

**DISAPPOINTED BUT NOT SURPRISED: A CRITICAL NARRATIVE
INQUIRY OF BLACK WOMEN'S DOCTORAL EXPERIENCES IN
AGRICULTURAL AND LIFE SCIENCE DISCIPLINES**

by

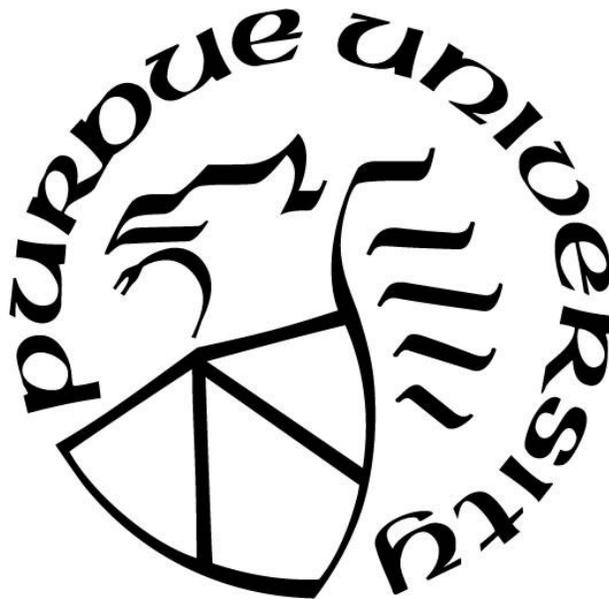
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For my Ma.

For my Nana.

For Aunt Felicia & Aunt Brenda.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	9
LIST OF FIGURES	10
ABSTRACT	11
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	12
1.1 Chapter Overview	12
1.2 Introduction	13
1.3 Black Women in Graduate Education	14
1.3.1 Barriers to Black Women’s Persistence and Retention in Graduate Education	15
1.3.2 Black Students in Agriculture and Life Sciences Education	17
1.4 Black Women’s Gendered, Racialized Experiences	19
1.5 Problem Statement	20
1.6 Significance	21
1.7 Purpose	22
1.8 Research Questions	22
1.9 Assumptions	23
1.10 Limitations	23
1.11 Definition of Terms	24
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	28
2.1 Chapter Overview	28
2.2 Literature Review Methodology	28
2.3 Purpose of the Study	28
2.4 Research Questions	29
2.5 Black Women in Graduate Education	29
2.6 Opportunities in AgLS	30
2.7 Barriers to Black Students’ Engagement in Agricultural and Life Sciences	31
2.8 Barriers Affecting Black Women’s Retention and Persistence at Historically White Institutions	34
2.8.1 Perceived Negative Campus Climate	34
2.8.2 Gendered Racial Microaggressions	38

2.8.3 Inadequate Mentoring	43
2.8.4 Lack of Sense of Belonging	48
2.8.5 Outsider-Within Status	50
2.9 Conceptual Framework	54
2.9.1 Intersectionality	54
2.10 Theoretical Perspective	60
2.10.1 Critical Theory	60
2.10.2 Critical Race Theory	62
2.10.3 Critical Race Feminism	64
2.11 Importance of Storytelling	65
2.12 Need for the Study	67
2.13 Chapter Summary	68
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY	70
3.1 Chapter Overview	70
3.2 Purpose of the Study	70
3.3 Research Questions	70
3.4 Qualitative Methodology	71
3.4.1 Critical Qualitative Methodology	71
3.4.2 Emancipatory Research	72
3.5 Narrative Inquiry	73
3.5.1 Narrative Inquiry in Educational Research	75
3.5.2 Critical Narrative Inquiry	76
3.6 Data Collection	79
3.6.1 Student Demographics in AgLS Graduate Programs	79
3.6.2 Study Participants	87
3.6.3 Data Collection Methods	89
3.7 Data Analysis	93
3.8 Trustworthiness of the Study	96
3.9 Role of the Researcher	97
3.10 The Researcher as the Instrument	99
3.11 Limitations	100

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS	102
4.1 Chapter Overview.....	102
4.2 Purpose of the Study.....	102
4.3 Research Questions	102
4.4 Participant Information.....	103
4.5 Participant Narratives	104
4.6 Theme 1: “I Don’t Know What I Don’t Know”: 1 st Generation Students Navigating Imposter Syndrome and the Hidden Curriculum	117
4.6.1 Navigating the Hidden Curriculum.....	118
4.6.2 Feeling Like an Imposter	120
4.7 Theme 2: Department Climate: Chilly	122
4.7.1 Power, Politics, and Gossip	130
4.7.2 Classroom Experiences	137
4.7.3 Peer Relationships.....	140
4.8 Theme 3: Mentoring and Advising	149
4.8.2 Department Dan	151
4.8.3 Department Diane	157
4.8.4 Black Representation	159
4.8.5 Green Faculty.....	162
4.9 Theme 4: Diary of a Mad Black Woman	165
4.10 Theme 5: It Takes a Village: Faith, Family, and Friends.....	168
4.11 Theme 6: When I Grow Up... ..	171
4.12 Chapter Summary.....	176
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS	178
5.1 Chapter Overview.....	178
5.2 Purpose of the Study.....	178
5.3 Research Questions	178
5.4 Conclusions of the Study.....	179
5.5 Conclusion 1: Role of First-Generation Status on Imposter Syndrome	179
5.6 Conclusion 2: Minimization and Silencing of Black Women through the Angry Black Woman Stereotype	181

5.7 Conclusion 3: Inclusive and Exclusionary Practices Shape Departmental Climate, Campus Climate, and Sense of Belonging	183
5.8 Conclusion 4: Normalization of Whiteness within a Department.....	186
5.9 Implications for Theory.....	188
5.10 Critical Race Feminism	189
5.11 Intersectionality	192
5.12 Implications for Practice.....	196
5.13 Implications for Policy	201
5.14 Recommendations for Research	203
REFERENCES	207
APPENDIX A. IRB APPROVAL	237
APPENDIX B. EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS.....	238
APPENDIX C. RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM	239
APPENDIX D. STUDENT INFORMATION FORM	242
APPENDIX E. PERSONAL NARRATIVE PROMPT	244
APPENDIX F. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL I.....	245
APPENDIX G. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2.....	247
APPENDIX H. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 3.....	249
VITA.....	251

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 The Three Dimensional Space Narrative Structure	74
Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants	103

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 AgLS Doctoral Degrees Awarded to Women by Race/Ethnicity, 2012-2016.....	18
Figure 1.2 AgLS Doctoral Degrees Awarded to Males by Race/Ethnicity, 2012-2016.....	19
Figure 3.1 bhu AgLS Graduate Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2014-2018.....	80
Figure 3.2 bhu Enrollment of Black Women AgLS Graduate Students, 2014-2018	81
Figure 3.3 HCU AgLS Graduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2014-2018	82
Figure 3.4 HCU Enrollment of Black Women AgLS Graduate Students, 2014-2018.....	82
Figure 3.5 LKU AgLS Graduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2015-2018.....	84
Figure 3.6 KCU Enrollment of Black Women AgLS Graduate Students, 2015-2018.....	84
Figure 3.7 LBU AgLS Graduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2014-2018.....	86
Figure 3.8 LBU Enrollment of Black Women AgLS Graduate Students, 2014-2018	86
Figure 3.9 Doctoral Student Development Model.....	92

ABSTRACT

Although institutions of higher education have been increasing efforts to recruit and retain Black women graduate students, Black women are still low in numbers in graduate programs. Black women have experienced decades of socio-historical challenges that impact their persistence and resistance in graduate education, with the most common being inadequate mentoring, poor socialization, perceived negative campus climate, gendered racial microaggressions, outsider-within status, and a diminished sense of belonging. The hostile climate and culture combined with the overwhelming whiteness of agriculture and life sciences (AgLS) sends a message to Black women that they do not belong in AgLS and perpetuates white supremacy.

The purpose of this study was to describe how intersecting marginalized identities shape the experiences of Black women doctoral students in AgLS disciplines at Historically White Institutions (HWIs), and how those experiences shape their journey into or away from the professoriate. Two theoretical perspectives informed the study: Critical Race Feminism and Intersectionality. Three rounds of interviews were conducted via Zoom or in person with six Black women doctoral candidates in AgLS disciplines at HWIs. Initial, simultaneous, and narrative coding were used to analyze the data. There were four conclusions for the study. First, first-generation college and/or doctoral student status negatively impacted study participants' experiences in navigating imposter syndrome. Furthermore, doctoral student-advisor relationships were also linked to imposter syndrome. Second, study participants were minimized and silenced due to attempting to avoid the Angry Black Woman stereotype. Third, departmental climate, campus climate, and sense of belonging are shaped by inclusive and/or exclusionary practices experienced in the academic environment. Finally, the normalization of whiteness negatively shapes campus and departmental climate, and thusly sense of belonging. Implications for practice, policy, and research were provided, as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Around the time I was starting to solidify the topic for my dissertation, I went on a cultural history retreat with the Black Cultural Center to learn about the culture and history of New Orleans, Louisiana. The overall theme of the weekend was race, space, and place. W.E.B. DuBois stated that art “shall be by us, for us, about us, near us.” (Omodele, 2002, p. 55), and I consider narrative research and storytelling to be an art form. One’s story must be treated delicately and told with intention. The first day of the retreat, we were told to consider the following: Who is telling our story? How is it being told? How do you maintain space when your face is being erased? Do you know yourself? As we learned about the history of colonization, slavery, culture, and resistance in New Orleans, I continued to keep the DuBois statement and questions posed by the facilitators in the back of my mind. Following the retreat, race, space, place, and story continued to surface in my readings. Through my research, I want to center and amplify the voices of Black women in spaces where we are often unheard and silenced. By doing so, faculty, staff, and administrators can learn how to better support, uplift, and educate Black doctoral women. I also hope to learn more about myself through this process. Knowing myself will help me to see myself in my participants, our differences, and a deeper understanding of the ways in which we negotiate space, place, and privilege.

1.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I will use existing literature to describe the state of Black women in U.S. higher education by discussing their persistence and retention in graduate education, doctoral programs, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)-based Agricultural and Life Sciences (AgLS) post-secondary education. To further describe how Black women are

situated within graduate education, I will discuss Black women's ethnic and gender identity and how it influences Black women's experiences as they matriculate through their doctoral programs. Additionally, I will outline the purpose of this study, the research questions, and address the significance of the study and its implications for theory and practice. I will conclude with a list of definitions used throughout the study.

1.2 Introduction

Black women are severely underrepresented at all levels of higher education due to a myriad of reasons, such as inequitable treatment, practices, and policies as a result of their position in society (Allen & Butler, 2014; Kelly & Fetridge, 2012; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2017c), in 2015, Black women represented 3% of full-time faculty nationwide. A disaggregation by rank shows Black women represent 3% of Lecturers, 5% of Instructors, 4% of Assistant Professors, 3% of Associate Professors, and 3% of Professors (NCES, 2017c). Further, Black women are more likely to hold positions as adjunct professors, lecturers, or other non-tenured positions (Croom, 2017; Gregory, 2001; Zambrana et al., 2016). This trend has been consistent over the past 30 years, revealing a continued marginalization of Black women in academia (Croom, 2017). As a result, Black women are left with the choice of leaving the academy for careers in education or industry, or staying in an environment where they are "othered:" treated like outcasts, experience isolation, and feel unwelcome (Villalpando & Bernal, 2002; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Turner, González, & Wood, 2008).

1.3 Black Women in Graduate Education

Although institutions of higher education have been increasing efforts to recruit and retain Black women graduate students (Hodari, Ong, & Katchchaf, 2014), Black women are still low in numbers within graduate programs. Black women have experienced decades of socio-historical challenges that have impeded their success in graduate programs, such as isolation and exclusion from white peers, feelings of uncertainty, and disparities in workload. As Black women experience these challenges, they are presumed incompetent by white faculty and peers (Grant & Cleaver Simmons, 2008). The overrepresentation of whiteness within an institution and academic department reinforces the norm that Black women do not belong (Anderson, 2015). The underrepresentation of Black women in graduate education is a vicious cycle. Prospective Black women have reported the lack of Black women faculty as a deterrent to enrolling in a graduate program at an institution (Croom & Patton, 2011). Black women do not and cannot see themselves as a part of the institution; as a result, many do not go on to pursue graduate degrees.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), (2017b) between 2005-2015, the total number of post-secondary degrees conferred increased across all degree levels across all race/ethnicities, with the exception of American Indian/Alaska Native students. Overall, more graduate degrees were conferred to women than men (NCES, 2017b). In fact, in 2016, women earned 57.4% of master's and 52.1% of doctoral degrees (Okahana & Zhou, 2017). Concerning race, in 2015, Black students earned 13.6% of master's degrees and 6.2% of doctoral degrees (NCESb, 2017). While Black students made up 12.4% of graduate students, they were severely underrepresented in several fields and only accounted for 5.8% in biological and earth sciences (Okahana & Zhou, 2017). In 2015, Black women earned 15.3% and 10.3% of all degrees conferred at the master's and doctoral levels, respectively (NCES, 2017b).

1.3.1 Barriers to Black Women's Persistence and Retention in Graduate Education

There are a number of barriers that impact Black women's persistence and retention in graduate education, with the most common being inadequate mentoring, poor socialization, perceived negative campus climate, gendered racial microaggressions, and lack of sense of belonging. For example, current literature indicates Black women graduate students are successful when provided with thoughtful and effective mentoring (Alcocer & Martinez, 2017; Bertrand Jones, Osborne-Lampkin, Patterson, & Davis, 2015; Ferguson, 2014; McGee & Bentley, 2017; Patton, 2009; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Black women often experience invisibility, social and academic exclusion within their academic departments, and a lack of Black women faculty and staff to serve as advisors and/or mentors (Holmes, Land & Hinton-Hudson, 2007; hooks, 1989; Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013; Patton, 2009). The lack of willing and available mentors causes a lack of sufficient guidance through a graduate program, as well as socialization into the department, discipline, and general campus. As a result, Black women struggle to adjust into the graduate program, which can negatively influence their retention and persistence.

Poor socialization has also been cited as a barrier to Black women's retention and persistence. Socialization has been defined as the "process by which newcomers learn the encoded system of behavior specific to their area of expertise and the system of meanings and values attached to these behaviors" (Taylor & Antony, 2000, p. 186). Research indicates Black women doctoral students often experience isolation in departments where they are the only person of Color, (Davis, 2008; Jean-Marie & Brooks, 2011), lack of or nonexistent access to mentors and networks (Jones et al., 2013; Tuitt, 2010), and lack of or nonexistent advising and guidance through the doctoral program (Davis-Maye & Jones, 2013; Jones et al., 2013; Patton & Harper, 2003). In sum, a lack of socialization among Black women graduate students result in

insecurity, doubt, and isolation, thus leading them to leave a graduate program, or worse, the institution.

Perceived negative campus climate can act as a barrier to retention and persistence among Black women graduate students. Campus climate refers to the “current common patterns of important dimensions of organizational life or its members’ perceptions of attitudes towards those dimensions” (Peterson & Spencer, 1990, p. 173). Many Black women have described their campus climates as “chilly,” hostile, uncomfortable, as well as feeling unwelcome from peers and faculty (Nugent, Childs, Jones, & Cook, 2004). Further, feeling unwelcome coupled with being the sole Black woman or Black student in class results in difficulties establishing relationships with peers and faculty (Nugent, et al., 2004; Patterson-Stephens, Lane, & Vital, 2017). Subsequently, Black women doctoral students experience a lack of sense of belonging, isolation, and high stress levels, which can serve as a hurdle to Black women’s progression in a graduate program.

Gendered racial microaggressions have been recognized as a hindrance to retention and persistence (Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Browne Hunt, 2013; Lewis, Williams, Peppers, Gadson, 2017). Gendered racial microaggressions are defined as the subtle and everyday nonverbal, verbal, behavioral, and environmental expressions of oppression due to the intersection of one’s race and gender (Lewis et al., 2013). Gendered racial microaggressions are manifested in four major themes: 1) assumptions of beauty and sexual objectification, 2) silenced and marginalized, 3) strong Black woman stereotype, and 4) angry Black woman stereotype (Lewis & Neville, 2015). These microaggressions are unique to Black women and have been associated with increased psychological distress, greater depressive symptoms, and lower social self-esteem (Szymanski, & Lewis, 2016). Further, gendered racial microaggressions negatively

impact Black women's ability to forge relationships with faculty, staff, and potential mentors, which could result in early departure from their graduate program.

A lack of sense of belonging has been identified as a barrier to retention and persistence. Sense of belonging is defined as belonging as a basic human need, and is characterized by perceived social support, a feeling of connectedness, and a feeling of mattering (Strayhorn, 2012a). Faculty and faculty advisors help students cultivate a feeling of connectedness within their department through networking, engaging in scholarly discussions, and providing knowledge about the unwritten rules of the department (Curtin, Stewart, & Ostrove, 2013; Gerholm, 1990; Lovitts, 2001). Further, when students have a feeling of connectedness with their peers, they reported a stronger bond with the campus community (Sidelinger, Bolen, Frisby, & McCullen, 2011). Black women graduate students are more likely to persist to graduation when they are well connected to their department, classroom, and campus community (Kay, Summers, & Svinicki, 2011; Lovitts, 2001; Strayhorn, 2012a). In sum, despite over 30 years of research providing strategies and recommendations, current research indicates Black women graduate students still experience systemic barriers to their retention and persistence, revealing continued marginalization of Black women in higher education.

1.3.2 Black Students in Agriculture and Life Sciences Education

Colleges of agriculture offer a number of STEM-related majors connected to the STEM disciplines, such as agricultural engineering, agricultural economics, food and nutrition, and natural resources and ecology (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015). Research indicates that the lack of URM students in STEM-based AgLS disciplines is similar to the lack of URM students in STEM disciplines (Esters & Knobloch, 2012; STEM Food & Ag Council, 2014). Further, AgLS disciplines continue to be very white, male-dominated and male-centered fields (Figure 1.2).

Factors that contribute to the broken STEM pipeline include, but are not limited to, gender and racial discrimination and harassment (Ceci, Williams, & Barnett, 2009; Rosser, 2006; Xie & Shauman, 2005). Black students' negative perceptions of agriculture due to the historical positions of Black people during and after slavery is characterized by racism, poor working conditions, and low prestige (Beck & Swanson, 2003; Jones, 1997). Further, the perception of agriculture is of unwelcome, oppression, and low wages (Beck & Swanson, 2003). Among Black women's engagement in AgLS, research indicates Black women receive a small percentage of doctoral degrees awarded (NSF, 1996). In fact, in 2016, of the 6,199 women who earned a doctorate in an AgLS discipline, only 25 were Black women (NCSES, 2017) (Figure 1.1).

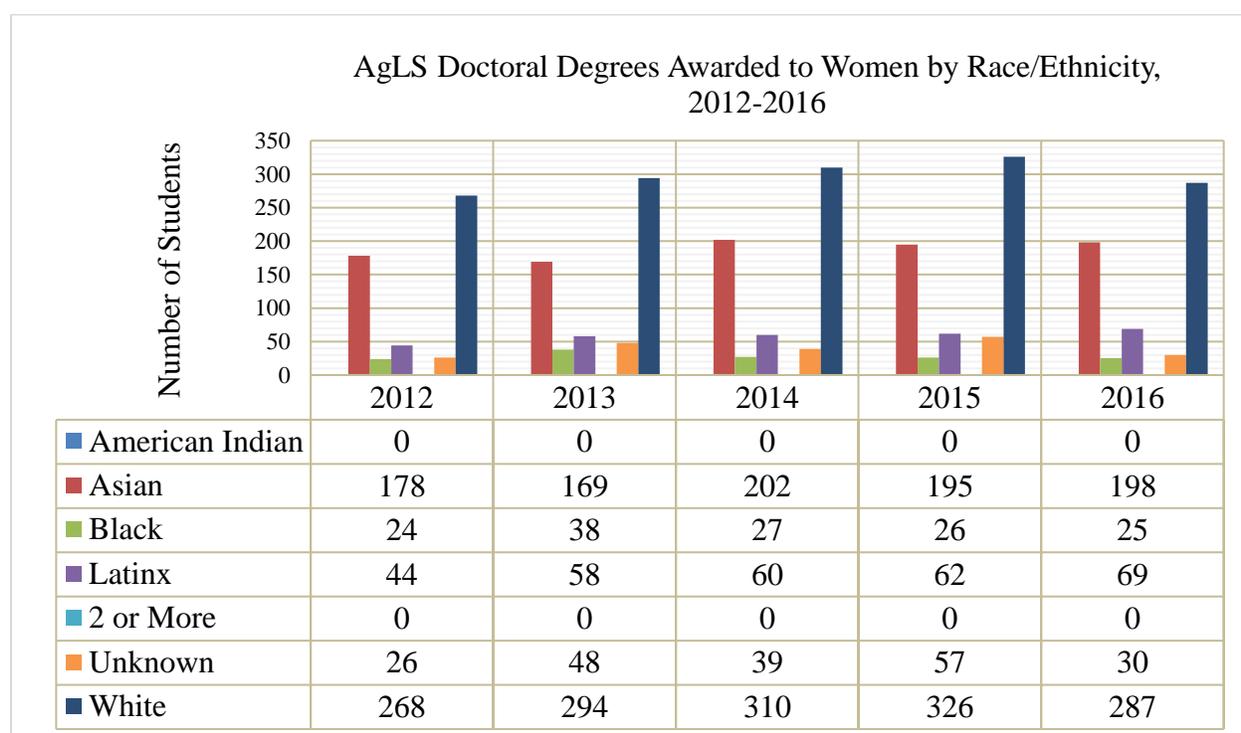


Figure 1.1 AgLS Doctoral Degrees Awarded to Women by Race/Ethnicity, 2012-2016

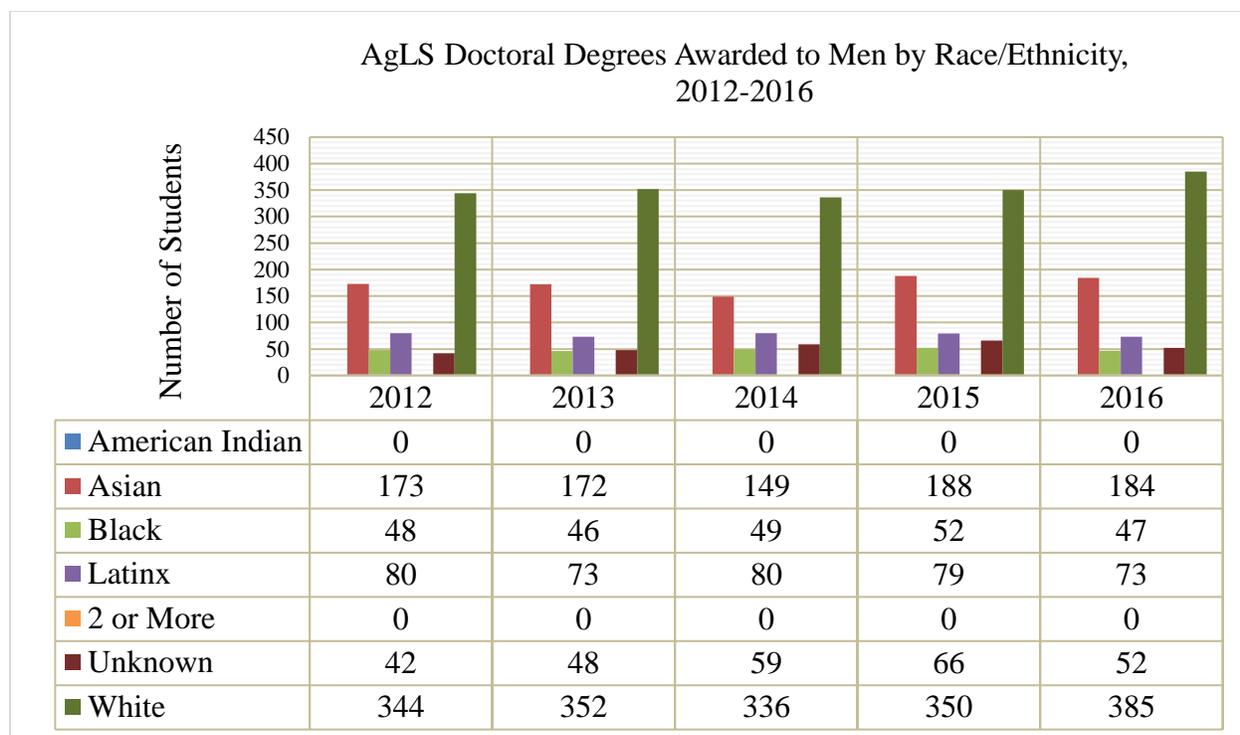


Figure 1.2 AgLS Doctoral Degrees Awarded to Males by Race/Ethnicity, 2012-2016

1.4 Black Women's Gendered, Racialized Experiences

The interlocking oppressions of race and gender creates a gendered, racialized experience for Black women that result in a unique set of obstacles during their graduate education. These gendered, racialized experiences are due to how Black women's intersecting identities position them in society, and consequently, in higher education (Smooth, 2016). Intersectionality occurs when the oppressions of two or more marginalized identities (e.g., racism and sexism) interact to influence the experiences of Black women in society (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). Intersectionality posits that identities are not additive and cannot simply be considered as race plus gender (Wing 2003), and race and gender have converged as one and are inseparable. Crenshaw (1989) noted any analysis that does not account for intersectionality cannot sufficiently address the experiences of Black women. Black women graduate students have not experienced the exact

same occurrences of marginalization; however, they do possess a shared gendered, racial experience.

Complementary to intersectionality is “outsider-within” status, which is a result of the negotiation, shifting, and claiming of identities. “Outsider-within” status explains how Black women occupy two worlds – one of power and privilege where they appear to be “insiders,” and one of their own community where they are truly insiders (Collins, 1986). Black women may feel like “honorary members” in their departments but also feel they could never belong, thus remaining outsiders. Further, Black women may perceive their department and campus differently than white women due to their “outsider-within” status.

1.5 Problem Statement

To date, no studies were found that examine the role of intersecting identities on the experiences of Black women within the context of AgLS disciplines. Though recent research has explored the experiences of women who possess intersecting identities, these studies tend to focus on women of color and often aggregate STEM disciplines or focus on more popular STEM fields, such as engineering, chemistry, and mathematics (Cross, Mendenhal, Clancy, & Amos, 2017; Johnson, Ong, Ko, Smith, & Hodari, 2017). As AgLS graduate programs seek to diversify their student population, there exists a gap in the literature that seeks to understand how and why Black women’s gendered, racialized experiences impede their retention and persistence. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe how intersecting oppressed identities shape the experiences of Black women pursuing doctoral degrees in AgLS disciplines.

1.6 Significance

This study is significant for three reasons: 1) it contributes to theory by describing the role of intersecting identities to examine the experiences of Black women in AgLS disciplines, 2) it contributes to policy by providing research-based equitable solutions for administrators, and 3) it can be used to expose the inequitable norms that uphold the dominant culture which oppress individuals of marginalized identities and result in a set of practices that will address barriers Black women experience in AgLS.

First, my study will contribute to theory by using intersectionality to examine the how intersecting marginalized identities shape the experiences of Black women in AgLS disciplines. To date, no research has applied intersectionality to critically examine oppressed marginalized identities and the experiences of Black women doctoral students in AgLS. Further, because Black women are currently outpacing Black men in degree attainment, Black women's needs have taken a back seat to Black men's needs (Kaba, 2008). As a result, university resources are funneled to programming for Black men, resulting in a lack of spaces, programs, and resources dedicated to Black women. Using intersectionality will center and amplify Black women's voices and needs, which can lead to the development of programming to enhance Black women's sense of belonging and increase retention and persistence in their graduate program.

Second, this study will contribute to policy by providing research-based solutions for higher education organizations to transform educational policy. By specifically naming how White supremacy, racism, and sexism converge with policy, policymakers can generate solutions to lead to equitable policies that contribute to Black women doctoral students' success not only in AgLS, but also in their general graduate school experience. Equitable policies will help faculty, staff, and administration to better serve Black doctoral women's development professionally, academically, and personally.

Finally, this study will contribute to practice by providing recommendations that can enable universities to develop deep and meaningful changes to institutional practices and norms of the dominant culture that tend to negatively influence the doctoral experience, retention, and persistence of Black women in AgLS disciplines. By exposing the institutional barriers Black women doctoral students face such as gendered racial microaggressions, stereotypes, and tokenism, institutions can continue to move toward making meaningful, equitable change that will result in enhanced sense of belonging and increased retention and persistence.

1.7 Purpose

The purpose of my study was to describe how intersecting oppressed identities shape the experiences of Black women doctoral students in AgLS disciplines at Historically White Institutions (HWIs) and how those experiences shape their journey into or away from a faculty career in an AgLS discipline.

1.8 Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. How do intersecting marginalized identities shape Black women's doctoral experience in agricultural life science disciplines?
2. How have Black women's doctoral experiences shaped their journey into or away from a faculty career in an agricultural life science discipline?

1.9 Assumptions

1. I was informed by a critical paradigm. The critical paradigm suggests the researcher should employ a qualitative approach in research design, methodology, and analysis (Creswell, 2014).
2. The data collected accurately reflects the participants' thoughts, beliefs, and experiences.
3. Racism, sexism, and classism are normal. Racism, sexism, and classism are a permanent part of Black women's experiences, and influences policy and everyday life in society (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Racism, sexism, and classism are so ingrained in society that it seems natural and is unrecognizable to most people (Ladson-Billings, 1999).
4. The intersecting identities of race and gender shapes Black women's doctoral experiences.
5. Narratives and storytelling/counterstorytelling are essential in understanding the effects of past and current oppression.

1.10 Limitations

1. Due to the sensitive nature of conducting narrative inquiry with marginalized populations, participants may have been hesitant to speak freely concerning their experiences because of potential negative reactions or repercussions from their university.
2. Though all participants were doctoral students, they represent varied disciplines within the agricultural and life science disciplines. Therefore, the experiences from this study do not represent the experiences of all Black women doctoral students.

1.11 Definition of Terms

1. **Academia:** A collective term for the thousands of scholars, scientists, professionals, and specialists who hold faculty rank in American colleges and universities (Collins & O'Brien, 2011).
2. **Advisor:** A faculty or staff member at an institution of higher education that functions as a person of guidance and/or in another academic capacity to a graduate student. Advisors tend to work closely on research projects, publications, grants, dissertations, theses, degree completion, and other projects with graduate students (Rose, 2005).
3. **Attrition:** Refers to a decrease in a specific group enrolled at a university. Attrition occurs when students fail to re-enroll or do not re-enroll continuously (NCES, 1997).
4. **Discrimination:** Treatment and/or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit; partiality or prejudice (Collins & O'Brien, 2011).
5. **Ethnicity:** A socially constructed category based on identification of a person within a particular social group. The social group can be based on many factors, including religion, language, history, and geographic location, and common physical appearances. Ethnicity also refers to a person's social connections with others who share much in common (Collin & O'Brien, 2011).
6. **Gender:** A socially constructed category prescribed for a particular sex through socialization and is usually described in terms of masculinity (Collins & O'Brien, 2011).
7. **Historically White Institution (HWI):** An institution of higher education in which the student population is primarily white (Lomotey, 2010); Historically White Institution is used for this study instead of Predominantly White Institution to acknowledge the percentage of white students and faculty has less to do with actual numbers than the "historical and contemporary racial infrastructure that is in place, the current campus

racial culture and ecology, and how these modern-day institutions still benefit Whites at the expense of Black communities and other communities of Color” (Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2006, p. 322).

8. **Identity:** Being recognized as a certain kind of person in a certain context. Identity also describes how individuals are positioned in society (Gee, 2000).
9. **Liberalism:** the view that law should enforce equality for all (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).
10. **Mentee:** An individual being mentored; also known as a protégé (Kram, 1988).
11. **Mentoring:** An interaction between an experienced individual that voluntarily assists, guides, and coaches a less experienced individual through instrumental and psychosocial support (George & Neale, 2006; Noe, 1988).
12. **Microaggressions:** Intentional and unintentional interactions in the form of verbal, behavioral, and/or environmental messages that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults (Sue & Sue, 2012).
13. **Oppression:** Systematic, institutionalized mistreatment of one group of people by another. The oppressed group is subject to unfair treatment, ridicule, and potential internalized feelings of worthlessness (Collins & O’Brien, 2011).
14. **Prejudice:** Any opinion or attitude formed without regard to factual information and is usually a preconceived opinion or bias against a person or group of people. It is often characterized by stereotypical beliefs that are formed as a result of prior assumptions, opinions, values, and beliefs (Collins & O’Brien, 2011).

15. **Persistence:** Continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any higher education institution — including one different from the institution of initial enrollment — in the fall semesters of a student’s first and second year (NSCRC, 2015).
16. **Predominantly White Institution (PWI):** Institution of higher education in which the student population is primarily white (Lomotey, 2010).
17. **Race:** A socially constructed category classifying groups of people according to selected physical and inherited characteristics (Collins & O’Brien).
18. **Racism:** A type of prejudice that involves the unequal treatment of a particular group of people because of social, physical, economic, linguistic, or other characteristics that socially define a particular race. It involves a system in which one race (or several) is considered to be superior or inferior to another (Collins & O’Brien, 2011).
19. **Retention:** Continued enrollment (or degree completion) within the same higher education institution in the fall semesters of a student’s first and second year (NSCRC, 2015).
20. **Sexism:** Deliberate unequal and harmful treatment of women. Often presented in three forms: overt, covert, and subtle sexism (Sue & Sue, 2013).
21. **Sense of Belonging:** A basic human need; perceived social support, sense of connectedness, and a feeling of mattering (Strayhorn, 2012a).
22. **Stereotypes:** The socially constructed preconceptions assigned to a specific identity group based on a combination of historical events, negative media representations, and interpersonal interactions (Blumenfield & Raymond, 2000; Sue & Sue, 2008).
23. **STEM:** Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics fields (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

24. **Underrepresented Minorities (URM):** A classification based on gender and/or race that is designated to a group when it does not reflect the national or state averages for an institution (Gándara & Maxwell-Jolly, 1999).

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of Black women in graduate education, barriers to Black women's entry into AgLS disciplines, and barriers that affect Black women at Historically White Institutions (HWIs). Additionally, I will discuss the conceptual and theoretical frameworks used to inform the study, followed by a brief summary of the chapter.

2.2 Literature Review Methodology

This study was informed by literature across several academic disciplines utilizing a variety of search methods. References were found using Google Scholar as well as the Purdue University Library catalog, e-journal database, direct search, and interlibrary loan service. Search terms and phrases included, but were not limited to: "Black women + graduate education," "Black women + STEM," "African American women + agricultural education," "campus climate + predominantly white institutions," "mentoring," "doctoral socialization," "sense of belonging," "outsider within," "gendered racial microaggressions," "intersectionality," "critical race theory," "whiteness," and "critical race feminism."

2.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to describe how intersecting oppressed identities shape the experiences of Black women doctoral students in AgLS disciplines at HWIs and how those experiences shape their journey into or away from a faculty career in an agricultural life science discipline.

2.4 Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. How do intersecting marginalized identities shape Black women's doctoral experience in agricultural life science disciplines?
2. How have Black women's doctoral experiences shaped their journey into or away from a faculty career in an agricultural life science discipline?

2.5 Black Women in Graduate Education

Graduate education in the United States is often considered as the highest quality education in the world, contributing to a number of scientific, literary, and intellectual achievements (Council of Graduate Schools, 2007). Unfortunately, URM students have not participated in graduate education at the same rates as their white peers, especially in STEM disciplines (Sowell, Allum, & Okahana, 2015). In 2016, women earned 57.4% of master's and 52.1% of doctoral degrees (Okanaha & Zhou, 2017). Regarding race, in 2015 Black students earned 13.6% of master's degrees and 6.2% of doctoral degrees (NCES, 2017b). While Black students make up 12.4% of graduate students, they were severely underrepresented in several fields and only accounted for 5.8% in biological and earth sciences (Okanaha & Zhou, 2017). In 2015, Black women earned 15.3% and 10.3% of all degrees conferred at the master's and doctoral levels, respectively (NCES, 2017b). Considering these statistics, it is important that institutions of higher education gain a better understanding of the barriers that impede the retention and persistence of Black women in AgLS disciplines.

Black women have long considered education as the key to personal achievement and social and economic advancement; as a result, they have sought education at every level (Billingsley, 1992). However, in higher education, Black women are "routinely underestimated"

and must be extraordinarily qualified to receive the same opportunities as their white peers (Essed, 1994). Unfortunately, studies regarding Black women in higher education are scant. Though many studies have explored factors that contribute to the attrition and completion of URM graduate students, few studies have focused on Black women graduate students. Lovitts (2001), Gardner (2009), and other graduate education scholars have made significant contributions to understanding attrition and completion in graduate education; however, their results focus on traditional, white middle-class students. Further, these studies tend to use theories and methods that are not equipped to study minoritized graduate students on a deeper level. As a result, their findings are not representative of minoritized graduate students, or students who have multiple marginalized identities.

2.6 Opportunities in Agricultural and Life Sciences

According to the National Research Council (National Academies, 2009), many of the grand challenges (e.g., energy security, national security, human health, and climate change) are connected to the global food and agricultural enterprise. Additionally, researchers have noted AgLS can provide context to abstract STEM concepts by showing students concrete applications (Wang & Knobloch, 2018). Research indicates when AgLS courses are delivered concurrently with science courses, students' science scores increased (Clark, Parr, Peake, & Flanders, 2012; Myers & Dyer, 2004). Furthermore, Goecker, Smith, Fernandez, Ali, and Goetz (2015) found 27% of AgLS careers are STEM-focused. As such, AgLS and STEM education naturally complement each other.

Additionally, AgLS disciplines provide an opportunity for students to pursue careers and research with a social justice focus. Topics such as ecofeminism, environmental justice, food justice, and land disparities experienced by folks of color allow for minoritized students to apply

critical theories and “give back” to their communities upon degree completion. To address many of the issues in their communities and gain access to spaces of power, students realize they must pursue graduate degrees. Access to spaces of power gives minoritized students the tools and supports to make change within their communities through mentoring, research, and the development of counterspaces and educational spaces (Ong, Smith & Ko, 2018).

