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The Unheard Voices: A Critical Look at Black Women, Voice and Education

by

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Thesis

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Abstract

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), Black women are among the most educated women in the United States. However, these dominant narratives about the educational achievements of Black women could be considered “rosy portrayals”. The purpose of this study is to understand, locate, and acknowledge the experiences and conditions of African American women in higher educational institutions through a thematic analysis and a curated Twitter chat. Dolores Delgado Bernal’s (1998) concept of “cultural intuition” was used to build a framework. The following research questions are addressed: What methods are useful for understanding the collective experiences of Black women in higher education when gaining a doctoral degree? What are the collective experiences of Black women in higher education when gaining a doctoral degree? In what ways do the collective experiences of Black women challenge dominant narratives about higher education as a democratic public sphere? Therefore, this study found that African American women are continuing to fight for equality inside of educational institutions, and they are continuing to create organizations to teach each other the standard educational curriculum.

Keywords: African American women, race, higher education, critical race methodology

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Over the years, the enrollment of women, specifically Black women, in post-secondary institutions has steadily risen. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), “between 2009 and 2010, black women earned 68 percent of all associate degrees awarded to black students, as well as 66 percent of bachelor’s degrees, 71 percent of master’s degrees, and 65 percent of all doctorates awarded to black students” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017, para. 2). While those statistics might indicate that Black women are among the most educated in the United States, there is still reason to question the perception of Black women and their positive experiences and positive educational advancements when attending higher educational institutions.

There has been an understanding that higher educational institutions are considered a democratic public sphere. As Ambrozias (1998) states, “The university is a special kind of public, one which remains privileged with respect to both knowledge and power” (p. 10). Or as it was stated by Hooley (2008), “Schools and classrooms are theorized as democratic public spheres where participants pursue understanding of serious issues for equity and the public good” (p. 37). It is important for students to maintain this democratic sphere that is seen as a privilege. When conducting an experimental study, Holley and Steiner (2013) found “the majority reported that being in a safe classroom changed both what and how much they learned” (p. 49). It is somewhat clear that the identity of an educational institution is a place where students can safely express their thoughts and concerns. Therefore, the concept of a democratic public sphere has created constant conversation.

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According to Squires (2002), “A public sphere refers to a set of physical and mediate spaces where people can gather and share, information, debate opinions, tease out their political interest, and social needs with other opinions” (p. 448). With that being said, the idea of counter public spheres are worth mentioning. One in fact would be the black feminist public sphere, it is also explained that “this sphere as ‘coalitions’ of overlapping subcommunities which share common interest in combating gender oppression, but which are differentiated not only by class and race positions but often by institutional locations” (p. 450). This sphere has emerged into higher educational institutions; however, dominate powers have used the idea of public sphere to silence certain individuals. It is also mentioned that “race is no longer salient, they are still articulating a vision of what Black people should and should not do with their personal, political and economic lives” (p. 454). With this idea arising it gives reason to believe that it is becoming even harder for an African American female to find her voice.

On the contrary, research has been conducted to prove that the idea of a safe, democratic public sphere is a myth, especially regarding exclusionary politics of race and gender in higher education. For example, Giroux (2002) states, “It appears that a story in which students give up their voices to promote a corporate ideology is viewed in the public media less as a threat to democratic norms” (p. 56). What Giroux is trying to shine light on is the fact that certain educational institutions do not value student’s voices, enough to see them as a potential threat if provoked. It is also important to note that other researchers see the decline of a democratic public sphere within educational institutions. This decline mentioned can negatively impact the self-worth of a Black women. In a study conducted by Allen (1992), he suggests, “As stated in response to a 1988 study about the rise in African American women in higher education, we must challenge and question these “rosy portrayals” (p. 29). For instance, Royster and Kirsch

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(2012) expressed a concern for including women's "voices, visions, and experiences in the work of rhetoric and composition, and identify the issues dealing with female voices, inside an higher educational institution" (p. 56).

Purpose of the Study

Reframing majoritarian narratives about race is critical for understanding marginalization of women in education, and recent studies have used counter-storytelling in order to challenge race and racism in education (Cho, 2017; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Fernandez, 2002; Ikemoto, 1997; Martinez, 2014; Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The purpose of this study is to understand, locate, and acknowledge the experiences and conditions of African American women, especially when pursuing doctoral degrees. While statistics indicate that Black women have succeeded in educational achievement and educational institutions are commonly considered democratic public spheres, other scholars demonstrate that counter-storytelling can be a significant form of challenging statistical and "safe space" majoritarian narratives about Black women's experiences in higher education. As Solórzano and Yosso (2002) describe, "majoritarian stories are not often questioned because people do not see them as stories but as 'natural' parts of everyday life" (p. 28). From this perspective, "natural" stories mute racial discourse. In this study, Dolores Delgado Bernal's (1998) cultural intuition is used as a conceptual framework to examine the personal and professional experiences and insights of Black women during their journey to obtaining a Ph. D. According to Bernal, cultural intuition is defined as "the unique viewpoints scholars bring to the research process" (p. 563). She provides four different sources of cultural intuition that is the basis for studying a recent curated Twitter conversation focused on Black women's experience in academia: personal experience, existing literature, professional experience, and an analytical research process.

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Research Questions

RQ 1: What methods are useful for understanding the collective experiences of Black women in higher education when gaining a doctoral degree?

RQ 2: What are the collective experiences of Black women in higher education when gaining a doctoral degree?

RQ 3: In what ways do the collective experiences of Black women challenge dominant narratives about higher education as a democratic public sphere?

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The victory of *Brown v. Board of Education* lifted segregation when pertaining to education. However, “White resistance to school desegregation resulted in open defiance and violent confrontations, requiring the use of federal troops in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957” (Library of Congress, n.d., para.3). It was also further suggested that even though Brown won the case for justice and equality in the courtroom, outside of the courtroom the victory did not mean much. Blacks in America were still having a tough time trying to obtain an education: this is because Whites did not want to share what they felt was their territory. In spite of the tormenting by the Whites, protesters continued to fight for what they believed was requisite.

This chapter provides a historical literature review related to Black women’s experiences in higher education, which later provides the researcher with “possible ways of approaching and interpreting data” and an opportunity to become “sensitive to what to look for in the data” (Bernal, 1998, p. 565). As Harpor, Patton, and Wooden (2009) show, researchers can “juxtapose historically noteworthy progressive steps toward access and equity with recent indicators of backward movement” (p. 390). Thus, this study implemented a literature review that shines light on progressive steps and backward movements inside higher academia. In particular, three important historical aspects are assessed for cultural intuition about access and equality in higher education before and after *Brown v. Board of Education*: historical figures who were significant for charting progress towards educational achievement, the centrality of Black women’s experiences in muted educational settings, and historical legal cases that were significant for further integrating educational spaces.

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Historical Figures in Equal Educational

Furthermore, the historical figures that will be mentioned, used the case of *Brown v Board of Education* as a stepping stone to make change, therefore, Library of congress states “By 1964, ten years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, the NAACP’s focused legal campaign; [*sic*] had been transformed into a mass movement to eliminate all traces of institutionalized racism from American life” (n.d.). Even though a vast amount of change has begun to take effect around this time, the idea of a safe and positive space for marginalized groups was hard to find when regarding higher educational institutions. Something to consider equally important was the fight for Black women to also obtain an education. Evans (2007) states that “universities, revealed that for the first Black women college graduates in the 1850s no faculty positions were available” (p. 131). Black women cherished the idea of achieving the same kind of education as individuals that could. Given the stigma of an African American women’s skin tone, this made it very difficult for African American women to fit in to society at that time. There were a number of African American women that dedicated their lives to fight for equal education for Black women. Additionally, it was clear that certain organizations and individuals saw the injustice and made efforts to make positive change. Here, I provide a profile of individuals central to educational progress.

