectively, these interactions hinder Sendi from existing fully as a Black woman scholar, limiting her ability to tap into sources of motivation via other scholars' research.

Though understood as an asset within the research process, the process as a Black woman doctoral scholar was also complicating for Cleva Janae, who described how being a Black woman creates additional labor when pursuing scholarships:

I think that we take an extra amount, like, we have extra layers that are adding on to just being a scholar. Because we...not only are we producing this work, but we're also very intentional about the way it's being viewed. And I feel like that adds additional stress, and also the way we're being viewed adds additional stress, and then the other roles that we have going on in our life that adds additional stress, and then having to deal with being Black and a woman, and whatever other marginalized identities you may have, I think the intersection of the intersections of that are also stressful

While both Cleva Janae and Sendi expressed complications with their identities as Black women doctoral scholars, multiple co-researchers acknowledged how being Black women scholars enhances their research approach. Eboni feels her identity as a Black woman should be actively brought into her work, sharing:

I think that it is important that you don't let any of your identities be silenced when you're conducting research...it's very valid because that's a part of who you are. You know, Black womanhood is just as valuable to this research as any other identity that you have. So don't silence that because somebody else or because historically, white male is what academia sees as valuable.

As described by Eboni and shared by other scholars, embracing one's Black womanhood alongside her scholarly identity is seen as an asset to her experiences. Similarly, several co-researchers articulated how being a Black woman equips them with a valuable standpoint for

approaching their scholarship. When considering how her identity as a Black woman scholar shifts how she both exists and produces scholarship in academia, Clevea Janae offered:

I feel like being a Black woman in this space, like you always have to navigate... how are you going to show up... what you're going to say... what type of work you're going to put out? How is this work going to be used to understand you, like in terms of, like, from other people? Like how, when people read my work when people see me... what are they going to think? What is their perception of me going to be? I feel like we always have to worry about that... We care about how we show up in a space, how we're being perceived by others, like how our work is going to be impacting others.

Existing as a Black woman scholar for Shelly changes everything within her academic career: “I mean, my beliefs and stuff, I think, and just, culturally, just being a Black woman, everything is different about it from how I approach the science, what questions I think are interesting, what I think is relevant, or someone else thinks irrelevant.” Within Shelly’s everyday academic life, her lived experiences as a Black woman support her ability to distinguish herself as a scholar by providing her a distinct perspective on science. When asked specifically about how this shapes her research, Shelly shared with confidence:

Because I'm going to ask questions, because I see things that nobody else can see, by paying attention to things that no one else is going to pay attention to. And because most other people aren't paying attention, that adds value and stock as far as of my quality! So, it's kind of like my price goes up when you don't pay attention because that means that I'm going to be able to submit grants that have unique ideas. So, it doesn't matter if you try to steal my ideas, I've got plenty. [Laughs] You know like... you're trying to take crumbs, and that's not even the meat in the heart of what I'm trying to do.

Shelly's outsider insider perspective as a Black woman, alongside other identities, positions her to approach her research in ways that are unique and ultimately make her more successful. Her reference of past experiences where peers and faculty stole her research ideas notes how research outcomes perceivably fall short when absent from Black women's scholarly perspectives.

Throughout her coursework, Love, too, experienced similar validations of her scholarly identity as a Black woman:

Like, for me, I've just never seen myself centered in academic discourse. So, I've never been centered. I feel like there was no like...with this [being a Black woman]... formula. The outcome could have never been someone like [me] centered in mainstream in any discipline. So, I'm bred to be on the margins.

Reflections of her identity as a Black woman and doctoral scholar highlight how Black women experience being overlooked and erased from academia further situating their identities at the outskirts of society. With this understanding, Love embraces being situated on the margins acknowledging the possibilities that come from the borders:

But I see that [being bred on the margins] as an opportunity to not just keep on recycling the same thing. I see it as like the perfect storm or offering something new and moving forward. Because I feel like, in the mainstream, it's hard to come up with something new. Like it just all kind of validates itself and centers itself, but from the margins, that's where unity and liberation is possible.

As scholars make sense of themselves within the confines of academia, many began to recognize their innate connection to socially just perspectives and interest in creating more equitable spaces. These actions, where simple, reflect a shared interest among most co-researchers to function as bridges for transformation as scholars.

Bridge Building Personas: *Being Very Vocal...Outspoken...Critical, Being A Disrupter*

Within academia and beyond, the influence and shared collective mobility of Black women continue to demand systemic change and disruption. These calls, echoed by Black women doctoral scholars in this study, often position them to serve as metaphorical bridges or pathways for transformation within their departments, institutions, and fields. Co-researchers regularly described themselves as being social justice and equity-centered within their scholarly work and broader existence. From this viewpoint, Black women scholars tend to see systemic structures and their functions, inclusive of academia, differently from their peers. In response, many find themselves speaking out to challenge oppressive policies and practices which hinder their capacity to exist fully. Additionally, scholars began to articulate how their bridge-building personas shape their perspectives and approaches to research. Embracing their bridge-building personas created opportunities for them to acknowledge their distinct socially just and equity-oriented standpoints, how and why they talk back, and its influence on their research as scholars.

Disruption from the Margins

For all co-researchers, there was an inherent connection to their identities as Black women and a vested interest in transforming communities, whether that be within their departments, institutions, or spaces outside of academia. Holding marginalized identities often better-equipped co-researchers with the tools to recognize inequities and tasked them to advocate for change in large and small ways. As a scholar, Clevea Janae shared, “I see myself as an outlet for or an avenue for marginalized people to say what they really want to say to people without the fear of retaliation. Without the fear of I don't know, like, isolation without the fear of, like, what it would mean for them to actually speak up in their truth in these spaces.”

Through many recalled stories, Cleva Janae gave a glimpse into her day-to-day realities of being a “disruptive scholar” navigating academia. Patterns of speaking out in silent rooms against the problematic language used by guest faculty lecturers or seeking clarity on inequitable practices helped her understand the unique nature of her bridge-building scholarly persona. She explained, “So, I feel like, for me, because I don't have that fear that a lot of people have, I'm able to speak out on things that other people...I'm able to be like the microphone that people can use to say what they really, really want to say.” These public moments are often followed by private thank you's and words of encouragement from peers who remain silent during these moments. However, using one's voice to push back hasn't come without challenge and consequence for Cleva Janae:

Being the type of Black woman that I am...being very vocal, being very outspoken, being very critical, being a disrupter, I definitely feel like I have to always deal with people's emotions around how they feel about things that I've said. Even if I didn't say anything bad...about them. Like people are usually uncomfortable with folks being so blunt.

Discomfort with her vocal nature continues to follow Cleva Janae throughout her doctoral career, yet fails to move her from her commitment to social justice.

When reflecting on her identity as a scholar, Sendi expressed how this need to drive equity-oriented change should be at the center of scholars' work and how it relates to her own scholarly identity:

And I think that scholars need to use their platform and where they are in life to get it to move the needle [on equity] as much as possible. Even if we don't, we're not able to do it in our lifetime...to realize some kind of improvement and change.

Existence as an Afro-Latina drives why Sendi feels scholars should utilize their work and positionality to progress society forward equitably. Her ability to see the world from the margins supports her belief that scholars should commit to changing. In response, many co-researchers find themselves utilizing their voices to disrupt the spaces around them.

Speaking Out, Talking Back, and Resisting Oppression

Black women doctoral scholars' perspectives on transformation and self-interest in social justice often position them to fill gaps in others' understanding of systemic oppression while requiring them to speak out against inequity. Sometimes this response is an active stance against their mistreatment. Despite being familiar with feelings of discrimination and prejudice, Shelly was still surprised by the amount of bias she had to navigate throughout her coursework and in the sciences more generally, though she acknowledged that the frequency of racism and levels of disrespect "got a little bit better" as a result of amplified national calls for racial justice and the global pandemic.

Dominant norms and practices signal to co-researchers what it means to be a scholar, oftentimes creating conflict with their self-concepts. Shelly recalled the unfair/superhuman expectations placed on her as a Black woman doctoral student in the sciences. The pressure to conform or attempt to embody perceptions of a scholarly Black woman from her white peers was unrealistic. No longer tolerant of these ideas, Shelly began pushing back and resisting these characterizations:

I can't do it according to their interpretation of what that looks like, because what that looks like is someone who doesn't actually exist. Like it's not real, it's an image. I'd be an imposter because I'm trying to live up to an expectation that no real human could ever live up to. Like, I'm trying to live up to the expectation of a human being who doesn't

have failed experiences, or might have fumbled a question...like I'm a human being, you know what I mean? I can't pretend based on your interpretation of how I'm supposed to pretend to be versus just being authentically myself.

Feeling the pressure to achieve and exist in impossible ways as a scholar helped ground Shelly in more self-defined understandings of her scholarly self that challenged her white peers' ideas and embraced a more authentic Black woman scholarly persona.

Speaking up and talking back for Zaria is central to her identity as a scholar. "I realized that I wasn't gonna go, like, sitting back and accepting the BS from these people. It's not gonna get you anywhere. Like, you're just gonna be sad and annoyed every time. And so, you should stand your ground." As she continued to explain why this stance is important, Zaria shared that she was encouraged to do so by her advisor, who is also a Black woman:

I'm not gonna go back and forth. I'm just gonna do what I have to do and make the results speak for themselves. But like, if it gets crazy or someone tries to act crazy, I will stand my ground in that moment. So that's one of the things that have shaped my [scholarly] identity.

Learning how to strategically use her voice has become a large part of Zaria's identity as a scholar thanks to her advisor. Through her guidance, Zaria who was naturally soft-spoken throughout our shared time, negotiates speaking up and asserting herself when necessary, and lets her academic achievements do the talking in other moments. As a lab manager in her department, she now feels responsible to encourage her peers to stand their ground against disrespectful faculty and peers in a similar way to her advisor.

Policies and practices within departments are a frequent cause of frustration for Black women doctoral scholars. Nessa, who is both employed full-time as a practitioner and enrolled as

a doctoral student at the same institution, is often the first to recognize and speak out against inequity. Though proud of her department and program's growth around social justice and equity work in practice, she still struggles with problematic processes ingrained throughout the institution that create inequitable experiences for students. She recalled challenging the funding structures for professional development opportunities within her department, which she understood professionally and as a student as being well-funded. In response, she questioned department leadership on the competitive undertones of professional development funding for students by pointing out:

You know, and so this idea of, almost a reification of [white] supremacy, like it has to be competitive, it has to be individual, it has to be—no, it doesn't have to be any of that. You know you can imagine a world, I promise you, you can, in which that is not a thing. So, you know, I never know if anything's ever gonna come up, or anything's gonna change.

