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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

PATHWAYS TO THE DOCTORATE DEGREE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY  
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN DOCTORATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Luciana Janee' Starks

September, 2010

Michelle Rosensitto, Ed.D.–Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Luciana Janee' Starks

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

---

Michelle Rosensitto, Ed.D.

---

John C. Tobin, J.D., USALJ

---

Michelle French, Ed.D.

---

Eric R. Hamilton, Ph.D.  
Associate Dean

---

Margaret J. Weber, Ph.D.  
Dean

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother Juanita Crawford. I know you're watching and I know you're smiling.

This dissertation is also dedicated to that little girl in South Central Los Angeles, who doesn't think it's possible, but who dreams the dream anyway.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is truly amazing how God works. When He said, “Ask and it shall be given,” He meant every word. I thank you Lord, because you have given me so much for which to be grateful. I am humbled and realize that I am nothing without you.

To my husband and best friend Willie Starks, thank you for being my number-one cheerleader and providing support on so many levels. To my little blessings from heaven, Jaylin, Charlee Simone, and the little one in my womb (Jaxson), I love being your mommy, you inspire me to greatness. Give your dreams wings!

To my grandmother, mother, sister, aunts, uncles, cousins, and “God-Sister” thank you for believing in me and for planting the seed of success and persistence early. This is proof that how you start the race, does not determine how you will finish.

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To my “chair extraordinaire,” Dr. Michelle Rosensitto, you were the wind beneath my wings. Thank you to Judge Tobin and Dr. Michelle French, my committee members who challenged me to think more critically. Thank you to the lovely 7 women who opened their hearts and told their stories so that I could one day tell mine. There is an old adage that states, “Be careful what you ask for, you just might get it.” Well, here’s my take on it: “Be cheerful and patient when you ask, for you will just get it.”

## VITA

## EDUCATION

---

California State University Long Beach, Long Beach, CA Bachelor of Arts in Communications	1998
Chapman University, Orange, CA Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership	2002
California State University Dominguez Hills, Carson, CA Community College Teaching Certificate	2009

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

---

Kaiser Permanente, Riverside, CA Public Affairs Representative	2006-present
Kaiser Permanente, Pasadena, CA Marketing Project Manager	2004–2006
Scott & White Hospital, Temple, TX Communications Manager	2001–2004

## PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- 
- Former Vice President of Education and Public Relations—Toastmaster International
  - Founder—After-School Mentor Program
  - Facilitator—Writers' Symposium on Poetry and Literature
  - Member—Orange County Public Relations Society of America

## ABSTRACT

Increasing the number of advanced degree recipients is more than an educational issue; it is also a key social issue. “A college-educated population results in pivotal benefits to society” (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2004, p. 1).

Although African Americans have made steady and notable progress in doctorate degree attainment, there is still more room to grow. Therefore, it is important to understand the experience of earning the doctoral degree to make sure we can disseminate this information to the greater community and help others to achieve these positive outcomes. This qualitative study explored the experiences of African American females who have obtained the doctorate degree.

The selected sample was composed of 7 African American women who had obtained a doctorate degree from a traditional university during the past 15 years. The data collection method was structured interviews conducted throughout a 1-week period. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. In accordance with literature on qualitative study, triangulation and member checking were some of the methods utilized to ensure credibility.

Six themes emerged from the data that connected the doctoral journeys of all 7 participants and were categorized as: (a) High educational expectations by a teacher, counselor, or parent promote college degree attainment; (b) Early academic achievement and school involvement motivate future study; (c) Student support services and institutional integration aid in doctoral student persistence; (d) Mentors and social supports play a critical role in students’ persistence and success; (e) Clear educational

goals and self-determination are crucial to doctoral degree completion; and (f) A dissertation chair and committee members who are supportive aids program completion.

Based on the results of the study, parents should set high expectations for students early and encourage participation in extracurricular activities. University administrators and doctoral advisors should provide academic, social, and emotional support for doctoral students by way of formal program orientations, mentors, counselors, and writing resource centers.

## Chapter 1. Introduction

*“Our silence has been long and deep. In canonical literature, we have always been spoken for. Or we have been spoken to. Or we have appeared as jokes or as flat figures suggesting sensuality. Today we are taking back the narrative, telling our own story.”*  
—(Morrison, 2000, p. xii)

For African American doctoral students, the news is both good and bad. First, the good news: Recent statistics by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2008) reports that 3,122 African Americans earned doctorates in the 2006–2007 academic years (see Table 1). This number represents 5.6% of all doctorates awarded to U.S. citizens, the highest level recorded for African Americans, in history.

Table 1

*Doctor’s Degrees Earned by Level and Race/Ethnicity: 1990 to 2006*

Level of degree and race/ethnicity	Total					Percent distribution		
	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	1990	2000	2006
Doctor’s degrees, total	38,371	44,446	44,808	52,631	56,067	100.0	100.0	100.0
White, non-Hispanic	26,221	27,846	27,843	30,261	31,601	68.3	62.1	56.4
Black, non-Hispanic	1,149	1,667	2,246	3,056	3,122	3.0	5.0	5.6
Hispanic	780	984	1,305	1,824	1,882	2.0	2.0	3.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,225	2,689	2,420	2,911	3,257	3.2	5.4	5.8
American Ind/Alaska native	98	130	160	237	230	0.3	0.4	0.4
Nonresident alien	8,898	11,130	10,834	14,342	15,975	23.2	24.2	28.5

Note: Table adapted from U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 2008.

Now, the bad news: Although African Americans have made steady and notable progress in doctorate degree attainment, there is still more room to grow. NCES (2008) figures show that in 2004, White students accounted for 28, 214 of the 48, 378 doctorate degrees conferred. Dissecting the number even further, one sees that African American women received 1,885 of the 48, 378 doctorates conferred and African American men,

only 1,015. In fact, African American men lagged considerably behind African American women on all degree levels (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Number and percentage distribution of degrees conferred by degree-granting institutions, by level of degree, race/ethnicity, and sex: 2003–2004*

Race/ethnicity and sex	Total	Associate's	Bachelor's		Master's	First-professional	Doctor's
			Number of degrees	Number of degrees			
Total degrees conferred	2,755,202	665,301	1,399,542	558,940		83,041	48,378
White	1,940,336	456,047	1,026,114	369,582		60,379	28,214
Male	818,690	183,819	445,483	143,827		31,994	13,567
Female	1,121,646	272,228	580,631	225,755		28,385	14,647
Black	271,911	81,183	131,241	50,657		5,930	2,900
Male	87,728	25,961	43,851	14,653		2,248	1,015
Female	184,183	55,222	87,390	36,004		3,682	1,885
Hispanic	201,619	72,270	94,644	29,666		4,273	1,662
Male	78,775	27,828	37,288	10,813		2,080	766
Female	122,844	44,442	57,356	18,853		2,193	896
Asian/Pacific Islander	168,770	33,149	92,073	30,952		9,964	2,632
Male	75,435	13,907	41,360	14,347		4,528	1,293
Female	93,335	19,242	50,713	16,605		5,436	1,339
American Indian/Alaska Native	22,731	8,119	10,638	3,192		565	217
Male	8,476	2,740	4,244	1,127		275	90
Female	14,255	5,379	6,394	2,065		290	127

Note: table adapted from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 2005 (NCES 2006-030), tables 259, 262, 265, 268, and 271, data from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2004.

Increasing the number of advanced degree recipients is more than an educational issue; it is also a key social issue. A college-educated population results in pivotal benefits to society (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2004).

Few studies have focused on the lived experiences of doctoral students, and even fewer have examined those factors for minority populations (Millett & Nettles, 2006).

### *Background*

The educational horizon has widened and the future appears brighter for minorities in higher education. NCES (2008) statistics illustrate that 4,442 U.S. citizens,

who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group, were awarded doctorate degrees in 1994. A decade later, the number increased to 7,489 U.S. minority doctorate recipients).

An increase has also been reported for African American students, in particular. For example, the number of doctorate degrees conferred to African American students stands at one of the highest levels in history, with African Americans constituting 6.1% of all doctorates awarded to American citizens in 2007, an increase from 4.1% in 1997 (NCES, 2008).

Further, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2004), African American students earned the most doctorate degrees (2,900) out of the three main U.S. minority populations. African Americans were followed by Asians/Pacific Islanders (2,632), Hispanics (1,662), and American Indians and Alaska Natives (217).

Although statistics have increased during the last decade for African American students, much progress remains to be achieved. In 2004, African Americans were nearly 13% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). However, blacks earned doctorates at only half the levels that racial parity with White Americans would indicate. While the proportion of African American doctorates awarded is rising, the percentage difference from year to year is not significant. For example, in 1995, 1,363 or 3.1% of doctorate degrees were awarded to African American students, in 2005, 2,361 or 5.1%.

Even more problematic are the wide differences among black and white students in terms of academic fields in which they earn doctorates. For instance, 41.3% of all doctorates awarded to African Americans in 2004 were in the field of education. In contrast, only 19.1% of doctorates earned by white students were in this field (“In contrast”, 2003). White students are far more likely than black students to earn doctorates



in the natural sciences. In 2004, nearly 12% of doctorates awarded to white students were in the physical sciences. This is nearly triple the percentage for African American students. Additionally, African American female students continue to outpace their African American male counterparts in doctorate degree achievement.

National statistical databases such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned Doctorates, and the National Center for Educational Statistics, to name a few, collect and report data on doctoral students. However, these data focus on statistical information and graduate student outcomes (i.e., enrollment, completion rates, fields of study, and financial aid), and offer little insight into the student's lived experiences and pathways they construct for degree completion. In short, these data fail to reveal the story of the student who is behind the number. In their study, which later was created into a book, *Three Magic Letters*, Millett and Nettles (2006) asserted, "While these organizations collected vital data about the flow of students into and through doctoral programs, there was a deficiency of information from students' perspectives about their performance and overall development" (p. 32). These statistics provide only a partial picture of graduate student experiences. The National Science Foundation advocated studies to gather data on the context of graduate school experiences of women, minorities, and other underrepresented groups in doctoral education in order to achieve both diversity and parity in higher education.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Although statistics have increased for African American students, the percentage of degree attainment does not match the population and much progress remains to be achieved. Increasing the number of college graduates is more than an educational issue; it

is also a key social issue. “A college-educated population results in pivotal benefits to society” (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2004, p. 1).

According to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2004),

There are four benefits of a college-educated society:

Individuals with higher degrees can expect to earn higher incomes. College graduation is statistically likely to have a positive personal economic benefit for graduates; An educated skilled population makes fewer demands on social services such as welfare and corrections. Increased graduation rates serve the public good because they have a positive effect on society as a whole; Individuals with higher degrees make more informed lifestyle choices and there is an increase in civic engagement and community service. Individuals with higher degrees are more comfortable handling decisions about health care, personal finance, and retirement...[they] are statistically likely to live better and healthier lives because they have higher degrees. (p. 1)

Since higher education has been linked to positive societal outcomes, and has become the barometer of how we define success it is important to understand the experience of the doctoral degree to make sure that we can disseminate this information to the greater community and help others to achieve these outcomes. This study will uncover some means to getting this degree, particularly to the African American population where higher degree attainment is low.

#### *Purpose Statement*

The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe and explore the experiences of African American females who have obtained the doctorate degree. In addition, this study will uncover some means to achieving the doctorate degree.

#### *Theoretical Framework*

As Silverman (2001) explains, “Theory provides a footing for considering the world and provides a framework for critically understanding phenomena” (p. 99). Tinto’s (1975) Student Integration Model and Tinto’s (1993) Conceptual Model of Doctoral

Persistence will be used as a framework for this study. The models contain variables that have been linked to student departure. There are several models that depict how students flow through postsecondary education. Tinto's (1975, 1993) models were selected because of their ability to elucidate the issue: "In particular, Tinto's attrition model has become a foundation for most research regarding student departure" (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003, p. 43).

Tinto's (1975) undergraduate persistence model is based upon earlier work of Spady (1970) who adapted a theory of student departure from Durkheim's (1953) suicide theory. Tinto asserts that individuals enter institutions of higher education with a variety of attributes that affect, directly or indirectly, their performance in college. According to Tinto, three major pre-college factors affect college students' success and subsequent departure decisions: (a) family background, (b) skills and abilities, and (c) prior schooling.

Tinto's (1993) theoretical model of doctoral persistence is drawn from his model of undergraduate persistence (Tinto, 1975). Graduate persistence, like undergraduate persistence, "is shaped by personal and intellectual interactions that occur within and between students and faculty and the various communities that make up the academic and social systems of the institution" (Tinto, 1993, p. 231). Three overarching stages are offered in the process of graduate persistence. The first is a transitional period of adjustment, which occurs during the first year. The student becomes acclimated to the academic and social communities of the university. This stage involves establishment of social networks and acclimation to academic and departmental norms. The second stage, attaining candidacy, culminates in doctoral comprehensive exams. During this stage,

lines between social and academic interaction are blurred, and the student is able to exhibit individual skills along with personal interactions with the faculty. In this stage, faculty influence becomes more important. The third and final stage covers the completion of a doctoral research proposal to the successful completion of the research project and defense of the dissertation. This stage reflects individual success along with direct interaction with individual faculty. The continual successful completion of the doctorate degree in this stage encompasses the importance of external commitment (i.e., family, work, and/or supports). The final stage is candidacy to defense during which time a proposal is developed, and the dissertation is completed and ultimately defended.