For example, Barnes and Bendixsen (2016) found Black women participating in urban agriculture gained independence from industrial agriculture and the medical system. In other words, small-scale food production was seen as a means of independence from medicine needed due to poor health. The women in the study also found the process of gardening and producing their own food to be therapeutic. Research indicates that gardening improves mental health, produce intake, physical functioning, and perception of physical well-being (Spees, Darragh, & Wolf, 2015). This research can be seen as an opportunity to develop and facilitate educational programming for Black women focusing on the health benefits of gardening and the mental health benefits of providing for one’s self.

2.7 Barriers to Black Students’ Engagement in Agricultural and Life Sciences

Due to the similarities between AgLS and STEM education, and the way higher education mirrors societal norms, AgLS education shares negative perceptions, culture and climate, and norms of STEM education. The norms, culture, and values of STEM education have been based on those of white males, which is often in direct opposition to those of Black women (Ferguson, 2016). Historically, the characteristics of a person in STEM have been those of masculinity, competitiveness, and lack of emotion. Further, the knowledge, values, and culture Black students can contribute to AgLS and STEM education are not valued due to STEM’s white-centered nature (Ferguson, 2016; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

Consequently, these characteristics have served as a barrier to recruiting and retaining Black women in STEM (Carlone & Johnson, 2006; Ferguson, 2016), and subsequently, AgLS.

In a qualitative study, Holmes (2015) used CRT to examine the lived experiences of Black and Latino alumni of AgLS programs at a PWI. Findings included the need for: (a) more racially/ethnically minoritized faculty and administrators, (b) organizations with aims to support minoritized students' academic and social success, (c) increased faculty support in and outside of the classroom, and (d) opportunities to collaborate with faculty on research projects. Sense of belonging and navigating the system were two broad themes found in each participant's narrative. These themes align with research from Talbert, Larke, and Jones (1999) stating that belonging is a crucial factor for marginalized students in AgLS disciplines. Additionally, Holmes' research aligns with scholarship from Palmer, Davis, Moore, and Hilton (2010) on Black students stating support for marginalized students includes increasing the numbers of marginalized faculty, staff, administrators, and students to serve as role models, mentors, and peer mentors.

In addition to the norms and culture of AgLS, the history of Black Americans in agriculture must be acknowledged. Many Black Americans' beginnings in the U.S. were rooted in slavery and continued in sharecropping (Aguire, 1992; Moon, 2007; Rogers, 1995). Furthermore, Black Americans have historically held positions in agriculture characterized by poor working conditions and low prestige. Though less than one percent of AgLS involves farming, the perception of agriculture remains as such (Environmental Protection Agency, 2015). Consequently, the perception of agriculture is of unwelcome, oppression, low wages (Beck & Swanson, 2003), and farm- and production-related occupations (Brown, 1993). As a result, Black

Americans' complicated history with AgLS serves as a barrier to progress in education and advancement.

Research indicates Black students must feel a connection with their educational environment; however, they often struggle to find faculty, peers, and programs with which they feel a connection (Anderson, 2006; Jordan, 2011). For example, Jordan's (2011) qualitative research found that Black students enrolled in AgLS disciplines experienced difficulty connecting with peers, isolation, and exclusion. Participants also noted a lack of ethnic/racial diversity on agricultural marketing and media materials. This finding is aligned with culturally relevant pedagogy scholarship from Hazen (2017) who asserted AgLS curriculum continues to represent agriculture through the dominant narrative. By continuing to characterize AgLS through a white cultural lens, Black students do not see themselves as belonging in agriculture. Moreover, Vincent (2010) found that Black Americans' low participation rates in AgLS were a reflection of the racial prejudice and lack of support for cultural differences. Further, Vincent (2010) posited increased multicultural competence would result in increased student diversity in AgLS disciplines. Additionally, Jordan's (2011) research aligns with that of Talbert et al. (1999), who found marginalized students in AgLS disciplines excelled academically and professionally when they received mentoring from marginalized faculty and peers. The students in Talbert et al.'s (1999) study felt an increased sense of belonging, which helped to combat the isolation and exclusion they often experienced. Collectively, Black Americans' complicated history with agriculture, poor perceptions of agricultural occupations, and lack of sense of belonging serve as barriers to Black students pursuing degrees in AgLS.

Despite only representing 3% of U.S. higher education institutions, Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs) educate over 15% of all Black students (Gasman, 2013).

Notably, HBCU students are more likely to major in a STEM discipline (Fryer & Greenstone, 2010), and HBCUs produce the largest number of URM STEM graduates (Clewell, de Cohen, & Tsui, 2010). HBCUs have had a longstanding dedication to educating and supporting Black students, resulting in successful preparation of Black students in STEM disciplines (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014). In fact, the majority of Black Ph.D holders in STEM disciplines begin their journey in STEM at HBCUs. For example, a report from the National Science Foundation (2008) indicated that in 2006, one-third of Black Ph.D. holders in the natural sciences and engineering disciplines earned their bachelor's degrees from an HBCU.

2.8 Barriers Affecting Black Women's Retention and Persistence at Historically White Institutions

A review of literature reveals a number of barriers negatively impact Black women's persistence and retention in graduate education at HWIs, with the most common being inadequate mentoring, poor socialization, perceived negative campus climate, gendered racial microaggressions, lack of sense of belonging, and outsider-within status.

2.8.1 Perceived Negative Campus Climate

Campus climate is defined as the perceived attitudes, values, and behaviors of a campus community around the acceptance of social issues (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999; Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2014), and has been viewed as an indicator of campus culture (Miller, 2014) and marginalized student persistence (Strayhorn, 2012b). Perceived campus climate develops from the interaction of many forces, and has been linked to the experiences and outcomes of marginalized groups (Allan, 2011; Hurtado et al., 1999). Cress (2002) noted, "there is no difference between perception and reality" (p. 391), and an individual's "reality" is shaped

by how the environment is constructed by its members. Cress' (2002) statement supports Mwangi, Thelamour, Ezeofor, and Carpenter's (2018) qualitative research examining Black students' perceived racial climate. They found perceived campus climate mirrors perceived societal climate, which may help explain why perceived campus climate may differ based on the individual. For example, minoritized students may report perceived campus climate as "chilly" or "unwelcoming," while white students may perceive the same environment as welcoming and supportive (Allan, 2011). Research suggests there is a significant correlation between campus climate and student engagement, achievement, self-efficacy, social and emotional development, and overall quality of campus life (Adelman & Taylor, 2005).

Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, and Milem (1998) conceptual scholarship offered a framework to examine campus climate. This four-dimensional framework assesses and describes campus climate as a product of: (a) the historical context of the institution and its inclusion or exclusion of certain racial/ethnic groups, (b) structural diversity in terms of numerical and proportional representation, (c) psychological factors, including perceptions and attitudes toward certain groups, and (d) behavioral factors characterized by intergroup relations on campus (Hurtado et al., 1998). Moreover, Hurtado et al. (1998) stated that most approaches to examining campus climate focus on the structural perspective alone, neglecting to take into consideration what may happen when representation of racial and ethnic groups is increased. Simply, increased diversity without proper planning can be detrimental to students and campus climate (Chang, 1996; Hurtado et al., 1998). However, Hurtado et al. (1998) do assert that institutional change at the structural level is most important, but are clear in noting it is only part of the solution.

As institutions of higher education continue their efforts in recruiting more Black women graduate students into their programs, the lack of intentional planning for the increased

interracial interactions has revealed a need for campus climate studies (Hurtado et al., 1998; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). Many disciplines, especially in STEM, are mostly male and white, and the lack of racial and gender diversity has contributed to challenging learning environments for women and racially/ethnically minoritized students (Johnson, 2012; Nugent et al., 2004). Further, STEM academic environments have been described as being centered on policies, practices, and values that privilege white men and often disadvantage women (Johnson, 2012). As a result, Black women tend to struggle with how their gender and racial identity is often in opposition to the norms of their learning environment.

Hall and Sandler (1982) introduced the term “classroom climate” to examine the classroom experiences of women in education. Similar to campus climate, classrooms reflect the strengths, weaknesses, and biases of society, and can contribute to classroom environments that disadvantage women and contribute to attrition (Ong, Wright, Espinosa, & Orfield, 2011; Sandler, Silverberg, & Hall, 1996). Further, faculty dispositions and their pedagogical methods can heavily influence Black women’s classroom participation (Johnson, 2006). In a qualitative study examining how conversations on race and racism triggered by racial microaggressions appear in educational settings, Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, and Rivera (2009) found classroom microaggressions resulted in difficulty holding classroom conversations about race, tense classroom discussions, numerous misunderstandings, and hurt feelings. Microaggressive acts in the classroom led to eruptions and silencing of students. Similarly, in a mixed-methods exploratory study examining minoritized students’ experiences, Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) used CRT to examine the relationship between classroom settings and academic engagement and performance. The researchers observed classrooms for microaggressive events and four themes regarding microaggressive behavior emerged: intelligence, cultural/racial, gendered, and

intersectional. Findings indicated white professors were most frequently the perpetrators of microaggressive acts, and the microaggressions were most often directed at a specific student, most often of minoritized status. Additionally, the most frequent microaggressions observed were those that questioned the intelligence of students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). As a result, classroom interactions were hostile and students were silenced. These findings support research on classroom climate indicating negative perceived classroom climate has the potential to weaken academic self-concept, activate stereotype threat, and negatively affect classroom performance (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Riley & Ungerleider, 2012; Steele, 1997).

Another notable finding from Suárez-Orozco et al.'s study (2015) included intersectional microaggressive behavior from professors who attacked students' cultural/ethnic background and their gender simultaneously. Microaggressions included questioning women of color's intelligence and silencing through dismissal of ideas. Collectively, the findings from Sue et al. (2009) and Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) support research of Black women experiencing stereotypes about their academic ability, discriminatory attitudes from faculty and peers, and resistance from faculty to discuss race and gender issues in the classroom (Brown, 2008; Essed, 1990; Ong, 2005; Ong, et al., 2011).

Black women have also reported being ignored by white faculty and peers inside and outside of the classroom. Further, Black women report experiencing classroom curricula and pedagogy that are not culturally responsive, gender stereotypes about women's lack of science and mathematics ability, poor to no academic advising, discouragement of pursuing STEM degrees from faculty, and blatant forms of sexism in the classroom (Goodman Research Group, 2002; Seymour & Hewitt, 1997). Black women are often the only Black student and/or Black woman in a department or class. As such, Black women report a lack of opportunities to interact

with peers and faculty with whom they share cultural characteristics, as well as difficulties connecting with white peers and faculty in their major (Johnson, 2012; Nugent et al., 2004; Patterson-Stephens et al., 2017).

2.8.2 Gendered Racial Microaggressions

Microaggressions are the brief, commonplace verbal, behavioral, and environmental messages, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate “hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults” to a target person or specific group (Sue, 2010, p. 5). The campus environment can also deliver microaggressive messages that make minoritized individuals feel unwelcome, unsafe, and alienated. The absence of students of Color and/or women on campus can serve as a microaggression (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008). Individuals who are well-meaning, particularly those with white liberalist views, may have biases that are often automatically and unconsciously enacted (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2002). Sue, Capodilupo, and Holder (2007) suggest the following assumptions can be made about microaggressions: (1) they tend to be subtle, unintentional, and indirect; (2) they often occur when an alternate explanation is available; (3) they represent unconscious biased beliefs, and (4) they are more likely to occur when individuals ignore differences, denying race and/or gender may have influenced their actions. Microaggressions can be expressed in the form of microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidations.

Microassaults are blatant attacks used to convey discriminatory and biased views through deliberate racist, sexist, and heterosexist messages (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008). Microassaults include using racial slurs, discriminatory hiring practices, and refusing to serve LGBTQ+ individuals. Next, microinsults are behaviors and comments that “convey rudeness or insensitivity or demean a person’s racial heritage identity, gender identity, or sexual orientation

identity” that are characterized by an insulting hidden message (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008, p. 111). For example, Black women have reported receiving microinsults conveying messages they are intellectually inferior (Brown, 2008; Ong, 2005; Sue & Capodilupo, 2008). Last, microinvalidations are verbal behaviors and comments that “exclude, negate, or dismiss the thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a specific group” (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008, p. 112). Victims of microinvalidations are often told they are “too sensitive” and they need to “loosen up.” Microinsults and microinvalidations tend to be unintentional, with the perpetrator often unaware they have offended the victim (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008).

As a result of the Civil Rights Movement, many acts of racism have shifted from overt to covert; consequently, these invisible acts of discrimination may occur unconsciously for the perpetrator (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; McConahay, 1986; Sue et al., 2007; Thompson & Neville, 1999). Research (Dovidio et al., 2002; Swim, Mallett, & Stangor, 2004; Ridley, 2005) indicates subtle forms of racism and sexism most often occur in individuals who hold liberalist, meritocratic beliefs; adamantly deny they are biased; and assert they are moral and fair. These individuals experience a cognitive dissonance, as their behavior is not aligned with their claims of being unbiased. While the perpetrator of the microaggression has the privilege to be unaware of their offense, the victim is put in an uncomfortable position: questioning the perpetrator’s intent, a feeling something is not right, and feeling they may have been insulted and/or disrespected (Lewis et al., 2013; Sue & Capodilupo, 2008).

The term “racial microaggression” was created by Black psychiatrist Chester Pierce and colleagues (1977) as subtle and stunning automatic racial slights aimed at Black Americans. Sue et al. (2007) expanded the definition to the “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” (p. 273).

Similarly, gendered microaggressions are the commonplace daily verbal and behavioral interactions that communicate sexist messages towards women (Nadal, 2010). These messages are often expressed unconsciously and often cause psychological harm and/or discomfort toward women (Capodilupo et al., 2010).

Originally coined by Essed (1991), gendered racism is an intersectional framework describing the everyday, concurrent experience of both racism and sexism experienced by Black women based on racist perceptions of gender roles. Essed’s (1991) qualitative research found Black women’s everyday experiences of racism were manifest and maintained in three major ways: 1) marginalization of Black women’s experiences, 2) suppression of internal reactions to oppression, and 3) problematization and legitimization of oppression. She goes on to assert Black women’s experiences of gendered and classed forms of racism are based on stereotypes of Black women. Adapted from Sue and colleagues’ definition of racial (Sue, Capodilupo, et al. 2007) and gendered microaggressions (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008), Lewis et al. (2013) defined gendered racial microaggressions as the subtle and everyday nonverbal, verbal, behavioral, and environmental expressions of oppression due to one’s race and gender.

Stereotypes are defined as the socially constructed preconceptions assigned to a specific identity group based on a combination of historical events, negative media representations, and interpersonal interactions, for example race or religious group (Blumenfield & Raymond, 2000; Sue & Sue, 2008), and can be expressed as microaggressions. Black women have historically been stereotyped as hardworking, obedient “mammies,” lazy “welfare queens,” the emasculating “matriarch,” and sexually promiscuous “Jezebels” (Collins, 1991). These historically and socially constructed images of Black women have been used to “other” and subordinate Black

women in society. Today, gendered racial microaggressions manifest in four major themes: 1) assumptions of style and beauty, 2) silenced and marginalized, 3) strong Black woman stereotype, and 4) angry Black woman stereotype (Lewis & Neville, 2015).

Gendered racial microaggressions can be seen in assumptions about the ways Black women culturally express themselves verbally and physically. Black women have been discriminated against due to their communication styles, physical appearance, and body type (Lewis et al., 2017). Rooted in the archetype of the Jezebel is the assumption Black women are sexually “loose” and have a specific body type, resulting in receiving negative comments regarding the size of their breasts, hips and other body parts. This leads to Black women feeling exoticized and objectified (Collins, 1990; Lewis et al., 2013; Lewis & Neville, 2015; Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2007). These messages critique and suppress Black women’s self-expression, and send a message that to be accepted they must adhere to white, middle class standards of beauty and communication.

The matriarch or “Mammy” archetype (Collins, 1991) has shifted in recent years to the “Strong Black Woman” stereotype – the independent Black woman that can take care of herself (Harris-Perry, 2011). This stereotype communicates to Black women they are often “too independent” and “too assertive.” Being “strong” is a stereotype unique to Black women and is often used in contrast to White women. As a result, Black women are described as “less feminine and ladylike” in comparison to white women (Collins, 1991). The Jezebel and Mammy archetypes originated during slavery to justify Black women’s mistreatment as domestic servants and sexual objects (Collins, 1991; Donovan, 2011).

Stemming from the Sapphire archetype (Collins, 1991), the Angry Black Woman is a stereotype that Black women are always angry, confrontational, loud, and difficult to work with

(Domingue, 2015; Lewis et al., 2017). Black women have reported feelings of frustration due to being misunderstood and the narrow lens in which they are viewed by the dominant culture. Further, the stereotype is perpetuated when Black women attempt to address situations where they feel they have been stereotyped or discriminated against. In an attempt to avoid the stereotype of the Angry Black Woman, many Black women choose not to address microaggressive remarks, continuing the vicious cycle of invisibility and silencing (Domingue, 2015; Lewis & Neville, 2015). Many Black women have reported feeling silenced and marginalized in higher education settings, stating they feel unheard in classes and meetings, and struggle to gain respect from peers and advisors (Domingue, 2015; Lewis & Neville, 2015).

Lewis et al.'s (2013) focus group study revealed Black women in higher education are at risk of experiencing gendered racial microaggressions in their social and collegiate relationships, the academic environment, and in the classroom. Further, the unique microaggressions experienced by Black women have a cumulative effect on their psychological distress (Lewis & Neville, 2015), greater depressive symptoms (Carr, Szymanski, Taha, West, & Kaslow, 2014), more post-traumatic stress symptoms (Woods, Buchanan, & Settles, 2009), and lower self-esteem (King, 2003). These symptoms serve as stressors that have the potential to influence the psychological stress response, which can impact health outcomes (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999). The gap in literature exploring the experiences and outcomes of gendered racial microaggressions has resulted in a lack of effective strategies and resources to help Black women navigate gendered racial microaggressions such as mentors, which could lead to avoidance and negative coping strategies (Charles, 2010). Lewis et al.'s (2013) study examining the ways in which Black women cope with gendered racism indicates Black women tend to engage in four types of coping strategies: (a) active engagements coping are strategies that use cognitive and

behavioral efforts to deal with a situation, (b) social support and interconnectedness coping are strategies that seek support from friends and family, (c) religion and spirituality coping include prayer and/or ritual-centered strategies, and (d) disengagement and avoidance coping are strategies that include not doing anything to address the situation and denial (Everett, Hall, & Hamilton-Mason, 2010; Lewis et al., 2013; Shorter-Gooden, 2004).

2.8.3 Inadequate Mentoring

Mentoring is an interaction between an experienced individual that voluntarily assists, guides, and coaches a less experienced individual through instrumental and psychosocial support (George & Neale, 2006; Noe, 1988). Kram (1988) identified five career functions and four psychosocial functions mentors can provide during a mentoring relationship. Career mentoring functions are those that help to prepare the mentee for career advancement. These consist of: Sponsorship, Coaching, Protection, Exposure, and Challenging Work. Psychosocial mentoring functions help the mentee to increase self-efficacy by developing trust and professional intimacy through continued support from the mentor. The psychosocial mentoring functions are: Role Modeling, Counseling, Acceptance and Confirmation, and Friendship (Gave & Cullen, 1998; Kram, 1988). Kram (1988) suggests mentoring helps to develop a mentee's professional identity and personal competence, as well as a sense of purpose.

Mentoring has been recognized as a resource and tool to alleviate barriers and challenges Black women doctoral students face in their department, college, and institution (Alcocer & Martinez, 2017; Brill, Balcanoff, Land, Gogarty, & Turner, 2014; Kendricks, Nedunuri, & Arment, 2013). Unfortunately, the lack of Black women available to advise and mentor Black women doctoral students results in little to no opportunities to interact with faculty that share similar cultural and life experiences and values. When Black women faculty are available, they

are more likely to serve as mentors (Griffin & Reddick, 2011), resulting in increased service-load for Black women faculty. In a quantitative study examining the effects of perceived racial and gender similarity on mentor relationship quality, Ensher and Murphy (1997) found mentees' perceived liking, satisfaction, and contact with a mentor were higher when there were increased perceived similarities with the mentor. In a qualitative study using Black Feminist Thought (BFT), Patton (2009) examined Black women's mentoring experience in graduate school. Patton (2009) found four emergent themes: expectations and perspectives of mentoring, perspectives of Black women as mentors, perspectives on white mentors, and perspectives on "other" mentoring relationships. Participants expressed the importance of having a Black woman faculty mentor due to her unique ability to relate to the participants. Another significant finding was that relationships with Black women faculty mentors feel familial and was likened to "mothering." Additionally, participants reported negative academic interactions with white faculty mentors that resulted in trust issues. Other research (Athey, Avery, & Zemsky, 2000; Bertrand Jones et al., 2015; Okawa, 2002; Patton, 2009; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001) has reported similar findings, which helps explain why Black women doctoral students prefer Black women faculty mentors due to their deeper understanding of the issues and challenges Black women face in higher education.

Black women doctoral students often experience invisibility, social and academic exclusion within their departments (hooks, 1989; Bertrand Jones et al., 2013) and a lack of Black women faculty and staff who are able to serve as advisors and mentors (Holmes et al., 2007; Turner, 2002; Woods, 2001). The lack of Black women faculty and staff available to mentor leaves Black women doctoral students to decode the "hidden curriculum" on their own. The hidden curriculum consists of the institutional norms, cultural cues, or major players and

gatekeepers involved in the program, department, and institution, and is ingrained within the institutional structure of higher education (Bertrand Jones et al., 2013; Margolis & Romero, 1998). The hidden curriculum can cause a delay in sitting for comprehensive and/or preliminary exams, dissertation writing, and graduation. Because Black women faculty and staff have most likely experienced similar situations, they can advise and guide Black women doctoral students by making the hidden explicit.

2.8.3.1 Poor Socialization Experiences

The relationship between mentors and their students is a critical part of doctoral education (Nyquist, 2002), and socialization can be considered a by-product of the mentoring relationship. Doctoral education is designed to socialize students to the culture of a profession (Golde, 1998; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001), and is paramount to doctoral students' academic and career success. Socialization is a process where newcomers learn the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and values of a specific discipline (Brim, 1966; Taylor & Antony, 2000; Weidman, 2006). Weidman et al. (2001) recognize graduate and professional school as agents that contribute to the socialization of graduate students, providing knowledge, skills, and values necessary for inclusion and success within disciplines. Strayhorn (2012a) asserts that socialization begets sense of belonging, and sense of belonging begets success. Further, doctoral student persistence is significantly shaped by the socialization received within their discipline and department (Golde, 1998), and is heavily influenced by faculty and peer socialization (Lovitts, 2001).

Socialization is the leading framework in the study of doctoral students (Austin, 2002, Gardner, 2010; Gardner & Mendoza, 2010; Weidman et al., 2001). Scholars have discussed graduate socialization as a set of stages or phases. Weidman et al. (2001) and Lovitts (2001)

describe the socialization process as occurring in four developmental stages: (1) the anticipatory stage, in which students become aware of the behaviors, attitudes, and expectations of their department and discipline; (2) the formal stage, in which students experience a type of mentorship, observe their mentors, advisors, and other faculty members to learn from them in the classroom and/or laboratory; (3) the informal stage, in which students learn from their peers in their discipline; and (4) the personal stage, in which students' cognitive and behavioral practices reflect those of their discipline. Scholars criticize this model of socialization because of its monolithic approach to graduate education, failing to address individual, disciplinary, or institutional differences (Antony, 2002; Gardner, 2008).

Gardner's (2009) Doctoral Student Development model of socialization consists of three phases: (1) entry, which is described as the time period of admission into the doctoral program until coursework begins; (2) integration, which is described as the time period in which coursework serves as the main source of social and academic integration of doctoral students' experience; and (3) candidacy, in which the student has passed comprehensive/preliminary exams and is engaged in the dissertation process. Gardner's model addresses the individual, disciplinary, and institutional differences, as well as relationships with peers, faculty, and scholars in the discipline (Gardner, 2010; Williams, Brown Burnett, Carroll, & Harris, 2016).

Some scholars have applied a CRT lens to doctoral socialization to better explore the experiences of Black doctoral students. For example, Williams et al.'s (2016) qualitative study utilized CRT to explore the ways race and gender shape the socialization experiences of Black doctoral students. Emergent themes regarding socialization included managing expectations, engaging in help-seeking behavior, and developing meaningful mentoring relationships. Further, findings supported previous research suggesting same-race mentoring relationships are

associated with positive perceptions of support and increased satisfaction (Athey, et al., 2000; Bertrand Jones et al., 2015; Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Okawa, 2002; Ortiz-Walters & Gilson, 2005; Patton, 2009; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Similarly, Barker's (2014) qualitative study utilized CRT to examine the socialization experiences of Black doctoral students engaged in cross-race advising relationships with white faculty at PWIs. Findings indicated doctoral students perceived a negative socialization experience that served to neglect and disregard their racial identity. Barker's findings supports research indicating race is a salient component to Black students' socialization (Barker, 2014; Felder & Barker, 2013; Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011).

Altbach (2011) described the socialization process as being deeply rooted in the foundations and culture of the university. Faculty and administration shy away from conversations that may challenge the process, thus perpetuating the institutional status quo. As a result, the socialization process for Black women continues the institutional norms that do not represent or address the intersecting identities of Black women. Further, the lack of Black women faculty available to serve as advisors, supervisors, and mentors serves to the detriment of Black women doctoral students. Harper (2013) asserts marginalized students must see faculty and administration who share their own demographics. Black doctoral students have reported faculty advising and mentorship more readily available from Black faculty (Blockett, Felder, Parrish, & Collier, 2016). Because socialization is essential to establishing a research agenda and identifying a career path, Black women doctoral students who do not have a formal mentor to assist with socialization are at a disadvantage (Felder, 2010; Johnson, 2012).

2.8.4 Lack of Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging in education has been described as a basic human need; perceived social support, a feeling of connectedness, and a feeling of mattering (Strayhorn, 2012a). Research has indicated that sense of belonging is positively associated with perceived campus climate, retention, and persistence (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Strayhorn, 2012a). According to Anderman and Freeman (2004), sense of belonging is especially important for individuals who experience an environment as different or unfamiliar, and may feel marginalized and/or unwelcome.

Black students in STEM disciplines have reported experiencing a lack of sense of belonging. In fact, Black women report significantly lower sense of belonging than Black men (Strayhorn, 2011). Extant literature on STEM disciplines reveals a climate dominated by male-centered values, competitiveness, and autonomy (Seymour & Hewitt, 1997) which most often leaves Black women feeling isolated and/or alienated. The STEM climate can contribute to decreased sense of belonging, difficulties socializing into their discipline, or leaving their discipline altogether (Dortch & Patel, 2017; Seymour & Hewitt, 1997). Though Black women enroll into STEM disciplines at higher rates than almost any other group (National Science Foundation, 2017), Black women are often avoided by white peers and faculty members, excluded from insider knowledge that contribute to academic and professional success, and encouraged to pursue non-STEM degrees (Ong, 2005; Seymour & Hewitt, 1997).

Dortch and Patel (2017) took a phenomenological approach to understand how microaggressions influence the lived experiences of Black women in STEM at PWIs. The researchers found microaggressions directly impacted participants' sense of belonging in STEM, as well as in the greater campus environment. In their STEM environments, participants experienced isolation as a result of the lack of Black students on campus, exclusion in the

classroom setting, and microaggressions aimed at demeaning their race. Outside of the STEM context, participants reported being questioned about their presence on campus and their intellect, with implications that they were admitted due to affirmative action and not their academic merits. Participants also reported experiencing overt racism in the form of racial slurs and verbal attacks. These findings support research on Black women asserting microaggressions directly impact Black women's sense of belonging (Anderman & Freeman, 2004; Dortch, 2016; Espinosa, 2011; Seymour & Hewitt, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012a)

In a quantitative study, Museus, Yi, and Saelua (2017) applied a new theoretical model of student success for racially and ethnically diverse students to examine the extent to which campus environments, such as campus climate, is associated with sense of belonging. The theory of student integration (Tinto, 1987; 1993) suggested students disassociate from their own cultures and adopt the dominant norms and values for academic success. Disassociating from one's cultural community disadvantages marginalized students, who often find the dominant norms and values to be in opposition to their culture's (McGee & Bentley, 2017). Consequently, the theory of student integration has been criticized for its limited ability to explain persistence among marginalized students (Attinasi, 1989; Tierney, 1999). Building upon Tinto's (1987; 1993) theory of student integration, Museus (2014) developed the Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE) Model to address how minoritized students' campus environment influenced their sense of belonging and persistence. The CECE Model can be used to test the correlation between college students' access to culturally engaging campus environments and their sense of belonging, academic self-efficacy, motivation, intent to persist, and performance. Museus et al. (2017) found that cultural familiarity, cultural validation, collectivist cultural orientations, proactive philosophies, and holistic support displayed positive statistically

significant associations with sense of belonging. First, cultural familiarity refers to the extent to which students are able to physically connect with faculty and peers that understand their cultural background. Second, cultural validation is the extent to which students perceive their cultural identity to be valued by their campus. Third, collectivist cultural orientations refer to the extent to which the campus values teamwork and mutual success. Fourth, proactive philosophies are behaviors of institutional agents that go above and beyond to provide information, opportunities, and support to students. Lastly, holistic support refers to the extent to which students have access to faculty and staff they can trust to help them navigate challenges. These findings align with qualitative research from Guiffrida (2003) who found Black students at PWIs developed meaningful relationships with faculty who provided holistic support and proactively encouraged them to succeed. Similarly, Museus and Neville's (2012) qualitative research with minoritized undergraduates found students reported academic success as a result of institutional agents who not only provided holistic support, but employed proactive strategies for providing support by helping them access networks, resources, and opportunities.

2.8.5 Outsider-Within Status

Collins (1986) coined the term “outsider-within” to describe how Black women occupy two worlds – one of privilege where at surface-level, they appear to be “insiders,” and one of their own community where they are truly insiders. Further, Collins (1999) asserts that “outsider-within identities are situational identities that are attached to specific histories of social injustice – they are not a decontextualized identity category divorced from historical social inequalities that can be assumed at will” (p. 86). Similarly, hooks (1989) discusses the margin and center in relation to the position Black and white people hold in society, with Black people at the margins and white people at the center. Black women can move back and forth between the margin and

center, but are not considered as part of the center (hooks, 1989). Black women's position as outsiders in the academy mirrors their position as outsiders in society. Howard-Hamilton (2003) explains that Black women in higher education "have been invited into places where the dominant group has assembled, but they remain outsiders because they are still invisible and have no voice when dialogue commences" (p. 21). In other words, Black women are invited to the table but not offered a seat; thus, they have no voice and are still invisible. Furthermore, Black women experience a diminished sense of belonging due to the lack of personal and cultural fit within the dominant group (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). In the academy, one would assume Black women would have the ability and power to challenge conventional methods and ask new research questions using methodologies and theories that would make evident that which traditional studies overlook (Collins 1986). However, due to Black women's outsider-within status, the power and privilege assigned to Black women remain the same: still an outsider with a title; isolated, excluded, and subordinated. Consequently, Black women's intellectual contributions are devalued and their work questioned (Henderson, Hunter, & Hildreth, 2010).

For example, Henderson et al. (2010) used BFT to examine tensions associated with Black women's outsider-within status. In their qualitative study, three themes emerged: inequality without respect for expertise and professional experiences, the mammy-sapphire continuum of existence, and the unacknowledged influences of white privilege and intersectional oppression within the academy. Concerning inequality and lack of respect, Black women reported experiencing simultaneous hyper-visibility and invisibility. Specifically, they reported feelings of marginalization, isolation, and invisibility while also having their work, attire, language, and behaviors scrutinized. Black women also reported that their scholarship was

devalued, experiencing a lack of respect toward their educational background, credentials, and expertise. Furthermore, Black women are often placed on teaching and service tracks without opportunities to further their own research, as well as being assigned courses that were less valued as highly as others. Next, externally imposed definitions and popular representations of Black women usually do not include images of Black women as intellectuals, individuals with upstanding character, or as productive colleagues (Harris, 2007). Instead, Black women are shown as the welfare queen, the unintelligent angry Black woman, and matriarchs (Collins, 1991). The absence of positive representations of Black women serve to devalue their research and role in the academy. For instance, Harley (2008) suggests Black women are seen as “maids of academe.” Black women are seen as a supportive agent (Bova, 2000), useful for serving on diversity committees, as the minority representative, and the social organizer (Few, Percy, & Stremmel, 2007). Lastly, white privilege is used to dismiss racism and sexism. White privilege refers to the invisible support and prestige through which white colleagues and students are supported and given access to information, opportunities, and mentoring (Dillard, 2000). Black women do not have, and therefore do not receive the benefits of white privilege. Consequently, Black women in academia are treated as inferior, experience a lack of mentoring, and lack resources that contribute to success. Henderson et al.’s (2010) strategies of resistance to their outsider-within status include peer mentoring, counternarratives defined and evaluated by Black women faculty, and rejecting stereotypical representations from the majoritarian narrative. Peer mentoring aligns with Black women’s reliance on networks and relationships with other Black women. These relationships and networks help Black women to navigate microaggressions and oppression (Combs, 2003). Additionally, counternarratives help Black women support their own self-definitions and self-valuations, and serve as a form of resistance. Further, counternarratives

help Black women to redefine and reclaim representations of Black women in academia. Creating images of Black women as successful, brilliant, productive scholars is also a form of resistance (Patton, 2004; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001).

In a qualitative study, West (2017) found consistent participation in a professional development program designed for and by Black women student affairs professionals helped Black women at PWIs navigate their outsider-within status. Specifically, West (2017) found three main benefits of participating in the program: identification and validation of microaggressive experiences, strategies to resist oppressions, and strengthening of Black women's standpoint. These findings align with research positing that counterspaces – “safe spaces” at the margins occupied by minority groups – can help marginalized populations navigate isolation and microaggressions, and have the opportunity to disrupt power structures in higher education (Ong et al., 2018; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). For example, in a qualitative study, Ong et al. (2018) used CRT and intersectionality to explore the barriers minority women experience in STEM higher education, and how counterspaces serve as a haven from isolation and microaggressions. The women in Ong et al.'s (2018) study reported experiences of isolation in classes and microaggressions from peers, faculty, and supervisors. Additionally, participants reported five counterspaces that helped them to persist in their STEM programs: (a) peer relationships, (b) mentoring relationships, (c) STEM diversity conferences, (d) campus student groups, and (e) their STEM departments. The researchers suggest counterspaces must be created closer to STEM's center where institutional agents with power can publicly address the barriers minority women experience.

2.9 Conceptual Framework

2.9.1 Intersectionality

McCall (2005) described intersectionality as the “most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies has made” (p. 1771). Building upon the work of intersectionality’s foremothers (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1987; Combahee River Collective, 1982; Moraga, 1983), Black feminist and critical race legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to the ways multiple interlocking oppressions, such as race and gender, work together to shape Black women’s experiences (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). Interlocking oppressions refer to the “macro level connections linking systems of oppression” (p. 492) that describes the social structures that construct social positions (Collins, 1995). Gender, race, and class characterize interlocking systems of inequality that are different but interrelated. Collins further asserts that together, interlocking oppressions and intersectionality shape oppression. Intersectionality emerged as a critique from women of Color recognizing how most gendered studies examined the experiences of middle-class white women (Crenshaw, 1989). It asserts multiple identities are not simply added together, or stacked one on top of the other; instead, they create a unique identity with its own oppressions (Crenshaw, 1991). Since the concept was first introduced, it has been used in disciplines including, but not limited to post-secondary education (Charleston, Adserias, Lang, & Jackson, 2014), psychology (Stewart & McDermott, 2004), women’s studies (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013) and sociology (Anthias, 2013; Bonilla-Silva, 2015) to examine how multiple socially constructed identities interact with each other. Employing intersectionality as a lens to examine the interaction of race and gender is important to better understand power and privilege, and how they influence the experiences of minoritized individuals in different contexts (Nuñez, 2014).

2.9.1.1 Tenets of Intersectionality

Despite its practicality and popularity, the use of intersectionality is sometimes diluted due to its lack of specificity. As a result, the theory and its concepts may be misused, and can prevent researchers and educators from effectively applying intersectionality to their work (Hulko, 2009). As a result, some scholars have worked to delineate the major tenets of the framework. For example, Greenwood (2008) outlined four tenets of intersectionality:

- social identities are not mutually exclusive;
- social identities are grounded in ideological and symbolic domains;
- social identities and their representations are historically and contextually situated; and
- social identities operate in and are influenced by power structures.

Additionally, Smooth (2016) outlined five principles of intersectionality:

- social identities are not additive; rather, they are intertwined;
- no social identity is a monolith and there are differences within each identity group;
- social identity and status, as well as the power systems the groups are embedded in are dynamic;
- acceptance of power and privilege's coexistence and are not mutually exclusive; and
- seeking to make meaningful societal change by understanding power, privilege, and oppression and developing tools to challenge the status quo.

The tenets outlined by Greenwood (2008) and Smooth (2016) share common themes regarding power and privilege, social and historical contexts, and racism and sexism's intersecting

oppression is interlocking and not binary. I will use a combination of the aforementioned tenets due to their alignment with Black women's experience in higher education and therefore, my study:

- social identities are not additive, but intertwined;
- no social identity is a monolith;
- individuals can possess privileged and marginalized identities simultaneously;
- social identities are historically and contextually situated; and
- social identities operate in and are influenced by power structures.

2.9.1.2 Intersectionality in Higher Education

If institutions of higher education truly seek to make meaningful changes to institutional policies and norms that negatively shape Black women's experiences, they must better understand how power and privilege are embedded into the system. According to Nuñez (2015), intersectionality as an analytic lens will illuminate the institutional barriers that produce and reproduce dominant power structures of oppression. Seeing the value in an intersectionality lens, scholars have explored how the interlocking oppressions of racism and sexism shape Black women's and women of color's experience in post-secondary STEM disciplines (Alexander & Hermann, 2016; Charleston et al., 2014; Espinosa, 2011; Ireland et al., 2018; Ong et al., 2011; Winston-Proctor, DeLaine, McDonald Lowe, & Woodson, 2018). For example, in a qualitative study exploring the role of race and gender on the STEM pursuits of Black women, Charleston et al. (2014) found Black women struggled with their identities as Black women in their race- and gender-exclusive academic spaces. Further, the women reported isolation and exclusion. Specifically, they reported limited interactions with peers throughout the duration of their STEM programs. Similarly, Alexander and Hermann (2016) conducted a qualitative study to examine

the experiences of Black women in STEM graduate programs at PWIs. Participants reported experiencing racial microaggressions, low self-efficacy, invisibility, and a lack of institutional support.