Nessa's acknowledgment of departmental practices mirroring white supremacy highlights how Black women doctoral scholars can bring together theory and practice in their advocacy when speaking out. As Black women doctoral scholars, one's research often serves as a primary space for challenging and resisting dominant representations of scholarship.

Shifting Approaches to Research

Research and scholarship production remains at the center of academia's function. As Black women doctoral scholars, the majority of co-researchers expressed a deep intimacy with their work, often due to its proximity to their identities, experiences, and overall stories. Bridge-building as researchers shifts who Black women doctoral scholars seek to produce their work for and how they approach their processes. Sendi's devotion to social justice and desire to create

research that transforms communities is heavily shaped by her identity as a scholar. Utilizing this as a source of motivation for the research that she pursues, she shared:

Like, I really want to conduct research and add to our understanding of practice so that Black students... could persist and be successful in their academic endeavors. And so, I just really want to contribute to our research on how we can create these campus environments and policies or practices in higher education.

Creating research that directly influences the communities in which Sendi holds membership is a driving force for her scholarly production. While she acknowledges the importance of dismantling structures in higher education that impact all students, her research focus remains unapologetically on the experiences of Black students.

When asked to consider what is most important to them as scholars, most co-researchers expressed a need for the work they produce to be accessible within and beyond the ivory tower. Earlier findings note the importance of community to scholars' identities, so naturally, the ability for their work to be seen, understood, and utilized by their communities is critical. Nessa described how this remains of the greatest importance within her scholarly journey:

I think that what is most important is access, right? That we produce meaningful work that is accessible to the folks that we care about. An audience that we care about oftentimes does not include academic libraries, or spaces, like, you know. It is sad that there probably is really good scholarship locked up behind the paywall or locked up somewhere behind a “you need a library username from a university to access” or that is written in a way that it's not accessible to, you know, non-academics, right? So, for me, I think it's important to produce work that is [accessible]. It's not about the amount of work that you produce, but it's about how meaningful it is. That it adds value to the

conversation and that it can be read by more than just your academic peers. Right? That it's accessible in all forms.

From Nessa's perspective, scholarship is most relevant when made physically and linguistically accessible to the communities deemed personally important to scholars. She acknowledges that certain practices, like publishing at high rates or using inaccessible language, often hinder academic work from reaching the people who matter the most and commits as a scholar to counter these norms. With further thought on her scholarly contributions, Nessa added, "A catalyst for change is probably—definitely—the most important [thing]," citing the ability for her research to transform the communities for whom she endeavors to make her work accessible.

Eboni articulated similar thoughts of accessibility, but specifically concerning her scholarly persona. Observations of prominent scholars in her field who became seemingly out of reach to the communities they advocate for conflicted with her bridge-building scholarly persona. As a former K-12 teacher, being personally available to and creating scholarship that can be understood by the communities she served, inclusive of students, caregivers, and community members, was important:

I don't want to be a person where I'm like, I've reached this level where if I don't think I'm ever going to be a professor, I want people to feel like I'm always approachable. And I don't want my research to ever get so convoluted that it's not understood by the common person. So that's, that's who I want to be as a researcher, somebody that makes the contribution, but my work is still...anybody can read it. Like, even if you only have a middle school, high school reading level education, like, I want my work to be relevant in that way.

Additionally, making research applicable to the everyday lives of communities affected by the issues studied was a commonality among several co-researchers. For Love, the work, particularly research production, is all about the people impacted by the issues problematized via research and policy analysis. Her responsibility as a scholar lies in “centering lived experiences. So, not just like pontificating, and just producing really complex thought exercises and mental exercises, like, in my field [criminal justice], this is real stuff. This is real life for millions of people. So, I think it's so important, like, number one is to start having our work reflect that.”

From Love’s viewpoint, research fails to mirror and shift the everyday truths of people plighted most by issues that are often shared without care. Her frustrations with these practices in her discipline were triggering “because we're talking about removing millions of human beings and I'm like, these are family members, these are community members. It used to be overwhelmingly emotional for me and I feel like that's not there's not as much space for that within academia.” The emotional nature of her work as an abolitionist conflicts with mainstream academia’s approach to research. As a Black woman doctoral scholar, Love believes research should incorporate room to reflect on one’s connections to the work while considering the humanity of the people at its core.

Multiple co-researchers acknowledged how their identities as Black women scholars enhance their ability to approach their research more effectively. Eboni feels her identity as a Black woman is important and should be actively brought into her work, sharing:

I think that it is important that you don't let any of your identities be silenced when you're conducting research...it's very valid because that's a part of who you are. You know, Black womanhood is just as valuable to this research as any other identity that you have.

So don't silence that because somebody else or because historically, white male is what academia sees as valuable.

The marginalization of Black women in academia often encourages scholars to minimize their expressions of Black womanhood within their scholarship. Eboni's reflection reminds scholars to embrace their identities, alongside their Black womanhood, as a source of credibility in the process. Countering the belief that research is less objective and valid when incorporating one's identity or centering communities in which they have membership as a scholar remains an act of resistance for Eboni and other co-researchers. When scholars tap into these inherent ways of seeing and knowing as Black women in academia, many expressed the ability to see new realities for themselves, academia, and their broader communities.

Imagining New Possibilities: *Letting This Black Womanhood Look Differently*

Time spent with co-researchers revealed how their scholarly personas as Black women doctoral students created new possibilities for their lives. Some of these new realities arise by choice, others out of necessity, in support of their identities as scholars. Once scholars begin to understand the dominant norms and practices of academia, many seek ways to work the system to their benefit. Additionally, scholars shared how their viewpoints encourage them to seek broader career opportunities that leverage their expertise and support their holistic health and well-being. Finally, thinking about new possibilities motivates scholars to consider different representations of Black womanhood.

Working the System to Their Benefit

Many Black women doctoral students recognized the ways that academia as a system was not constructed with them in mind. From isolating departmental climates to poorly structured course content, co-researchers often found themselves shortchanged. Several co-researchers

acknowledged how these systems function in oppressive ways, but they have figured out ways to work the system to their benefit. For Cici, recognizing the opportunity to leverage her academic experiences for financial gain was a primary motivator for pursuing her doctoral degree. She expressed:

I literally said I need to get this Ph.D. to market myself. And that was my motivation. It had nothing to do with academia. It was more like...if academia is going to cap me at this low-ass salary after I went to school to get my master's, it's like, by getting this terminal degree, I will be able to be in control of my career. And the academy will just be where I reside. Right? It'll just be like, where I reside. But this Ph.D. will allow me to maneuver how [I want to].

Cici's previous experiences as an instructor at several institutions made her familiar with the salary limitations of faculty roles. As a new mom who oftentimes felt like she belonged outside of academia, pursuing a doctoral degree made her feel as though she could take control of her career and exist in academia on her own terms. For Shelly, her identity as a Black woman had a "strong focus and purpose" in her tolerance of white-dominant academic structures, norms, and practices. She explained:

...like, that's what's driving me to, like, deal with them. Because I want to get to the work that I want to do by kind of like putting in the time and energy in areas that are valuable to my white peers at the moment. And even though it is valuable to my, you know, white peers, it's information I'm going to need. So, it's kind of like, I got to get through these questions to get to the questions I want to ask in a more meaningful way. So, you know, it's all par for the course.

Working alongside white colleagues who have access to various forms of social and cultural capital, despite having to “deal” with poor interactions, is seen as a necessary exchange. These interactions provide Shelly with critical information that she plans to later use within her research agenda exploring the experiences of Black women’s health. By utilizing the system to benefit her interest as a scholar, Shelly continued:

...it's kind of like, my current work is kind of like a means to get to that. You know what I mean? [To] gather the skills that I need, so that eventually I can ask the questions that I want. I'm still not in a position to ask the questions that I want to ask. So, I literally have, like, lots of questions and things that I want to explore, but I can't do that, um, you know, at this stage in my development and training, because I still need to, like, learn more.

Most co-researchers found themselves in isolated environments where they are one of a few minoritized voices in spaces. Zaria tailed why she specifically chooses to engage in these spaces as a scholar, despite having similar emotions. “I want to be in rooms with people that do not look like me, [who] want more representation.” Recognizing the value in fostering relationships and gaining professional experiences beyond her advisor encourages Zaria to seek out spaces where the lack of representation of Black women needs to be addressed. “So, working on that second project, I work with all the like big people in the big labs here. So that's another way to get more representation or get myself in the room ’ Despite describing her advisor's research lab as one of the only safe spaces in her department, Zaria ventures out beyond her comfort zone into potentially harmful spaces for opportunities that support her long-term goals and increase representation for other minoritized scholars. These choices keep her encouraged within her journey: “[In] experiences where I’m, like, [the only one in the room], [this] influences and motivates me to continue thriving at what I do... it makes me want to keep going

and keep learning more things, exploring different avenues to do things.” Though isolated, Zaria uses these moments as a source of persistence within her journey and recognizes how she gains access to new experiences despite being the “only one in the room.” As scholars continue to leverage opportunities for their benefit within their doctoral journeys, conversations frequently included their career interests and how their choices are influenced by their identities as Black women.

Broadening Career Possibilities

Careers in academia are traditionally presented as the primary option for doctoral students after degree completion. Yet for Black women doctoral scholars, careers in academia often mirror their experiences as students, including bias and discriminatory interactions that undermine their talents and limit their existence in these spaces. This reality heavily influences co-researchers’ interests in careers in academia and inspires them to imagine broader career possibilities as Black women scholars. As scholars, Black women doctoral students hold multiple identities sometimes shared with other co-researchers or distinct to them as individuals. For Cici, her identity as a new mom with additional financial expenses helped further push her into her current role outside of academia:

And it was way more money than a lecturer position was offering. And I just had a baby, so we gotta pay for like...the daycare. And I was thinking about that work-life balance... even though I feel like... everyone will probably have challenges balancing work and life. Ummm, but I was thinking about, like, the amount of grading and then like, sometimes grading happens on a weekend, then how would that like take time away from, you know, my daughter, or just trying to create boundaries as a parent in academia.

