

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL:
BLACK DOCTORAL
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS
ASPIRING TO THE PROFESSORiate

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research explored the unique experiences of Black doctoral students. Specifically, Black doctoral students' perceptions of themselves, their academic program, and the possible role of racism were explored as factors that may contribute to the Black Faculty Gap phenomena. Study participants included eight Black Ph.D. students enrolled in the social sciences, including education at a large, urban research university in the Northeast. Accounts of the findings include the collection, data analysis, and interpretations drawing from the lens of critical race theory and the theoretical frameworks of self-efficacy and symbolic interactionism. The findings indicate specifically that Black doctoral students struggle with racialized experiences, pressures to prove themselves, and perceptions of unfitness for the professoriate. Roundabout Racism, Prove Pressure, and The Fit Factor are the three themes that emerged from this study. Findings also indicate that despite their respective struggles, many Black doctoral students seek to change the Eurocentric education paradigm and become role models for other students of color. This study's findings and implications have the potential to support and inspire Black and other minoritized doctoral students, inform higher education institutions of impediments in doctoral programs, and the ways in which the Black Faculty Gap may be reduced and/or eliminated. Recommendations for further research include, but are not limited to further studies on Black doctoral students' perception of advisor matching, program resources and accessibility, research preparedness for the professoriate, and contemporary racism and cultural competency training for higher education faculty, staff, and students.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Heavenly Father who started me, kept me, and gracefully guided me through this entire spiritual and educational journey...

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,

That saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost but now am found,

Was blind, but now I see!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The paucity of Black faculty in higher education is well recognized. It is rare to sit on a search committee and not lament the dearth of qualified Black applicants coming through the PhD pipeline (Taylor & Anthony, 2000). In 2014, The National Science Foundation's Annual Survey of Earned Doctorates reported that only 6.4 percent out of the 12 percent of Blacks in doctoral programs received doctorates. Of the estimated 2,100 doctorates awarded to Blacks, 515 of them were in education. Thus, according to the "*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*" (2012), outside of education, there is approximately one new Black PhD per every three college campuses nationwide. Blacks earned 252 doctorates in the biological sciences, 206 in psychology, and 172 in engineering. There were 61 in chemistry, 49 in history, and 26 in math. Only nine doctorates were awarded to Blacks in foreign language and literature.

However, according to a 2014 National Center for Education Statistics report there exists an almost 43 percent increase in the award of PhDs to Blacks from about 7000 in 1999-2000 to slightly over 10,000 in 2009-2010, yet the average increase in Black faculty appointments at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) during the same period was about 1.3 percent (NCES, 2014). While this may be that similar to other PhDs, Black PhD graduates may be considering other career options outside academia. The statistics above, however, indicate that there appears to be more Black doctoral students earning PhDs than being hired into the professoriate.

The literature review reveals that studies of Black doctoral students have been organized into four broad thematic groups: (1) persistence/attrition/retention (2) campus environment and mentoring (3) social support, and (4) strategies for overcoming barriers to success (Ballard &

Cintron, 2010). Although these studies explore the survival aspects of Black doctoral students, these studies fail to examine the Black doctoral students' experiences relating to self-efficacy, the role of race, and how they make meaning of their experiences on the pathway to the professoriate.

The context of this study focuses on the experiences of Black doctoral students at a Predominately White Institution (PWI). In their study of 140 Black doctoral students from PWIs across the Midwestern, Northeastern, and Southern regions of the United States, Williams (2014) found that academic and social integration were significant factors in predicting depression, anxiety, and stress for Black doctoral students at PWIs. In addition, in their study of Black doctoral students at a PWI, Lewis et al. (2004) found a powerful sense that the Black students felt like uninvited guests in a strange land on campus. The Black doctoral students felt as if they were on their own, stood out as being different, and had to find their own connection points and negotiate the system as best they could. Some Black doctoral students also reported feelings of intense periods of isolation to the point that they considered leaving the program entirely to return to previous jobs and lifestyles.

In comparison to PWIs, Walker et al. (2016) argue that graduate education at HBCUs is critical in providing Black students a safe, intellectual space that helps maximize their development. Other scholars report that faculty-student interaction and positive encounters with peers were vital factors to the success of the Black doctoral students at HBCUs. However, despite these positive reports, participants complained about the lack of customer service from staff, condescending interactions with administrators, and lack of resource parity with their PWI counterparts (Palmer et al., 2012).

The experiences of the participants in this study may be raced because they identify as Black doctoral students functioning in the historically White environment of doctoral education. Felder (2014) explains that an increasing body of scholarship demonstrates the impact of racial experiences on graduate students of color (specifically Black doctoral students) and their academic achievement and preparation for the faculty and leadership roles. Moreover, unlike White students enrolled in doctoral programs, Black doctoral students at PWIs encounter the added pressure of being a numeric minority within these predominantly White learning environments. Some Black students identify feelings of intense isolation, marginalization, and oppression (Henfield & Witherspoon, 2011).

The intentions and aspirations of the Black PhD students in this research project requires clarification. Schwartz & Walden (2012) in their study of the attitudes about preparedness of PhD alum after completing their PhD programs, found that while some PhD students may aspire or intend to seek the professoriate, less than half of the doctoral students they surveyed reported that their program prepared them to publish their research. It cannot be automatically assumed then, that because a PhD student aspires or intends to become a faculty that this event will occur.

This research project's data was nuanced since it did not take into consideration the proliferation of Black doctoral students in online doctoral programs. According to Mervis (2017), the most recent data from the latest Survey of Earned Doctorates by the National Science Foundation (NSF) documents how Walden University, an online, for-profit university, is far outpacing every other U.S. university in serving Black students. Its total of 682 degrees from 2011 through 2015 is nearly twice the number awarded by second-place Howard University, a HBCU in Washington, D.C. NSF reports that one-third of the 562 doctoral degrees Walden awarded in 2015 went to Black students. In addition, online doctoral students do not have the

same experience as on-campus doctoral students since their interactions with faculty, staff, and students are, apart from on-campus residencies, remote. Secondly, most of Walden's students are practitioners. Unlike the participants in this study, most of Walden's students are seeking doctoral credentials to further their practice, not to become faculty members.

This study explored the experiences of Black doctoral students in PhD programs at a PWI through the lens of critical race theory (CRT) because scholars are drawn to CRT to help explain lingering social and educational challenges faced by students of color (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). CRT also recognizes the unique perspectives and experiences of people of color in analyzing and understanding racism (Trough & Museus, 2012). In conjunction with CRT, I utilized symbolic interactionism, which is sympathetic with critical race theory, to better understand Black doctoral students' perceptions of program experiences and how they make meaning of those experiences. I used self-efficacy theory to explore how Black doctoral students come to feel about their ability to enter the professoriate. The synergy of CRT, self-efficacy, and symbolic interactionism allowed my research to more fully explore some of the experiences of Black doctoral students on the pathway to the professoriate.

Black Doctoral Student College Attendance and Persistence

Although access to higher education has expanded in recent years with an increase in the number of Blacks enrolling in U.S. doctoral programs, doubling between 1994-95, and 2004-05, Blacks in doctoral programs struggle with higher attrition rates compared to Asian American, international, and White doctoral students (Barker, 2011). Past research reveals that several factors contribute to the attendance and persistence of Black doctoral students including socialization, racism, gender, teaching styles, and the lack of Black faculty in higher education.

Some Black doctoral students revealed that they often struggle with feelings of loneliness, isolation, prejudice, stereotyping, and marginalization. Participants reported being the sole Black student in their classes, condescending comments about their intellect, and fears of conforming to negative stereotypes about Blacks. Moody (2004) argues that many people of color often enter higher education consumed with self-doubt as a consequence of the negative stereotypes they have repeatedly encountered. Some of the more damaging stereotypes hold that Black and other minority students are intellectually inferior and will make poor material for college, graduate school, and the professions.

Dominant culture teaching styles is another area of struggle for Black doctoral students. Leiding (2006) argues. “Although teaching styles may reflect the dominant cultural establishment, they do not necessarily reflect what is best and most productive for Black students” (p. 139). While it is true that not all students learn the same, Rovai & Gallon (2005) argue that Black students are more successful in learning environments characterized by harmony, cooperation and socialization. Black students are inclined to engage in learning in a holistic manner, compared to the compartmentalized and analytical manner of many Euro-American students and institutions. Similar to a relational style of learning, holistically inclined learners attend best when material is relevant to their own experiences and embedded in context (p. 25).

Moreover, different teaching styles and exposure to culturally biased teaching may be problematic to Black students in a White dominated educational system. Chinwe Ikpeze (2015) examined the tensions, uncertainties, as well as the possibilities for effective teaching across multiple cultural contexts. Ikpeze posits, “Within the context of higher education the interplay of institutional culture, faculty-teaching cultures, the entitlement culture, the invisible cultures, or

teaching as a racial and cultural outsider, can generate tensions” (p. 42). While research reveals that culturally relevant pedagogy is one of the most recent trends to address the possible cultural differences in learning on the K-12 level, higher education has yet to fully embrace culturally relevant pedagogy. For example, in his work describing the development of a graduate course at a university in the Northeast, Mbugua (2010) found:

One way of achieving the goal of culturally relevant pedagogy in higher education is to integrate an experiential service-learning component that may expand the ‘comfort zone’ of participant teachers while also enhancing their abilities to view the world from multiple perspectives. (p. 96)

In addition to socialization and teaching style challenges, Black students’ struggle with racism in higher education is problematic. At the intersection of socialization and racism, Ellis (2001) in her study of the experiences of Black male and female doctoral students as well as those of White men and women, found that it appears that race is a salient factor in the doctoral experience. The inclusiveness of Ellis’s sample allowed the investigator to explore other theories that suggest that graduate school experiences may vary by race and/or gender. To explore the various levels of social integration among the students, the investigator inquired about three factors: social contact with other students in their programs, social contact with faculty, and networking with peers. By asking Black graduate students questions about their perceptions of their relationships with peers and faculty, the investigator could ascertain which of the three factors, if any, was important to the students in helping them become socially integrated into their graduate programs.

Although outlawed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, discrimination in contemporary American higher education continues to be salient. Similar to the racially contentious 1960s

when Black students demanded more Black faculty, half a century later, during the fall of 2015, Black student groups delivered a list of demands to college presidents all across the country with most groups again demanding more Black faculty (Biemiller, 2015). Students of color want to see more faculty that look like them and they are demanding that higher education institutions do more to increase Black faculty representation.

Interestingly, the similarities between the protests of the past and the protests of today are striking. Today's die-ins are very similar to the sit-ins of the 1960s. The hunger strikes and demands for racial justice on today's college campuses mirror those of the not-to-distant civil rights movement. Kingkade, Workneh & Grenoble (2015) explain that the protests staged on college campuses today are the culmination of years of activism around inequality, everyday racism, and incidents pushing racial divisions to the surface.

According to Karabel (2015), "Higher education was originally designed to serve the White majority, and prepare White men for leadership roles in society. Since this genesis, racism has manifested in higher education policy at federal, state, and institutional levels" (p. 6). Overtime, the United States outlawed discrimination in all sectors of American society, including higher education. However, it is difficult to regulate morality and discrimination continues to exist.

Given that higher education is a microcosm of society, it is not surprising that racially charged events and resulting racial tensions continue to emerge on college campuses around the nation. After landmark civil rights legislation began to inch toward providing people of color with equal protection of the law, racism again adapted to operate effectively despite these advances. Specifically, because the majority could no longer legally discriminate against people of color on the basis of race, more covert forms of racism emerged. For example, scholars have

documented the ways in which the passage of the Civil Rights Act was followed by a backlash, including the persecution of Black radical intellectuals and housing discrimination that channeled people of color into segregated communities, thereby maintaining racial segregation as well as solidifying inequities within the education system (Museus, 2015).

Black doctoral students also find themselves questioning the racial climate in higher education. Gildersleeve, Croom & Vasquez (2011) in their critical race analysis of Black doctoral student education found that some Black doctoral students find themselves questioning their own sanity:

Michelle, a Black doctoral student, described how there were moments in her graduate education that stood out in her experience and commanded not only her attention, but that of her peers, specifically other students of color. She considered these moments of struggle when she thought something was just off or inappropriate or out of context for doctoral education. Yet, amazingly, to Michelle, the experience went unchecked and consequently was completely normalized by everyone else. After these moments had passed, Michelle explained that she and some of her friends, “will go sit in one of our apartments and have to debrief and say, ‘What!? Did this just happen?’ And then—‘what just happened?’ ... I balance that ... to make sure I am not crazy.

The struggle with racism for people of color at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) might be mitigated by having more faculty of color representation. Research studies have suggested that Black students who attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) perform better academically, develop more meaningful relationships with faculty and staff, are more engaged in the campus environment, and have a better sense of encouragement and connection than Black students who attend PWIs (Fountaine, 2012). For Black doctoral students

at PWIs having more faculty who look like them and can relate to their life experiences may be encouraging to Black doctoral students, many of whom have never been exposed to a Black faculty member. Arminio, Torres & Pope (2012) argue, “A body of literature demonstrates positive cognitive and affective benefits of students’ own interactions with individuals from different cultures and races other than their own” (p. 115). In their 2001 study illustrating how the involvement of Black faculty with Black graduate students is beneficial, Walker, Hanley, and Wright (2001) argue, “African American students require successful persons with which they can identify in order to succeed academically” (p. 582). While the authors espouse the benefits of having Black faculty, Elam (1983) counters, “There are few Black professionals who can serve as role models or to whom they can turn for advice or assistance” (p. ix).

The pathway to increasing Black faculty representation is through increasing the number of Black doctoral students seeking to enter the professoriate. While it is true that reaching the terminal degree stage often proves challenging for most graduate students regardless of race, the number of Black doctoral graduates has increased yet the number of Black faculty appointments has not.

Statement of the Problem

There are not as many Black doctoral students being hired as faculty members as there are graduating from American higher education. A 2014 National Center for Education Statistics report indicates an almost 43 percent increase in the award of PhDs to Blacks from about 7000 in 1999-2000 to slightly over 10,000 in 2009-2010. “Yet, the average increase in Black faculty appointments at PWIs during the same period was about 1.3 percent. Sadly, the percentage of Black faculty at the nation’s PWIs averages out to a dismal 4 percent, today (p. 4).

Of the 175,038 doctoral degrees' award between 2012 and 2013, 110,775 were awarded to Whites and only 12,084 doctoral degrees were awarded to Blacks (NECS, 2014). Black faculty emerge from successful Black doctoral students; thus it is troubling that significantly fewer Black doctoral students are successful in comparison with their peers in entering the professoriate. The current literature base provides evidence to suggest that Black doctoral student issues exist within doctoral education. Felder & Barker (2013) argue that research on Black student persistence found that prejudice, racism, and discrimination can negatively impact a student's commitment to his or her institution. This impact negatively affects Black students' ability to negotiate the PWI environment both academically and socially. Furthermore, these experiences and feelings may also impact the racial and academic identity development of Black doctoral students and in other cases lead to racial trauma (Truong & Museus, 2012). This research explores how Black doctoral students feel about the role of race, their abilities, interactions, and how they make meaning of those interactions. Knowledge about how Black doctoral students feel about racism, their self-efficacy, and how they make meaning of their interactions with others has implications.

The lack of Black doctoral students and faculty may impact campus diversity. Increasing Black doctoral students' desire to enter the professoriate in turn increases Black faculty representation, which consequently may provide more representative mentoring, advising, research support, and role modeling to students of color on college campuses (Cooke et al., 1995). Thus, if we seek to increase Black faculty representation in the American professoriate, it was important for this research project to examine the experiences of Black doctoral students who are considering entering the professoriate.

Research Questions

The following questions were posed in this study:

1. How do Black doctoral students perceive the role of racism in their decision to pursue a career in the professoriate?
2. How do Black doctoral students perceive their efficacy for a career in the professoriate?
3. How do Black doctoral students make meaning of their doctoral experience on the pathway to entering the professoriate?

The Significance of the Study

This study's findings have the potential to inspire other Black doctoral students and inform higher education institutions of the perceived factors that contribute to the lingering Black Faculty Gap. Felder & Barker (2013) argue, "An institution's or department's practices of and full commitment to diversity can have a positive impact on the experiences of African American doctoral students" (p. 9). Most importantly, to cease racial tensions throughout contemporary academia and to expand the Black pipeline to the professoriate, Field (1998) "urges graduate institutions to recognize the complexity of issues that can impede the success of underrepresented graduate students, and take immediate action to provide the additional support these students require and deserve" (p. 26).

This research fills the gap in the literature that focuses on Black doctoral student isolation, mentorship, retention, and attrition. Through the lens of critical race theory coupled with the theoretical frameworks of self-efficacy and symbolic interactionism, this research explored why there are increasing numbers of Black doctoral graduates yet an incomparable increase in Black faculty membership in the American professoriate. Research in this area is

relevant in capturing the voices and experiences of Black doctoral students, and useful to colleges and universities undergoing problems with this long-standing faculty diversity issue.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research project extracted from the lens of critical race theory (CRT) coupled with self-efficacy and symbolic interactionism theoretical frameworks to provide insight into the experiences of Black PhD students. As a means of providing context for this study, the review of the literature provided a brief overview then subsequent literature review of the following: Critical race theory and Black doctoral students' experiences with racism in higher education; self-efficacy theory and Black doctoral students' perceptions of self-efficacy; and symbolic interactionism theory and the ways in which Black doctoral students make meaning of their program experiences. Lastly, a literature review of the Black Faculty Gap was included to inform of the causes and concerns pertaining to these ongoing phenomena and the role Black doctoral students may play in the Black Faculty Gap.

Critical Race Theory

CRT embraces a movement of left scholars – mostly scholars of color situated in law schools – whose works challenged the ways in which race and racial power are constructed and represented in America legal culture and more generally in American society (Crenshaw, 1995, xiii). The Critical Legal Scholars group, including Derrick Bell, Patricia Williams, Richard Delgado, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, are marked by their utilization of developments in postmodern and poststructural scholarship, especially the focus on marginalized communities and the use of alternative methodology in the expression of theoretical work. Most notable is their use of narratives and other literary techniques (Dunbar, 2008).