The present study gathers information as participants reflect upon their doctorate program experiences during the four stages of Tinto's (1975, 1993) theoretical models. The first stage is drawn from Tinto's (1975) undergraduate persistence model and the subsequent stages are drawn from Tinto's (1993) theoretical model of doctoral persistence. These stages are (a) preentry attributes, (b) transition and adjustment, (c) attaining candidacy and developing competency, and (d) research completion (Tinto, 1975, 1993).

### *Research Questions*

The study will be guided by the following questions, which are based on four stages of Tinto's (1975, 1993), theoretical models:

1. What are the pre-entry behaviors that lead to the success of African American women prior to beginning a doctoral program?
2. How do African American women access doctoral education, as revealed in Tinto's first "transition and adjustment" stage of graduate persistence?

3. What facilitates the success of African American women during their doctoral study, as revealed in Tinto's second "attaining candidacy" stage of graduate persistence?
4. What are the pathways to the doctorate degree for African American women, as revealed in Tinto's third "research completion" stage of graduate persistence?
5. Based on Research Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4, what are the experiences of African American women in doctoral programs?

### *Significance of the Study*

Higher education has become necessary in today's society as a means to increase earning potential and improve the quality of life and power. The number of ethnic minorities receiving doctorate degrees continues on an upward trend. However, while the proportion of African American students completing graduate degrees is rising, the difference in percentage from year to year is not statistically significant. The number is still too small and equal access has not yet been achieved.

A number of studies have expounded on the benefits of a college education, including higher lifetime earnings, more fulfilling work experiences, lower unemployment probability, better health, and a longer life (Brinkman & Leslie, 1988; Wallpole; 2003).

A number of scholars have attempted to explain the barriers in gaining access to and succeeding in postsecondary education (Pavel, 1998). Other studies have sought to understand the experiences that lead to persistence and success of African Americans in a graduate setting (Mullen, 2003; Heggins, 2004).

While the current literature on African Americans in higher education provides some insight into this population, a clear understanding of the doctorate degree process and experiences relating to African American female doctoral students is needed.

This research proposes to:

1. Assist higher education institutions in developing strategies for recruiting and retaining ethnic minority students;
2. Make a positive contribution to helping college administrators address these issues of access and persistence more effectively;
3. Lend to helping high school administrators, students, and parents identify potential barriers to college access and persistence and a plan to overcome these impediments should they surface;
4. Provide clear strategies employed by this population that would help other students successfully reach their educational and occupational goals;
5. Provide a blue print of success that can be developed for other college-bound African American students to utilize. The utilization of this blueprint will not only provide success on college campuses, but African Americans will have the opportunity to be successful in their families, communities, and society where statistics of them are not favorable.

### *Limitations*

The investigation includes data on the experiences of seven African American women who have persisted to doctorate degree completion. The small sample size for this study limits its transferability. The study serves as a starting point to provide insight into

the African American population. Further, it is important to note that these women represent only a small proportion of African American scholars. Therefore, their accounts are not intended to serve as the universal voice for all black women in higher education. This study will not include data on the experiences of African American men or other underrepresented groups. Additionally, the study excludes students who were awarded first professional degrees, such as, the MD, JD, and DDS.

### *Definition of Terms*

*African American or black.* The term African American or black as used in this study refers to a person having origin in any of the black racial groups in Africa; this excluded persons of Hispanic origin and did not include international Africans from the Africa continent. African American and black are used interchangeably throughout the study, mainly to reference these populations during specific historical periods.

*Attainment.* The term attainment as used in this study refers to reaching a desired goal.

*Attrition.* The term attrition as used in this study refers to a school's loss of students.

*Doctorate degree.* The term doctorate degree as used in this study refers to the highest award a student can earn for graduate study. This excludes first professional degrees (i.e., MD, JD, and DDS).

*Doctoral student.* The term doctoral student as used in this study refers to students who are currently pursuing either the doctor of education (Ed.D.), or doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees.

*Expectation.* The term expectation as used in this study refers to the frequency of parents' and students' discussion about parents' expectations, hopes, and dreams for their children in regard to attending college. Expectation of parents was a clear factor in why participants of this study completed their education.

*Maternal/Matriarchal Influence.* The term maternal or matriarchal influence as used in this study refers to any female supports that were prevalent and fundamental to the participants attending and completing school. Participants described their mothers, aunts, female teachers and female counselors as huge influences in their persistence.

*Minority.* The term minority as used in this study refers to any person from an underrepresented ethnic group such as African American, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander. The terms minority and underrepresented will be used interchangeably throughout the study.

*Pathway.* The term pathway as used in this study describes the actions and behaviors that lead to a particular outcome, degree completion.

*Persistence.* The term persistence as used in this study refers to a student's postsecondary education continuation behavior that leads to graduation.

### *Summary*

The study aims to explore and describe the doctoral experiences of African American females and their pathways to the doctorate degree. Chapter 1 established the purpose, problem, and significance of the study, and provided the theoretical framework based on Tinto's (1993) Conceptual Model of Doctoral Persistence, which will guide the study in conjunction with the literature that contributed to the development of five research questions. The operational definitions of terms used throughout the study were



presented to provide clarity and understanding to the reader. In Chapter 2, a comprehensive review of relevant literature is presented.

## Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

*“And where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives.”*

—(Lorde, 1984, p. 21)

It is important to understand the history of African Americans in higher education. Therefore, a broad overview of the history of American higher education, educational access for African Americans, and African American women in particular, is given to provide specific historical, social, cultural, and political context. This chapter concludes with a summary of the research that has been conducted on doctorate degree completion and support organizations for women and minorities.

### *Historical Background of Higher Education*

American higher education has been a unique and constantly evolving system. The system has been encouraged and celebrated, but has often been met with sharp criticism (Bowen, Kurzweil, Tobin, & Pichler, 2005). The following outlines the history of American higher education from its earliest beginnings to the present. The overview is divided into four parts: (a) Earliest Beginnings, (b) Pre-Civil War/Antebellum Era, (c) Post-Civil War/Reconstruction Era, and (d) Post-World War II Era.

### *Earliest Beginnings*

Universities of all types proliferated throughout Europe at an increasing rate between the 13th and 15th centuries. “By the year 1500, it has been estimated that there were at least seventy-nine [universities] in operation” (Lucas, 2006, p. 47).

Lucas (2006) wrote:

Early on it was apparent that a desire to found an institution of higher learning ran strong among the first settlers of English America, After God had carried us safe to New England, reported *New England’s First Fruits*, a pamphlet first printed in

1643, and we had builded [sic] our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God's worship, and settled the civil government: one of the next things we longed for, and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to prosperity. (p. 103)

Funds for the first American college, Harvard College, were appropriated in 1636 by the general court of Massachusetts (Lucas, 2006). Harvard College was modeled after Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, and was originally established to educate literate clergy (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976). Harvard's earliest published rules (as cited in Lucas, 2006) announced the chief aim of the institution:

Every one shall consider the main end of his life and studies to know God and Jesus Christ, which is eternal life..., and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning. (p. 104)

Harvard's main task was also to prepare men of refinement and culture, those destined to positions of responsibility and leadership to society. Lucas wrote:

Prior to the American Revolution eight more colleges were founded including: the College of William and Mary (1693), the Collegiate School at New Haven (1701, later renamed Yale College), the College of Philadelphia (1740, later renamed the University of Pennsylvania), the College of New Jersey (1746, late named Princeton), King's College (1754, later renamed Columbia University), the College of Rhode Island (1764, later named Brown University), Queen's College (1766, later renamed Rutgers College), and Dartmouth College, founded in 1769. (p. 105)

Lucas (2006) wrote:

Whatever the particular circumstances of their origin, all of the first nine English colonial colleges in America subscribed to the goal, as expressed at the founding of William and Mary, of ensuring that the youth...be piously educated in good letters and manners. (p. 105)

A rising tide of denominationalism engulfed America's colonial colleges in the 18th century and traditional patterns of shared governance between established church and secular state were being challenged, agencies of higher education list little of their sense of broad purpose and function (Lucas, 2006). In the same way, religious diversity

throughout the colonies precluded the possibility that any one set denomination could long exercise exclusive control over whatever college it might establish.

It was not until later in the 18th century when colleges began to assume an elitist stance and restrict entry to a select few (Bowen et al., 2005). Although higher education opened its doors to various religious faiths and socio-economic statuses, at no time prior to the American Revolution did higher education reach the majority of U.S. citizens.

“Even Yale and Harvard’s, tight sectarian control was soon loosened by the adoption of more liberal policies” (Lucas, 2006, p. 107).

#### *Pre-Civil War/Antebellum Development*

Early 19th century institutions closely resembled the early colonial colleges. In spite of the likenesses to earlier colonial institutions, there were some new additions apparent during this evolutionary period of higher education. So-called feminists’ seminaries and academies were new additions to the growing roster of collegiate institutions that appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century. Most were inspired by Emma Willard’s famous Troy Female Seminary, founded in New York in 1821, and Mary Lyon’s Mount Holyoke Seminary, opened in 1837. In the South, the Wesleyan Female College of Macon, Georgia, was the first institution of its type to grant its graduates a formal academic degree (1836). “Alabama’s Judson College, founded in 1836, and the Mary Sharp College for Women in Tennessee in 1852 likewise offered women opportunities to obtain a collegiate education. Whether many qualified as true post-secondary institutions, however, remains doubtful. In a majority of cases, admissions standards were low and required preparatory training was almost nonexistent” (Lucas, 2006, p. 121).

Lucas (2006) notes there were doubts as to the quality of these all-women institutions. The quality of these institutions represented the skepticism in the value of higher education for women at that time. According to Lucas (2006), “Women’s struggles to gain access to higher learning in nineteenth-century America were waged on two fronts. The first was represented by the founding or expansion of what had been called “academies” in the late 1700s, then “seminaries” in the early 1800s, and finally, true postsecondary colleges in the latter half of the 19th century. The second was defined by experiments with coeducation” (p. 121).

Antebellum institutions for women had been far and in between. Each had begun as little more than finishing schools designed to produce young women who would be suitable companions for their husbands. This they remained for many years thereafter, scrupulously avoiding any appearance of striving to educate their students beyond their natural sphere. Lucas (2006) points out:

Women’s struggle for access to higher education roughly coincided in time with the first stirrings of a movement to expand educational opportunity among blacks. It is recorded that a certain Edward Jones and John Russurm were the first two African Americans to earn a bachelor’s degree from white institutions, each having graduated within weeks of one another from Amherst and Bowdoin, respectively, in 1826. People of color attending college were nevertheless a rarity in the antebellum period, as indicated by the fact that no more than twenty-seven others were listed in the roster of all black graduates prior to the Emancipation Proclamation. (p. 109)

The first black colleges to come into existence were founded in the North; An Institute for Colored Youth was first created by Quakers in Philadelphia in 1842, ancestor to the institution later called Cheyney State College. Avery College in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, chartered in 1849, was also among the first; followed by the Miller Academy, begun in Washington, D.C., in 1851; and then by Lincoln University

(originally the Ashmun Institute), founded by Presbyterians in Pennsylvania in 1854. Wilberforce was established a year later by Ohio Methodists. Later on joining northern black colleges Central State University in Ohio, founded in 1887 (Lucas, 2006).

According to Lucas (2006), “prevailing opinion held that blacks were inherently inferior to whites that the obvious differences favoring whites over blacks were innate and unalterable, and hence no good purpose was served by attempting to pretend otherwise” (p. 163).

The original intent of most of the founders of black colleges was to provide for the clientele and education indistinguishable from that commonly pursued by whites (Lucas, 2006). Very few blacks were afforded opportunities to pursue higher learning in the antebellum period. Throughout the South, it was a statutory crime in most states to teach even the rudiments of reading and writing to anyone of African American ancestry (Lucas, 2006). The creation of institutions specifically dedicated to the postsecondary education of African Americans is presented in another section in this chapter.

#### *Post-Civil War/Reconstruction*

Lucas (2006) asserts:

The post-Civil War period is difficult to imagine. Institutions of higher learning were scrutinizing themselves and reexamining their basic purpose and goals. Despite high levels of public indebtedness and inflation, the economy of the North had emerged from the Civil War relatively unscathed, bolstered as it was by the cementing of the industrial East with the rich agricultural Middle West...most of the South still lay in ruins. The entire region's economic infrastructure had been virtually destroyed, the dreams of its plantation aristocracy ground into dust. Not surprisingly, southern states were to share little in the tremendous expansion of higher education that took place elsewhere throughout the Union. (p. 147)

The restructuring of American higher education elsewhere in the post-Civil War period was driven by a potent combination of social, political, cultural, and economic

factors. Accelerating industrialization and urbanization combined with the impetus to complete the settlement of a fast-disappearing western frontier were contributing forces (Lucas, 2006). Colleges and universities had shown remarkable growth throughout the first half of the 1900s; with enrollments expanding exponentially well beyond the increase in the nation's population for the same 50-year period. Lucas (2006) asserts:

At the end of the 1899–1900 academic year, for example, institutions of higher education collectively awarded a total of 29,900 degrees; for the 1949–50 academic year, the comparable figure had risen to nearly half a million. Numbers of students enrolled in postsecondary education doubled about every 15 years, as did the number of faculty employed in colleges and universities. (p. 247)

Another component in the evolution of higher education emerged during the span of 1880 to 1930 when the direct application of schooling to jobs and economic opportunities, or vocational education. With the development of professional schools and programs, and educational link emerged between high school and college and employers increasing use of college credentials as a criterion for hiring. Thelin (2004) wrote:

Although most occupations, including the professions, required little formal certification or training, one finds in the new national period significant signs of interest in providing options for formal training in such fields as agriculture, the military, science, and engineering. Education reformers of the era were particularly alarmed by the apparent gulf between students and studies. (p. 64)

The appearance of schools of business, engineering, education, nursing, social work, dentistry, law, and medicine defined higher education in terms of its practical and direct application to occupation (Lazerson, 2010). Lucas (2006) wrote:

By 1860 at least 45 institutions offered collegiate degrees to women. They had a variety of institutional names, including “college,” “academy,” “female seminary” and “literary institute.” Their curricula ranged from vocational training to genteel finishing-school programs, from professional education to the liberal arts. (p. 84)

One of the major changes associated with the academic community in the years after the Civil War was the allowance for coeducation of women and men. Oberlin had pioneered this practice several decades earlier. However much the new approach was publicly celebrated, coeducation in practice achieved at best mixed record. Women at Cornell and the University of California, for example, were not treated equally or even well. “Admission into the college or university hardly precluded segregation within the walls. Tracking into particular courses or majors, discouragement from some fields, and, above all, exclusion from extracurricular organizations and activities were the disappointing realities of coeducation” (Lucas, 2006, p. 98).