Though she loves her work as a hip-hop scholar, Cici's other identities as a mother and provider encouraged her to seek other opportunities beyond faculty life within academia. Additionally, poor academic structures keep Cici from fully embracing a life of teaching and research. She recalled feeling "bad" for a colleague who teaches at a local university: "The infrastructure [in academia] is not there. No fucking pay because [the] budget is short sometimes or especially in the summertime, pay be cut short." Systemic issues throughout academia, including pay shortages and poorly funded departments, add to the political pressures of academic careers and encourage Black women doctoral scholars to explore other opportunities while remaining connected to the field. Cici offered:

If I were to be [in academia] as an adjunct, you know, teaching one or two classes and this is not my full-time gig, so I don't have that pressure to deal with like the politics of the academy. You get what I'm saying? So, I would, you know, love to [be more fully in academia]... I would even be open to finding something online, like an online teaching position.

Being able to maintain her current role outside of academia, as well as find an opportunity to teach in a non-traditional setting, aligns with both Cici's personal and professional needs.

Within this study, not all co-researchers expressed an interest in a career in academia. Nessa understood early within her higher education career that academia, especially teaching, did not align with her scholar-practitioner identity and personal needs:

I always knew faculty wasn't my route, right? Just because I don't really like teaching like that. Um, I've done it, you know, um, but I just, I can't say I really enjoy it. Like, and I don't like all the stuff that comes with it, right, the grading and, like, not my thing.

The responsibilities of faculty life encouraged Nessa to consider if the demands of the role, inclusive of tenure and promotion, paired well with her skills and capacity. She went on to explain how pursuing a career as faculty and having to undergo the tenure and promotion process gave her anxiety as a person living with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):

So, I know engaging in it is not...like this idea, you need to publish this much, you need to do this much service, like, no. And I'm a person with ADHD. So, like, furthermore, that kind of thing put on me, as opposed to me choosing to do it, is never going to be a good look, right? Um, so I'm trying to make sure that I'm still...though I don't let my ADHD run my life, I still have to be realistic about how it does affect my life. And one of the things that I know it doesn't work well with is like those types of expectations.

The pressures of academia have real-world implications and can be detrimental to Black women doctoral students who fail to acknowledge their potential impact. Though she expressed a disconnect with the everyday responsibilities of faculty life, Nessa's mental health and well-being would be put at risk if tasked to achieve at pre-established levels for tenure and promotion. As someone who grappled with an onset of health issues within her doctoral journey resulting in extended leave via the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), avoiding faculty life was a necessary choice for Nessa. Navigating inequitable standards and welcoming an open forum for critique impedes Black women doctoral scholars from embracing academic life in this way. In support of herself as a scholar-practitioner, she instead imagines a career as a Vice President at a mid-sized public institution in hopes of "working a lot less."

In contrast, Aisha was the only scholar fully committed to a career in academia as a faculty member beyond her doctoral experience. As mentioned previously, her love for students and commitment as an educator were central to her scholarly identity and motivation. When

asked about careers in academia she acknowledged how her initial interest in only working at elite Research I HBCUs has changed through the years:

I was like, definitely I'll go work at like FAMU or Spelman or somewhere else excellent and Black after this... People at community colleges make just as much money, do just as much good work, and are still able to make the contributions to academia. And then they don't have that publish or perish hanging over their head. I don't have a problem with it. I always get it done...but I don't know. I just am not so closed off and resistant towards it as I once was... You just grow up? Yeah, the goal is to get a job, a tenure track job. I'll take whichever one comes my way.

Experiences in higher education exposed Aisha to the realities of working at different institution types which may be better equipped to holistically support her needs without the pressure of large-scale institutional research culture. Additionally, securing a tenure track job for Aisha is the primary goal beyond completing her degree and she no longer focuses on the type of institution. Though still invested in academic life, the opportunities for where and how she can contribute as a scholar continue to expand throughout her doctoral journey as her identity evolves.

As explored earlier, co-researchers frequently imagine their careers in academia often through the lens of Black women role models and peers throughout the field. Observing academia and its treatment of Black women faculty, especially within the tenure and promotion process, caused Sendi to reconsider how she would be treated if she moved forward with her career interests in academia:

It's been interesting to see Black women recently have issues with gaining tenure. And there's no coincidence that their research topics are on critical thinking or are using

critical lenses like Critical Race Theory and stuff. And that messaging has just been really interesting to try to process and think about what that means for me and my career moving forward. I—honestly, so far—I'm still a little apprehensive to go into higher education after I graduate, rather than considering other career paths where I can still have an impact on Black students in higher education, but I might not necessarily have to fight through spaces in higher education and fight through processes and policies and practices like the tenure process.

Recent events complicating the tenure process for a prominent Black woman scholar alongside broader observations prompted Sendi to consider if she, too, would face similar barriers as a future faculty member. As a social justice-oriented scholar, societal discourse attacking critical frameworks feels personal to Sendi and makes her question her ability to navigate oppressive spaces in formal academic roles. “Is that something that I even want to put myself through? Because I’m getting this messaging that...that kind of research, there’s no place for it in higher education...especially depending on the institution you’re at.” This messaging prompts Sendi to think about the impacts of this reality within her research and academic career noting “it’s already a struggle to even create spaces for those topics, for that kind of research.’ The conflict between Sendi’s research interests and her well-being in academia is an ongoing internal battle for her. She continued, “But I don’t want to let [the politics of critical research] run me away from higher education, though, because I think the work I want to do is important and needed.” The politics of academia has her interested in finding other spaces like “the federal government, state government, department of education” or “nonprofit work, private sector” to actively contribute through her work as a scholar interested in social justice, diversity, and inclusion.

Exploring opportunities beyond academia naturally aligns with how certain scholars see themselves and the work that they produce, and for Black women doctoral scholars, this work is often situated in equity and justice work. Love, a self-proclaimed abolitionist scholar, imagines a career as a scholar that brings together her current interests in research and desire to work alongside communities. Many of the day-to-day tasks of graduate student life, including “reading a lot, synthesizing information, bringing my perspective whether that's through talking to people, writing, creating whatever translational product that's accessible to people,” are things Love hopes to continue to do within her future career inside or outside of academia. For her, doing “more direct work with people” within a community organization as a researcher and programmer feels “like that's part of [her] purpose,” though she acknowledges that “it just wouldn't look like what most people are doing.”

All co-researchers expressed appreciation for specific elements of academia, whether it be reading, teaching, research, or other scholarly functions. Additionally, each co-researcher described utilizing their scholarly talents to improve local communities in different ways. Though Love positions herself outside of academia and alongside communities in her reflections, she is still interested in becoming a faculty member to write books and support doctoral students to “get through” their journeys, though she still prioritizes working with communities over any institutionalized labor.

Similarly, other scholars expressed an interest in conducting research or teaching, but struggled with seeing themselves as full-time academics due to the systemically oppressive norms and practices throughout the field. These often included the career stratification of Black women in academia, attacks on their often-critical research agendas, poor pay structures, and

daily micro-and macro-aggressive interactions. As a mid-career scholar, Shelly remains steadfast in her professional plans to eventually enter academia, sharing:

I do want to keep going in academia...I might probably do a postdoc [...] And then from there, you know, kind of figure out where I might want to do my work in research and kind of get back in the fight. But kind of build my strength...go build my skills before I come back to, you know, fight this fight again at a different level.

Pursuing other opportunities beyond academia offers Shelly space to continue her scholarly development with the intent to re-enter academia in a different capacity. Additionally, her motivations for pursuing postdoc jobs via industry are influenced by the ability to make better money in comparison to academia. As a new mom, this interest in financial gain aligns with Cici's reflections on poor pay structures in academia and its influence on her seeking new opportunities for the betterment of her family. Shelly's decision to eventually re-enter academia seemed fairly concrete until she later revisited the issue of being challenged by colleagues. She explained

For me, it's more so do I want to still be bothered with these people, with these questions? Even though I know I have a passion for teaching, education, and mentorship, which are the qualities a faculty member's supposed to have, there is also the other side of having to, like, deal with it.

Previous instances of bias and discrimination throughout Shelly's coursework continue to make her question if she can cope with "these people" in academia. She acknowledges a love for the core characteristics of faculty roles yet struggles with the idea of immersing herself in the field again. She goes on to share how she has specific scholarly goals inclusive of producing a textbook and furthering her research. From her perspective:

Some of those goals and things that I have ideas to do are based on me actually staying in the field, not like leaving and doing something else. And yeah, my original passion was to do that. And I don't want the fact that I've had some negative experiences to, like...I don't want to forfeit my purpose, just because of the situation and things that I'm going through as of today.

Shelly's reflections showcase the effects of harmful academic environments within the career trajectories and overall pursuit of goals for Black women doctoral students. As she grapples with staying in academia or pursuing alternative career opportunities, she reminds herself that her interest in choosing to stay aligns with a long-term purpose.

Black women doctoral students make decisions regularly in support of their scholarly identities. As white hegemonic structures in academia continue to persist, broadening their career possibilities as scholars represent a way for these women to be agentic within their journeys. Though many co-researchers struggled with toxic environments, like Clevea Janae, they refuse to let it limit their possibilities. She countered, "I don't feel like I'm constrained to traditional ways of being a scholar."

Resisting tradition by staying true to themselves as scholars helps Black women doctoral students imagine new career possibilities. In these spaces, many are trying to figure out how to hold on to the parts of academia that they love while seeking nontraditional or academic adjacent opportunities to utilize their scholarly talents.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored thematic findings made apparent through data analysis of Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities. Findings illustrate the multifaceted ways that Black women doctoral students experience their scholarly selves due to their intersectional and

overlapping identities within the backdrop of academia. Co-researchers' stories highlight the distinct ways that each journey is shaped by their scholarly personas and note the shared truths among their experiences. When considering the research questions, Black women doctoral scholars describe and make meaning of themselves through their Black womanhood, inclusive of personal lived experiences, Black women role models, and connections to their broader communities. Interactions with graduate socialization shift Black women doctoral scholars' journeys, creating complicating and empowering moments that support their acknowledgment of their scholarly development and help them better articulate how their race and gender shape their personas. As scholars, Black women doctoral students see themselves as bridge builders who find ways to disrupt academic spaces and utilize their standpoints to progress communities forward equitably. From their scholarly perspectives, Black women doctoral scholars reimagine new realities for themselves within and beyond academia that align with their purpose and broaden their career perspectives. In Chapter 6, implications derived from the findings and theoretical framework are recommended to rethink approaches to research, policy, and practice for Black women doctoral scholars.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this Black feminist storytelling study was to examine Black women doctoral students' scholarly identity perspectives. Additional interest focused on the influence of their scholarly self-concepts concerning larger socialization experiences within their doctoral journeys. Navigation of the double jeopardy of being Black women created distinct realities which shaped their interactions with academia and shifted their choices as scholars. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do Black women doctoral students describe and make meaning of their scholarly identities?
2. How do Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities influence their graduate socialization experiences?
3. What negotiations do Black women doctoral students make in support of their scholarly identities?