Ireland et al. (2018) conducted a synthesis of 60 research studies examining Black women and girls in STEM education using intersectionality. Their synthesis revealed four main themes within the experiences of Black women in STEM: (a) identity, (b) STEM interest and confidence, (c) achievement and self-efficacy, (d) and socializers and support systems. STEM identity and personal identity were a key theme throughout the literature on Black women in STEM. Regarding STEM identity, Black women's STEM identity development is important to their success in postsecondary STEM programs. However, in STEM disciplines, many Black women experience stereotypes that serve to impose definitions of who Black women are supposed to be. Consequently, Black women's self-definition of their personal identities is important to their STEM success. Ireland et al. (2018) also found patterns of STEM interest, confidence, and persistence across the literature. Researchers in Ireland et al.'s (2018) synthesis found that though Black girls' interest in STEM increased from middle to high school, larger class sizes and difficulties in STEM courses were linked to decreased STEM interest in Black undergraduate women. Also, Black women have demonstrated similar STEM confidence levels as their white male peers. Concerning achievement and self-efficacy, Black women experience an early recognition of their ability in STEM; however, their self-ratings were significantly lower than those of their white peers. Additionally, some Black women graduate students have reported diminished self-efficacy, a finding also evident in Black high school girls. Last, research indicates socializers and support systems are critical to the success of Black women in STEM. Socializers are interpersonal influencers who provide guidance and help cultivate STEM identity,

confidence, and achievement. Support systems consist of family, teachers, peers, and minority networks. Further, institutional support, such as mentoring, has a positive influence on Black women in STEM, particularly at the graduate level.

2.9.1.3 The Gentrification of Intersectionality

Over the past decade, intersectionality has grown in popularity as a tool and theory to analyze the experiences of Black women. Many scholars have attempted to broaden intersectionality's use and definition, watering down its power and meaning. Crenshaw (1989) likens intersectionality to a traffic intersection:

Imagine traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination...may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and...sometimes from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (p. 149)

As the term intersectionality has become more mainstream, people who do not fully understand its origin or meaning attempt to incorporate it in their own work. Unfortunately, its meaning becomes blurred, a process Crenshaw (2017) compares to “a very bad game of telephone.” For example, Lowry (2015) described intersectionality as membership in two or more oppressed groups, with the benefit of choosing an accusation of bias. According to Lowry, one can pick and choose which oppressions they experience. Lowry's take on intersectionality is an additive/subtractive one and is in direct opposition to Crenshaw's definition.

The commodifying and watering down of intersectionality has become such a problem that scholars (Bilage, 2013; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 2017; Harris & Patton, 2019) have been writing about the ways it has been misused (intentionally and unintentionally). For example, Harris and Patton (2019) discussed how scholars work to “undo” the power of intersectionality in

their summative content analysis. Some scholars use intersectionality to front as if they “support the intellectual, political, and moral value the term has come to imbue” (p. 16) when in reality, they do not truly do the work or carry the principles over into their lives outside academia (Davis & Linder, 2016; Luft & Ward, 2009). Instead, they are more concerned with the doors intersectionality can possibly open for them such as grants, publications, and validation (Bilge, 2013; Luft & Ward, 2009). The recognition received by white scholars who engage in this research in the way described above is a simultaneous manifestation of interest convergence and whiteness as property (Bell, 1980; Harris, 1993). Additionally, citation practices are a form of academic exchange and a political act, which creates a genealogy of ideas that (dis)empower its creators (Delgado, 1984). Failing to cite the foremothers of intersectionality in writing, theory, and praxis diminishes, decenters, and erases their contributions.

Harris and Patton (2019) generated four themes from their summative analysis: Intersectionality as a Buzzword, Intersectionality as Framework, the (Mis)Definition and (Mis)Application of Intersectionality, and the Herstory of Intersectionality. First, Intersectionality as a Buzzword suggests scholars use intersectionality as a buzzword without actually engaging with intersectional work, thereby misappropriating the term and stripping it of its power. Second, Intersectionality as Framework suggests scholars use intersectionality or frameworks that include the tenet intersectionality to center mostly racially minoritized groups, often excluding other marginalized identities (e.g., class). Third, (Mis)Definition and (Mis)Application of Intersectionality describes how scholars often reduced intersectionality to Crenshaw’s definition. Further, some scholars used intersectionality as an additive approach like Lowry’s example above. Last, Herstory of Intersectionality described how over half of the articles analyzed failed to cite women of color’s contribution to intersectionality.

2.10 Theoretical Perspective

To better understand how institutional norms rooted in white supremacy shape Black women's experiences in postsecondary AgLS disciplines, I examined Black women's experiences by employing Critical Race Feminism (CRF). Critical Race Feminism was first developed as a critical theoretical framework used to analyze, understand, and critique legal concerns related to women, racial/ethnic minorities, and the underprivileged (Wing, 2003).

2.10.1 Critical Theory

Critical theory is a social theory concerned with issues of power and justice in the ways the economy, race, class, gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion, media, and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact within a social system (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008; Strydom, 2011). It focuses on how the aforementioned issues keep individuals and groups in unconscious unfreedom and injustice within a society that privileges the dominant group through tacit consensus of the marginalized (Collins and O'Brien, 2011; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). Critical theory can give researchers a creative, practical tool to examine experiences and amplify marginalized voices (Charleston et al., 2014).

Critical theories have been utilized in a large body of literature, including but not limited to critical race (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 2004), queer (Hall, 2003), and Black feminist (Collins, 1991; Crenshaw, 1991). Although each theory has its own perspective, they all share some common commitments across the body of work. These commitments include: (a) the world is socially constructed, (b) social constructions are mediated by power relations, (c) power relations are distributed through social positions (e.g., race and gender) to produce subjects who are simultaneously privileged and oppressed, (d) working toward meaningful change, and (e)

providing reflexive accounts about the research process to demonstrate the situated and partial nature of knowledge claims (Carspecken, 2001; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008).

2.10.1.1 Critical Legal Studies

Critical Legal Studies (CLS) emerged as a response to perceived stalls in civil rights advancements (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Stanley, 2006). After significant legal advances during the Civil Rights Era, the 1970s saw a reemergence of opposition toward legal policies like affirmative action (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Stanley, 2006). As a result, in the 1980s, a group of legal scholars, including Derrick A. Bell, Jr., Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, and Kimberlé Crenshaw began to question the role of the law in maintaining and furthering racially biased social and economic oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Lynn & Adams, 2002; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Yosso, 2005). Many legal scholars, including Bell, recognized there were weaknesses of CLS: (a) CLS did not offer strategies for social transformation because it did not incorporate race or racism into its analysis, and (b) it failed to listen to the lived experiences and histories of oppressed people (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). The result of these critiques paved the way for what is now known as Critical Race Theory.

Feminist legal theory aimed to promote political parity between men and women. Traditionally, women's voices had been silenced and excluded; feminist legal theory worked to center women's voices and promote gender parity (Rhode, 1990). Further, feminist legal theory sought to dismantle liberal legalism (or colorblindness) from a gendered perspective (Carter, 2012). Eventually, two groups of feminist legal theorists arose; the first group focused on the sameness between men and women, while the second group wanted to build upon gender differences to transform policies and laws (Fineman, 2005). The latter group felt that ignoring

gender differences reproduced discriminatory behaviors women were already experiencing. Together, the two groups of legal feminist scholars were able to center and elucidate the legal and political concerns of women (Carter, 2012). However, one criticism of the feminist legal movement was that their ideas and efforts were based on the voices of white women. This essentialist approach to deconstructing white supremacy left minoritized women feeling excluded and isolated (Carter, 2012). hooks (1994) stressed that essentialism was harmful because it asserted an “authority of experience,” which would simultaneously silence a person’s or group’s experience.

2.10.2 Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theory and movement used as an oppositional, disruptive, and intellectual tool to assist in understanding all forms of human inequity. The CRT movement played a role in legitimizing the marginalization and oppression of non-whites, and its strategies have been used to study issues including, but not limited to gender, class, language, immigration, and ability (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-billings, 2004; Muñoz, 2015). Several activists and scholars critiqued and challenged the policies and procedures of the U.S. legal system that served to silence and dismiss the voices of the marginalized to reproduce systemic oppression to privilege the wealthy. As a result, the following tenets of CRT were developed (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Parker & Lynn, 2002):

- Racism is normal and permanent to U.S. society.
- Interest convergence theory states the marginalized advance only when their interests converge with the interests of those in power.
- Experiential knowledge (counterstorytelling) of the marginalized is needed to understand, analyze, and teach about racial subordination.

- Whiteness as property is the premise that the assumptions, privileges, and benefits of being white are valuable assets white people seek to protect.
- Critique of liberalism challenges the concepts of objectivity, meritocracy, and colorblindness.
- Intersectionality occurs when racism intersects with other subordinated identities (e.g., sexism, classism, heterosexism, etc.) to influence the lived experiences of the marginalized.

While issues of race, racism, power, and privilege have been identified in the legal system, critical race scholars have also applied CRT to analyze history, economics, and education, as well as self and group interests (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Offshoots of CRT have emerged to address specific aspects of groups who do not identify as Black, and Critical Race Feminism (CRF) was developed to specifically address Black women's needs.

2.10.2.1 Critical Race Theory in Education

In education, CRT has been used to challenge the dominant narrative on race and racism in relation to education by exploring how educational theories, pedagogies, and policies are used to marginalize certain racial groups. Critical Race Theory in education uses similar tenets, with the addition of an interdisciplinary perspective, which challenges ahistoricism and unidisciplinary focus, methods, and analyses; the use of praxis to combine theory and practice to combat oppression; and a commitment to social justice to eliminate racism and empowering groups that have experienced marginalization and subordination (Delgado, 1984; Garcia, 1995; Solórzano, 1998; Wing, 2003). Matsuda (1996) notes CRT in education should be seen as a movement, and a “derivative of the history and intellectual traditions of people of color” (p. 55).

Other notable contributors who are often unrecognized in the CRT movement in education include Fredrick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and W.E.B. DuBois, who illuminated the obstacles Black people experienced in everyday life in academic settings (Hodge, 2017).

Scholars have since continued to apply CRT to educational settings. For example, Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) scholarship laid the foundation for CRT in education by using the theory to analyze school inequities and experiences. They centered race and racism as central in educational achievement, experiences, and outcomes. Further, they interrogated the use of multicultural education as a social justice tool but saw it as a call to action. Critical Race Theory has been used to analyze the mentoring (Croom & Patton Davis, 2012; Weiston-Serdan, 2017) and socialization (Barker, 2016; Williams et al., 2016) experiences of Black women in higher education. For example, Croom and Patton Davis' (2012) conceptual essay used CRT and CRF to discuss the experiences of Black women faculty. They assert the two theories are useful in examining how Black women experience and navigate systemic obstacles in obtaining promotion and tenure.

2.10.3 Critical Race Feminism

Critical Race Feminism (CRF) is a body of scholarship evolved from the work of 300 women of color who teach in legal academia that were excluded by their male peers and white feminist legal scholars (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Few et al., 2007; Wing, 2003). Informed by the writings of critical legal studies, critical race theory, and feminist scholars, CRF is used as an explanatory tool to understand how race and racism, as well as gender and sexism play dominant roles in the treatment of Black women (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). Critical Race Feminism can be linked to other critical theories, such as Black Feminism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical Race Feminist scholars challenge the notion that there is

one Black female experience and assert every Black woman has a unique experience due to the multiple facets of their identity (e.g., race, gender, and class) (Crenshaw, 1991). Further, CRF explains that any critique of oppressive structures is inadequate if the intersectional experiences of the oppressed are not addressed. Wing (2003) introduced the concept of “multiplicative identity,” which suggests that when multiplied together, the multiple identities of minoritized women become “a holistic One.” Multiplicative identity also states minoritized women not only share a negative experience, but also a diverse positive experience. Delgado (2003) noted, “the world of the woman of color is unique; it is not a combination of the two worlds of Black men and white women, A plus B equals C” (p. xiv).

Critical Race Feminism as a theoretical framework is not as widely used as intersectionality, but there is little scholarship as to why. While CRF addresses the interlocking oppressions of multiple minoritized identities, it does not address the experience of simultaneous privilege and oppression (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Museus & Griffin, 2011). By only addressing oppression, some scholars criticize CRF suggesting it may silence minoritized women who experience privilege and possess outsider-within status.

2.11 Importance of Storytelling

My study employed a critical race methodology. As discussed earlier in the chapter, experiential knowledge is needed to amplify the voices of marginalized people to better understand racial subordination. Racism and sexism work to maintain the dominant narrative about marginalized people and perpetuates white male privilege by normalizing subordination (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002b). Because the norms and culture of higher education mirrors those of society, white male privilege is also normalized in higher education. Further, this normalization privileges research methods developed by and preferred by white male researchers. As research

tends to be a reflection of dominant societal values and politics, Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) noted that dominant research practices often reproduce oppression. This assertion aligns with scholarship from Cannella and Lincoln (2004) who state research is political and often an imperial act that perpetuates the oppression of marginalized populations. However, research methods and principles can serve as a strategy of resistance and activism. In fact, Delgado (1989) maintained that “oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation” (p. 2436). Counterstories and storytelling helps to normalize and affirm experiences of marginalized people.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert “simply stated...narrative inquiry is stories lived and told” (p. 20). Through storytelling, Black women remember ancestors, affirm each other, and teach life lessons about values and perseverance. One story many Black children have heard is the one where their parents walked five miles (possibly with no shoes or in the snow) to get to school each day. I recall hearing this story when I started walking to middle school. While the story is exaggerated, it usually follows up with a lesson about doing what we need to do though we may not want to or feel we have the necessary tools to do so. The story of how I have come this far is one that, according to the majoritarian narrative, was never supposed to happen. First-generation college student. Black woman. Non-traditional family/household. These characteristics, among others, signal to those of majoritarian and deficit narrative thinking that I am not supposed to be in the last leg of a doctoral program. The stories my family, friends, and mentors told me have helped me to persevere by giving me strength, knowledge, and determination.

2.12 Need for the Study

Broadly, this study fills a gap on research focusing on the experiences of Black women pursuing graduate degrees in AgLS. Black women are severely underrepresented in the academy, and are more likely to hold positions as adjuncts, lecturers, or other non-tenured professions (Allen & Butler, 2014; Croom, 2017; Zambrana et al., 2016). As more Black women continue to enroll into graduate programs, it is essential that scholars begin to focus more on the barriers and supports that influence the retention and persistence of Black women graduate students. Research indicated Black women graduate students are looking for Black women faculty mentors. However, Black women receive a very small percentage of the doctoral degrees awarded in STEM-based AgLS disciplines (NCES, 2017b). As such, it is important to understand how the dominant norms of AgLS disciplines and departments hinder the success of Black women. However, no research was found focusing on the experiences of Black women in AgLS disciplines. Therefore, the current study contributes to the body of literature on the experiences of Black women pursuing graduate degrees in AgLS disciplines.

Additionally, understanding how Black women experience the intersecting oppressions of racism and sexism is important. The multiplicative identities of Black women create a gendered, racialized experience that results in a unique set of challenges during their graduate education. Research indicated Black women experience perceived negative campus climate, gendered racial microaggressions, a diminished sense of belonging, poor socialization, a lack of mentors, and outsider-within status as a result of their social position. Because higher education reflects societal norms, Black women's social position puts them at a disadvantage (Smooth, 2016). Much of the research regarding intersecting identities and their corresponding oppressions in STEM tend to focus on women of color as an aggregate (Johnson et al., 2017). Moreover, research that focuses singularly on race or gender fails to adequately capture the experiences of

Black women. While studies examining the experiences of Black women in STEM exist, no studies were found that use intersectionality as a lens to explore the experiences of Black women in AgLS STEM-based disciplines.

Finally, it is important to understand how Black women's experiences are a result of the inequitable norms, practices, and policies rooted in white supremacy that serve to oppress individuals with minoritized identities. Institutions of higher education and colleges of agriculture are seeking to diversify their student populations (Hodari et al., 2014). However, like STEM, the numbers of Black women in AgLS graduate programs remain low. Critical Race Feminism will allow for a critical examination of the historical and contemporary oppression Black women experience as a result of their intersectional identities. Further, CRF will help bring the voices and needs of Black women front and center, which can lead to a reexamination of policy and programming that may negatively influence the experiences of Black women enrolled in graduate programs. As mentioned before, graduate programs have been making concerted efforts to diversify. However, once Black women have begun a program, they report feelings of invisibility and exclusion by white peers, faculty, and staff, contributing to a diminished sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012a). No research studies were found that examine the oppressive nature of the dominant culture's policies, practices, and procedures that served to negatively influence the experience of Black women in AgLS STEM-based disciplines.

2.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter included the literature review methodology, purpose of the study, and research questions. It also provided literature on Black women in graduate education; specifically, barriers experienced that negatively influence the experience of Black women graduate students. These barriers included perceived negative climate, gendered racial

microaggressions, inadequate mentoring, poor socialization, lack of sense of belonging, and outsider-within status.

This chapter also included literature on intersectionality, which served as this study's conceptual framework. Intersectionality occurs when two or more oppressed identities interact to influence the experiences of Black women in society (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). Intersectionality suggests identities are not additive and converge as one to create a unique experience. Literature on the use of intersectionality in educational disciplines was reviewed where the experiences of Black women in STEM disciplines were highlighted. Research revealed Black women experienced several challenges, including exclusion, poor socialization, and questioned intelligence.

Critical Race Feminism was presented as the theoretical perspective to guide the study. Critical Race Feminism aims to understand how racism and sexism interact to oppress Black women. Further, CRF helps to disrupt systemic oppression, challenging the dominant narrative on racism and sexism in relation to education by exploring how educational theories, pedagogies, and policies are used to marginalize groups. Critical Race Feminism also challenges ahistoricism and undisciplinarity, and uses praxis and a commitment to social justice to work towards eliminating oppression (Delgado, 1984; Solórzano, 1998; Wing, 2003).

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research procedures and methods employed to conduct this study. Specifically, I will describe the methods and procedures employed along with the rationale as to why they were deemed most appropriate to address the research questions. I will also describe the site of the data collection and the participants selected for the study. Additionally, I will address the method employed to collect data and the measures utilized to ensure trustworthiness of the study. Finally, I will conclude with a section on the role of the researcher as well as the description of data management and data analysis techniques.

3.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to describe how intersecting oppressed identities shape the experiences of Black women doctoral students in AgLS disciplines at Historically White Institutions and how those experiences shape their journey into or away from a faculty career in an AgLS discipline.

3.3 Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. How do intersecting marginalized identities shape Black women's doctoral experience in agricultural life science disciplines?
2. How have Black women's doctoral experiences shaped their journey into or away from a faculty career in an agricultural life science discipline?

3.4 Qualitative Methodology

A qualitative methodology was deemed most appropriate to address the research questions. Statistical approaches often limit deeper reflection of the lived experience (Ferguson, 2013). As a result, qualitative research has been recognized as an appropriate approach to examine experiences and intersectional identities related to experiences (Shields, 2008). Similarly, Creswell (2007) explains “qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem...” (p. 4). Further, qualitative research explores how individuals make meaning of experiences and capture narratives to understand those experiences (Patton, 2015). The naturalistic nature of qualitative research means the researcher aims to observe the phenomenon of interest in its environment with little to no manipulation of the setting and no preconceived hypothesis (Patton, 2015). Qualitative approaches provide researchers with the opportunity to develop rich descriptions of individuals’ socially located experiences in contrast to generalizable conclusions based on statistical analysis.

3.4.1 Critical Qualitative Methodology

This study employed critical qualitative methodology. Critical qualitative methodologies characterize a large body of literature, including but not limited to critical race (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 2004), queer (Hall, 2003), and Black Feminist (Collins, 1991; Crenshaw, 1991). Although each methodology has its own perspective, they all share some common commitments across the body of work. These commitments include: (a) the world is socially constructed, rather than given; (b) social constructions are mediated by power relations, (c) power relations are distributed through social positions (e.g., race and gender) to produce subjects who are simultaneously privileged and oppressed (d) working toward meaningful change, and (e)

providing reflexive accounts about the research process to demonstrate the situated and partial nature of knowledge claims (Carspecken, 2001; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008).

Critical Race Feminism, as well as other critical race-based epistemologies, share the tenet of using experiential knowledge (i.e., counterstories, storytelling) to challenge forms of oppression and to understand and examine minority group subordination in education (Ladson-Billings, 2004; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). In contrast to traditional methods of scholarship, experiences are shared through storytelling, biographies, narratives, and testimonies (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). As interpretive tools, these theories help to examine experiences and illuminate themes that may have particular salience for the female minority experience (Ferguson, 2013).

3.4.2 Emancipatory Research

Emancipatory research seeks to expose and challenge social systems where power produces privilege, opportunity, and control that often go ignored (Watson & Watson, 2011). Black Feminist Thought, Intersectionality, Womanism, and Critical Race Feminism are among the theories considered emancipatory. These Black feminist theories seek to move towards emancipatory liberation, which Cannon (1995) describes as a self-reflexive process that interrogates systems that perpetuate oppressions. Few, Stephens, and Rouse-Arnett (2003) discussed the participant-researcher relationship and asserted the researcher shared power with the participant by recognizing possible harm, allowing the participant to deviate from the interview, and sharing information about themselves during the interview process. I am hoping my research will help bring some form of power and healing to Black women who have struggled and feel alone in their graduate programs.

3.5 Narrative Inquiry

This study used narrative inquiry for data collection. Narrative inquiry is the study of descriptive experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which allows the researcher to determine the nature and extent of social change (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Narrative is defined as meaning-making through the shaping of experience as a way to understand one's and others' actions, connecting the consequences of actions and events over time (Chase, 2011). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state narrative inquiry is a way to understand and inquire about experience through a collaboration between the researcher and their participants over time, in a place (or places), and in interaction with their environment. Narrative inquiry takes place within a three-dimensional space: temporal, the personal and social, and place (Table 3.1). Within these dimensions, the researcher will move in four directions: (1 and 2) inward & outward, and (3 and 4) backward & forward (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). When the researcher moves inward, they move toward internal conditions such as feelings, hopes, and moral dispositions; when the researcher moves outward, they move toward the environment. I moved inward with my participants by asking how it feels to be a Black woman on campus, how certain events made them feel, and their level of belonging within their departments. We moved outward when discussing interactions with their peers, faculty, and other individuals on campus. Next, when the researcher is moving forward and backward, they are moving along the temporal plane (i.e., past, present, and future) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). We moved along the temporal plane by recalling events in the past, discussing how things are currently, and envisioning where we see ourselves professionally in the future. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that to experience an experience, or to research an experience, is to experience it simultaneously in all four ways and to ask questions pointing in each direction.

Table 3.1 *The Three Dimensional Space Narrative Structure*

Interaction		Continuity			Situation/Place
Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
Look inward to internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions.	Look outward to existential conditions in the environment with other people and their intentions, purposes, assumptions and points of view.	Look backward to remembered experiences, feelings, and stories from earlier times.	Look at current experiences, feelings, and stories relating to actions of an event.	Look forward to implied and possible experiences and plot lines.	Look at context, time, and place situated in a physical landscape or setting with topological and special boundaries with characters' intentions, purposes, and different points of view.

Note. Adapted from “*Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*,” by D.J. Clandinin and F.M. Connelly, 2000, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Narrative inquiry research explores how individuals experience their environment by recalling experiences that provide a holistic picture and give a better understanding of individuals' experiences (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Further, insight is gained through the storytelling of events of personal and shared life experiences, which helps researchers to capture the whole story and illuminate complex social problems (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987). Additionally, narrative inquiry can offer the researcher with the opportunity to explore significant experiences with a deeper perspective to represent participants' experiences while maintaining participants' realities (Gladney, 2016). One notable characteristic of narrative

inquiry is the revolving nature of the researcher-participant relationship. During the data collection and analysis processes, the researcher and participants are co-narrators, transforming and learning as new knowledge and themes emerge (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Both parties may gain a deeper understanding of their own lives. Ultimately, narrative inquiry generates chronological stories of individuals' experiences in a personal, social, and historical framework (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000).

3.5.1 Narrative Inquiry in Educational Research

Narrative inquiry research in the field of education has focused mostly on K-12 education, studying how teachers' narratives shape and inform their practice (Bell, 2002). Educational disciplines using narrative inquiry include community studies (Huber & Whelan, 2001), language learning (Bell, 2002), and school reform (Craig, 2001). For example, in her conceptual essay, Carter (1993) discussed how narrative and story were being used to understand teacher knowledge. She discussed the importance of teachers' voices, stating centering teachers' voices allows for the authentic expression of teachers' experiences and concerns. Second, she asserts that centering teachers' voices is a political move and an issue of discourse and power. The language of researchers not only tend to deny teachers the right to speak for and about teaching, but also creates a larger network of power with policymakers and administrators serving as gatekeepers, controlling teaching practices. Narrative has been seen as an appropriate form of women's knowing and expression (Belensky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), and has been used to disrupt the dominant discourse on teaching. Further, researchers and administrators consist mostly of White males, while the teaching profession consists mostly of women. Carter (1993) argues narrative inquiry can help to "unmask male hegemonic structures" (Fish, 1990, p. 220) and elevate the stories of individuals traditionally unheard. In higher

education, scholars have studied experiences at all levels: administration (Santamaría, 2013), faculty (Patton & Catching, 2009; Aguirre, 2006), graduate (Preston, Ogenchuk, & Nsiah, 2014), and undergraduate (Beamon, 2014; Hotchkins, 2017). Contemporary narrative inquiry in education uses a mixture of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods (Chase, 2005).

3.5.2 Critical Narrative Inquiry

Specifically, this study will utilize critical narrative inquiry. A critical approach to research encompasses the ideas of unmasking beliefs and practices that contribute to limiting human freedom, justice, and democracy, while simultaneously having a commitment to social change (Usher, 1996). Critical narrative inquiries see narratives as dynamic, active, fluid productions that are socially constitutive; they involve making sense of one's lived life within a particular historical context (Hardin, 2003). According to Allen and Hardin (2001), critical narrative inquiry seeks to question how narratives intersect with power, and how individuals situate themselves. Analysis moves between the individual and sociocultural or historical levels without discounting individuals' narratives. Ladson-Billings (1999) asserts critical narrative research confronts the dominant theories and concepts that govern our disciplines and restrict our thinking in an effort to reveal the ongoing inequities that shape our society. Further, critical narrative inquiry resists colonial traditions of inquiry and are concerned with uncovering the subtleties, complexities, and biases that come with representing culture (Clair, 2003). Connecting narrative inquiry with a critical approach strengthens the ability of the researcher to identify and critique the social and cultural character of personal narratives (Squire, 2008; Usher, 1996).

3.5.2.1 Storytelling and Counterstorytelling

Though narrative inquiry tends to focus on stories, it is more than just storytelling. Narrative inquiry records the doings, actions, and happenings, which are known as the narrative expressions of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry requires going beyond telling stories to an analytic examination of the underlying insights and understandings the story illustrates (Bell, 2002) by focusing on the content of the narration (what's being told), the structure of the narration (the retelling of the story), and what is not being said vocally (Josselson, 2011). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state narrative inquirers must develop intimacy within the researcher/participant relationship, which helps to contribute to building trustworthiness within the research. Furthermore, Creswell (2012) asserts that as a main component in the research, the researcher/participant relationship must be nurtured to accurately represent and retell the participants' stories. The researcher and the participant work together to co-construct the meaning of the experiences shared through the narratives. To do this, I asked my participants not only how a certain experience made them feel, but also what it meant to them in that moment and in the future. The goal of narrative inquiry is to make sense of the participants' personal experiences in relation to the researcher's research question(s) which are derived from the researcher's theoretical framework. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) identified "three voices" that must be heard in order to further dialogue in narrative research. The voices are the narrator (the participant), the theoretical framework (Critical Race Feminism), and the voice that emerges from self-awareness during the process of drawing conclusions. The researcher collects the stories of the participants and retells the stories. Once the stories are told, the researcher switches roles and becomes the narrator, and with as much accuracy as possible, interprets the stories without "writing over" their stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

While autobiographical stories have traditionally been considered trivial and superficial (Dews & Law, 1995), storytelling is a way to help make sense of others' behaviors and experiences, being used as a "frame of reference" (Moen, 2006). Storytelling is a valued tradition that has existed among African American, Latinx, and Indigenous people as a way of transferring knowledge and history (Linde, 1993; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a). In Black oral tradition, storytelling can be seen in African and African American communication structures through griots in African tribal cultures, plantation tales in U.S. slavery, and presently hip-hop, poetry, and spoken word (Smitherman, 1977). Storytelling is a verbal tradition characteristic of Black discursive practices, and is engrained in Black culture. In discussing the history of pre-colonial West African culture, Royster (2000) detailed the significance of storytelling as the primary medium for cultural preservation and the transmission of beliefs. Through stories, metaphors, wise sayings, proverbs, etc., women would use language to guide listeners in ways of believing and doing. Storytelling is used in everyday conversation, and Smitherman (1977) argued it is often at odds with white American culture and is often rejected and devalued in traditional language arts classrooms (Michaels, 2005).

Counterstorytelling and experiential knowledge is a tenet of CRT and provide a means of listening to, understanding, and amplifying the voices and experiences of people who have historically been marginalized (Crenshaw, 1989). As such, the participants' narratives will serve as counterstories in this study. The counterstory provides a necessary space for voices to be heard. Further, counterstorytelling has proven itself highly productive, empowering, and impactful (Grey & Williams-Farrier, 2017). Additionally, for some, counterstories can serve as a method of self-healing and self-preservation. For example, Carey (2016) explains counterstorytelling "can become an instrument for healing...or a means for Black women to

enact their agency in resisting or repairing the conditions that wound them” (p. 27). Furthermore, counterstorytelling can provide Black women with creative ways to heal and write oneself free (Carey, 2016); to negotiate, resist, and preserve oneself (Baker-Bell, 2017).

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Student Demographics in Agricultural and Life Science Graduate Programs

Each study site is an 1862 land-grant and a historically white institution (HWI). HWI is used in my study instead of predominantly white institution (PWI) to acknowledge the percentage of white students people on campus has less to do with actual numbers and more to do with the “historical and contemporary racial infrastructure that is in place, the current campus racial culture and ecology, and how these modern-day institutions still benefit Whites at the expense of Black communities and other communities of Color” (Smith et al., 2006, p. 322). I have given each university a pseudonym of a Black woman intellectual to protect the participants’ anonymity.

3.6.1.1 Study Site 1: bell hooks university

bell hooks university (bhu) is a public, historically white land-grant university in the Midwest. The university enrolls approximately 43,400 students with 9,700 being graduate students. There are 188 Black women graduate students, making up 4% of total graduate student enrollment.

Demographic data were provided by bhu’s Office of Enrollment Management website. The demographic data in Figure 3.1 represents the racial/ethnic enrollment of students in bhu’s College of Agriculture from 2014-2018. In 2018, white students comprised the largest category of students enrolled in AgLS graduate programs at the university with a total of 301 students,

followed by international students with a total of 284 students. Latinx student enrollment was 25, followed by Asian students at 18 and Black students at 14. Fourteen students identified as Two or More Races, five students as American Indian, followed by one Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander student. Enrollment of minoritized populations increased marginally from 2014-2018. Regarding gender, there were 307 women and 365 men enrolled in graduate programs in Fall 2018. Of these totals, there were six Black women enrolled in AgLS graduate programs in Fall 2018 (Figure 3.2).

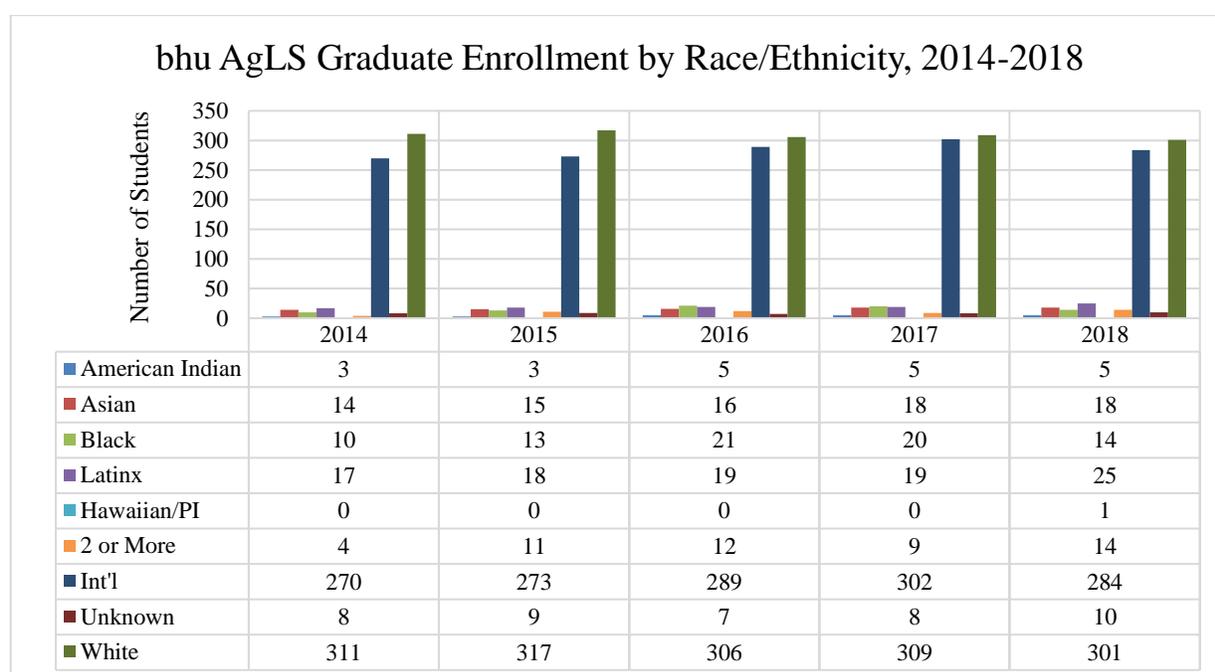


Figure 3.1 bhu AgLS Graduate Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2014-2018

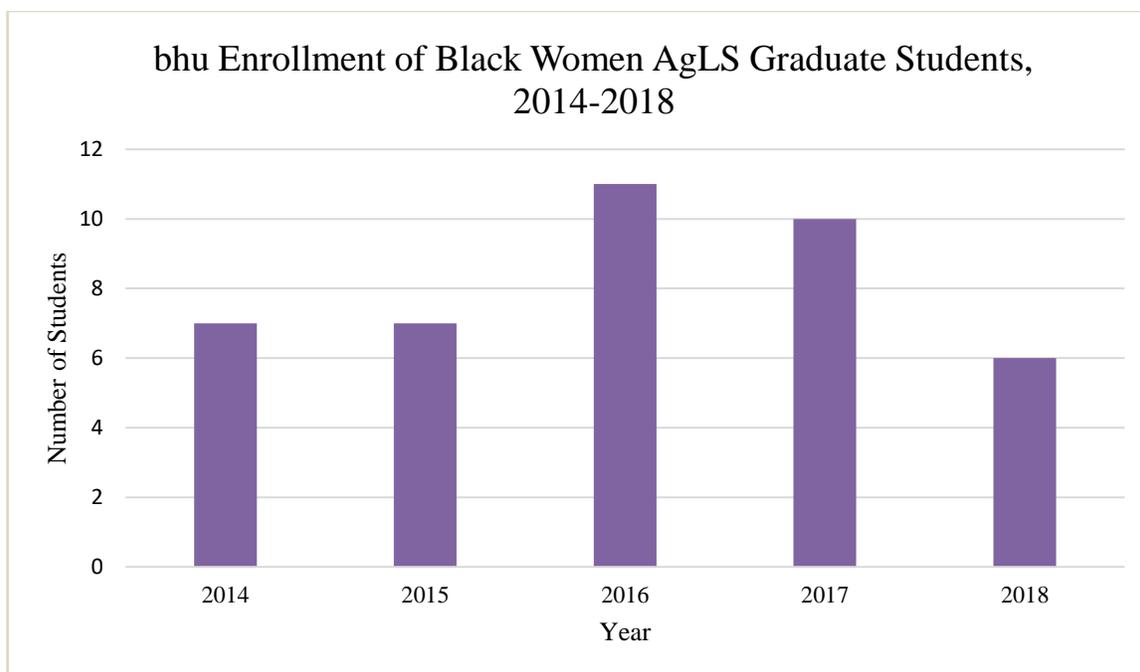


Figure 3.2 bhu Enrollment of Black Women AgLS Graduate Students, 2014-2018

3.6.1.2 Study Site 2: Hill Collins University

Hill Collins University (HCU) is a public, historically white land-grant university in the Southeast. In the Fall of 2018, the university enrolled approximately 22,201 students with 3,098 graduate being students. There were 237 Black women graduate students, making up 7.6% of total graduate student enrollment.

Demographic data were provided by HCU's Office of Enrollment Management website. The demographic data in Figure 3.3 represents the racial/ethnic enrollment of students in HCU's College of Agriculture from 2014-2018. In 2018 white students comprise the largest category of students enrolled in AgLS graduate programs at the university with a total of 267 students. Black students and Asian students' enrollment were 39, followed by Latinx student enrollment at 16. Four students identified as Two or More Races and one student as American Indian. There were no Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students enrolled. Data for international students were not recorded in 2017 and 2018. Regarding gender, there were 219 women and 157 men enrolled in

graduate programs in Fall 2018. There were 25 Black women enrolled in AgLS graduate programs in Fall 2018 (Figure 3.4).