The university movement with its professed commitment to academic excellence provided a bittersweet environment for women. “Several of the highly publicized new universities—namely Stanford and the University of Chicago—shared with the state universities of the Midwest and West a commitment to coeducation” (Lucas, 2006, p. 142). The participation of black students in the inner workings and rewards of collegiate life was negligible even at colleges that had no formal policy of racial exclusion. It was a standard practice to exclude the black colleges from the national media, or other publications about college life.

The first obstacle was that almost all the so-called colleges for black students around 1900 in fact offered little in the way of college-level instruction. “Most were confined to elementary and secondary studies. Second, the best-endowed colleges for African Americans—namely Hampton Institute and Tuskegee—favored agricultural and industrial education to the neglect of collegiate studies. As a further indication of the



paucity or educational opportunity, only 364 African Americans had earned college degrees in the Southern states and the District of Columbia” (Lucas, 2006, p. 186).

The early decades of the 20th century saw some growth in higher education enrollment as a result of a shift in the criteria for employment. There was also growth in professional occupations and in white collar jobs within corporate and public agencies that required the kinds of learning and socialization skills obtained during the college educational experience (Lazerson, 2010).

Because higher education was a decentralized system of institutions competing in a deregulated market, it expanded in whatever ways it thought necessary. That is, colleges had the power to change admissions requirements to attract more students or become selective, provide fiscal incentives for students to attend, revise curriculum, and expand student life activities. The power helped to establish a business relationship with both students and investors (Lazerson, 2010). Likewise, segmentation was also critical during this period. Higher education realized that access could increase if the system was segmented. This included incorporating different kinds of postsecondary institutions from junior and community colleges to selective liberal arts colleges and research universities, allowing for a sense of status within the system. This increased access and opportunity for higher education set the basis for extraordinary growth for the future.

#### *Post World War II Expansion*

Between 1950 and 1990, the number of colleges and universities nearly doubled from 1,851 to 3,535, growing by 26% in the 1960s, and again by nearly 25% in the 1970s (NCES, 2008). A major impetus for this increase resulted from post-World War II expansion in the federal role of higher education including Servicemen’s Readjustment

Act of 1944, best known as the G.I. Bill, and President Truman's Commission on Higher Education in 1847 (Lazerson, 2010). The G.I. Bill gave way to more than two million veterans enrolling in colleges and universities between 1945 and 1949, tripling the numbers projected during the Act's passage.

Although progressing rapidly, the evolution of higher education was not a smooth one. The immediate postwar period witnessed a battle between anticommunists convinced that communist were invading American college campuses (Lazerson, 2010). There were also doubts as to whether American standards of academic achievement were stringent enough for the Cold War Era. This coupled with the rising costs of college, opened higher education to sharp criticism and the system as a whole was met with legislative efforts to reduce federal and state expenditures.

Soon after the 1980s state allocations for higher education increased slightly. However, government funding as a percentage for higher education declined during the 1980s (Nerad, June, & Miller, 1997). Critics challenged the quality of teaching at colleges and universities and questioned if learning was occurring. As remedial programs increased, the idea of higher education was looked upon with great scrutiny and doubt. The institutions created during the first half of the nineteenth century were similar to the early colonial colleges. For example, institutions of this period tended to be both small and poor.

Likewise the Higher Education Act of 1965 brought together and expanded existing financial aid programs, including work-study, student grants, and loans, and college facility funds, to focus on access through need-based grants. The act provided

guaranteed student loans for moderate income families and established Upward Bound to improve access for poor people and minorities (Nerad, June, & Miller, 1997).

Campus demonstrations against the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and early 1970s were at first met with criticism and shock (Lazerson, 2010). Throughout the remainder of the 1970s, campus restrictions to student activities decreased significantly and a college education provided a great deal of freedom for students. The number of required courses declined and there were also more autonomy and choices in what to take and what to teach for both students and faculty (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976).

However, by the late 1990s, growing scrutiny of the practices, policies, curricula, and missions and outcomes of America's colleges and universities came from state legislators, business and industry, community leaders, parents, students, and other stakeholders. Higher education was slowly being impacted by change in majority minority populations, the aging America, and the redefining of the American family (Bowman, Pasque, & Martinez, 2009). In addition, changes in technology had become a driving force in higher education as new technological use alters business processes within and outside of higher education (Dennis & Lamay, 2003).

#### *Educational Access for African Americans*

“Higher education for blacks was a rarely glimpsed dream prior to the Civil War, and only a handful of black men received advanced degrees prior to the Civil War” (Peltak, 2003, p. 25). Harvard University opened in 1636 and Princeton 90 years later, however, it was not until 1826, nearly 200 years later, that the first African American would receive a bachelor's degree from an American Institution. It was 1876, that Edward Bouchet would become the first black man to receive a Ph.D. from Yale

University and 1895 when W.E.B. Dubois would become the first African American male to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Prior to the Civil War, education for blacks was nonexistent. In fact, literacy for this group was forbidden by law. Peltak (2003) wrote:

Slave revolts, such as the one led by Nat Turner in 1831, frightened slave owners who felt an educated slave would be rebellious. To squash potential rebellions, Southern states enacted “black codes,” harsh laws forbidding the instruction of Negroes in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Not more than 10 percent of the slave population could read or write at the time of the Emancipation Proclamation. (p. 19)

The Civil War managed to be a prosperous period for black education.

“Beginning in 1862, missionary groups from the North laid groundwork for a formal system of higher education for blacks. The American Missionary society helped to establish 7 black colleges and 13 teaching schools between 1861 and 1870” (Peltak, 2003, p. 25).

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, abolishing slavery. With the end of the Civil War, there were roughly 4 million freed slaves. Many of these slaves could neither read nor write. Missionary societies, religious sects, and other philanthropic organizations helped facilitate educational access and empowerment for blacks (Gold, 2005).

Additionally, Congress founded the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, also known as the Freedmen’s Bureau (1865–1872). The bureau established hospitals, gave food and supplies, resettled displaced blacks and poor whites, and founded more than 4,200 schools (Peltak, 2003). Black students flooded the schools. However, dismantling the system of slavery did not eradicate the racism that had become its own institution.

W.E.B. DuBois wrote in a 1901 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, “The opposition to Negro education was bitter in the South, for the South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro” (Dubois, 1901, p. 2). Despite their freed status, black students were treated as inferiors, the educability expectations for freedmen were low, and white Southerners remained hostile to the idea of educational development of blacks. To combat the racism that existed after the Civil War, Congress passed the 14th Amendment in 1866, a civil rights act, which gave full citizenship to blacks and guaranteed that all laws would apply equally to blacks and whites (Gold, 2005).

The benevolent period of Reconstruction ended in 1877 with withdrawal of troops from the South. In 1890, the Morrill Act ruled that states must either provide separate educational facilities for blacks or admit them to existing colleges. In response, all Southern and border schools chose to establish schools for blacks. Peltak (2003) wrote, “Under Morrill’s revision, schools using federal land-grant funds had to either open their doors to blacks or allocate money for segregated black schools...rather than integrate most states chose to fund exclusively black schools” (p. 31).

In 1890, 16 black institutions received money to start schools for higher learning. Between 1870 and 1919, state governments founded more than 100 black colleges and universities. The court’s decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 delivered a killing blow to civil rights for blacks. The ruling set the standard for legal actions on the issue for almost 6 decades (Gold, 2005). In this ruling, the court allowed states to separate facilities—including schools—for blacks as long as they were equal to white facilities.

The period from 1900 to 1935 was characterized by a continuing debate over vocational versus liberal arts education for blacks. The two leading voices in this debate

were Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. At the time, it was thought that learning trade skills rather than liberal arts education would make the newly freed black population attractive to white employers. W.E.B. DuBois, the first black man to receive a doctorate from Harvard, believed that educated blacks, those who had received a classic college education, were best suited to lead the battle against racism (Peltak, 2003).

The early history of educational access for African Americans encapsulates the struggle of black Americans to achieve education and equality. “The election of President Franklin D. Roosevelt opened doors to Black citizens. Roosevelt’s New deal legislation set up literacy programs that taught more than 100,000 black adults to read and write” (Gold, 2005, p. 31). Between 1935 and 1954, racism remained persistent, and blacks and whites remained segregated. Blacks and whites received separate educations and sat in different sections of buses. A series of lawsuits challenged the notion of a separate but equal education. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) brought five lawsuits to the U.S. Supreme Court, challenging the lack of equal educational opportunity. Peltak (2003) wrote:

Beginning in the 1930s, a handful of cases chipped away at the inequality inherent in segregated education. The U.S. Supreme Court recognized that Southern states generally neglected the equal part of the separate but equal doctrine. These cases laid the groundwork for the Supreme Court’s historical decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that declared segregated schools to be unconstitutional. The decision was a major turning point in black education. (p. 60)

In 1936, NAACP lawyer Charles H. Houston, a prominent black civil rights lawyer educated at Harvard School of Law, challenged the separate but equal practices of the American higher education system with the litigation of *Gaines v. Canada*. Gold (2005) wrote:

Lloyd Lionel Gaines planned to become a lawyer and practice law in his home

state of Missouri. The University of Missouri's law school would be the best place to study the state's legal system. He applied to the school in 1935 and was rejected. The state offered to send him to a law school in Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, or Illinois. Missouri had no law school for blacks. Gaines's suit against the university's registrar, S. W. Canada, made its way to the Supreme Court. In 1938, the court ruled in Gaines's favor. The ruling upheld the "separate but equal" doctrine set forth in Plessy. But it said Gaines was entitled to fair treatment under the law, as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. If the state provided a black law school equal to that of white students, the court would allow segregation. (p. 33)

The decision was the first of several that culminated with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Throughout the remainder of the 20th century, other historic events would help shape the direction of higher education. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka Kansas ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court declared segregated public schools were unequal in terms of education for blacks and whites. Ten years later, Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1964. One provision prohibits federal funding to segregated schools and outlaws segregation of public facilities. In 1965, Congress passes the Higher Education Act of 1965. The government reserves funds for developing institutions, which largely means black colleges and universities. The act also provides grants to students with financial need. In the years following this legislation, the number of baccalaureate and graduate degrees awarded to blacks increased (Peltak, 2003).

In terms of advanced studies, barriers to academic opportunity such as institutional racism and economic disparity were apparent as well. According to Gold (2005), "With the exception of Harvard, the University of Wisconsin, Yale, and a few other universities, blacks could not receive graduate professional training at most historically white institutions" (p. 7). From Reconstruction to the 1950s, Southern black students who wanted to attend professional or graduate school attended the limited number of all-black schools or schools in the North.

Atlanta University was the first historically black college to establish a graduate school in 1929. However, only a few historically black colleges and universities, such as Howard University in Washington, D.C., and Meharry Medical College in Nashville, TN, offered graduate and professional schools (Peltak, 2003).

*African American Men and Higher Education*

During the past 100 years, perhaps no slice of the U.S. population has been more studied, analyzed, and dissected than black males. “Dozens of governmental boards and commissions have investigated their plight, scholars have researched and written papers on them, and black men have been the subject of at least 400 books” (Merida, 2007, p.7).

In his book, *State of Emergency: We must save African American males*; Jawanza Kunjufu (2001) outlined a list of alarming circumstances confronting African American men as a group:

- (a) 80% of the African American children in special education classes are male;
- (b) 40% of African American males are categorized as illiterate;
- (c) 1 of every 4 African American males are involved in the judicial system;
- (d) There are almost 3 African American females in college for every male;
- (e) Roughly 14% of African American males in the U.S. are disenfranchised;
- (f) African American males are 13% of the U.S. population, but comprises 35% of the drug arrests, 55% of the drug convictions, and 74% of drug prisoners...;
- (g) 2 of every 3 African American males are projected to have some involvement in the penal system by 2020. (p. 23)

The statistics that spell out the status of black men are often conflicting, sometimes perplexing. The percentage of black men graduating from college has nearly quadrupled since the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and yet more black men earn their high school equivalency diplomas in prison each year than graduate from college (Merida, 2007).