CRT utilizes various means to provide voice to the voiceless. Karabel (2005) argues that CRT perspectives have been utilized in higher education research and discourse for multiple purposes. First, CRT scholarship in postsecondary education has functioned to illuminate the

voices of people of color within academia. In this way, CRT scholars have challenged notions of U.S. society being in a color-blind era and institutions of higher education being free of significant racial problems. Second, CRT scholarship in higher education underscores the reality that historical and social contexts influence postsecondary systems and experiences within them. Others scholarships have illuminated the nature of racialized space on college campuses that privilege the White majority and marginalize people of color. Researchers have also noted that White people founded many of the nation's postsecondary institutions to serve slaveholders and White students. Third, higher education scholars have employed CRT to deconstruct dominant discourse in postsecondary education. For example, CRT has been used to fight prevailing deficit-oriented agendas of historically minoritized students of color. Dominant deficit models perpetuate perceptions of people of color as inherently inferior in status, intelligence, and standing to Whites by focusing on failure as a result of the dispositions of students of color while ignoring how systemic factors shape their educational opportunities and outcomes. Unlike CRT, these dominant deficit models also privilege White values and norms in education discourse, and can therefore influence policy and program development, interpretation, and implementation in ways that disadvantage people of color.

CRT offers a critique of society as it exists. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2012), CRT questions the very foundations of the liberal order. This research project focused on two features of CRT, ordinariness and counter-story telling. The first feature of CRT, ordinariness, was used in this study as a lens to understand the experiences of Black doctoral students since they are considered 'others' in the historically White space of higher education. Similar to other modern-day entities, higher education purports itself as a colorblind American institution.

Delgado & Stefancic (2012) argue that the ordinariness tenet of CRT, means that racism is difficult to address or cure since it is not acknowledged:

Color-blind, or “formal,” conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board, can thus remedy only the most blatant forms of discrimination such as mortgage redlining or the refusal to hire a Black Ph.D. rather than a White college dropout that do stand out and attract our attention. (p. 8)

The second feature of CRT used in this research is counter-storytelling. Solorzano & Yosso (2002) assert that counter-story is a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told - those on the margins of society:

The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform also aims to expose race neutral discourse to reveal how White privilege operates within an ideological framework to reinforce and support unequal societal relations between Whites and people of color. (p. 32)

Parker (2015) argues that race functions as a stratifying force in school and society and that researchers takes up the dual challenge of uncovering the foundations of White supremacy in an alleged post-racial world that turns a blind eye to continued inequities and inequalities faced by Black and other students of color on college campuses.

Black Doctoral Students’ Experiences with Racism in Higher Education

Students of color say that given that students are growing up witnessing high-profile deaths of unarmed Black men and teens, like Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice and Eric Garner, students are arriving on campus believing racism remains persistent in America (Kingkade,

Worneh & Grenoble, 2015). Today, students of color also say that they constantly are reminded that they are different. For example, Reine Ibala, a senior at Yale University, described either feeling “invisible” on campus, or like she was an intruder (Kingkade, Worneh & Grenoble, 2015). Moreover, Seltzer & Johnson (2009) in their work that explores discrimination through the eyes of college students argue that other researchers have found that racist attitudes toward Blacks are more prevalent than what has been revealed in survey data. In response, Seltzer & Johnson (2009) assert, “The latest incarnation of racism is described as “racial resentment” of Blacks who have been given too much and could achieve economic parity and overcome discrimination and prejudice if they would only try harder” (p. xxi).

A limited number of scholars found that Black doctoral student education is indeed complicated by racism. Nettles (1990) in his study on the doctoral success of Black and White students argues, “We know very little about the background, performances, and experiences of Black doctoral students and almost nothing about racial/ethnic group differences in doctoral programs” (p. 494). While we may undoubtedly know more today about Black doctoral students than Nettles in his 1990 study, the fact remains that more than twenty-five years later, Black doctoral students are still significantly underrepresented in doctoral programs and as faculty members in higher education.

In his comprehensive study of the differences among Black and White doctoral students across four universities, Nettles (1990) found that Blacks and Hispanic doctoral students perceived more feelings of racial discrimination and fewer teaching or research assistantships than White doctoral students. Nettles used mixed methods to implement a two-stage sampling design using the Doctoral Student Survey (DSS), finding that racial discrimination negatively impacts the doctoral study and degree completion rates of Black and Hispanic doctoral students.

Fagen & Suedkamp (2004) argue that in the 2000 National Doctoral Program Survey aimed at understanding and improving the preparation of doctoral students interested in academic careers, one important finding was that the key to the success of doctoral students is their connection with the people and cultures of their departments. In their critical race analysis study of the everyday experiences of Latino/a and Black doctoral students, Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez (2011) argue, “The culture of doctoral education for Black students consists of a racialized social narrative that reveals the harmful institutional and systemic factors contributing to the possible derailment of Latino/a and Black doctoral students” (p. 94). Under their innovative narrative, *Am I Going Crazy?* the researchers expose the often daily microaggressions and ways in which students of color must navigate and negotiate the oppressive and dehumanizing conditions in their experiences in doctoral education. Utilizing ethnographic interviews and a sample of 22 Black and Latino/a doctoral students across three major research universities, the researchers concluded that long-standing inequalities of participation in higher education continue in the doctoral education of Blacks and Latino/as. The revealing and often disturbing narratives of the participants disclosed in the study’s report support the researchers’ conclusion that racism indeed permeates not only higher education but more saliently, the daily lives of doctoral students of color.

Similarly, other scholars insist that the experiences of Black doctoral students contrast with those of other groups. Barker (2011) in her study on Black doctoral students and White advisors reveals that an increasing body of literature supports the view that Black students in U.S. higher education have unique experiences that differ from other students of color and White students:

Being Black means preparing to operate in a predominately White context, managing negative racial experiences, being a salient object among students and faculty, and feeling the need to outperform their White peers. Experiencing racism and having to prove oneself echoed through the experiences of doctoral students. (p. 393).

Although racism in America exists nationwide, the American South is notorious for its racist history. Barker's (2011) study also found that in the Southern portion of the U.S. both faculty and students had racist encounters either directed at them or had observed conversations where racial discrimination was practiced by Whites.

Racism has also emerged in the realm of Black doctoral student advisement. Felder & Barker (2013) in their qualitative study on the role of racism in advising relationships between Black doctoral students and faculty, argue that although Black doctoral degree completion has increased, Black doctoral students continue to face issues related to race during their doctoral study. The researchers emphasize the critical race theory concept of interest convergence wherein White people will support racial justice only when they understand and see that there is something in it for them, as a feature of culturally receptive advising relationships between Black doctoral students and White faculty. Felder & Barker utilized the phenomenological approach by conducting two series of exploratory case studies and found several pertinent instances where Black doctoral students' personal interests or perspectives on race in doctoral education may not be compatible with that of other members of their doctoral program (faculty, staff, etc.).

The most revealing aspect of the Felder & Barker study is its examination of the relational aspects of how context and race shape students' perceptions of interactions with faculty and the environment and its implications for advising and creating inclusive institutions. In other words, racism and perceptions of racism had a negative impact when Black doctoral students felt

devalued and felt that White faculty did not culturally understand them. Conversely, when White faculty were somewhat multi-culturally competent (they understand and have sensitivity to the Black experience), Black doctoral students felt respected and valued.

Racism in the Black doctoral experience may have tragic consequences and the research on the coping skills of this underrepresented group continues to emerge. Gasman, Hirschfeld & Vultaggio (2008) in their study of Black graduate students at PWIs found:

African American graduate students frequently sense that their perspectives are not valued in the classroom. These students often feel academically isolated in the classroom due to the lack of alignment between their viewpoints and those of their White professors. In addition, graduate students of color frequently feel discouraged from participating in class discussions if there are no other minority students in the classroom. Furthermore, due to the “risky” nature of addressing racial issues, faculty members may not feel comfortable addressing these issues within the classroom. (p. 697)

In their study on responses to racism and racial trauma in Black doctoral study, Troung & Museus (2012) found the following themes related to how Black doctoral students experienced racism and racial trauma: a sense of oneliness and isolation; identity intersectionality; differential support and investment; low expectations, high standards; exploitation of students; neglect; devaluing of research on race; reproduction of racism by people of color; cumulative effects of racial microaggressions; secondhand racism; and violations of institutional and federal policies. The researchers also found that these experiences led doctoral students of color to develop symptoms of racial trauma, such as anger, shock, self-doubt, depression, disassociation, physical pain, and spiritual pain. What the researchers fail to examine, however, is the role of racism and racial trauma on Black doctoral students’ graduation rates, or their desire to pursue faculty

positions when they do graduate. Moreover, the researchers do not address how Black doctoral students cope with racism in the academy. These gaps in the research are particularly noteworthy because Black doctoral students have advanced to the last stage of the education pipeline and many towards the start of the faculty pipeline, and therefore can provide especially valuable information regarding how to succeed in education despite experiences with racism. If Black doctoral students are unable to cope with the plethora of challenges they face in pursuing the terminal degree, attrition rates increase while critical access to the professoriate decreases contributing to what many in academia refer to as the ‘pipeline problem.’

Symbolic Interactionism Theory

Historically Black doctoral students have not had full access to graduate education and therefore their experiences and the ways in which they interact on the graduate level may differ from those of the traditional graduate student. Thus, in conjunction with the CRT research lens, the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism measures how Black doctoral students make meaning of their experiences in doctoral education.

Formulated by sociologist Herbert Blumer (1969) symbolic interactionism theorizes first, that “human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them,” second, that “the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows,” and third, that “meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.” Meaning is thus something that is a product of social interaction, but requires active interpretation to be acted on.

Griffin (1997) inform that symbolic interactionism consists of three core principles: Meaning, language and thought. These core principles lead to conclusions about the creation of a person's self and socialization into a larger community.

- Meaning states that humans act toward people and things according to the meanings they give to those people or things. Symbolic Interactionism holds the principal of meaning to be the central aspect of human behavior.
- Language gives humans a means by which to negotiate meaning through symbols. Humans identify meaning in speech acts with others.
- Thought modifies each individual's interpretation of symbols. Thought is a mental conversation that requires different points of view.

With these three elements, the concept of the self can be framed. People use 'the looking-glass self': and they take the role of the other, imagining how we look to another person. The self is a function of language, absent of talk there would be no self-concept. People are part of a community, where our generalized other is the sum of responses and expectations that we obtain from the people around us. We naturally give more weight to the views of significant others (Griffin, 1997).

Use of symbolic interaction theory enabled this study to examine how Black doctoral students made meaning of their experiences because, according to Dennis (2011) for symbolic interactionism, meaning is the outcome of actors' interpretations of the settings (and constituent parts of those settings, including other actors) they are acting in.

Black Doctoral Student Academic Program Perceptions

The interactions of Black doctoral students in their academic program may offer insight into how Black doctoral students make meaning of their experiences during doctoral education. Fountaine (2012) in her study on the impact of Black doctoral student faculty-student interaction found that faculty-student engagement is a critical factor to the experiences and perceived

program persistence of Black doctoral students attending HBCUs. However, Taylor & Anthony (2000) in their study linking Black graduate student socialization with intellectual academic ability, found that doctoral education may be more encumbered due to what Claude Steele (1999) refers to as ‘Stereotype Threat.’ The researcher informs, “Stereotype Threat refers to members in a group whose intellectual skills are generally held suspect because of negative stereotyping” (p. 185). Stereotypes such as notions that Blacks are intellectually inferior to Whites, and B’s are for Blacks may negatively impact how Black doctoral students feel about their academic ability.

The researchers also found that sustained school achievement depends, most centrally, on identifying with school through forming relationships between oneself and the domains of schooling such that one’s self-regard significantly depends on achievement in those domains. For Blacks who are highly identified with school, stereotype threat presents an additional obstacle. Steele (1997) defines stereotype threat as the social and psychological sense of peril or doom that negative racial stereotypes induce, which results in a climate of intimidation that can hamper academic achievement. This fear comes not from internal doubts about their ability, but from situations, class presentations or token status, where concerns about being stereotyped can cause anxiety and self-consciousness. Moreover, stereotype threat is described as ‘a threat in the air’:

It is the social-psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one’s group applies. This predicament threatens one with being negatively stereotyped, with being judged or treated stereotypically, or with the prospect of conforming to the stereotype. (p. 187)

Another area of academic concern for Black doctoral students in their doctoral programs is the perception that White faculty are insensitive to their research interests. Unlike most of their White counterparts, some Black doctoral students possess a research interest in race, racism, and topics related to Black History & Culture. In their two-part, qualitative study examining how the relational aspects of context and race shape Black students' perceptions, Felder & Barker (2013) found instances where Black doctoral students' personal interest or perspectives on the manifestation of race in doctoral education may be congruent or incongruent with that of a faculty member, advisor, or the departmental or institutional environment. One salient example provided by the researchers of the divergence felt between a Black doctoral student's research interest and those of an advisor include:

I think a whole lot of faculty didn't take my work seriously or even knew what I was doing. I had one faculty member pull me aside and sort of whispered to me in her office, "I just want you to know that hip hop is not going to be around forever, so you better make sure you do something other than hip hop" as if all I did all day was like write down rap lyrics, you know what I mean. As if my work was devoid of any sort of intellectual merit or rigor. She was actually trying to look out for me. (p. 23)

The researchers interviewed 12 Black doctoral students at six top universities and found that the experiences of negative stereotyping toward Blacks was common among these students. Respondents experienced stereotype threat in a variety of ways including tokenism, marginalization, and labeling in a variety of situations including campus life, classrooms, faculty interactions, and curricular content. Stereotyping permeated many aspects of their graduate school experience including how Black issues were framed and researched, social interactions on

campus, and how Black doctoral students were received by their departments (Felder & Barker, 2013).

Although the Felder & Barker's (2013) and Taylor & Anthony's (2000) research studies both highlight the racialized experiences of Black doctoral students, neither study describes the degree to which stereotype threat has an impact on Black doctoral students' pursuit of the professoriate.

My study adds to the body of literature on Black doctoral student experiences by specifically addressing experiences related to self-efficacy, the role of racism in doctoral education, and the ways in which Black doctoral students make meaning of their interactions on the pathway to the professoriate. By exploring the aforementioned experiences through the lens of critical race theory coupled with the theoretical frameworks of self-efficacy and symbolic interactionism, it is hoped that this research provides more clarity on Black doctoral students' perceptions on seeking faculty positions.

Self-Efficacy Theory

The experiences of Black doctoral students may affect how they perceive their efficacy to pursue a faculty position. Vin Dintner, Dochy & Segers (2011) assert that self-efficacy refers to the beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute actions or courses of actions required to produce given attainments. Self-efficacy is a key element of social cognitive theory and appears to be a significant variable in student learning, because it affects students' motivation and learning. Zimmerman (1995) argues, "The role of efficacy beliefs is an important area of human functioning concerning career decision making and career development" (p. 203).

Self-efficacy is the personal beliefs or an individual's confidence in his or her own ability to perform effectively. Self-efficacy has been found by many empirical studies to be associated

with progressive outcomes. In the school setting, research studies have shown that students' self-efficacy is related to higher academic achievement or performance (Mateo, Makundu, Barnachea & Patt, 2014).

Black doctoral students may feel differently about themselves in comparison with their White counterparts. Bong & Slaalvik (2003) argue:

Individuals who are otherwise similar feel differently about themselves and choose different courses of action, depending on how they construe themselves, what attributes they think they possess, what roles they presume they are expected to play, what they believe they are capable of, how they view they fare in comparison with others, and how they judge that they are viewed by others. It is these subjective convictions about oneself, once established, which play a determining role in individual's further growth and development. (p. 2)

For example, Betz & Hackett (1981) argues that efficacy analyses of career decision-making reveal that males perceive themselves to be equally efficacious for the type of occupations traditionally held by women, but inefficacious as it relates to understanding the educational requirements and job functions of vocations dominated by men.

Turner, Chandler and Heffer (2009) found that self-efficacy was a significant predictor of one's academic performance and a similar study by Lent, Brown and Larkin (1986) pointed to self-efficacy as a reliable predictor of one's educational performance. Many other empirical research studies have shown the effects of self-efficacy on students' academic accomplishments suggesting that if students' self-efficacy can be enhanced, the result will translate into better academic or educational accomplishments.

The self-efficacy of Black doctoral students may be compromised since evidence suggests that college students of color encounter explicit and implicit forms of racial discrimination (Karabel, 2005). Given these racial experiences and because Black doctoral students are considered an ‘outsider’ group in doctoral education, Bandura’s self-efficacy theory is useful for this research project to explore how Black doctoral students’ experiences affect the way they come to feel about their abilities and their perception about seeking a faculty position in higher education.

Black Doctoral Students’ Experiences with Self-perception

Entrance into a doctoral program in higher education is a laudable accomplishment. Many Black doctoral students are the first in their family to attend graduate school and acceptance into a doctoral program is considered an outstanding accomplishment in and of itself. However, like undergraduate and graduate school, Black doctoral students’ perceptions about themselves and their abilities may be challenged by their experiences in doctoral education.

In her study on ways to avoid the derailment on the Black doctorate track, Fields (1998) found that a factor that commonly hinders many Black students upon arrival at graduate school is their independent spirit. While some Black doctoral students may view themselves as successful independents, since they have been working alone for so long and despite the odds, they achieved a large measure of academic success, the researcher found that independent self-perception may be problematic. In her consultation with a member of the National Consortium for Graduate Degrees for Minority Engineering and Science, Inc., the researcher found that the gamesmanship that it takes to pull off doctoral degree completion is not necessarily encompassed in one person. According to Fields (1998):

Very few people get a dissertation done all by themselves. They get help with the writing, the analysis, and packaging of their data. Consequently, Black doctoral students' self-perception as independents negate seeking support and assistance because they attempt to work by themselves when others hire people to do many of the tasks associated with dissertation completion. (p. 26)

In another more recent qualitative study, Shavers & Moore (2014) utilized the Black feminist lens to investigate the perceptions and experiences of Black female doctoral students at PWIs. The researchers found that Black doctoral students must overcome various obstacles to persist academically and maintain their overall well-being. Results of the study concluded that female Black doctoral students at PWI's reported wearing an academic mask as a strategy to overcome oppression and persist academically resulting in feelings of incompleteness, disconnection, and exhaustion. Some Black doctoral students mask their racial and cultural identity because they perceive these identifiers negatively impact how they are viewed by others. The researchers found that wearing an academic masks may help some Black doctoral students navigate doctoral studies.