Nine co-researchers shared their stories for this study. Storytelling as a methodology was selected to amplify the often minimized and silenced voices of Black women. Telling the scholarly stories of Black women doctoral students via a storied approach sought to redistribute inequitable power structures by focusing inquiry on their self-definitions, perspectives of lived experience, and overall agency. Scholarship on Black women in higher education continues to emerge with a wide focus on their realities. This study contributes to further discussion on the realities of Black women doctoral students through its investigation of their lived experiences as scholars. In this chapter, findings from my study illustrate new approaches for research, practice, and policy within academic spaces and higher education. Discussion is explored via the

following sections: revisiting the matrix of domination/Conceptual framework, implications for research, implications for practice, and policy implications.

Connection to the Literature and Theoretical Framework

The stories of Black women doctoral students in academia continue to deepen our understanding of how context shapes identity for scholars. My findings from this study showcase the daily implications of systemic oppression for these women's scholarly experiences and the negotiations they make in response to their lived realities. As introduced in Chapter 3 in Figure 1, the Model of Black Women Doctoral Student Scholarly Identity highlights how systems of domination coalesce to influence how these women see themselves and leverage their worldviews within academia. The Matrix of Domination (Collins, 2002) and the Essential Elements of Socialization model (Bertrand Jones & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013) served as a lens to understand the function of interlocking systems of control and the resistance to dominance enacted by Black women doctoral students. Within the following sections, each domain of the Matrix of Domination is revisited to illustrate how these interrelated systems of oppression manifest, often operationalized via socialization practices, within their scholarly journeys. Through co-researchers' stories, my study offers insight into how Black womanhood serves as a source of meaning-making and a tool of resistance utilized throughout scholars' doctoral journeys.

Structural Domain of Power

The increased subjugation of Black women is organized via widespread, interlocking social institutions which actively reproduce their social exclusion due to the structural domain of power. Collins (2002) notes how these structures are everyday systems operating as corporate, government, and education entities, inclusive of higher education. Through laws and policies,

these spaces continue to marginalize Black women by tasking them to leverage empowerment through the transformation of social institutions. Observed throughout the literature and this study is how academia, composed of its varying institution types, departments, programs, as well as academic adjacent spaces and outputs, is structured to maintain dominance over Black women's lives. Central to higher education's history of exclusion and inclusion, these patterns within academia remain at the core of its systemic function and are embedded in laws and policies (Evans, 2008). As these functions continue to favor the marginalization of Black women, the evolution from complete inaccessibility to colleges and universities contemporize into limited access to doctoral degrees and faculty status.

Not surprisingly, most co-researchers existed as the only or a small representation of Black women doctoral students within their programs and departments, complicating their scholarly identity development as I describe below. Broader laws and policies greatly shape educational pathways for Black women into postsecondary education (Commodore et al., 2017). Despite their evident capacity to persist, Black women's access to doctoral programs and subsequent faculty careers continues to be heavily shaped by discriminatory admission and hiring policies (Walkington, 2017; Wilder et al., 2013). This contributes to the ongoing lack of critical mass of Black women experienced by scholars in this study both within graduate academic settings and broader campus communities.

With most co-researchers enrolled at HWI's, many endure specific forms of subordination due to the structural effects of systemic underrepresentation. Furthermore, limitations to academic pathways for Black women resulted in several scholars navigating their campus communities in isolation or with few safe spaces. Clevea Janae noted being one of three Black people housed at her discipline-specific campus, inclusive of her faculty advisor and

another student. Additionally, challenges with making connections with faculty are normalized due to the underrepresentation of Black faculty and subsequent cultural tax demands of those present at their institutions (Gooden et al., 2020). Though not fully the experiences of co-researchers enrolled at HBCUs, barriers resulting from the lack of a critical mass of Black faculty, especially women, reduced Aisha's socialization opportunities in seeking mentorship and culturally responsive coursework. Additionally, the underrepresentation of Black faculty on college campuses further systematizes the lack of access to courses centering on minoritized communities or incorporating critical concepts into theory and praxis which remained a large frustration of multiple co-researchers.

Regardless of where co-researchers situated themselves within the ivory tower, or when and where they entered, all articulated moments of marginality, invisibility, and/or devaluation due to being systematically othered and made to feel like "outsiders within" academia (Collins, 1989). Interlocking systems of oppression manifest differently in the lives of Black women due to their distinct social locations, yet oppression's widespread function in the experiences of all co-researchers could not be ignored. As indicated within my study, connections to other Black women within academia and broader cultural communities are a primary source of scholarly identity meaning-making, resilience building, and motivation for co-researchers. When granted access into academic systems, the structural domain of power maintains dominance by restricting scholars' access to the shared consciousness of Black women, yet, in response, co-researchers find ways to combat its effects.

In the absence of structural suppression and a lack of critical mass, co-researchers' empowerment and resistance strategies use present laws and policies to further gain access to experiences that support their graduate school aspirations and aid in their matriculation. Though

on a slow decline within recent years, Black women doctoral scholars continue to gain access to and graduate from academic programs (NCES, 2018). Multiple scholars noted pre-graduate academic preparation experiences as formative within their scholarly identity journeys. Early exposure to fields came by way of their preparatory high schools, STEM pathway programs, extracurricular involvements, and/or full-time work which offered mentorship, expanded networks, and subsequent graduate school support. Findings highlight how systemic attempts to limit Black women's access to academic spaces were bypassed by co-researchers gaining access to the "hidden curriculum" via these interactions. Luedke and colleagues (2019) study found how early access academic programs offer minoritized students distinct forms of cultural capital through the usage of bilateral socialization which encourages students to see their identities as assets to their scholarly journeys.

Tapping into culturally congruent community spaces, sometimes within and beyond formal academic structures, supported scholars' resistance to the subordination of the structural domain by raising their consciousness and helping them understand systemic oppression. Nessa recalled several moments of resistance throughout her early K-12 teachings which often incorporated Black voices and were facilitated by teachers from her neighborhood. Similarly, informal learning of Black leadership and careers in education systems for both Eboni and Shelly came from their interactions with Black scholars and local community leaders early in their childhood. These touchpoints normalized questioning dominant discourse around who and what Black people can accomplish and planted seeds of consciousness that would carry into their postsecondary pursuits. For co-researchers, these early experiences laid a foundation of confidence in their Black womanhood and subsequent scholarly capacity which supported their persistence in the presence of daily domination.

Disciplinary Domain of Power

Within the disciplinary domain of power, oppression is managed through internal academic practices, inclusive of institutional structures and broader academic entities and their respective actors. Bureaucracy informs policy creation and decision-making to further control Black women doctoral students in these spaces. Emphasis is placed on how everyday practices of dominance support oppression through municipal rulings and monitoring which influences their scholarly personas. Socialization experiences throughout the doctoral process aim to provide access to opportunities, resources, and overall skill development valuable to doctoral students' scholarly identity development (Baker & Lattuca, 2010; Twale & Weidman, 2016). For Black women doctoral students navigating the effects of the disciplinary domain of power, control manifests in its intentional limitation of access to necessary forms of capital often administered at the hands of faculty.

The dynamic of faculty-student relationships within the doctoral process is one of bestowed opportunities and yielded power on the part of faculty (Betrand Jones et al., 2013). The vitality of faculty-student relationships in regard to doctoral socialization and subsequent success is well-documented, noting that access to these interactions provides hands-on skill development via research and teaching opportunities, funding support, mentorship, and space to decode the hidden curriculum (Grant & Simmons, 2008). Faculty-student relationships when fostered often result in Black women doctoral students having to endure spaces filled with micro and macro aggressions, bias, and general mistreatment in exchange for access to information (Dortch, 2016). My findings further support how the intersectional identities of Black women doctoral students often complicate the formation of these relationships due to navigating stereotypical tropes, and subsequent discriminatory practices.

A few co-researchers described existing in harmful relationships with faculty who served as advisors, PI's, and or supervisors within their doctoral experience. Shelly's account of her relationship with her PI highlighted how she manages both this faculty member's colorblindness while enduring the everyday harm of her peers and faculty bias/questioning her intelligence and presence in academic spaces. Similarly, Clevea Janae was blindsided by the intense labor demands of her former faculty supervisor which led to severe physical and mental stress within her journey. Attempts to advocate for healthier workloads and forgiveness amid simple errors were returned with heavier surveillance of her work hours, challenges to her scholarly capacity, and attempts to disparage her character among faculty. Though both gained access to project management skills, research and lab experiences, and publishing opportunities, these socialization interactions were experienced differently due to their Black womanhood. Furthermore, the effects on their scholarly identities, inclusive of their self-concepts, capacity to articulate their needs and overall feelings of safety and well-being within their programs were shifted.

In tandem with faculty relationships, broader social discourse and government rulings heavily shape how Black women doctoral students experience their journeys within the matrix. Co-researchers' concerns over enduring the tenure process for Black women faculty highlighted the fear that exists in pursuing academic work that could be deemed invaluable, problematic, and subsequently hinder one's career progression. Currently, social discourse alongside local and state laws challenging critical scholarship, specifically that of Critical Race Theory, was concerning to several scholars invested in social justice work. Furthermore, several co-researchers frequently described how academic policies favor specific types of research and community engagement, further supporting the ostracizing of critical scholarship and research

alongside communities. Together, these functions caution scholars from taking a vested interest in faculty careers and shape how many view current and future scholarship situated from similar standpoints.

Where Black women doctoral scholars find themselves controlled by practices within the disciplinary domain, their scholarly identities create room for resistance and empowerment from inside the ivory tower. All scholars embodied a persona of speaking out and talking back in the face of mistreatment, a common characteristic Black women take on in the face of oppression (hooks, 1989). Navigating faculty-student interactions and broader socialization practices requires Black women doctoral students to identify barriers and maintain boundaries within their journeys. Several scholars described teaching their faculty and peers how to appropriately interact with them in respectful and developmental ways. These interactions required co-researchers to disrupt stereotypical misnomers regarding their scholarly knowledge and broader identities, unpack coded racialized and gendered language, and interrupt general disrespect stemming from their Black womanhood. Though present throughout academia, faculty fail to interact with Black women students in culturally responsive ways due to their inability to recognize, interrogate and manage their own biases that support their development and aid in their success (Felder, 2010). Where necessary to their survival and central to their scholarly personas as evident in my study, Black women too often carry the responsibility of educating and countering oppressive interactions.