Merida (2007) wrote:

The ranks of professional black men have exploded throughout 4 decades—there were 78,000 black male engineers in 2004, a 33% increase in 10 years; and yet 840,000 black men are incarcerated, and Justice Department projections show that the chances of a black boy serving time has nearly tripled in three decades. (p. 5)

African American men represent roughly 12% of the U.S. male population;

however, they represent more than 48% of the incarcerated U.S. male population and less than 4% of the higher education male population. One of four African American males between the ages of 20 and 29 face incarceration, parole, or probation (Kunjufu, 2001).

The path to the corner is set early for some black men. Although school achievement has been a growing concern for boys of almost every ethnicity, the problem is most acute among black boys, who are far more likely to be left back, be assigned to special education, score poorly on standardized tests, be suspended from school or eventually drop out than any other demographic group, numerous studies show (Merida, 2007).

Federal government policy efforts to raise national public school education standards such as No Child Left Behind seem to be having a perverse effect on the educational aspirations of many moderately achieving high school students. High school dropout rates are on the rise (Herbert, 2003). National support programs designed specifically to train youngsters and enhance their employment opportunities are vanishing. The loss of these educational initiatives often has debilitating effects on the education opportunities and aspirations for many students, particularly African American males. The most obvious immediate effects of the lack of both educational opportunity for African American males are increased rates of crime, drug use and gang membership for many young children. The less obvious but potentially most damaging impact is the

failure of healthy young people to realize their potential to live satisfying and constructive lives (Herbert, 2003; Locke, 1999; Nakashian & Kleinman, 1999).

The magnitude of diminishing educational opportunities and increasing academic failures for African American males is strikingly apparent by the following dismal educational statistics Locke (1999) lists:

African American males are overrepresented in low ability academic programs and underrepresented in college preparatory programs for students identified as gifted (Kunjufu, 2001); (b) African American males score critically lower than any other student population (Locke, 1999); (c) According to the U.S. Department of Education 1997 Statistics, 33% of the 1,949,000 African American females, ages 18 to 24, who completed high school enrolled in college. During the same period 25% of the 1,701,000 African American males who completed high school enrolled in college. (p. 13)

Associate Degree attainment by African Americans has increased over the past three decades. In 1977, African Americans earned 8.2% of all associate degrees nationwide; by 1996 that figure had increased to 9.2% (49,204). Despite the increase in associate degree attainment, African Americans remain underrepresented among associate degree recipients (9.2%) compared to their representation in the traditional college age population 14.3% (NCES, 2008).

In addition, studies of African Americans in higher education, such as those by Roach (2001), continue to demonstrate the widening gap of degree completion of African American males compared to African American women. "Black women are scoring big gains in education, particularly at the college level; the progress for Black men has either stagnated or increased slightly from year to year over the past decade" (p. 19). African American women have earned 58% of bachelor's degrees awarded to African Americans in the United States. African American women also earned 63% of master's degrees and

66% of doctoral degrees awarded to Black students in 2003 (“African American women have earned”, 2003).

Because of the overwhelming literature that permeates academia and pop culture concerning African American males, there is some literature that defends African American males, especially in higher education. Some literature and studies reveals that successful African American males who persist to degree completion are not an anomaly. Davis’s (1999) study revealed these illuminating struggles of African American male students. He discovered:

They struggle to become socially integrated in a community of peers who are supportive but often confining; they struggle to overcome academic hurdles created by inadequate pre-college preparation, and they struggle against hostile schooling environments that marginalize their presence on campus. (p. 135)

The African American males in the study overcame these challenges with lessons learned about life, character, persistence, survival, and a college degree.

Harris (1996) agrees that African American males face many problems. He further declares that African American males must reframe the issues concerning them in colleges and universities. Reframing the issues consists of moving from a deficient model to one of success. Merida (2007) reported:

African American males must move from a deficient ‘blame the victim’ model to one that says that African American males can be successful. Black men said they strongly believe in the American Dream—nine in 10 black men would tell their son they can become anything they want to in life. But this vision is laden with cautions and caveats: Two-thirds also would warn their sons that they will have to be better and work harder than whites for equal rewards. (p. 19)

The success of blacks in college in the 21st century will depend upon this society’s ability to solve several problems. These remedies will require more effective academic training in elementary and secondary schools, changes in public policy

(increasing financial aid), more institutional support at colleges and universities (reducing attrition rates), and support from families and the black community (encouraging more youth to obtain a college education). “By the year 2020, nonwhites will represent 35% of this country’s total population. Hispanics will be the largest nonwhite group, representing nearly 15% of the total population, and blacks will constitute approximately 14%. Thus, it is imperative that this young population have every opportunity to obtain more than a secondary education” (Willie, Garibaldi, & Reed, 1991, p. 97).

#### *African American Women and Higher Education*

In order to determine more fully the impact of black women in education, “We must know more about who they were and what they did, as well as the issues and movements that characterized the different periods of time during which they lived” (Collier-Thomas, 2001, p. 178).

In 1833, Oberlin College (Oberlin, OH) opened its doors for the admission of both men and women of all races. This occurred during the midst of strong opposition for the higher education of women and African Americans (Lawson-Bush, 2004).

Given the limited opportunities for African American women, particularly in the South, to pursue higher education, efforts were made to establish black women’s colleges. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, four colleges were established specifically for the education of African American women: (a) Spelman College in Atlanta, GA; (b) Bennett College in Greensboro, NC; (c) Tillotson College in Austin, TX; and (d) Barber-Scotia College in Concord, NC (Peltak, 2003).

Across many generations, education has served as a catalyst for facilitating the important connections among self-improvement, change, and empowerment within

African American communities. Noble (1957) published an article in *The Journal of Negro Education* in which she shared a historical and philosophical review of black women in higher education. She eloquently noted:

It's like viewing two streams winding down a mountain path. At some points they seem to merge, and at other times they are miles apart. And yet, they are headed in the same direction—toward the great body of water. The tempestuous journey of all groups, while heading toward the great body of knowledge—college education—has echoed in the education of Negro women. (p. 16)

Issues related to the education of African American women shifted tremendously in the latter part of the 20th century. On the positive side, the civil rights and women's movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s served as major catalysts against racial and gender discrimination in education. The passage of the landmark legislation, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, or handicapping conditions. Title XI of the Education Amendments in 1972 prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender in educational institutions (Gold, 2005). As a result of these legislations and other social advances, we have witnessed increases in the high school and college completion rates of African Americans.

In terms of postsecondary education, African American women have made tremendous strides in attainment of postsecondary degrees since 1862 when Mary Jane Patterson became the first such female to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree from an established college (Cowan & Maquire, 1995) and Sadie Alexander became the first Black female to earn a Ph.D. in 1921 from the University of Pennsylvania (Peltak, 2003). Currently, African American women earn more degrees in almost every field than African American men. The enrollment and completion rates have increased steadily

since the 1970s. This is attributed to African American women far outnumbering African American men in college enrollment and completion.

Graduate and professional degree attainment for African American women is on the rise. African American women make up nearly two thirds of the population enrolled in graduate level study (“In contrast”, 2003).

In 2001, African American women received 70% of all master’s degrees and 64% of all doctorate degrees awarded to African Americans. The appointment of African American women to higher education faculty and administration has increased during the past few decades. In 2003, for the first time since the U.S. Department of Education began to collect data in this area, black women held more full-time higher education faculty positions than black men, with women now constituting 51% of all black full-time faculty (“In 2003 for the first time”, 2007).

#### *Purpose of Education for African American Women*

The traditional purpose of a formal education for women was social and cultural refinement to assist her in becoming a good wife and mother. At the end of the 19th century, white women founded schools for black girls to train them to become refined ladies as well as “up lifters” of their race. Literacy was also a primary concern because it was important for reading the Bible and teaching the children. Most black women, like white women, were encouraged to study “helping” fields such as education, nursing, and social work, and many often prepared themselves to become primary and secondary school teachers (Gregory, 1995).

Education was seen as the key to unlocking wealth, respectability, and economic development in the black community after the Civil War and into the 20th century

(Gregory, 1995). In most black communities, a great value is placed on the role of education because many believe it is the only means for successful employment in American Society.

Gregory (1995) noted that another purpose of education for black women was to “prepare members of the next generation to take their rightful place as tomorrow’s leadership” (p. 152). In the 20th century, the black community began to recognize the need to train black women for potential leadership roles in the community (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982). According to Hull et al.:

Black women used education as a means to further the struggle of equality. As a result of this commitment to the education of females and the opening up of white institutions of higher education to larger number of Blacks in the 1960s, the intellectual imagination of scholarly Black women has been unleashed. (p. 146)

Black women have traditionally remained in education because of the need to provide leadership for young developing scholars. “But each black woman has a different history and experience that helped to shape who she is and what she has yet to achieve” (Gregory, 2001, p. 121). Determining why women are successful in doctorate completion will elucidate strategies and practices that can be implemented to achieve possibly similar success in other areas of study.

*Double Jeopardy: Female and Black*

The pursuit of higher education has not been an easy road traveled for many women of color. In pursuit of her identity and educational success, she historically has been the most misunderstood and unappreciated human being on the planet earth (Tobin, 1981). Throughout her long fight for economic survival, sexual respect and racial self-esteem, the black woman has had to bear what Elam (1989) in her study of black women in higher education refers to as triple jeopardy: “They [Black women] are much more

likely to face not only economic but also sexual discrimination. If one adds to that the burden of race, it becomes a type of triple jeopardy” (p. 23).

Piper (1999) identifies the discrimination against Black women as the “Triple negative of Colored Women” (p. 32). Reginald Wilson’s (1981) study “Women of Color in Academic Administration: Trends, Progress, and Barriers,” observed that women of color have been double jeopardized, by being part of two oppressed groups—women and people of color. Wilson suggests that in understanding the limited presence of Black women in higher education, the study would first have to address the history of America. Wilson traces the plight of freed slave education at the end of the Civil War, through missionaries and abolitionists, to the establishment of Black colleges to the Civil Rights Act(s). He states that the times were of extreme difficulty for groups of color, but more burdensome for Black women suffering because of their color and the perceptions and beliefs that women were expected to marry and raise families, not become educated. Also included in this study were the two events in which he suggests distinctly changed the face of American higher education. These two events are the migration of Blacks from the south to the north and the passage of the GI Bill in 1945. Wilson also cites the signing into law the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant legislation and the court ordered dismantling of 10 southern states dual systems, *Adams v Plessey* (1973). The affirmative action executive orders (1961, 1967) were also cited as having strong influence affording people of color educational opportunities.

In *Three’s a Crowd: The Dilemma of the Black Woman in Higher Education*, Caroll (1982) suggests that “Black women in higher education are isolated, underutilized, and often demoralized. As a result of the above situation, African American women



appear to be at a severe disadvantage in pursuit of their higher education degrees” (p.

115). Carroll describes what she had accepted as the black woman’s role:

I had unquestioningly accepted what I conceived to be the Black woman’s role. I functioned by the tacit formulae followed by all Black women who wish to succeed in a man’s (both black and white) world: You must be better qualified than the men; You must be more articulate; You must be more aggressive; You must have more stamina to face inevitable setbacks; You must have more patience, since you will advance more slowly; and Above all, you must remain feminine and not appear threatening. (p. 115)

Carroll (1982) affirms:

The Black woman sees that her numbers are few among the general membership of the women’s movement, and nonexistent among its national leadership. She is often told that many of the problems she raises are problems of all Blacks, and as such, are not the special concern of the women’s movement. (p. 121)

Hull et al. (1982) in, *But some of us are brave: All the women are white, all the blacks are men*, say that the intellectual void surrounding African American women is totally related to the politics of a white male society. This society does not recognize, and denies the importance of African American women’s lives and contributions through perceptual racial, sexual, and class oppression. Bell-Scott (1982), in *De-bunking Sapphire: Toward a Non-Racist and Non-Sexist Social Science*, calls for a broader interpretation of the experience of African American women. She states, “One is almost overwhelmed with the depth and extent of the intellectual void that exists among social science scholars concerning the life experiences of Black women” (p. 85). She goes on to state, “Despite the fact that Black women have always played important roles in American society, they have been almost totally ignored by students of American society and human behavior” (p. 86).

#### *Minority Doctorate Production*

The need to focus on African American doctorate degree attainment has been

established. Although African Americans have made tremendous progress in obtaining doctorates, more progress remains to be achieved (“Although African Americans have made”, 2003). Much of the existing literature related to doctorate degree process is limited, either focusing solely on gender and ethnicity or frequently examining comparisons of African American doctoral students enrolled at historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions.

Clewell (1987) investigated three areas of doctoral study: (a) the feasibility of determining whether factors influencing persistence and non-persistence of minority doctoral students could be identified; (b) whether potentially successful minority doctoral students could be identified at the graduate entry level; and (c) whether institutional practices that encourage or deter minority participation in graduate school could be identified. In this study, 63 participants at six graduate schools were interviewed. Clewell found that minority persisters in doctoral programs had at least one sibling or a spouse who had pursued some type of postsecondary education. More than half relied on funding for both undergraduate and graduate school. They subsidized their education through work, student loans, and working. Of the participants, 62% chose an advisor with similar research interests. Among the participants, 80% of the persisters rated their academic advisors as either supportive or very supportive. Non-persisters cited lack of financial support and self-confidence as factors for not continuing. External institutional factors such as family responsibilities, an unsupportive dissertation committee, and ineffective advising were also given.