Grant & Simmons (2008) found in their qualitative study exploring the effectiveness of mentoring functions for Black female doctoral students aspiring to the professoriate that socio-historical factors results in feelings of self-imposed multi-marginality and feelings of uncertainty. When these feelings are combined they often resulted in the overall presumption of Black doctoral students' feelings of incompetence. The researchers concluded that their study on experience narratives indicate that while traditional mentoring components were helpful, more support and assistance is required to help Black doctoral students succeed academically and to perceive themselves as competent.

Although the Grant & Simmons' study found that Black doctoral students have feelings of incompetence at PWIs, Constantine & Watt (2002) in their study exploring the cultural congruity, or perceived fit within the college environment, found that Black students attending HBCUs tend to report a greater sense of happiness due to circumstances that are endemic to such institutions (e.g., more Black students, faculty, and staff).

Some Black doctoral students feel isolated and depressed in the doctoral programs. Ali & Kohun (2007) in their longitudinal, four-stage study of doctoral students from pre-Admission to the dissertation stage, explored effective frameworks for doctoral student socialization. The researchers posit that social isolation has been described as a lack of meaningful relationship and that social isolation is seen as a contributing factor to depression. A closer examination of the literature shows that social isolation affects a wider range of populations and influences one's work environment, school, and other locales. Moreover, social isolation has negative effects for the functioning and well-being of individuals and for solidarity and social cohesion. Personal quality of life was found to be very much affected by participation in a social network.

As a part of her longitudinal research study, Hurtado (1994) investigated students attending graduate school to examine the influence of graduate school's racial climate on Black doctoral students' academic self-concept. Results of Hurtado's study found that Black female doctoral students have lower self-esteem than their male counterparts at PWIs. Hurtado's work informs that previous studies establish that the quality of interactions is essential to graduate student success, and yet minority students recognize alienating aspects of their graduate school's racial environment that may inhibit this interaction.

Patterson-Stewart (1997) in their qualitative study of eight Black doctoral students at a PWI found that Black doctoral students reported feeling invisible. In the participants' narratives,

each described how he or she had historically received powerful messages that Blacks did not belong in the White academe. Two study participant examples according to Patterson-Stewart (1997) include: “I went to college laden with the perceptions that academe was for scholarly, smart White people and how could a poor Black man from a coal-mining town compete?” (p. 491). “I was walking across campus one day, and when I passed a White student, I spoke to him. He ignored me. I felt invisible when he totally ignored my personhood” (p. 491).

Participants in the Patterson-Stewart study connected feelings of not belonging in doctoral education with feelings of invisibility that often emerged when they encountered White students, faculty, and in behaviors throughout the university campus environment. The researchers also cited several studies which concluded that minority graduate students often feel alienated and isolated in their graduate schools and typically view themselves as being outside the mainstream of their academic programs. Patterson-Stewart’s research resonates with the limited research on the experiences of Black doctoral students. However, the researchers do a salient job of providing voice about the ways in which some Black doctoral students are perceived and how they perceive others.

The Black Faculty Gap

Across academic disciplines there continues to be huge differences between White and Black doctoral students. Patel (2015) in his article discussing how the dearth of Black Ph.D. recipients will complicate efforts to diversify faculty, informs that when breaking down minority doctoral recipients by subfields, the data reveals only one Black doctoral recipient in many subfields, including biophysics, nuclear physics, nuclear engineering, architecture, and entomology.

The disparity in Black doctoral students impacts the disparity in the Black Faculty Gap. According to recent data by National Association of Education Statistics, of all full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, 79 percent were White and only 6 percent were Black. Among full-time professors, 84 percent were White and 4 percent were Black (Characteristics of Postsecondary, 2015).

According to Taylor & Anthony (2000), although rates of graduation are on par, Blacks (who represent about 12% of the population) encompassing 10% of undergraduates, yet the percentage of Black faculty is 5.1%. When those teaching at HBCUs are considered, the number at PWIs is just 3.7%. Graduate and professional school attendance by Blacks has increased considerably, in part because a number of departments have attempted to transform themselves into more democratic, diverse, and helpful programs. Blacks now earn 3.1% of all doctoral degrees, many of who are potential candidates for faculty positions. Why or why not are these individuals choosing academic careers remains poorly understood.

The reasons cited and studied for the phenomenal lack of Black faculty in higher education vary. Williams (2013) in his seminal work addressing diversity leadership in higher education and the barriers to faculty diversity suggest five primary impediments that contribute to the Black Faculty Gap:

(a) the pipeline challenge, (b) outdated faculty recruitment and retention practices, (c) faculty diversity myths that abound in higher education, (d) the decentralized administrative culture of the academy, and (e) the view that faculty diversity is incompatible with academic excellence. (p. 283)

Ironically, racial desegregation is another possible contributing factor to the Black Faculty Gap. Despite the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, desegregation of

student bodies in higher education did not dismantle the cancer of racism in America or on college and university campuses. Wilson (1982) in his seminar to foster less contentious and more educationally productive means to increase racial equity in higher education, argues that racial desegregation continues to be a matter of periodic and continuing interest in American higher education. Racism has been a subject of particularly intense concern as Black Americans and other minorities have sought to overturn and overcome the legacy of segregation and questions of race and equity. Racism has assumed urgency on virtually every college and university campus in the nation. Now free to engage in the college experience, the challenge of racist stereotypes and attitudes still pose a challenge to Black doctoral students.

Some argue that the personal choices of Black doctoral students are another reason for the Black Faculty Gap. DeCuir (2004), in his study utilizing critical race theory as a tool for race and racism in education, found that some critical scholars argue that if more Black doctoral students chose the academic life, then there would be more potential minority faculty available for the institutions seeking them. Others contend that there are other ways of explaining the shortage of minority faculty, such as discrimination (Fields, 1998). Still others reject this explanation and claim that one can find little evidence that discrimination is a cause (Glazer, 2003).

Financial burden may also contribute to the lingering Black Faculty Gap. In his text on the experiences of Black doctoral and faculty members, Darrell Cleveland (2004) argues:

Most Black students are not able to attend graduate and professional schools without some type of financial support. This is the major factor that limits the number of African Americans in the pipeline for faculty positions. (p. 204)

While it is true that many graduate students may be challenged financially, Cleveland

(2004) further argues. “The combination of financial burdens and other adverse incidents can be so negative that it hastens Black doctoral students’ premature departure from academe” (p. 28). Thus, the importance of understanding why Black doctoral students choose to seek faculty positions, or not, cannot be overstated, as institutions are facing increasing pressure to increase the number of Black faculty across the academic landscape.

Faculty departments traditionally explain their poor performance in hiring Black faculty on the grounds that there are no qualified Blacks in the PhD pipeline. However, the no Blacks in the pipeline thesis is at worst a red herring and at best a weak explanation for poor hiring results (“Black Faculty,” 2007). There are Blacks in the professoriate pipeline and it is understood that potential faculty candidates will possess a doctoral degree. The Chronicle of Higher Education reported in its 2015 Almanac that Blacks received 6.4 percent of doctorates in all fields compared to Whites who earned 72.9 percent (Hammond, 2015, p. 41). According to Allen-Castelitto (2001), “While Black professors represent five percent of all faculty members generally, they are significantly underrepresented at public research and private comprehensive institutions. Only a small proportion of associate professorships and full professorships are held by Blacks” (p. 90).

The hiring of Blacks in faculty positions may be further challenged by some White faculty advisors who well know that the professoriate represents the Ivory Tower. Moody (2004) reports:

At least three-fourths of the future-faculty candidates I have coached over the past decade have disclosed that they were proactively discouraged from visualizing themselves as future professionals. How can one not internalize some of this negativity – especially when it comes from supposedly informed authority figures? The result is often

an overriding fear of failure and a sense that even when succeeding, one will soon be defrocked and shown to be an imposter. (p. 23)

On the contrary, in his 2011 study of the role of race in cross-race advising relationships between White faculty advisors and their Black doctoral student trainees, Marco Barker (2011) found that some advisors identified their doctoral students' race as an asset when discussing entering the faculty ranks or applying for fellowships. These faculty members held that their doctoral students would have an added advantage because they were Black, in addition to their academic preparedness. Some other faculty, however saw the race of their doctoral student as a liability to the student. For example, they were concerned that their students would not be taken seriously or would be questioned based on their race.

Summary

This chapter contained a review of the literature on the experiences of Black doctoral students in higher education. This chapter also examined the literature on Black doctoral students' experiences with racism, stereotype threat, and the donning of academic masks as means to navigate the terrain of doctoral study. I also described, through the literature review, the basis of the theoretical lens of critical race theory and the theoretical frameworks of self-efficacy and symbolic interactionism to describe how Black doctoral student education is often nuanced and complicated by unique factors such isolation, retention, lack of mentorship, and attrition.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This research used qualitative methods because good qualitative research is relevant, timely, significant, interesting or evocative. Worthy topics often emerge from disciplinary priorities and therefore, are theoretically or conceptually compelling (Tracy, 2010). Qualitative studies aim at answering questions such as “how” and “why,” and deal either with issues that cannot be quantified or issues where quantification has no meaning (Fogel, Fredericks & Spellerberg, 2011).

It was important to examine and understand the dynamics that affect Black doctoral students’ perceptions about entering the professoriate. If the relationship between these dynamics are unknown, steps cannot be taken to increase the number of Black faculty in academia. The issue of the Black Faculty Gap and the reasons for these phenomena are timely and compelling. This research’s qualitative exploration of Black doctoral students may shed light on how to address, reduce, or eliminate the long-standing Black Faculty Gap.

Despite programs designed to cultivate and produce minority faculty representation, research suggests that for a variety of reasons the Black Faculty Gap continues to persist. Although several studies identified various factors that influence Black doctoral student persistence, attrition, and completion rates, the focus is narrow with no exploration of Black doctoral students’ career decisions. Previous studies also do not examine the possible connection between how Black doctoral students perceive their ability to pursue the professoriate, how they perceive program experiences, and the impact of these factors on their desire to enter the professoriate.

To examine Black doctoral students' perceptions of themselves, their academic programs, and the possible role of racism as factors that may impede the pathway to the professoriate, it was useful for this research to apply a critical race theory lens, coupled with the theoretical frameworks of symbolic interactionism and self-efficacy. The lens of critical race theory allowed this research to explore how, and if racism plays out in doctoral education. Symbolic interactionism allowed for the exploration of the ways in which Black doctoral students made meaning of their experience in doctoral education, and self-efficacy theory was useful to explore how Black doctoral students came to feel about their ability to pursue a faculty position.

With the purpose of exploring how Black doctoral students perceive their ability, program experiences, and how they make meaning of their experiences on the pathway to the professoriate, the following questions were posed in this study:

1. How do Black doctoral students perceive the role of racism in their decision to pursue a career in the professoriate?
2. How do Black doctoral students perceive their efficacy for a career in the professoriate?
3. How do Black doctoral students make meaning of their doctoral experience on the pathway to entering the professoriate?

Research Site

This research site was chosen based on its reputation as a national leader and stated intent to do all it can to diversify the professoriate by training graduate students from traditionally underrepresented groups, including ethnic minorities and women for careers in academe. The research site is a large, urban research university in the Mid-Atlantic. With 17 schools and colleges, nine campuses, 400+ degree programs, over 9,000 graduate and professional programs, and approximately 38,000 students, and a 14:1 student-faculty ratio, the university attracts some

of the most diverse, driven and motivated minds from across the nation and around the world. A number of the university's graduate programs are also highly ranked and many of the university's 3,500 faculty members are among the most-cited and distinguished researchers in their fields.

Participant Selection

Purposive selection strategy was used to select eight Black doctoral students who are enrolled in PhD programs in the social sciences, including education at an urban, research university. The names of enrolled Black doctoral students were obtained through participant referrals, email recruitment correspondence, and a list of Black PhD students obtained from the Office of Graduate Education at the research site. Two participants are advanced doctoral students completing their dissertation research. The age range of the participants was between 23 and 62. Each participant completed a demographic/background survey and completed the informed consent document before the interview began. All Black doctoral students who identified as Black (men and women) as well as foreign-born Blacks were considered for this research study. Once participant selection was completed, consent forms were issued to participants prior to the interview. Study participants, eight Black doctoral students, four males and four females with identified intent to become faculty members, were informed of the purposes of the study.

Interviews: Data Collection

The primary source of data for this research project was semi-structured interviews because they allowed for deeper exploration of the ways in which people express their experiences and realities. The semi-structured interview also supported key themes from the literature review (Black doctoral students' experiences with academic programs, self-perception,

and racism) and my theoretical frameworks: CRT – a lens to understanding the experiences of Black doctoral students; Symbolic Interactionism – humans act towards things based social interactions; and Self-efficacy – personal beliefs about one’s own confidence and ability to perform.

The interview guide was aligned with the scope of the study’s conceptual framework; it contained 25 open-ended questions with related question probes. The theoretically-based interview questions also aimed to demonstrate whether and how the participants’ responses supported or challenged the theories used in this study (Yin, 2016). The interviews gathered data that allowed analysis to go beyond ordinary reporting to provide deeper exploration into each participant’s motives, intentions, circumstances, and career choices. Each interview was tape recorded through using the Audacity software application.

The participants’ names were anonymized and pseudonyms have been used. Names of people, including program administrators/advisors have been withheld and pseudonyms have been used. Three semi-structured interviews, lasting approximately 60 minutes each, were conducted with eight study participants.

The sample for this study included four males and four female Black doctoral students/candidates who had been in doctoral study for at least two years. Each participant identified as Black and attended the research site, a large, urban, PWI research-driven university in the Mid-Atlantic. Two participants were doctoral candidates. The age range of the participants was between 23 and 62. All participants are in the social sciences, including education.

All interviews for this study began with demographic information (see Appendix C). Study participants were initially contacted via email and telephone to (1) provide participants

with an overview of the study, (2) request study participation, and (3) to ensure participant's appropriateness for the study. An appointment for the study interview was scheduled during this time. During the interview the participant was asked a series of questions to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. The later part of the interview allowed participants to reflect on the meaning their experiences held for them. The interviews were audio recorded for the purpose of making a transcript which was initially manually transcribed then subsequently uploaded to NVIVO for classification and categorical aggregation to establish emerging themes and patterns.

Field Notes

As a means of strengthening the validity of this research study, I generated Field Notes (see Appendix F) during and after participant interviews. Field Notes taken during participant interviews allowed me to note participants' descriptive and reflective actions as they took place during the interview. The Field Notes also allowed me to describe the disposition of participants as they responded to interview questions (i.e. participant emphatically replied, etc.). According to Yin (2016), focusing on the actions that take place in the field or during the interview, as opposed to describing a person or a scene is one way of noting what is going on while minimizing stereotyping. As described below, a third common source of Field Notes came from available documents and materials.

Documents

Creswell (2009) asserts that during the process of research, the investigator may collect qualitative documents. These may be public documents (e.g., newspapers, official reports) or private documents (e.g., personal journals and diaries, letters, and e-mails). Throughout the research process I collected private documents from participants such as resumes/curriculum

vitaes as they became available. I collected documents from participants' doctoral programs and media sources to further strengthen this research study's credibility. The doctoral program and media source documents collected enabled me to better understand each participants' interview question responses in the context of their educational environments.

Data Analysis

When conducting the data analysis for this research project, I first considered the ways in which my data related to this study's research questions. The data analysis strategy useful for this study were two data sources: open coding and categorizing. This six-step method included initial coding, revisiting initial coding, developing my initial list of broad categories, modifying initial list based on additional rereading, revisiting categories and subcategories (Lichtman, 2006).

Data for this project were coded to allow systematic analyses of participants' responses to semi-structured interview questions. Taylor & Anthony (2000) confirm the efficacy of analysis utilizing the narrative approach to interpret interview text. Data managing takes place through the creating and organizing of files for data (Creswell, 2007). I created a separate file for each participant that included their demographic information, actual interview questions, answers, Field Notes, and document summaries. Since the information was organized, I could readily locate and make notes and advance to the next phase of establishing the chronology, coding, and writing of the data according to emerging themes. The next two phases of the data analysis consisted of reading text, making margin notes, developing initial codes, and the classification of categories. The final step consisted of utilizing the qualitative software, NVIVO. Wiltshier (2011) asserts that the NVIVO software is useful to gather all the data together in one place such

as web-based sources, PDFs, video and data sources. All data can be imported directly into NVIVO eliminating the need to produce transcripts first from the multi-media sources.

Yin (2015) informs that the coding process involves organizing material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information. This research study allowed the codes to emerge during the data analysis. This involved taking text data from participant interviews during data collection, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) into categories, and labeling the categories with a term based in the actual language of the study's participants. More specifically, the coding process for this study consisted of seven steps:

1. Obtaining a sense of the whole by reading all the interview transcriptions carefully and writing notes as they came to mind.
2. Creating a list of all topics and clustering together similar topics. Formulating these topics into columns arrayed as major topics, unique topics, and others.
3. Taking topics list back to the data and abbreviating the topics as codes and writing the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text. During this preliminary organizing plan, I notated when new categories and codes emerged.
4. Determining the most descriptive wording for the topics and turning them into broad categories. I looked for ways of reducing the total list of categories by grouping topics that related to each other. Lines were drawn between categories to show interrelationships.
5. Final decisions on the abbreviation of each categories were made and codes were alphabetized.
6. Assembling the data material belonging to each category in one place and performing a preliminary analysis. When necessary, I recoded existing data.
7. The NVIVO qualitative computer software was used to enable me to quickly locate all text segments in the data that were coded the same and to determine whether particular participants were responding to a code idea in a similar or different way (Yin, 2009, p. 186-188).

I reviewed my data and considered the following questions:

- (1) What are the distinctive features of my data?
- (2) Are there potentially new insights that have emerged from my data?
- (3) Are there topics that readers would expect to find based on past literature and common sense?