Counterspaces often help Black women doctoral scholars process these interactions and for co-researchers validate their experiences as scholars (Apuogo, 2017; Grant & Ghee, 2015). Co-researchers actively seek out culturally responsive communities typically filled with other Black women and scholars of color. These spaces offer scholars opportunities to cultivate their

research interests and strengthen their practices in ways that expose them to new ways of thinking and empower their standpoints as scholars. Additionally, counterspaces helped counter harmful broader discourse regarding critical approaches to scholarship that make co-researchers question their scholarly capacity and overall existence in academic spaces (West et al., 2018).

Research for many Black women remains deeply personal and spiritual, informing how it's pursued and why we embark on inquiry (Dillard, 2019; Evans-Winters, 2019). In alignment, many scholars in this study chose to pursue their research regardless of the perceived consequences that often come within the disciplinary domain for Black women who fail to abide by the rules (Collins, 2002). To co-researchers, the value of their scholarship and the need to be their authentic scholarly selves was deemed more important, so they resist. Surveillance, alongside policies and rulings that seek to control, required several scholars to “play the game” securing resources and experiences to better position them for success while pursuing their research agendas. While “playing the game” is a valuable strategy for survival, the harm that Black women doctoral students often endure due to their resiliency and coping strategies within their journeys questions if these choices are best for their overall wellbeing (Shavers & Moore, 2014a).

Empowerment and resistance within the disciplinary domain resulted in many scholars re-evaluating careers in academia as faculty, as mentioned earlier. Observations of mistreatment of fellow Black women and critical scholars encouraged co-researchers to explore alternative ways of existing as scholars. With many already understanding that scholarly identities exist and are valuable beyond academia, co-researchers described new ways to cultivate and utilize their scholarship that better aligned with community needs, releasing them from the confines of academia's standards and subsequent discipline within this system.

Hegemonic Domain of Power

Since higher education's emergence, white heteropatriarchal norms influence academia's function by justifying oppression via the hegemonic domain of power. In its shaping of the field's culture, ideas, and beliefs, concepts rooted in whiteness feel like everyday othering of anything that exists in contrast. This study noted how scholarly personas rooted in Black womanhood created disconnects for co-researchers due to contradictory beliefs that countered harmful dominant discourse and controlling images of who and what is a scholar.

As an outcome of systemic oppression, hegemonic ideas frequently inflict epistemic violence through research and praxis for Black women doctoral students. Interactions rooted in knowledge reproduction and dissemination, whether within formal coursework, research experiences, or informal conversations with peers and faculty, often perpetuated dominant ideas centered on whiteness. Inquiry that sought to interrogate structures of inequity and create room and/or uplift minoritized perspectives were often overlooked, directly challenged, or dismissed with false claims. Love's experiences with a TA whose worldviews as a white conservative man traditionally contradicted her abolitionist stance often left her frustrated by her peers and faculty's unwillingness to counter or hold space for alternative thoughts. Too often the dominant discourse is often recycled and presented as common knowledge.

The hegemonic domain of power attempts to loudly define who is a scholar, where a scholar comes from, what a scholar does, and how a scholar behaves. When paralleled with the self-definition and embodiment of scholarly identity of Black women doctoral students, conflict arose for co-researchers who often see and experience themselves differently from these ideas. Black women doctoral students often hold multiple personal and social identities, all with real influence within their doctoral journeys. Co-researchers often negotiated with messaging

regarding the relevance of these identities and how they should be prioritized as scholars. Cleve Janae expressed being attacked by a former doctoral supervisor for prioritizing self-care, travel, and other streams of income alongside her identity as a scholar. Physical expressions of Black womanhood also came under attack as co-researchers recalled conversations regarding changes in their hair, attire, and even presentation styles as being othered by their peers and faculty within their journeys.

Narratives of scholarly identity often consisted of discipline-specific ideas and values, shifting the manifestation of oppression based on one's field and forcing scholars to conform in different ways as a means of survival. Additionally, hegemonic ideas of scholarly identity attempted to define what qualifies as research within co-researchers' experiences, often frustrating scholars with differing viewpoints. As many co-researchers determined that faculty and academic careers did not align with their scholarly identities, tensions over what a scholar does and where they are situated career-wise arose.

Finally, a handful of co-researchers grappled with self-doubt due to their inability to access widely normalized socialization experiences like research and publishing, despite their personal and professional achievements. Hegemonic messaging identifies these experiences as being signals of scholarly personification and necessary to doctoral students' development; yet, they fail to identify the harmful ways many Black women doctoral students are socialized as doctoral students. Additionally, this messaging does not acknowledge how scholarly accolades fail to achieve parity for Black women often failing to counter the interlocking effects of oppression ever-present in their lives. In particular, Cleve Janae's story in which she questions her capacity as a scholar following a debate with her supervisor on her productivity and writing abilities comes to mind. Collectively, justified oppression from the hegemonic domain of power

creates narratives that shift the responsibility away from academia and broader social institutions to oppress Black women who are forced to endure it. In the presence of normalized oppression, Black women doctoral students tapped into their self-definitions as resistance.

Awakened by the realities of systemic oppression, scholars utilized counterspaces as alternatives for scholarship productivity and generation. For some, these were spaces curated by Black women faculty advisors, and others were self-constructed with peers or outside of academia via freelance work. Spaces contrasting hegemonic beliefs supported scholars in resisting ideas of who and what a scholar is by offering them first-hand representations of different scholarly personas and spaces, as well as community to reflect on their experiences. These hands-on experiences with scholarly practices from the margins often felt more aligned with co-researchers' identities as scholars and further signaled that everyday concepts should be experienced with skepticism. Additionally, experiences helped co-researchers negotiate their self-concepts with everyday discourse to determine which practices they wanted to align themselves with as scholars. For many, agreeability existed in scholars generating new knowledge, having perceived expertise within an area, capacity to articulate thoughts clearly, and production of high-quality work. Possibly more important, many co-researchers acknowledged that these ideas of scholarly identity can and should look different for them as Black women doctoral scholars signaling a level of critical consciousness.

Interpersonal Domain of Power

The interpersonal domain of power influences the daily oppression of Black women, doctoral students, through interactions with others. Central to this domain is how individual consciousness attributes to Black women's subordination within the everyday. Consistent within the stories of co-researchers are micro-level interactions rooted in stereotypes, bias, and

discrimination. Every scholar shared instances of experiencing microaggressions within their doctoral experiences, from comments regarding their research interest to questions regarding their career choices. Co-researchers were not protected from these interactions in the presence of faculty and staff who often failed to disrupt instances of violence or were themselves the perpetrators. The hypervisibility, yet invisibility of Black women within academic spaces due to their underrepresentation makes them targets of harmful comments or the harm of erasure from physical academic spaces.

The interpersonal domain of power centers on individual agency by addressing how one's consciousness perpetuates violence in action or inaction. Colorblindness remained an ongoing issue for certain scholars whose peers and faculty refused to acknowledge their realities as Black women within academic spaces. Ongoing instances of bullying within the classroom resulted in Shelly's non-Black peers admitting how their colorblindness made them ignorant to the many challenges of Black women doctoral students. Interactions in class became so disruptive, they solicited advice from her on how they could support her navigation of these interactions. No one would go on to disrupt them. Other instances of normalized problematic interactions throughout these women's journeys varied from students being recommended to pursue independent study when inquiring about the inclusion of Black voices in a course to a co-researcher walking in on a white man faculty member at her HBCU yelling at a fellow Black woman student during a lecture. None of these interactions should be endured by Black women doctoral students and have a great influence on their identities as scholars. As non-Black peers, faculty, and staff within academia "practice being around Black people " as stated by Shelly, Black women doctoral students are forced to find ways to be agentic with these interactions.

Several scholars shared that empowerment within these interactions tasked them to remove themselves temporarily and sometimes permanently from these interactions. Where others may interpret their choices as isolation, co-researchers often found peace in stepping away from harmful shared lab spaces or meetings that often overlook their presence. One scholar trusted her intuition and opted to relocate, completely changing programs in response to the everyday exploitation and harm inflicted in her former program. For many, the opportunity to pursue a doctoral degree was undoubtedly valuable, yet not worthy of sacrificing their physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being. Empowerment within this domain also occurred in the form of advocacy from co-researchers who were committed to changing departmental and institutional structures in support of minoritized students. Where most co-researchers felt comfortable using their voices to speak out on their behalf and broader inequities, some scholars sought to empower others to also employ a stance of advocacy against social injustices within and beyond academic spaces.

Black women's leadership styles are often rooted in socially-just transformation due to their positioning at the intersections of oppression and in turn, create liberatory possibilities for others (Cooper, 2017; Rosser-Mis, 2010). Naturally, scholars' resistance strategies to everyday oppression require a stance that refuses to endure its effects, often positioning them to call out ill-practices and demand changes in policy and practice. For some scholars, this stance occurred in direct conversation with departmental leadership over problematic funding structures allowing for epistemic bias in professional development allocations. Others opted to take on roles as TAs or lab leaders to change harmful practices so that students could experience course and research spaces differently. Experiences in these roles offered co-researchers valuable skill development and allowed them to identify aspects of faculty life that they enjoyed.

Within the interpersonal domain, not all scholars find holding others accountable and supporting their development empowering, noting the cultural tax that comes with being one of the only minoritized voices in spaces. The oppressive effects of the matrix of domination flow throughout the stories of Black women doctoral students, yet, so does their agency as scholars. As interconnected systems continue to shape how Black women experience academia, inclusive of its socialization practices, research, practices, and policies must be developed in alignment with their realities and needs as scholars.

Before outlining recommendations for how research, policy, and practice can shift to better support Black women in academia it is important to name the need to view these women's existence collectively. acknowledge that Black women doctoral students represent an important subset of a larger ecosystem of Black women undergraduate and master's students, faculty, and staff whose pathways intertwine within higher education. This study highlights how their stories are those of Black women doctoral scholars and how their realities are shaped and shared. As the following recommendations are detailed, interpretations should consider how these ideas can evolve to meet the context-specific needs of all Black women within broader academia. Though presented as separate sections, I hope that recommendations for research, practice, and policy are understood as a collective, iterative approach to transforming the realities of Black women in academia.

Implications for Research

My study intended to deepen our understanding of the scholarly identities of Black women doctoral students in US higher education. Scholarship on Black women enrolled in higher education continues to expand; however, remains limited in its investigation of women enrolled in doctoral programs. Though a topic of increased inquiry through the years, often by

Black women scholars, publication efforts centering on Black women doctoral scholars face systemic inequity due to standards of whiteness and discriminatory practice. Coupled with the underrepresentation of scholars invested in the work within academia, a great opportunity exists in expanding our understanding of Black women in higher education through further research. This study's findings note the following implications for research.