Bowen and Rudenstein (1992) provided a foundational study of doctoral education in the United States, which explored trends and measurable outcomes in

doctoral programs in arts and sciences. Findings from the study indicate the completion rates for doctoral students are considerably low, with only about half of those entering doctoral programs obtaining a doctorate degree. Bowen and Rudenstein note that attrition in doctoral programs occur during all phases, including the pre-second year, pre-all but dissertation, and all but dissertation. The authors indicate attrition is attributed to the students' difficulty with selecting a dissertation topic, the nature of dissertation, dissertation advising, and financial support. The authors explain that students could take up to 2 years selecting a topic, and that students and faculty view the dissertation "not as the first step in a long scholarly career, but as significant, ground-breaking work that will secure a rewarding position at an institution" (p. 257). The study lists three obstacles that occur during completion of the dissertation: (a) dissertation advising, (b) nature of the research, and (c) lack of financial support. While Bowen and Rudenstein provide important insight into trends of doctoral education for the general population, their findings are limited to a small number of fields, programs, and 10 major universities. Furthermore, the study does not address differences in women and minority populations.

Patterson-Stewart et al. (1997) conducted research on African American persistence through doctoral programs at predominately white institutions. A case study approach was used with 8 study participants. Response categories for the study included previous college persistence, cultural competence, family influences, religion, peer relationships, faculty relationships, and campus climate. Themes that emerged from the study were historic persistence, intrapsychic factors contributing to graduation, and interpsychic, researcher-developed terms to describe factors contributing to graduation.

Kerlins (1997) explored women's doctoral experiences in an effort to move

toward a theory of doctoral persistence for women. In the qualitative study, 7 participants were interviewed via e-mail. It is not clear whether African American women were included in the study. Research revealed that there was a unique combination of personal, social, and institutional factors that shaped women's perceptions of the doctoral experience.

Personal and social factors such as academic self-concept, gender, age, health factors, financial status, family issues/status, class, and cultural identity influenced women's doctorate completion. Institutional factors found to influence women's doctorate degree completion were attendance (i.e., part-time or full-time), employment status, department climate, department practices and policies, and adviser-advisee relationships.

Lovitts (2001) studied attrition in doctoral programs through a quantitative approach. She contends that attrition is the fault of the individual student and related to the social structure and organizational culture of graduate education. She argues that socialization and academic integration were also found to have an effect on departure. Lovitts explains that one of the underlying goals of graduate education is to socialize students to norms, values, ethics, and processes of their respective disciplines, and at some level to change how they view themselves. Therefore, when a student fails to integrate into the academic system of his or her departments or when the departments fail to help the student integrate, it leads to departure. She explains that advisors play an important role for the students' socialization, understanding of the discipline, selection of a dissertation topic, and job placement. Moreover, students who chose their advisors were more likely to receive guidance, become academically and socially integrated, and to

complete their doctoral program.

Golde and Dore (2001) surveyed more than 4,000 students using paper-based and Web-based questionnaires. The researchers sought to determine how effective doctoral programs prepared students for the wide range of careers they pursue. The data revealed a statistically significant number of students did not clearly understand what doctoral study entailed, how the process worked, and how to navigate it effectively. The doctoral students surveyed revealed that the training they were receiving was not the training they wanted or needed for their careers.

Nichols and Tanksley (2004) explored how African American women with terminal degrees overcame obstacles to achieve success. A survey was administered to 99 women and garnered a 39% response rate. The survey explored variables that may have impacted women's professional training and careers and included marital status, number of children, age, terminal degree completion, field of study, type of undergraduate institution attended, and barriers to success. Most earned the terminal degree in their 40s and 50s. Of the respondents, 70% earned degrees from historically black colleges and universities. Another 14% indicated experiencing discouragement from friends, coworkers, past employees, and professors who did not see the need or importance of doctorate degree attainment. Of the participants, 68% had earned either an Ed.D. or Ph.D. in education. Among the participants, 88% indicated a strong support system was critical to their success.

Millett and Nettles (2006) surveyed more than 9,000 students from the top 21 doctorate-degree granting institutions throughout the United States. This included public and private predominantly white institutions and historically black colleges and

universities. The data revealed that more than 30% of the doctoral sample of students felt they did not have a faculty mentor. Millett and Nettles defined a mentor as someone on the faculty to whom students turned to for advice, to review a paper, or for general support. The students rated their social interaction with faculty members as high in engineering, sciences, mathematics, and education fields of study. Other findings suggested students in the humanities thought highly of their professors while those in the social sciences were more critical in rating the quality of academic interactions. The study also revealed that gaps existed in the experiences of minority and female doctoral students, including navigating the admissions processes, securing teaching or research assistantships, and publishing research. These gaps generally did not favor minority students.

#### *Higher Education Support for Women and Minorities*

A number of studies have identified the need for doctoral student support. Support has been identified as financial, academic, and social. A number of national and regional groups have been formalized as a means of support for doctoral students. These organizations include the Holmes Partnership, the National Black Graduate Student Association, Sisters of the Academy Institute, the Association of Black Women in Higher Education, Sister Mentors, and the Ph.D. Project.

*Holmes partnership.* The Holmes Partnership (2009) website states that the Holmes Scholars Program was designed to provide support and mentoring for talented men and women who are underrepresented in leadership positions in professional development schools and institutions of higher education. Graduate students in the field of education are provided opportunities to network with other Holmes Scholars and

Scholars alumni at the national and regional levels. They are encouraged to participate in and disseminate research at the national conference where they receive support and feedback from faculty across the country. Finally, the scholars program directors and the Holmes Partnership organization work hard to ensure that Holmes Scholar Graduates obtain positions as faculty members, K-12 administrators, or with education policy organizations. The Holmes Partnership showcases its Holmes Scholars Program as a unique contribution to the area of education reform. More than 400 students have participated in the network and nearly 100 are currently in tenure-track positions at colleges and universities around the country. (The Holmes Partnership, 2009)

*National Black Graduate Student Association, Inc.* The National Black Graduate Student Association, Inc. is a nonprofit, interdisciplinary, and student-run organization dedicated to improving the status of African Americans in higher education by systematically identifying and addressing their needs and concerns. This is achieved through increasing the number of graduate and professional students of African descent by encouraging undergraduates to pursue graduate and professional degrees by (a) providing resources that will enhance the likelihood of academic and career success of current graduate and professional students; and (b) developing a network of emerging scholars of African descent, who are dedicated and sensitive to the needs and concerns of an increasingly diverse academic community. (National Black Graduate Student Association, 2010)

*Sisters of the Academy.* Founded in 2001, the mission of Sisters of the Academy is to facilitate the success of Black women in the academy. Specifically, the organization aims to: (a) create an educational network of Black women in higher education in order

to foster success in the areas of teaching, scholarly inquiry and service to the community, (b) facilitate collaborative scholarship among Black women in higher education, and (c) facilitate the development of relations to enhance members' professional development. (Sisters of the academy, 2005)

*Association of Black Women in Higher Education.* The Association of Black Women in Higher Education (2010) is committed to aiding Black women in the academy in fulfilling their own aspirations; communicating the history of personal and professional achievements of Black women in higher education in order to preserve and increase the presence of Black women and men in higher education, eliminating racism, sexism, classism, and other social barriers which hinder Black women in higher education from achieving their full potential; and providing academic and social mentoring of Black youths in order to ensure the participation and success of future generations of Blacks in higher education. (Association of black women in higher education, 2010)

*Sister Mentors.* Sister Mentors (2010) was founded in 1997 as a nonprofit project designed to offer social support for minority women doctoral students through a dissertation support group and mentoring. They are a community of highly motivated women of color of different races, ethnicities and backgrounds who have come together to help each other complete the dissertation and get the doctorate. Most of the members are first generation doctoral students and recipients. Sister Mentors is a project of EduSeed, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that promotes education among historically disadvantaged and underserved communities such as women and people of color. Their goal is to increase the number of women of color Ph.D.s. (Sister mentors, 2010)



*Ph.D. Project.* The Ph.D. Project (2010) is an organization dedicated to increasing underrepresented ethnic minorities in business school Ph.D. programs and on business school faculties. The Ph.D. project was founded by the KPMG Foundation, the philanthropic division of KPMG, a U.S. accounting firm. The project focuses on increasing the number of ethnic minority business Ph.D.s based on the explicit reasoning that a greater representation of minority business faculty can foster greater interest in business disciplines on the part of minority students, and greater retention and matriculation of these students through effective role modeling and mentoring. Thus, by increasing the number of minority business faculty, the Ph.D. Project aims to increase the pool of minorities who can fill business-related jobs in corporations. The project provides a variety of services (a) The organization sponsors a 2-day informational conference regarding business school Ph.D. programs for prospective students, (b) The project creates a strong social support system by sponsoring an annual discipline-specific doctoral student association meeting, (c) The Ph.D. Project financially supports students in all disciplines by funding travel to the primary annual discipline-specific conference, and (d) For students in accounting and information systems business doctoral programs the Ph.D. Project provides supplementary stipends. The Ph.D. Project has been successful in improving the business Ph.D. pipeline by increasing the number of underrepresented ethnic minorities in doctoral programs. (Ph.D project, 2010)

### *Summary*

This chapter provided a broad overview of the history of American higher education, educational access for African Americans, and African American men and women in higher education. This chapter concluded with an exploration of literature

related to minority doctoral study and support organizations that have been created for minority doctoral students.

### Chapter 3. Methodology and Procedures

*“Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with shades of deeper meaning.”*

—(Angelou, 1994, p. 29)

This chapter describes the methodology for this phenomenological research study, including (a) restatement of the research questions, (b) rationale for the study method, (c) instrument, (d) data collection, and (e) analytical techniques.

#### *Restatement of Research Questions*

The study will be guided by the following questions in structured interviews, which are based on Tinto's (1975, 1993), theoretical models of student departure:

1. What are the preentry behaviors that lead to the success of African American women prior to beginning a doctoral program?
2. How do African American females gain access to doctoral education, as revealed in Tinto's first transition and adjustment stage of graduate persistence?
3. What facilitates the success of African American women during their doctoral study, as revealed in Tinto's second attaining candidacy stage of graduate persistence?
4. What are the pathways to the doctorate degree for African American females, as revealed in Tinto's third research completion stage of graduate persistence?
5. Based on Research Questions 1, 2 and 3, what are the experiences of African American females in doctoral programs?

### *Rationale for Study Method*

A qualitative method was selected for this study for two central reasons: The first is studies related to African Americans in higher education have been framed within a postpositivist claim, and have relied heavily on quantitative methods. This type of approach has yielded findings that may not best fit this particular population (Hoffman, Snyder, & Sonnenberg, 1996). The distinction of qualitative research is that it strives for deep understanding that comes from “visiting personally with informants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to obtain detailed meaning” (Creswell, 2003, p. 193). Qualitative research methods are important for studies in the social sciences and applied fields such as education.

The second reason is qualitative interviewing is appropriate because it allows the researcher to obtain descriptions of lived experiences and to seek the meaning of those experiences to form a greater understanding. The basic purpose is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence. “Qualitative approaches allow for advocacy/participatory writing, where there is a strong personal stimulus to pursue issues that relate to marginalized people and an interest in creating a better society for everyone” (Creswell, 2003, p. 23).

### *Phenomenological Approach*

With its roots extending from the philosophical perspectives of Edmund Husserl and his discussions of phenomenological philosophy, phenomenology provides a basis from which we may explore the structures of consciousness in human experience (Polkinghorne, 1989). Husserl’s work was influenced by his discontent with a philosophy of science that focused solely on studying material things and failing to take into

consideration “the experiencing person and the connections between the human consciousness and the objects that exist in the material world” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 43).

Moreover, each horizon, or perception, adds something important to a person’s current experience. In a phenomenological study, a horizon is singled out to determine if feelings, images, past meanings, and any qualities can be identified that have clearly influenced the present experience (Moustakas, 1994). “These new moments of perception “bring to consciousness fresh perspectives, as knowledge is born that unites the past, present, and future and that increasingly expands and deepens what something is and means” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 53).

#### *What Is Phenomenology?*

Phenomenology as a research method is devoid of presuppositions and focuses purely on the phenomena. For Giorgi (1985), the operative word in phenomenological research is to describe. The aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, and remaining true to the facts.

Phenomenology is both a mode of data collection and data analysis. According to Husserl as cited in Moustakas (1994), there are four processes researchers should undertake when conducting phenomenological research: (a) *Epoche or bracketing* is the stage at which researchers prepare for an experience and become self-aware to gain freedom from their own preconceptions; (b) *Transcendental phenomenological reduction* refers to researchers creating nonrepetitive statements and meaning units from the transcripts that describe the phenomenon being studied; (c) *Imaginative Variation* refers to researchers forming a structural description of how the phenomenon was experienced

and clustering the meaning units into rich themes; and (d) *Synthesis of Meanings and Essences* is analyzing the overall experience and constructing a composite exhaustive description of the meanings and essences of the overall experience of the whole group being studied.

#### *Interview Protocol Instrument*

Create interview protocol instrument. The researcher developed an interview protocol. This instrument was used during the structured interviews and mailed to participants in advance (see Appendix A).

*Credibility testing instrument.* To increase the credibility of the instrument, an expert panel of three women who have obtained the doctorate degree reviewed the interview questions to eliminate weaknesses, to ensure the questions were well understood, and to ensure that participants could respond to each question without difficulty (see Appendix B for résumés).