To address the above three questions, I developed my initial 1st Broad Codes:

1= Distinctive Data

2= Emerging Data

3= Past Literature/Common Sense

Since the data collection and analysis for this study was drawn from the lens of CRT and the theoretical frameworks of self-efficacy and symbolic interactionism, I applied descriptors to my initial coding to examine how the data supports or contradicts CRT as well as my theoretical frameworks and how my data enhances the current research literature. During coding, I found myself utilizing a circular process in that I revisited the raw data based on theoretical findings and the current research literature (DeGuir-Gunby et al., 2011). I used Boyatzis' (1998) framework to demonstrate the steps I used to create 'Broad to Category Codes' (See Table 1).

Although I found no specific gender differences in this study, I did find that some of the Black male participants reported being 'the only Black' in many of their doctoral experiences, particularly in the doctoral classroom. While this study selected an even number (4 males and 4 females) the Black males reported that often if there was another Black student in their doctoral classroom, their gender was female.

I choose to focus on two tenets of CRT, ordinariness and counter-storytelling, because they are most useful for this research. Crenshaw (2011) explains that the original CRT developed in the 1970s to confront doctrinal and political retreats that severely limited the scope of civil rights advocacy. Racial progress was associated with an accommodationist orientation to the terms of racial power rather than a sustained collective contestation of it.

Ladson-Billing & Tate, (1995) in their creation of CRT in Education assert:

An increasing number of education scholars are raising critical questions about the way that research is being conducted in communities of color. Without authentic voices of people of color, it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities. (p. 58).

The CRT tenet of ordinariness describes racism as endemic and deeply ingrained in American life. This tenet allowed me to analyze my data in the context of participants' perceptions of their ordinary experiences in doctoral education. Second, the counter-storytelling tenet allowed me to analyze my data from the perceived experiences of participants' own voices of color as doctoral students on the pathway to the professoriate.

The next step in my data analysis consisted of coding my data based on my theoretical frameworks and my actual data. Boyatzis (1998) indicates that there are separate procedures for creating Theory and Data-Driven Codes. I developed my Theory-Driven Codes in three steps to inductively create codes for determining the reliability of coders and the codebook: (1) Generating the code (2) reviewing and revising the code in context of the data (3) determining the reliability of coders and the code. I then began my Theory-Driven coding by reviewing my CRT lenses (ordinariness and counter-storytelling). I developed the following codes:

CRT = Critical Race Theory
SE = Self-Efficacy
SI = Symbolic Interactionism

Using the aforementioned coding method, I then reviewed my theoretical frameworks, symbolic interactionism and self-efficacy theory to develop data-driven Codes. Boyatzis (1998) asserts that it is important to create code labels that are conceptually meaningful, clear and concise, and close to the data. (See Tables 2 & 3). My data-driven Codes developed in five steps to inductively create codes for my codebook: (1) Reducing raw information (2) identifying subsample themes (3) comparing themes across subsamples (4) creating codes (5) determining reliability of codes. I then created the following data-driven codes:

V= Voice of Color
C= Cultural Referencing

R= Racialized Encounters
 I= Interaction Meaning
 SP= Self -conception Perceptions

The next step in my coding process involved creating categories in NVIVO based on my data from my initial broad coding; theory-driven codes, and data-driven codes. I created the following NVIVO categories:

CRT
 Interaction Meaning
 Past Literature/Common Sense
 Racialized Encounters
 Self-Efficacy
 Surprising Data
 Symbolic Interactionism
 Voice of Color

Data Coding

Table 1.

Topic from Data	1 st Broad Code	Theory Driven Codes	Data-Driven Codes
Prove Myself	2	SE	V
Microaggressions	2	CRT	R
Racial Incidents	1	CRT	R
Institutional Racism	2	CRT	V
Advisor Issues	3	SI	I
No Role Model	3	SI	I
Research Interest Problems	3	SI	R
Becoming A Role Model	1	SE	S
PhD Meaning & Impact	2	SE	S
Only Black in the Classroom	1	CRT	V
Isolation & Loneliness	3	CRT	R
Faculty Support	3	SI	I
Career Aspirations – Question	1	SE	S
Efficacy for Professoriate	2	SE	S
Faculty Career Knowledge	2	SI	I

Table 1. continued

1st Broad Codes

1= Distinctive Data

2= Emerging Data

3= Past Literature/Common Sense Data

Theory-Driven Codes
 CRT = Critical Race Theory
 SE = Self-Efficacy
 SI = Symbolic Interactionism

Data-Driven Codes
 V = Voice of Color
 R = Racialized Encounters
 I = Interaction Meaning
 S = Self-conception Perceptions

Table 2. Theory-Driven Codes, Description and Example

Code	Description	Example
Voice of Color	<i>Assumption that a sole Black student can speak on behalf of the entire race</i>	<i>"I often find that because I am the only Black student, I must speak for the race. I don't want to be the representative of the race!"</i>

After re-analyzing the data in my NVIVO categories, three themes emerged from the data: (1) Roundabout Racism (2) Prove Pressure, and (3) The Fit Factor. To arrive at the three emergent themes, I re-analyzed each interview transcript. The first data analysis and interview transcription yielded 14 codes. The theory and data analysis, broad to selective coding and triangulation were useful in reducing the data to a single theme. The theme is Roundabout Racism. Second, the data analysis and interview transcription yielded 10 codes. The theory and data analysis, broad to selective coding and triangulation were useful in reducing the data to a single theme. The theme is Prove Pressure. Third, the data analysis and interview transcription yielded 9 codes. The theory and data analysis, broad to selective coding and triangulation were useful in reducing the data to a single theme. The theme is The Fit Factor.

The themes of Roundabout Racism, Prove Pressure, and The Fit Factor were categorized to operationalize how the data in this study overwhelmingly refers to the ways in which the participants discussed struggles with racialization, marginalization, loneliness/isolation, and pressures to prove themselves in doctoral education on the pathway to the professoriate.

Trustworthiness and Quality Assurance

This research used Lincoln and Guba's (1986) framework for ensuring credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of findings. Checks with participants relating to the accuracy of the data took place 'on the spot' during the first and second interviews. Member checks were also conducted with participants during the third interview to confirm the accuracy of interview transcripts before the data analysis. When data was needed for clarification or additional information, follow-up interviews were conducted. Participants were asked to read any transcripts of dialogues in which they participated. The emphasis was on whether the participants consider that their words matched what they intended (Shenton, 2004).

In compliance with the IRB's goal to protect the rights, dignity, and welfare of human subjects who participate in the research programs and this study analyses of participants lived experiences were shared with participants and solicited for feedback. I looked for and found no disconfirming evidence in this research.

Role of the Researcher

My background and knowledge of doctoral education as a current Black doctoral student informed this study. Prior to developing this study, I considered that race and racism played a role in society and in doctoral education. This perception informed the design of the study and how the interview protocol was developed. Consequently, my researcher's bias may have obstructed my ability to be objective in what I heard, saw, observed and understood about the experiences of Black doctoral students. Throughout this study, I maintained an awareness of my own biases by bracketing my own experiences. I did not discuss my own personal experiences and perceptions with participants during the interviews. I was careful how questions were posed

and recognized and avoided biased questions. I frequently reviewed my interview guide, before and after each interview, for leading questions, and rephrased them or removed them.

This research fills the gap in the literature pertaining to the experiences of Black doctoral students on the pathway to the professoriate. Through the framework of CRT, self-efficacy, and symbolic interactionism, this research sheds light on why there are increasing numbers of Black doctoral graduates yet paltry increases in Black faculty appointments in the American professoriate. Research in these areas are relevant in capturing the unique voices of Black doctoral students, and useful to colleges and universities experiencing problems with the phenomena of the Black Faculty Gap.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This research examined the experiences of eight Black PhD students, at a large urban research institution in the Mid-Atlantic. The first part of the chapter restates the purpose of this study. The first part also presents findings: Participant profiles, demographics, and perceptions including information about support systems. The second part of this chapter provides this study's findings for each of the three research questions through three emerging themes: (1) Roundabout Racism, (2) Prove Pressure, and (3) The Fit Factor.

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative research study was three-fold. First, this study was designed to capture Black doctoral students' descriptions of how they feel about themselves while in doctoral study and to determine their perceptions of their ability to become faculty members. Second, the study aimed to explore the role of race and its possible impact on Black doctoral students aspiring to the professoriate. Lastly, the study aimed to explore how the study participants make meaning of their experiences in doctoral education as they pursue faculty membership.

Participant Profiles

The eight participants in this study are Black doctoral students who are first in their respective families to pursue the PhD degree. Two of the participants are immigrant doctoral students whose experiences may differ from the other non-immigrant participants in this research. Ogbu (2008) asserts that immigrant minorities compare their situations in the United States with what they have been 'back home.' These immigrants believe they have more and better educational opportunities in the United States, especially opportunities in higher

education. Conversely, non-immigrants Black minority students compare their situation with that of the White middle class and often conclude that they are worse off for no other reason than that they are minorities.

Most participants have strong support networks, while others have limited support. Each participant has completed at least three years of doctoral study and two are working on their dissertation. Collectively, all participants enjoy conducting research and all seek to become change agents in their chosen fields.

Table 3. Demographics of Participants

Name	Male/Female	Age	Department	Years in Program	Doctoral Status
Andre	Male	49	Urban Education	3	Student
Kim	Female	28	Education Psychology	6	Student/Working on Dissertation
Tracey	Female	32	Special Education	3	Student
Rahiem	Male	36	Urban Education	3	Student/Working on Dissertation
Tyrone	Male	62	Public Health	7	Student
Darryl	Male	23	Criminal Justice	3	Student
Shamaine	Female	27	Education Psychology	4	Student
Khadijah	Female	45	Education Psychology	3	Student

As described by the profile quotes that follow, each participant has a strong sense of what earning a PhD means for them individually and for society-at-large.

Participant Interviews

Andre

“With A PhD no one can say I’m just an angry Black man!”

Andre is a middle-aged, married, Black doctoral student from the Northeast. He is in his third year of doctoral study and recently passed his comprehensive examination. For the past two decades, Andre has worked full-time as a Student Assistance Counselor at a local high school. Although Andre is not a first-generation college student, he is the first in his family to pursue a PhD. Interestingly however, Andre’s early education was wrought with academic challenges including race-based innuendoes at school, a passion for sports, and Andre’s distraction with ‘the ladies.’ These challenges resulted in Andre having to repeat two grade levels despite the fact that one of his parents was an educator. After encountering a positive White, male role model in high school, Andre embraced a strong sense of spirituality. Although he constantly feels pressure to prove himself, Andre is devoted to empowering the lives of young Black males through education.

Andre never imaged himself earning a PhD. His challenging educational trajectory as a young Black male did not project a promising career in Urban Education. Andre believes that his age and abroad travel experiences exposed him to a hunger for opportunities to learn. Andre strongly believes that earning his PhD will give him credibility. He is very happy to be in his doctoral program largely because of the program’s great professors and the opportunity to expand his knowledge base.

Kim

“Becoming a role model for students of color is my reason for getting my PhD.”

Born and raised in a close-knit family in the Mid-Atlantic, Kim is a twenty-eight-year-old Black doctoral candidate in her sixth year of doctoral study in education where she serves as a Graduate Research Assistant. Not attending college was not an option for Kim. She comes from a long-line of family members who possess a host of professional degrees. In her family Kim is neither a first-generation college student nor the first to earn a PhD. Kim self-identifies as ‘the darkest’ member of her family. Having been raised in a very diverse environment, Kim is passionate about issues that pertain to diversity and inclusion.

Kim plans to bridge the gap in K-12 math education since, according to Kim, “many educators are not utilizing valuable theories.” From a personal standpoint, Kim revealed that the journey to getting a PhD allows her to prove to herself that she can do it. For Kim earning a PhD is not so much about the credentials as it is about becoming a role model for other students of color.

Tracey

“I feel like shoving my PhD in the face of the man!”

Born in the American South, Tracey is a thirty-two-year-old Black doctoral student in education who self-identifies as a lesbian. Tracey has a learning disability and at her request, utilizes audio accommodations. Tracey believes that her Southern upbringing impacts how she perceives the world and her lesbian appearance impacts how she is perceived. Raised in a large family with strong ethics, it was expected that Tracey would attend college. Tracey has a great deal of support from family and friends. While Tracey is not the first in her family to attend college, and although another family member earned a M.D., Tracey is the first family member to pursue the PhD.

Tracey is in her second year of doctoral study where she was awarded a Graduate Externship and Fellowship. For Tracey, earning her PhD will finally allow her to prove herself to herself and others. Tracey also readily admits that she likes to challenge things, especially the stereotypes of minorities.

Rahiem

“Being a Black man pursuing a PhD makes you sort of a unicorn- almost not human.”

Rahiem is a thirty-six-year-old Black male doctoral student not born in the United States. Rahiem’s early education was obtained in a foreign country. Rahiem admits that during his early years he was not particularly interested in education. However, upon his family’s arrival to America, Rahiem encountered an identity crisis in his early twenties resulting in a strong need to figure out who he was. Rahiem did not identify with the Black identity that most Blacks possess in America. Although Rahiem identified as Black on the Demographic Questionnaire for this study, during his interview he stated that he does not regularly claim his identify as Black or White. Rahiem is married to a White woman and they have no children.

Rahiem is not the first in his family to go to college or to earn a PhD. Rahiem is pursuing his PhD because when he served as a high school teacher, he felt like he was selling students a mainstream idea about themselves that they already knew. Every time he failed a student, Rahiem felt like all he was doing was reinforcing the sense that students of color are not good enough. Rahiem grew tired of this routine and wanted to pursue his PhD because he knew there was more and that the concept of learning in America is misleading.

Tyrone

“I think from the platform of my race identity & consciousness, I have made a difference.”

In his seventh year of doctoral study, Tyrone currently serves as a full-time educator in higher education. Tyrone is a foreign-born doctoral student in his early sixties. After completing his K-12 education abroad, Tyrone and his family settled in the Northeastern section of the United States. Tyrone recalls that his experiences with racism began when he and his family moved to America. During this time, Tyrone stated that he became more sensitized to racism and oppression.

Tyrone believes that people of African descent always play the second fiddle to all others. For Tyrone, it is very important for him to be able to say that his expertise and practice is comparable to other people who also claim to have PhDs. Tyrone describes himself as spiritually grounded and incredibly motivated. Tyrone has several role models and he benefits from the diligent support of his wife. In addition to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, Andre takes pride in taking spiritual and mental care of himself.

Darryl

“I never thought people like me could get a PhD!”

Darryl is a twenty-three-year-old student in his third year of doctoral study in the social sciences. Born and raised in a poor, urban neighborhood, Darryl’s family eventually moved to a better location. Darryl subsequently attended a magnet school where he completed a dual enrollment program. Consequently, when Darryl graduated from high school he possessed an associate degree and enrolled as a college junior.

Darryl never imaged himself in a position to earn a PhD. Although Darryl has no criminal record, many of Darryl’s close relatives do. Despite family challenges and his own admitted distractions, Darryl enrolled in his PhD program with the goal of advocating on behalf

of Black men. Despite being the only Black male in his department, Darryl often receives support from his doctoral program advisor and a host of friends and family.

Shamaine

“A PhD is the only way to solidify opportunities.”

Shamaine is a twenty-seven-year-old, fourth-year doctoral student. Shamaine’s parents’ ethnically mixed background created unique experiences for her. She attended private school during her elementary, middle, and high school years and according to Shamaine, she overcame a lot of obstacles that made her career aspirations challenging. More specifically, while in high school, Shamaine became pregnant. Her mother’s side of the family became very doubtful that Shamaine would ever go to college since Shamaine had a child out of wedlock and because being a young mom is very difficult.

Although Shamaine suffers from anxiety and depression, Shamaine decided to pursue her education despite the obstacles. Shamaine believes that earning her PhD will provide her and her family with much-needed stability. As a single-mother of a special needs child, Shamaine views earning her PhD as a means to empower herself and her young child. Shamaine has limited support in her doctoral studies since she reports that only her partner offers her much-needed support.

Khadijah

“I feel like I have an opportunity to do something that my grandmother and great grandmother couldn’t imagine!”

Khadijah, in her mid-forties, is a Black female in her third-year of doctoral studies in the social sciences. Khadijah was raised in the Northeast where she attended K-12 public schools. As both a first-generation college student and the first to pursue the PhD, Khadijah’s family is

extremely proud of her accomplishments. As an older, non-traditional student, however, Khadijah regrets the timing of her doctoral degree pursuits. She believes that if she had completed her doctorate earlier, she would have had more years established in her career which she believes has cost her in terms of loss of earning potential and wealth accumulation.

As the only member of her family with a formal education, Khadijah feels poised to impact her family and others. Khadijah believes that earning her PhD will give her the ability to ask questions and interrogate structures that she feels are not beneficial to marginalized groups of people. She is also looking forward to not being such a novelty. Khadijah wants more people, if they want it, to be able to have access to the PhD.

Khadijah considers herself fortunate to have received scholarships throughout her educational experiences. In addition to financial support, the love and support of her parents has provided much-needed assurance and stability for Khadijah.

Organization of Findings Data

The data for this research is organized by three research questions: (1) How do Black doctoral students perceive the role of racism in their decision to pursue a career in the professoriate? (2) How do Black doctoral students perceive their efficacy for a career in the professoriate? and (3) How do Black doctoral students make meaning of their doctoral experience on the pathway to the professoriate?

Research Question #1

How do Black doctoral students perceive the role of racism in their decision to pursue a career in the professoriate?

The study participants shared their perceptions regarding the role of race in doctoral education as well what they perceived to be racist acts, incidents, or microaggressions. Consequently, one theme that emerged was Roundabout Racism – never direct, politically incorrect, and in most cases, carefully delivered forms of racial microaggressions that injure, insult, intimidate, marginalize or cause stereotype threat. The literal examples in this section provide insight into the participants’ factual perceptions.

Roundabout Racism

The participants all report that the role of race played an indirect role in their respective doctoral programs as they aspire to the professoriate. All the participants’ report encountering subliminally racist comments, messages, and incidents. All experienced microaggressions - brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group (Sue, 2007).