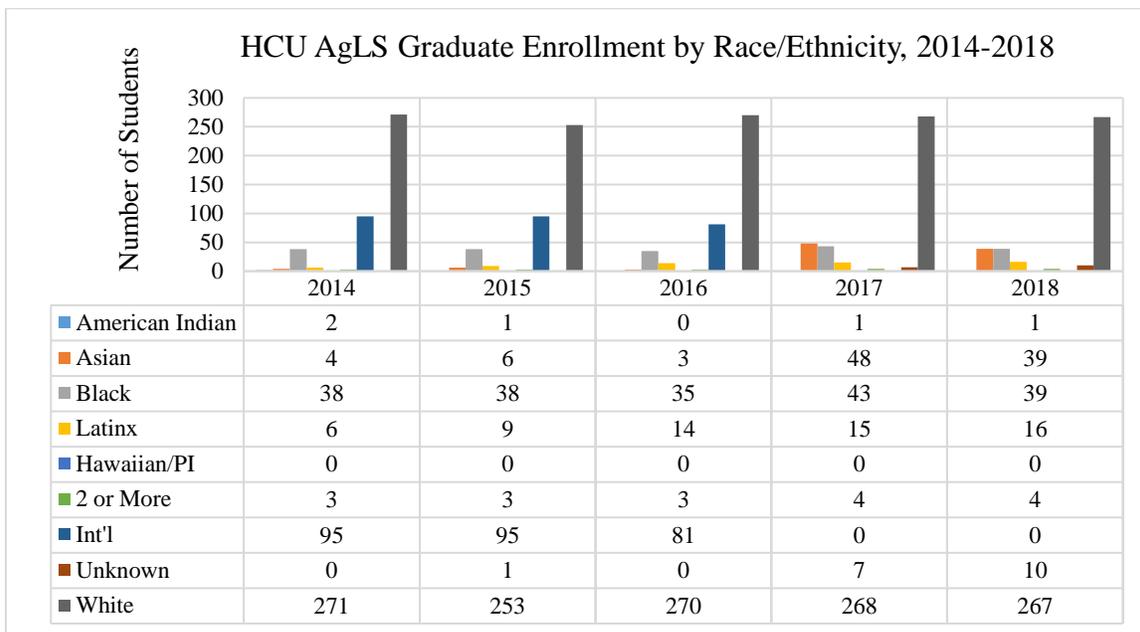


Figure 3.3 HCU AgLS Graduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2014-2018

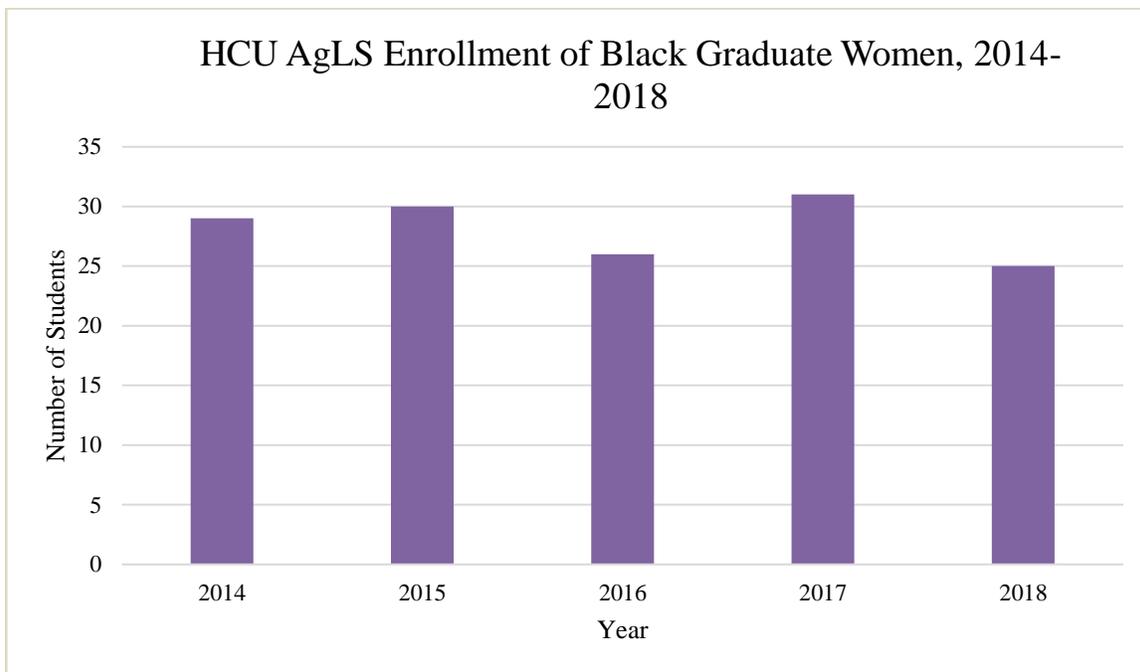


Figure 3.4 HCU AgLS Enrollment of Black Graduate Women, 2014-2018

3.6.1.3 Study Site 3: Kimberlé Crenshaw University

Kimberlé Crenshaw University (KCU) is a public, historically white land-grant university in the Southeast. In the Fall of 2018 the university enrolled approximately 34,850 students with 6,370 being graduate students. The university did not provide information regarding Black women's enrollment.

Demographic data were provided by KCU's Office of Enrollment Management website. The demographic data in Figure 3.5 represents the racial/ethnic enrollment of students in KCU's College of Agriculture from 2014-2018. In 2018 white students comprised the largest category of students enrolled in AgLS graduate programs at the university with a total of 284 students. International students comprised the second largest category of students with a total of 110 students. Black student enrollment was 24, followed by Two or More Races at 18. Fifteen students identified as Asian and 12 as Latinx. Enrollment of minoritized populations decreased marginally from 2015-2018. Regarding gender, there were 268 women and 202 men enrolled in graduate programs in Fall 2018. Additionally, there were 15 Black women enrolled in AgLS graduate programs in Fall 2018 (Figure 3.6).

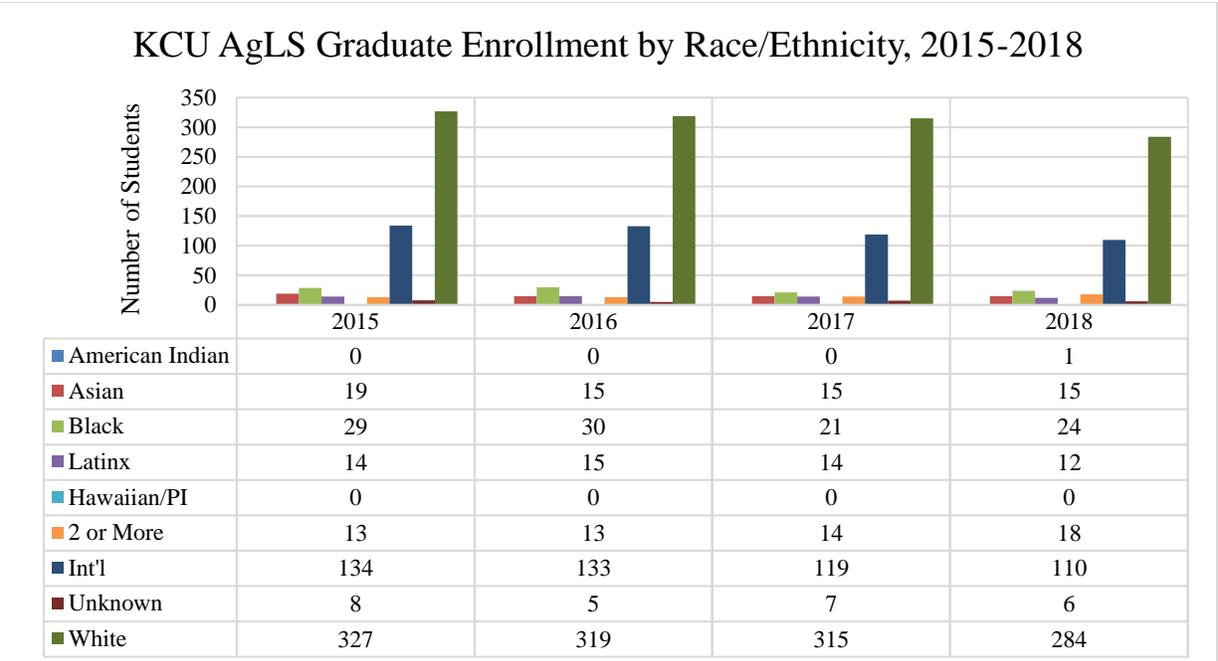


Figure 3.5 KCU AgLS Graduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2015-2018

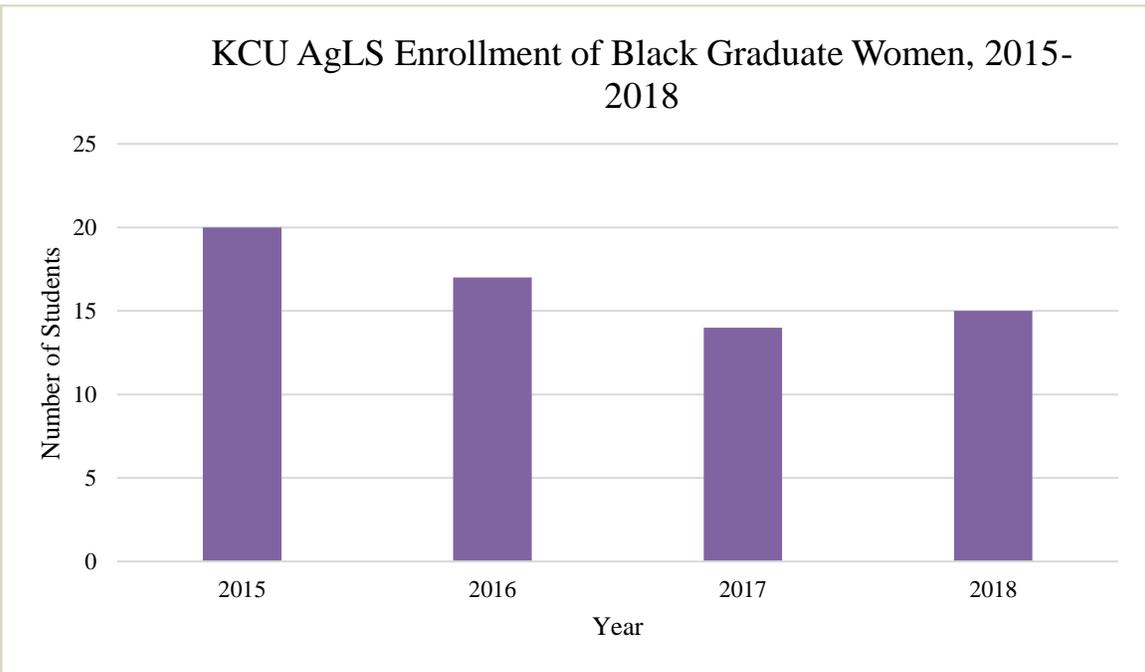


Figure 3.6 KCU AgLS Enrollment of Black Graduate Women, 2015-2018

3.5.1.4 Study Site 4: Ladson-Billings University

Ladson-Billings University (LBU) is a public, historically white land-grant university in the Southeast. The university enrolls approximately 56,079 students with 11,763 being graduate students. There are 373 Black women graduate students, making up 6% of the total graduate student enrollment.

Demographic data were provided by LBU's Office of Enrollment Management. The demographic data in Figure 3.7 represents the racial/ethnic enrollment of students in LBU's College of Agriculture from 2014-2018. In 2018, white students comprised the largest category of students enrolled in AgLS graduate programs at the university with a total of 843 students, followed by international students with a total of 421 students. Latinx student enrollment was 159, followed by Black students at 56, and Asian students at 52. Thirty-five students identified as Two or More Races, eight students as American Indian, followed by one Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander student. Regarding gender, there were 969 women and 661 men enrolled in graduate programs in Fall 2018. Of these totals, there were 39 Black women enrolled in AgLS graduate programs in Fall 2018 (Figure 3.8).

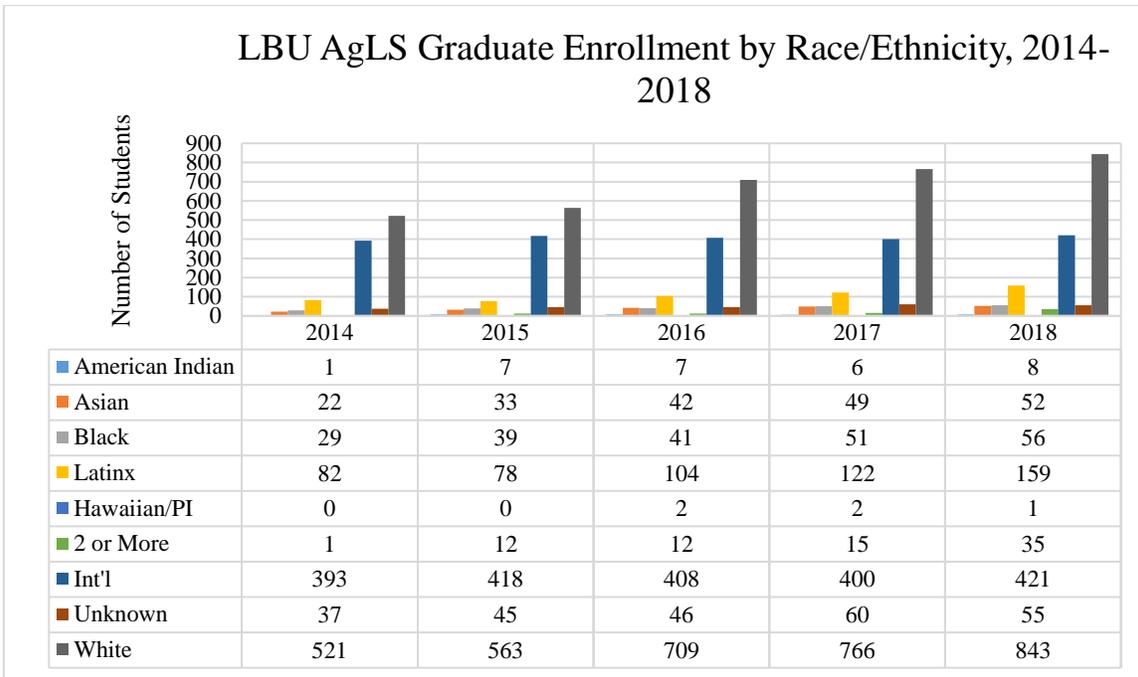


Figure 3.7 LBU AgLS Graduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2014-2018

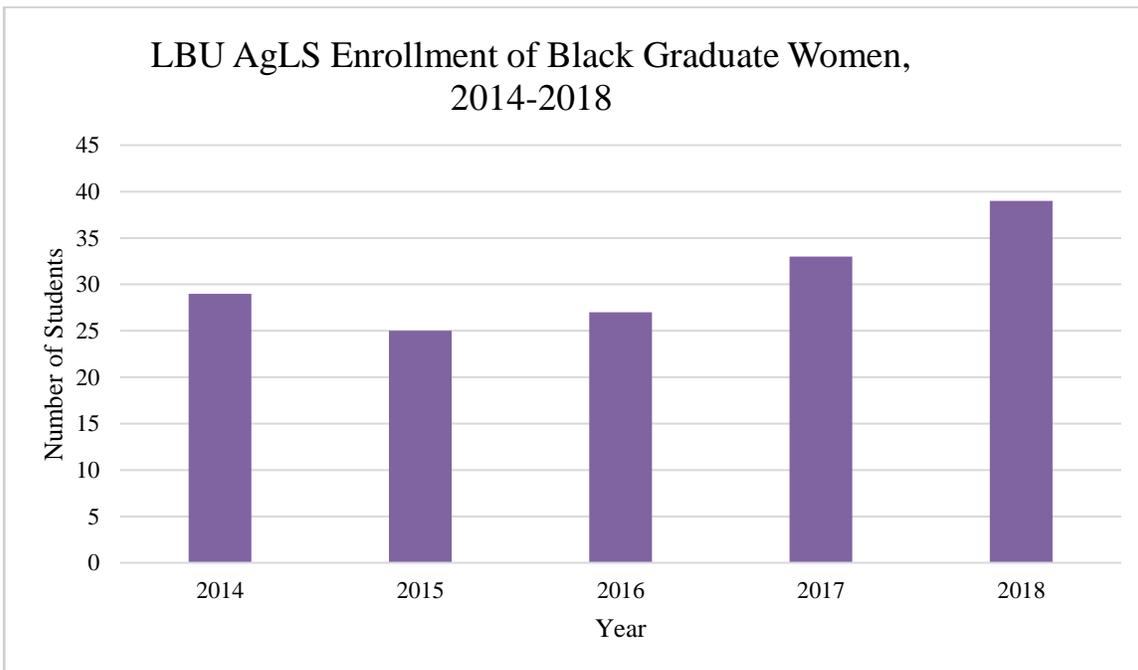


Figure 3.8 LBU Enrollment of Black Women AgLS Graduate Students, 2014-2018

3.6.2 Study Participants

Participants must meet the following criteria: be a full-time, domestic student; have reached candidacy status; and self-identify as a Black woman. Participants must have reached candidacy because they have more experiences which helps to develop a richer narrative, they have a better understanding of their campus and departmental climates and norms, and their experiences can speak to each phase of the Doctoral Student Development Model. International students were excluded because of vastly different cultural and individual differences. For example, international and domestic students have unique experiences in graduate education, such as acculturation and language that should be examined separately (Bodden, 2014).

Purposeful and snowball sampling were used to identify participants. Researchers use purposeful sampling approach to identify and include individuals who have the greatest potential to provide significant data that would appropriately address their research question(s) (Ferguson, 2013; Patton, 2015). Participants were also recruited using snowball sampling with the assistance of key informants (Gilchrist & Williams, 1999) familiar with the Black female population of graduate students at each university. The informants have ties to the institutions' Black cultural center, Black graduate student government, the College of Agriculture's diversity office/office of multicultural programs, and various affinity organizations for Black women. I asked the informants to assist in recruiting graduate students interested in participating in the study. Upon receiving the names of potential participants, I contacted each student to explain the purpose of the study and invited her to participate. Because qualitative research is more concerned with collecting rich data rather than large sample sizes (Patton, 2015), five participants were targeted for this study (Bhattacharya, 2017). I extended an email invitation (Appendix A) to Black women doctoral candidates in AgLS I personally know. I also requested organizational networks I am apart of to disseminate the invitation via the email listservs, such as their Black graduate

student association and the Black Cultural Center. Black women who met the criteria and were willing to participate were instructed to contact me directly, where they were provided with additional details about the study and information regarding the scheduling of interviews. I also served as a participant in the study, and was interviewed by the critical qualitative researcher who serves on my committee. Due to the significantly small numbers of Black doctoral women AgLS disciplines, anonymity was important. I did not disclose the discipline of the women, or any other identifying information.

3.6.2.1 Situating Myself in the Study

It is important I situate my identity within the study. I am a Black woman and am both an insider/outsider to my study. Merton (1972) explains the “Insider Doctrine” states members of a particular population should research their own population. Critics argue that following the Insider Doctrine can lead to bias as a result of identifying too closely to the beliefs and perspectives of the participants (Innes, 2009). Conversely, researchers conducting outsider research may see themselves as objective because they do not identify as closely with the researched population. Consequently, outsider researchers may raise questions that insider researchers may overlook.

As stated before, I identify as a Black woman. Raised by my grandma (I call her Ma), Ma made it very clear to me I was Black. As many other Black kids have heard, she told me “You have to be ten times better than those white kids if you want to make it in the world.” I did not understand at first, but as I continued through secondary education, I began to. As I matriculated through middle school, I started to be placed in advanced courses and noticed a stark difference in the race of students and socioeconomic status of the kids in the advanced classes versus those in the regular classes. While I knew I was smart, I also knew my friends in the regular classes

were smart too. This trend continued into high school. During my undergraduate and master's programs, I attended a Historically Black College/University (HBCU) and experienced sense of belonging due to supportive faculty and staff mentors, socialization into education, and peers that I shared many salient identity characteristics with. I anticipate my participants may relate to some parts of my educational journey. As discussed in the literature review, many Black women graduate students have had poor experiences while pursuing their degrees. My doctoral experience has been overall very positive; however, I have experienced some of the challenges Black women in the extant literature have experienced. Understanding our shared but different experiences forced me to make careful decisions regarding the research process including building rapport with participants, how I analyzed and interpreted the data, and how I presented this research to the public.

3.6.3 Data Collection Methods

The data collection for this study consisted of a demographic survey, participants' written narrative, and three in-depth semi-structured interviews to discuss their narratives and experiences. Additionally, my analytic memos and post-interview journal entries will also be considered as data. Interviews are used in qualitative inquiry to gain insight into individuals' perspectives and experiences (Patton, 2015). The guided interview approach was employed to conduct interviews. Pre-selected topics, issues, and questions I wanted to cover were used to develop the interview protocol. Before the first interview, participants were asked to read and sign a consent form detailing the purpose of the study, the benefits and risks associated with participation, and details related to confidentiality (Appendix B). The consent form also clearly stated that participation in the study was voluntary and participants were free to withdraw at any time. Upon signing the consent form, each participant also completed a questionnaire including

demographic and educational information (Appendix C). After the survey was completed, I asked participants to write out their own narrative, reflecting on their doctoral journey thus far and how their identity as a Black woman may have influenced their experiences (Appendix D). Once participants completed their consent form, I sent them the prompt for the written narrative and the demographic questionnaire, along with a link to a doodle poll to schedule the first interview. During the interview, I briefly introduced myself and described the research project. Each participant was interviewed in three, 60-120 minute Zoom sessions. I held three interviews with each participant to increase prolonged engagement, which enhanced credibility (Creswell, 2012). Each interview was audio recorded through Zoom and transcribed by a third party service. I took notes during the interview to capture participants' body language and expressions the audio recording and transcriptions would not catch. In addition to interview notes, I kept reflective journal notes as well. Once interviews were transcribed, the audio was stored on my laptop with a secured password accessible only by me, then permanently erased from the audio recorder.

As a Black woman who fits the criteria and believes in voice and story as a means of healing and resistance, I also served as a participant in the study. I also wrote a narrative, and was interviewed by the critical qualitative researcher serving on my committee. We sat for three 60-120 minute in person interviews, and the researcher took notes during the interview. Our interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by a third-party service. My interviews were also stored on my laptop with a secured password and permanently erased from the audio recorder.

3.6.3.1 Doctoral Student Development Model

The development of the interview protocol was guided by Gardner's (2009) Doctoral Student Development Model (DSDM) (Figure 3.4). The DSDM helped me to organize my

interview protocol and helped with data analysis. The DSDM presents the development of doctoral students in a series of three phases of challenges and supports (Gardner, 2009). Phase I, Entry, is described as the time period of admission into the doctoral program until coursework begins. While this phase tends to last a few months, many students report the phase greatly affects the rest of their program, confirms their decision to attend a particular institution, and can influence their overall decision to persist in doctoral education (Gardner, 2009). Challenges in Phase I include applying to prospective doctoral programs, visiting campuses, meeting with and talking to faculty and current graduate students, moving to a new location, beginning coursework, balancing life and graduate school, and understanding the expectations of their new graduate student role. Sources of support for Phase I challenges include peers they will meet at orientation, faculty in their departments and who will teach their courses, and staff who will provide direction during the beginning months (e.g., Graduate Student Coordinators) (Gardner, 2009). Phase II, Integration, describes the time period in which coursework serves as the main source of social and academic integration of doctoral students' experience. Challenges in Phase II include demonstrating competency and skills in coursework and subsequently the comprehensive/preliminary exam process, while also making the transition from knowledge consumer to knowledge producer. Supports during Phase II are the deeper relationships formed with faculty and peers (Gardner, 2009). Phase III, Candidacy, describes the final phase. At this phase, the doctoral student has passed comprehensive/preliminary exams and has reached candidacy status. Challenges candidates face includes completing independent research for their dissertation, seeking jobs in their desired fields, and transitioning from student to colleague. The support students may have had in the past may disappear, exacerbating the challenge

experienced. Supports in this phase include the advisor, mentors, and possibly writing groups (Gardner, 2009).

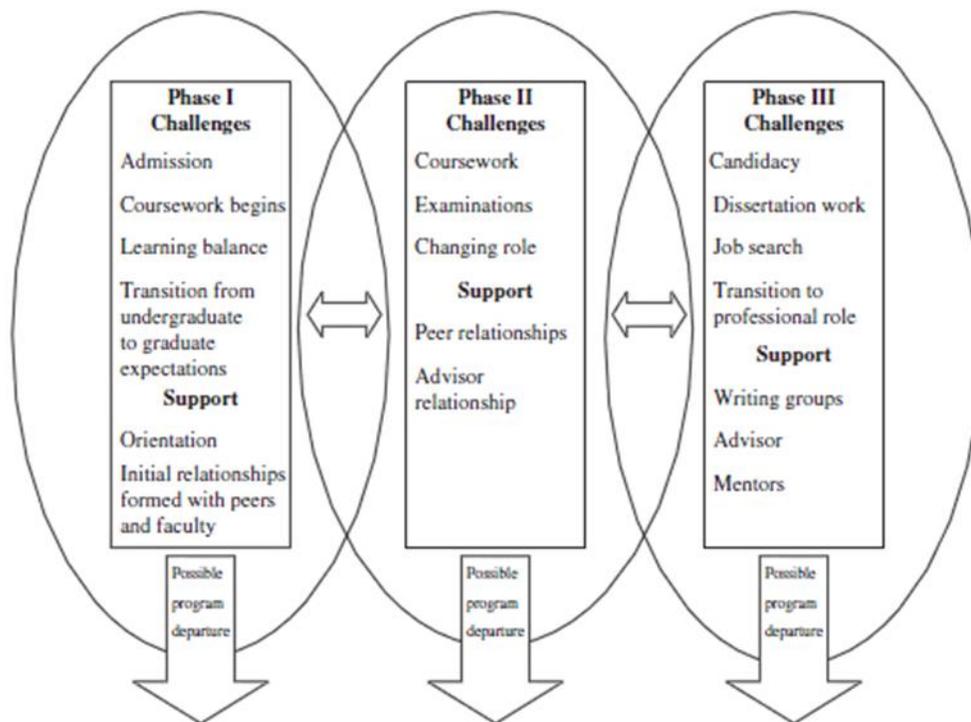


Figure 3.9 Doctoral Student Development Model

The first interview was designed to build rapport with the participant, learn background information about the participant, and learn about their experiences during Phase I going into Phase II. Interview questions for the first interview included questions about their transition into their program, beginning coursework, and initial relationships with faculty, peers, and advisors. The first interview's protocol can be found in Appendix E. The purpose of the second interview (Appendix F) was to learn about participants' experiences of Phase II going into Phase III. Interview questions for the second interview included questions about their integration into the doctoral program, coursework, and departmental climate. The third interview focused on Phase III of the DSDM. Interview questions for the third interview included questions about their comprehensive/preliminary exam experience, their proposal defense experience, dissertation

writing, professional development, and being on the job market (if applicable). The interview protocol for the third interview can be found in Appendix H.

Though the DSDM addresses individual, disciplinary, and institutional differences, as well as relationships with peers, faculty, and scholars in a discipline, it does not address how social identities shape doctoral students' experiences. Gardner suggests several research questions for future research that would examine how doctoral students' social identities may shape the way they navigate through their doctoral programs. The suggested research questions should not be taken lightly, as possessing several marginalized social identities can complicate the doctoral experience for women of color, specifically Black women (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). For example, Black women have reported differential treatment and being "weeded out" due to their identities (Patterson-Stephens et al., 2017). Research that fails to address how the power and privilege of the dominant culture serves to the detriment of Black women doctoral students will not uncover the deeper societal issues of higher education Black women face. The departure of Black women from their doctoral programs works to perpetuate the gatekeeping systems of oppression that impede Black doctoral women's success. As a result, there are fewer Black women in the academy, and the cycle continues.

3.7 Data Analysis

All of the interviews were transcribed by a third party transcription service, checked for accuracy by me, and then sent to the participant for accuracy. To begin analysis, I organized interview data and transcribed field notes, written narratives, and personal journal entries. I printed hard copies of interview transcripts field notes, written narratives and personal journal entries for manual coding.

Codes and themes from the conceptual and theoretical frameworks guiding this study were developed which included “Black in STEM-based AgLS,” “campus climate,” “microaggressions,” “stereotypes,” “socialization,” “outsider-within,” “sense of belonging,” “identity,” “privilege,” “mentoring,” “intersectionality,” and “colorblindness.” I conducted two cycles of coding. During the first cycle of coding, I used initial coding and simultaneous coding. During initial coding, I read interview transcripts line by line for familiarity with the data (Saldaña, 2013). Manually interacting with the data allowed me to pre-code data by circling, highlighting, color coding, and underlining notable phrases and quotes to be used to display results. Additionally, this preliminary review of the data allowed me to write down key words and phrases for analytic consideration for later in the data analysis process. Next, simultaneous coding allowed me to assign multiple codes to content that may have more than one meaning (Saldaña, 2013). Glesne (2011) notes social interactions do not occur in “neat, isolated units” (p. 192) and may warrant simultaneous coding. Last, I used narrative coding to explore intra- and interpersonal participant experiences and actions to understand their lived, storied experiences. During the second cycle of coding, I used focused coding to organize the data around the most salient categories (Saldaña, 2013). Next, I used the categories and codes to develop themes for a written in-depth narrative about the participants. The categories and themes for each narrative were reviewed and compared to other narratives (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002) to create a co-narration of meanings, themes, and descriptions with the participants.

All interviews were analyzed following the voice-centered relational method outlined by Brown and Gilligan (1993). Women are known to speak in encoded language and voices – the less evident, indirect language of women, especially concerning topics we are not supposed to talk about. Further, it is also important to note the symbolic nature of what is said, as well as

what is not said. As such, the voice-centered method is a feminist method that is relational and responsive to different voices. The voice-centered method works to illuminate the ways white dominant culture influences the experiences of women (Brown & Gilligan, 1993). The approach to the voice-centered method suggests three to four reviews of the interview audio and transcription. The first time reviewing the interview, I listened to the story being told to get a sense of what is happening. I paid close attention to recurring words and images, contradictions and inconsistencies in style, revisions in the story, plot holes, and shifts of voice in narrative position (first, second, or third person narration). The second time reviewing the interview, I listened for “self” or the voice of “I”, speaking about herself in the story. It is important to ascertain how the participant speaks of herself before retelling her story. During the third and/or fourth review(s) of the interview data, I paid attention to the way participants discussed relationships and how they experienced their social positioning in graduate education, specifically in their programs. I especially paid close attention to the ways in which cultural norms and institutional barriers influenced their experiences.

Following my voice-centered analysis, I employed critical event narrative analysis (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Critical narrative analysis categorizes events as critical events, like events, or other events. A critical event is one that has major influence, whether positive or negative, on the characters involved. Critical events are only identified in hindsight and occur in an unplanned and unstructured manner (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Like events may highlight critical events and can aid in confirming critical events. However, they are not as profound as critical events. Any other information that is unrelated to critical or like events is categorized as other events, and is often descriptive of critical or like events (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The

critical events analysis approach is straightforward and well-suited to develop common themes (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

My written personal narrative, interviews, and researcher memos will also be used as a source of data and will be presented with data from the participants. I wrote my narrative before interviewing my participants to ensure I would not be influenced by participants' responses. After I completed my narrative, I did not edit it in any way. For my interview, my committee member used the same interview protocols I used for the other participants in the study.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the Study

Rossman and Rallis (2003) stated “trustworthiness of a qualitative research project is judged by...competent practice and ethical conduct” (p. 63). Researchers must be diligent in ensuring their research is conducted fairly, and data presented accurately (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). As such, Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined four criteria for trustworthiness: credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. Credibility refers to how the researcher provides assurance the data and interpretation accurately reflect the participants' views of life (Patton, 2015). I used member checking, which involves the researcher sharing information from the study with the participant, who verifies the information for accuracy (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants received the transcripts from their interviews to read and determine its accuracy. After accuracy was established, the participant returned the transcripts to me with corrections, if any. Additionally, prolonged engagement was used to further establish credibility. Prolonged engagement was achieved by conducting three 60-120 minute interviews with each of the participants over a three month period. Confirmability refers to establishing the data and interpretations are not “figments of the inquirer's imagination” (Patton, 2015, p. 685). To establish confirmability, I employed an audit trail. This involved tracking my interpretations

back to the raw data and other evidence gathered during data collection. Data and other evidence used for the audit trail includes analytic memos, field notes, thematic analysis, and member checking (Creswell, 2007). I summarized field notes and observations after each interview to capture my immediate perceptions of each interview session. Transferability refers to the researcher providing enough information on the case studied for readers to establish the degree of similarity to which the findings from the case studied can be transferred to other cases (Patton, 2015). Thick, rich descriptions from my participants about their experiences will enable other researchers to apply second decision span generalizing (Kennedy, 1979). This places the responsibility of transferability on the researcher attempting to transfer the findings, instead of on the original researcher. Dependability refers to the process of inquiry and the researcher's responsibility for ensuring a logical, traceable, and well-documented research process (Patton, 2015). This was established through use of an audit trail-diligent maintenance of well-organized written and electronic notes outlining my reasoning for execution during all phases of the study. I used peer reviews, also called peer debriefing, to enhance dependability. My committee members evaluated my study in an attempt to make the account accessible to others beyond myself as the researcher (Creswell, 2003).

3.9 Role of the Researcher

Morrow (2005) stated researchers should acknowledge their position in terms of worldview, bias, and point-of-view. Further, the researcher must be sensitive to their own identities, culture, and personal experiences (Creswell, 2012). For example, Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggested prior personal experience with the subject being studied can be problematic in conducting research if not addressed. In this case, several of my academic and personal experiences have influenced my interest in studying Black women in STEM graduate education,

specifically AgLS disciplines at HWIs. Further, these experiences were crucial in deciding to study dominant norms within institutions, mentoring and socialization, and gendered racial microaggressions. First, as an alumna of an HBCU, my experience was of support and empowerment from mentors and peers. My assistantship supervisor took special interest in me, and extended several opportunities to assist in my professional development and socialization into AgLS. My peers and I studied together, shared notes and resources, and celebrated victories. My HBCU experience was uplifting, and helped me develop inner strength and self-confidence. The instrumental support, psychosocial support, and socialization I experienced at my HBCU helped to enhance my sense of belonging and prepared me academically and personally.

Next, when I arrived at my current institution, I was taken aback at the pervasiveness of whiteness within the College of Agriculture and the general campus environment. Despite the culture shock, I succeeded by making use of the resources provided on campus, as well as the thoughtful advising from my advisor and mentor. The absence of Blackness on campus relays a message to Black students that we do not belong, are out of place, and that campus is a “White space” (Anderson, 2015). Further, it also send a message that AgLS programs are not looking for Black students. However, cultural centers, minority organizations, and effective mentoring have helped me to overcome the diminished sense of belonging and isolation many Black students experience upon their arrival. Further, my peers, advisors, and mentors have helped me navigate the “hidden curriculum,” aiding in my progress in my program. The hidden curriculum, or unspoken rules and norms of the department or discipline, can contribute to exam, dissertation, and subsequently, graduation delay. In discussions with peers, I realized many of them have experienced these setbacks and my positive experience was the exception when compared to what my peers had experienced.

Last, as a Black woman in AgLS at an HWI, I am very well aware of the challenges Black women face in the HWI setting. My approach to graduate education is a Black Feminist one, which is grounded in the reality of Black women (King, 1988) and the assertion of Black women's self-definition to validate Black women's power (Hill Collins, 1986). I want to make sure Black women's voices and experiences are centered and heard, and to continue established work that helps develop and employ strategies that will aid in the success of Black women students. By helping other Black women to validate and define themselves, we can work together to redefine stereotypes that lead to microaggressions and impede our professional, educational, and personal success. Collectively, all of these experiences have shaped the ways in which I interpreted the data collected. Further, these experiences guided my approach to gaining entry and developing trust with my study participants.

3.10 The Researcher as the Instrument

As previously mentioned, I am considered in insider/outsider to my study. As such, it was crucial for me be careful in designing and implementing my study to avoid bias due to over-rapport (Innes, 2009) and making assumptions about my participants due to our shared identities (Hayano, 1979). Furthermore, I, the researcher, was the primary data collection instrument for the study. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher's personal perspectives, research lens, and assumptions are integral to each aspect of the research process (Creswell, 2013). As a result, I had to critically reflect on my own experiences, narrative, and assumptions.

Having attended an HBCU and living in a diverse area prior to attending an HWI, I found the experiences, narratives, and voices of Black women were absent in my discipline. Additionally, I found it difficult to find Black graduate-level women in my HWI's College of Agriculture. To interact with other Black graduate-level women, I had to seek out interactions

within the Black Graduate Student Association. Further, I noticed the literature in my discipline was focused on either mostly white undergraduates or “minority” undergraduates, aggregating all minoritized individuals into one group. Moreover, critical theoretical perspectives and methodologies that would be valuable in examining experiences and exposing inequities were missing from the literature in AgLS.

As a Black woman invested in uplifting marginalized voices and moving us closer to freedom, the concept of “me-search” is important. Me-search can be defined as research about or connected to the researcher’s identity (Gardner et al., 2017). Me-search has been critiqued for its lack of subjectivity, association with self-indulgence, being touchy-feely, and overly emotional (Golub, 2008). Many researchers have been taught that research undergirded in subjectivity is good, rigorous research. However, social justice-oriented research aims to contribute to social change through emancipatory, critical, and participatory research; often me-search. Holman-Jones (2005) described the challenge of negotiating research and advocacy for a community as a “balancing act,” with the line of neutrality blurred. Me-search is a choice; a decision. For me, a Black woman from a family of strong Black women, conducting research on Black women, working for the good of Black women, this study, this work, holds a special place in my heart. Through narrative, I hope to lay the groundwork for more work like mine to follow.

3.11 Limitations

Despite the deliberate effort to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, I considered the limitations when reviewing the findings of the study. First, I know some of the study participants, have heard negative stories about their campus culture, and share racial and gender identity with participants. As such, it was possible to allow my own preconceived assumptions about their institutions, their College of Agriculture, and the participants’ experiences influence

my interpretation and retelling of my participants' experiences. Next, because the study focused on Black women graduate students within a College of Agriculture, participants may have been hesitant to speak openly and freely about their experiences due to possible breach in anonymity, resulting in negative repercussions from their advisors, their program, and/or the university. Last, triangulation is often used to aid in achieving credibility. However, due to the nature of narrative inquiry, it is not necessarily applicable to story-based research (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Triangulation is difficult to achieve because this study was conducted by one person in a limited time, which also limited time for prolonged engagement and additional data collection.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

4.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I will present the findings of this critical narrative inquiry. First, I will provide a review of the purpose of the study, along with the research questions that guided the study. To describe how intersecting marginalized identities shape Black women doctoral candidates' experiences in AgLS disciplines, I will present the findings in two sections: the participants' narratives (written in first person) and a thematic analysis across the participants' experiences.

4.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to describe how intersecting oppressed identities shape the experiences of Black women doctoral students in AgLS disciplines at Historically White Institutions and how those experiences shape their journey into or away from a faculty career in an AgLS discipline.