Vincent Colyer., As Sandifer & Renfer (2003) show “Burnside North Carolina put Vincent Colyer, an army chaplain, in charge of taking care of the escaped slaves. Camps were set up for them, and many were given jobs helping Union soldiers build forts”. Colyer knew that just helping the escaped slaves with their temporary daily needs was not enough. They needed preparation for lives as free citizens after the war was over, Colyer knew that they needed an education. Therefore, “On July 23, 1863, Colyer established the first school for freed people in

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North Carolina. This school was on Roanoke Island, another was soon opened in New Bern, North Carolina. Both were taught by soldiers who volunteered their free time” (Sandifer & Renfer, 2003). Even though Blacks were creating educational safe spaces to study and obtain an education, equality was still an intangible goal, students were struggling to obtain. In fact, W.E.B Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Thurgood Marshall, and Charles Hamilton Houston were just a few powerful activists that had a major role of working tirelessly to dismantle the segregation inside colleges and universities.

Booker T. Washington. In 1895, Booker T. Washington was a professor at Howard University. He publicly put forth his philosophy on race relations in a speech at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia (Booker T Washington, 2018). This speech is known as the Atlanta Compromise. In his speech, Washington stated that African Americans should accept disenfranchisement and social segregation as long as Whites allow them economic progress, educational opportunity, and justice in the courts. This compromise was one of the first successful attempts at integrating African Americans into White higher educational institutions (Booker T. Washington, 2018).

W.E.B Du Bois. However, after becoming the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University. W.E.B Du Bois fought against Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise. Du Bois believed that it was essential for Blacks to become educated on social and political issues (W.E.B. Du Bois, 2018). Du Bois criticized Washington for not demanding equality for African Americans, as granted by the 14th Amendment (W.E.B. Du Bois, 2018). Du Bois fought for what he believed was a superior strategy, subsequently becoming a spokesperson for full and equal rights in every realm of a person’s life.

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Charles Hamilton Houston. From 1915 to 1917, Charles Hamilton Houston taught English at Howard University. From 1917 to 1919, he was a First Lieutenant in the United States Infantry, based in Fort Meade, Maryland. After studying at the University of Madrid in 1924, Houston was admitted to the District of Columbia Bar that same year and joined forces with his father in practicing law. Beginning in the 1930s, Houston served as the first special counsel to the NAACP (NAACP History Charles Hamilton Houston, n.d). Houston was involved with the majority of civil rights cases. Houston designed a strategy of attacking segregation in law schools which in turn would force states to either create costly parallel law schools or integrate the existing ones. (NAACP History Charles Hamilton Houston, para.2). While joining Howard University's law school faculty, he found himself mentoring Thurgood Marshall.

Thurgood Marshall. The great achievement of Marshall's career as a civil-rights lawyer was his victory in the landmark 1954 Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. The class-action lawsuit was filed on behalf of a group of black parents in Topeka, Kansas, whose children were forced to attend all-Black segregated schools. Though *Brown v. Board* was one of the most important cases of the 20th century, Marshall challenged head-on the legal underpinning of racial segregation, the doctrine of separate but equal established by the 1896 Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*. On May 17, 1954, "the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal, and therefore racial segregation of public schools violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. The supreme court granted all races equal learning opportunity to obtain an education" (NAACP Legal History, para. 2). The male activists listed provided a path for African American women to fight for their own individual equality.

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Mary Church Terrell. Mary Church Terrell was one of the few Black women to receive a bachelor's degree in 1884. She went on to teach at a Black high school in Washington and then at Wilberforce College in Ohio. Thereafter, "Terrell was appointed to the District of Columbia Board of Education in 1895. She was the first black woman in the United States to hold such an honored position" (For Harriet, 2014, para. 22). Terrell was also a charter member of the National Association of Colored Women and became the first president of the organization in 1897. Mary Church Terrell became well known for her resistance of racial segregation, and her support of women's suffrage. Terrell's determination to fight for African American women and education paved the way for other activists, such as Mary Mcleod Bethune.

Mary Mcleod Bethune. Mary Mcleod Bethune founded the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls in Daytona, Florida, in 1904: "Starting out with only five students, she helped grow the school to more 250 students over the next years. The college was one of the few places that African-American women could pursue a college degree" (For Harriet, 2014, para. 4). Bethune stayed with the college until 1942. The college is now called Bethune-Cookman College. The college created a safe space for African American women to gain an education and earn a degree. This gave Black women, like Pauli Murray, a boost of confidence to achieve a more respected degree in respected fields such as law.

Pauli Murray. Pauli Murray decided to create a campaign to enter the all-White University of North Carolina in 1938. She was able to do this with the support of the NAACP (For Harriet, 2014, para.18). In 1941, Murray enrolled at the Howard University Law School with the intention of becoming a civil rights lawyer. Murray then went to the University of California Boalt School of Law, where she received a degree in law. Murray work hard alongside well-known activists such as Martin Luther King Jr., Philip Randolph, and Bayard

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Rustin. Murray and other activists continued to work for positive change. Other Black educated women like Ella Baker, Dorothy Height, and Angela Davis, just to name a few, continued to fight for change, equality, and a safe space for Black women to earn an education.

Experiences of Black Women in Education

After the 1900s, the idea of Black females gaining an education was not seen as a taboo or unlikely any more. According to Collier-Thomas (1982), “After the 1900s the rank of black female teachers swelled as more black women were educated and more jobs became available particularly in the rural area” (p. 175). This was a time where Black women could see prosperous change, and the option for Black women acquiring a job in the education field was finally a tangible goal. While having access to an education became undisputable, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) for Black women started to arise. The new educational institutions gave Black women a safe place to study around their own ethnicity. Therefore, “By 1920 there were over 100 black institutions of higher learning to which women were admitted. At least three of these were known to be exclusively for black women: Scotia Academy, Spelman College, and Bennett College” (p. 177). This gave Black women the confidence and security to attend a higher learning institution without fear of feeling shame, displacement, or invisibility in the classroom.

In contrast, the idea of Black institutions contradicted White higher educational institutions. However, the HBCUs were strictly tailored to the Black community. Therefore, HBCUs focused on the basic needs of their community, which in turn resorted to “HBCU institutions teaching Black women how to become homemakers or teachers” (p. 177). This was a step in a right direction; however, it limited Black women, when gaining an education, outside of

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the Black women's status quo. Thus, understanding the historical experiences of Black women in higher education has also been a continuous investigation.

Recent studies of experiences. Researchers have studied experiences of Black women in higher education, such as in U.S. computing science programs (Charleston, George, Jackson, Berhanu, & Amechi, 2014). Such studies provide further understanding of the historical experiences Black women encounter when attending higher educational institutions. When looking at the actual success of Black women attending the computing science program, Charleston et al. (2014) found a plethora of negative experiences that African American women went through when attending the higher educational program. A few negative experiences were the feelings of not fitting into the status quo or feeling the need to wear an academic mask to get through the day and program. A study conducted by Pierce (2008) focused on Black women and their experiences in a graduate degree programs in central Kentucky. Pierce looked at key experiences that certain Black women went through when attending this predominantly White institutions (PWI). This also found that the African American women going through the graduate degree program endured negative experiences, such as feeling like the minority and feeling marginalized within the program. The research uncovered some of the importance of understanding what a muted group and a muted learning space is and how it is or isn't enforced in higher educational institutions.