Roundabout Racism aligns with findings from Gildersleeve’s et al., (2011) qualitative study of four recent PhD graduates and four current PhD students at a PWI. The researchers found that in addition a host of possible issues faced by most doctoral students, Black doctoral students dealt with perceived individual and institutional racism. Other scholars included feelings of racialized and cultural isolation and tokenism, often exhibited by experiences such as being expected to represent one’s racial and ethnic group, being the lone person of color in class, lack of mentoring, and lack of diverse epistemological perspectives in the curriculum. In another study, Gay (2004) explains that graduate students of color often must function in an alien and often hostile environment, consistently encounter irrelevant curriculum, and frequently are taught by culturally impervious and uncaring instructors.

Given that all the participants in this study report racialized incidents in doctoral education, I reviewed participants' interviews to better understand how and where these incidents occurred. I found that many of the racialized incidents occurred between a Black doctoral student and a White classmate(s), or between a Black doctoral student and a White faculty member. I also found that with the exception of classroom resources, participants reported that racialized incidents occurred largely in the doctoral classroom. The current literature reveals that Black graduate students, including Black doctoral students, may find themselves feeling as if their perspectives are not valued, respected, and appreciated in their classes, among their professors, and among their classmates especially at PWIs (Cleveland, 2004).

Roundabout Racism is comprised of five subthemes: colorblindness, microaggressions, voice of color, stereotype threat, and marginalization. Each subtheme is detailed below as reported by the participants – all of which supports the claim that Roundabout Racism is an important emergent theme in this research study. Participants' data about how Roundabout Racism occurs during doctoral study includes highlighted reports from Shamaine, Darryl, Tyrone, and Khadijah.

Colorblindness

Haltinner (2014) argues that many students are plagued with a sort of racial blindness causing them to interpret realities and events in ways that erases racial histories and contexts while reinforcing negative stereotypes of people of color and positive images of whites. For Shamaine, the fourth year, single mom, colorblindness has a great deal to do with the little things

people in her program do and say. Shamaine reports that at times, some classmates mask racism thru color-blindness:

It's just little subtleties people make. I had to take a Socio-cultural Dynamics class. One White woman in my program made a comment basically alluding that she had struggles too, because she's color blind, the struggles are the same for everyone. Another White student told her that she was a bigot and she ran out of class and started crying because she made that comment like, this isn't something that only Black people experience.

What sparked this conversation was that we were talking about race and things that people go through and the differences just based off of race and identity. And she was like, I go through stuff too. I was just in awe, like wow, people think this way. Really not acknowledging the experiences of Black people in this country, the history of people in this country, just like, "I don't see color, I don't see it, I have problems too, I matter too." I mean, I understand. You do matter, but you have privilege and you need to acknowledge your privilege. And that's what the course was basically about. In this course, mostly the people of color were participating and all the White people would be quiet the whole time. These things made them uncomfortable. I understand, however, it's real. Acknowledge your privilege if you're of White descent, or if you're White in this country you have privilege, if you're a straight person in this country you have privilege. Just acknowledge your privilege. That was the theme of the course, but she didn't get it.

Darryl, the youngest Black doctoral student reports that racism in his program is so prevalent –albeit disguised- that he has learned how to detect and navigate indirect racism:

In the first year, you could either be a teaching assistant or a research assistant. People got a research assistant and they didn't really have any real work, it's up to twenty hours but you don't really do any work. They made me a teaching assistant and I'm only supposed to be a teaching assistant for two classes, but they gave me a teaching assistant for a lady who teaches three classes. I had a class of 100 my first year that I was teaching. I had a class of 50-60, and the other class with 60 students because the primary professor let other people come into the class. This professor was ill so she was out and sick for most of the semester, so I did most of the teaching. I was 21, first year, and I had to do my three classes and still stay up on my research, so it was like a make or break, sink or swim. I felt some type of way, but at the same time I realized that I was Black and this is what happens. I mean, for Black people, we face these types of circumstances so it wasn't like 'Oh my goodness why are they doing this to me?' I know the rules of the game.

Similar to how Darryl acknowledges struggling with colorblindness, Tyrone reports that as an experienced instructor and long-time doctoral student, colorblindness is institutional:

I see the effects of racism in my students, who struggle from one semester to the other. The racist institutional systems that we have here where they encounter, what I consider to be normal life challenging kinds of issues. And, I'll be blunt, faculty who are not of color often want to encourage students to either drop out or to do all kinds of crazy stuff, or not allow those same chances which are given indiscriminately to those who are considered to be of the mainstream.

There are times when Black students will switch sections and come to my section, and it's a question of supporting people. Not getting these normal chances at life, which does not, in any way, mean that Black students are not smart enough or whatever. If we can erase poverty as a common denominator we could all be done in three years, four years, or however long it takes. But it doesn't mean you cannot do the work. So, I see that a lot. I'm thinking of my school where we have this social justice message but we don't live it at all.

Khadijah, a third-year, adjunct instructor reports struggles with feeling uncomfortable while in doctoral study. "My race is always with me. I can't tell if my race is influencing this experience as opposed to others. I do know that sometimes it is difficult to be in class."

Khadijah also reports a classroom struggle with perceived colorblindness as she attempted to provide her own perspective:

There was this one time, and I do not know if this is race or social class, I was sitting in the class with doctoral students. One student was talking about a particular study in a particular inner-city school. The student said that at the school students have to sit with their hands visibly on their desk because they don't have structure at home. The demographics of the students were predominately African Americans in an urban, violent neighborhood. I provided a different perspective by sharing that there is a lot of social control in that class. The students tend to be controlled at school. There is structure at home. It's excessive structure. Parents have to teach their kids that they have to always have their hands visible. Parents are teaching their children that they have to have their hands visible when they get stopped by the cops while walking down the street, they have

to have their hands visible when they are pulled over by the cops when driving, and they have to have their hands visible when shopping at a store so that they won't be accused of shoplifting, etc. So, if you always have to have your hands visible, the school is just another place of social control. This was my argument. I said that this is unfortunate because schools need to be emotionally safe environments. I wanted to provide a different perspective. Sometimes I feel like my race and my socio-economic status affects my doctoral program as it relates to me being able to provide a perspective.

Microaggressions

When asked about the role of race in his doctoral program, Rahiem reports that he has not directly experienced racism while in doctoral study. Rahiem admits that in today's society, no one is going to make outright racist remarks. Instead, the instructor of education explained that he struggles with how racism in his doctoral program occurs in subliminal ways, mostly in the classroom:

Oftentimes I would hear people congratulate me. People use the word 'articulate' to describe me. To me I hear, "I just didn't think you could put sentences together. When I hear it, I quickly respond, 'What do you mean?' They will say, 'Well you always have interesting things to say.' I then think to myself, why wouldn't I have interesting things to say? Some of it is my own experiences and some of it is the ways in which learning is a racialized process.

Similarly, Tracey, the second-year doctoral student from the American South reported that after a class, a White classmate approached her and remarked, 'You're really smart.' Tracey revealed that she was both unsurprised and curious about the classmate's remark. Tracey

reports that she struggles issues with authorities and rigid systems so when these microaggression incidents occur, she directly confronts them. Tracey asked the classmate, “Thank you, but why say it like an announcement? Why did you feel the need to say that?” “Well, just based off how you talk I didn’t think you would be smart” replied the classmate. Tracey responded, “Well, is there something wrong with the way I talk?” The classmate did not respond causing Tracey to conclude, “It has to be the fact that I’m a Black woman.”

Kim, the 28-year-old Graduate Research Assistant in her sixth year of study, reported that she attended diverse secondary schools in the past. On the contrary however, Kim informed that diversity was not as prevalent during her undergraduate years and even less so in graduate school. When asked about the role of race in her doctoral program, Kim reports that she struggles with racialized classroom encounters:

I completed an assignment early for a class and the professor used my work as an example of how to successfully complete the assignment. A classmate who never acknowledged my existence, came up to me and said, “I am very impressed with your quality of work.” I thought it was weird that this individual was so impressed with my work. Did he not think I could produce exemplary work? In my heart-of-hearts I don’t think his comments were racially motivated but then again this is one of those times when you ask yourself, ‘Why would someone be so impressed? I kind of felt like he was really saying, “I’m so impressed with the quality of your work since you’re a Black woman.” I may have felt differently if he had said specifically what he was impressed with but because he didn’t I was left wondering if race played a role in his comment. This is another instance where I went back and forth,” Was that racist?”

Voice of Color

Many of the participants in this study (Kim, Tracey, Darryl, Khadijah, Rahiem and Shamaine) find that they are often the only voice of color in their respective doctoral programs. Voice of Color assumes that a sole Black person has the expertise to speak for the entire race. Khadijah struggles with the expectation that she is the expert on 'All Things Black' which for Khadijah is exhausting, frustrating and disappointing, "Sometimes I feel frustrated because nobody else is providing a counter-narrative. It is disappointing that there might not be so many perspectives. I don't always want to be the representative of my race."

Shamaine also reports struggling with the burden of being expected to be an expert on Blacks. During a class discussion Shamaine reported:

We were talking about affirmative action, and someone asked me, do you know what affirmative action is? Just assuming that I would know what affirmative action is. But I guess because I'm Black I should know everything about the law regarding affirmative action. So, things like that.

Like Khadijah and Shamaine, Rahiem reported frequent struggles with having to be the voice of color. In one such incident, Rahiem recalled:

I do remember first semester that a White student was a member of our group project. During our project presentation, this student stated to the class, 'No one is going to address the elephant in the room?' At first no one knew what he was talking about but then I realized that essentially what he was saying was that I was the only Black person in the group. I guess he felt compelled to say something since I was the only Black guy in the class. I didn't quite get why he said it. There were a few chuckles in the room and then afterwards he approached me and said that he felt like he had to say something to me

since I was the only Black guy in the room. I guess he wanted me to be the voice of the race. This happens to me often. It happens all the time. You get used to it. You choose to either ignore it or pretend that you are not ignoring it.

Stereotype Threat

Steel (1997) described stereotype threat as the social-psychological threat that arises when one is in a situation or doing something for which a negative stereotype about one's group applies. This situation threatens one with being negatively stereotyped, with being judged or treated stereotypically, or with the prospect of conforming to the stereotype. Kim, whose prior educational experiences were diverse, was surprised to find that she was often the only Black doctoral student in her classes. Kim reports a struggle with stereotype threat:

My lowest point in my doctoral experience occurred when I stumbled over a presentation. The famous and brilliant professor (White male) sent out a massive email to the class that said, "Everyone should really spend a good amount of time practicing their presentations because when you stumble over your words you don't look endearing. You actually make yourself look like an idiot." I remember reading the professor's comments and thinking to myself, "Alright that's it! I'm done! I'm not going to do this anymore." I remember obsessing about it for about a week. I thought OMG! He must think I'm an idiot. He's famous and he's brilliant, so I must be stupid! I later recalled a couple of students making comments that the professor was racist. I had never read his textbooks but I started to wonder if the professor's mass email was racist as well. This is one of the dilemmas of being a person of color – You go back and forth about the interactions you have with people. You ask yourself, "Was that racist? Was that racially motivated?"

As the only Black student in the class, Kim perceived that the professor in the above incident was referring to the stereotype that Blacks are inferior to Whites, particularly in education. While Kim admits that the professor sent the email to the entire class, Kim perceived the professor's actions to be subliminally racist since everyone in the class was present when Kim, the sole Black student in the classroom, stumbled over her presentation. In another incident of stereotype threat, Kim reports:

A White classmate made the comment, 'We always talk about White privilege but what about Black privilege or affirmative action cases?' Kim believed that although the student did not direct the comment at her, it felt very strange, "I was the only student of color in the conversation. When the classmate made this comment, I was very angry." Kim reports that she was so angry that she had to excuse herself from the classroom because she was afraid that she would say something that she would later regret. Kim explained, "The assumption that I didn't work hard for any of my experiences really made me angry!"

Similar to Kim, Rahiem, the doctoral candidate and adjunct instructor, reported:

I am careful in what I say and do because of this idea of stereotype threat – this role that I should be playing. I need to make sure I am over-prepared so no one has any evidence that I don't know what I'm doing. I just don't want to give any preconceived notions of why I'm there.

Kim's and Rahiem's struggles with racialized encounters are not new. Darryl, the youngest study participant at age 23, reports, "We believe in the myths and stereotypes and they

persist and get passed down, but we never get to a valuable solution.” Darryl perceives that his experiences with poverty and the criminalization of Black men are consequences of institutional and systemic racism. As the sole Black in his entire doctoral program, Darryl recognizes that he is subject to stereotype threat. “The problem is in academia in general and how it is set up without us in mind.” To combat stereotype threat Darryl frequently reminds himself, “I’m just one Black man trying to get a PhD.” Austin & Wulff (2004) explain that stereotype threat is the sense of social and psychological peril that negative racial stereotypes induce, bringing about a climate of intimidation that can hamper academic achievement. “The fear comes not from internal doubts about one’s ability but from situations such as testing, class presentations, or token status, where concerns about being stereotyped can cause anxiety and self-consciousness” (p. 96).

In addition to racialized incidents with students in their doctoral classrooms, several of the participants reported racialized incidents with faculty members. Shamaine, a single mom and fourth year doctoral student noted that at the end of a classroom discussion her professor stated, “It’s great to hear a minority’s perspective.” Shamaine responded that she did not know if the professor meant minority as in African American or minority opinion. Already suffering a disability that includes anxiety and depression, Shamaine reports her struggle to discern the professor’s remarks, “I’m trying to shift my thinking to cope with it.”

Andre, the 49- year-old doctoral student in his third year of doctoral study reports that he had an experience with a first-time White, female professor who commented several times to Andre, ‘I don’t know what was wrong with you,’ regarding an assignment Andre was struggling with. Andre reports, “I said to myself, wait a minute, I earned a bachelors and two master’s

degrees, clearly I have a little bit of sense!” Andre suspects that this professor had a secret discussion with his advisor and said something along the lines of ‘I don’t think he belongs here.’”

Marginalization

Marginalization is the social disadvantage and regulation to the fringes of society. Tracey, Tyrone and Darryl all report struggles with marginalization in doctoral education. Tracey, the Southern doctoral student reported that while building her intervention to an assignment from a minority perspective, “I began receiving harsh disagreement about my proposed intervention. I believe the professor did not like the fact that I was challenging the high population of minorities.” When asked about the professor’s motives, Tracey responded, “She wanted me to re-write my paper in her way. The professor’s feedback was along the lines of ‘Why won’t you comply? Why won’t you fit in?’” Tracey’s encounter resonates with Patterson-Stewart et al., (1997) study of a group of doctoral students who experienced either intentional or unintentional racism in their interactions with White faculty members. According to the researchers, a thread that appeared in the category of racial incidents was the participants’ objections to methods White professors used to question their writing abilities. Tracey reported that she received a C- in the class and ultimately had to file a formal discrimination complaint against the professor. “I won my appeal and the professor increased my grade. I consider this incident academic bullying or racism.”

This research study also found that Roundabout Racism in doctoral education is evident in the marginalized resource materials used in doctoral instruction. According to Tyrone, the 62-year-old doctoral student who has been in his program for seven years:

Look at the textbooks that are used. The textbooks are always recommended content that is filled with Eurocentric theories and approaches and philosophies about civilization. They never talk about African civilization and the scholars that emerged from that background and the scholars who are still in the academy from all over the country. How come we don't talk about ethnically diverse models related to how African American families navigate through life?

The literature on Tyrone's experience with educational resource marginality is confirmed by scholar Geneva Gaye (2004) who argues that significantly more research, scholarship, curriculum revisions and instructional reforms are needed in the design, implementation and overall assessment of multicultural education in higher education.

Darryl, echoes Tyrone's struggles with marginalization, "You have to read a lot of damaging things." Darryl also reports that when he first arrived in his department, "Nobody talked to me. People who you look like, that's who you talk to." When offices in his department were assigned, Darryl discovered, "Everybody had offices with windows, I got a little storage closet in the back. All the graduate student offices were in the front in the office. I was the only graduate student who had his office in the back and nobody would talk to me." Gay (2004) asserts that physical isolation may have personal and professional negative effects. From a personal perspective, it is difficult not having academic peers who share your own realistic frames of reference, or are from the same racial background.

Tyrone and Darryl's experiences illuminate the marginalization issue of culturally relevant pedagogy in doctoral education. Hall & Burns (2009) argue that minority students often straddle boundaries between multiple and conflicting cultures and being a member of one cultural community sometimes means compromising identities in the others. The researchers

also found that different universities, colleges, schools, departments, and programs within them have specific models for how individuals should act and what it means to be a researcher and student. Individuals entering institutional spaces like doctoral training programs will be influenced by the models of identity that are most valued and recognized. Doctoral students from non-dominant racial and cultural backgrounds often describe feeling conflicted about who they are and whom they perceive their doctoral programs require that they become. Some Black doctoral students report believing they must give up many aspects of their cultural identities to pursue institutional visions to achieve academic success.

In sum, the participants describe their struggles with racialized learning during doctoral education and the ways in which these struggles equate to Roundabout Racism. Participants internally and externally question the motives behind each racialized incident and conclude that their 'Blackness' is the source of each incident.

Research Question #2

How do Black doctoral students perceive their efficacy for a career in the professoriate?

The participants reported how they perceived their self-efficacy in doctoral study as they consider faculty membership. As a result, the theme Prove Pressure emerged. The Prove Pressure theme describes how participants report consistent struggles with the need to prove their presence and credibility while in doctoral study. The Prove Pressure theme is comprised of two subthemes: impostorism and role modeling. Each subtheme is detailed below as reported by the participants – all of which supports the claim that Prove Pressure is an important emergent theme in this research study.