Studying Black Women Doctoral Students

Black women doctoral students' presence throughout academia is undeniable despite historical attempts to limit their access, retention, and matriculation. When recruitment for this study began, I assumed there would be moderate interests, but was shocked by the overwhelming response from fellow Black doctoral *sista* scholars interested in sharing their stories. Within 48 hours of sending out study flyers and recruitment details via email and sharing them on social media, 96 full responses were collected through Qualtrics. By the survey's closing, 190 responses were collected from prospective co-researchers alongside 414 retweets and 446 likes between Twitter and Instagram. These numbers represent the countless untold stories of Black women doctoral students existing in divergent, yet, overlapping ways. Responses also reflect a vested interest from the community in sharing their experiences.

These sentiments were shared by most of the co-researchers who expressed gratitude for their engagement with the research process. Though supporting this research with their time and stories, many shared they rarely reflected on their experiences, especially regarding their doctoral journeys, overall academic careers, and personas as scholars. When coupled with limited safe spaces for reflection and storytelling, the social cycle of silencing and erasure of Black women in and beyond doctoral programs persists. From co-researchers' narratives to shifting representations of Black women doctoral students throughout higher education, clearly, they are

here to stay, and therefore their experiences warrant further investigation. Research centering Black women's lives must continue; however, structures of power must shift to increasingly value and prioritize this work in both non-academic and academic spaces.

Several topics for further inquiry emerged from my study. Multiple co-researchers connected their Black womanhood to characterizations of strength and resilience with some later highlighting how they tap into this concept in harmful environments as a source of motivation. The concept of resilience is an ongoing conversation among Black women who are often socialized to buy into stereotypical tropes of superhuman strength and persistence (Abrams et al., 2019). Several scholars have explored this concept to better understand Black women's negotiations with strength including the Sisterhood Complex (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003); Sojourner Truth Syndrome (Mullings, 2006), and the Superwoman Schema (Woods-Giscombe', 2010). Much of the research explores a broader take on these concepts' impact on Black women's lives uncovering the negative implications on individuals' physical (Yu-Hsin Liao et al., 2020) and mental health and well-being (Abrams et al., 2019) often stemming from oppressive structures rooted in racism, sexism, and classism.

While important contributions, beyond Shavers and Moore's (2014a) scholarship, few contextualize their studies within the realities of Black women of doctoral students. My study findings note scholars' navigation of micro-and macro aggressive environments which contributed to isolation, self-doubt, and additional stress in their journeys. To combat these negative outcomes, additional research should explore self-concepts of resilience and strength among Black women doctoral students and their relationship to their scholarly identities and overall journeys. Additionally, this research can strengthen practice and policy disruption to combat the negative influence of these associations within their journeys.

Another strand of research inquiry exists in deepening our understanding of Black women doctoral students' interest in social justice, transformation, and everyday leadership. All co-researchers expressed formal and informal advocacy efforts rooted in addressing inequity within their departments, institutions, and local communities. Additionally, several detailed their commitments to multiple leadership experiences on campus, often in advocacy of Black or minoritized students. Where referenced frequently, none of these women used the term leadership to describe their involvements or efforts. Throughout history, Black women's leadership continues to progress social movements forward creating longstanding change via their worldviews, influence, and organizing (Cooper, 2017; Rosser-Mims, 2010). Though documented in other forms of media and text, leadership literature focused on Black women's identities, efforts and influence remain limited with exploration rarely occurring within academia. The majority of co-researchers described scholarly identity as naturally overlapping with their leadership and advocacy whether through their research and career pursuits, campus involvements, or everyday acts of resistance. Research that looks to better understand how these women understand and enact leadership, its relevance to their scholarly identities, and lived experiences can fill necessary gaps in the literature.

The doctoral journey traditionally socializes students for careers within academia, complicating and shortchanging the preparation of scholars whose interest may exist both within and beyond the ivory tower (Culpepper et al., 2020; Patterson et al., 2017). Recent trends within higher education signal a mass exodus from the field due to inflexible working conditions, poor pay, and an overall disconnect for the work for a multitude of reasons (Ellis, 2021). These experiences are often heightened for Black women situated at the margins who face the additional burden of systemic oppression alongside these already present barriers. With all but

one co-researcher fully committing to a faculty career, additional research should consider the career interests and trajectories of Black women doctoral students and motivations for their choices.

Co-researchers traditionally referenced Black women in academia, inclusive of those recently departed, with their understanding of career possibilities and potential future career realities. Disinterest in academic careers, specifically as faculty, appeared to stem from concern for their mistreatment as Black women, disdain for the tenure and promotion process, and overall pursuit of fair compensation for one's labor. As Black women doctoral students graduate and pursue careers outside of academia, a deeper understanding of why they are leaving, where they are going, and how their doctoral journeys can better prepare them for broader career opportunities warrants further research. Finally, research can help identify long-term solutions that can create more aligned opportunities within the field that support Black women's capacity to exist fully within academia.

Research on doctoral socialization continues to grow to evolve alongside higher education. Understanding socialization through scholarly identity for Black women doctoral students within this study encourages research to find culturally responsive approaches to these practices. Research also benefits from diversifying the stories of these scholars within various contexts, inclusive of different institution types and disciplines. Specifically, co-researchers housed in the STEM discipline appeared to encounter increasingly harmful, competitive, and discriminatory interactions which undoubtedly influences their scholarly personas and overall journeys. Accounts of the challenges of Black women students in STEM disciplines has been widely explored including via Black undergraduate women enrolled at various institution types (McGee & Bentley, 2017), a 60 article literature synthesis on Black women and girls (Ireland et

al., 2018), identity conceptualization of undergraduate STEM education students (Morton & Parsons, 2018). Findings from these studies mirror the journeys of co-researchers in STEM, yet more studies exploring doctoral experiences in STEM are needed. Additional inquiry can offer new understandings regarding socialization experiences, scholarly identity, and overall doctoral pathways.

Scholarly identity for Black women doctoral students emerges throughout the lifespan and continues to develop within and beyond K-12 experiences like many other identities. Co-researchers often referenced instrumental moments throughout their K-12, undergraduate, and master's experiences alongside those occurring beyond academia. Research within my study focused specifically on Black women doctoral students which limits our ability to understand how scholarly identity may shift within various contexts. Broadening this scholarly identity research to understand meaning-making, agency, and resistance within Black women undergraduate, masters, and faculty spaces could further contextualize how development occurs and its relevance to this community's experiences.

Expanding Our Understanding of Research Alongside Black Women

Research methodologies often fail to uplift the lived experiences of Black women. Though created within and outside of academia, approaches to reconsider how to research alongside Black women can shift to better capture their experiences is often limited in access or rarely acknowledged (McClish-Boyd & Bhattacharya, 2021; Winters-Evans, 2019). When selecting a methodology for this research, I was conflicted in how to best align my approach and research questions to Black women's realities. The responsibility of sharing co-researchers' experiences in ways that honored their experiences made the choice increasingly complicated and highlighted a need for more methodology generation.

Several Black women scholars offered new approaches to research in contrast to dominant methodologies to counter ill-fitting and/or potentially harmful study interactions. The creation of *sista circles* (Johnson, 2015), Black feminist-womanist storytelling (Baker-Bell, 2017), Black feminist memory work (Ohito, 2020), and the forthcoming Black endarkened feminist narrative inquiry (McClish-Boyd & Bhattacharya, 2021) offers insight into innovative ways scholars can come alongside Black women in the research process. Because Black women live multifaceted lives, methodologies should be responsive to the many ways they exist. Future research should seek to generate new methodological thoughts rooted in Black women's experiences. For example, the relevance of dialectical knowledge within this study and everyday engagement with Black women makes conversation central to meaning-making and theory generation (Collins, 2002). A methodology that amplifies these interactions can expand how research gathers and interprets everyday experiences.

As the decolonization of methodologies and progression into post-qualitative thought continues to call for experimentation and fluidity, methodologies used to study Black women may benefit from overlapping approaches that bridge schools of thought. For example, combining both phenomenological and story-based principles can uncover new ways of understanding phenomena through life stories that are not solely informed by how data are collected or presented. Bhattacharya (2021) continues to echo the opportunities and challenges that exist in blurring epistemic and methodological borders, specifically within the qualitative inquiry, citing the ability to “demonstrate complicated constructs at play, open up spaces to think and research differently and use whatever tools we find effective for claiming spaces and truths that disrupt the empire” (p. 181).

Alongside a need for new methodologies exists the space to imagine new frameworks to understand Black women's experiences, generally and within academia. Scholars continue to favor the application of Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2002), Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1988; Collins, 2019), and Endarkened Feminism (Dillard, 2000) to unpack the realities of Black women. Undoubtedly critical to research focused on Black women, this scholarship calls for scholars and their respective systems to support and push the boundaries of thought generation to imagine new frameworks to amplify these women's experiences. The evolution of research centering on Black women's experiences is continuously evolving and demands methodologies, theories, and frameworks that can keep up with their ever-changing nature.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The following recommendations for practice focus on increasing the representation of Black women faculty and students, centering culturally responsive experiences, and interrogating practices from Black women doctoral standpoints. Broad representations of Black women in academia are necessary for countering monolithic ideas of Black womanhood. These changes further support Black women doctoral students' scholarly identity development by offering multiple pathways for development and embodiment through representation. To further encourage scholarly development, academia must shift to better reflect the interest of Black women doctoral students. Policy implications are interwoven throughout the following sections and highlight how practice is enhanced in tandem with policy.

Increase and Retain Black Women Faculty and Students

Many co-researchers described distinct experiences with Black women within their journeys. Most women were directly connected to other Black women within their departments, institutions, or fields who served as a source of motivation and support within their journeys.

Oftentimes these women were peers; however, some had faculty mentors and advisors who were Black women. Interactions with them were often transformative to their scholarly personas and doctoral journeys, creating safe spaces for them to exist more authentically and offering professional development opportunities that were more culturally congruent with their values and interests.

The influence of same race and gender relationships in the experiences of Black women, and specifically the success of Black women in academia is well-documented (Bertand Jones & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013; Shavers & Moore, 2014b). Due to underrepresentation, Black women doctoral students often experience their journeys in isolation, absent from these connections and a broader community of support reflective of their Blackness. Institutions and departments must rethink recruitment and retention practices to increase the representation of Black women in academic spaces and at minimum address inequities in the representation of Black students, faculty, and staff. In practice, this will require departmental leadership to evaluate current recruitment efforts, inclusive of policies, that signal to prospective and current students that institutional spaces are not good fits to support their doctoral careers.