A study by Patton, Crenshaw, Haynes, and Watson (2016) found it necessary to understand and deconstruct prior experiences in U.S. classrooms, with the goal of understanding how those experiences contributed to their persistence as Black women in doctoral programs. Findings indicated that racist and sexist ideologies were enacted in the classroom and reified through a series of academic transactions they experienced as Black girls. This study focused on

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the marginalization and other challenges that African American women and girls face within the U.S. society. The marginalization of Black women is a concept that should be looked at more deeply, especially within the educational institution. According to Patton et al. (2016), “Black women remain marginalized, misnamed, maligned, and made invisible in the academy” (p. 194). Therefore, one may question the contested idea of higher education institutions as safe, democratic spaces.

Muted spaces in higher education. It is somewhat clear that the identity of an educational institution is a place where students can safely express their thoughts and concerns. The concept of a higher educational institution as a democratic public sphere continues to create constant conversation. While recent statistics indicate an increase of Black women in higher education, the aforementioned historical overview and experiences of Black women challenge the dominant narrative of higher education as a democratic public sphere. Thus, the concept of muted group is useful to frame hegemonic practices of silencing non-dominant experiences in higher education.

As Orbe (1998) explains, “privilege is assigned to some groups whereby social hierarchy creates dominant and sub-cultural groups. Traditionally, especially in Western societies such as the United States, non-dominant groups include women of color, women, gays, lesbians and bisexuals” (p. 1). As Orbe describes, the process of silencing groups in dominant spaces “renders marginalized groups as largely muted because their lived experiences are not represented in these dominant structures.” Several processes describe the function of silencing or muting in dominant spaces of higher education. Put together, each dominating process forecloses upon materializing African American women’s right to higher education and acknowledging experiences and voices.

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The concept of “voice” gives way to understand muting practices in higher education. Voice asserts the “truth” of a kind of physiological understanding of the immediacy and interconnectedness of the world before the mind learns how to “talk” itself into an understanding based on an “I-Thou” division” (Watts, 2001, p. 180-181). As Watts (2001) explains, voice is a physiological understanding with oneself. In the case of education, one’s voice is also deculturalized, making it difficult to understand one’s interconnected self. Springs (2016) states, “Deculturalization is a conscious attempt to replace one’s culture and language with another that is considered superior, since the early days of European settlement this has a common practice in American schools” (p. 1). Allen (1992) examined African American college student’s experiences at HBCUs and PWIs. The study found that there are different outcomes when looking at the experiences and encounters African American students feel when attending a HBCU or a PWI. Allen also found the students felt out of place and not accepted at the PWI, and it was also found that the students felt as if they needed to create their own space to feel accepted. When looking at the experiences the students encountered at the HBCUs, it was clear that the students felt more accepted and did not feel the need to create spaces to feel more comfortable when attending a higher educational institution.

The process of rendering Black women invisible is a concept very prominent to educational institutions. Pierce (2011) states, “A black women's invisibility is apparent in the classroom, curriculum, residential, and social life. Professors do not recognize them in classroom settings” (p. 1-2). This statement suggests that the invisibility of a Black women is noticeable when she is in an academic classroom. This invisibility can make it difficult for a Black woman to understand her voice in the classroom. The feeling of invisibility can resort to negative physiological developments. Research pertaining to physiological effects regarding the

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invisibility syndrome have been explored. As Patton, et al. (2016) state, “The prolonged effects of invisibility can result in black women attempting to avoid operating in racialized lenses” (p. 56). If a Black woman determines that the public sphere they are currently in is not accepting to them, this mindset could potentially contradict the idea of a democratic public sphere. In the same instance, some may suggest the idea for a Black woman to attend an HBCU to eliminate the feeling of invisibility entirely. However, both PWIs and HBCUs have similarities when considering an educational institution as a muted space. This study continues to explore Black student’s experiences at HBCUs and PWIs; it was found by Allen (1992) that

Black women were shown to encounter challenges and problems arising from their unique identities in two forms Race and Gender. If not three Race, Gender and Class discriminative categories. These challenges often represented serious barrier to Black women's satisfaction with achievement in college. (p. 7)

In another instance, Allen concluded that Black women gained less status by attending college than Black men (p. 2). On the contrary, it was found that males on the other hand were most influenced in their goals and aspirations by the college attended and were three times as likely to plan to pursue a doctorate degree. Yet these findings may create inquiries regarding the positive advancements Black women lack when attending an HBCU. With that being said, there are a number of power imbalances regarding gender in educational settings, especially across different types of universities. Therefore, “Many U.S. students of color experience pressure to adopt the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the dominant white culture while simultaneously feeling pressured to abandon their own culture” (Bourassa, 1991). According to Allen (1992), “Studies of African American students suggest that they may have negative, anomic experiences at White institutions and they suffer lower achievement, and higher attrition than White students” (p. 5).

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Allen's study indicated that African Americans feel out of place when attending a PWI. Those negative experience can also have a negative effect on Black women in a number of ways, such as the development of social anxiety. Consequently, this could decrease a Black women's scholarly accomplishments.

Social anxiety could be one physical and physiological development that most Black women experience when attending a PWI. Some researchers label the anxiety as an academic mask. An academic mask is also considered to be a second persona; however, it functions as a mental illusion. This mask is created to help individuals mentally get through the day, particularly in a marginalized environment. Unfortunately, Hannon (2016) states, "African American women have learned to master the skill of wearing an academic mask. This is because, African American female college students experience PWI environments as a marginalized population" (p. 1). Despite the invisibility that Black women have faced, the process of silencing has and is functioning at varied levels within educational settings. This results in another practice of subordinating minority experiences. When historically looking at the length of time it took for Black women to gain access to an education, the process was very toilsome and, to a certain extent, painful.

Historical Legal Cases After *Brown v. Board of Education*

The experiences of Black women in education show that there are still necessary steps needed to further realize equity and equality in higher education. Thus, the legal cases that will be mentioned here solidify the ongoing fight for equality inside the workplace and academia. Some researchers argue that progression has been reversed following *Brown v. Board of Education* (Pettigrew, 2004). For instance, as Hudson and Holmes (1994) suggest, "Black students today are more likely than any other groups to be represented in lower academic tracks

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and Special Education classes, especially when they attend school in majority white school districts” (p. 390). Thus, it is important to understand other legal cases that followed *Brown v. Board* in order to acknowledge the consistent fight for access and equality in education. One may agree that the inclusion of affirmative action can mute the voices of African Americans. Specifically, African American women when attending higher educational institutions. This section will focus on a series of legal cases that followed *Brown v. Board of Education*, further creating progressive change. The cases discussed represent an understanding as to why there is still need for progressive change when considering race in education as a whole.

Affirmative action (1960). Affirmative action was another historical landmark worth mentioning, this legal action bled into different aspects of political and legal platform. A few professional and legal cases that affirmative action affected was the Executive Order 11246 (1965), *The Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), *Grutter v. Bollinger* (1997) *Parents v. Seattle* (2007), and *Meredith v. Jefferson* (2007). The Executive Order 11246 was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson on September 24, 1965. This executive order established requirements for non-discriminatory practices in hiring and employment on the part of U.S. government contractors. The phrase affirmative action had appeared previously in Executive Order 10925 in 1961 (Affirmative Action Overview, 2014). Affirmative action made it possible to eliminate blatant legal discrimination.