Prove Pressure aligns with findings from Patterson-Stewart's et al., (1997) qualitative investigation of eight Black doctoral students' persistence in PWI doctoral programs. The

researchers found that Black doctoral students experienced dissonant communications about their abilities, such as negative messages of Black student incompetence, prior to the doctoral process. However, feelings of incompetence were often exacerbated with further communication of incompetency from faculty. The participants noted that they did not dispute constructive, objective criticisms from faculty but they did object to the delivery of the criticisms. In another study, Gasman et al., (2008) explains that several authors have claimed that Black graduate students feel out of place or unaccepted at their institutions. In turn, this sense of being devalued can lead to feelings of social isolation, during which students may feel removed or “cut off” from their classmates, families, and friends.

I reviewed participants’ interviews to clearly understand how participants perceived the need to prove themselves. I found that Prove Pressure occurs in the academic setting of doctoral education. I also found that for the participants, being the only Black student in the classroom creates a sense of having to prove oneself academically. The current literature reveals that Black doctoral students may find themselves developing a strong need to dispel notions of their alleged academic inferiority. Steele (1997) argues that structural limits on educational access have been imposed on Blacks by socioeconomic limitation, segregating social practices, and constricting cultural orientations. By diminishing Black students’ educational prospects, these limitations may make it more difficult to identify with academic domains.

Prove Pressure is comprised of two subthemes: impostorism and role modeling. Each subcategory is detailed below as reported by the participants and details how Prove Pressure emerged as an important theme in this research.

Prove Pressure as it occurs during doctoral study are highlighted by reports from Andre, Kim, Tracey, and Tyrone. From his earliest experiences as the sole Black in his neighborhood

and often in doctoral education, Andre, the Student Assistance Counselor, readily admits that he encountered plenty of support to help prove himself for entry into his doctoral program, “I was admitted to this university on the condition that I prove myself. I met with the college dean and my advisor and they gave me point-by-point instructions on how to construct my admissions essay.” Andre explained that although he was provided admissions assistance, his true feelings amounted to academic revenge, “How dare you say that I am not good enough to sit next to you in a classroom! I’m going to do whatever it takes. The prove myself theme in my life developed as a consequence of downright revenge. I might also say academic revenge.” The current literature reveals that Black Americans have always lived with the allegation that they are inferior simply because they are Black. This allegation has been too uniform, too ingrained in cultural imagery, too enforced by law, custom, and every form of power not to have left a mark (Steele, 1990).

For Kim, the sixth- year doctoral student working on her dissertation, having to prove herself comes as a consequence of not only how she perceives herself, but also how she is perceived by her classmates. Kim recalled a classroom incident when a White student debated the legitimacy of White privilege v. Black privilege. The White student alluded to the suggestion that Kim received her opportunities to teach and conduct research simple because Kim is Black:

The White student’s statement diminishes the work that I have done because of something I had no control over. In hindsight now, I forgive her for saying it because I realize that what she said came from a very ignorant place. I should have used that opportunity as an opportunity to educate her about what she said, but I was so angry I couldn’t even think! How dare she think I got opportunities because I am Black!

I used this experience as motivation to prove that everything I have, I've worked for. I always remember what my mom said, 'You can't spend your time proving to people that you deserve the things you have because they will use those examples for their gain.' They will continue to think you got those things because you are Black. You can't spend your energy on that. I have this advice in the back of my head. There are times when I'm sitting back watching television and I'll say to myself, 'You've got to get up and do such and such because you have to prove myself.' I have an extra-added motivation to prove myself.

Prove Pressure was also reported by Tracey, the 32-year-old doctoral student from the American South. According to Tracey being Black and from the South equates to constantly having to prove herself in doctoral study:

I feel like every day I have to prove myself. I'm from the South. You can't be an educated Black woman in the south. We are still stuck on the idea that Blacks need to be or are expected to be submissive. We still think that you didn't get your degree on your own merit. You got it on affirmative action. Blacks still have to prove ourselves.

Similar to Tracey but from a different birthplace, Tyrone reports that being a Caribbean-born Black doctoral student also requires proving himself:

People of African descent always play the second fiddle to all of these people. You're not as good as those people. And so, for me, it is very important to be able to say that my expertise, my practice is comparable to other people who also claim to have these PhD's. I also want to be able to stand toe-to- toe with people and not allow them the privilege of thinking that they're better than me.

Also, the sole Black doctoral student in his program, Darryl reports that during his second year of study he began proving himself with the hope that one day his PhD journey would show other Black men right leadership:

In my second year, I started proving myself even though things still weren't right. I was proving to myself that I was here to stay. It got better. They respect me for my scholarship, ultimately. It was really rough because I didn't have anyone to show me.

Prove Pressure may impact Black doctoral students' aspirations to pursue academic careers. From issues of other people's perceptions, issues pertaining to the pressure to engage with non-culturally relevant materials, to having to over-perform in doctoral education, many of the participants in this study encounter pressure to prove themselves fit not only for doctoral education, but also for the academy. Moreover, Miller & Stone (2011) in their study on the aspirations of doctoral students of color found that half of the participants reported that one of the reasons they felt students of color did not pursue careers in academia involved the lack of visibility of faculty of color to serve as guides.

Impostorism

Included in the Prove Pressure theme are the ways in which the participants struggle with Impostorism or worthiness for the professoriate. Steele (1990) argues that when Black students who find themselves on White campuses surrounded by those who have historically claimed superiority, they are also surrounded by the myth of their inferiority.

Although Kahdijah feels confident in her ability to successfully complete her doctoral studies and ultimately achieve faculty membership, Khadijah reports her struggles with her

perception of feeling like imposter, “I feel like a foreigner in a place where I should not feel like a foreigner.”

In the current literature, Parkman (2016) argues that Impostorism, at its root, is about an inability to accurately self-assess with regard to performance. In addition, diminished self-assurance and self-efficacy is known to accompany imposter inclinations. In the face of faltering self-confidence, internalization of failures, and over focus on mistakes over the long term, stress and anxiety become ever-constant companions. Thus, impostors strive to lessen both by working longer, harder and seeking perfection. Impostors feel these are the only tools they have, to meet expectations.

Rahiem, one of the two male, foreign-born participants, attended secondary and post-secondary schools in the United States and upon his arrival, discovered salient assumptions. According to Rahiem, “Scholars have said that once you arrive in America, you are made to decide your identity. If your skin is a certain color, there is an image of your social order or what you should be.” As a Black doctoral student and adjunct professor, Rahiem also reports that he often feels like he needs to do more as an instructor to prove his intelligence and mere existence, “People want to know how I got here. They think there is something weird about me. It’s almost as if they are saying, ‘What planet are you from?’ People see me as a unicorn. There is a sense of proving myself because of my race.” Darryl, the youngest male participant echoes Rahiem’s struggle, “It’s like being a unicorn for a Black male to be in my field.”

While some of the participants’ report struggles with being perceived as imposters or unicorns, Kim, who has great support from her advisor and supervisor, reports that after an encounter with a faculty member she began doubting her efficacy for the professoriate:

I was told by a re-known professor (White male) in my field that ‘Statistically women of color do not gain tenure especially when they have kids.’ This was discouraging. In hindsight, I think this person made the statement to inform me of what I was up against and that I should persevere anyway. Sometimes, I go back and forth about how I feel about this. Sometimes I find myself asking myself, ‘Why am I even doing this? I know that I want to be a mom someday and I expressed this to this person. I can’t stop being Black. I can’t just pull off my Blackness. When I heard the statement, I starting asking myself, ‘Is there any hope for me? Am I going to able be to continue this dream? Should I start thinking about some other plans? To be honest, I still think this way. I ask myself, What other skills do I have that can make me marketable in other fields?’

Although the participants in this study view becoming a college professor as an output of doctoral education, Kim’s experiences highlight that for some, their interest in seeking the professoriate may change over time. Jackson & Johnson (2011) argues that some Black students attending PWIs who are sensitive to race-based incidents are more likely to perceive discrimination and may be more profoundly affected when discrimination occurs.

On at least two occasions, Shamaine, the only participant with a documented disability (anxiety & depression) reports that she was pressured to prove her disability, ”Two professors asked me about my accommodations before. But one just blatantly told me that I don’t need them and it was really upsetting.” When asked why she was upset about providing information about her disability, Shamaine elaborated:

Black people have mental health issues too. I don’t know why I have to prove that I have a disability. It’s just weird. The ADA allows anyone with a disability to get an

accommodation. You don't have to prove your disability to professors. I am perceived like I'm just trying to get over. I don't know if it is racial or not, but apparently, I have to go an extra step to get my rights. I only asked for accommodations twice yet each time I asked, it was a problem.

Role Modeling

Though not a dominant theme in the literature about Black doctoral students, this research found that the participants in this study reported that the Prove Pressure they encounter largely encourages them to become role models for future doctoral students of color. Gardner & Mendoza (2012) argue that when individuals are presented with a challenging situation or experiences they have not previously encountered (such studying at a PWI) new responses may emerge. For many of the participants in this study, because they did not experience a role model of color during doctoral education, the pressure to prove their worthiness and creditability motivates them to not only solidify their doctoral status, it also inspires them to become the role model(s) they did not experience.

Tracey reports that like the majority of participants, she does not see faces that look like hers that prevail her to go forward:

I feel like there are certain fields in academia where lots of people look like me and it makes me wonder, 'Why don't people in other fields look like me?' So instead of wondering I just be a person who looks like me so I can encourage others to join in. Trust me, if I'm in the room, I'll make room for you.

Although many of the participants report not having a role model in doctoral education, Andre, Rahiem, Khadijah, Tracey and Shamaine report that family examples, prior exposure to

Black educators, and simply proving themselves during doctoral education makes them role models. For example, Kim states that when she was teaching a college course, after class a student came to her and thanked her. According to Kim the student said, “I want to thank you for existing because you are the first professor I had that looks like me.” Kim reports that at the time she did not understand what it meant for the student because she had personally had experiences with teachers of color. Kim explained, “I didn’t realize that having someone that looks like you could serve as a system of support for someone. For the past year or so this (being a role model to students of color) has been my reason for getting my PhD.” Very similar but for different reasons, Tracey reports that not having a PhD role model makes her want to become a PhD role model for someone else.

Like Darryl and Tracey, Kim seeks to be a positive role model for others who might follow in her footsteps, “I had a Black woman as a professor during undergrad and I want to be what she was to me. I want to put the effort she put into me into someone else. As a Black woman, you don’t see people who look like you on the other side of the fence as professors.”

Khadijah’s goal to become a role model stems from recent events pertaining to police brutality against people of color (Blacks in particular) that relay and confirm negative images about Black people. Khadijah explains:

Young people are seeing Black people being hurt, gunned down, and brutally assaulted all on social media. Constant exposure to society telling you that you’re not good enough. So, Black representation is important to me and I feel like there is a lack of that in the education field and I want to be part of making that better.

Another emerging area of Role Modeling that the participants reported is the desire to impact the paradigm of doctoral education. Darryl reports, “I want to be the person that people

cite and change the discourse.” Similarly, Tracey reports that she often perceives disapproval when she speaks in contrast to the Eurocentric paradigm that she constantly encounters in doctoral education. “I would like redesign history curriculums so that it is more multi-media and student-driven and representative of the whole history, not just Eurocentric, or male dominated. I want to be considered an innovator in my field.”

Tyrone reports that role modeling at its best, lays the foundation for future generations of Black doctoral students:

I want to be an example to the newest African American students that I connect with and support and I also want to push them on to also be all that we can be.

Research Question #3

Research question 3: How do Black doctoral students make meaning of their doctoral experience on the pathway to the professoriate?

As the participants amenably shared their perceptions about their experiences they also revealed how they struggle to understand those experiences. Consequently, the theme Fit Factor emerged. The Fit Factor theme describes how participants report consistent struggles with feeling like they do not fit into doctoral education. The Fit Factor theme is comprised of four subthemes: loneliness/isolation, research concerns, advisor issues, and resource problems. Each subtheme is detailed below as reported by the participants – all of which supports the claim that The Fit Factor is an important emergent theme in this research.

The Fit Factor aligns with findings from Austin (2002) research which used data from a four-year qualitative, longitudinal study to examine the graduate school experience of a group of individuals preparing to be faculty members. The researchers found that graduate students who

aspire to the professoriate perceive that they do not receive systematic preparation in many aspects of the job. Doctoral students must grapple with intellectual mastery and the question of "Can I do this?" Second, they must grapple with the question of "Do I want to be a graduate student?" Third, they must learn about the academic profession and ask "Do I want to do this work?" Fourth, they face the task of becoming part of a department where they may ask "Do I belong here?" (p. 98). In another study, Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot (2005) found that Black doctoral students experience treatment marking their difference and they experience pressure to assimilate into the dominant White culture.

I re-examined participants' interviews to garner a better understanding of how participants perceived their struggles with The Fit Factor. I found that The Fit Factor occurs in and outside the doctoral classroom. Although the limited doctoral research productivity literature indicates that there is no common approach to determining what factors might influence scholarly output (McGaskey, 2015), I found that participants reported that they often have difficulty finding support and buy-in for their research projects. Lack of advisor support was also a significant issue reported by the participants. The subtheme of loneliness/alienation emerged as a consequence of participants typically being the sole Black student in the classroom, lack of support for their research ideas, and lack of support from their program advisors.

The current literature reveals that Black doctoral students report feeling invisible, isolated, and undervalued (Felder & Barker, 2013). In another study conducted by Bonilla, Pickron & Tatum (1994) the researchers found, "Few faculty of color are available for the necessary task of mentoring students of color. This lack contributes to a heightened sense of isolation and loneliness" (p. 102).

Detailed below are the ways in which the participants in this study report their struggles with the four subthemes of The Fit Factor: loneliness/isolation, research issues, advisor issues, and resource problems.

The Fit Factor occurs during doctoral study as highlighted from the reports of Andre, Shamaine, Khadijah, and Rahiem. As a three-year doctoral student, Khadijah reports that she often feels disconnected from doctoral study, “I often feel like I don’t fit in. I feel like there is a disconnect between how I communicate and how my colleagues and other faculty communicate. I feel a lack. I feel a hole.”

Similar to Khadijah, Rahiem struggles with fitting into doctoral education as a Black student in a White learning environment. Rahiem reports:

It’s like a unicorn for a Black male to be in my field because it’s so unpopulated for Black males in my field. It can be discouraging not seeing people like you, not being taught by you, not having information, not relevant information about Black studies being important.

Andre reports that being the only Black male in his classes makes him feel like he does not fit in from both a racial as well as a gender standpoint, “When I walk into a classroom, there are Black people in the class but their gender is female.” Likewise, Shamaine, reports: “I’ve been isolated amongst my peers. There are not a lot of Blacks in my program. There is like one in each cohort for the past four years.” Ellis (2001) in her study of the experiences of how Black and White doctoral students perceive ‘fitting in’ or being socialized in doctoral study found that Black doctoral students reported an absence of a sense of community in their departments. Black males and females expressed a sense of isolation from their departments. One Black woman in

the study reported, “You feel brought back home to realize that you are, in fact, a Black woman there, standing alone.” (p. 38).

Loneliness/Isolation

Barker (2011) found that Black doctoral students in PWIs sometimes feel a sense of isolation and alienation. “Some doctoral students have also reported feeling invisible, isolated, and undervalued. These instances lead to Black students feeling as if they must over-perform or that their work quality is less than the work quality of Whites creating a sense of academic vulnerability” (p. 389). “Loneliness and isolation have been significant factors,” reports Andre, one of the participants who reported no role models and the ever-present need to prove himself. Although Andre observes that there are a number of Black women in doctoral study, Black men are a scarcity. “There are not a lot of brothers in my doctoral experience. I am the only Black male in a lot of my classes.” Andre admits that despite the absence of other Black male doctoral students, his interactions with women and some Whites have been very supportive, “I have met some good sisters who have jumped behind me. They have my back and want me to be successful. Although some White folks have been encouraging, it has been the sisters that have been really supportive.” Andre also reports that when he did encounter and interact with another Black male doctoral student, he misperceived an automatic connection, “Although there was another Black male in the program, I made the mistake of assuming we would connect.”

The literature on Black graduate students and their struggles with loneliness and isolation is well-documented. According to Patterson-Stewart et al., (1997) some scholars found that minority graduate students often feel alienated and isolated in their graduate schools and typically view themselves as being outside the mainstream of their academic programs.

Similar to Andre, Darryl reports in the extreme, “I’m still the only Black male in my program. I am not in a program with people who look like me.” Gay (2004) argues that Black graduate students, including Black doctorals, have the dubious distinction of being the sole Black or one of very few in both general courses and their areas of specialization. Many of these students feel physically isolated and excluded from the mainstream dynamics of graduate studies. They often do not feel like they are major players in the unfolding theater of their professional development. Darryl confirms, “Sometimes you just want to talk about whatever Black men talk about today. Something that is authentic to you and get that affirmation because you don’t really get it in the program.”

The ongoing struggle to fit in described by the participants in this study may result in alienation, despair, disenchantment, and disillusionment. Darryl reports, “Sometimes you might want to cry, but you don’t have time to cry. I knew I wasn’t going to quit. I just woke up every day and that was just the reality. I grew up in the projects, so the resiliency was already there.”

Research Concerns

People who pursue the PhD typically do so because they have an interest in conducting scholarly research. McGaskey (2015) found that Black doctoral students in education, social sciences, the sciences and mathematics publish less than their peers. While this is only one measure of research productivity, it does suggest that Blacks pursuing PhDs may not have the same opportunities to develop into researchers. This could have an influence on their graduate experience, completion rates, and future careers.

It is important to note that many Black doctoral students are interested in exploring research phenomena related to themselves. Gay (2004) explains that students of color are

interested in researching issues related to ethnic, racial, cultural and linguistic diversity in education. In confirmation with the current literature, half of the participants (Tracey, Rahiem, Tyrone, Shamaine, and Khadijah) reported struggles with research concerns in doctoral education. Khadijah reports, “I haven’t done any rigorous research. I’m a PhD student, mind you, and I don’t really have that experience.” Rahiem, who is interested in conducting research on young Black males, reports:

The kind of research that I am doing is ethnography and there is not a large appetite for this kind of research. People don’t think it is scientific enough especially for grants. I already know that getting my project funded may be much harder than the other researcher who is using a national database or research based on numbers. For me it is kind of for selfish reasons because I think that numbers only tell us where to begin looking. They tell us very little about what is going on. There is a lot of interest in the failure of Black students in mathematics. But again, the narrative to me seems to be established with the Coleman Report. A lot of students reinforce this sense that Black students live in poverty and don’t do well in math. But there is very little information in terms of what’s happening in schooling.