4.3 Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. How do intersecting marginalized identities shape Black women's doctoral experience in agricultural life science disciplines?
2. How have Black women's doctoral experiences shaped their journey into or away from a faculty career in an agricultural life science discipline?

4.4 Participant Information

This study explored the experiences of six Black women doctoral candidates in AgLS disciplines at HWIs. Each individual narrative includes a quote from the participant I felt represented them, their own personal narrative, and my summary of the participant's doctoral experience. Two of the six participants chose their own pseudonyms. The following are the narratives of Nahla, Ebony, Errica, Jayei, Karla, and myself.

All participants identified as a Black woman and are Ph.D. candidates in an AgLS discipline. Four of six participants are from the Southeastern U.S., one is from the Midwest, and one is from the Western U.S. Participants' ages ranged from 26-55. Five of six participants are enrolled in a social science AgLS discipline, and one is enrolled in a STEM-based AgLS discipline. Each participant is either a member of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS), or has interacted with or volunteered with MANRRS.

Table 4.1 *Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants*

Pseudonym	B.S.	M.S.	Ph.D.	Year in Program	Generation of College Student	Ph.D. Discipline	Institution
Nahla	HWI HBCU ^a	HBCU	HWI	4 th	2 nd	STEM	Ladson-Billings University
Ebony	HBCU	HBCU	HWI	4 th	1 st	Social Science	Kimberlé Crenshaw University
Errica	HWI	HBCU	HWI	2 nd	3 rd	Social Science	Kimberlé Crenshaw University
Jayei	MSI	HWI	HWI	4 th	2 nd	Social Science	bell hooks university
Karla	HWI	HWI	HWI	3 rd	1 st	Social Science	Hill Collins University
Torrie	HBCU	HBCU	HWI	5 th	1 st	Social Science	Purdue University

^aNahla started her Bachelor's degree at a HWI, and transferred to an HBCU.

4.5 Participant Narratives

Below are the participants' personal narratives (in italics). The personal narrative prompt consisted of two questions: (1) Tell me about your decision to pursue a Ph.D., and (2) Share 3-4 doctoral experiences that have stuck out to you thus far. The personal narratives are followed by my interpretative summary of the participants' experiences.

Nahla

"I'm meant to be here."

My decision for pursuing a Ph.D. was something that wasn't planned. I got my Master's and I wanted to go to work. I went to a conference and got the opportunity to explore different colleges and I knew that my passion was [STEM area]. I talked to different recruiters and realized that this was something that I could do. I always wanted to be a doctor, but I didn't know it would be in the direction of a Ph.D. I am in the fourth year of my program right now.

There are numerous experiences that have stuck with me this far. Within the past year, I was able to attend 8 conferences that were sponsored. They were very beneficial. I have had the opportunity to mentor high school and college students and expose them to microbiology. I've also seen my personal and mental growth throughout my program as well. I know that I am capable of accomplishing my goals in my field.

Nahla is a 4th year, second generation college student, 1st generation doctoral student, and attended an HBCU for her Bachelor's and Master's. Nahla has attended numerous conferences to assist with professional development and has received support from her advisor and mentor, also a Black woman. Nahla plans to graduate December 2019.

As I interviewed Nahla over the spring semester and into the summer, one thing was apparent: Nahla was going to be successful regardless of the challenges she faced. Nahla is very

soft spoken, goal-oriented, and steadfast in her faith. What stood out to me during our first interview was a focused, quiet strength in her answers. She mentioned several times during our conversations that she is proud of herself and her accomplishments. When I asked her how she felt reflecting on her experiences in her personal narrative, she said “It felt amazing...I’m speechless” and went on to say how proud of herself she was that she has made it this far and has met many of her professional goals. When asked about imposter syndrome, she said she refuses to let it affect her because she feels like that is what people want. Nahla has had a positive doctoral experience and still holds her initial goal of becoming a faculty member teaching and conducting research. Most of the challenges Nahla faced were concentrated around adjusting to her classes, how to talk to faculty, and the expectations of a doctoral student. Now she has an even larger adjustment: being a new mom while juggling school and home life. For some, this new challenge would be cause for concern. But Nahla is confident she will finish and finish well. She did not choose her pseudonym. With her experiences in mind, I chose “Nahla,” which means “successful.”

Ebony

“A long journey.”

I decided to pursue a Ph.D. after teaching high school science for a few years. During my time in the K-12 classroom, I found that utilizing agriculture as a media through which to teach science was beneficial to my students. This process allowed students [entry in]to the science and to “bring it to life” in a real world perspective. This process encouraged me to further my education so that I could better incorporate agriculture in a more explicit way within the science curriculum that I was teaching. Additionally, during this time the state of [redacted] was

undergoing a restructuring in the way that they paid teachers, doing away with master's pay; so although I had my master's degree, I was unable to receive the pay that should have come with the completion of it. I was also told during this time that even if the state were to allow master's pay, I would not qualify for it because my master's degree in [redacted] was not related to the topic area I taught in.

Some doctoral experiences that have stuck out to me thus far include:

- 1. During the doctoral program here, many of the faculty allowed students to address them by their first names.*
- 2. Many of those in my cohort had not had experiences working with students from diverse populations. This fact became evident upon several insensitive comments made by the students during what would have generally been considered innocuous conversations.*
- 3. My advisor left the university shortly before I defended my proposal. I was unprepared for his departure and did not [know] how to proceed. I was upset that a better transition plan was not put in place or available for students that may have found themselves in similar situations.*

Ebony is a 4th year, 1st generation college student from the Southern U.S. She attended an HBCU for her Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Ebony recently successfully defended her dissertation and plans to graduate December 2019. Her previous and current advisors are white men.

Ebony has a soft voice, and a strong spirit. When I talked with Ebony, there was clearly hurt in her voice. The experiences she endured included being the subject of department gossip, being silenced trying to avoid the Angry Black Woman stereotype, being diagnosed with

anxiety, and her advisor leaving so suddenly they were unable to develop a post-departure plan. Because of her experiences, Ebony is undecided about pursuing a faculty career but is open to returning to her alma mater (an HBCU) to teach. Her supports included her committee member who stepped in as her new advisor, her family, her church family, and individuals from her community. Ebony refuses to allow the obstacles and challenges she experienced to keep her from achieving her professional and academic goals, or allow them to define her or her doctoral journey. In fact, when I asked her to sum up the past year in one word, she instead gave me a statement: “It’s hard but it’s worth it.” She expounded, stating that as a woman of faith, God is working it all out for her good. Ebony did not choose her pseudonym. After hearing her story, I chose “Ebony,” which means “dark strength.”

Errica

“I used to be a big code switcher. I don’t do that anymore.”

I didn’t decide to pursue a Ph.D. for any specific reason. I didn’t have a certain career in mind and I wasn’t thinking about being able to research or learn new things. It just seemed like the most logical step after finishing my bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Some of the people who I was around in school, at conferences, my mentors, professors, and advisors all had a Ph.D. so it seemed that I should get one, too. I guess in the background there was the idea of earning more money, plus I was burned out from teaching high school and I wanted to shift away from that. I wasn’t having good luck getting job offers from the agricultural industry so I thought that going back to school for a Ph.D. would be a good option.

When I was still teaching high school, I was accompanying students to the National FFA Convention and I met a faculty member from my now Ph.D. program. She basically recruited

me. She told me that the program was 3 years long and didn't require the GRE exam. That was a big reason that I chose the program I'm in. I told her what school I went to for my master's and she told me that several alumni from my master's institution were Ph.D. students in the department. I went to visit during their prospective student weekend and got to meet the faculty and students. The campus and town seemed nice so I decided to apply. Once I was accepted, I was able to secure an assistantship and made plans to move and began my first semester in the program.

Pursuing a Ph.D. is difficult in general. There's a learning curve with a lot of things such as learning the language of your field, learning about and situating yourself in research paradigms, knowing where to get help and how to ask for it. Then there are other things on top of all that such as feelings that come up related to the "imposter syndrome" or questioning the decision to pursue the Ph.D. It can wreak havoc on mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. One thing that has stuck out to me so far is the importance of having a community to support you. That can look different for different people but for me, it was getting close to some of my peers in my department, building relationships with other Black people outside of my department, and leaning on my family. This process has also taught me the importance of taking care--mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Seeing a therapist, listening to podcasts, doing things I love and enjoy, taking breaks, and focusing on getting done as soon as I could.

In addition to learning all of the things needed to be a good researcher and to matriculate through a Ph.D. program and into the workforce, there are also things I learned that have had a transformative experience for my life personally. I was able to take classes in contemporary pedagogies and nonformal learning which exposed me to different pedagogies and theories. I read books from bell hooks and Paulo Freire for the first time and was exposed to

feminist theory and critical race theory. I had never learned about these things until my Ph.D. program. I read a book called Shifting and was just truly changed by the things I was being exposed to. I was learning how to be critical of the structures around me. I'm thankful for that.

Though many experiences have been positive, there were times where things weren't so positive. During orientation at the beginning of my first semester, faculty in my department would continuously say that our Ph.D. was what we made it and that we had the freedom to make it our own. They would present the message of us all being colleagues and the image of a collegial department. Yet, different things would happen that contradicted that message and image. I felt that things that happened were to me rather than with me. Decisions were made and things happened that I wasn't fully made aware of. I felt uncomfortable and disrespected in a few instances.

Most recently I went to my region's [conference for agricultural educators] conference for the first time and could immediately see why Black agricultural faculty choose to not attend this conference. The environment isn't particularly welcoming or inclusive and it really made me think about my career path. I don't know how willing I am to be the only Black faculty member in a department that doesn't have a real commitment to diversity and inclusion. Hopefully, when I start to look for jobs, I can find something that is more fitting. But as of right now it seems that if you pursue a Ph.D., people expect you to also pursue a faculty position and I think there needs to be more recognition of other career options and to at least truly commit to diversity initiatives in agricultural departments.

Errica is a 2nd year, 3rd generation college student and 1st generation doctoral student from the Midwestern U.S. She attended a PWI for her Bachelor's degree, an HBCU for her Master's degree, and plans to graduate May 2020. Her advisor is a white man.

What stood out to me in discussions with Errica was the hope and perseverance in her voice. Errica was one of two participants who earned her Bachelor's from a PWI. However, her undergraduate PWI experience was very different from her doctoral PWI experience. Her undergraduate institution was located near a large, diverse city and as a result, her undergraduate institution was very diverse. In contrast, she is very aware of her minority status. Errica mentioned that she felt closer to the faculty at her HBCU and considered them mentors. There are no Black faculty at her current institution, and she does not consider her advisor her mentor. For example, expressing her concern about possibly being the only Black faculty member in a department, she stated "that's something I would share with a mentor. Not that I couldn't share that with him, it's just that I don't want to." When she started her program, she was in a long-distance relationship which got old fast. Now her partner lives closer, but still not in the same city. When she experienced challenges, she turned to her faith, friends, family, and journaling. Errica mentioned experiencing imposter syndrome and briefly considered leaving her program, but stated she had invested too much time and money into the program. When she started her doctoral program, she was unsure about pursuing a faculty career. However, after her experiences with research, teaching, and outreach, she is now open to a faculty career. Errica chose her own pseudonym.

Jayei

"Where there's a creative will, there's a creative way."

Being a member of two underrepresented groups, I've experienced being taken for granted and overlooked in K-12 and in college level learning environments. Because of my experiences, I have firsthand insight to how many others are similarly overlooked and not being

taught the importance of education or shown the greater career opportunities within their reach. A goal of mine is to combat teacher-lack-of-expectations, in particular, among middle school African American students.

- A. The power of mentorship. In particular, women-to-women mentorship as a mentee and mentor.*
- B. How white power and white privilege is used on a predominately white research-one university campus. In particular, the malice acts that are committed by faculty members and high-level administrators with the sole purpose of destroying a student's confidence, goals, hopes, dreams, while obliterating that student from a college/program, degree completion, scholarly acknowledgment, etcetera.*
- C. The importance of my voice as an agent for social justice.*
- D. Where there is a will, there is a way.*

Jayei is a 4th year, 2nd generation college student, and 1st generation doctoral student from the Western U.S. She attended a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) for her Bachelor's degree and the same PWI for her Master's and Ph.D degrees. Jayei plans to graduate in August 2020. Her advisor is a Black man.

Jayei's energy and passion for her research, mentorship, and achieving her goals were apparent during our interviews. Her career goals from when she entered her graduate program remain the same: she is still interested in becoming a faculty member. Jayei was the only participant from a non-HBCU MSI; however, she described a similar experience to the participants from HBCUs: a feeling of welcome, inclusion, and support in contrast to the PWI experience. When she enrolled at her PWI, she was a doctoral student in a different discipline.

Her first advisor gave her a near-failing grade in a course out of spite, which caused her GPA to take a nosedive. She mastered out, with the understanding with her next advisor (in the same discipline) would take her on as a Ph.D. student. However, he reneged on the agreement, and Jayei shifted her focus to staying in school and employing her “where there’s a will, there’s a way” attitude. When Jayei first entered her agriculture department, she felt like a “fish out of water,” because the discipline was very different from her original. She also mentioned feeling like a part of her research group, which consists mostly of Black students and women, but not particularly a part of her department. Furthermore, she describes difficulty in conversing with some faculty, citing her identity as a Black woman as a possible issue for the faculty. It is also important to note that Jayei is a non-traditional student, but she believes it has worked to her advantage; she explained she is glad she returned to school and came back with a “firmer grip on who I am as a person, and who I wanted to continue to grow into as a person.” Given her insightful interviews, her energy, and her tenacity, I gave her the pseudonym “Jayei” which means “a strong woman like an elephant.”

Karla

“A continuation of moving mountains.”

Karla is a 3rd year, 1st generation college student from the Southern U.S. She attended a PWI for her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, so the PWI setting is not new to her. Karla plans to graduate December 2019. Her advisor is a white woman.

While I did not know Karla personally prior to our interviews, I knew of her and knew she was a go-getter. She has held leadership positions in several agricultural organizations, and is known as an advocate for minoritized populations in agricultural disciplines. Karla was not shy

about discussing her accomplishments or the obstacles she has faced during her doctoral program. She has experienced microaggressions from individuals in and outside of her department, a failed preliminary exam attempt, and isolation from her department. As a student who has attended two PWIs prior to her doctoral program, Karla was no stranger to the PWI setting. However, she found her experiences to be very different at her doctoral institution. At her Bachelor's and Master's institutions, she received support from faculty members in her department and expected to receive similar support in her doctoral program. Unfortunately, she did not receive the support she was used to, which contributed to her feelings of isolation. Though she knew before her doctoral program she did not want to pursue a career in the professoriate, her experiences solidified her decision. She recently obtained a position working with the government. Clearly, Karla will succeed despite the challenges she has experienced or will experience. Karla chose her own pseudonym.

Torrie

“The plan is to tell the truth.”

I knew it was time for a change. I had been a long-term substitute teacher and working at Express [clothing store] on the weekends. I made decent money for a single person with no kids but felt like there was no direction or movement in my life. I found out that Dr. E would be visiting my alma mater and decided to see what was up. I met Dr. E (we had been emailing back and forth) and Brittini Brown, his Ph.D. student – a Black woman in person. I also met his colleague, Dr. Knobloch. Dr. Esters helped me apply, I took the GRE, and I got in. My Ma [maternal figure] passed in 2011 and she was the real reason I stayed in Greensboro (where I'm

from) for so long. When I saw the opportunity to leave, expand knowledge, and chase dreams, I left.

- a. *Surgery: May 2016 – 2nd semester of my 2nd year, I found out I needed to have surgery. Several large fibroids were disrupting everyday life. I had a period the entire month of May. I almost passed out on several occasions. I was soaking through ultra tampons paired with overnight pads. In two hours. One day I could not leave the house. The day I almost passed out in WalMart was the day I made an appointment at PUSH with the gyno [gynecologist] I had been seeing. Usually when I see her, she is upbeat and cracking jokes. I must have looked like death because as soon as I walked in her office her face dropped. She gave me Tylenol for my fever, examined me, and ordered blood tests. She referred me to a Black woman gyno, Dr. Sam, at St. Elizabeth's. Dr. Sam examined me and ordered more tests. A week later I went to my follow up appointment and she tells me I must have surgery. My surgery happened in August and my aunt in NC stayed with me for two weeks. The hard part was getting back in the swing of school after being out for a month. I was so tired. I was out of breath. Moving slow. Couldn't sing. I feel like I didn't get my energy back until spring 2018, which made school very difficult. That I was struggling showed in my work (research and assistantship) and it directly affected my relationship with my advisor.*
- b. *Candidacy: I reached candidacy in fall 2017. I guess. I didn't really know what my committee was looking for, but I don't think that at the time I would have been able to produce it even if I knew. I didn't do well overall, but I really bombed one question during the written exam. My advisor called three different meetings with me basically*

telling me how awful I did and how much I would need to prove myself during the meeting. He also said that I would have to ace the oral portion in order to pass. But the way he said it implied that I would not pass. I went into the oral exam defeated. Like, why are we even meeting? Just send me home. I did pass, but I felt like I didn't deserve to pass and that my committee passed me out of pity. I participated in the Black Graduate Student Association's Candidate's Rite of Passage ceremony, but I didn't feel like I earned it. A year later and I still tear up at the thought of prelims [preliminary exams] and I still feel like it was given to me.

- c. Proposal Meeting: My proposal meeting went much better than my exams. I did not foresee that happening. I went into it afraid it would be like prelims, even though I had learned so much more since the exams. My advisor made me even more anxious, stating that I would have to show that I had grown since prelims. The day of my proposal meeting, my committee assured me that the meeting would not be the same as prelims, and they were right. They saw growth. They passed me during prelims because they believed I could and would improve, not out of pity. But it took until that day for me to realize that.*

I am a 5th year, 1st generation college student from the Southern U.S. I attended an HBCU for my Bachelor's and Master's. I plan to graduate in August 2019. My advisor is a Black man who attended an HBCU for his Bachelor's and Master's, and a PWI for his Ph.D.

When I reflect back on my own experiences, I can say that in comparison to many, I have had a good doctoral experience. I enjoy working with my advisor; my research assistantship was emotionally, personally, and professionally fulfilling; and I have experienced a sense of belonging within my department. I realize my experience is different from some of my

participants' experiences. I did relate to my participants in feeling a great deal of stress around preliminary exams. Several of us also shared a prior HBCU experience, and having Black women faculty advisors and mentors to lean on from our previous institutions. I also share a concern that a couple participants had about being the sole Black faculty in a department. Similarly, I turned to my family, local friends, friends from home, and mentors for support to navigate challenges I experienced. I do consider my advisor my mentor, and consider other faculty and staff on campus a mentor in some form. Having these local mentors, many of whom are of color, has worked to my advantage when I need advice about jobs, letters of recommendation, and help with research. I know that without the supports I had during the doctoral journey, I would not have made it through. I agree whole-heartedly with Ebony about the doctoral process: "It's hard but it's worth it."

I decided to present the data with the participants' personal narratives, my summative interpretations, and themes across the narratives. I felt the participants' words from their personal narratives were important to the study, and I wanted the reader to read the stories directly from the participant first before my retelling of events. I presented the rest of the relevant data in chunks, organized by theme. Again, relevant chunks of story were presented in first person to humanize my participants' experiences through voice. Last, the reader will notice there is not much data presented from me. While I am also a participant and do share some experiences, my interviews tended to deviate from the interview protocol. Therefore, my interviewer and I did not collect a great deal of data that fit within the themes presented below.

4.6 Theme 1: “I Don’t Know What I Don’t Know”: 1st Generation Students Navigating Imposter Syndrome and the Hidden Curriculum

Some faculty assume their doctoral students are already completely self-aware and developed, and often immediately treat their doctoral student as a research and teaching colleague. As a result, some faculty forget about their students’ developmental needs (Gardner, 2009). Several of the participants, including myself, are either first-generation college students or first-generation doctoral students. Faculty assumptions and navigating the hidden curriculum, combined with student assistantship roles and the first-generation college student status can contribute to imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome is the belief that one’s success is due to external factors (e.g., luck) despite one’s own hard work and achievements (Caselman, Self, & Self, 2006; Dancy & Brown, 2011), and the fear being exposed as an imposter (Mazzula & Campón, 2019). Dancy and Jean-Marie (2014) described imposter syndrome as a condition of internalized racism due to white supremacy, and is most often experienced by people in historically marginalized groups (Dancy, 2017). Students of color that suffer from internalized racism subconsciously believe white students are superior to students of color, which can cause students of color to feel othered and question their abilities (Dancy & Jean-Marie, 2014). When discussing how they felt conducting independent research and having conversations with faculty about research, at least two students mentioned the exact phrase “I don’t know what I don’t know” and expressed they felt not knowing due to being a first-generation doctoral student worsened their feelings of imposter syndrome. As a result, this theme will be divided into two sub-themes: Navigating the Hidden Curriculum and I Feel Like an Imposter.

4.6.1 Navigating the Hidden Curriculum

When I asked my participants about their expectations going into their doctoral program, their answers were all fairly similar, expressing they did not really have any concrete expectations outside of their advisor helping with research and going to class. However, we all know there is so much more to pursuing a doctoral degree. Students often embark on this journey without totally understanding how much of an undertaking the doctoral process can be. Additionally, as first-generation college/doctoral students, we often do not know who our resources are and/or where to find them, what paperwork or forms are needed, the best instructors and courses to take, or the unspoken policies and procedures of the department and/or institution. The participants describe below how navigating the hidden curriculum feels like navigating uncharted waters.

Ebony:

I don't know that I really had any [expectations]. I'm a first gen [generation] college student, so I'm definitely first gen PhD. I guess I expected that [my] advisor [would be] was very generic. What I got in the handbook [and] what I heard when I came to interview [is] that your advisor's going to be here to assist you...recommend courses that may be beneficial to what you're trying to accomplish regarding your research. They will be here to help you get published and help you navigate, you know, the waters as far as obtaining your degree. And then...they discuss if you have issues, you talk to your advisor and they can help you navigate whatever personal or professional issues that you have.

I do think I believed graduate school was going to be pretty much like my undergrad and my master's was. Like you go, you do your work, you keep your head down, and you get out. But that was not the case. It seems like, you know, it was politics

everywhere. And whether you wanted to be involved or not, you were going to be impacted.

I pray to the Lord that I do not I have seeds of bitterness, but there was again a lot that I didn't know as a first-gen college student. Especially as a first-gen PhD student, I didn't know what to ask. I didn't know how to communicate with my faculty members because my advisor was my point of contact. He asked to advise me, so I went to him with all of my issues because I thought he would give me the best input. He was my person. He was supposed to be my person. That's the way I perceived it.

Errica:

Okay, so my parents were instrumental regarding support for me, being a support system. But beyond that, navigating college, especially beyond a bachelor's level, they weren't able to really be that helpful. My mom got her bachelors actually, let's see, about two years ago. She's a recent college grad, so that's why I say they were able to really help me, and support, and talking things out, but as far as just navigating graduate school and college in general not that much. That help came from my grandma; [she] was helpful too, 'cause she had a master's degree. She was helpful, but not in the sense of like Black in agriculture and that kind of stuff.

I went to class, I worked with my advisor, I TA. But it was really just navigating politics and power. Power was a big issue I had my first year just navigating issues with people. It was navigating relationships with people was just stuff I couldn't really anticipate. All these unspoken rules and hidden things that you're supposed to know but nobody really taught you so they just expect you to know certain things. Recently, I came to the conclusion that that's something I cannot avoid, I guess.

But in my research design class, sometimes I felt challenged in the sense of not knowing some of the terms or some of the concepts. And it was kind of like this expectation to know certain things, and I didn't. I didn't know them. So in those moments I felt challenged.

Karla:

I'm one of those people [who] when I learn new material, I have to talk through it in order to feel comfortable about it and when I took my oral or my written [oral or written preliminary exams], they asked me some questions that I never learned in my program. So, I thought that was a very unfair...but they were like, "You should've, that's what PhD students do." But I was like, "If I didn't know that I needed to know it, then how was I expected to pass it?" It just blows me that I'm around all these women that have doctorates but they try to make it so much harder than it has to be.

Torrie:

I don't know if it's something about how vague it feels when you're doing it [preliminary exams], you don't know exactly what you're supposed to write. You don't know the exact amount you're supposed to write. And then is it because you're supposed to know this thing that you haven't done before. Well, how would I know that, I've never done it.

The participants' responses indicate that first-generation status, along with unacknowledged expectations as hidden curriculum, presented a challenge and in some cases resulted in strained advising relationships (McCormack, 2005).

4.6.2 Feeling Like an Imposter

I did not ask any questions specifically about imposter syndrome and how it has shaped my participants' doctoral experiences. However, it still emerged in several participants'

narratives as something they experienced going into their doctoral programs and for some, was made worse by critical events that occurred during their program. Additionally, the same participants who discussed their first-generation status along with navigating the hidden curriculum are the same participants who expressed feeling imposter syndrome.

Ebony:

I had imposter syndrome before. But him [advisor] leaving made it worse. Because once he left, I saw all the deficits. When I got with my new advisor and he [was] asking questions and we're talking about things. And I'm like, "I don't know about this. Like what is this? Am I supposed to be doing this? Like is this a thing?" And you know, that new advisor who's been here a lot longer, who has been great, by the way. You know, [he] started asking these questions and being more hands-on. Not overbearing, but I guess doing what I assume an advisor is supposed to do. Noticing those deficits and what I'm getting now compared to what I was getting with my previous advisor. They [other students] were getting this all the time before that. I don't want to come out of this institution and not have a degree because they trying to get me out. But I really don't know what I need to know to have a degree. So that's something I battle with now. And I think that advisory experience – I mean I think I had it anyway just a little bit, but definitely the advisory experience made it worse.

Errica:

Preparing I was so nervous. I was so consumed with prelims [preliminary exams]. I was so nervous. I was like, just not necessarily freaking out or anything, but just very concerned with it. I just wanted to do well, because I knew that that was the next step and I needed to pass. I had to pass, like I said, we came in and I've been ever since trying to

just do what I need to do to be done...Just very concerned with it, nervous...During the process, it was like, is what I'm writing good enough? Is what I'm writing going to meet what my committee members are looking for? It was like waves, one minute I'll be feeling confident about it and then the next day I'd be like, this is terrible. This doesn't make any sense.

Karla:

So [for] my qualitative section I'm like, "How can I make this stronger?" She's telling me, "These are where I see your weak points, but these are my suggestions to make it better." And I was able to talk through what I had read in the literature in order to support why I felt the way I felt, and some of those things were acceptable because I knew my stuff. And then my outside committee member, he was like, "These are the questions I'm gonna ask you." And we were able to talk through them intellectually. So when I got to my orals [oral preliminary exam], I was comfortable because I had already talked through the answers. I had verification that I knew what I knew. But they often make me feel like I don't know what I know, which makes me feel like I have that imposter syndrome.

For these participants, their imposter syndrome was directly connected to experiences with their advisor and/or committee, indicating that the advising relationship plays a role in students' experience with imposter syndrome.

4.7 Theme 2: Department Climate: Chilly

I asked my participants about their level of feeling included and/or excluded in their departments, as well as how it feels to be a Black woman in their departments. Most of my participants either feel like they are not a part of their department or have felt excluded at some

point. Factors that played a role in participants' perceived departmental climate included classroom climate, interactions with peers and faculty, and navigating department politics.

Regarding feeling like a part of the department, Jayei stated, "I've always felt more like I belonged with [my research] group, but not a part of the department, if that makes sense." Jayei is part of a mostly Black research group. She goes into detail:

I felt understood. I felt I was in a safe space. You know, I get that. But I would often say...it's a privilege to be in this space...Even when we were in classes where I might not have had a class with them. I might've been there by myself. I was already empowered by my group. I know if there was some ill treatment going on and I brought it to [Dr. Researcher's] attention, he's gonna be heard. So just having the comfort of the space with my advisor and the other lab members, when you walk out into the campus if you're in classrooms that are all white areas, I think you feel a little bit stronger. A bit more confident because you know when you go back to your nest, you can talk it up with the rest of your group.

One of the things too that I must say is that when I first came into the group...I always felt like a little outsider because...they had all worked together, whatever. What I often learned though is that if there was a problem that needed to be worked out, they all jumped in together and worked it out. That right there just, you know, I mean, we [her research group] are privileged. We are really privileged on this campus to have that. I don't know any other group that does [that].

What is interesting about Jayei's experience is that her mostly Black research group is housed in a mostly white department. Here are her thoughts on this experience:

The ag [agriculture] department, from what I've observed, is very unique in that it's a strange dynamic that's going on that I feel there. It's like you've got this circle, and then you have this circle within that circle. That circle within that circle is the [research] group. Now, all of that exterior stuff, they [department members outside of the research group] don't engage with us. They barely speak to us. So that's letting me know that if Dr. Researcher would not be there, it would be a completely different story for us.

I asked Jayei to expand on her relationships with faculty in her department. She responded:

They're very surface. The relationships are “Hi and bye. How are you? How are things going?” Very surface. I just don't know how to have any type of relationship with the faculty members in our department. And you know to a large degree I have had negative interactions with faculty members at bell hooks university and I understand how they can use that pen or pencil to write you out, cross you off. So I have tried to slide under the radar.

Though Errica feels the faculty in her department are approachable and helpful, she also noted that there is a “layer of professionalism only. [They’re] not necessarily someone who I will go [to when] in need of support for something.” When I asked Ebony about her relationship with faculty, she said it is better than before. Specifically:

My second year, I felt like faculty members that I had directly interacted with and I had classes with knew that I would work but I've been also collaborating in projects with my original advisor and he dropped the ball. I've felt like because of that, I didn't think that faculty members would want to work with me on other things... the department's always said if you want to work with another faculty member, you can do that but I didn't know how to establish relationships to do that. I didn't know how to work and I didn't know

how to talk to my advisor about that without feeling like he might get offended. Then after he left and I was left in the lurch with no funding, all these things happened. I felt like the faculty members turned their backs on me. They felt like I was lazy the whole time. That I was the one not working, that I was the one disadvantaging the system, that I was doing things that they didn't want me to do knowingly in an effort to get ahead or get over. But this year was different. I think the advisor that I have, working with him, I think he's realized a lot. I think when he took me on, he was like alright, I'm going to help her and I feel like at that point, he took me on. He was like, I'll help her get out but I'm not going to do anything extra for her. But I think now as we worked together for almost a year, he sees my work ethic and that I'm not all of these bad stereotypes. I think that working with him now as he's seen my work ethic, his perception of me has improved and I feel like other faculty members' perception of me has improved as well because of that. I think that they're now starting to realize that the perceptions that they had of me was not all my fault. That there was some ill advisement going on with my original advisor. And so those issues they had with him were being reflected on me.

I then asked her how it made her feel that the faculty turned their backs on her. She responded:

I don't know. I don't really need their approval for personal validation but I need it for academic validation. I was hurt more than anything because I felt like as a cohort, as a department, they let me down because obviously they knew that what my original advisor was doing was not everything that it should've been but nobody stepped in. I'm a student. I'm here to learn. Not only am I a student, a first-gen [generation] college student. I don't know what I don't know and I've been pretty vocal about not knowing and asking questions about what I need. I was really hurt. I feel like you're turning your back on me

for a problem that you could've fixed a long time ago. I didn't know it was a problem because I didn't know what I did. The students can't advocate on their own if they don't know what they need to advocate for. I was hurt and I was angry. It took me a bit. I'm not going to lie. It took me a bit. I have very significant trust issues. I'm just getting to [the] point where I have trust in my new advisor now but I don't know. I don't trust anybody here because I feel like at any given moment, if I do or say something you don't like, I'm out the door.

When I asked Errica if she feels like part of the department, she indicated that she “frequently feels a part of it” but through her own intentional efforts. She explains:

I think most frequently a feel I part of it [the department]. I volunteer...so when we have prospective students, I help take students to lunch or on campus tours. On Friday I did one [take a prospective student to lunch] and a couple weeks ago. So I feel like you have to be intentional sometimes about being a part of the department. Like when there's things happening, if you don't go or you don't show up, then you just are not there. And so to feel like I'm a part of it, I felt like I needed to. Well, I like volunteering anyways. I always have liked volunteering. But I have to be intentional too...And yeah, just doing stuff like that, anything like that. Volunteering for stuff pretty much is when I feel most a part of the department 'cause then I'm present at stuff or for things.

And then also when there's...an issue. For example...a couple weeks ago when we took prospective students to lunch on campus, we had to pay for ourselves and the department [paid] for the students. So we have a graduate student committee, and the committee members brought to our coordinator that we didn't like that we had to pay for ourselves. So this next time the department is paying. They'll pay for people to take

students on lunch. So just things like that. When you have an issue and they make an effort to fix something or an initiative that's for graduate students in the department, it feels nice to have those things. So, yeah.

Similarly, Nahla also makes intentional effort to feel like a part of her department.

However, the racial makeup of her department is more diverse, which may also play a role in her department belonging. She explains:

Okay, so, in my department, I think the white numbers is lower. The ones that are there, I always seek, I always talk to them because they're in my office as well. On campus, it's [there are] a lot of different ethnicities on campus and I talk to everybody. So, I don't really focus on if they're white if that makes sense. Because I try to figure out where I can go to get help and everything. So, if I'm on campus, I go to the graduate diversity office or I go to classes, where a lot of interaction comes from. [There are] Chinese [people], people from Brazil...a lot of [people in] my department are from Brazil as well. So, I don't really see it as just like white, [though] they do say that this school is predominantly white. But I don't know how it is specifically here for graduate education.

I then asked Nahla what experiences make her feel like a part of her department. Her response:

I think it's more, it was more the participation. Like with the events that we have. I think that's why they do a lot of things to get us to interact with each other. Because when I first started I didn't go to any of these programs as much; I may have went to one or two meetings but over time when I started going I had a chance to talk to more people and it actually helped within the department to get to know things and understand. We're supposed to be required to go to these events. So, we get a chance to see a lot of things

[defenses, presentations, etc.] and how they go before we actually do ours, so we have some type of idea of what to do.

While Errica feels she now has a good relationship with her department, there was a time during her first year that she felt isolated. During her first year, she was a Teaching Assistant for a class in the department. She had an encounter with a student and the instructor on record, which led to a break in trust between her and her advisor. This is how it made her feel:

Everything that would've happened regarding feeling isolated would've been within my first year. My second year has been pretty much focusing on getting done...[making sure] I was established going into my second year. My first year is when I felt just kind of like, felt like I wasn't really sure who was necessarily someone who I could talk to or who I could trust in certain situations. And not necessarily with graduate students, it was like [how] I talked about before with faculty. But in the class where I was teaching, for example my department as a grad student was totally different from undergrad. It was totally different. It's just not diverse. It's just not there. And so I was teaching this undergrad class and it was all white. In those moments was when I kind of felt just kind of much different than how I've felt amongst graduate students in my department. So yeah, I would say everything surrounding teaching that class and working with those students is when I felt like that the most.

Karla indicated that she does not feel like a part of her department due to the lack of support in comparison to her master's institution, as well as some exclusionary encounters she experienced. She elaborates:

I thought I was gonna have that same support here [the same as her master's institution], but it's very telling that it's not...I've experienced a lot of microaggressions in my

department, which is new for me. This was my third PWI, I didn't think that it was gonna be a different experience. I knew that I was gonna be one of few, or the only one, so I knew that; that was the expectation. But because I had been supported by white people throughout my life, I didn't think that I wouldn't get that same support here and I thought that they would want me to succeed but it almost feels like I've been set up for failure in a few ways.

I asked Karla if she ever felt like a part of her department. What follows is an excerpt of our conversation:

Torrie: Is there a time that you've ever felt like a part of your department?

Karla: A part of my department? No.

Torrie: Like you belong?

Karla: No. And I say that because when we go to events, even campus events, I won't sit with my department. I'll sit with [other department], or my roommate because her PI, he voluntells me to do everything, which is fine. But whenever they have something going on, they always include me, so I just always sit with them.

Torrie: So if you were at an event on campus, and you are the first one at a table, and then people from your department come in, would they sit with you?

Karla: Probably not. Actually, so, if they're students they would. But if they were professors; no, not at all. And I say that because it happened at that conference. I didn't sit with a professor. Not one time. And there were times where I was one of the first few people in the room. They all sat together, but...

Torrie: So, okay. So they're saying, "Hey" to you, at home in the department, but out in public, they act like they don't know you. How does that make you feel?

Karla: Not comfortable in this department...Disappointed. Disappointed because, in a academic environment, you should never feel like that with your professors. And, again, I know that because I don't experience that with anybody from our other departments. But it's not like that here at all. I think I told you when we were at that conference, we went to a bar, and it was very uncomfortable the entire time.

The above findings show how participants' department experiences have shaped their perceived departmental climate. Two participants have experienced belonging within their department but partly due to their own intentional efforts.

4.7.1 Power, Politics, and Gossip

Karla had a challenging assistantship experience, having to answer to three faculty members which made her feel powerless. She describes the situation:

So the first assistantship I was under, I worked for three professors, and it was doing stuff that I absolutely had no interest in doing. One of them...well, two of them were the state evaluators for the Extension programs in the state and I knew I didn't wanna go into Extension. I wanna learn about it [Extension] but this isn't really what I wanna do. And so, I did that and then I also kept record of every time I went to their courses and stuff like that, and there is a track written system but, the professional on campus is the one that does it for the whole state so I would do that.

And then one of the other professors was the editor of one of the Ag and Extension journals. And I remember when I came into the program-I deal with anxiety really bad and when I move, it gets amplified and I space out and it takes me a while to get acclimated to just actually being in that space and being comfortable. But I let them know like, "Hey, I'm a hard deadline type of person because I can set soft deadlines for

myself to make sure I get it to you on time, but if you tell me you absolutely need it by this day, then you're gonna get [it] on [that day]." And they were like, "Well, that's not really how our discipline works; this, that and the other." I was like, "Yeah, but that's who I am, so even if it's not when you need it, just so you have it, let me know." And they would give me stuff like, "Oh, get it done when you get it done." It was very strange.

So when they did my evaluation, they pretty much gave me like 1's and 0's in some places and they told me they felt like I was always on edge and all this stuff and I was like, "Where is this coming from?" I got pissed because I was like, "I come to you all, I've been very open with what has happened in my life and my dad passing and you all say things like, 'Well, we just felt like you were really being short in the email or you're on edge'. It's almost like they were trying to make me the Angry Black Woman. I went to my department head I said, "I can't work for them anymore." And so that's how I ended up under my assistantship now. So that was actually my first year. And I cried because I was like, I've never got a bad review at work, I've always been told I have really good work ethic so this is like very bizarre to me.