California v. Bakke (1978). *The Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978) was a case that incorporated the legalities of affirmative action. Bakke’s decision found a way to uphold some parts of affirmative action while rejecting other parts. Allan Bakke, a White man, had applied twice for admission to the University of California Medical School at Davis (California v. Bakke, n.d., para. 2). He was rejected both times despite having the required

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academic achievements, while minority applicants were given preference. The court decided the University of California had to admit Bakke, arguing the rigid use of racial quotas at the school violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. But the court also found that race as part of admissions decisions was constitutional, as long as it was one of several admission criteria (*California v. Bakke*, n.d., para. 2).

Grutter v. Bollinger (1997). *Grutter v. Bollinger* (1997) expected change regarding equality at the University of Michigan's law school. In 1997, Barbara Grutter, a White resident of Michigan, applied for admission to the University of Michigan Law School (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, n.d., para. 1). Grutter applied with a 3.8 undergraduate GPA and an LSAT score of 161, and she was denied admission (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, n.d., para. 2). The law school admits that it uses race as a factor in making admissions decisions because it serves a compelling interest in achieving diversity among its student body (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, n.d., para. 2). The District Court concluded that the law school stated interest in achieving diversity in the student body was not a compelling one and enjoined its use of race in the admissions process.

Parents v. Seattle (2007). Another case influenced by affirmative action was the *Parents v. Seattle* (2007). The Seattle School District allowed students to apply to any high school in the district. Since certain schools often became oversubscribed when too many students choose them as their first choice, the district used a system of tiebreakers to decide which students would be admitted to the popular schools (*Parents v Seattle*, n.d., para.1). The second most important tiebreaker was a racial factor intended to maintain racial diversity. If the racial demographics of any school's student body deviated by more than a predetermined number of percentage points from those of Seattle's total student population (approximately 40% White and 60% non-White), the racial tiebreaker went into effect (*Parents v Seattle*, n.d., para. 2). At a particular school,

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either Whites or non-Whites could be favored for admission depending on which race would bring the racial balance closer to the goal. A non-profit group of parents involved in community schools sued the district, arguing that the racial tiebreaker violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment as well as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Washington state law (*Parents v Seattle*, Para. 3). A federal district court dismissed the suit, upholding the tiebreaker. Finally, by a 5-4 vote, the court applied a strict scrutiny framework and found the district's racial tiebreaker plan unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Para. 3).

Meredith v. Jefferson (2007). Lastly, and more recently, the *Meredith v. Jefferson* (2007) case focused on fair integration as well. Jefferson County Public Schools were integrated by court order until 2000. After its release from the order, Jefferson County Public Schools implemented an enrollment plan to maintain substantial racial integration. Students were given a choice of schools, but not all schools could accommodate all applicants (*Meredith v. Jefferson*, n.d., para. 1). In those cases, student enrollment was decided on the basis of several factors, including place of residence, school capacity, and random chance as well as race. However, no school was allowed to have an enrollment of Black students less than 15% or greater than 50% of its student population (*Meredith v. Jefferson*, n.d., para. 2). Meredith and other parents sued the school district, arguing that the plan's racial classifications violated the students' Fourteenth Amendment right to equal protection of the laws. After a loss, the second attempt was a success, by a 5-4 vote, the court applied a strict scrutiny framework and found Jefferson County's enrollment plan unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (*Meredith v. Jefferson*, n.d., para. 2). According to Sander and Taylor (2012),

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The mismatch effect happens when a school extends to a student such a large admissions preference sometimes because of a student's athletic prowess or legacy connection to the school, but usually because of the student's race, that the student finds himself in a class where he has weaker academic preparation than nearly all of his classmates. (p. 4)

This statement explains although so many have fought for equal opportunity and for their voices to be heard, the fight is yet to be over. Sander & Taylor (2012) stated “So we have a terrible confluence of forces putting students in classes for which they aren't prepared, causing them to lose confidence and underperform even more while, at the same time, consolidating the stereotype that they are inherently poor students” (p. 5). Sander and Taylor expressed their concern, that by regulating diversity inclusion in educational institution, the implementation of equality could be reversed due to the “mismatched” academic preparation of African American students.

Chapter 3. Method

This study uses Bernal's (1998) cultural intuition as the major concept that guides the method for exploring counter-narratives of Black women experiences in higher education. As a Chicana feminist, Bernal outlines four different sources of cultural intuition that is related to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) theoretical sensitivity, that is: personal experience, existing literature, professional experience, and an analytical research process. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) construct of theoretical sensitivity indicates an understanding of the subtle meanings of data and that "one can come to the research situation with varying degrees of sensitivity depending on one's previous reading and experience with or relevant to the data" (p. 41). Existing literature from the previous chapter guided the cultural intuition for collecting Twitter data on personal and professional experiences and conducting the analytical research process comprised of thematic and historical analysis.

Study Setting: Twitter

Bernal (1998) extends personal experience to include "collective experience and community memory, and points to the importance of participants' engaging in the analysis of data" (p. 465). Thus, given that social media is a common place to create online communities, this study uses Twitter to better understand the more recent and relevant conversations that previous African American women doctoral students are having in digital spaces. After understanding the success of Bernal's (1998) collective experience research, I found it useful to use Twitter as my source for data collection. Bernal focuses on the collective experience of an individual as previously stated, however, by understanding those personal and professional experiences of the Chicana feminist. Bernal's (1998) work supports the usage of the Twitter

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analysis. This analysis is used in this study to understand African American women's collective experience when attending higher educational institutions.

Twitter is an online social media space where individuals can create messages, called Tweets. Each tweet is no more than 280 characters. Twitter is an online community where users can communicate for personal or professional needs. This in turn allows the user to network within those specific areas of their lives. Networking means following the “feed” (messages). This feed allows users to continuously stay up-to-date with personal or current events. Although the Tweets shared are restricted in the numbers of characters, the material shared is full of depth, whether it’s through pictures, videos, or links to longer stories.

According to MacArthur (2017), Twitter began as an idea that Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey had in 2006. Dorsey had originally imagined Twitter as a social media communications platform. Groups of friends could keep tabs on what each other were doing based on their status updates, similar to texting (MacArthur, 2017). During a brainstorming session at the podcasting company Odeo, Jack Dorsey proposed this social media-based platform to Odeo’s co-founder Evan Williams. Williams and his co-founder Biz Stone gave Dorsey the go-ahead to spend more time on the project and develop it further. In its early days, Twitter was referred to as “twtr” (MacArthur, 2017). At the time, a popular trend, sometimes to gain domain name advantage, was to drop vowels in the name of their companies and services. Software developer Noah Glass is credited with coming up with the original name twtr as well as its final incarnation as Twitter (MacArthur, 2017).

Therefore, this study uses Twitter to analyzes a Twitter discussion created by the TTG+Partners; this online community is a creative communication consultancy specializing in starting thoughtful conversations on race, ethnicity, and diversity in higher education.

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TTG+Partners helps some of the nation's top colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, and nonprofit organizations on groundbreaking campaigns and various communications initiatives targeting traditionally marginalized student populations. Besides creating a safe space to speak about certain taboo topics, their mission includes brand messaging, event promotions, media relations, social media, interactive marketing, and strategic communications. This online community has conducted a number of over-sensitive monthly conversations.