Tyrone, a veteran educator, reports that he typically receives negative responses about his research ideas:

When issues would come up regarding the directions which I wanted to pursue my research in, I would get responses that I needed to reconsider that direction because of I was not probably going to find adequate data related to those particular issues or those issues would not lend themselves to future publications - all related to participating in

things which had never been written about by other scholars, or not being clear or not being informed about how I was conceptualizing, relating all of those things to my own agenda. So, there was never really any interest in finding out what my motivations were, what I was thinking about long-term and how do I see these intersectionalities between my research agenda and the kinds of motivations that I had in mind relating to advancing in my research.

Tracey, who is interested in research on urban schools, reports, “I anticipate having the big ordeal of a lot of challenges when I finally sit for my dissertation proposal. I’m already experiencing the challenge of getting my professor on board with what I want to study.”

From his knowledge-base, Darryl informed that being a Black doctoral student and finding research buy-in requires navigation:

You have to learn how to play by the rules quickly. They are not just malicious rules but there’s rules around publishing and things that won’t get accepted – things that will be considered academic and things that are not considered academic. It can be a little discouraging, especially for minorities when you want to change the system.

Kim reports also being encouraged to learn how to ‘play by the rules’ of doctoral education. Although Kim reports that her advisor is very supportive, Kim recalls:

He often said that most people who look like me are generally interested in race related issues. He always comments that there are things that are going to help and hurt me because of my race. He advocated a little extra for me because he realized that I am a minority and also because of the field that I study.

Shamaine reports significant concerns about being a fourth-year doctoral student with little to no research experience in preparation for the professoriate:

It is kind of concerning. I do worry about that because I am a PhD and I feel like I don't know enough about research methods. I want to get into the field but I guess I just don't have that support in the research end. I have support for my dissertation, but I don't have the experience to be able to help others with research. So, I wouldn't be able to conduct research with faculty right out of college. I wouldn't want to do that anyway, but I just thought that I would have more research experience as a PhD student and that's why I pursued it instead of taking another practitioner based program. By taking the PhD program, I thought I would be a researcher, or I could call myself a researcher.

Advisors Issues

The relationship between the doctoral student and advisor is saliently imperative. Barnes & Austin (2009) found that the issue of advising in graduate education is particularly important because the relationship between doctoral students and their advisors has far-reaching implications and consequences for the advisee. For many, the advisor is thought to be one of the most important people with whom doctoral students will interact during their graduate degree program. One plausible explanation is that the department is the primary socialization agent at the doctoral level and the advisor is the principal interface between the student and the department therefore, advisors contribute to students' socialization, the quality of their doctoral experiences, and their post-graduate options largely by providing opportunities to attend and present at conferences, participate in research projects, and publish.

Two of the participants (Darryl and Kim) report favorable and productive working relationships with their White academic advisors. Darryl reports that while working with his advisor, “We wrote a grant together and I got like \$6,000 over the summer and I was able to teach and earned \$4,000.” Similarly, Kim, the 28-year-old Graduate Research Assistant, is enthusiastic about her relationship with her advisor and her work supervisor:

I definitely feel like my advisor and boss support my career aspirations. They encourage me to be competitive when I apply for professor jobs. My advisor (White male) is very active in sending me post-doc opportunities or other opportunities that will make me more competitive when the time comes to apply for a professorship. As a result of my relationship with my advisor, I have been able to publish two papers with my advisor and also work on various projects. My boss (White, female) has also been very encouraging. She has included me in a grants project, book chapters and on several other publications.

Conversely, Tyrone, reports that his first advisor passed away and his second advisor was woefully incompetent, “I think it was a mis-assignment because the person didn’t know anything about my topic. Also, he was not prepared to hold meetings that were scheduled to talk about my research agenda and framing my project, etc.” While Darryl’s and Kim’s experiences are ideal, Tyrone’s struggles with advisors is not unique. Barker (2011) found that faculty may not have the expertise on race-related subjects when working with students of color who are or may be studying race. Regardless of research interests, faculty may also be more inclined to choose a student that reminds the faculty member of himself or herself. Tyrone believes that although doctoral students are assigned advisors, his mismatch advisor struggles lead him to conclude and suggest:

When assigned to advisors, students of color - or any student for the matter - do not get the chance to pre-review the advisor's research history, ask questions about the fit between the prospective advisor and the student, nor even get a chance to have a pre-acceptance meeting or conversation before being assigned to the adviser. It's like one is "Sold Off" to the man (LOL!). The latter, which I think is extremely important in light of our racialized differences, is not a suggestion ever made by the program coordinator to the student about having an exploratory pre-commitment meeting. Nor is it also suggested to speak to the advisor's students to get a sense of the assigned students' relationship with the prospective advisor. Students need to be afforded the privilege of interviewing other graduate students or "scouting around" in order to be informed about the forced choice they've been given. This unilateral decision of advisor assignment, which still continues today, needs to be reviewed.

On the other hand, Andre reported a strong and productive relationship with his advisor/Dissertation Chair:

Having a Black male as the Chair of my dissertation committee has allowed me to bond, talk about issues pertaining to Black boys, and just talk about men stuff in general. My Dissertation Chair has provided invaluable insight into faculty careers, etc.

Tyrone's and Andre's advisor experiences vary according to advisor-matching. Taylor & Anthony (2000) in their study on the socialization of Black doctoral students found that data generally supports good outcomes when there is an advisor match by race and gender. They also suggest good outcomes for those not matched. The scholars argue that it is unreasonable to expect that every Black woman is going to bond with the sole

Black female faculty member. Black doctoral students who chose departments based on specific work being done by Black faculty reported particularly supportive relationships, primarily because of matched research interests.

As described in the current literature, faculty members are frequently cited as sources of helpful advice and professional direction. However, in their research on the experiences of Black doctoral students at an Ivy League Institution, Gasman, Hirschfeld & Vultaggio (2008) found that Black doctoral students received little guidance during doctoral study. When asked how she learns about faculty careers, Khadijah informs that as opposed to obtaining this information from her advisor:

I gained information about faculty careers by interacting with other faculty members. This is how I know about the experiences they go through. I also read about work done by faculty members. This makes me excited about being able to pursue research questions. I do feel like for a person of African descent there should be some more mentoring in place in order to navigate the unspoken process of pursuing a faculty position.

For the most part, most Black doctoral students tend to lean on their advisors to guide them and provide support (Hirschfeld & Vultaggio (2008). The findings of this study indicate that Black doctoral students need greater, more directed support to aid their persistence through the doctoral education on the pathway to the professoriate.

Resource Problems

The participants reported struggles to gain access to resources, support systems and the overall structure of doctoral education. Rahiem, who works several jobs while in doctoral study reports:

Getting a PhD seems to me a very middle-class thing to do. If you had kids going into this, it would be a terrible sacrifice. I mean who can live off \$17,000 a year? It's almost as if the school lets you into a PhD program which makes you feel special because you got selected over however many people have been rejected. But once you get in, there is reluctance to give you real support. It's almost as if you are getting mixed messages. If you really want me to do this thing, why not fund me based on what a living wage should be in this city. I have to adjunct four or five places. No one can live off of this. You can't even pay rent. Imagine if you have a family. It does not seem to be designed for regular folks who need an income. It seems to be designed for people who have a spouse that is wealthy or those who are still very young and do not have much responsibilities. The set-up at this university is not for people who need to work.

When asked about her knowledge of faculty careers and where she obtained that information, Shamaine reported, "I guess in the college experience, I've learned about the ranks of faculty just being a student. By pursuing more education, I've learned more about faculty and the dynamics and what roles faculty may have." Shamaine also informs that her struggle to obtain information is impactful and correctable:

I just think that social support for people of color is so important for them to be able to obtain higher education. I would recommend maybe a research center for people of color. A resource center for people with differences, people that might be homosexual,

just people with differences. I know they have clubs, but graduate students may not be able to be as engaged in this, so just having some sort of outlet, or some venue that graduate students or people with difficulties could go to and be engaged with their peers and have access to resources would be good. Hopefully, something like a resource center can support people of color and educate the institution about different groups of people.

Both Rahiem and Tyrone report being relatively clueless about what will happen to them once they earn their respective PhDs. Rahiem laments that he knows very little about faculty careers and where to gain this information:

I literally have no idea what is going to happen upon graduation. I do not remember any conversation about what to do with a PhD or what happens next. I don't think that the connection is made clearly enough for students. I think of a lot is being done in a bubble which is probably why some people are afraid to get out of the bubble because they have become comfortable in the bubble. It is not clear to me what it means to start looking for a job or when to start looking for a job. Where do you go? I don't think this is made clear enough. I started looking for full-time work on my own. I did not know I could get an assistant position as an All But Dissertation. I feel that knowledge of getting a job with a PhD is something everyone in a doctoral program should know.

Tyrone, an experienced academic with seven years in doctoral education, agrees with Rahiem but from a political perspective, "My ability to pursue a tenure-track position is going to be determined by, honestly, the political concerns and considerations that will exist at the time of me applying for a position." Tyrone also reports that he relies on resources largely external to his program to obtain information about doctoral education as well as the professoriate:

I'm in touch with a couple of consortiums of Black academics and Black doctoral students. I have networks with all kinds of friends, sisters, brothers, all over the country. And we are constantly in touch with each other about what's going on such as supportive people with information about faculty openings and that sort of thing. So, I'm very intimately connected with a host of people of color out there, both Black and Asian. And mostly Black, but a few Asians and a growing number who are also Hispanic.

Showing other Blacks how to earn a PhD is another emergent theme related to the resources and support struggles of the Black doctoral students in this study. Although the number of Black doctoral recipients continues to rise and the increase in the number of Blacks attaining PhDs has been met with growth in scholarly interest and inquiry in them as students (McGaskey, 2015), many of the participants in this study report that the process of obtaining the PhD is cumbersome at best. Khadijah confirms:

It's just difficult to navigate. How do you get there? How do you apply? How do you get finances for it? What do you do with it? There are some occupations that are more immediate that I could get a job in and support my family. But, if you don't know what a PhD does for you, it might be that you don't pursue it, or you might not know anyone else who has done it and might not know how it converts into a sustainable lifestyle or a way that you can support yourself and your family.

As reported by the participants above, navigating doctoral education may be challenging at a PWI. Miller & Stone (2011) assert that effective recruitment of graduate students of

color entails adequate support as well as detailed explanations of the social support programs provided by the graduate institution.

Chapter Summary

Roundabout Racism, Prove Pressure, and The Fit Factor are the three themes that emerged from this study. The Roundabout Racism theme describes how the participants experience colorblindness and covert racism during doctoral study. Participants reported subliminal microaggressions in and outside doctoral study. When the sole Black in the classroom, participants report that they are expected to be ‘the voice of color’ simply because they are Black. Participants report that doctoral education including the curriculum, result in feelings of marginalization since what is taught and how it is taught is accomplished from an exclusive, Eurocentric perspective. In addition to experiencing marginalization, the participants reported that they struggle with succumbing to stereotype threat during doctoral education.

The Prove Pressure theme emerged as a consequence of participants’ experiences with perceptions of having to prove their credibility and worthiness for doctoral education and the professoriate. Many of the participants reported feelings of impostorism – the persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud. Surprisingly, most participants embraced Prove Pressure by viewing themselves positively as current and future role models for aspiring Black doctoral students.

The Fit Factor theme described how the participants made meaning of their suitability for doctoral education and entry into the professoriate. Many participants reported their struggles to find ‘buy-in’ for research projects. Others reported frequent academic advisor/mismatching issues. In addition, accessibility to department/program resources and information was reported

as an ongoing participant concern. Thus, Roundabout Racism, Prove Pressure, and The Fit Factor expose that for the Black doctoral students in this study, the struggle is real.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe and explore the perceptions of Black doctoral students as they aspire to the professoriate. This chapter is organized into three parts. The first part summarizes the findings. The second part discusses the limitations and complications of this research project. The final part presents implications and suggestions for future research and practice. This research contributes to our knowledge of the experiences of Black doctoral experiences. The results of the study indicate that unlike their White counterparts, Black doctoral students face struggles with racism, pressure to prove themselves, and to fit into doctoral education and ultimately the professoriate. The Struggle is Real is the major premise that developed from this study. As a result, three themes emerged: Roundabout Racism, Prove Pressure, and The Fit Factor.

Findings Summary

The theme Roundabout Racism developed as a result of the ways in which the participants described the occurrence(s) of colorblindness, microaggressions, voice of color, stereotype threat, and marginalization during doctoral study. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) nearly half of all hate crimes are racially motivated and schools or college campuses are the third most common place for a hate crime (Owens et al., 2015). Although none of the participants reported overtly racist incidents, all participants perceived that while in doctoral study race-based comments and remarks, whether from faculty or students, relayed or implied racist messages or meanings.

In addition, as a consequence of the interview questions, the researcher found that most of the participants perceived themselves as being marginalized by the resources available to them

including textbooks and other program materials. The participants reported that their academic work is often hampered by a rigid Eurocentric paradigm. Also, participants reported that they acknowledge the ordinariness of racism in American life including doctoral education.

Pressure to represent the race as the ‘voice of color’ was frequently reported by the participants. While some participants openly challenged voice of color, some did not because for many of the participants, Roundabout Racism incidents, including being the voice of color, are considered par for the course (ordinary) in doctoral education.

The Prove Pressure theme described how participants reported consistent struggles with the need to prove their presence and credibility in doctoral study and in many instances, a career in the professoriate. Both Darryl and Rahiem reported being perceived as imposters or unicorns. Shamaine reported struggles with respect and the acknowledgement of her documented disability, while Khadijah struggles with proving that she belongs in doctoral study. Andre admits to a lifelong struggle of proving himself and doctoral education is no exception. Other participants reported struggling with assumptions that they are affirmative action students who really do not belong in doctoral education at all. These assumptions and pressures may hinder the credibility of Black doctoral students and may foster a sense of impostorism because from participants’ reports, the assumption is that Black doctoral students lack the academic merit to make it on their own. Consequently, Black doctoral students may often feel Prove Pressure to survive and thrive.

Unexpectedly, as the Prove Pressure theme emerged, so too did participants’ desire to serve as role models for other students of color as a means to dispel negative stereotypes about Blacks doctoral students aspiring to the professoriate. More than half of the participants studied reported that they either encountered a faculty member or teacher of color in the past, or that the

lack of Black faculty member(s) exposure inspired them to want to become faculty members themselves.

The Fit Factor theme emerged in four parts. The first part addressed how participants reported feelings of loneliness and isolation while in doctoral study. The second part, developed as a consequence of research-related issues such as lack of faculty interest in minority related topics, and opportunities for participants to conduct research in preparation for the professoriate. The third part addresses how participants perceive the mismatching of academic advisors. Although two of the eight participants gave high marks to their advisors, all other participants desire a better relationship with their current advisor, wish that they had the ability to directly select an advisor, or terminate their current advisor in favor of a more culturally competence and agreeable advisor. Lastly, the majority of the participants perceive a significant disconnect between themselves and program/departmental resources and information. While some participants report knowledge of faculty careers, most obtained this information external to their program and/or departments. Overall, for the doctoral students in this study fitting into doctoral education means being on your own socially and academically.

Theoretical Connections

This study connected three theoretical frameworks, CRT, symbolic interactionism, and self-efficacy theory. Newbury (2011) argues that there is a democratic element to inviting multiple perspectives, including theoretical perspectives, into the research process. Doing so may contribute to the procreant function of qualitative research by moving us out of ingrained practices towards alternative ways of being. It can sometimes even facilitate speaking and listening across seemingly incommensurable conceptual areas.

As an analytical framework, the CRT framework in higher education questions the persistence of racism and gendered racism in higher education and offers an approach that values the experiences of those voices least heard in many other educational frameworks. CRT has gained increasing scholarly interest as a tool to help educators understand how race and racism shape the educational pipeline. CRT also provides methodological tools to listen to the experiences of students of color and document how these often-marginalized students respond to and resist the racism pervading their college campus (Smith, Yosso & Solorzano, 2007).

The CRT tenets of ordinariness and counter-storytelling bring correlation about the racialized experiences of the participants in this study. The Roundabout Racism theme and its emergent subthemes – microaggressions, voice of color, stereotype threat, and marginalization emerged as racialized themes as reported by this study’s participants. The faculty discrimination complaint filed by Tracey; the allegation that Andre did not belong in his program; Rahiem’s admission that he must to be careful in what he says and does due to stereotype threat; and Shamaine’s and Khadijah’s perception that their Blackness makes them the automatic voice of color directly correlates with the CRT theoretical tenets of ordinariness and counter-storytelling. Gildersleeve et al., (2001) assert that doctoral education should be examined to account for power, resistance, and agency along racialized distinctions. CRT states this premise through its ‘voice’ and ‘ordinariness’ components as a way to communicate the experiences and realities of the oppressed. CRT theorist believe that social reality is constructed by the formulation and the exchange of stories about individual situations which serve as interpretive structures by which we impose order on experience(s) and it on us (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Herbert Blumer’s theory of symbolic interactionism and Alfred Bandera’s theory of self-efficacy are theoretically correlated through this study’s emergent themes of Prove Pressure and

The Fit Factor. Blumer (1969) states that symbolic interactionism rests on three premises: that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings of things have for them; that the meaning of such things derives from the social interaction one has with one's fellows; and that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process. Bandera's (1977) self-efficacy theory holds that self-efficacy beliefs determine cognitive processing, motivation, emotional arousal, and behavior.

In advisor mis-matching, the participants in this study reported low self-efficacy for the professoriate because of poor matching of advisors and subsequent research concerns. Tracey reported that although she is a PhD student, she has not had any opportunities for research. Tracy explained that she makes meaning (symbolic interactionism) of her lack of research opportunities as a salient deficiency of her ability (self-efficacy) to pursue a faculty position after graduation. Bandura (1977) argues that factors influencing the cognitive processing of efficacy information arise from enactive, vicarious, exhortative, and emotive sources. Khadijah, who reported high levels of confidence for doctoral education and the professoriate (self-efficacy), explained that her Blackness makes her feel (meaning-making) like an imposter. Khadijah's experience resonates with Bandura's (1977) theory that psychological procedures, whatever their form, alter the level and strength of self-efficacy. The combinations of the aforementioned theories allowed this research to take place with substantiation coming from the Black doctoral students' interview responses correlating with the themes.