*Field testing instrument.* The interviewer field tested the instrument for timing with two women who have obtained the doctorate degree before conducting the study. Two separate field tests were performed to determine the necessary timing needed for study participants to answer each question, uncover and find answers to unanticipated questions, and ensure that participants understand and respond to the questions thoroughly (Creswell, 1998).

#### *Data Collection*

*Population.* It is recommended to study 3 to 10 subjects for phenomenological research methodology (Creswell, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1989). The researcher included 7 study participants. According to Creswell:

One subject does not fully explore the phenomena, and an extremely large number of subjects is difficult to manage during data analysis. More important is to describe the meaning of a small number of individuals who have experienced the phenomena. (p. 122)

*Sample.* Participants in the study were selected using a criterion sampling technique. Patton (1990) indicates that “the logic of criterion sampling is to review and study cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (p. 238). Creswell (1998) indicates that this type of sampling “works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon” (p. 118).

*Recruiting participants.* Participants were recruited through the researcher’s own professional networks, including the Association of Black Women in Higher Education, Los Angeles Chapter. During a monthly meeting, the researcher distributed a flyer to the group that explained the study. The flyer (see Appendix C) lists the study criteria and invited members to call the researcher if they were interested in participating or learning more. Members could also leave their phone numbers with the researcher the day of the meeting. The flyer was posted to the Association of Black Women in Higher Education, Los Angeles Chapter’s Web site and group list serve. The researcher gained permission from the chapter president to post and distribute the flyer to the group.

*Study criteria.* Criteria for this study are:

1. Participants who are African American females and have earned the Ed.D., Psy.D, or Ph.D.
2. Participants who have earned the Ed.D., Psy.D, or Ph.D. between 1994 and 2009. The inclusion of participants who matriculated within a time span of 15 years will enable the researcher to determine whether emergent patterns and themes are common to a particular time period, region, and type of institution.

Furthermore, the recent program completion will likely facilitate participants' clear recall of critical incidents and events.

3. Participants who are alumnae of traditional, campus-based doctoral programs. The study excludes graduates of online and/or for-profit institutions.
4. Participants who are willing to be audio taped.
5. Participants who are willing to share their educational experiences.

*Initial phone prescreening.* After hearing from prospective participants, the researcher contacted each participant for a 5- to 10-minute initial screening phone interview using a prepared phone script (See Appendix D). At this time, the researcher established rapport, restated the purpose of the research, asked the screening questions (see Appendix E), and determined whether the interviewee would be included as a study participant. At the end of the screening interview, the researcher scheduled the structured interview and mailed potential participants a packet that contained a letter with the following: (a) information pertaining to the interview, such as time, date, and location; (b) the informed consent form (see Appendix F); and (c) interview questions. Follow-up calls were placed to potential participants a week after the packet mailing to ensure their receipt.

*Bracketing.* Prior to the interview, the researcher engaged in a period of self-reflection and reflective journaling (See Appendix G). Husserl (1973) referred to this stage as the *Epoche* (or bracketing), a process that creates a readiness in the phenomenological researcher to be receptive to the information received during the data-gathering phase. Moustakas (1994) wrote:



Investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination. The researcher enters the interview as a blank slate, ready to acquire information. The researcher must set aside any assumptions, feelings and previous experiences and allow only one's own perception, acts of consciousness to remain as pointers to knowledge, meaning and truth. (p. 88)

*Interviewing participants.* This was a structured interview. The interview protocol was followed to ensure the interview process was consistent for each participant. It is important that the participant be given necessary privacy to freely respond to the interview questions without fear. The researcher also attempted to select a time of day that was optimal for the participant, recognizing that the participant would be more willing when she has less competing demands on her time, or is physically tired. The researcher established a rapport with each participant. The telephone interview process eliminates some bias that comes from face-to-face interaction.

The researcher reviewed the consent form with the participant, received approval to audio record the interview, and then began the interview. The researcher did not take detailed notes because of the negative effect intense note taking could have on the interview. The interviews were audio taped with a digital recorder. Member checking enhanced credibility. Each participant received a copy of the interview transcript and was asked to review for accuracy and clarity. All participant data will be kept confidential. The researcher will keep the information in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's garage for 5 years and is the only person with a key and access to the file cabinet. Participant's names were replaced with a number. For example, Participant 1 may

replace. Jane Doe, graduate of XYZ University. The only reference to participants' names is on a coding sheet that is only available to the researcher. Participants were issued a number and no quotes were attributed to a specific participant. The transcriber only received numbers and the interview MP3 files. All other records were destroyed.

### *Analytical Techniques*

*Transcribe interviews.* Interviews were audiotaped and later converted to MP3 files that were e-mailed to the transcriber. Content of the interviews were transcribed. Transcriptions and coding sheets are kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher's residence for 5 years. The transcriber only received the generic number and MP3 file with the interview data for transcribing. All other records were destroyed. The transcriber signed a statement of confidentiality. The next section describes how the researcher analyzed each participant interview. The coding sheet containing the lists of names of participants was destroyed at the completion of the research.

*Analyze data.* The researcher used Moustakas' (1994) method of analysis of phenomenological data. The approach is a modification of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's analysis method. The steps the researcher used for data analysis are explained below.

1. The researcher created a full, written description of her own experience with the phenomenon (epoche'), so that the focus could be directed to the participants of the study.
2. Interviews were conducted and transcribed. Participants were asked to review their transcripts for accuracy.
3. The researcher read each transcript several times to get a sense of the entire interview.

4. The researcher developed a list of significant statements from the interviews. Each statement was treated with equal value (horizontalization of the data), finally creating a list with nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements.
5. Significant statements were color coded then grouped into meaning units or themes.
6. A description of what the participants experienced was created (textural description) using verbatim quotes.
7. A final description of how the experience happened (structural description) was developed.
8. Finally, the researcher performed imaginative variation to write a composite textural description of the phenomenon that represents the group as a whole.

*Methods for credibility.* Credibility refers to the degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world. To increase credibility, McMillan and Schumaker (2006) recommended researchers do the following:

Member checking: Check informally with participants for accuracy of data collection. Participant review: Ask participant to review researcher's synthesis of interviews. Mechanically recorded data: Use a tape recorder in each interview. Participant language and verbatim accounts: Interviews are phrased in the informant's language, not in abstract social science terms. (p. 324)

The researcher performed all of the methods of credibility as described above.

*Ethics.* The researcher used the informed consent form to ensure ethical research.

The informed consent form communicates the following to the participants:

1. That they are participating in research;

2. The purpose of the research;
3. The procedures of the research;
4. The risk and benefits of the research;
5. The voluntary nature of research participation;
6. The participant's right to stop the research at any time; and
7. The procedures used to protect confidentiality.

*Reciprocity.* The researcher acknowledges that the participants are adjusting their lives and routines to further the study. To address the issue of reciprocity—the need for participants to receive something in return for their willingness to provide information (Creswell, 1998)—the researcher did the following:

1. Show genuine interest in the participants and their stories.
2. Present each participant with a gift card at \$10 or less.
3. Say thank you to mark the conclusion of the interview.
4. Mail thank you cards to each participant.
5. Offer a summary of the completed study findings to each participant, if requested.

### *Summary*

This chapter presented methods that were used in the present study. The chapter listed the purpose, research questions, and rationale for the research approach, sampling method, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

## Chapter 4. Findings

*“If I were really asked to define myself, I wouldn’t start with race; I wouldn’t start with blackness; I wouldn’t start with gender; I wouldn’t start with feminism. I would start with stripping down to what fundamentally informs my life, which is that I’m a seeker on the path.”*

—(Hooks, 1989, p. 5)

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of African American women who have obtained doctorate degrees. In addition, this study aimed to uncover means to achieving the doctorate degree.

The study utilized structured telephone interviews with 7 African American women. Interviews were conducted throughout a 1-week period. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. In accordance with literature on qualitative study, triangulation and member checking were utilized to ensure credibility. According to phenomenologists Colaizzi (1973), Giorgi (1985), and Moustakas (1994), creating a unique method of data analysis is acceptable. Moustakas affirms that “every method in human science research is open-ended. There are no definitive exclusive requirements. Each research project holds its own integrity and establishes its own methods and procedures to facilitate the flow of the investigation and collection of data” (p. 104) The researcher used a modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method (as cited in Creswell, 2007) to analyze the data. Steps the researcher used for data-analysis are explained below.

1. The researcher created a full, written description of her own experience with the phenomenon (epoche’), so that the focus could be directed to the participants of the study.

2. Interviews were conducted and transcribed. Participants were asked to review their transcripts for accuracy.
3. The researcher read each transcript several times to get a sense of the entire interview.
4. The researcher developed a list of significant statements from the interviews. Each statement was treated with equal value (horizontalization of the data), finally creating a list with nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements.
5. Significant statements were color coded then grouped into meaning units or themes.
6. A description of what the participants experienced was created (textural description) using verbatim quotes.
7. A final description of how the experience happened (structural description) was developed.
8. Finally, the researcher performed imaginative variation to write a composite textural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Tinto's (1975, 1993) theoretical models of educational persistence served as the framework for the study. The models form the conceptual basis of much of the research on persistence and graduation. This model differentiates between social integration, which is measured by such factors as interaction with faculty and participation in extracurricular activities, and academic integration, which is usually measured by grades or other indications of academic achievement. To provide a clear picture of how each of the women in the study experienced their doctoral programs, themes were captured in each of Tinto's (1975, 1993) four stages: (a) pre-entry, (b) entering the program

(transition and adjustment), (c) throughout the program (attaining candidacy), and (d) program completion (research completion).

The first section of this chapter provides a profile of each study participant. The second section of the chapter provides the results of the data analysis from the participants' interviews with verbatim quotes from the transcripts. Central themes and the essence of the women's experiences that emerged from the data are presented.

### *Description of Participants*

All of the women in this study participated in a 60-minute audio taped structured telephone interview. Selection of the study participants required their completion of a doctorate degree from a traditional university between the years of 1994 and 2009. A profile of each study participant is provided with an emphasis on their degree completion year, type of degree earned, type of university attended, and current job. Each doctor participant interviewed was given a participant ID number based on the order in which they were interviewed (i.e., the first doctor interviewed was given the ID number of D-1; the second doctor was given the ID number of D-2, etc.). Table 3 provides a visual summary of participant profiles.

Table 3

### *Participant Profiles*

Participant ID Number	Institution type/ Affiliation	Degree Type	Year of Completion	Area of Specialty	Current Job
D-1	Private Christian University in Southern CA	Ed.D.	2009	Organizational Leadership	School Administrator
D-2	University of California System	Ph.D.	2009	Environmental Health	Researcher

*(table continues)*

Participant ID Number	Institution type/ Affiliation	Degree Type	Year of Completion	Area of Specialty	Current Job
D-3	Private University in Southern CA	Ed.D.	2006	Educational Leadership	Dean, Community College
D-4	University of California System	Ph.D.	2007	Epidemiology	Senior Consultant/Faculty Member
D-5	Private Christian University in Southern CA	Ed.D.	2008	Educational Leadership	Principal
D-6	Private University in Southern CA	Ph.D.	2003	Political Science	Adjunct Professor, State University
D-7	Private University in Southern CA	Ed.D.	2008	Educational Leadership	Assistant Dean, State University

### *Emergent Themes*

For 1 week, my life was spent (by phone) in the living rooms and offices of some of the finest people it has ever been my privilege to encounter. These 7 women allowed me to enter into their lives and hearts. Tears were shed and laughter was heard as they relived stories of perseverance, self-doubt, honor, and pride. At times, I was amazed at how transparent and open some of the women were about their personal experiences in their doctoral programs. They spoke about obstacles, disappointments, triumphs, and joy. Their stories were honest, inspiring, and rich in detail. And while each of these women is accomplished in her own right, they told their stories with great humility. They were eager to share their stories in an effort to outline a path for others to follow. Key words and phrases emerged from the interviews that were repeated time and time again and became the labels generated to describe the participants' universal experiences (see Table 4). Six themes emerged from the data. The findings for each theme help to answer the five research questions that were used to guide this study.



Table 4

*Emergent Themes Identified in Tinto's (1975, 1993) Four Stages of Doctoral Persistence  
by Research Question*

Stage of Doctoral Persistence	Research Question	Emergent Theme
Stage 1: Pre-Entry	What are the factors that lead to the success of African American women prior to beginning a doctoral program?	Theme 1: A teacher, counselor, or parent who expects the best promote future success.  Theme 2: A positive high school or undergraduate learning experience encourages future study.
Stage 2: Entering the program	What are the factors that lead to the success of African American women as revealed in Tinto's first transition and adjustment stage of doctoral study?	Theme 3: A doctoral program orientation and campus resources promote persistence.
Stage 3: Throughout the program	What facilitates the success of African American women during their doctoral study, as revealed in Tinto's second attaining candidacy stage of graduate persistence?	Theme 4: A mentor and community of support encourage persistence.
Stage 4: Program completion	What are the pathways to the doctorate degree for African American women, as revealed in Tinto's third research completion stage of graduate persistence?	Theme 5: A clear educational goal and internal drive is a catalyst to program completion.  Theme 6: A dissertation chair and committee members who are supportive aids program completion.

*Stage 1: Preentry*

It was clear upon interviewing these women, that a seed was planted long before they applied to any doctoral program. The women spoke candidly about people and events in early life that helped to set the stage for them to pursue their higher education. Two themes emerged in Stage 1: (a) A teacher, counselor, or parent who expects the best promotes future success, and (b) A positive high school or undergraduate learning experience encourages future study.