On January 30, 2014, TTG+Partners hosted an online conversation, centered around African American women and their experiences attending doctoral programs. Dr. Natalie T.J. Tindall, associate professor and co-graduate director/area director in the department of communication at Georgia State University, and Dr. Danielle N. Lee, a postdoctoral research associate in the department of zoology, partook in this conversation with other numerous women of color that have obtained their doctoral degree. This conversation focused on the experiences of Black women's professional experiences in the academy and personal experiences while going through the process to getting their Ph.D. One responder states, "There's an isolation that happens among Black women with Phds, especially in academia." According to Elfman (2014), a number of questions were asked to assist with guiding the conversation. A few other questions that were asked stated, "What is the number 1 quality anyone needs to persist to a Phd.?" (Elfman, 2014, para. 2) "What stereotypes have you confronted as a Black woman pursuing and receiving your Phd.?" (Elfman, 2014, para. 2) "What kinds of -isms have you experienced?" (Elfman, 2014, para. 5) Those questions prompted important responses such as "Women in academia, but especially Black women in academia, don't really get a chance to discuss these things because it's always about the grind." (Elfman, 2014, para. 2)

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Data Collection

The TTG+Partners Twitter conversation hosted on January 30, 2014 was used to collect data for this study. The conversation can be found on the website storyify.com//ttgpartners/blac-women-the-ph.d. Each tweet came from the personal and or professional responses from African American women that are completing or have completed a doctoral program. Using Bernal's (1998) definition of professional experiences and Clandinin and Connelly's (1994) definition of personal experiences, the researcher identified and used 35 personal and professional tweets out of the total of 55 tweet responses (see appendix).

To understand the personal experiences of each tweet, the researcher used Clandinin and Connelly's (1994) definition of personal experiences, which "reflects the flow of thoughts and meanings persons bring to their immediate situations" (p. 1). On the contrary, Bernal's (1998) definition of professional experiences was used as a criteria for collecting the data: "Years of practice in a particular field often provides an insider view of how things work in that field. This knowledge, whether explicit or implicit, is taken into the research and helps one to understand differently than if one did not have this experience" (p. 8).

Analysis

According to Bernal (1998), analytical research is an important part of the cultural intuition process. As she states, "look more closely at the data and bring meaning to the research" (p. 556). Bernal provides a number of ways of "looking" at data collected from personal and professional experiences and literature reviews: "making comparisons, asking additional questions, thinking about what you are hearing and seeing, sorting data, developing a coding scheme, and engaging in concept formation (p. 556)." In order to analyze the specific

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Twitter conversation regarding African American women and their personal and professional experiences in higher academia, this study employs a thematic analysis.

First, each tweet was thematically represented using in-vivo and descriptive codes (see Appendix). Saldana's (2008) method of in-vivo coding and descriptive coding assisted with uncovering the more frequent recurring themes of the personal and professional experiences that emerged. According to Saldana (2008), in-vivo coding is "one of the codes is taken directly from what the participant himself says and is placed in quotation marks" (p. 19). Saldana also states that descriptive coding is "the one-word capitalized code in the right column is called a Descriptive Code, which summarizes the primary topic of the excerpt" (p. 19). Each code assisted with developing a theme to organize the data of the personal and professional experiences found. Microsoft word was utilized to design a thematic table to sort the relevant tweets (see Appendix). The thematic table clarified the usage of the in-vivo codes, descriptive codes, and each tweet was defined as either personal or professional responses. By using this form of organization, the categorization was better seen for visual understanding.

Chapter 4. Findings

Overall, a total of 35 tweets were coded, which can be found in Table 1 and Table 2. The representative tweets that were found were from personal experiences (51%) and professional experiences (49%). Table 3 displays the percentage of each theme found, then divided into the three categories of personal experience responses, professional experience responses, and overall responses. Additionally, the dominant theme that occurred was the theme of having a stronger support system (63%) when completing a doctoral program. The second dominant theme found was discipline (51%). Other themes that followed were lack of organizational spaces (49%), lack of diversity (23%) and lack of training (23%). Discipline and a need for a strong support system were the dominant themes found out of all themes. Both themes were greater than 50% of the total tweets. Out of the two themes, each one had more professional experience responses compared to personal experience responses. Of the three other themes that were found (lack of organizational spaces, lack of diversity, lack of training), each one fell less than 50% of the total tweets. Looking at the three themes (lack of organizational spaces, lack of diversity, lack of training), the researcher noted each one produced greater personal experiences responses compared to professional experience responses.

How would you advise younger black women on persisting past racial & gender discrimination in #highered?

1. Discipline. The dominant theme of discipline consisted of a variety of representative responses. Each response mentioned the need to stay focused. In one case, the responder stated, “Time. Money. Work-life balance. Some relationships have to be severed so you can finish with sanity.” The theme of discipline fell under the personal minor category, this theme suggests that one of the components to getting through a doctoral program is having a discipline mindset.

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Are there unique issues Black women face when on the Ph.D. track?

2. Need for a strong support system. The second dominant theme fell under the personal minor category; this theme was represented as a need for a strong support system. Responders stated that it was important to have a strong support system to get through a doctoral program. It is also important to note, most respondents stated going as far as finding an online community is recommended. One responder stated, “Twitter is great way to find community and find those who can support you.” This theme was important to responders because of how demanding a doctoral program can be.

Table 1

Representative Tweets Of The Themes Discipline And Need For A Strong Support System

Major Category	Minor Category	Representative Tweets
Discipline	Personal	<p>A.1) Time. Money. Work-life balance. Some relationships have to be severed so you can finish with sanity.</p> <p>A.2) You have to know the rules of the game. And I looked at tenure like a game of chess.</p> <p>A.3) You push through all of that by completing your degree, staying focused, fight one battle at a time.</p>
Need for a strong support system	Personal	<p>A.4.) I have found AMAZING support & mentors from SM. I could stay sane or in the game w/o them.</p> <p>A.5.) I couldn't have made it through dissertation w/out my supportive sisters!!</p> <p>A.6.) Twitter is great way to find community and find those who can support you.</p>

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Would you speak about using social media to mentor & be mentored?

3. Lack of organizational spaces. Another theme to consider is lack of organizational spaces; this theme fell under the professional minor category. Responders found it important to find organizational spaces that could provide a space where African American women doctoral students could vent, speak, and ask questions about different area of the doctoral program. This study found that most African American women have to look outside of the institutions to find these kinds of organizations. One responders made a statement expressing, “I was president of #NBGSA a natl group for #Black grad students there are communities out there.” This statement suggests that there is a lack of organizational spaces for African American women in the doctoral program.

What are some of the personal/professional sacrifices that are made to earn a Ph.D.?

4. Training. Responders provided comments that pertained to the theme of training, understanding the content of the material, and finding ways to strengthen your skills was essential when completing a doctoral program; this theme fell under professional in the minor category. It was stated by one responder, “I was academically underprepared and no one of campus looked like me.” This study also found, by seeking out mentors to build a “mentoring army” it would make the doctoral journey less daunting.

Are there unique issues Black women face when on the Ph.D. track?

5. Lack of diversity. When completing a doctoral program, diversity inclusion is an important factor for the responders. Although the theme lack of diversity fell under the less than greater category, it was still an important theme to consider. The lack of diversity was organized under the professional minor category. As one responder mentions, “no one of campus looked like me.” Responders found it necessary to express the lack of diversity in their doctoral

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program. The theme lack of diversity can affect the visibility of a Black women. As one responder states, “Black women in #academia are often hyper visible and/or invisible.” This response indicates that visibility is an important concept when completing a doctoral program.