Not only did Karla have issues during her first assistantship, she also experienced challenges with other faculty in her department, who Karla perceived to feel that students are in a subordinate position to faculty. She explains:

So, there was one teacher in particular that did a really good job on playing on our strengths, but for the most part, my department makes it a point to let you know that you're the student and they're the teacher and they make you feel like they can't learn from you. They make me feel like that on a regular basis. And it's not every department.

Like I feel I'm more included in [my roommate's] department than my own. I joke all the time because her boss, if they have like a symposium or whatever, they'll recruit me to help them with the setup and stuff like that, or if they're celebrating somebody, I get invited to their functions and my department doesn't do that at all.

Let me give you an example. We went to a [regional] conference and I'm sure you've heard of it, it's the [agricultural] conference. Like, I would speak to the people in my department and they wouldn't speak back to me and I was like, "Maybe they didn't hear me." And I'd say something again and people would stare at me like they were contemplating if they wanted to speak to me. Or, there was an instance where they paid for our drinks to go to a brewery. I don't really drink beer but I was like, I'll go be social. So I went and I was at the bar with one of the master's students and she left; there was a professor that was a student in the department when I got there [and] she's now faculty, and the department head. And they're like talking to one another but staring at me the whole time and it was very uncomfortable. And I was just like, "Who raised y'all?" Sorry this is unacceptable. Like that's horrible.

Unfortunately, it does not stop there. Karla has also had negative experiences in discussions with her department head, who in this situation, spoke condescendingly to her:

I told him [department head] a couple weeks before I went to D.C. for National Ag Day [that] I have the opportunity to go and lobby on behalf of the agricultural issues, and he was like, "Well, how much is that gonna cost me?" And I was like, "First of all, I'm going on behalf of MANRRS, so whenever it's MANRRS-related, they pay for everything. Second of all, I've asked for travel one time since I've been here, and that

was the first semester here when I was the [redacted].” So I’m like, “Why you still coming at me like that?”

And then I told him that I got reappointed to my position, and he was like, “Karla, when do you plan on graduating?” I said, “I’ll walk in December. My PI told me I’d be done writing by the beginning of August.” So she thinks I can attend it [agricultural conference] sometimes in August or beginning of September. He was like, “Well, is this hindering you from graduating on time?” And I was like, “No.” I’m like, “What’s the problem?” I do more...I get recognized for more shit than any graduate student in this department. I’m like, “Why you keep bothering me? Furthermore, I’m funded for a whole ‘nother year, not through this department. Why do you keep bothering me?” I have not missed a deadline, I’ve done everything that I’m supposed to do, I’ve presented at...my poster got accepted for the [agricultural] National Conference, and I found this out while I’m at the [other agricultural] conference. But I also got my mom’s autopsy results while I was there, and I’m running around with my head cut off. So responding or trying to figure out if they’re funding me for this is the last thing on my mind. So I talked to my boss last Tuesday, and she was like, “Yeah, I don’t have any funding for you to go.” So I was like, “Okay.” And she was like, “I’m pretty sure [Department Head] doesn’t have any money for you to go either.” I said, “Okay, well I’ll reach out to...our advisor for [agricultural organization]. I’ll reach out to him and the Dean of the Grad School to see if I can get the money.” And I was like, “How is it that you send these professors to conferences every conference that comes up, but you don’t support your grads. You knew this conference was coming up and you knew that your grad students were applying to go to this conference. Our PI told us to submit, but now there’s no funding.” So that’s

frustrating 'cause it feels like I'm not supported, not only in the mentorship, but just the demeanor of my department head. He's [department head] making it seem like what I'm doing is a problem, but in nobody else's mind is it a problem. It's actually a great thing.

Due to power dynamics, the conversation Karla had with her department head is an issue.

Departmental faculty, staff, and leaders are supposed to be people students can go to in time of need. Instead, Karla is left trying to navigate power and politics without any mentoring from her advisor.

Below Errica describes a conversation with her advisor due to rumors and gossip floating around the department:

A couple weeks after the whole class schedule situation my advisor in one of our meetings said, "Well, there's some rumors going around that you're having a hard time adjusting." And I said, "From who?" So he wouldn't tell me. But, I found out later that it was kind of coming from upper faculty that I was having an issue. I knew that it had to have been related to all of these issues that was happening. The class, and probably what my co-TA [Teaching Assistant] had told my department head, probably had an impact on this rumor. I'm just like, "I'm fine." So I kind of felt like I had to be like, "Everything is fine." Any time somebody asked me how I was doing, [my response was] "Great."

Because I felt like if I said anything else then it was gonna be all, "Oh, Errica's not doing well." Or whatever. I was like, "I don't have time for that. Especially if you're not gonna tell me who it was." The gossip is real. It's real, and it's surprising. These are supposed to be people who are in leadership, and supposed to be able to show you how to be in academia.

Ebony has also had issues navigating department politics and gossip. Here she describes how the department tries to control how the graduate students interact outside of school:

So learning how to navigate that and like kind of trying to figure out work-life balance. And I guess also learning how to navigate the landscape and the culture in the department. They even went so far as like a couple of people...I mean when you have departments, everybody's not going to be friends. Everybody [is] going to be cordial, professional, or whatever. But that doesn't mean you got to spend your time outside of work together. There was a situation where several graduate students had gotten together. And it was just like a couple of people. And there were a couple pictures of Facebook of the people that got together. [Department faculty's point of view is:] Well, it wasn't inclusive and if there were going to be events with the graduate students gathering, everybody should be invited. Even though this was off campus in a personal home of another graduate student.

So learning how to navigate that because not only are you policing what I do at work, you're policing what I'm doing at home in my free time. I can't go on vacation, I can't hang out with one person unless I invite everybody. Like I'm not 12. You not my mama. Like I'm a grown ass woman. I been doing this. I pay my own bills. Ain't no lights in my house in your name. So, it was really trying to navigate the culture. I found difficult because I felt like that's petty and uncalled for. I hadn't said anything unprofessional, done anything unprofessional at work. So why are you trying to police what I do outside of the nine to five or eight to five or whatever hours I need to be on campus doing my work?

Both Errica and Ebony had to deal with faculty discussing and gossiping about their performance and/or what they do in their free time. Faculty gossip and departmental politics help perpetuate the inequity in faculty-student relations and can contribute to the anxiety doctoral students feel (Fine & Wohl, 2018). For example, I asked Ebony how department politics have affected her doctoral experience. She responded:

So, upon my advisor leaving and inter-departmental gossip, people [were] saying that he was bullied and that's the reason he couldn't do his job. And he was lazy or things like that. So [I'm] wondering, on his end, how he was navigating his role as a faculty member within the department. And it impacted me. Now how much of that was actually his fault and how much of that was just residuals from, you know, whatever he was going through. I don't know. I just know how it impacted me. They weren't happy with some of the things that he told me was okay. And so it almost felt like when I lost my funding, nobody wanted to touch me. Like I was like, you know, the leper in so many words. It was like I was a leper, nobody wanted to touch me. They were scared they would get infected. So...You know, it took a lot for me to end up finding the funding to complete my degree. I ended up becoming connected with some other people in the university, external to the department. And you know, magic happened and my degree was funded for the remaining time.

When I asked Ebony to tell me about a time she felt excluded, she mentioned feeling excluded after her advisor left and the faculty turned their backs on her. She then stated, "I feel like they gossip with other students about me." I asked her to tell me more. She explained:

I was somewhere else, this faculty member said something about...abusing the privileges of graduate school, something like that. I was like oh, you're trying to come for me. But

this faculty member was not involved in the conversation that was had [with her advisor]. And even if they were, why is it something that's being publicly discussed? Now they're going around asking the other graduate students, especially Black graduate students: How much money do you make doing x, y, and z? Are you abusing the system?

Jayeri felt one of the major challenges she experiences is working with and communicating with faculty in her research group. Specifically:

I'm feeling really challenged right now when working with some of the faculty members in our department who I don't quite understand their way of communicating... 'Cause I feel like if you say the wrong thing and get under their skin, then they make life a living hell for you. That's when they invoke their power. I feel like I'm challenged just to stay under their radar. And I've always got that on my mind because I've seen it happen. I just wanna stay under the radar, get my work done, and get on. And that's a challenge for me.

I asked Jayeri if she thought the challenge in communication she experienced is due to her identity as a Black woman. She responded:

I do. I think it has to do with me being one, a Black woman. No, excuse me. One, Black. Two, a woman. Three, of my age. Four, it might even be the way that I look. I don't know. All of that, I feel there's a challenge there. I'll tell you, that challenge is being taken seriously. Understanding my boundaries and respecting them.

4.7.2 Classroom Experiences

Earlier, Karla discussed how faculty in her department operate on a clear hierarchical structure with students at the bottom. Because classrooms reflect society (Ong et al., 2011), this hierarchy spills over into the classroom. Furthermore, faculty dispositions and pedagogical methods can heavily influence how Black women experience classroom climate and

subsequently, her classroom participation (Johnson, 2006). Below, Karla's instructor discounts Karla's work experiences:

There's one teacher in particular; she's actually on my committee. She teaches Program Planning and Program Evaluation. I actually got out of taking Program Evaluation 'cause I took it in my Master's Program. But I took the Program Planning class with her, and another teacher teamed up with her to teach that class. But anytime we would give them real-world experiences of how we've incorporated programming in what we do, they belittled it. I told her, "In corporate America, they don't use logic models." "Well, the correct way is to do ..." I said, "But this isn't what they're doing. I'm not saying I don't need to know it, but I'm letting you know this isn't what they do." But that's her baby, so she was so offended and was like, "No, this is what you need to do." And I'm like, "Girl, this ain't what they doing. I'm talking to the Directors of Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of these Fortune 500 companies. This is ain't what they doing. And if they are, it's not the Wisconsin model."

Jayeri's research interests called for her to take a number courses outside of her department. I asked her about her experiences and she responded:

Oh, it was fun. It was fine. I'm assuming off of their body language and perhaps their questions... they were all assuming I couldn't be in [STEM]. How does the shoe fit [STEM] and [redacted]. A lot of them have undergraduate degrees in [STEM]. They go into [STEM], I'm not sure why, however the [STEM individuals] that I've met outside of my husband seem to think that they're on top of the world in some kind of way, but you see I'm married to a very talented [STEM individual] who tells me all the time, you [Jayeri] are on top of the world too. He is very humble, but yeah [STEM] students over in

[STEM], they're cocky. They're always very surprised. They were always very surprised when they saw I expressed an idea that was so different or so outside of the box. But you know, they were cordial about it.

I then asked her about her home department. She stated:

Yeah, they thought they knew everything too. They thought they knew everything too and they didn't. We'd have a class with [Dr. PI] and [Dr. Researcher] and we had [Asian Peer] and yeah that whole group, they thought they knew more. It's funny because white people, they are... They say that we're messed up. They're very aggressive. They'll cut you off to get their idea in first... To get their comment in first and all of that. And they're wrong. They're wrong, and that's because they want to appear smarter and because they feel like because we're Black, they're supposed to be. That I had a lot of experience with.

When I asked Ebony about her classroom experiences, she stated she has not had any negative experiences except for one:

Haven't really had issues except for one time. And that was with an Indian [South Asian] TA. And I feel like I had those issues because the same person from my department that had not had diverse interactions, made a comment to the TA and then the TA starts looking at me. [The TA told me] I need to watch what I'm looking at on my computer when I'm in class, because it's distracting to other students. I cussed in my head. But I couldn't show out like I wanted to. Because here, I mean, a lot of times I feel like I have to represent them [HBCU students]. Because we do have a strong pipeline from, you know, and I don't want to be...I don't want anything I do to reflect negatively on the institution that I came from. Not even about Black women. Just about my institution and

my HBCU. Not wanting my behavior to negatively impact students that might come through in the future.

Here, participants described negative classroom experiences. In addition to navigating coursework and peer relationships, participants had to carefully navigate experiences with instructors. Ebony's response revealed an association with the Black Tax – the notion that Black students must work hard with no complaints about racism in order to gain or keep privileges (Burrows, 2014). Further, she felt she had to represent well for Black students to keep the pipeline intact from her HBCU to her HWI for other Black students.

4.7.3 Peer Relationships

Peers play an important role in students' levels of belonging and departmental/campus climate (Brown, 2016). I asked my participants about their relationships with peers in their departments. When I asked Jayei about her peers, she stated she had a good relationship with most of her research group, a rocky relationship with some peers, and no relationship with others.

I've kept my distance from most of them... And here's the thing, we all have our areas where we're just not... it's not our thing, like [Asian Peer is] incompetent, but then [Asian Peer] wants to approach me like I'm incompetent... I know I'm Black, African American, however you want to see it, and I know you believe in the hype that surely I can't know more than you, but you're wrong. [white Peer] had a problem with me. I don't know what it is. She wants to tell me what to do or whatever. I don't know what it is. [Asian Peer] I have no more patience for because now I'm going to treat her like I would treat my son if he were not to listen to me or if he were to disrespect me.

Errica:

Good relationships. I'm thankful that my department is pretty diverse for the most part, to the point where I'm not the only Black woman in my department or the only Black person. I'm thankful for that. And so because of that and because I came in knowing people from before, prior to entering that department, I had relationships with people. So yeah, and even people who I didn't know before, I never really had a difficult time getting to know anyone or anything like that. Everyone for the most part seems to be pretty open to just being nice and kind and working together. 'Cause we all share offices and take classes together, so we have to come in contact with each other. And sometimes we do things, social things like happy hours, and just stuff like that.

Ebony:

Within our department, I think because I've been here, at this point, I probably been here the longest out of all the graduate students in my department. A lot of them come to me about advice, especially other students of color. Probably maybe every month, I get two or three people reaching out to me about different things or different questions. But I also think some of that has to do with the work that I've done and obviously inclusion and diversity. I had other Black graduate students at other departments across campus reaching out to me asking how to address certain issues or who do they need to call, just connecting them. I don't necessarily know that I have friendships but I'm definitely seen as a resource. I think I'm more of a mentor in some spaces. Mentor, resourcing, I guess I'm a connector in some ways.

Ebony went on to describe an encounter with a white female peer:

But particularly our first year, we have our graduate student council. And I think I was on the social committee. And we were planning an event. And we were just talking, getting

to know each other. And this student says, "Black people can only go to college if they get scholarships." Proceeds to talk junk about Black people here. And then later on during my time here, tells me that Black folk don't speak English. Well, because I said something back, I was a threatening Black woman that she was afraid of. To the point that someone, a faculty member in my department, came to me.

While many students regardless of race/ethnicity need scholarships, loans, and/or fellowships to attend college, here a peer used stereotypes of Black people needing financial handouts in order to attend college. This stereotype manifest as a microinsult – messages that demean a person's race and is characterized by an insulting hidden message (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008).

Nahla:

The students, I actually have a good relationship with the students. In meetings on the, what do they call it, the [departmental] graduate student association. So we all get together at least once a month and eat and have professional development, things like that. If somebody knows something they'll help everybody out.

Her response made me wonder why her experience was glowingly more positive, so I asked her what made her department different from others. Nahla's response:

I think it's just about whatever you make out of it. So my department is big, but it's small in a sense because we're not on campus, we're off campus in our own building. And the way Hill Collins University is set up, they have huge departments, we have a big department but it's still, it's kind of intimate because we can see and know everybody in our building.

Karla:

So the Master's students typically are not [in] a cohort [structure], but they typically find community within themselves. But Ph.D.-wise, I got [Peer 1] down the hall. She's in our department, but she's a different major. She also failed her candidacy exams the first time. I have two Master's students across from me, and then another Master's student. But they're...I don't know. I know that the Master's students communicate, but the Ph.D. students don't really hang out or anything. There's two people at the end of the hall, and I talk to them frequently just because we are under the same advisor. We'll go to lunch or something on campus, but I normally don't hang out with them outside of campus. They have personalities that make me very anxious, at least those two particular people. One is just socially awkward, and the other is just high-strung all the time, and it just makes me very anxious. Those are timid women, and I'm just not used to being around timid women. [I hang out with] my roommate and her officemate. We'll all hang out, and then one of my former students ended up becoming a friend/mentee. So, every now and then, we'll get together and do a study session at my house or get our business ventures together or whatever that looks like. But other than that, nobody. [College Town] is a very lonely place for me.

I asked my participants what it feels like to be a Black woman in their department and/or at their university. Their responses are below.

Karla:

[On campus] Defeated. Undervalued. Noticeable. Well noticeable because you stand out...And then I chose isolated because it really does feel like you're on an island, at least particularly at this school. I didn't feel that at [undergraduate or graduate institutions], but here, you're really all you have and you may have a few friends on

campus but they're also dealing with their own struggles in their department and then things like that. And then what was the second word I used? I can't remember. Did I use undervalued? Yeah. So we bring a lot to the table but it kind of goes back to that, "I need to make sure that you know that you're the student, I'm the teacher, and even if you bring in this experience, we don't value that because you don't have a Ph.D."

[In department] Isolated. Yeah, that's probably the best word. I feel like I'm literally in a island. I'll show you real quick. See if I can flip my camera around... There you are. Yeah, so that is the hallway. There are professors that walk past this hallway all the time, and my door will be open, and they never speak. Matter of fact, since I've been on the phone with you, they have no idea I'm on the phone 'cause my ear buds are in, they don't speak to me at all.

Jayei:

[On campus] You know, it's like you are not heard, you're not seen. Now, the other end of the spectrum, I've been here for a while, I'm almost getting ready to leave. I've accomplished a lot and I think sometimes my reputation precedes me, right? So that when I come along, I think I'm approached differently because of that reputation for the things that I've done. I think in the spaces that I choose to spend my extra time in, I think in those spaces I feel supported, respected, heard, seen, loved, all of that. I feel appreciated as being this beautiful, phenomenal, diverse Black woman. I feel all of that and in large parts, that's what I feel like within any space I go on campus now. That's a thicker skin I had to grow when I first got here 'cause I came from an environment where yes, there were some pressure, things going on, but it wasn't really in your face. Wherever I went, I felt I belonged, I felt I dominated, I felt like I belonged before anybody else, white,

Black, or indifferent. But here I come here and I go, "Ooh, is it okay for me to even be in this area? Are there any other Black people here? Is there gonna be a lynching?" You know what I mean? You feel out of place, you know. Yeah, you grow a thicker skin and you grow into your own, and you begin to understand more about yourself after surviving in the climate. Yeah, I think in the areas that I do spend my extra time, yes, I do feel respected and all of that stuff in those areas. However, I feel slighted too. I feel slighted at, let's say, maybe the departmental level. When I don't see research spotlights on only but a select few people. That bothers the hell out of me, so yeah. I feel slighted, disrespected, unheard, all of that at the departmental level, the graduate school, the college level, and then the next level up from there. I do.

[In department] I have not seen or understood or heard... I am a woman in that department and yet I have no real connection with any of the other...five women [faculty] there. None of them have stepped to me to have a real conversation or create any kind of sisterhood... None of them...I feel unseen and unheard. That's how I feel being a Black woman in that department. I feel like there is some kind of division or divide between the African American students and the African students and then there are white students. The African students are preferred with the white students. I don't know how the African students are being treated, but the African students in [good] grace with the white people.

Torrie:

Community...I don't know what the opposite of community is. Lonely is not right word but it's the closest to it I can get to, and-I don't know. Maybe it'll come back. But community. Oh, I met an undergrad from Mexico at a community organizing institute. And he was asking me about the Black community of grad [graduate] students here. And

I was saying that it's actually pretty tight-knit. And a lot of us went to historically Black colleges and so we bond and lovingly argue over which college is the best and all of that. And so we have activities and throw a superbowl party. And there's First Friday's and study groups and we do a whole lot together. You go to whatever you can. You have a group meeting and you just keep each other abreast of what's happening in the Purdue community and Lafayette community.

They've been places or communities where you really just bond with folks and feel like you're also helping to build up a community while you're here, because everyone has something to contribute. But then on the other hand, so "lonely" is not quite it, but I find it interesting, and this is more of a societal issue but because we are a reflection of society, right? I can't buy hair things here. I can't buy makeup here which I wouldn't wear much makeup even if I could buy it. But there's the thing that...like, I shouldn't have to drive to Indianapolis to go to a hair store. Or I could order it online but what if I just want to go get it now? What if I need to touch it first? Those kinds of things...so do you just not do the things that are part of kind of who you are because you can't find the things here? Or do you go out of your way to find those things? Or do you just not do it at all?

Nahla:

It makes me want to make a bigger difference. It makes me want to stand out more and understand that I'm supposed to stand out and I'm meant to be here. Just pretty much paying it forward and trying to help someone else. Because everybody can't get to this point, but the people who want to do it, trying to help them see what they're gonna have to go through or make sure they understand what they're getting themselves into, to make sure that they're prepared.

Because there are days I don't feel like a Black woman in the department, I just feel like somebody in the department trying to do the same thing that everybody else is doing. Since, I mean some people say that you want minorities in schools. But at the end of the day we both have the same opportunities, and we're both graduating from the same program or department. So, it doesn't make a difference if it's me being Black or somebody being Brazilian or white. It's just all about working together. Then it tells me why I want to be more of a leader, and it helps kind of guide my path and understand what I need to do to move forward from this. And what's next, how do I [plan] my next step after this Ph.D.

Errica:

[In department] I would say challenging, rewarding... I don't know. I don't know, complicated, navigational if that's a word. I would say it's just, first of all, you're navigating the program. For example, the structure of the foundation of the program, so the classes that you need to take, the research hours that you need, the requirements. You have to navigate this, and plan it out, and map it. Then, you're also navigating research. So, figuring out what you want your research to be, what are you interested in. Navigating that whole process. Then you're navigating relationships with people. You have to maintain and navigate relationships with your advisor, with faculty, with people within the university or within the community. Whatever you're doing. Then I feel like navigating also yourself. You learn things, and you experience things, so you have to really just figure out where you're going and how what you're experiencing is impacting where you're going.

It's not just me. So I don't feel alone. Thank goodness, 'cause I can just imagine. And I've been in that. In undergrad I was the only Black woman. It's not easy. But here, it's not just me...And then on the other side though... For example, in one class that I took-and this is kind of funny now but it wasn't then. But this student who is a Black woman but is African, from Nigeria, and we were talking about ... this was a non-formal theory class or whatever, so we were talking about race and whatever. And so she was saying how she didn't understand why we made such a big deal about race and white people, and just this kind of thing. She didn't understand the racial dynamics in the United States.

Ebony:

[In department] I think it's like walking on eggshells. You have to speak but you have to be careful with how you say what you need to say because you don't want Becky [white women] to get upset about what you said. I think it's also like mothering because when you see, for me personally, if I see younger Black women coming into the department, making sure they don't step in the same traps that I might've stepped in. And then when you see the Black man coming into the department, making sure that they're not perceived as any other Black male stereotypes. I guess too, making sure if they stay, the white folks don't see it. If they struggle, that's a private conversation, let me help you. Or let us figure out what resources because you don't want to give them anything to say against the Black man. I feel like there's also been some of my experiences as a Black woman. Overhearing conversations or comments about some of my Black male colleagues. Not telling them this was said to stir the pot. Hey you might want to think

about not doing this or be careful if you speak around such and such. It's minimizing yourself. Trying to make yourself look smaller when you go into the room.

In sum, my participants experience a multitude of feelings in their departments and on campus. In most of the responses, participants felt isolated, out of place, unheard, and some felt simultaneously hypervisible and invisible. Black women are made to feel invisible in academia through systemic underrepresentation, the devaluing of their research, and isolation. Black women experience hypervisibility from heightened surveillance and/or scrutiny due to their otherness (Settles, Buchanan, & Dotson, 2019). In contrast, some participants also indicated aspects of a positive experience as well, especially Nahla. However, Nahla mentioned not feeling like a Black woman in her department, which allows her to focus on her academic success.

4.8 Theme 3: Mentoring and Advising

Effective advising and thoughtful mentoring are critical to doctoral students' success. Research indicates the most important relationships doctoral students develop are with their mentors (Felder, 2010) and their advisors (Gardner, 2009; Golde, 2000). Advisors can mitigate challenges for Black women doctoral students by sharing information about graduate school, the academic discipline, and the department (Barnes & Austin, 2009). Unfortunately, some of my participants have experienced challenges regarding poor advising. However, some of my participants have had positive experiences as well. I asked Errica who has supported her during her doctoral program. She responded:

I will say my advisor has been a big support because at the end of the day I'd meet with him every week. He's the one person who knows everything. It's really helping me in going into the direction that I need to go and clarifying certain things. You can provide and help people think about [agriculture] and youth in the different way. Just that kind of

support because my committee members will be also able to do that, but I don't meet with them every week. They have their own students. I meet with my advisor every week. He's probably been the biggest support.

Though the functions of advisor and mentor are similar and intertwine, they are not the same (Jones et al., 2013). Advisors often provide programmatic academic support (or instrumental support), providing guidance concerning coursework and helping students to plan and conduct research (Mertz, 2004). On the other hand, mentors often provide psychosocial support, as well as instrumental support and role modeling (Kram & Isabella, 1985). My advisor is a Black man who I also consider a mentor, so I know what it feels like to be mentored, understood by, and supported by an advisor. As a result, I asked Jayei her if she had any thoughts on having a Black advisor. She shared:

I did. I thought that I would be in a safe space. I felt protected from white power, privilege, and position. I felt supported. I felt understood finally on this darn campus. I felt understood! A little. Yes, yes. So, I felt supported, I felt understood, I felt respected...Yeah, I think [Dr. Advisor] empowers us by allowing us to have the autonomy to choose our project, to choose the conferences. Teaching us and training us how we can publish our voice on the very specific avenue that we can publish our voice and be heard. That was empowering right then and there, in itself. Opening up all of those different academic outlets where my voice can be heard and giving me the opportunity to work through how I want my voice to be heard. My advisor is really, really good with showing up and taking pictures and clapping, speaking on your behalf. That's so important.

In contrast, I asked Karla if her advisor is her mentor. She said no. Here is why:

I don't think she knows how to be. And you kind of have to be taught to be a mentor if you haven't done it before and I only know this because I just created a mentorship guide for our leadership team at MANRRS with my mentor. Well she's my old mentor now in MANRRS. Some people have really great experiences and then some people don't talk to their mentors all year. So how do we normalize it and put a standard behind it so that students are getting the development they need and holding people accountable. So we created a guide for it. I think she's [old advisor] probably my sponsor now. Because I think sponsors and mentors can be two different things.

I also asked Errica if her advisor was her mentor. She also said no. She explained:

Just this semester; preparing everything for the summer. Working through theories and working through concepts and answering questions those are advisor duties, and he does those well. But when it comes to just, I don't know, being able to vent or being able to express concern about just anything, academic, professional life stuff, anything. I don't think that that's there. So like when it comes time for me to start applying for jobs and different things, I'm sure he will be very helpful in that process. But, for example, one of the things on my mind has been like if I go into academia and become a faculty member, how willing am I to join a department's faculty and be the only Black faculty? How committed I'm I? It's a real thing. That's something that I would share with a mentor. Not that I couldn't share that with him, it's just that I don't want to. What insight can he give me? That kind of thing I would say is the difference.

4.8.2 Department Dan

Twitter has been a place to see current events documented in real time. Recently on Twitter, white people have been documented bothering, surveilling, harassing, and calling the

police on Black people doing regular, everyday things, such as enjoying themselves at a cookout, playing at a public pool, selling water, and taking a nap. As a result, many Black people on Twitter have taken to humor to deal with the emotions around the racist incidents. According to Roper (2018), Black humor is often viewed as an expression of hope and a tool to combat oppression. As a result, Black folks on Twitter developed clever names for white people who have refused to let Black people live their lives (Molina, 2018). For example, a white woman called the police on two Black men grilling in a public park. She earned the name “BBQ Becky” after being caught on camera arguing with the men while on the phone. Here, white advisors and faculty who have wronged their advisees have been named Department Dan and Department Diane.

Earlier, Errica discussed a time she felt isolated from her department. Here, she describes the situation that fractured her relationship with her advisor:

I was a TA [Teaching Assistant] for this class and I had a co-TA. She’s white, and she’s nice. I like her; we’re friends. So we’re cool. We have started this class in the fall and we have been pushing through it together. So, when the fall semester ended we worked, ‘cause we worked in the background mostly doing grading. So the instructor of record was at the forefront really doing most of the teaching. He told us at the end of last fall that we would be moving to the forefront and he would be stepping back. Cool. So we worked the syllabus, changed just a few things ‘cause we felt that the grading, or rather his grading and his approach wasn’t as consistent as it could have been. It was biased towards your traditional young white male from a farm background type of situation. We wanted it to just be more consistent, so start of the spring semester we were getting a lot of pushback. Pushback like crazy from this one particular group of students, but then

one particular student in general. He fit this background: young, from traditional ag [agriculture], whatever. So he complained about us to the instructor of record. So, naturally of course the instructor wanted to discuss this with us, but we felt that instead of discussing it with us he was kind of just like “We need to change to make this student and these group of students feel whatever they needed to feel.” I don’t know, like cater to? I don’t know, but we felt that it was a lot of issues at play. Sexism was at play, bias. Also, racism. I say this because one day, this was like a Wednesday last spring, the instructor wanted to meet with me and [Co-TA]. He emailed the day of and wanted to meet and I said that I couldn’t meet that day, but I could meet that Thursday or Friday. He responded that it would only take about 15 minutes, he just wanted to discuss the concerns that the students have been bringing to him. I said, “Okay, I can meet between this time and this time.” Or whatever.

So, then I got an email that he [instructor of record] meant to send to my advisor, but he accidentally sent it to me and [Co-TA]. It said, “Hey, [Dr. Advisor]. This is the email that she [Errica] sent me right after I left your office.” I was like, “Huh? What’s going on here?” Confused. So then I saw my advisor in the hallway and I was just like, “Hey, I got this email by accident. Is it something I need to be concerned about? What’s going on?” He was like, “Well, I was gonna talk to you about this tomorrow, but since you here we can go ahead and discuss.” So we went into his office and he told me that the instructor went to him and asked him to pull up my schedule, my class schedule, to confirm if I actually had class when I said I had class. Like if I actually couldn’t meet when I said I couldn’t meet, and my advisor pulled it up and actually did do that. So that

was a very challenging time, 'cause I'm just like, "What in the world is going on in this place?"

I felt kind of like that issue of power, like they were just pulling power moves. I didn't really know what to do. I was talking to a couple people and they were like, "You should probably see the ombuds person, 'cause that seems to be something like a violation." So I did see him. He didn't say that there was anything that was a rule violation, but it was just crossing major boundaries. So that happened. That was a very just challenging time because I felt like I couldn't really trust. I couldn't trust my advisor, and that has shaped our relationship now. I have to work with this man, so I have to maintain a level of being cordial, but that's why I feel like he's just an advisor. I don't have that mentor type of trusting kind of relationship with him 'cause that was really just not something that was good.

I asked Errica for one word to describe the TA experience and to describe how the situation made her feel. Her response:

Can I just say stressful? I was going to say traumatic. I will say traumatic because it was. So that's my word. Those are my words. Traumatic and stressful. And I had to go back to look at a journal that I wrote. I do not journal often, but I had journaled last year. [I felt like] like I didn't really know who to trust. I feel like when you're going through something like pursuing a Ph.D. you need to be able to lean on people, go to people. And feel like you can lean on people and got to people for support requires trust. You can trust those people. I felt that I was just having an issue with trust with the people who were supposed to be most instrumental. My advisor, the department head, people who I'm supposed to be able to feel like I can go to. I was just feeling like I couldn't. I felt like I

needed to do whatever I needed to do, so I started being vocal with my advisor about timeline. Next semester, let's start preparing for prelims, whatever. It was like I need to get done, so I was just feeling like I need to finish here 'cause there's really nothing else I can do.

I also asked Errica if she still thinks about how her advisor broke her trust. She responded:

It is still something I think about. Not often, but in passing, you know how you just kind of think about things in passing. I will say that I do still think about it. I don't let it [get to me] because at the very end of the day I need him to approve everything that I do so I can graduate. I'm never going to let anything that has happened regardless of what it is, stop me from getting done. I guess [that is] the resiliency of Black women. I know that I have to have a working relationship with this person. While I was upset and did feel like trust was really impacted, I still need to have work relationship with this man.

Ebony attends the same university as Errica and has experienced similar issues with regards to departmental gossip and a break of trust in the advising relationship. Her advisor left suddenly without telling her his plans. She describes the situation here:

My new advisor is white. And the way I got him was, so my original advisor...I kept hearing rumors that he was leaving. And so I confronted him. I said, "Hey," I said, "I'm really worried." I said, "I keep hearing rumors that you're leaving. And I just need to know if this is true. And if it's true, what's going to happen to me?" And he was like, "Yeah, I'll probably leave. But you'll be graduated by the time." He said, "If I leave, it won't be until May. And you'll be defending that summer. So you don't have anything to worry about." And I was like, "Okay. I just want to make sure." I said, "Well, just in case, I'm going to go talk to this person [committee member] and ask them if they'd be

willing to take me on.” And he was like, “All right.” So I went to that person and I said, “Hey, you know, I heard that my original advisor’s leaving. And in the event that they do, would you be willing to take me on as their student?” I said, “I got my own funding, it goes through 2018, May.” And he said, “Yeah, that’ll be fine. I’ll be glad. I’m honored that you chose me, but hopefully that won’t happen.”

The week before school starts, my advisor calls me on a Wednesday. And I was very upset. Because this is the point where I feel like he asked me this question because I was Black. He says, “Hey, where are you?” And I’m like, “I’m at home. Do I need to come back to campus? What’s going on?” He was like, “Oh, nothing, can I call you in like 10 minutes?” And so he calls and he said, “Hey, I just wanted to tell you that I’m leaving the university on Friday.” This was [a] Wednesday. And I feel like he asked where I was because he didn’t want to tell me to my face. And in that moment I felt like he lumped me in with Black women and the Angry Black Woman stereotype.

So from that point, I didn’t hear from him for three months. He told me he wanted to remain on my committee. And that he would be accessible by phone or email. This man changed his email address. I heard nothing from him. So walking across the parking lot one day going home, and another faculty member says, “Hey, have you heard from [your] original advisor?” And I was like, “No, I’ve been emailing him, he hasn’t responded.” “Oh, he changed his email address, he didn’t give it to you?” So finally, after like month three I told my new advisor, I said, “Look, I haven’t heard anything from him. I don’t want to be held up any longer.” So my new advisor, he gave me his email address. And so I just emailed him, I was like, “Hey, haven’t heard from you. Moving on. Please sign to be removed from my committee.” All I got back was, “This makes me very sad.”

As mentioned earlier, Jayei is a member of a mostly Black research group. Project Principle Investigators (PIs) are often seen as potential mentors and role models. However, Jayei feels one of her research group PIs does not practice what he preaches:

So, these are the type of struggles that have just rubbed me the wrong way. These things should not be overlooked. I think [Dr. PI] should put [Student Researcher] in his place to respect women. I mean, you're running a program that is for and about women, but your actions don't speak [to] what you're saying. That's what I have been seeing all along. Your actions are not speaking what you are preaching. You see, what I know, when there's a discrepancy between what comes out your mouth and your actions, you lying...So these are the things that bother me.

4.8.3 Department Diane

Black women have historically had a complicated relationship with white women. Dace's (2012) compilation of narratives from white women and women of color describes their experiences with cross-race collaboration in academia. Kendall (2012), a white woman, stated women of color (especially Black and Latinx women) informed her that "white women are their greatest barrier to success" (pg. 17). In times when white women have been in positions to be allies and advocates to Black women, many choose whiteness and/or to stay silent (Chamblee, 2012). Both of these options uphold, protect, and perpetuate white supremacy (Castagno, 2008). Given the aforementioned research, I asked my participants about their relationships with white women in their departments. Karla shared:

I mean, my whole department's white, and most of them are women. I don't know. I still feel like there's that superiority and privilege. Not to say that they don't go through certain things as well, especially being in agriculture, 'cause they are a minority in

agriculture. But it's still a sense of privilege, I feel like, that's there. And those are mostly the professors. I won't say that about the students. I feel like the students are very cognizant of everything, and they know that how I feel about everything, so they make sure that they don't cross those boundaries with me.

Earlier, Karla described her experience with faculty from her department ignoring and excluding her while on campus, as well as at a conference. Below, she describes a conversation she had with her advisor:

So literally, the day my mom passed, I was on campus, and this is before I found out obviously, but me and my PI sat down and had a conversation, and she was just asking me what I thought about that [international conference for agricultural educators]. And I was like, "Well, you know, I dealt with a lot of microaggressions while there, so there's that." And she was like, "Well, do you wanna talk about it?" And I was like, "I mean, we can." I said, "A lot of it came from this department." And she was like, "Well, what happened?" And so I gave her a few instances, and I was like, "Well, you were also one of those people." So it was uncomfortable initially. But she cried, she apologized. And she was like, "I need people to have these candid conversations with me because if nobody does, then I can never change."

When I asked Jayei about her relationship with white women in her department, she stated:

Yeah, I don't really have one. They don't want a relationship. They're kind of phony at functions. [Dr. Professor] tried to have a relationship with me. That didn't work out. My first advisor, she was a white, old white woman, but she was from [another country]. The minute they find out who I truly am, they can't deal with it. They're not ready. It's just that I don't take on every battle that they want to bring. White women I find to be very

aggressive. I find them to be very dismissive of Black women, and white women try to immediately sum up if they can take control because then they feel better. They have to feel better than a Black woman. I thought they were envious of Black women, and I like to say that I have to really get to know them before I can trust them. I've had encounters where there was this quick power struggle, but of course I don't back down. I stand my ground. They feel no respect. I've had encounters where they were dismissive. They thought they knew more. They didn't know more, and I've had encounters where they didn't want to be bothered...[did] not want to get friendly.