*Theme 1: High educational expectations by a teacher, counselor, or parent*

*promote college degree attainment.* Although each of these women was first in her family to achieve a doctorate degree, each of the 7 participants articulated that there was an expectation, by a teacher, counselor, or parent that she would attend college. Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, these expectations became the catalyst for these women to pursue higher education. The following quotes were obtained through an interview from the participants in this study on December 1 - December 15, 2009.

My high school was determined that everybody there, if not an Ivy League, would go to a 4-year college. If not a 4-year college, you would go to a historically black college unless you decided not to. My high school counselor told me, "I will accept nothing less than a doctorate from you. If you can get straight As in Calculus at the junior college level and you are in high school, you should have a doctorate." She said, "I don't care if you get it in chemistry, biology, or science...but you get a doctorate." So when I did receive my doctorate, I sent her a card and a copy of the invitation and she just sent me an e-mail back saying, "I told you so."

My counselor was great. She actually was the same counselor that my brother had, so she knew my family and truly believed in me and my abilities, so anything that I said in terms of my college aspirations or what I wanted to do in high school was never any doubt that I was going to be able to do those things.

I thought that I was going to pursue a medical degree, so I knew it would be a doctorate-level degree. I knew that I was going on [to college]. It was not a question. It was more so my parents and my family and what the expectation that was put upon me. From the time that I can remember, my dad would say, "You're going to be a doctor, that's what you're going to be," and so that's what he told me and that's what I believed.

Education was always really valued in my family. My mother's a teacher and a college graduate. My grandparents are college graduates and everyone in my family before me basically graduated from college and really valued education. So it [college] was an expectation

D-5 also talked about how a professor while she was an undergrad encouraged her to pursue the Ph.D. Again, his expectation served as a motivation to achieve.

I remember in that interview to get into the program, one of the professors asked me what I wanted to do and I guess this was right after the riots, after the '92 riots maybe, and Maxine Waters was all over the news and I said, "Well, I'm going to go to law school and I'm going to be the next Maxine Waters," and I remember the professor looking at me and saying, "Well, we have enough black lawyers. What we need is more black Ph.D.s. You should become a professor. It's a great life," and that's all he would say. And so my senior year, he started talking to me about what's so great about going into academia. And so that really mentored me into graduate school.

My mother actually obtained her Bachelor's degree when I was probably about 8 or 9 years old, so I was able to shadow her, like go to her classes and things like that and kind of see what the college experience was like, even when I was in middle school, junior high, that age there. In addition, my father also would attend community colleges at night too. So I think I was exposed to college at a very early age and it was just the expectation from my parents, specifically my mom, that I would pursue a college education. So I think growing up it was just always that expectation that after high school you went to college. I think just having that sense of this is an expectation and this is what you do was engrained in me, and so it was just something I always knew I would pursue, at least a college degree.

*Theme 2: Early academic achievement and school involvement motivate future*

*study.* The participants in the study described their early high school and undergraduate experiences. These stories often began with the participants' early academic success and their participation in campus activities. This positive academic experience and campus involvement inspired a certain hope in the women and became the catalyst for them to further their education. The following quotes were obtained through an interview from the participants in this study on December 1 - December 15, 2009.

I had a wonderful high school experience. I went to a high school that was predominantly African American and during my 11th and 12th grade years, I was able to do dual enrollment. My high school pushed so that the top students in the class all participated in dual enrollment. So we went to high school in the afternoons and we went to the junior college in the mornings and so many of us graduated from high school with the first year of college, if not more, already completed. So I know that if you have a wonderful high school, a good experience there, that it could be the catalyst for you to do more.

I was highly involved and engaged in high school. I was involved in student leadership. I held a commissioner position for one of those years. I was class

president for 2 out of the 3 years of high school. I was an athlete, played basketball, was on the varsity all 3 years. I was academically a strong student and had over a 4.0 GPA when I graduated. I did most of the honors courses, a few AP courses.

I was always into school for the most part, so I did pretty good independently studying and doing my homework. I know some people are usually bored or lack motivation. I was pretty motivated. I engaged in a lot of campus involvement at school, so I was involved in Associated Student Body, over the 3-year period of high school at the time when it was 10th through 12th grade, and I also participated in the academic decathlon. I was a cheerleader for 2 out of the 3 years, and then during my senior year, they started up the track team, so I participated in that to kind of help excite other students about running, starting up the track club. I was involved on campus on the undergraduate level, too. I was freshman senator. I was in several cultural clubs, what would be the equivalent of a BSU. I was engaged in AACW in an officer role there. I think one of the Asian student associations. I had quite a few Asian friends, and so I participated in other cultural groups.

I ended up going into a particular magnet program in high school. I found it to be stimulating. I found it to be challenging enough and I took the higher math and science courses that college-bound students generally take. I think I may have been a little bit ahead of myself and I went to summer school and by the time I finished 11th grade, I'd met all my college entry requirements up through calculus and so my senior year, I just took the basic courses and I left early. I was a cheerleader. I personally had worked very hard academically. I couldn't come home with mediocre grades. Cs were like Fs in my household.

D-5 described her high school experience as atypical. She faced obstacles during this period of time, but still was able to achieve a 4.0 in the 11th grade.

Well, my high school experience is probably atypical of people who have doctorates. I was not the most studious person in high school. Well, there was one subject that I really enjoyed. In the 9th and 10th grade, I went to a high school that had African American Studies and so I really enjoyed those classes, but aside from that, I cut class all the time. I was not a good student. I actually wound up dropping out of traditional high school in junior year and went to independent studies after getting into a lot of trouble generally. So I was kind of a...I grew up in a really bad neighborhood, so I was kind of a product of my environment in a lot of ways, but I did go back to traditional high school in the 12th grade and graduated I did go to independent studies and colleges and universities didn't really know what that was, and so you basically got As in all your classes if you did enough hours worth of work, so it looked like on paper that I had a 4.0 in the 11th grade. So when I applied to schools, my GPA was a little inflated based on

that 1 year in independent studies. Who would think dropping out would help you get into college, right.

D-5 spoke about her undergrad experience and how getting good grades during this period of her life inspired her to achieve more.

And so I went away to Howard and was able to basically kind of become a new person there and I think for me, my college experience allowed me to reinvent myself and the great thing about being in a historically black college is the thing that kind of helped...I found out that I enjoyed community organizing and I enjoyed doing community work, and then my first semester there, it was the first time in my life I had gotten all As and Bs and it felt good and I was working a couple of jobs and all of this other stuff, but it made me feel like, "Hey, I can do this." So the 1st year was my 1st year of getting all As and Bs. I got it the 1st semester and then the 2nd semester I said, "There's no way I can do this again," but I did and the great thing about Howard is all of the faculty basically become your parents, so they're all rooting for you, they're telling you, "You can do it." So because I'd gotten all As and Bs, they wound up giving me what's called the trustees scholarship where they pay your full tuition and fees based on your academic achievement. So my last 3 years I actually was on a full scholarship and it makes you feel like with that...you know, with that kind of investment in you, it makes you want to do well because they're expecting you to do well.

D-6 faced personal challenges in high school; she used these challenges to her advantage.

In terms of high school, I don't feel like I was adequately prepared to be successful as an undergraduate student. That is because the level of expectation, I believe, at the high school that I attended was substandard. I don't believe that academically I was prepared to be successful in a more global forum or on a campus as large as the undergraduate campus...the university I attended, and so I would say that my motivation came from my family background and my adversities that I experienced as a child growing up poor, having experienced foster care and an adoption and having a biological mother who pretty much assumed a life of illegal activity and crime and drugs. I knew that that wasn't the road that I wanted to take and I was sold on the fact that education would be my vehicle to avoid her reality and I believed that I could overcome poverty and that I could provide for myself a life that was quite the contrary of my biological mother, and I used that as my encouragement and my motivation to succeed, but it wasn't easy.

In high school I was involved in cocurricular activities, so I did play sports growing up and I was involved in things like the high school year book. I was involved in the drama club for a little bit, so that was probably part of my development too that carried over into my college life because when I was in college, I was involved in activities as well, but as far as maybe...but was

involved in the cocurricular and extracurricular activities in high school and throughout college as well.

*Stage 2: Entering the Program*

Each of the women discussed a clear impetus for beginning a doctoral program. Some of the women expressed it was a lifelong goal; others said it was for career purposes. Needless to say, a doctoral degree was a new feat; the women expressed the importance of orientation and on-campus student support services such as a writing center, career center, teaching assistantships, and on-campus housing. One theme emerged in Stage 2: A doctoral program orientation and campus resources promote persistence.

*Theme 3: Student support services and institutional integration aid in doctoral student persistence.* During the early stages of the doctoral program, the women faced a variety of challenges. These defining moments were important in the lived experiences of the women as they helped the women to overcome obstacles that could have impeded their persistence in their doctoral programs. The study participants expressed the importance of an initial orientation and other student support services. The following quotes were obtained through an interview from the participants in this study on December 1 - December 15, 2009.

I was impressed that [my university] did have an initial orientation that was extensive. It was more than 1 day. It was like a 3- or 4-day orientation. And so that's one thing that kind of grounds you in the program and I think that once you're in a cohort, you have the ability to kind of maintain this group dynamic that you've entered into. The school did offer a writing support center. You get a chance to participate in study groups. It's wonderful that the school had the Web as its library so you could always access information at any time.

At the information session that we attended, there were a variety of faculty and support staff of different ethnicities, so I felt that I would really be supported as a

woman of color there. I liked the idea of a cohort model, the idea that I would focus on educational leadership, that's what the focus on community college is.

The first two years I believe are crucial to an incoming graduate student, and I'm not talking about the person who comes in and already knows exactly what they want to do. The first two years especially, provide the student and develop the student with the necessary tools for them to have academic success. So for me, that meant these writing support classes, how to write a grant and apply for outside funding support, how to develop long-range career plans, either within the department or they can do it in conjunction with the Career Center. You know, they always have these really nice workshops. I spent my last year in the Career Center getting the help and utilizing the resources of the university. Students need help to learn how to write a really good solid research report that translates into their thesis or their dissertation, but also to help them start to think about what they want to do after graduation.

D-4 talked about the valuable resource of on-campus family housing:

I moved into family housing and that worked out pretty good because I was on campus, it was subsidized and I was close to my children who attended childcare right there on campus.

They did have a graduate school orientation. I think they're orientation program was like 2 or 3 days and it did kind of familiarize you with the campus, but it was really basic. I did have study groups and usually we kind of married the study groups with social time. We used to call ourselves the UN because we were all from different places. Study groups were important, and then getting an assistantship was really important because I feel like you can do the readings, but what makes you really understand the material is having to teach it or having to write about it. I became a TA for this law class and you have to know your stuff. You can't just be walking in there and not knowing what you're doing because TAs at Research 1 universities actually teach the section, so you have a large lecture class that the professor teaches and the students meet in discussion sections once or twice a week and you're basically the professor in there. Meeting with the professors I think is really important. So you know, making sure that you go to office hours and that kind of thing and talk regularly with the instructors.

I remember submitting my proposals and different things to the writing resource center, they helped me and so it was important to me. I still don't feel like I'm fluent in Standard English. So I needed support from someone who was strong in the rules of Standard English and sentence structure and grammar and all those good things. And so I consulted with the writing resource center.

They [the university] had a 2-day orientation, so we came before classes started and we got to meet with other members of the cohort and they had a student panel that talked about the transition into the doctorate program. We heard from faculty

members. It was all very structured. We got our little ID card; we got to interact with each other, so...yeah, that was for 2 days in the summer before we started coursework. I found it was helpful because I got to meet people who eventually I became very close friends with throughout the program and then because it had been awhile since I had been in school, again, any kind of information that I could absorb that would help me become a more successful student, I was all on it. I was like, "Just help me out here. I'm not sure what I'm doing." So any information either I could get from people who were already in the program, like tips from them about how to be successful or any kind of information that would help me, even simple things like, "Well, it's been awhile since I had to register for classes and how do I do financial aid and all that kind of stuff?" That was all very helpful for me because I'm the first one in my family who actually did pursue advanced degrees. So even though my family was very supportive, this experience for us was new because I was the first one. We did have a writing center on campus. I think I used them specifically for the dissertation phase, so they would help with your chapters and things like that. I used that.

### *Stage 3: Throughout the Program*

As the women persisted to degree completion, one theme was consistent: A mentor and community of support influence persistence. As in their early doctoral experiences, the women encountered personal and academic obstacles. However, when faced with challenges that could potentially hinder their success, the women adapted and built communities of support.

*Theme 4: Mentors and social supports play a critical role in students' persistence and success.* Support systems were of crucial importance for the women in the study. Support systems helped the women to gain strength, confidence, reassurance, and encouragement. These supports often came in the form of faculty members, study groups, family, and friends. The following quotes were obtained through an interview from the participants in this study on December 1 - December 15, 2009.

I would tell others to establish a mentoring program and that mentoring program should not just be during the intro to the program, but there should be a lot of support at the end of the program because the dissertation is the loneliest portion of the doctorate, but yet it's the most critical work product that you will produce for the university. I would tell other students to make sure to surround yourself



with people who understand how important this task is to you, how difficult it's going to be, and that when they hear you grumble or, "Oh, my goodness, this is due," that those are just...that's just for the moment and that truly that will pass and that you will go on to complete this degree.

I had a very good group of friends within the program that helped get me through. So we had our study groups. Anytime there was a group project, we tried to work together to make sure that we would all get through it. It's that same thing, In addition to my friends who were part of the program.