Limitations

Although there are limitations, this study provides meaningful data that have implications for practice. When performing the data collection process for this research study, I used a

checklist to manage ethical constraints which proved to be beneficial because I was consistently reminded of my ethical responsibilities as a researcher. There were also limitations regarding participant's forthrightness as it relates to responding to some of the interview questions, particularly questions regarding the role of race in participants' academic programs due to varying levels of participants' comfortability. However, the first of the three participant interviews served as a valuable 'ice-breaker' which enabled participants to feel relaxed, comfortable, and forthcoming during the interview process.

Limitations of this study also included the participants' field of study, the social sciences including education. Although I had a disproportionate number of Black doctoral students in education in my sample, the typical Black faculty member in the academy is in education and social work. For example, 41.3 percent of all doctorates awarded to Blacks in 2004 were in the field of education. In contrast, only 19.1 percent of doctorates earned by Whites were in this field. This large percentage of Black doctorates in the field of education has been the case for decades with only minor fluctuations (Doctoral Degree, 2005). Even with these limitations, this study contributes to the literature about Black doctoral students on the pathway to the professoriate.

There may also be geographical and intuitional type limitations as well since the doctoral students in this study are located in the Mid-Atlantic. In addition, some of the doctoral students at the research site may not be seeking faculty posts unlike doctoral students at major research universities. Another point of nuance is universities' retreat from hiring more traditional faculty members with more adjuncts which then complicates faculty aspirations of hiring. Also, the issue of generalizability emerged more clearly during the research study.

This study's findings are limited since the study is site-specific and is a case about the perceptions of the Black doctoral students at a PWI. The uniqueness of the research site includes its rankings as one of the most diverse universities in the nation based on its diverse faculty and student population.

Implication for Practice

This research's results for higher education administration and leadership state some challenges for ensuring the success, graduation, and entry into the professoriate for Black doctoral students. The participants in this study are aware that contemporary racism takes place in covert, subliminal ways and that their interactions inside and outside their doctoral programs have an effect on how they come to feel about themselves, doctoral study, and their aspirations for the professoriate.

As I reflected on the interviews conducted in this study, the participants in some roundabout fashion had to navigate racialized incidents while still attempting to 'fit-in' and be collegial members of the doctoral community. Most participants reported experiencing microaggressions, stereotype threat, marginalization, and having to be the voice of color in doctoral education.

When reviewing the current research, I found little, if any, training requirements for higher education professionals who interact with doctoral students of color. However, it is reasonable to imply that to successfully educate, interact with, guide, and prepare Black doctoral students, higher education administrators and leaders should undergo anti-racism training prior to interactions with students of color, and especially Black doctoral students.

Advisor support and access to research opportunities for Black doctoral students has implications for higher education practice. Several participants reported very supportive and engaging relationships with their advisors. On the other hand, other participants reported adverse advisor experiences including lack of advisor accessibility and willingness to support or provide research opportunities. Participants also reported being clueless about what will happen to them once they earn their respective PhDs. Others reported that they do not have access to necessary resources and little, if any, research opportunities during their doctoral experience.

The current literature supports the critical role advisors play when interacting with Black doctoral students, particularly as it relates to resources and research opportunities. The favorable interactions with their advisors as reported by the participants in this study implies improvements in advisor relationships with Black doctoral students at PWIs. However, the negative data reported by Tyrone and Khadijah, specifically Tyrone's report of advisor mismatching has implications for the advisor selection process in doctoral education. Moreover, participants' report of issues with resources and research opportunities is unacceptable practice and has implications for how Black doctoral students become equipped for not only doctoral education, but also for preparation for the professoriate.

Based on this study's findings higher education administrators should address the issue of how to incorporate Black doctoral students into the mainstream research preparation. Administrators should find ways for faculty to be appreciative and sensitive to the experiences of Black doctoral students. It is anticipated that the findings from this study will motivate and encourage further research and extend my findings.

Institutional and Policy Recommendations

This research project concurs with Hiraldo's (2010) recommendation to incorporate critical race perspectives in daily practices within education. Doing so may promote awareness about the role of race in producing racial inequities. Consequently, doctoral students, faculty and staff may become be aware of the rooted racism in educational settings and acknowledge the systemic complexities and nuances that further disadvantage students of color. Patton et al., (2007) argue that a critical race lens should also be demonstrated in the preparation of new professionals to help them understand the complex dynamics of how race is constructed and enacted to grant agency to one group while disadvantaging and stifling the progress of another.

Higher education should enact a mandatory cultural competency training policy to ensure all faculty, staff, students and leaders possess and exhibit the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultures. Culturally competent training will provide instruction on how to become aware of one's own cultural bias(s) and worldview, as well as dispositions/attitudes toward cultural differences. This training should also include definitions, examples, and conflict resolutions about microaggressions as they occur throughout higher education.

Instituting a cultural competency training policy will also serve as an information toolkit for not only cultural competency, but hopefully the development of cultural responsive teaching in higher education. For faculty, Patterson-Stewart et al., (1997) argue that at PWIs, faculty members should be sensitive to how the false perceptions or discordant communications about the abilities of Black students might have a negative influence on the self-appraisal and self-esteem of those students. For example, when criticizing the performance of Black doctoral students, it is critical for the White faculty member to (a) clearly identify the areas of concern;

(b) make definitive and objective statements about how the student can improve his or her performance, rather than general statements about the student's inability to perform.

Since many of the participants in this study report being the sole Black doctoral student in their class and/or program, it is recommended that the university revisit its recruitment and selection efforts of Black PhD students. Taylor & Anthony (2000) found that to increase the number of minority applicants for faculty positions, some departments have embarked on efforts to improve graduate school access, retention, and completion. Such reforms, however, have generally lacked a strong theoretic framework and have sometimes resulted in piecemeal efforts. To increase the recruitment and selection of Black doctoral students, it is recommended that the university take action to recruit Black doctoral students from HBCUs since there exists disproportionate numbers of Black doctoral students and graduates from these institutions. It is also recommended that PWIs advertise PhD program offerings in journals that target Black students such as *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, etc.

Instituting policies for the early recruitment of Black PhD students is also recommended. Miller & Stone (2011) assert that early recruitment for Black PhD students may prove very effective in fully utilizing the potential of future scholars and practitioners. The effective recruitment of graduate students of color entails adequate preadmission support as well as detailed explanations of the application process and formal financial and social support programs provided by the graduate institution. Another approach that may be helpful is to have successful doctoral graduates (those who have secured an academic position) provide a question-and-answer presentation about their experience to current students who are interested in pursuing faculty careers.

Recommendations for Future Research

Many of the participants in this study reported a sense of disconnect, loneliness, isolation, and a lack of transparency about what is available to doctoral students and how they access certain information. Sometimes it is useful to have a resource just so doctoral students can get through the paperwork. The establishment of a Black Doctoral Resource Center would serve as one central space, regardless of doctoral status, where students will have access to information, networking opportunities, and fellowship with their peers. The center should incorporate dialogues on race, resources, and research while also serving as space where Black doctoral students can meet and in some cases, retreat from hostile campus racial climates, and microaggressions (Patton, 2007).

Advisor-matching is another important area recommended for further research. The participants in this study reported that they have no ‘say so’ in the selection of their academic and/or intellectual advisor. According to Tyrone, “You get sold off to the Man!” Thus, the process of matching a Black doctoral student to a randomly selected advisor in a program may be problematic at best since it is no secret that White doctoral students and faculty members are disproportionately represented in doctoral education.

Further research on advisor mismatching is also recommended. Gay (2004) asserts that while some White advisors readily admit that they do not have any expertise or knowledge of the scholarship in minority research areas, many professors are aware of the mechanics of writing that are generalizable across topics that can be taught to students. However, they often fail to utilize these knowledge and skills. Instead, some students are often left to their own devices to struggle through the writing process. Gay (2004) also found that in some cases their efforts are met with stark criticisms such as: your research is not scholarly enough; you don't have

sufficient empirical evidence to support your claims; you're engaging in personal, passionate and/or subjective storytelling instead of providing data and objective analyses; or you tend to dwell too much on racial, cultural, and ethnic differences. Gay's assessment is confirmed by the participants in this study because as has been reported, some Black PhD students are advised to reconsider their research choices since their significance is suspect. Thus, their research interests are marginalized, demeaned or invalidated.

Further research on the relationship between Black doctoral students and academic/intellectual advisors may serve to promote the establishment of an Advisor-Matching System in doctoral education. Properly matched faculty advisors may look for opportunities for their Black doctoral students to engage in research projects. "A PhD is a research degree, and there is little argument that doctoral recipients should be trained to conduct sound, rigorous research" (Austin & Wulff, 2004, p. 23). Moreover, Barker (2011) argues, "Increasing the level of engagement between the Black doctoral students' and others in the program may, in turn, decrease the level of isolation or surveillance felt by the student (p. 394).

The implementation of role modeling as a faculty member service responsibility is also recommended. In addition to teaching and research, it is recommended that as opposed to service on a host of committees, faculty, and faculty members of color in particular, should serve as role models/mentors for Black doctor students.

This research study found that racism and the meaning-making of program interactions has an influence on how Black doctoral students perceive themselves as they struggle along the pathway to the professoriate. It was shown that Roundabout Racism in and outside the doctoral classroom tended to influence how Black doctoral students experience and navigate racism during doctoral study. There was a direct link between participants' perceptions of struggling to

prove themselves fit for doctoral education and the resulting desire to become role models for other students of color. The struggle for engaging advisors, research opportunities, and access to program and/or departmental resources was also evident as a consequence of this research. The Black doctoral students in this study expressed their real struggles in doctoral education as they seek to join the academy. This study did not attempt to answer or examine if these experiences contribute to the Black Faculty Gap. Instead, this research focused on how these experiences affected the participants desire to complete doctoral study as they aspire to the professoriate.

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Press.

APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: **The Struggle is Real: Black Doctoral Students' Perception Aspiring to the Professoriate**

Principal Investigator & Advisor: James Earl Davis 215-204-2002

jedavis@temple.edu

1. **Purpose the Study:** The purpose of this research is to examine the experiences of Black doctoral students. This study will focus on how Black doctoral students perceive self-efficacy, the role of race in their academic program, and how they make meaning of their doctoral experiences on the pathway to entering the professoriate.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** Your participation in this research will consist of three 60 minute interviews. Interviews will begin during the summer II semester of 2016 and continue through the fall 2016 semester. During the interviews the participant will be asked a series of questions to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. The later part of the interview allows participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them. The interview will be audio recorded for the purpose of making a transcript.
3. **Discomforts and Risks:** The study contents deal with issues that are sensitive. Participants in this study are being asked to discuss and analyze their feelings towards themselves, others, and the role race in their doctoral experience. As a participant you may feel uncomfortable about answering some of the interview questions. To minimize risks, you may elect not to answer any question that you may feel uneasy about and remain a study participant. You can withdraw from the study at any time or choose not to share your views. Although no personal identifiers or names will be used, there is a possibility that you could be recognized by your comments.
4. **Benefits:** Your participation in this research study is wholly voluntary. However, your participation will result in increasing the body of research that is lacking. Information obtained may lead to changes and more awareness of issues faced by Black doctoral students. The findings will also inform the body of higher education that changes are necessary to increase Black faculty representation in higher education.
5. **Use of Data:** The information provided in this study may be used for scholarly presentation/publication, institutional reports and instructional material. Direct quotations of what you say in connection with this study is used for publishing purposes and will not be in any way associated with you or any likeness of you. If withdrawal from the study takes place, any files pertaining to this study will be destroyed.

6. **Confidentiality:** Any information in connection with the study that is identifiable by and with you will remain confidential and disclosure will take place only with your permission or as the law requires. Your name will not be used in the data. Efforts will be taken to ensure your confidentiality as a participant in this study. Interview tapes will be stored in a locked file at 652 Ritter Annex, 1801 Cecil B. Moore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA. The tapes will be stored for 7 years and be destroyed in the year 2023. Only the investigator will have access to the tapes.

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** As a participant in this study, you have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. All questions should be directed to:

Shay Scott 407-879-0255

Sharron.scott@temple.edu

Dr. James Earl Davis (Advisor) 215-204-2003

jedavis@temple.edu

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study.

If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

I have read and understand the procedures described in this “Consent to Participate in Research” and it is agreed that I will participate fully in this study.

Participant

Signature and Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

Researcher

Signature and Date

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPATION LETTER

Date

Invitee Name
Address One
City, State, Zip

Re: Invitation to Participate in a Study dealing with Black Doctoral Students'
Perceptions Aspiring the Professoriate

Dear Participant:

My name is Shay Scott and I am a doctoral candidate at Temple University. I am conducting a study as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership with a Higher Education concentration and I am inviting you to participate. I am studying the perceptions of Black doctoral students on the pathway to the professoriate at a four-year research university.

The following represents the criteria for this study:

1. Identify as Black or African American
2. Be currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program in the social sciences, including education
3. Be considering a career in the professoriate

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a three interviews about your experiences involving your educational background, self-efficacy, the role of race in your academic program, and the ways in which you make meaning of your doctoral educational experience. Interviews will take place at a designated location and should last about one hour (60 minutes) each.

Any information shared with me is for the purposes of research/evaluation only. You will not be identified by name on any of the material gathered and studied that is part of this project. In addition, your name will not be used in any published or public reports. Taking part in this study is your decision and I will be pleased to answer any questions that you have about the study. **If you would like to participate, please contact me at sharron.scott@temple.edu or by phone 407-879-0255.** If you have any questions please contact me or my dissertation chair, Dr. James Earl Davis jedavis@temple.edu or 215-204-2003.

Thank you for your consideration.

Warm regards,

Shay Scott, M.Ed., Ed.S.
Temple University

APPENDIX C
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

This demographic questionnaire pertains to the dissertation research study, *The Struggle is Real: Black Doctoral Students Perceptions Aspiring to the Professoriate*.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please contact the researcher Shay Scott at tuf61440@temple.edu

The Professoriate:

Have you or are you considering a career as a faculty member?

Yes _____

No _____

Maybe _____

Age:

What is your age? _____

Sex:

What is your sex? (Circle one)

- Male • Female • Non-conforming

Race/ethnicity:

How do you describe yourself? (please circle the one option that best describes you)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Black or African American | • Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander |
| • Asian or Asian American | • American Indian or Alaska Native |
| • Hispanic or Latino | • Non-Hispanic White |

Doctoral Status:

Are you a currently enrolled Doctoral Student/Candidate? If so, are you full-time or part-time student? (Please check all that apply)

I am full-time doctoral student _____ I am a part-time doctoral student _____

I am full-time doctoral candidate _____ No, I am not a doctoral student _____

I am a part-time doctoral candidate _____

Doctoral Program:

In what doctoral program are you enrolled?

Area of Concentration:

What is your area of concentration in your doctoral program?

Time In Program:

What year are you in your doctoral program? (check one).

1ST year _____ 2nd yr _____ 3rd yr _____ 4th yr _____ 5th yr _____ 6th yr _____ 7+ yr _____

Comprehensive Exams:

Have you completed your comprehensive/preliminary exams? If so when?

Yes _____ Month & Year Completed _____

No _____

Doctoral Candidacy:

Have you reached doctoral candidacy? If so, when?

Yes _____ Month & Year _____ No _____

Graduation Date:

What is your anticipated doctoral graduation date?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW #1 – QUESTIONS

Title of Project: The Struggle is Real: Black Doctoral Students' Perception Aspiring to the Professoriate

Principal Investigator & Advisor: James Earl Davis 215-204-2002 jedavis@temple.edu

1. Tell me about your educational background from primary school to present.
2. Tell me what factors led you to study at this university?
3. Are you a first-generation college student? If you are tell me how and why you chose to pursue college credentials?
4. Will you be the first in your family to earn a PhD? If so, how does this feel?
5. Why are you pursuing a PhD at this particular time?
6. Is this your first doctoral program? Have you considered transferring to another program? If so, why? Why not?
7. Do you have a PhD role model (s)? If so, tell me more about this person or persons. How did they impact your academic aspirations?
8. Who supports you in your doctoral study? How is this support offered? How do you benefit from this support?
9. What does earning a PhD mean to you? How will earning a PhD impact your life?
10. What else about your background would you like to share at this time?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW #2 QUESTIONS

Title of Project: **The Struggle is Real: Black Doctoral Students' Perception Aspiring to the Professoriate**

Principal Investigator & Advisor: James Earl Davis 215-204-2002 jedavis@temple.edu

1. Tell me, what it is like being a doctoral student at your institution?
2. Tell me, how you are treated by your peers and professors?
3. Have you had an opportunity to work with a faculty member on research projects? If not, why?
4. Tell me about your relationship experiences in your doctoral program?
5. Are you considering a career as a college or university professor? Why, why not?
6. What do you know about faculty careers and where did you gain this information?
7. Do you believe you have the ability to become a faculty member? Why, why not?
8. Tell me what careers you believe you are best suited for? Why?
9. Do you feel confident in your abilities? Why, why not?
10. In what ways has your student experience been influenced by your being a Black doctoral student?
11. What role did your race play in your decision to pursue a faculty position?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW #3 QUESTIONS

Title of Project: **The Struggle is Real: Black Doctoral Students' Perception Aspiring to the Professoriate**

Principal Investigator & Advisor: James Earl Davis 215-204-2002 jedavis@temple.edu

1. As a part of the ongoing consent process for this research, do you give your permission to participate and have this interview recorded as a part of this research project?
2. Please allow me to present you with a transcript of your previous two interviews. Is there anything in the transcripts that you would like to add or delete?
3. Do you have any questions or concerns for me regarding any aspect of this research project?

APPENDIX G

FIELD NOTES

Date: _____ Participant # _____

Descriptive Notes

Reflective Notes

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