4.8.4 Black Representation

I did not always ask specifically about the racial composition of my participants' faculty members, but it came up in conversation. My participants were and are looking for Black and Black women faculty to go to for guidance in navigating Blackness and Black womanhood in academia. Unfortunately, due to the extremely small numbers of Black women faculty in AgLS, Black women doctoral students in AgLS have very few opportunities to interact with Black women faculty in their discipline. I asked Jayei if she would recommend the Ph.D. process to other Black women. She responded:

Absolutely. There are power in numbers...We have been marginalized and abused in so many different ways. Disrespected in so many different ways. Only we can tell our story. Only we can help share the story from others who have told the story. I could take another Black woman's story and share her story with another somebody else. Let's put it in context. We need more Black female faculty members at this level. We need more thinkers at the professorial level. At the CEO level. All of these levels where decisions are made and personas are decided and reputation is decided upon. We need Black

women in these areas to represent, to continue to make those who are so very intimidated by our strength, to let them understand and quit calling us aggressive. We're not aggressive; we're smart. We're quick. Yes, we need more Black women to nurture. One of the things that I learned from [Black research group] was that at HBCUs there is this thing called "other-mothering". That is what gives you the strength to matriculate through undergrad, master's level, and Ph.D. level...That is another reason why we need more representation for Black women in the professoriate. To other-mother. To see us through. I notice that the Asian students, they've got some other-mothering type of thing going on with them that if you look closer...I remember when the Asian population was, you could count on one hand how many Asians were on campus back in 2006... Now, there's groups of them and I've noticed their numbers have grown. But more importantly, what I've noticed is the other-mothering going on within that group.

They got other Asian-mothering going on campus. That's because there's a lot of Asian students, there's a lot of Asian faculty members, there's a lot of Asian employees, there's a lot of Asian restaurants. Why can't it be a lot of Black students; a lot of Black other-mothering going on? A lot of Black faculty, administrators, employees. It could be a Black janitor who I could say hello to. I mean, you know, we have very little representation.

Errica:

Well, so one thing about [undergraduate institution/PWI] is that it is a PWI, but because it's five hours from [Big Diverse City 1], two hours from [Big Diverse City 2] it's still quite a few Black people at [undergraduate institution/PWI]. I would say that I never felt like I didn't have Black community at [undergraduate institution/PWI] because there was

so many Black people. Now, I would say that the difference, there was a big difference in a PWI ag [Agriculture] program and an HBCU ag program. That's where really the difference for me was, because outside of ag events and organizations [there were] plenty [of Black people], but in the college of agriculture that's where it was like I would be the only Black student in really probably all of the ag classes that I took except for one, like an ag econ class.

So, then I went and I had one Black ag teacher, and he left. [Dr. Professor]...left my sophomore year. Beyond him I only had white ag teachers. Then I went to [master's institution/HBCU] and it was a totally different side of agriculture, so that was like amazing to me because I had Black mentors in agriculture for the first time. Then I came to Kimberlé Crenshaw University and it's back to we don't have any Black faculty. But, the good thing about it was that there [were] Black students who had come from [master's institution/HBCU] as well, so that was helpful for me.

As mentioned before, Nahla's advisor is a Black woman. Expectedly, she had certain expectations of her advisor due to her status as a Black woman: "I knew she probably, well not probably, but I knew she knew what she was talking about. I knew she was familiar with all the things so I kind of looked to her for guidance more than anything...Because I honestly did not know what to expect" [of the doctoral process].

Karla expressed earlier that she went into her doctoral AgLS program expecting the same level of support as she did at her bachelor's and master's institutions (also PWIs). She describes what she expected based on her previous experiences here:

Well, at [undergraduate institution/PWI] we had one Black, female professor, so she became my mentor. And then we also had...I don't know if you all have it at Purdue, but

it's called [Black Graduate Association]. So we had that, [and] we had people from [nearby HBCU] and also people from [undergraduate institution/PWI] who were both Master's and Ph.D. students that helped us navigate...we were able to talk about our issues, we had social events, we did fund raisers so it was just more of what I was used to because my community and my tribe is so big that, that's the type of support that I'm used to having.

4.8.5 Green Faculty

New faculty are under a great deal of pressure to perform as advisor, mentor, and researcher while trying to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Menges (1999) found that as new faculty transition from their doctoral studies into their first faculty position, their anxiety “shifted from anxiety about getting a job to anxiety about surviving on the job” (p. 20). New faculty may fall short in an area, and for a couple of my participants, that area was advising.

Karla's advisor is a fairly new assistant professor with hopes of tenure. Here Karla reflects on her advisor after their conversation about a negative conference experience:

So I think part of it is her being new faculty and trying to get all her publications and stuff done so she can be on track for tenure. And then she also shared with me one of her dilemmas: because we're so close in age, she doesn't know what that looks like working with me. I ended up buying her a book on how to have difficult conversations, because I bought it too...she's doing a segment in the Ag magazine about how to have difficult conversations. So she was like, "I'd love to interview you." So I think it was one of those things where it wasn't microaggression, but it was unconscious because now that I said something, and it just so happened my mom passed that day. And I'm not saying she's not saying she's not a compassionate person, but when my dad passed my first semester here,

it was just like, "Oh, I'm sorry." But now it's like she's checking in on me, you know what I mean? Asking how everything's going, which is different. I'm like, "Where was this support when I was ready to drop out of this program? Where was all this concern then?"

Ebony describes her preliminary exam experience with her advisor:

My situation was also different in that instead of having four committee members, I had five because I was not appropriately advised on how to structure my committee. I had the people that I wanted there, but he also had people that he wanted. When I told him who I wanted and was ready to leave off one of my people to have four, so with the four that I originally chose, including that one person that he wanted, I didn't meet the requirements for the graduate school. So I had to ask a fifth person because I felt that it would be shady for me to have asked a person to be on my committee and then go back to them and say, "Hey, by the way, I don't really want you on my committee anymore." I do feel like I have people on my committee that I have not really interacted with that have not been that instrumental in my process, but because of the way things were structured, I don't want to be like, "Yeah, you're not here no more."

I really didn't know how to prepare for it [preliminary exams]. I talked to some of my team, my committee. I knew who was doing what question, but in regards to preparing, I asked my advisor, "What do I do for this?" He was like, "Oh, it's not something you can really prepare for." I did have some of my committee members tell me, "Hey, you might want to start thinking about reading around these things," or something like that, but for the most part I didn't prepare for preliminary exams because I didn't know how to prepare.

Well, I thought it was normal, so I didn't know it was out of the ordinary. I asked to have my preliminary exam set up online. I don't know if you're familiar with [learning management system], but that's the learning management system we use here. From another student I had heard them say that they utilized [learning management system] to make sure that their questions were released and cut off at whatever time period they need to be cut off. So other than requesting that they were put into [learning management system], I didn't have anything else that I'd ask about it.

In later conversation I did find out that some of my committee members had asked that they have certain questions on certain weeks, like that they were ordered in a way that built on one another, but that's not how my advisor gave them to me. My advisor actually gave me my hardest question first. That committee member, when I saw them later, I was like, "Hey, you really tried to kill me with this question." He was like, "It should've been easy. You should've had this person's question and this question before." I was like, "No, that was my first question." He was like, "Yeah, that was not intended to be your first question. That was supposed to be like your third question, and by answering the other two you should've been able to answer that one more readily." My initial advisor...I was his first and only Ph.D. student, so I do try to give him grace in that I don't think he knew what he was doing either, but at the same token I felt like he had resources. He'd been through the process, and there were people around him that he should've been asking.

In sum, participants reported difficulty in finding mentors and other Black doctoral students in their departments. Ebony, Errica, and Karla experienced challenging advising relationships, characterized by a distrust of their advisors. In Ebony's case, her former advisor's

abrupt departure caused her to lose her funding and contributed to her feelings of imposter syndrome. For Errica, the betrayal of her advisor made her feel like she could not trust people in the department she should be able to lean on. Karla and her advisor's relationship is on the mend, but Karla finds herself having to mentor her advisor on how to be a good advisor. Jayei, Nahla, and I have Black advisors, and consider our advisors our mentors. These narratives on mentoring advising show the consequences of poor advising and a lack of mentoring, as well as what effective advising and mentoring relationships could look like.

4.9 Theme 4: Diary of a Mad Black Woman

The stereotype of the Angry Black Woman has been used against my participants to silence them. They feel like they cannot speak up for themselves when they have been offended, and they feel like they cannot be their authentic selves, causing them to “code switch.” Code switching involves shifting from Black vernacular to Standard American English to match their speech to their environment. In addition to speech, code switching (or role flexing) can also involve dressing and/or behaving differently to adapt to their environment (Davis, 2018). My participants utilized code switching to appear non-threatening to their white faculty and peers. Errica:

Now I will say that has been a big one [the Angry Black Woman stereotype], because I have been trying to be very conscious about not being portrayed as the Angry Black Woman. That is complicated because it's like, well, am I? I guess I'm trying to say I have to think to myself when I'm upset about something, or aggravated or annoyed or just not happy about something, is what I'm trying to say to this person or to whoever I had to just check myself first and make sure I'm not coming across as angry. Using angry tone of voice and that kind of thing. But it's like sometimes even when you check yourself, calm

down a little bit and you are just communicating with people, I think that sometimes it can still come across, pretty strongly and you can still be portrayed as angry even if you are not using an angry tone voice, or are clearly not physically representing anger or whatever. If something happens, I need to take a moment, because then I'll be talking like my mom [and] it would just be all come spilling out and then whatever. I take a moment think about it; talk about it with someone usually and then try to go back and whatever, handle it. But even just small things like just walking around as a normal person. If you don't, it seems like if you don't have like a smile on your face or you are not acting all chipper and happy, then it's like people will automatically assume that you're upset about something or not doing well. That's very annoying because it's just like you have to act like it's like this performative thing that you have to do is really to make other people feel comfortable.

Because I have a regular face and I'm not walking around the hallways smiling randomly like a crazy. I shouldn't have to do that for people to feel comfortable or whatever. But just in different situations, I think that I have kind of muted myself. I've learned that I do need to speak up for myself. I won't say muted because I usually do say what I need to say, but I do take some time to really to think about it. But sometimes I'm sure that still might come across as being angry and that's fine, but I'm done [muting myself]; I used to hold things in and just like whatever. But now I don't do that...because that's that person's bias and projecting onto me.

The campus doesn't have a lot of Black women on it. But I think that it was enough [on campus] and it was enough within my department for me to not feel alone necessarily. Somebody was kind of repeating what I said one day and was mimicking me,

trying to mimic me and said what I said in a neck rolling kind of way. A white person. I just was like, "What?" First of all, anyway, I know I didn't do all that and even if I did that's not for you to try to imitate. That's just not appropriate. So, I think as a Black woman you deal with people seeing you as sassy, or mad, angry, or whatever. All the things. I think you do have to... Or, rather, you find yourself shifting, kind of. You may shift in ways that like for me, I was shifting prior to learning about certain things in certain classes that I've taken I would find myself shifting. I would change something, what I wore, or hair, or dress, or rather how I talked or whatever. I would find myself shifting, but now I've come to be aware of certain things that I was doing and not doing those things anymore. Thinking, "Why was I doing that?" So, yeah.

Recall earlier Ebony spoke of her advisor leaving the university unexpectedly and not telling her to her face, making her feel as if he thought she was an Angry Black Woman. Additionally, Ebony described an experience with a TA, who she was hesitant to speak out against because she was trying to avoid the Angry Black Woman stereotype. Here, Ebony shares how constantly trying to avoid being labeled the Angry Black Woman has shaped her doctoral experience:

I definitely think I probably let some things slide because in the moment when your emotions are high, you may not know how to appropriately address it, or you may not have the capacity to address it depending on whatever that situation is. I think there were probably a lot of moments that could've been teaching moments, but again, I feel like it's not my responsibility to teach you. I probably passed up a lot of those moments just because I didn't know that my reaction would be what is acceptable or what is deemed acceptable in a setting. Because even though a white woman or a white man would react

in anger, which would be the appropriate response for that situation, me reacting in anger could be seen as so much worse. It's almost as if as a Black woman you don't have the right to be angry.

I have also experienced people thinking I am angry and/or intimidating. At an agricultural conference, my department head described my actions as “assertive, not aggressive” over and over in a room full of people I did not know. It was as if he was trying to convince himself that I was not aggressive, though I had never shown any signs of aggression. I stayed quiet, not knowing how to react or respond to the situation. Our experiences align with the literature on gendered racial microaggressions. Gendered racial microaggressions manifest in this study in two ways: 1) silenced and marginalized, and 2) the Angry Black Woman. In order to avoid the stereotype of the Angry Black Woman, some of the Black women in my study did not address the microaggression(s), continuing the cycle of invisibility and silencing (Domingue, 2015; Lewis & Neville, 2015), which upholds white supremacy. Having to constantly attempt to present ourselves as friendly and non-threatening prohibits Black women from living our lives fully and authentically.

4.10 Theme 5: It Takes a Village: Faith, Family, and Friends

There is an old saying “It takes a village to raise a child.” Well, it also takes a village to graduate a doctoral student. When faced with challenges from microaggressions, poor advising, and a lack of mentors, it takes the support of family, friends, and for some, the church to get through the doctoral process.

I asked Jayei how she copes in the face of adversity. She responded:

That's when you start bringing in your resources. You start calling on all of your mentors, your family, your friends. You start bringing in your soldiers, you know? But I always

say too, you pick and choose your battles wisely. Because at the end of the day, we are trying to win the war.

Ebony has had to pull in all of her resources as well. She shared:

I went home a lot. I recently started going to therapy. I've been diagnosed with anxiety. And I went to the [health aid office] with my dad...and the particular office we went to, they have PTSD dogs. And before we went in one of the women was explaining to me...this is what the dog does. This is how he...alerts us to someone that has PTSD. And so when we go in the dog comes to me. He bypasses my father and comes to me. And I know my experiences probably wouldn't even compare to some other people. But, yeah. [I] cry a lot privately.

I mean, grad school has given me health issues. Like I don't sleep well. Like I have acid reflux now. Never had that before. Like I can't even eat some of the certain foods that I used to eat. Because they bother me. So my physical health has definitely taken a toll on being in graduate school. Both physically and mentally.

I will say that I've always been a Christian, identify as Christian, but this definitely made me get into my Bible more. Just looking at the different spiritual guidance and trying to be faithful. One thing that stood out to me, even in my worst moment, I met this lady on campus. And she says, "Ebony, can I ask you a question?" And I said, "Sure." And she said, "You a Christian, ain't you?" And I was like, "Yes, ma'am." She was like, "I could tell." And I was walking around like...I looked like death. You could tell that everything in the world was wrong with me. But she could still see something different about me. So I would say that [faith] that's been a number one help.

I have thought about quitting several times. And my Daddy is support. And my grandma. My mom, she's been supportive, too. My momma and my grandma. My whole family, everybody, my whole team. I think I told you I found my own campus community this past year, and they've been great. They drive me around places when I'm tired. If I'm staying at work in the office late, they'll stay late with me. They might not stay to two in the morning, but they get off at five and they'll stay till eight because I'm there. Or if I'm having a long day, they'll go get wine with me, or if they see me getting ready to have a breakdown, they will pull me [aside] like, "Yo, I know you're working. Finish that sentence, we going to go get a break because you want one right now." Then my mom, she just retired. She's been really good. Her first week of retirement she spent here with me because I was having a hard time getting everything together, just keeping my house straight. So she came, and she cleaned my house. She cooked for me, and she's like, "I don't want you to do nothing but just focus on writing." That's what I did. I just wrote and did what I needed to do. She was just here making sure that I ate and that I got to go to sleep and that I was up to do the things that I needed to do.

Then my church family at home, my church family at home, they give me a scholarship every semester to help me cover my expenses while I'm in school. When I go home, they ask me what I need. The church ladies, some of them I couldn't stand growing up, but [the] church ladies been looking out. For me, it's not even about me getting a PhD anymore. It's so many people that have poured into me. I feel like this is a community degree. If I could write everybody else's name undermine on this process, it would be a whole lot of names on this diploma because this is not just about me.

Nahla:

My family. My family is always a good support system because they have been making it a little bit easier for me. They may not understand the process but they know, "She's working on her Ph.D., she has to do this." My advisor. A lot of my friends. Everybody that I pretty much dealt with before I got here are still in my life now. Everybody.

Like the other participants, I also “bring in my soldiers” in challenging times. I call on family and friends from back home, friends and mentors on campus, and look to my advisor/mentor for guidance. These findings align with Lewis et al.’s (2013) research on Black women’s coping strategies: (a) active engagement, (b) social support and interconnectedness, (c) religion and spirituality, and (d) disengagement and avoidance. Earlier, Errica described intentional efforts to be more involved in her department, which increased her levels of belonging within the department. All participants described seeking support from family, friends, and mentors. Some participants described leaning into their spirituality and looking to the church for emotional and financial assistance. Last, Karla described earlier how she disengaged from her department and most of the campus, describing her college town as “a lonely place.”

4.11 Theme 6: When I Grow Up...

Because the presence of Black women is directly linked to the access, entry, and retention of Black women in doctoral education (Jones et al., 2013), it was important for me to find out how participants’ doctoral experiences shaped their career plans. For some of my participants, their doctoral experiences have confirmed their initial career plans. I asked my participants how their experiences have shaped their career plans. Below are their responses.

Jayei:

My career plans have remained the same. My self-efficacy and my career self-efficacy have been strengthened through the process. It happens throughout the process. Oh, I know what I was going to say earlier too. Because this process has taught me to slow down and question things and critically think... Now I'm beginning to feel, "Oh, I can. Oh, I can."

However, Jayei is still a little unclear about what department she would like to be faculty in:

I feel a little unclear, but clearer. [I will] stay away from [agriculture], because that can kind of box you in. So I almost need to go into a [STEM]. If I go over there, I'm not strictly [STEM]. I am [STEM]. I am integrated [STEM]. So I'm looking to carve out my space.

Ebony:

When I first came here, I left my hometown. I was teaching high school. I was like, "I don't want to do this no more." When I left, I left with the intent of coming back in a position where I could better serve students, so maybe not necessarily in a case with a classroom but still working with students. I don't want to work with high school students, not as my primary form of employment. Then it was also when I go to get this degree, I want to come back to work at [master's institution/HBCU]. But then it was maybe I should start at a PWI so I can get some experience first, and then when I go back to [master's institution/HBCU] at whatever point in my life, I could say, "I worked at this white university, and I did X, Y and Z. And I have these things to offer to [master's institution/HBCU] when I come back."

Then I started seeing stuff here, and I'm like, take me back to the HBCU. I don't want to work with these white folks. I don't want them. I think for me, if a PWI is my only option, I'll take it, but I would much rather be at an HBCU. Just dealing with some of the students here, they're a lot different. I think you get questioned, your role gets questioned a lot more here at a PWI than a HBCU because for some reason [white] students at PWIs don't seem to know that you can be Black and you can be young and you can be successful and you can be intelligent or any of those things. It's like you're constantly having to prove yourself.

While I know that I may run into some of that at an HBCU, I don't think it would be as much. I don't want to spend my nine-to-five code switching all day. I don't want to spend my nine-to-five walking on eggshells because I'm worried about how Becky [white women] is going to perceive what I said when I disagreed with her in the conference room because she don't have any cultural awareness. I don't want to deal with that. I'm tired, and that's not to say that I won't ever work at a PWI, but it's not my dream right now. If I ever work at a PWI, I want to come back already in a role of power so that if you question me, I can be like, "Well, look, my title says this. What's yours say?"

Nahla:

I want to teach. I want to be able to do a lot more in the community. Now, I'm at the point where I'll be job searching. So I'm writing my dissertation and trying to get that done and situated. I want to be able to have my job when I graduate. And I noticed a lot of people, they have their mind set on graduating but they don't have a job lined out after they get their Ph.D.

I think when I started I had my mindset on teaching, and it hasn't changed. I would be open to do like government work or jobs, but I still want to teach. One of the things from the beginning when I started, they [doctoral committee] asked me what I wanted to do, and since I wanted to teach, that's the route I took the entire program. So like working with Extension and doing different conferences, and setting things up kind of helped me with that as well.

Karla:

I think I kind of knew already that I never wanted to go the faculty road. And I think that being here just kind of proves that to me more. People do research just to keep their job. And I like research but I don't love it. So if I'm doing research I want to be able to make a direct impact from that research. And I knew that I wanted to go into a diversity and inclusion role before I even got here...I thought I was going to go the corporate route. And I'm not saying that that's still not in my future, I just didn't know that all of this experience would lead me back to the government. Because I've been running from it since I got [out of government job]. I was like, "I don't want to do this. I don't like policy, [government] sucks." All this stuff, right? Well, really at first, I wanted to work for USDA. But as stuff has progressed and the political climate, I was like "I don't want to work for the government." And then to have this fellowship that I didn't even apply for brought to me, I was like man, God is funny. So I'll be there [government fellowship]...I'll probably go on unpaid leave until I'm done with my dissertation and then apply for another job with the federal government. But because it's an appointed position, I get priority. They get priority when they apply for jobs. I was like, God is funny.

Errica is still unsure, but more inclined to pursue a faculty position:

I think that right now it's like a 50/50 split [on wanting to be faculty]. I'm not opposed to it by any means, but it's just like that thing like if I go, I'm probably going to be the only Black person? Unless it's like your program; you have [one] Black faculty in your department. I think of course HBCU. I know at the [regional conference for agricultural educators]...I saw no Black faculty; none. I was there from [master's institution]. That's kind of just discouraging a little bit. I don't know how it is like [elsewhere] regarding [agriculture]. I know the further west you go, [agriculture] is few and far between. I'm sure it's not as diverse. Maybe in California...If I go to like an R1 land grant, I'm probably going to be the only Black faculty member.

I think about [being] faculty as a professor, and I also wouldn't mind [being in] an administrative role. Working with graduate students or undergraduates, preferably grad to be honest. For outreach, like an administrative outreach role. I would love that working with youth. I do want more youth to consider agriculture and to work to perceptions of agriculture in different things, be more aware of and or whatever.

When I first got in to the program I totally did not want to be a professor. I was like, this stinks, it's too much politics, it's a lot of work. It's like being a Ph.D. student full time all the time for the next till you retire. All the research and the grants and stuff. But then I think as I progressed through my program and saw how people can find their niche and people can it's like if you do your job, you are hopefully working in your interest area. Doing research in your interest area and collaborating on grants within your research, your interest area, I think that it can be fulfilling. Just different experiences like talking with people and just observing academia as a whole. I think that I could find

fulfillment in being a professor or like an administrator or anything like that. I guess it's made me more open to the thought of being in academia.

When I began my doctoral program, I had aspirations of becoming a faculty member and still do. My experiences have made me want to pursue a career in the professoriate even more. However, I do also share Ebony and Errica's concerns of being the only Black person/Black woman in a department. I am hopeful we will all find positions that are right for us, in positions that appreciate and value our knowledge.

4.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter included the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the findings of the study presented in six thematic areas: 1) "I Don't Know What I Don't Know": 1st Generation Students Navigating Imposter Syndrome and the Hidden Curriculum, 2) Department Climate: Chilly, 3) Mentoring and Advising, 4) Diary of a Mad Black Woman, 5) It Takes a Village: Faith, Family, and Friends, and 6) When I Grow Up... These six themes addressed the research questions by interrogating how my participants' intersecting marginalized identities shaped their doctoral experiences in AgLS, and how or if those experiences shaped their journey into or away from the professoriate. Theme 1, "I Don't Know What I Don't Know": 1st Generation Students Navigating Imposter Syndrome and the Hidden Curriculum, focused on how the participants' first-generation status was intertwined with having to navigate the hidden curriculum of academia, as well as experiencing imposter syndrome. Theme 2, Department Climate: Chilly, described the factors that shape my participants' perception of departmental climate; which included faculty and peer relationships, classroom climate; and departmental power, politics, and gossip. Theme 3, Mentoring and Advising, highlighted the participants' experiences regarding mentoring, advising, and the lack thereof. This theme also illuminated the role whiteness plays in

mentoring and advising relationships. Theme 4, *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, focused on how Black women are silenced through the *Angry Black Woman* stereotype. Theme 5, *It Takes a Village: Faith, Family, and Friends*, described the strategies and supports participants utilized to navigate challenges. Finally, Theme 6, *When I Grow Up...*, described the participants' career goals before and as a result of their doctoral experiences.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I will present a summary of the conclusions of the study. First, I will provide a review of the purpose, along with the research questions that guided the study. I will then highlight the four major conclusions of the study which include: 1) Role of First-Generation Status on Imposter Syndrome, 2) Silencing of Black Women through the Angry Black Woman Stereotype, 3) Inclusive and Exclusionary Practices Shape Departmental Climate, Campus Climate, and Sense of Belonging, and 4) Normalization of Whiteness within a Department Shapes Department Climate and Sense of Belonging. This chapter will conclude with implications for theory, practice, and policy as well as recommendations for future research.

5.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to describe how intersecting oppressed identities shape the experiences of Black women doctoral students in AgLS disciplines at Historically White Institutions and how those experiences shape their journey into or away from a faculty career in an AgLS discipline.

5.3 Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. How do intersecting marginalized identities shape Black women's doctoral experience in agricultural life science disciplines?
2. How have Black women's doctoral experiences shaped their journey into or away from a faculty career in an agricultural life science discipline?

5.4 Conclusions of the Study

In the following sections, I will present the conclusions of the study. Four major conclusions are discussed below, along with how the conclusions relate to prior research on Black women in graduate education, as well as how they contribute to the current literature. Additionally, I will link the results to the theoretical and conceptual perspectives that informed the study, Critical Race Feminism and Intersectionality.

5.5 Conclusion 1: Role of First-Generation Status on Imposter Syndrome

The findings from my study suggest that the participants' first-generation status was directly linked to imposter syndrome and was an important factor in their doctoral experiences. Not only did some participants come into the doctoral program already feeling like an imposter, their experiences with their advisors, committee, and/or departmental faculty worsened their feelings of imposter syndrome. While all of the participants indicated a general lack of knowledge regarding what the doctoral journey would entail, it was especially prevalent among the first-generation college/doctoral students.

Gardner and Holley (2011) found that Black doctoral women are often first-generation doctoral students. These women find themselves navigating uncharted waters with little to no mentoring, guidance, or preparation for the doctoral process, which can affect time to degree or degree attainment (Khan, 2008). Additionally, not only do Black women first-generation doctoral students have to navigate the academics and norms of doctoral education, they have to navigate the intersection of race and gender and how it shapes their experiences. Furthermore, literature suggests first-generation college students experience various challenges as they matriculate through their doctoral programs, including feeling unwelcome on campus, financial difficulties, lack of knowledge about college life, navigating the hidden curriculum, feeling

academically unprepared, and guilt for leaving home or not fulfilling family obligations (Azmitia, Sumabat-Estrada, Cheong, & Covarrubias, 2018; Ellis, Powell, Demetriou, Huerta-Bapat, & Panter, 2019).

Based on findings from my study, there is a link between first-generation status, poor advising, and imposter syndrome. According to Patton (2009), “support systems are necessary in helping Black women overcome the dual-edge burdens of race and gender, particularly when they attempt to find mentors within the ‘old boy’ network” (p. 511). As such, thoughtful and effective advising and mentoring are critical to Black women’s success in a doctoral program, especially first-generation doctoral women. Unfortunately, the small numbers of Black women faculty in AgLS, combined with the lack of advisors with cultural competency training, there are few faculty available to advise, mentor, and guide Black first-generation doctoral women. Furthermore, advisors are supposed to help advisees’ socialization into a discipline and department (Felder, 2010). For first-generation doctoral students, this socialization is crucial to academic success.

The findings from my study align with those from Ellis et al. (2019) which indicated first-generation students at a HWI felt out of place on campus, dealt with stereotypes and microaggressions based on race and gender from faculty and peers, and had their presence at the HWI seen as merely a benefit of affirmative action initiatives. For example, several participants indicated they feel like they did not belong in their department, and when asked to describe how they feel as a Black woman on campus and/or in their department, their responses included being undervalued, defeated, noticeable, unheard, unseen, out of place, challenging, and like walking on eggshells. Moreover, my findings also aligned with those from Rasheem, Alleman,

Mushonga, Anderson, and Ofahengaue Vakalahi (2018), who found that shared racial identity with a mentor increased comfort and relatability.

5.6 Conclusion 2: Minimization and Silencing of Black Women through the Angry Black Woman Stereotype

Almost all of my participants, including myself, mentioned the Angry Black Woman stereotype. For several of my participants, attempting to avoid the Angry Black Woman stereotype resulted in the minimization of self, the feeling of walking on eggshells, and code switching/role flexing. These findings are supported by previous literature on gendered racial microaggressions and stereotypes (Collins, 1990; Lewis et al., 2017; Lewis & Neville, 2015). For example, one participant shared that a white peer was mimicking her – trying to talk “Black” and rolling her neck. Consequently, this participant would “shift” her behavior, her clothes, the way she dressed, and how she would talk so she could fit in with the dominant culture of her department. This shift in behavior, or code switching, aligns with research from Davis (2018), who found that her participants attempted to appear non-threatening by adapting their speech, behavior, and dress to match their environment. Moreover, feeling the need to code switch is a result of messages from the dominant culture that Black women do not fit in the professional and/or educational environment. In fact, Davis (2018) stated, “Even though code-switching and role flexing are vital in the workplace, both strategies can signify that the perceived essence of Black womanhood is antithetical to ‘professionalism.’” (p. 308). Utilizing non-threatening assimilation techniques in order to fit in to avoid negative reactions that feed into stereotypes serve to uphold white supremacy and oppression. Black women are often held to and expected to conform to white beauty standards, especially regarding hair and style of dress. Not conforming

to white patriarchal standards can cause Black women to be the victim of microaggressions, negatively impacting sense of belonging and perceived departmental climate.

Participants also mentioned how they would avoid speaking up for themselves; essentially silencing themselves, which contributes to the vicious cycle of microaggressive behavior. The perpetrator has the privilege of either not being aware or not caring they committed a microaggression, and the victim is put in a position of “rocking the boat” by speaking up for themselves or staying silent, which leaves room for the perpetrator to offend again. My findings align with those of Lewis et al. (2013), Sue and Capodilupo (2008), and Essed (1991) on gendered racism and gendered racial microaggressions. Essed’s (1991) qualitative research on gendered racism found that some of Black women’s everyday experiences of racism manifested in the suppression of internal reactions to oppression. For example, Ebony mentioned she has to be careful of what she says to not upset white women. Having to constantly exist where one cannot be themselves, speak up without risk of repercussions, or have to worry about being microaggressed can negatively impact mental health. Increased psychological stress responses negatively impact mental health outcomes and have been found to be associated with experiencing microaggressions (Lewis et al., 2013). In fact, one of my participants shared an experience of going to the doctor’s office to seek assistance for a family member. The support dog trained to seek out individuals that have experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder walked past her father and went to her, indicating she was the one in psychological need.

In chapter two, I outlined Black women’s coping strategies used to combat gendered racial microaggressions, which include (a) active engagement coping strategies, (b) social support from friends and family, (c) religious and spiritual focused coping strategies, and (d)

disengagement and avoidance (Everett et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2013; Shorter-Gooden, 2004). My participants expressed utilizing all of these coping techniques. However, though all of my participants attempted to engage in their departments by attending departmental seminars, socials etc., not all of them had success, which caused them to disengage from departmental activities. They then sought out other support systems, such as their Black graduate organization on campus or the refuge of their research group.

5.7 Conclusion 3: Inclusive and Exclusionary Practices Shape Departmental Climate, Campus Climate, and Sense of Belonging

Findings from my study indicate that practices the university and department utilize (or do not) shape departmental climate, campus climate, and sense of belonging. Further, campus and departmental climate were critical in shaping participants' sense of belonging at their HWI. In fact, Ellis' (2001) qualitative study on Black and white doctoral students enrolled at PWIs found that the departmental environment was important for Black and white students; however, the classroom climate was most important. Ellis' Black women participants reported a challenging classroom climate, with professors that had an "I speak; you listen" attitude. Likewise, some of my participants reported similar classroom experiences. Specifically, Karla shared that one of her professors, who happened to be on her committee, did not take well to feedback in the classroom. Furthermore, she stated faculty in her department regularly exhibited this type of privileged behavior inside and outside of the classroom.

Scholarship from Anderson (2006) and Jordan (2011) both indicate Black students must feel a connection with their educational environment to be successful; however, they often struggle to connect with peers and faculty. Due to their similarities, the culture of agriculture mirrors that of STEM (Esters & Knobloch, 2012). The culture and climate of STEM disciplines

tends to reflect the norms and values of white males, which is often competitive, individualistic, and emotionless. These attributes are most often in direct opposition to those of Black women, which tend to be cooperative and community-oriented (Ferguson, 2016). Some participants reported feeling like they were not a part of their department. For example, Jayei stated faculty in her department “barely speak to us” and that her relationship with faculty was very surface level. Further, she felt that if her advisor, a Black man, were not present in the department, the faculty would not speak to her at all. She also reported a similar relationship with her peers, and shared that her white peers were “aggressive,” and would “cut you off to get their idea in first.” Another participant reported faculty in her department would regularly not speak to her while on campus, and would ignore her while at conferences.

Gardner (2009) found advisors to be a critical factor in doctoral students’ success during the final phase of their program. During Phase III of the DSDM, Candidacy, doctoral candidates have passed all examinations, are completing independent research for their dissertation, writing the dissertation, seeking jobs in their desired fields, and transitioning from student to colleague. This final phase can be a lonely one, as the doctoral student is no longer taking classes with other students and is often in isolation writing. In fact, Gardner (2009) asserts one of the biggest challenges for doctoral candidates to navigate is isolation. Black women may experience isolation on many levels: structural isolation as the only Black person or Black woman in a department, isolation from difficulty in finding community outside of the university, isolation from conducting independent research and dissertation writing, and possible isolation due to their research topic focusing on diversity and inclusion. During this phase, the advisor plays an important role in the completion of the dissertation and in the student’s overall success. Doctoral candidates are in transition becoming independent researchers and developing their own research

identity, and look to their advisor for assistance navigating the doctoral process (Gardner, 2008). Unfortunately, for a couple of my participants, the strained advisor-advisee relationship has prolonged the time-to-degree. For example, Ebony's advisor abruptly left the university after she passed her preliminary examinations. This setback cost her time, funding, and reputation with other faculty in her department. For Karla, her advisor could have been a support to keep her from experiencing isolation. However, their strained advising relationship as a result of the exclusionary practices Karla's advisor exhibited contributes to the isolation she feels. My findings also align with those from Brown (2016), who found that strong relationships with faculty were key in providing academic support within a discipline, as well as socialization into a department and discipline.

On the other hand, Nahla reported feeling included due to the inclusive practices of her department. Nahla's department held departmental seminars and workshops that graduate students were strongly encouraged to attend. Additionally, graduate students were required to attend other students' defenses, which helped to build community and serve as an example for students yet to defend. This inclusive practice not only helps build community, but also helps to enhance sense of belonging and improve perceived climate. Research suggests marginalized students who are minoritized within a department struggle to make connections within their department (Gardner, 2008). Furthermore, Black students in AgLS disciplines often report struggling to find faculty, peers, and programs they feel a connection with (Anderson, 2006; Jordan, 2011). Nahla's department is also very diverse, with white students and faculty in the minority. The combination of structural diversity, an advisor with similar cultural characteristics, and inclusive department practices have helped cultivate a positive departmental climate and enhanced sense of belonging.

5.8 Conclusion 4: Normalization of Whiteness within a Department

Findings from my study indicated whiteness in a department played a role on departmental racial climate, which ultimately affected their sense of belonging. Johnson et al. (2017) found white students reported a high level of sense of belonging, while minoritized students reported a much lower level of sense of belonging. As higher education was originally created for the education of white males, this comes as no surprise. Harper and Hurtado (2007) assert that a student's sense of belonging to a department or campus is a direct indicator of how inclusive/exclusionary the department's or campus' racial climate. Moreover, "The more exclusionary for Students of Color, the more that Whiteness is the climate norm (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). The more that whiteness is the norm, the lower the sense of belonging (Gusa, 2010)" (Cabrera, Franklin, & Watson, 2017, p. 68). For example, Karla mentioned how white women in her department exude "a sense of privilege." Additionally, Jayei shared she finds white women at her institution to be "very aggressive...and dismissive of Black women." Similarly, in describing interactions with white faculty and peers in their departments, my participants described situations where they were excluded, demeaned, mimicked, and the topic of departmental gossip. These observations align with research from Cabrera et al. (2017) and Gusa (2010), who concluded that white privilege allows white people to distance themselves from non-white people and take a colorblind worldview. Moreover, this behavior from white peers and faculty can cause Black women to wonder if they are reading too much into a situation or being overly sensitive. Additionally, white privilege, combined with the institutional norms of whiteness, further allows white students and faculty to not only approach situations with a colorblind worldview, but to also be and continue to be discriminatory and microaggressive toward Black women.

Spaces on HWI campus, such as classrooms and graduate offices, can be considered “white spaces.” The absence of Black students in a university space sends a message to Black students that they are unwelcome, unexpected, and that the space is a “White space” (Anderson, 2015). White privilege allows white people on campus to be oblivious to the overwhelming whiteness of a space. For white people on campus, the white space is normal. However, Black students immediately notice when they are the only or one of the few, and this realization can cause feelings of uneasiness and isolation. For example, one participant described her experience of being on campus wondering “is it okay for me to even be in this area? Are there any other Black people here? Is there gonna be a lynching?” The questions my participant poses align with research from Anderson (2015) and Sue and Capodilupo (2008), who stated overwhelming whiteness and white spaces can be considered microaggressions that tell Black students they do not belong in a space. My participants described looking for Black representation on campus at the faculty and graduate student levels. Given my findings and extant research indicates that the exclusive messaging the white space relays to Black women also serves as a deterrent to their enrollment or retention in a graduate program, I am left to wonder: Are there Black women faculty in AgLS at HWIs? What post-graduation positions do Black women AgLS PhD holders move on to? Jayei shared that she will most likely move into a STEM education faculty position upon graduation. Karla, who was not sold on a career in the professoriate when she entered her doctoral program, reported that her experience has solidified her choice to go into industry or the government. Errica and I are concerned about taking a position where we will be the only Black faculty member within a department at an HWI. Ebony has taken a faculty position in AgLS at an HBCU.

Whiteness is difficult to define and recognize outside of structural whiteness. Black women would not be “severely underrepresented” unless white students were overrepresented (Cabrera et al., 2017); however, the overrepresentation of whiteness is often not discussed in AgLS research. Additionally, the persistent denial by white people that they are not racist and there is not a problem within the discipline makes having this conversation difficult. Karla and a few other participants mentioned they only see Black or Brown students and faculty conducting equity- and inclusion-based research within AgLS. I was recently asked if I would want white people conducting research about Black women. My answer is that while I am cautious about white people conducting research involving marginalized populations, white people can still do anti-racist work and research. White people can still support marginalized faculty and students in their research.