Co-researchers described selecting their programs based on curriculum alignment with research interests and/or personal values often rooted in equity and justice, opportunities for faculty mentorship, program affordability, and flexibility for broader life commitments. With this information in mind, programs should evaluate current practices in alignment with these expectations of Black women doctoral students. The lack of critical mass among Black women in academic spaces is no longer acceptable. For this to shift, policy changes that hinder Black women's access as students and faculty must be addressed. For students, this requires institutions to reconsider widespread standards of achievement, including GPA, GRE scores, publications,

professional experiences, and research interests, which serve as perceived markers of students' capacity to be successful within the doctoral journey.

Center Culturally Responsive Socialization Experiences

Evident in this study and the countless recollections of Black women in academia, race, and gender identities continue to shape how scholars experience their time within the ivory tower. Failure to consider and incorporate how these identities shape Black women doctoral students' experiences limits how they can fully see, understand and grow as scholars.

The literature highlights the benefits of culturally responsive socialization experiences which take into account individuals' identities in their approach to developing doctoral students throughout their academic journeys (Davis, 2011 & 2012; Bertrand Jones & Osborne-Lampkin., 2013). Additionally, several frameworks exist in the literature developed from the purview of Black women in academia and can serve as entry points for rethinking interactions and developing support structures for students. In practice, institutions, departments, faculty, and staff should prioritize exploration and integration of these experiences into their campus communities in support of Black women doctoral students.

Bertrand Jones and Osborne-Lampkin's Essential Elements of Socialization (2013) model highlights the relevance of academic preparation, professional development, and mentoring within the socialization experiences of junior faculty, yet extended this understanding to encompass doctoral students from shared backgrounds. At a minimum, campus practices must evaluate the opportunities available for Black women doctoral students to engage in these interactions in ways that uplift their intersectional identities. If opportunities seemingly fall short, faculty, programs, and departments should consider ways to offer experiences in alignment with the model. In the same year, Bertrand Jones and colleagues (2013) developed a Black feminist

approach to doctoral advising framework to support both faculty and students in engaging in reciprocal relationships centering on the needs of Black women. The framework outlines how advisors' responsibilities, functions, and characteristics/behaviors can shift to be more effective when supporting Black women. In practice, faculty should consider exploring how these concepts align with their current practices and adjust their work alongside students. Additionally, departments may consider spotlighting professional development conversations around these concepts to emphasize their relevance and broaden their consumption among faculty.

Minnett and colleagues' (2019) JAD framework for peer mentorship support introduces the concepts of radical coping, communal sista scholarship, and cultivation of an authentic holistic self as strategies for cultivating support among Black women. Though developed through the lens of friendship among Black women doctoral students, these concepts may be utilized to support the understanding, need, and establishment of counterspaces within academia. Individuals and structures may consider ways they can support the creation of these communities by identifying students' needs, fostering connections across campus, and advocating for funding in support of interactions as formal developmental spaces.

Through the years, several professional organizations emerged with an emphasis on developing formal counterspaces in support of minoritized graduate students and faculty in academia. Furthermore, organizations (e.g., Sisters of the Academy) and professional development experiences (e.g., Research BootCamp) exist solely for the upliftment of Black women in the ivory tower offering culturally responsive experiences which broaden participants' networks, equip them with critical skills, and enhance their overall scholarly identities. Spaces continue to stretch the bounds, also existing in virtual settings through social media (ex. @BlackwomenPhDs, @CohortSistas). Faculty and staff should remain aware of these spaces and

be prepared to encourage and advocate for students' participation. Supporting the development of Black women doctoral students can be increasingly easy for individuals and departments if truly committed. Leaning on the expansive literature that exists offering multiple pathways of support for Black women doctoral students can aid institutions in developing strategies for their success.

Align Practices with Black Women Doctoral Students Standpoints

My findings consistently noted how academic spaces signal to Black women doctoral students that they do not belong. These interactions often emerge in the form of micro and macroaggressions rooted in white-dominant norms, practices, and sometimes outright prejudice. Aligning practices with the viewpoints of Black women doctoral students can help disrupt interactions that encourage attrition, make their journeys traumatic, and/or discourage them from pursuing careers in academia. Instead, these practices can support the development of their scholarly identities by affirming that there is space in academia for their values/interests.

Co-researchers frequently referenced holding critical scholarly personas situated in equity, justice, and disruption. For many, this meant having a vested interest in aligning their research with practical transformation in communities. Though acknowledged, scholars found themselves frustrated with the limitations to do so. Practices should identify ways for scholars to expand their knowledge on these topics within their disciplines. Several co-researchers articulated frustration with limited access to course work and professional development that reflected their research interests or simply de-centered whiteness. Course offerings should reflect broader ways of knowing in departments, incorporating diverse viewpoints in readings and assignments that span beyond student-initiated work. Furthermore, these shifts must disrupt the additional labor often absorbed by Black women doctoral students who serve as teachers for

uneducated faculty and peers within course spaces centered on topics related to power, privilege, and oppression (Roland et al, 2021).

Within research, practices must support Black women doctoral students' capacity to put into practice their research interests alongside communities of interests. For some co-researchers, engaging in research utilizing non-traditional research methods like ethnodramas, participatory action research, and/or ethnography helped support their ability to understand how research can be responsive to community needs and their interests. Additionally, scholars valued the ability to utilize their research interests in direct community work via social services, writing thought pieces for local organizations, and cultivating program experiences via findings with minoritized organizations. Exposing and supporting students in these opportunities can be meaningful ways to incorporate their standpoints into everyday practices.

Many scholars throughout their journeys were interested in making their research increasingly more accessible to communities beyond academia. Faculty should be prepared to help students identify non-traditional means of publication and dissemination of their research. Traditional means of publishing are relevant, yet, not solely important to co-researchers who hoped to write children's books and develop community programs stemming from their research. Gaining access to the knowledge, tools, and resources to pursue these non-traditional routes of research distribution should become everyday practice in academia. With many Black women doctoral students pursuing degrees to better their communities, this remained incredibly important to their broader purpose as scholars.

The Great Resignation² continues to encourage scholars to take their talents into professional spaces outside of academia. If institutions and the broader field are truly committed to the long-term success of Black women in academic spaces, additional support must be developed to address the issues that continue to push them out. Out of the eight co-researchers open to careers in academia, only one was certain she would pursue a career as faculty. Practices that devalue Black women doctoral students' standpoints within academia must shift to make room for their academic career possibilities. This requires departments to address bias and discriminatory practices that limit Black women doctoral students' access to programs, developmental socialization practices, and subsequent competitive positioning within the academic job market. Encompassing all these interactions are big and small ways that oppression wears down Black women within academia. Whether through devaluing their research, limiting their upward mobility in leadership, or consistently maintaining pay inequity, Black women in academia continue to endure countless challenges that influence their careers.

In response, practices must address the same structures within Black women's faculty search experiences that limit their access and shape how they experience spaces once granted entry. To combat these realities, institutions should consider pathway programs that equip Black women doctoral students and faculty with the necessary tools, resources, and support structures to navigate these ever-present barriers. Programs reminiscent of these experiences already exist and engagement could be well supported with adequate funding. To truly shift the system to

² The Great resignation references the mass rise in employee resignation from the workforce beginning in early 2021 throughout the US due to the rising cost of living, stagnant wages and increased labor demands from employers.

create room for more Black women doctoral students' career possibilities, deep disruption in broad policy and practice must occur within and beyond academia.

Conclusion

The brilliance of Black women doctoral students continues to progress higher education and broader communities forward. Motivation for this study existed in revealing the choices Black women doctoral their counternarratives students make to benefit themselves as scholars and the subsequent influence of these decisions. Leveraging their scholarly personas rooted in Black womanhood, they create opportunities and change in academic spaces where underrepresentation seeks to limit their existence. Their doctoral journeys remain complicated by systems filled with policies, practices, and actors who refuse to adapt to their personal and academic needs. As academia slowly inches towards more diverse, equitable, and just spaces, the experiences of Black women situated at the intersections remain critical to its advancement and can no longer be overlooked.

Motivation for this study centered on the counternarratives of Black women doctoral students, the choices they make to benefit themselves as scholars, and the subsequent influence of these decisions within their journeys. Challenges arise when Black women make choices rooted in their well-being as scholars. Emphasis on how they negotiated with policies and practices that do not serve them deepened our understanding of the shapeshifting nature of domination in academia. The subjectivity of the hidden curriculum and the ever-evolving nature of systemic barriers makes the identification of strategies that benefit these women of investigative importance. Finally, conversations explored the ways Black women associated and disassociated with graduate socialization practices, inclusive of how these choices shaped their perceptions of academia and subsequent career decisions. The underrepresentation of Black

women in academia makes them a critical voice for progress. In addition to furthering our identification of spaces of harm, this study amplified Black women doctoral students' perceptions of academia.

Evident throughout graduate programs, especially at the doctoral level, is the need to address the systemic function of oppression within Black women's experiences. Wide-scale adjustments must be made to disrupt the hegemonic effects of white supremacy, often in the form of macro and microaggressions, which limit how Black women doctoral students access, exist, and ultimately thrive as scholars in the ivory tower. Black women's scholarly identities are deeply shaped by the presence of other Black women in academia, making efforts to strengthen their representation and retention throughout higher education critical to the collective communities success. Additionally, doctoral socialization practices must evolve to be more culturally responsive in support of their scholarly identities as Black women. Though tasked to navigate problematic spaces, Black women doctoral students are finding spaces to just be within academia. Their stories are filled with distinct worldviews as mothers, scientists, and professional Black girls, which create new bridge-building possibilities for their existence and the many who come alongside and will come behind them.

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear [Potential Participant],

I hope this message finds you in good spirits. My name is Brittany Brewster, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education program at Florida State University. I am completing my dissertation exploring the scholarly identity experiences of Black women doctoral students.

I am recruiting participants for my study and would like your assistance in identifying potentially qualified candidates. For this study, participants should:

- Identify as a woman
- Identify as Black or African descent
- Be enrolled in a doctoral program beyond their first year
- Note being a Black woman as influential in their everyday experiences

Due to your role, I believe you may know of individuals who meet the criteria for my study. Attached to this email is a consent form that participants will need to complete before study engagement. The form details study requirements, time commitment, and compensation for participation. To sign up for potential study inclusion, please have interested individuals submit their information, via the following link:

I appreciate your willingness to share this information with individuals who might meet the criteria for this study. If you have any questions about study recruitment, please contact me at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]. Again thank you for your time.