Table 2

Representative Tweets Of The Themes Lack Of Organizational Spaces, Training And Lack Diversity

Major Category	Minor Category	Representative Tweets
Lack of Organizational Spaces	Professional	<p>A.7.) Women in academia but especially Black women in academia don’t really get a chance to discuss these things because it’s always about the grind, when we find spaces that we can, it all sort of bubbles up to the surface.</p> <p>A.8.) I was president of #NBGSA a natl group for #Black grad students there are communities out there.</p> <p>A.9.) Start the mentor process by seeking out people online but solidify with in-person/chats/email.</p>
Training	Professional	<p>A.10.) I was academically underprepared.</p> <p>A.11.) The lack of visible mentors. When you are the only one for extended periods of time, it can be frustrating, draining.</p>
Lack of Diversity	Personal	<p>A.12.) No one on campus looked like me.</p> <p>A.13.) Black women in <u>#academia</u> are often hypervisible and/or invisible.</p>

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Table 3

Percentage of Personal, Professional and Overall Responsive Tweets Within Each Theme

Themes	Personal Experiences Responses	Professional Experiences Responses	Overall Responses
Need for strong support system	44%	82%	63%
Discipline	39%	65%	51%
Lack of organizational spaces	61%	35%	49%
Lack of training	28%	18%	23%
Lack of diversity	28%	18%	23%

Chapter 5. Discussion

History has always told a story, and there are a number of important historical events that influenced the integration of Black women in higher education. On October 29, 1954, the Supreme Court ordered immediate desegregation of school districts and opened legal pathways for incoming African Americans in education, due to the victory of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Over the years, a number of scholars have reflected on educational achievement more than fifty years after the landmark case (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004; Thomas, Fulton, Abercrombie, & Yoon, 2004; Pettigrew, 2004; Hudson & Holmes, 1994). For instance, Zirkel and Cantor (2004) state, “In examining the state of racial integration and racial justice in education today, there is much to be discouraged about. Schools in most areas of the United States remain largely segregated by race” (p. 4). The findings by Carroll, Fulton, Abercrombie, and Koon (2004) found the following:

A chilling picture of inequitable school conditions where low income students and children of color are too often taught by unqualified teachers, with insufficient instructional materials and a limited supply of textbooks and inadequate technology, in overcrowded and crumbling buildings with vermin and broken bathrooms. (p. 7)

Both statements express the need for change within the United States educational system on regards equal educational institutions and materials.

The Twitter chat illustrates a contemporary discourse of Black women experiences that challenge dominant statistical narratives in higher education, as well as myths about the democratic public sphere. Thus, the contemporary discourse of personal and professional experiences of African American women as expressed on the curated Twitter conversation

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function as what Martinez (2014) calls a “counter-reality” created/experienced by “outgroups” subordinate to those atop the racial and gendered hierarchy” (p. 70).

With that being said, the Twitter chat also functions as a historical discourse supporting the need for more progressive change, especially in the case of creating organizational spaces as support systems. The results indicate that there is still a need for positive change within areas such as preparing African Americans, specifically women in this case, for higher educational institutions. This preparation will help decrease the lack of ability to succeed in future endeavors such as higher educational institutions if they so choose to take that path. Thus, while this study used a thematic analysis in order to perform the analytical process of “cultural intuition” (Bernal, 1998). Zarefsky’s (1998) senses of rhetorical history is useful for further understanding the historical and rhetorical significance of the personal counter stories acquired from the Twitter discussion. Zarefsky provides four approaches for studying discourse: “the history of rhetoric, the rhetoric of history, historical studies of rhetorical practice, and rhetorical studies of historical events” (p. 26). As Zarefsky states, the “historical events from rhetorical perspectives (Zarefsky, 1998, p. 26). Zarefsky seeks to understand history as a “series of rhetorical problems, situations that call for public persuasion to advance a cause” (Zarefsky, 1998, p.30). Whereas thematic coding was used in this study to analyze the curated Twitter conversations as a contemporary discourse, the discussion can also be studied as Zarefsky’s third sense of rhetorical history: historical study of rhetorical events.

As the study illustrated, the Twitter chat sponsored by TTG+Partners created a safe space for starting thoughtful conversations on race, ethnicity, and diversity in higher education. Although there were a number of different themes that were found, such as lack of diversity, training, need of a support system, discipline, and need for organizational spaces. The concern of

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the lack of space to ask for help was a big disappointment for the women who participated in the conversation. The absence of community and/or space to express the struggles and hardships African American women go through was another concern as well. Other responses stated, “When we find spaces that we can talk, it all sort of bubbles up to the surface.” Also, “sometimes, people don’t feel a welcoming space to talk about these things or have the discussion or even ask questions about “How do you find a mentor?”

By studying the Twitter responses as “as an index or mirror of history” or a “conversation it alters an ongoing social conversation” (Zarefsky, 1998, p. 29). One could provide a historical counter-story of Black women’s experiences in higher education that is useful for understanding how people have and are responding to the problem of muted educational spaces. One response is critical to understanding the ongoing efforts to uphold the mandate of *Brown v. Board of Education*: the development of spaces to counter barriers to equal education. To illustrate further, I provide a sample profile of several historical and contemporary organizations aimed at increasing educational achievement among Black women in higher education.

National coalition of 100 black women (NCBW)

The National Coalition of 100 Black Women (NCBW), is an organization that was launched on October 24, 1981, with representatives from 14 states and the District of Columbia. Jewell Jackson McCabe was selected as its first national president. The organization’s mission is to advocate on behalf of women of color through national and local actions and strategic alliances that promote the NCBW agenda on leadership development and gender equity in the areas of health, education, and economic empowerment. This organization was a response to the lack of voice that African American Women had before the 1980s. A couple more recent organization to consider are Black girl CODE, and Her mind Rocks.

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Black Girls CODE

Black Girls CODE, is devoted to showing the world that black girls can code and do so much more. By reaching out to the community through workshops and after school programs, Black Girls CODE introduces computer coding lessons to young girls from underrepresented communities in programming languages such as Scratch or Ruby on Rails. Black Girls CODE has set out to prove to the world that girls of every color have the skills to become the programmers of tomorrow. However, another organization has continued to make positive change as well.

Her Mind Rocks

Her Mind Rocks empowers young, Black women to create their own definition of what it means to be a Black woman. Through partnerships with schools in the community, they are able to reach the girls where they are already learning and interacting socially. Also, this organization focuses on education and creating dialogue. The organizations listed are a response to continue educating young black girls and women. The organizations are also a response to extending the mindset of equality and “voice” along with tailoring, motivating, educating, and developing social skills to prevent low self-esteem so that young Black girls and women can continue to keep up with societies educational curriculum.

These organizations are a safe space that go beyond the predominantly White higher educational institutions. Within these organizations, Black Women have a space to voice their opinions and concerns without feeling ridiculed. Having those spaces prevent vocal suppression and reverse the idea of muted voices. One may also see the correlation between all of the organizations listed and the theory of muted group. As stated before, muted group theory is useful to analyze the hegemonic practices of silencing non-dominant experiences in higher

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education. As Orbe (1998) explains, “privilege is assigned to some groups whereby social hierarchy creates dominant and sub-cultural groups. Traditionally, especially in Western societies such as the United States, non-dominant groups include women of color, women, gays, lesbians and bisexuals” (Orbe, 1998, p. 1). The organizations mentioned solidify the notion of silencing African American women's voices in higher educational institutions. The organizations have been created to educate, motivate, and support young African American girls and women. It is clear that Black women are still fighting to find a safe space and supportive community to be a part of, thus restricting Black women from becoming un-mute.