5.9 Implications for Theory

I used two theoretical perspectives, Critical Race Feminism and Intersectionality, to inform the development of my study as well as interpret the data. Intersectionality refers to the ways multiple interlocking oppressions work together to shape Black women’s experiences (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). Intersectionality also addresses the experience of simultaneous privilege and oppression (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Museus & Griffin, 2011). Critical Race Feminism is a theory that helps us to understand how race and racism, and gender and sexism play dominant roles in the treatment of Black women (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). Together, these theoretical frameworks helped to shape the overall design of my study, as well as the analysis and interpretation of the results.

5.10 Critical Race Feminism

An extension of Critical Race Theory, CRF is used here to challenge the dominant narrative on how race and racism and gender and sexism in higher education are used to marginalize Black women. Below, I will describe how my findings relate to applicable tenets of CRF: (a) racism is endemic, (b) interest convergence, (c) experiential knowledge, (d) whiteness as property, and (e) critique of liberalism.

The findings from my study suggest participants experienced difficulty in navigating their AgLS doctoral program due to their treatment as a result of their intersecting marginalized identities. For example, Karla shared how every day, the white faculty in her department ignore her. The everyday exclusive behavior many of my participants experienced aligns with the CRF tenet that racism is normal and endemic to society. In other words, racism is not an isolated, random act; but is so engrained in U.S. society it seems natural and is often unrecognizable to most people. The invisible nature of everyday racism can lead white people to believe it no longer exists or only occurs in isolated events.

The tenet of interest convergence theory states that the marginalized advance only when their interests converge with those in power. Some of my participants indicated feeling their institutions were interested in admitting students of color only to increase their numbers of minoritized students. However, they felt their institutions were not concerned with the well-being of their minoritized students. Karla noted that when she attends agricultural conferences, she and other minoritized faculty and students are the ones conducting research on minoritized and marginalized populations. As I stated before, white people can still do anti-racist research and work without centering themselves and uplifting marginalized voices. Karla's observation aligns with research stating Black women are often engaged in research that examines social issues within their own community (Grant & Simmons, 2008; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001).

Furthermore, social justice research is often devalued, contributing to feelings of isolation, marginalization, and othering (Patton & Croom, 2012). Another participant described her conflicted feelings about being the departmental representation for diversity. She understood the need but felt that college administrators and faculty did not truly care about diversity. This is not surprising, as it is consistent with research on tokenism, stating that Black women are often asked to take on roles solely because of race and/or gender (Ferguson, 2013; Green, 2001; Turner et al., 1999). These observations align with scholarship from Freeman (1978) who explained that those in the dominant group with power offers small, incremental opportunities to the oppressed that converge with their own self-interests. These small actions maintain the status quo, distances them from responsibility for racial discrimination, and allows them to enjoy their privilege.

The tenet of experiential knowledge (counterstories) states counterstories and narratives are lived and experienced counter to the dominant narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a). Counterstories help us to analyze, expose, and challenge the dominant narratives that come from privilege by privileging those of the oppressed. Some of my participants indicated the need to code switch/role flex in order to appear non-threatening to white people in their departments. The dominant narrative in these instances is of the Angry Black Woman – a stereotype used to silence Black women and keep them from being their authentic selves. Additionally, a comment made to one of my participants indicated she would not be in college if it were not for scholarships. I think most people would not be able to attend college without assistance from scholarships, fellowships, loans, etc. However, what this microinsult insinuates is akin to the anti-affirmative action argument, that Black people are too poor to go to college without a “handout” from others. This majoritarian narrative sends a message that negates and ignores the

history of inequities Black people experience and have experienced in education. The stories my participants shared with me can be used to critique the dominant narratives that perpetuate racial stereotypes.

The tenet of whiteness as property states that the assumptions, privileges, and benefits of being white are valuable assets white people seek to protect (Harris, 1993). Some of my participants indicated feeling imposter syndrome, which has been posited as a condition of internalized racism due to white supremacy (Dancy & Jean-Marie, 2014). Further, through whiteness, Black women are treated as though they do not belong due to the exclusionary practices within their department. These practices relay a message from the department that the space is for white people's enjoyment and use. For example, Harris (1993) states that the right to degrees and licenses held by one person can be transferred to someone else. This can be seen in the lack of structural diversity in most AgLS departments. White faculty often advise and mentor white students, which perpetuates the cycle of whiteness within the student body, and eventually within the professoriate. Furthermore, the absence of Black faculty and small numbers of Black students reinforce the message and perpetuates the dominant norms and culture of the department and upholds white supremacy. The two aforementioned examples also exemplify the right to exclude others from their "property." The right to exclude means white people can exclude others from participating in AgLS and they can do with AgLS as they please. This includes making changes to curriculum. Errica mentioned she felt empowered because someone had the courage to move the department in an inclusive direction offering a class on identity and inclusion in AgLS. However, this also means white faculty and administration can decide to not make changes in curriculum, keeping the curriculum white- and male-centered. In a white-

centered department, white people lack exposure to and social interaction with Black women and can form assumptions about Black women that go un-checked (Anderson, 2015).

Critique of liberalism challenges the concepts of objectivity, meritocracy, and colorblindness (Delgado & Stafancic, 2001). Solórzano and Yosso (2002b) stressed that these concepts work to “camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society” (p. 473). Unfortunately, one of my participants has internalized and employed a colorblind approach to her experiences, stating her success or failure in her program has nothing to do with her being Black; instead, it is about everyone “working together.” Additionally, I felt she also held a meritocratic view, stating “at the end of the day we all have the same opportunities.” While I do not agree with her statement, I also realize her situation is different. Her program is racially diverse in terms of students, faculty, and staff, and her advisor shares salient identity characteristics with her as a Black woman. I am also unaware of her previous experiences that could have contributed to her views. However, I believe these factors have given her the false sense that race and gender do not play a role in the opportunities Black doctoral women are afforded or the way they are treated. What is also interesting about this particular participant’s experience is that she is the only participant in a STEM-based AgLS discipline. Research (Byars Winston, 2014; McNamee & Miller, 2004; Rossides, 1997) suggests the myth of meritocracy is prevalent in STEM disciplines; however, overwhelming evidence from decades of research demonstrates that educational opportunities within STEM are “socially constructed and unevenly distributed” (Byars-Winston, 2014, p. 345).

5.11 Intersectionality

In my study, intersectionality was used to explore how interlocking oppressed identities shape the experiences of Black women doctoral candidates in AgLS disciplines. Intersectionality

asserts that when multiple oppressed identities interact, they create a unique experience (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). Intersectionality emerged as a critique to how researchers examined the experiences of middle-class white women. My participants indicated they often feel left out of research and programming efforts in AgLS, and institutional efforts tend to focus on white women, Black men, or students of color as one group. Additionally, many of my participants indicated they feel their departments see their race first, without regard for their gender and their unique experience due to the intersection of race and gender. My participants echoed Croom and Patton (2012), who asserted that when society, and therefore researchers, think about “Black” as a race, they think of Black men and when they think about “women,” they automatically think about white women. More directly, “Black women are not white women plus color, or Black men, plus gender” (Croom & Patton, 2012, p. 22). Delgado (2003) described this phenomenon as “a combination of two worlds of Black men and white women, A plus B equals C” (p. xiv). The idea of a combination of two worlds, combined with similar statements from my participants supports the assertion that Black women are erased and not considered when developing programming, interventions, and research efforts and that institutions of higher education need to shift their focus to Black women and their needs.

Intersectionality posits that no social identity is a monolith, which opposes essentialist views of identity. Though Black women have many shared experiences, we also come from many different backgrounds and cultures. Consequently, no Black woman’s experience will be exactly the same as another’s. I found this to be true of my findings. I think Nahla’s experience was significantly more positive than the other participants because of her academic surroundings: her department and university were more racially diverse, her department provided social and academic opportunities for networking and learning, and she had a Black woman advisor. As a

result, her experience allowed her to focus on her academic and professional success instead of her identity as a Black woman. In fact, she stated she often does not think about her social identity. Additionally, two of my participants attended the same institution. However, their experiences were quite different and as a result, they each had a different outlook on their department and overall experience. These findings align with scholarship from Cabrera (2018) who stated that minoritized individuals will most likely have an increased awareness of race, but it is not assumed. This is supported by Friere (2000), who argued that while the oppressed are in the best position to understand oppression, marginalized people should not be treated as a uniform, oppressed group with a collective consciousness. Therefore, while all of my participants were Black women in AgLS at an HWI, I could not assume we all have the same collective experiences.

Several of my participants discussed how their intersectional experiences were shaped by power structures. In fact, one participant stated, “I felt that things that happened were to me rather than with me,” and that she felt powerless. Power dynamics played a major role in my participants’ experiences within their departments. Faculty in their departments put themselves at the top of the departmental hierarchy and treated several of my participants poorly or as if they did not have valuable knowledge to share. Participants felt like they could not speak up for themselves when wronged, which served to silence them. Further, several participants did not consider their advisor as a mentor and did not suggest they foresee a mentoring relationship with their advisors in the future. The same participants also stated not feeling included in their departments. This finding suggests departmental power and hierarchy are associated with departmental climate and sense of belonging. Additionally, Karla mentioned her advisor and committee treated her differently after she passed her preliminary exam, suggesting a different

level of respect and possibly privilege for students who have passed examinations. It may sound normal to experience a newfound respect once candidacy is achieved; however, Karla's case is different. Karla discussed being treated poorly by faculty and her department head before becoming a candidate. After passing her preliminary exams, faculty in the department (including her advisor) were suddenly treating her with respect. This observation supports research suggesting Black women are often in graduate programs where their intellectual capacity and productions are deemed inferior until they prove themselves to be worthy and/or extraordinarily talented (Allen, 2000; Essed, 1994; Hill Collins, 1986; hooks, 1989). Moreover, Karla's experience also supports literature indicating that Black women are forced to invalidate stereotypes and validate their competence, intelligence, and worth, especially at HWIs (Hill Collins, 1986; hooks, 1989).

All of my participants expressed their career and research goals were directly associated with their minoritized status. Regarding career goals and plans, several participants indicated their doctoral experiences shaped their decision to pursue a career in the professoriate. Though two of my participants' experiences were rife with negotiating department politics, microaggressions, and isolation, they were still open to a career in academia. Additionally, my participants want to fill the need for research on equity, access, and inclusion for minoritized people in AgLS. For myself and two other participants, our experiences solidified and encouraged our desire to enter the professoriate. For one participant, her experience solidified the fact that she does not want to pursue a career in the professoriate. What is true of myself and all of my participants is that we feel the need to make the landscape of AgLS higher education better for Black women who come after us, and we recognize the need for Black women to serve as mentors, advisors, researchers, and policymakers. This finding aligns with research from

Gibbs and Griffin (2013) who found social identity and personal values were drivers for minoritized students pursuing a career despite the current climate of the career or discipline. This finding also aligns with scholarship from Womble (1995) who found Black women often conduct research that illuminates social issues in their communities. Moreover, Patton and Harper (2003) found Black women faculty desired to and were committed to giving back and felt they owed it to themselves and other Black women to “lift as you climb.” The Black faculty in Patton and Harper’s study gave back by serving as mentors and role models. Collectively, my findings and the supporting literature demonstrate Black women faculty want to mentor and advise Black women students because of a need and desire to give back to our community.

5.12 Implications for Practice

The first implication for practice includes interrogating whiteness and subsequently dismantling white supremacy at all levels of the institution. My study findings suggest the overwhelming whiteness in a department makes it a white space, that is microaggressive and unwelcoming. By ignoring race, gender, and cultural differences, the department ultimately perpetuates the dominant norms and practices that oppress Black women. For example, I have found from my assistantship work that recruitment and retention go hand-in-hand. However, when recruitment efforts only focus on structural diversity of students and faculty while ignoring how racism is embedded within the university culture and system, diversity efforts become ineffective (Iverson, 2007). In other words, you can recruit “diverse” students until the cows come home, but failing to address systemic racism and creating an inclusive and equitable campus can and will lead to attrition. Effective cultural competency training will help white people in colleges of agriculture to think critically about what it means to be white, the privileges associated with being white, and how the culture of whiteness can shape experiences for

minoritized groups in the college. Scholarship from Cabrera (2014) asserts that white people in higher education must include whiteness in their analyses and examinations of racial climate, mentoring, and socialization practices.

Audre Lorde declared the following in her 1984 speech “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”:

Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society’s definition of acceptable women...know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master’s house as their only source of support.

Lorde asks “What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy?” and then answers “It means that only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable.” The issue of incremental change, along with the -isms associated with social identities within societal systems begs for a CRF analysis of university practice and policy. A CRF analysis of university systems will force university faculty, staff, administrators, and students to analyze race and gender and the role they play in producing and reproducing oppression. Furthermore, a critical lens will force university agents to assess who holds power, the amount of power held by an office, and how to redistribute power. It is hard to come to terms with the fact that white supremacy and all of its byproducts will most likely not be dismantled within my lifetime. However, I remain committed to the cause, and encourage other critical scholars to continue disruptive work in higher education.

The second implication for practice is for university faculty, staff, and administrators to make deliberate efforts to learn to provide culturally competent mentoring and advising.

Findings from my study support literature that there is a significant correlation between climate

and student engagement, self-efficacy, and overall quality of campus life (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Additionally, my findings support previous research that demonstrated how Black women experience stereotypes about their academic ability, discriminatory attitudes from white faculty and peers, and resistance from faculty to discuss race and gender issues in the classroom (Sue et al., 2009). Research has shown advisors and mentors can help to decrease feelings of marginalization and isolation, and negate the effects of negative campus climate, thus increasing sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012b). Therefore, it is imperative that campus faculty, staff, and administrators receive cultural competency training to help develop a positive campus and departmental climate.

The third implication for practice is to provide doctoral students with cultural competency training. Advisors, faculty, and mentors help with socializing doctoral students into a discipline and department (Weidman et al., 2001). The socialization process includes teaching doctoral students the behaviors and norms of the discipline and department, guiding doctoral students through independent research, and leading by example the art of mentoring and advising students. Faculty with cultural competency training will be able to pass down what they have learned, and (hopefully) the cycle will continue. However, we cannot assume culturally competent and equitable advising and mentoring will be passed along to doctoral students. Doctoral students become the next generation of advisors, professors, and project directors. Consequently, it is important the educational leaders of tomorrow be equipped with the tools and knowledge to successfully advise and mentor the next generation of doctoral student leaders. Furthermore, cultural competency training for students would allow peers to better mentor each other. Research suggests peer relationships are important and influential in the development of doctoral students as researchers, and my findings demonstrate that peers also contribute to

departmental climate. Reddick, Griffin, Cherwitz, Cérda-Pražák, and Bunch (2012) found students experienced enhanced socialization into a discipline when they engaged in peer mentoring and other interactions. As such, developing formal peer mentoring programs with an underlying commitment to inclusive excellence can contribute to increasing perceptions of departmental and campus climate, as well as enhancing instrumental support, socialization, and sense of belonging.

The fourth implication for practice includes increasing the numbers of Black women and other minoritized groups in AgLS graduate programs. Inclusive education for colleges of agriculture have fallen on the shoulders of their diversity officers, their local MANRRS chapter, and other self-funded equity- and access-focused diversity initiatives. They cannot do it alone. To create more inclusive colleges of agriculture, everyone has to commit to inclusion, equity, and diversity. Research has demonstrated isolation is one of the greatest challenges doctoral candidates face (Gardner, 2009), especially for Black women. As a result, achieving critical mass is one of the most suggested recommendations for institutions of higher education. However, simply recruiting more Black women does not solve the problem entirely. There needs to be mechanisms in place to help maintain sense of belonging once Black women doctoral students arrive on campus and in their departments. Formal and informal mentoring programs within departments and/or the college can serve as an academic and social community for Black women doctoral students, which could enhance sense of belonging. In fact, Holmes (2015) found that Black AgLS students wanted to see the development of programming focused on minoritized students' academic and social success.

In addition to the isolation experienced in graduate education, Black women experience isolation and loneliness as a result of being the only or one of the few Black women in a

department. My findings support literature suggesting Black women graduate students are seeking out mentors, advisors, and peers that look like them and share a cultural background (Griffin & Reddick, 2011; Holmes, 2015; Murphy, 1997; Patton, 2009). In fact, Patton (2009) found Black women graduate students felt that having a Black woman as a mentor was important due to her ability to relate to her experience. Furthermore, in Holmes' (2015) study Black students in AgLS disciplines at HWIs expressed the need for more racially minoritized faculty, administration, and staff within their college of agriculture. Consequently, having advisors, mentors, and peers present on campus who share salient identity characteristics would help Black women not feel as lonely and enhance sense of belonging.

The fifth implication for practice is for colleges of agriculture to revamp and decolonize curricula and research. Western knowledge and research practices work to devalue, silence, and erase Black perspectives, which (re)produces oppression (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Masta, 2019). My findings support research demonstrating that white-centered pedagogy, curricula, and recruiting and marketing materials served as a deterrent from engaging with the department (Hazen, 2017; Vincent 2010). Jayei and I are both disappointed in the departmental course offerings at our respective institutions. Course material regarding the history of Black and Indigenous folks in agriculture are glossed over and avoid discussions focused on identity and equity within agriculture broadly. Moreover, by representing AgLS through a white lens, Black women do not see themselves belonging in AgLS. Conversely, Errica shared that she took a course in her AgLS department that focused on inclusion, identity, and diversity with a culturally competent white instructor. The instructor's pedagogy combined with the inclusive and relevant course material increased her engagement in the class and made her feel empowered by what she learned. She was exposed to authors and scholarship she had never heard of that ultimately

shaped her approach to navigating her AgLS doctoral program as a Black woman. This participant also indicated she does feel a sense of belonging in her department. This example supports research from Hazen (2017), who found that the more white-centric the AgLS curriculum was, the more Black students in AgLS felt they did not belong.

5.13 Implications for Policy

The first implication for policy is for colleges and departments of agriculture to rethink and reassess their hiring policies to ensure equitable hiring practices. Findings from my study indicated participants noticed the lack of Black faculty in their departments, which increased feelings of isolation and unwelcome, and diminished sense of belonging. Therefore, colleges of agriculture need to implement hiring policies that would employ more faculty, staff, and administrators that share salient identity characteristics with marginalized groups. Research has shown advisors often advise and mentor students with similar racial backgrounds (Patton & Croom, 2012). However, due to the lack of Black women faculty, there are fewer faculty available to advise and mentor Black women doctoral students. Moreover, the lack of Black women employed in colleges of agriculture sends a message to Black women doctoral students that they are not welcome and do not belong (Anderson, 2015). As a result, Black women may leave the department or the university. Finally, the lack of Black women doctoral students to graduate and pursue a career in the professoriate results in a lack of Black women faculty, and the cycle continues.

The second implication for policy is for institutions to reassess their promotion and tenure policies. Black women represent only 3% of full-time professors nationwide (NCES, 2017c). Factors that contribute to the lack of Black women full professors include devaluation of research, limited opportunities to collaborate on grants, lack of mentoring, and higher service

loads (Croom & Patton, 2012). Black women faculty at the full professor rank would hold more power, authority, and influence to make actual change within the department. For example, Black women full professors can chair search committees not only for faculty, but also for deans and other senior level positions that hold a significant level of influence. As a result, Black women full professors can help to usher in and enforce more equitable hiring practices, ensuring Black women are not overlooked during the application review process. Furthermore, Black women full professors have more independence regarding their own research, service efforts, and teaching loads. By controlling the amount of energy dedicated to department service, Black women faculty can reassign some of that energy toward bringing in and mentoring more Black women doctoral students. Additionally, Black women full professors can chair committees that determine curriculum; consequently, Black women committee chairs can help faculty to rethink and reassess their syllabi and pedagogical practices to be more culturally relevant.

The third implication for policy is for institutions, policymakers, and educational organizations to conduct more consistent reporting of demographic information of students enrolled at each institution. I attempted to gather demographic information for each participant's college of agriculture; however, some of the colleges did not have mechanisms in place to determine the multiple identities of students. Some websites only reported one identity at a time, making it impossible to determine how many Black women were enrolled in the college. If policymakers are unaware of how many Black women are enrolled in AgLS disciplines, how can they rethink and develop policies that would cater to Black women's needs? By ignoring the numbers, by not addressing the small enrollment numbers of minoritized groups, institutions and policymakers can claim ignorance and distance themselves from the issues the lack of structural diversity causes.

5.14 Recommendations for Research

To my knowledge, my study is the only one that has focused on the experiences of Black women in AgLS doctoral programs. Further, my study is novel as it used Intersectionality and Critical Race Feminism to examine Black women's experiences. Thus, there is a significant opportunity for additional research to be pursued in this area. My recommendations for future research are suggested below.

My study was to originally focus on Black women doctoral candidates in STEM-based AgLS disciplines. However, due to the lack of Black women doctoral candidates in a STEM-based AgLS disciplines available within the time frame needed to finish the study, I had to open the criteria to non-STEM AgLS disciplines. In doing so, most of my participants are in a social science-based AgLS discipline. Future research should be conducted on Black women doctoral candidates in a STEM-based AgLS discipline at HWIs. These studies would allow researchers to explore how Black women doctoral candidates experience environments that have a more typical STEM culture and fewer Black students enrolled.

To learn more about Black women's socialization and professional development experiences, I asked my participants about common professional development practices they utilized. Conferences were the main source of professional development; as such, future research should examine Black women doctoral students' conference experiences, particularly at MANRRS, American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE), and North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA). These were the most frequented conferences by my participants, and some of my participants indicated a negative experience at a particular international conference for agricultural educators. Research comparing and contrasting Black women's experiences would allow researchers to reassess and examine current practices

regarding what proposal topics are accepted, the numbers of minoritized members of the corresponding organization, and the behaviors and norms of the organization/conference.

My study utilized Critical Race Feminism as its theoretical lens. Critical Race theories are meant to center and amplify the voices of the marginalized while critically examining race and racism, and challenging and illuminating white supremacy. However, many AgLS departments can be considered a white space. To interrogate whiteness, researchers must center whiteness, which is not the purpose of Critical Race theories. Whiteness, though seemingly ambiguous and difficult to define, is very powerful and has real effects on departmental and college climate, culture, norms, and practices. Therefore, I recommend future research utilize Critical Whiteness Studies alongside Critical Race Theory to center and interrogate whiteness in AgLS disciplines, and subsequently re-center the marginalized voice and perspective. This research would critically examine issues of whiteness and masculinity on campus and within colleges of agriculture by calling out racism, recognizing its history and how it has shaped and continues to shape the academic space.

This study was conducted to determine how Black women's experiences shape their journey into or away from the professoriate. I recommend longitudinal qualitative research to determine if participants: (a) are employed in an AgLS discipline, (b) if they are employed in the professoriate, and (c) if they plan to stay employed in their current position. Longitudinal research will allow researchers to see how participants experience the career they are employed in. Further, researchers can find out if the participants stayed in an AgLS field, and assess the climate of their current place of employment.

This study focused on Black women graduate students; however, it is also important to understand the challenges Black women faculty experience. Data indicates there are Black

women faculty in AgLS but due to a lack of research, we do not know much about Black women faculty in AgLS disciplines. Therefore, I recommend research be conducted on the experiences of Black women faculty at HWIs. Black women doctoral students are searching for and wanting Black women faculty to serve as advisors and mentors, but they are not present at HWIs.

Research needs to be conducted to examine how departmental climate shapes the experiences of Black women faculty in AgLS disciplines. Departmental/college climate research would help colleges of agriculture to better understand what challenges Black women experience, as well as what support mechanisms are needed.

This study was a critical narrative inquiry. I recommend future studies to conduct research utilizing critical quantitative methodologies, including scales to measure factors such as campus and departmental climate, perception of mentoring, or gendered racial microaggressions. Quantitative methods in combination with qualitative methods would allow researchers to gain a more holistic view of the experiences of Black women doctoral students and how those experiences are shaped by their intersecting identities.

Last, this study focused on Black women doctoral candidates; however, future research should be conducted to understand the experiences of domestic Black men enrolled in graduate AgLS programs. Black men are also severely underrepresented in AgLS in comparison to white, Latinx, and Asian men (Figure 1.2). Furthermore, Black men are also underrepresented in the professoriate. As a result, there is also a shortage of Black men advisors and mentors available who share salient identity characteristics with Black male graduate students. Additionally, Black men experience gendered, racialized microaggressions unique to Black men (Sue et al, 2007); therefore, Black male advisors and mentors would most likely be best suited to socialize Black

male graduate students into the department and campus environment; help navigate racialized, gendered microaggressions; and enhance sense of belonging and climate.

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APPENDIX A. IRB APPROVAL



HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS

To:	LEVON ESTERS LILY
From:	JEANNIE DICLEMENTI, Chair Social Science IRB
Date:	01/16/2019
Committee Action:	Expedited Approval - Category(7)
IRB Approval Date	01/16/2019
IRB Protocol #	1812021426
Study Title	A critical Narrative Inquiry on Black Women's Doctoral Experiences in STEM-Based Agricultural and Life Science Disciplines
Expiration Date	01/15/2022
Subjects Approved:	4

The above-referenced protocol has been approved by the Purdue IRB. This approval permits the recruitment of subjects up to the number indicated on the application and the conduct of the research as it is approved.

The IRB approved and dated consent, assent, and information form(s) for this protocol are in the Attachments section of this protocol in CoeusLite. Subjects who sign a consent form must be given a signed copy to take home with them. Information forms should not be signed.

Record Keeping: The PI is responsible for keeping all regulated documents, including IRB correspondence such as this letter, approved study documents, and signed consent forms for at least three (3) years following protocol closure for audit purposes. Documents regulated by HIPAA, such as Authorizations, must be maintained for six (6) years. If the PI leaves Purdue during this time, a copy of the regulatory file must be left with a designated records custodian, and the identity of this custodian must be communicated to the IRB.

Change of Institutions: If the PI leaves Purdue, the study must be closed or the PI must be replaced on the study through the Amendment process. If the PI wants to transfer the study to another institution, please contact the IRB to make arrangements for the transfer.

Changes to the approved protocol: A change to any aspect of this protocol must be approved by the IRB before it is implemented, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject. In such situations, the IRB should be notified immediately. To request a change, submit an Amendment to the IRB through CoeusLite.

Continuing Review/Study Closure: No human subject research may be conducted without IRB approval. IRB approval for this study expires on the expiration date set out above. The study must be close or re-reviewed (aka continuing review) and approved by the IRB before the expiration date passes. Both Continuing Review and Closure may be requested through CoeusLite.

Unanticipated Problems/Adverse Events: Unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others, serious adverse events, and serious noncompliance with the approved protocol must be reported to the IRB immediately through CoeusLite. All other adverse events and minor protocol deviations should be reported at the time of Continuing Review.

APPENDIX B. EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

A Critical Narrative Inquiry of Black Women's Doctoral Experiences in Agricultural and Life Science Disciplines

Principal Investigator: Levon T. Esters, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Co-Principal Investigator: Torrie A. Cropps, Doctoral Student

Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication

Purdue University

Dear (Name):

My name is Torrie Cropps and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication. I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation and would like to invite you to participate in a research study entitled, "*A Critical Narrative Inquiry of Black Women's Doctoral Experiences in Agricultural and Life Science Disciplines.*"

The purpose of this study is to explore how intersecting marginalized identities shape the experiences of Black women pursuing doctoral degrees in Agriculture and Life Science (AgLS) disciplines. As a Black woman pursuing a doctoral degree in AgLS, you are an ideal candidate to provide us with valuable insight about your experiences. Specifically, I am looking for full-time domestic female doctoral students who attend Purdue University, West Lafayette (main campus), who are majoring in an AgLS discipline, have reached candidacy in their program (have passed all comprehensive and qualifying exams), and identify as Black/African American woman.

Should you choose to accept my invitation, you will be asked to participate in three 60-120 minute interviews on Zoom. The setting and attire for the interview is informal. Your responses will be kept confidential. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write-up of findings. Furthermore, the transcripts will be kept in a secure location at Purdue University until the study is complete.

Participation in this study is voluntary and all participants must be 18 years or older to participate. If you are willing to participate, please RSVP by contacting tcropps@purdue.edu and I will provide you with the consent form. Once the consent form is returned I will provide options for the date/time of your first interview as well as the location. Please return the signed consent form to me at tcropps@purdue.edu. Thank you so much for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Warmest regards,

Torrie A. Cropps

APPENDIX C. RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

A Critical Narrative Inquiry of Black Women's Doctoral Experiences in Agricultural and Life Science Disciplines

Principal Investigator: Levon T. Esters, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Co-Principal Investigator: Torrie A. Cropps, Doctoral Student

Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication

Purdue University

Key Information

Please take time to review this information carefully. This is a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary which means that you may choose not to participate at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may ask questions to the researchers about the study whenever you would like. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this form; be sure you understand what you will do and any possible risks or benefits. To participate in this study, you must: be a full-time, domestic doctoral student; identify as a Black/African American woman; be enrolled in an Agricultural and Life Science discipline; and have passed all preliminary and/or qualifying exams. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of intersecting marginalized identities on the experiences of Black women pursuing graduate degrees in Agriculture and Life Science disciplines at Historically White Institutions. The duration of the study will be approximately 3 sessions for a total of 3-6 hours over a 3 month period.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how intersecting marginalized identities shape the experiences of Black women pursuing graduate degrees in Agriculture and Life Science disciplines at Historically White Institutions. You are invited to participate in this study because you represent an important group of students pursuing advanced post-secondary degrees in Agriculture and Life Science disciplines. I hope to enroll 3-4 total participants in this study.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

You will be asked to complete a personal narrative and a demographic questionnaire. Additionally you will be asked to participate in three Zoom interviews. Each interview will last for approximately 60-120 minutes.

How long will I be in the study?

Three 60-120 minute interviews over the span of three months.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

Breach of confidentiality is always a risk with data, but we will take precautions to minimize risk as described in the confidentiality section. Further, due to the small number of Black women in Agriculture and Life Sciences, there is an increased risk you may be identifiable in subsequent reports and/or publications. Additional discomforts may include being asked questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Are there any potential benefits?

There are no direct benefits to the participants in this research study. However, you may receive indirect benefits from participation in these interviews. Additionally, your insight may inform research focused on how the marginalized intersecting identities of Black women shape their experiences while pursuing graduate degrees in Agriculture and Life Science disciplines.

Will my information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Research records must be maintained for a minimum of three years following the closure of the study. However, identifiers such as names and majors will be destroyed immediately. Any digital data collected will be stored in a secure, password protected file on a password protected computer at Purdue University. Any hard copies will be stored in a locked cabinet in a secure office. The principle investigator and co-principle investigators will have access to the data, which will be password protected. The project's research records may also be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or, if you agree to participate, you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Dr. Levon Esters at (765) 494-8432 or via email at lesters@purdue.edu.

To report anonymously via Purdue's Hotline see www.purdue.edu/hotline.

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at 765-494-5942, email (irb@purdue.edu) or write to:

Human Research Protection Program – Purdue University
Ernest C. Young Hall in Room 1032
155 S. Grant St.
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

Documentation of Informed Consent

I have had the opportunity to read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research study, and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above. I will be offered a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Name (Print)

Researcher's Signature

Date

Please return signed consent form to Torrie Cropps at tcropps@purdue.edu.

APPENDIX D. STUDENT INFORMATION FORM

A Critical Narrative Inquiry of Black Women's Doctoral Experiences in Agricultural and Life Science Disciplines

Principal Investigator: Levon T. Esters, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Co-Principal Investigator: Torrie A. Cropps, Doctoral Student

Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication

Purdue University

All responses will be kept confidential, and your identity will remain private. Your responses to these questions are optional, but will be extremely helpful in our research.

Thank you!

1. Name: _____

2. Email Address: _____

3. Pseudonym: _____

4. Age: _____

5. Are you a first generation college student?

_____ Yes

_____ No

6. What is your cultural/ethnic background?

7. What degree program are you currently pursuing (major)?

8. What year are you in your program?

_____ 1st Year

_____ 2nd Year

_____ 3rd Year

_____ 4th Year

_____ 5th Year

_____ 6th Year

9. From what institution did you receive your bachelor's degree?

10. Is your bachelor's degree from a Historically Black College/University, Hispanic-Serving Institution, Tribal College, or other minority-serving institution?

Yes

No

Don't Know

11. What was your major? _____

12. From what institution did you receive your master's degree?

13. Is your master's degree from a Historically Black College/University, Hispanic-Serving Institution, Tribal College, or other minority-serving institution?

Yes

No

Don't Know

14. What was your major? _____

APPENDIX E. PERSONAL NARRATIVE PROMPT

A Critical Narrative Inquiry of Black Women's Doctoral Experiences in Agricultural and Life Science Disciplines

Principal Investigator: Levon T. Esters, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Co-Principal Investigator: Torrie A. Cropps, Doctoral Student

Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication

Purdue University

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Please answer the prompts below:

1. Tell me about your decision to pursue a Ph.D.
2. Share 3-4 doctoral experiences that have stuck out to you thus far.

APPENDIX F. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL I

Interview One: Background & Entry

Welcoming Comments

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study.

My name is Torrie Cropps and I am a doctoral candidate at Purdue University in the Department of Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication. I earned my bachelor's and master's from an HBCU, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of intersecting marginalized identities on the experiences of Black women doctoral students in AgLS disciplines at HWIs, and how those experiences shape their journey into or away from the professoriate. You were invited to participate in the study because you are a Black woman in an AgLS discipline pursuing a doctoral degree.

For the next hour or so, I will ask you a series of questions about your own personal experience as a Black woman pursuing an AgLS doctoral degree. Please feel free to share whatever you wish. However, if you prefer not to answer a specific question, please say, "I'd prefer not to answer that question." Additionally, you may excuse yourself from the interview at any time. I also ask for your permission to audio record the interview and to take notes during our discussion. In order to protect your real name and identification, I will use the pseudonym that you selected on your participant questionnaire when I review the transcription. Finally, I ask that you keep our discussion confidential. Please note: We cannot guarantee complete confidentiality as stated in the Participant Consent Form.

Are there any questions before we start?

Background & Entry

1. Let's discuss your written narrative.
2. Describe some of your expectations before starting your program.

3. What was it like your first semester on campus?
4. What is it like to be a Black woman in on campus?
5. Tell me about a time that you felt challenged during the first year of your program.
 - a. How did it make you feel?
6. Tell me about a time you felt empowered during the first year of your program.
 - a. How did it make you feel?

APPENDIX G. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2

Interview Two: Integration

Welcoming Comments

Thank you for returning for your second interview for my study.

As you may recall, the purpose of this study is to explore the role of intersecting marginalized identities on the experiences of Black women doctoral students in AgLS disciplines at HWIs, and how those experiences shape their journey into or away from the professoriate.

During the last interview, we discussed your written narrative and your experiences during the first year of your program. Today we will discuss your experiences integrating into your department socially and academically.

Similar to the last interview, please feel free to share whatever information or experiences that you wish. However, if you prefer not to respond to a specific question, please say “I’d prefer not to answer that question.” Additionally, you may excuse yourself from the interview at any time. I also ask your permission to audio record the interview and to take notes during our discussion. In order to protect your real name and identification, I will use a pseudonym that you selected on your participant questionnaire when I review transcription. Finally, I ask that you keep our discussion confidential. Please note: We cannot guarantee complete confidentiality as stated in the Participant Consent Form.

Are there any questions before we start?

1. What are some reflections from the last time we met?
2. Describe some of your expectations at the beginning of the second year of your program.
3. Tell me about a time that you felt challenged in class.
 - a. How did it make you feel?
4. Tell me about a time you felt empowered in class.

- a. How did it make you feel?
-
5. Tell me about your relationships with faculty in your department.
 - a. Students?
 6. Tell me about a time you felt like a part of your department.
 7. What is it like to be a Black woman in your department?

APPENDIX H. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 3

Interview Three: Exams, Candidacy, & Career Plans

Welcoming Comments

Thank you for returning for your third and final interview for my study.

As you may recall, the purpose of this study is to explore the role of intersecting marginalized identities on the experiences of Black women doctoral students in AgLS disciplines at HWIs, and how those experiences shape their journey into or away from the professoriate.

During the last interview, we discussed your experiences integrating into your department socially and academically. Today we will discuss your experiences in preparation for and during your exams, dissertation writing, and your career aspirations.

Similar to the last interview, please feel free to share whatever information or experiences that you wish. However, if you prefer not to respond to a specific question, please say “I’d prefer not to answer that question.” Additionally, you may excuse yourself from the interview at any time. I also ask your permission to audio record the interview and to take notes during our discussion. In order to protect your real name and identification, I will use a pseudonym that you selected on your participant questionnaire when I review transcription. Finally, I ask that you keep our discussion confidential. Please note: We cannot guarantee complete confidentiality as stated in the Participant Consent Form.

Are there any questions before we start?

1. What are some reflections from the last time we met?
2. Tell me about the comprehensive/preliminary exam experience. What happens? How did you prepare?
 - a. Now, tell me about your comprehensive/preliminary exam experience. What happened?
 - b. How did it make you feel?

3. (If applicable) Tell me about the proposal defense experience. What happens? How did you prepare?
 - a. Now, tell me about your proposal defense experience. What happened?
 - b. How did it make you feel?

4. What has dissertation-writing been like?
 - a. What has been a challenge?
 - b. What/who has been a support?
 - c. How have you felt during while dissertating?

5. How have your doctoral experiences played a role in your career plans?

6. What does professional development look like for you (e.g. conferences)?
 - a. How has being a Black woman played a role in your professional development experiences?

7. (If applicable) What has your job search experience been like?
 - a. How has being a Black woman played a role in your job search?

8. Is there anything else you would like to share?

VITA

Torrie A. Cropps hails from Greensboro, North Carolina. She holds a B.S. and M.S. in Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Education, respectively from North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University. Prior to attending Purdue University, Torrie worked for four years in K-12 education teaching agriculture and science.

Torrie began her doctoral journey at Purdue University in Agricultural Education in 2014. There she served as the Educational Outreach Coordinator for Mentoring@Purdue (M@P), coordinating the M@P Summer Scholars Program, the Invited Lecture Series, and the Peer Mentoring Program. Torrie has published three opinion pieces in *Diverse Issues* on the experiences of Black women in higher education. She has also presented research at the American Educational Research Association conference, the Association for the Study of Higher Education conference, and the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity.

Torrie's research interests focus on the mentoring and socialization of Black women in graduate education; critical qualitative research in higher education; career development of graduate students; and equity, access, and inclusion in higher education. Upon completion of her dissertation, Torrie plans to pursue a faculty career conducting research on Black women graduate students in STEM and agricultural life sciences.