With Gratitude,
Brittany Brewster

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Title of the Research Study - Cultivating Scholarly Identity - Critical Narratives of Black Women Doctoral Students

Investigator - Brittany Brewster

Background Information

Thank you for your interest in this qualitative research study about Black women doctoral students. The purpose of this study is to explore how Black women doctoral students describe and make meaning of their scholarly identities. Additionally, this study aims to highlight the negotiations Black women doctoral students make in support of themselves as scholars. Self-definition remains a central tool of resistance for Black women, yet, few studies have explored its influence within a higher education context among doctoral students. Study findings will highlight the influence of Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities within their broader academic experiences and future careers.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

There are minimal risks involved in study participation. This study will explore your experiences as a doctoral student which may result in a range of emotions. You are not required to disclose any information that makes you uncomfortable and may opt-out of study participation at any point. Identifying information including individuals' identities and institutions will remain confidential. Participation in this study may provide a space for reflection regarding your doctoral journey. Additionally, information shared may affirm and motivate current and future Black women doctoral students to persist within their journeys.

Compensation

Participants will receive a \$25 gift card as compensation for your full study participation. Full participation includes submission of one's statement and completion of two one-on-one interviews.

Procedures

By agreeing to participate in this study, you are asked to do the following:

- Complete an electronic demographic questionnaire that should take no more than 15 minutes to complete
- Submit your personal statement used for doctoral program admission
- Participate in two individual interviews (in person or via video call) that will last approximately 60-90 minutes each

Interviews will be audio and video recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions will be shared with you for review and approval. Themes and findings will also be shared for your review.

Confidentiality

Study records will remain confidential, anonymous, and private by law. Published information will not include any information that can identify you as a participant. Access to study data will be limited to the investigator, Brittany Brewster, and stored on a password-protected cloud-based server.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Study participation is voluntary and may change at any point as you see fit. There is no penalty associated with choosing to not participate in this study. If you decide to no longer participate in this study, your relationship with the investigator and University will not be impacted.

Contacts and Questions:

Any question(s) you have about the study may be asked via email or prior to the start of interviews. If you have an additional question(s) later, please contact the investigator Brittany Brewster at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]. The investigator's advisor, Dr. Tamara Bertrand Jones, is also available to answer questions at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED].

Questions or concerns may also be answered by contacting the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or at (850) 644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu.

A copy of this information will be made available for your records.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

Participant Signature Date

Investigator Signature Date

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research study on the scholarly identity experiences of Black women doctoral students. Completion of this electronic questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes.

I acknowledge:

- ✓ I identify as a Black woman.
- ✓ I am currently enrolled in a doctoral program.
- ✓ I completed a minimum of 1 year of doctoral coursework.
- ✓ My race and gender as a Black woman influences my everyday experiences

- 1) First Name:
- 2) Last Name:
- 3) Graduate Institution:
- 4) Institution Type:
- 5) Doctoral program and/or specialization:
- 6) Please select where you are in your journey:
 - a. Enrolled in coursework
 - b. Passed qualifying/comprehensive exam, working on dissertation proposal
 - c. Defended dissertation proposal, collecting data and/or finalizing dissertation
- 7) Years completed in doctoral program:
- 8) Please select the terminal degree you will complete:
 - a. Ed.D.
 - b. Ph.D.
- 9) Enrollment status:
 - a. Part-time
 - b. Full-time
- 10) Program type:
 - a. Online
 - b. Face-to-face
 - c. Hybrid
- 11) Race:

- 12) Ethnicity:
- 13) Age:
- 14) Gender:
- 15) Undergraduate degree major/minor
- 16) Master's degree major/minor
- 17) Were you a first-generation college student (undergraduate)?
- 18) Are you a first-generation doctoral student?
- 19) Please list your most salient identities:
- 20) Briefly describe your research interests:
- 21) What are your career aspirations/intentions after you complete your doctoral degree?
- 22) Study Pseudonym:
- 23) Please upload a copy of your personal statement used for admission into your doctoral program:

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Instructions

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening! My name is Brittany Brewster and I am a doctoral candidate at Florida State University. Thank you again for agreeing to speak with me today as a participant in my research study exploring the scholarly identity experiences of Black women doctoral students. I am also looking at the choices you make in support of your scholarly identity.

Overview of Interview

Your participation in this study will include two interviews. The first interview will explore your personal and academic experiences as a Black woman and their influence on how you describe yourself as a scholar. The second interview will focus on your doctoral journey and the negotiations you make as a result of your scholarly identity.

This interview is scheduled for 60 to 90 minutes pending the direction of our conversation. I hope to keep this conversation casual and honest as we talk about your experiences. Please feel free to express yourself in whatever manner feels natural to you. There are no right or wrong answers. If you don't want to answer a question or need to stop at any point, please let me know.

All data will remain confidential. A pseudonym will be assigned to ensure anonymity. Data sources will be stored on a password-protected computer on a cloud-based website.

Audio/Video Recording

All interviews will be audio and video recorded and then transcribed by a professional transcription service. Video imagery will be blurred before being sent for transcription. A copy of the interview transcripts will be shared for your review for accuracy and to allow you to make any suggested changes.

Consent Form

Thank you for completing your consent form in the questionnaire. A copy of the signed consent form was emailed to you. Did you receive the consent form copy?

[Confirm receipt]

Do you have any questions or concerns about the consent form and/or study?

[Answer remaining questions. Start audio recording]

Interview 1 Questions

Overarching Question

How do Black women doctoral students describe and make meaning of their scholarly identities?

Identity

1. Tell me about yourself.
 - a. Where do you call home?
2. Describe to me what it means to you to be a Black woman. In what ways does this identity shape your everyday experiences?
3. Tell me about your most salient identities and how you've come to know more about them.
4. How do these identities intersect with your identity as a Black woman?

Educational Experiences

1. What academic related moments stand out in your educational experiences?
 - a. Tell me about your informal learning and formal educational experiences.
5. In what ways, if any, do you feel that your race/gender has shaped your educational experiences?
 - a. What about your other identities?
6. How have these experiences influenced your current doctoral journey?

The Doctoral Pathway

7. Tell me about your decision to pursue a doctorate. When did you know that you were going to pursue this journey? What motivated you?
8. What obstacles, if any, did you experience when making this decision?
 - a. How did you respond to those obstacles?
9. How did you select your specific graduate program and degree type?
10. What expectations, if any, did you have for your doctoral experience?
 - a. Where and/or who did those expectations come from?

Doctoral Experience

11. Tell me about your doctoral experience so far.
 - a. What are some of the highlights? Any challenges?
12. What words come to mind when you hear the word *scholar*?
13. Would you describe yourself as a scholar? Why or why not?
14. Personally, what does it mean to be a scholar?
 - a. In what ways, if any, has your race/gender shaped your perceptions of what it means to be a scholar? What about your other identities?
15. How has your doctoral experience supported your development as a scholar?
 - a. In what ways do you feel that your race/gender influences the support you've received? What about your other identities?

Conclusion

Thank you for participating in today's interview. Please note that the information shared today was both audio and video recorded. Please look for a transcription of our conversation within

the next week. After reviewing the transcript, please let me know if there are any changes you would like to make. Are there any questions I can answer for you? If you think of any questions later, please contact me at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Next Steps

Please look for a follow-up email from me within the next two weeks to schedule our second interview within the next month. Again, thank you for your time

Interview 2 Questions

Overarching Question

How do Black women doctoral students' scholarly identities influence their graduate socialization experiences?

What negotiations do Black women doctoral students make in support of their scholarly identities?

In our previous conversation, you started to share what it meant to be a scholar and how you identify with the term. At the start of this process, you submitted your personal statement/statement of goals used for your doctoral application. Were you able to review your statement before this interview? If not, feel free to do so now.

Scholarly Identity

1. In reading your personal statement, how has your understanding of what it means to be a scholar changed?
 - a. In what ways has your identity as a scholar changed, if any?
 - b. Can you provide an example?
2. Can you describe a moment where you felt like a scholar in this journey? What were you doing?
3. What messages have you received about what it means to be a scholar?
 - a. In your program? In academia?
 - b. How do those messages differ from your personal understanding(s)?

Graduate Socialization Experiences

1. How have your interactions with faculty in your program influenced your doctoral experience?
2. What, if any, professional development experiences have you participated in? How have your professional development experiences influenced your doctoral experience?
3. What, if any, mentoring experiences have influenced your doctoral experiences? Have you developed new mentors within your experience? Why or why not?
4. What is your research interest? How has your research interest influenced your doctoral experiences?

Negotiations

4. What is most important to you as a scholar?
 - a. In what ways have your doctoral experiences aligned with what is important to you as a scholar?
 - b. In what ways has it not aligned with what is important to you as a scholar?
 - a. What challenges, if any, have you had due to what is important to you as a scholar?
 - c. Can you describe a situation where this was an issue and how you worked through that challenge?
5. Tell me about the decisions you made within your program in support of yourself as a scholar.

- a. Do you believe that these are decisions other students have to make? Why or why not?
 - b. What influence, if any, have these choices had on your doctoral experience?
 - c. How does it feel to make these choices in support of yourself as a scholar?
5. What strategies do you suggest to other Black women doctoral students to help them make choices in support of their scholarly identities?
 6. How has your scholarly identity influenced your next steps post-graduation?
 7. As you reflect on our conversations, how do your experiences in life relate to your scholarly identity as a Black woman?

Conclusion

Thank you for sharing your time with me today. Please note that the information shared today was both audio and video recorded. Please look for a transcription of our conversation within the next week. After reviewing the transcript, please let me know if there are any changes you would like to make. Are there any questions I can answer for you? If you think of any questions later, please contact me at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Thank you again.

[Ends audio and video recording]

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Brittany Brewster, Ph.D. graduated from the Higher Education program at Florida State University in 2022. She served as an instructor and research assistant on a project examining the early career professional development experiences of Black women emerging scholars, and the multidisciplinary socialization experiences of Black women doctoral students and recent graduates. Brittany's research interests explore the experiences of minoritized populations in higher education, with a special interest in Black womxn. Her research seeks to refine policies and practices to strengthen pathways to the professoriate for students. Prior to this journey, she served as an instructor for undergraduate leadership courses and as a higher education practitioner supporting students at the juncture of justice, leadership, and community participation. Brittany earned her bachelor's degree in Communications from Florida International University and her master's degree in Higher Education from Florida State University. She is a proud native of Miami, Florida.