Further research on similar organizations and digital communities could address the ways in which African American women feel mentally and how these spaces provide an opportunity to have conversation about their experiences in educational institutions. For instance, in studying this new form of community, one could look at the increase or decrease in self-esteem, lack of suppression of voice, and what it means to be free inside of an educational institution as an African American woman. This research could help strengthen the conversation and provide ways to create a more inclusive academic space for African American women.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that experiences were collected from a secondary study; the legitimacy of the responses could be a concern. A primary study would ensure the authenticity of the responses. When looking at the themes found, one could find it more effective to have a broader understanding of other themes that were found when analyzing the TTG+Partners Twitter Chat. Giving more information about the other themes could broaden the conversation of Black women's experiences attending higher educational institutions. Those kinds of questions could make for better questions in the future. By expanding data collection

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through other social media platforms, such as Facebook, Blogs, and LinkedIn, could have help to thicken the data collection process, making for an even stronger data analysis. With a plethora of legal cases found, this study could have benefited from providing more cases in different field areas such as political, administrative, legal, personal, and academic.

Conclusion

The history of African Americans and African American women in education dating back to the 1800s indicates an ongoing struggle as well as a progressive and backward movement towards access and equality. Previous research provides an understanding of Black women's experiences at PWIs and HBCUs, expressing the need to do better in all aspects of educational areas. According to Allen (1992), "Studies of African American students suggest that they may have negative, anomic experiences at white institutions and they suffer lower achievement and higher attrition than white students" (p. 5). This study was able to answer the research questions asked. RQ 1: What methods are useful for understanding the collective experiences of Black women in higher education when gaining a doctoral degree? By using Bernal's (1998) cultural intuition as a conceptual framework, this study analyzed the personal and professional experiences of African American women in higher education as discussed during a curated Twitter conversation organized by TTG+Partners. The study used thematic analysis to code recurring themes throughout the conversation.

Secondly, RQ 2: What are the collective experiences of Black women in higher education when gaining a doctoral degree? The dominant themes and historical legal cases found in the study indicated that the fight for voice is still a current issue among African American women in educational environments. After collecting the data, it was clear that Black women are

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continuously trying to find a safe space to simply speak about concerns and struggles regarding their experiences in higher educational institutions.

Lastly RQ 3: In what ways do the collective experiences of Black women challenge dominant narratives about higher education as a democratic public sphere? The idea that Black women are creating organizations and spaces outside of the higher educational institution to gain inner acceptance contradicts the concept of a higher educational institution being a democratic public sphere. Not only are Black women creating spaces and communities in online spaces, they are continuing to create spaces and communities through grassroots organizations as well. For instance, as one participant responded, “Twitter is great way to find community and find those who can support you.” Thus, it was shown through the data by having a space and community, Black women are able to start educating and motivating women to have a mind and a voice to express themselves at a young age.

Therefore, the experiences discussed in the curated Twitter chat can relate to the historical experiences previously mentioned and discourse about the progression and regression of educational achievement; this challenge the dominant narratives about higher education as a democratic public sphere. Because Black women are going outside of their institution to find safe spaces to express their voice, this indicated that those particular Black women do not feel that they are a part of a democratic public sphere as previously mentioned. The Twitter chat served as a counter-narrative to dominant narratives about statistical educational achievement and narratives about higher education as a democratic public sphere. As Martinez (2014) notes, “it is crucial to use a narrative methodology that counters other methods that seek to dismiss or decenter racism and those whose lives are daily affected by it” (p. 65). As Lopez (2013) explains, counter-storytelling is a tenet of critical race theory that seeks to “demystify the notion

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of a racially neutral society and tell other stories of a highly racialized social order: a story where social institutions and practices serve the interest of White individuals” (p. 85). Thus, Twitter can serve as a space for creating counter-narratives in digital spaces as well as conducting better research when pertaining to African American women and “voice”.

This study has uncovered the historical and present experiences that African American women have experienced when attending a higher educational institution. Although change as occurred throughout decades, a few items are still very similar. African American women are continuing to fight for equality inside of educational institutions, and they are continuing to create organizations to teach each other the standard educational curriculum. It is also clear that they continue to create communities to feel accepted, which will allow them to express their voice. Therefore, this study illuminates the halt for progressive change for African American women when attending a higher educational institution.

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Appendix Subtitle

C.I. - Personal and Professional Experience		
Tweet	In Vivo Code	Descriptive Code
<p><u>Q:At what point did you know you wanted to get your Phd.?</u></p> <p>A1.) getting a phd wasn't on my radar. I originally wanted to be a Veterinarian</p> <p>A2.) Didn't realize I wanted a PhD until near end of my MS program</p> <p>A3.)In my MA program, I fell in love with research. I tore up my job applications and started doing PhD apps.</p> <p>A4.)Good question. Sometimes I just think I ended up in academia by coincidence/luck</p>	<p>"Fell in love with research"</p> <p>"coincidence"</p> <p>"Luck"</p> <p>"Until near end of MS program"</p>	Aspirations
<p><u>Q:How has earning a degree changed your life?</u></p> <p>A5.) getting a phd has given me access to the world. I like to travel & explore. I get paid to do that</p> <p>A.6)it has given me access and ability.</p>	<p>"Access to the world"</p> <p>"Access and ability"</p> <p>"I like to travel and I get paid to do that"</p>	Accessibility
<p><u>Q:What are some of the personal/professional sacrifices the are made to earn a Ph.D.?</u></p>	<p>"Time"</p> <p>"Money"</p> <p>"Work-life balance"</p>	Discipline

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<p>A.7) Time. Money. Work-life balance. Some relationships have to be severed so you can finish with sanity.</p> <p>A.8) personal sacrifices - my independence is premium so...I'm unmarried and no kids</p> <p>A.9) I've moved all over the country, left friends, relationships, family - for school & job opportunities</p>	<p>“Severed relationships”</p> <p>“Sacrifice my independence”</p> <p>“Unmarried And no kids”</p> <p>“Left friends, relationships, family”</p>	
<p><u>Q: Would you speak about using social media to mentor & be mentored.</u></p> <p>A.10) Twitter is great way to find community and find those who can support you.</p> <p>A.11) I was president of #NBGSA a natl group for #Black grad students there are communities out there</p> <p>A.12) Yes, #NBGSA has been a great resource for so many students and profs</p> <p>A.13) start the mentor process by seeking out people online but solidify with in-person/chats/email</p> <p>A.14) I have found AMAZING support & mentors from SM. I could stay sane or in the game w/o them</p>	<p>“Support”</p> <p>“Twitter”</p> <p>“community”</p> <p>“Find those who can support you”</p> <p>“there are communities out there”</p> <p>“Mentors from SM”</p> <p>“Seek mentors out online”</p> <p>“twitter is a great way to find community”</p> <p>“#NBGSA a natl group for #Black grad”</p>	<p>Lack of organizational space</p> <p>Need for a strong support system</p> <p>Lack of support</p>

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<p><u>Q: Many grad students wonder about the tenure process. What does it take to become tenured?</u></p> <p>A.15)It takes a calm head to get through tenure. Remove anxious people from your life</p> <p>A.16)Ask for help from your department, university. Be able to distinguish what are real benchmarks.</p> <p>A.17)Understanding & aligning w/ the larger strategic vision of the institution also goes along way</p> <p>A.18) You have to know the rules of the game. And I looked at tenure like a game of chess</p> <p>A.19) LOTS of productivity measured as research papers and grant \$ plus luck and timing</p> <p>A.20) Read the tenure manual. Know the tenure manual of whatever institution you are considering</p>	<p>“It takes a Calm head”</p> <p>“Remove anxious people from life”</p> <p>“Ask for help”</p> <p>“Distinguish real benchmarks”</p> <p>“Know rules of the game”</p> <p>“Like a game of chess”</p> <p>“Luck and Timing”</p>	<p>Survive</p> <p>Need for a strong support system</p> <p>Discipline</p>
<p><u>How does the tenure process affect other areas of one’s life?</u></p> <p>A.21.)Tenure can be an all-consuming process if you let it be</p>	<p>“Break up journey into smaller steps”</p> <p>“Fraught with anxiety bc its great”</p>	<p>Sense of self worth</p>

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<p>A.22.) Tenure can be fraught w/ anxiety bc it is great, big task in front of you. Break up the journey into smaller steps</p> <p>A.23.) You doubt yourself. You question yourself and your worth as a person, as a scholar...sometimes.</p> <p>A.24.) Being on tenure track can cause a lot of stress and anxiety. "Am I doing what's right? Is this worthy?"</p> <p>A.25.) can cause you to sacrifice other aspects- Best advice: try to streamline what you do to meet criteria & take "off" when possible</p>	<p>"You doubt yourself"</p> <p>"You question yourself And your worth"</p> <p>"Can cause a lot of stress and anxiety"</p> <p>"Am I doing what's right?"</p> <p>"Is this worthy?"</p> <p>"Can cause you to sacrifice other aspects"</p> <p>"Try to streamline what you do to meet criteria"</p> <p>"Take off when possible"</p>	
<p><u>Q: Do you find some of your biggest detractors are black women?</u></p> <p>A.26) No, no prob at all w/ this</p> <p>A.27) I couldn't have made it through dissertation w/out my supportive sisters!!</p> <p>A.28) don't. I find black women to be my greatest supporters. If not supporting, they don't stand in my way</p> <p>A.29.) That doesn't negate that some black women do have others</p>	<p>"Supportive sisters"</p> <p>"Black women greatest supporters"</p> <p>"Black women other detractors"</p>	<p>Need for a strong support system</p> <p>Need for Organizational space</p>

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<p>as detractors. Just not my experience.</p>		
<p><u>Q: Are there unique issues Black women face when on the Ph.D. track?</u></p> <p>A.30) I'm not so sure there are. Issues of class, race & sex might apply to other URM women, too.</p> <p>A.31)The lack of visible mentors.When you are the only one for extended periods of time, it can be frustrating,draining</p> <p>A.32) the challenge of remaining true to your research and vision. Dealing with the anxieties that others foist on you</p> <p>A.33) Yes & no. Grad school generally tough for everyone. But struggles of racism/sexism/+ compound difficulties</p> <p>A.34) Imposter syndrome is real for many;for black women it is definitely there</p> <p>A.35) Black women in <u>#academia</u> are often hypervisible and/or invisible</p> <p>A.36) Women in academia but especially Black women in</p>	<p>“lack of Mentors”</p> <p>“Underprepared “</p> <p>“Invisible”</p> <p>“Frustrating”</p> <p>“Draining”</p> <p>“Remaining true to your research and vision”</p> <p>“Anxieties that others foist on you”</p> <p>“Grad school generally tough”</p> <p>“Racism”</p> <p>“Sexism”</p> <p>“Compound difficulties”</p> <p>“Imposter syndrome”</p> <p>“Black women In academia are Hypervisible Invisible”</p> <p>“Always about the grind”</p> <p>“Academically underprepared”</p> <p>“No one looked like me”</p>	<p>Training</p> <p>Lack of diversity</p> <p>Need for organizational spaces</p>

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<p>academia don't really get a chance to discuss these things because its always about the grind, when we find spaces that we can, it all sort of bubbles up to the surface.</p> <p>A.37) I was academically underprepared and no one of campus looked like me</p>		
<p><u>Q: As communications professor, do you think Black women receive positive messages about getting a Phd.?</u></p> <p>A.38) We receive multiple messages depending on the area/topic.</p> <p>A.39) We are told the PhD gives you credence & credibility but that the degree will make you too much for others to handle</p>	<p>“ We Receive multiple messages”</p> <p>“PhD gives you credence and credibility”</p> <p>“Make you to much for others”</p>	<p>Lack of acceptance</p> <p>Sense of self worth</p>
<p><u>Do you currently mentor younger students? What do you emphasize in your mentoring?</u></p> <p>A.40) focus on the need for "balance" and being true to yourself. Don't let the PhD become your entire identity</p> <p>A.41) That you need to find work-life integration.</p>	<p>“Balance”</p> <p>“Being true to yourself”</p> <p>“Find work-life integration”</p> <p>“Take breaks”</p>	<p>Discipline</p> <p>Training</p>

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<p>You can't be all PhD all the time. Take breaks, get rest, be rejuvenated</p> <p>A.42) YES!! I mentor HS thru graduate students, mostly SOC. It's imperative.</p> <p>A.43) emphasize preparation, esp for opportunities like study abroad, independent research projects, internships</p> <p>A.44) I mentor younger student, peer colleagues. I emphasize that the PhD will change you in ways that cannot be quantified</p> <p>A.45) There will be some barriers you overcome that won't go on your CV or counted to tenure.</p> <p>A.46.) Yes, I mentor my students at Howard & stu at other unis. Also, some mentoring via SM</p>	<p>"Get rest"</p> <p>"Be rejuvenated"</p> <p>"Preparation"</p> <p>"PhD will change you"</p> <p>"Barriers you will overcome"</p>	
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<p><u>How would advise younger black women on persisting past racial & gender discrimination in #higherred?</u></p> <p>A.47) you push through all of that by completing your degree, staying focused, fight one battle at a time.</p> <p>A.48) get a mentoring army & support system & make plans to get your skills up & achieve</p> <p>A.49) If you've made it as far as PhD program, you have survival skills. Keep doing what you're doing. Determination</p> <p>A.50) racial & gender discrimination is going nowhere? Where else are going? Higher ed gets your skills & degrees to leverage</p> <p>A.51) you either persist or perish no matter what you do. Proceed on your own terms. Get the degree, get out, get paid</p> <p>A.52) Strive for a calm mind. Have a courageous spirit. Find allies that can fight with/for you. Pick your hills</p> <p>A.53) That's not to mitigate structural barriers that exist and that are real. But find ways around, over those</p>	<p>"Push through"</p> <p>"Stay focused"</p> <p>"Fight one battle at a time"</p> <p>"Army & support system"</p> <p>"Get your skills up"</p> <p>"Survival skills"</p> <p>"Determination"</p> <p>"Racial & gender discrimination"</p> <p>"Get your skills & degrees to leverage"</p> <p>"Persist or perish"</p> <p>"Get degree"</p> <p>"Get out"</p> <p>"Get paid"</p> <p>"Strive for a calm mind"</p> <p>"Courageous spirit"</p> <p>"Find allies"</p> <p>"Pick your hills"</p> <p>"Structural barriers exist"</p>	<p>Discipline</p> <p>Need for a strong support system</p>
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<p><u>Q: What is the number 1 quality anyone needs to persist to a Ph.D.?</u></p> <p>A.54) Persistence!! You need a reason for getting a PhD and being called Dr aint it</p> <p>A.55) Knowledge of self, what you want/expect from the degree. Flexibility and adaptability.</p>	<p>“Persistence”</p> <p>“Knowledge of self”</p> <p>“Flexibility”</p> <p>“Adaptability”</p>	<p>Discipline</p> <p>Sense if self worth</p>
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