My family was amazing. My parents at the time lived about 10 to 15 minutes away from me, so they were very proud of what I was doing, very supportive, had no problems there. Initially, my first job when I started was supportive. That helped me tremendously. Just having that built-in support from a group of individuals that I met over the course of a year was key.

My mom definitely has always been the backbone for me, and then I have about six friends throughout this whole journey who I've relied on heavily. And that's pretty much it. You know, I have supporters, family supporters from afar, I feel like my mom got the degree with me. There's a few friends who through the years you're like, "Girl, I don't think I can do this," and they're like, "No. Yes, you can," you know, so just those two. I did participate in study groups. I initiated them with colleagues, my dissertation chair, and another department faculty member who happened to be like the department graduate advisor, she helped me I can say I used all of the university resources. I ended up seeking out a dissertation support group at the Counseling Center and I think it was the best thing I ever did, exactly. So I ended up joining...it was called a dissertation support group at the Counseling Center and ultimately it led to me going to also a women's support group of graduate...like women graduate student support group. The best thing I could have ever done.

Not only was she my boss, but we became friends. She kind of took me under her wings professionally to help groom me and she took very good care of me. She's very spiritual and very ethical, very fair, very put together, very polished, very smart, and I would just watch how she would go about doing things; just how she would get things done and I really admired that about her. I also had a sorority sister during this time who I could count on. She was also in the program.

We always understood whatever else we were dealing with, we had to be there for each other, it was a must, there was no choice. There was no one else that could understand what we were dealing with in terms of frustrations and things like that and her frustrations. I lifted her up and we just encouraged each other through the whole time and that's just really important. I would say for African American students, specifically African American women, to have a mentor, whoever that might be. It could be a faculty member. It could be a fellow student who...anybody...sometimes it might be someone on campus who's not really even directly related to the program. I know someone on campus that was actually

kind of that person too, but just someone who...I mean, really it was the daycare provider and she would pray with me on the mornings of my tests. She and I shared the same faith and she would pray with me, and just those people, you just have to find those people that you know, "OK, this person is on my team." You just kind of have to have a place of discernment where you, "OK, I'm going to push this one to the side, but this one I know I can depend on for this." I know I have my prayer warriors. I have my people that I could vent to, that I knew it wasn't going to go beyond them, and then I had just my supporters, my team like, "You know, I'm feeling like this today. I'm so tired." "OK, I know you're tired, but you're going to have to...come on, push it out, get up, push it out and make it happen. You've got this due tomorrow, you got that...." So I would just say to build a team of support around you.

There was a lot of moral support. My mom was really happy. My father wasn't as excited, but my mother was super excited that I was in the program. But I think part of it for me was also having outside mentors who could be supportive. I think there's no underestimating the role that black faculty play in making it comfortable for you. So there were people in my department...well, there was one person in my department and there was actually a white woman who was supportive later on in my process that really helped me. I reached back to Howard and let them know how things were going and I met the dean of the law school at Georgetown who was African American and I remember I would call him pretty regularly. He'd given me his home number and I would call him and I remember the 1st year was really difficult because there weren't very many African Americans. I remember calling him and saying, "I just don't think I can do it. I just don't think I can do it," and I was crying and I was saying, "I feel so lonely here and blah, blah, blah," Look, you're almost done with your 1st year. You need 1 more year to get a Master's. Just get the Master's and then drop out," and I said, "OK," and I remember thinking that makes sense to me, and then he threw in, "And after the Master's, it's only 1 more year to finish your coursework for your Ph.D.," and I'm like, "Oh, yeah," and it was that pep talk that made me feel like I could do it. And so what kept me going was not so much family. I mean, I'm blessed that my mother was in my corner and that she was kind of rooting for me, but also other people who had done it, you know, rooting for me. Mike Preston became kind of like my dad at USC and he was my dissertation advisor. He also was rooting for me, so having those folks who'd done it and telling me that they thought I could do it is what made me finish. Seek out mentors. I think if it weren't...I know if weren't for mentors, I wouldn't have finished. I wouldn't have even gone. And then build a community around yourself. Find other people who are doing what you're doing. If you can, find a couple of people who share your racial and gender identity, but if not, find other people of color and kind of build a community that way because it does get lonely and sometimes you're going to need to vent and talk about that stuff.

When I needed to go to the library and study and on those long weekends sometimes; they [my family] made sure that she [my daughter] was still able to be a kid, and so I have to say that my family support was beneficial. I had a very

active board. I'm not sure if you guys had to assign roles and have your own personal board that would support you in different roles, but I took that very seriously when I developed my board members who would help me get through the program and my family...my daughter even had a role on my board because at the time, she was my motivation. My bosses have all supported me; one of my bosses was actually at my final defense. My cohort members and I mentored each other. We were our support group. It was like a family. We passed each class together. There were a lot of group projects, we did them together. We motivated each other.

I had the support of friends. We had a dissertation group. There were seven of us that met with our advisor every 2 weeks, and so we were accountable to each other too to make sure that we were on track and getting things written and read on time for each other. So I think there were all sorts of support networks and especially I think finding those key seven people that last year when we were all trying to get through the dissertation, that really tried to keep us on track and we bonded.

#### *Stage 4: Program Completion*

As the women completed their doctoral programs, two themes emerged: (a) A clear educational goal and internal drive is a catalyst to program completion, and (b) A doctoral advisor and committee members who are supportive aid program completion. The women discussed moments when they needed to be self-determined and internally driven. These moments were experienced near the completion of their programs, a time in which the women describe as a lonely process. The women articulated how a supportive doctoral advisor and committee influenced their program completion. The following quotes were obtained through an interview from the participants in this study on December 1 - December 15, 2009.

*Theme 5: Clear educational goals and self-determination are crucial to doctoral degree completion.* As the women neared completion of their doctoral programs, they recognized the significance of receiving the doctorate degree. This was not viewed in terms of their personal success, but more so in terms of what attaining a doctoral degree meant for others. They each recognized that they were one of a small number. They

spoke with great pride and understood that the degree came with great responsibility to their families, communities, and other African Americans.

I always knew I would go. I always knew in high school that I would get a doctorate. A doctorate degree is a very lonesome process. You must be internally motivated in order to complete it, and even though I completed it in a cohort, you are still very much so an individual. I am a single mother. I am a business owner. I am a public school administrator. So my life is multifaceted, multitasked, and a lot of people can't relate to that, that I have multiple hats to wear in the single course of a day. And so that makes you even more self-determined. Like if you have to go somewhere and just complete what you need to complete, then that's on you, but I say it's very doable. I went into the doctorate program really knowing what I wanted to study. I went into it knowing that I wanted to be a pioneer in this aspect of special education and then I had the privilege at the end of my dissertation study...I functioned in a public school as the director of Special Education, so I had the opportunity to practice those things that I wrote about within my dissertation. So I was very passionate about it and my dissertation committee could pick up on that and I had enough resources within my field that I could really do this study and I was very glad about it.

For a long time I was debating whether I was going to go get another Master's degree or pursue the doctorate and it just happened that something clicked. I was like, if I'm going to go back to school and do this, I might as well get the highest degree I can. My overall experience was great. I mean, I made the most of it. I didn't complain a lot about a lot of things I knew there were going to be some bumps along the way and I was fine with that. I figured it'll all work itself out and I'm going to make the most of it. I really forged relationships with other students and was able to make some relationships with some of the faculty in the area or in the program. I would probably say have a really good reason for why you're doing it. You don't want to do this just because you think it's what other people want or expect of you because you won't be happy. That it takes a tremendous amount of faith and patience, but that it is doable.

There was a lot of turmoil in my life, but I used school as my getaway I guess. All of those external factors contributed to me being very focused on school because I felt like I would be able to better my life through education and it also served as an outlet. I knew I would be a doctor. In fact, I wrote it out. I make goal lists. I think I have since I was...I don't know when I started them, maybe undergrad or maybe high school, but on one of my old goal lists I knew I would be Dr., so that had always been in my head and shortly after coming out of undergrad I had this interest in environmental health, the concern of environmental impact on an individual person's health and then those methods for studying those types of issues.

The whole time I was pregnant, everyone was like, “Are you going to take off time? Are you going to take off time?” I’m like, “No, he’s due during spring break. I’m going to have him during spring break and I’ll be back in class on Monday. I don’t see the big deal.” And they were like, “You’re crazy. You can’t do that. You can’t do that.” And one thing about me, if you tell me I can’t, I’m going to show you how I can, so I was like, “Yes, I can. Who said I can’t? I can. I can do it. I’m going to do that. That’s what I’m going to do. It’s going to happen.” And I think because I really had it in my brain that’s just what happened. He was born during spring. He was born on his due date during spring break and on Monday, I was back in class. I was a single parent and I had no time to waste. My schedule was very straightforward. But there were nights where I know I would have a paper that I had to write and I wasn’t able to get it done and there’s only so many hours in the day. So I would wait for the kids to go to sleep and the baby, wouldn’t really sleep like that, so I remember having to hold her in my left arm and type my paper with my right hand and I would go like that for hours and then I would kind of switch off. I did that for months and months and months and I survived on very, very, very little sleep and I was determined to have it work, have it happen, because I had a lot riding on this. I had left my career. I had left my job. I had left...you know, I was going through this divorce. I had all this stuff going, this had to work. It’s like I have to have this work so that I can be in a better position to support my family. I have to be able to support my family. When this is all over with, I have to be able to walk away from this with a degree that’s going to be able to turn into something that’s going to be better for all of us and I knew I didn’t have years and years to do it. At some point, it had to end; it had to end as quickly as possible. So I think that my motivation really was my kids, you know, just looking at them every day and knowing that, “OK, Momma has to work it out, so we’re going to get through this. We’re going to make this happen,” and that was it.

I was still motivated by the fact that I knew I could do it. One, I believed that it was possible. I knew that I had all of the potential in the world to be successful, but I just needed to focus and do what I knew that I could do, but again, I knew that I didn’t want to remain in a life of poverty and that I wanted better than my family generation before me. And so I used basically the adverse experiences in my childhood and things that I had experienced, negative experiences, and I used them to create positive outcomes for myself. I live in the realm of possibility. I’m positive and I try to keep myself...or remind myself of that even when I feel that I may be falling into a temporary rut, but I try to be very positive and I wanted to surround myself with those people, with those types of people as I went through this final step in this doctoral process. I would tell any student don’t suffer in silence. If there’s something that they don’t understand and you can’t get in touch with the person that you are supposed to consult with for whatever it is—a class, a project, or whatever—go and consult with someone else in that school, so if it’s educational psychology, consult with another professor that is familiar, other students, but certainly other professors that have gone through it or that have supported and walked other students through it and just not suffer in silence and

basically get it done. We have a lot of our colleagues who are all but dissertation and I think you commit so...I'm not even just speaking of the financial resources that you allocate to a doctoral education experience, but I'm talking about the time, your life, and the life of others.

I think I always knew that I wanted to get the doctorate degree. It was just about timing and finding something that worked for my lifestyle at the particular time I did decide to go back. I think just from a personality perspective, the people that I became very close with; we were all very driven to complete the degree because they have statistics out there. I mean, we know the statistics about people who start the degree and then never finish and I just felt personally accountable to not just myself and finishing the degree, but then also again, because I'm the oldest of four siblings, I also knew that I was hopefully setting an example too and that my family was counting on me to finish and things like that. So I think in that respect, I just had the internal drive to finish and finish on time. That was the other thing. I was determined to finish on time because it did make such a huge impact on my lifestyle, especially trying to balance work and going to school at the same time. The dissertation topic that I chose was very intentional, so I think that was a lot that led me to be able to complete on time because I chose a topic that fit into my program, so folks on higher education specifically focused on success of students of color in remedial mathematics, but I was able to conduct my research at my work site. So that kind of fitted in as well. So I kind of intentionally did things that I think helped make my journey a little bit easier.

*Theme 6: Supportive doctoral advisors and committee members aid program completion.* One of the most prevalent issues for participants was the challenges they faced with their doctoral committees. This generally meant having an unsupportive advisor or chair, unclear expectations, and unclear timelines. Many of the participants described the final stages as a lonely process. The negative experiences left many of the participants with feelings of resentment, confusion, and sadness. The following quotes were obtained through an interview from the participants in this study on December 1 - December 15, 2009.

I was fortunate enough to have a committee that really was interested in my topic, really wanted to see the end result of the topic, and they were really supportive. So even though this is an academic exercise and there were many things to do, many corrections, editing and all of those things, I still left every defense feeling that these three individuals want me to complete this....There should be a lot of support at the end of the program because the dissertation is the loneliest portion

of the doctorate, but yet it's the most critical work product that you will produce for the university.

My chair was interesting. He had moments where he was very supportive and moments where he made things very difficult. So we met, we talked as a group, he gave us deadlines for when he wanted specific things turned in. We got those things into him, there was a lot of back and forth and revisions and trying to clarify what the focus of the dissertation was going to be. That whole process of...you know, as a student there are certain things that you want to do, but your chair wants to do other things, and so really having to know what the chair wants you to do, even though it's not completely in line with what you want to do. I found myself very frustrated at times with the process and with him as a chair and not really feeling like I got the direction that I needed. Thank God for my group because that really helped to keep me and I think keep a lot of us going. When one of us kind of hit a wall, the other one was there to help pick us up or we could talk through, "This is what he said. Does this make sense to you? Yes? No? Can you look this over before I send it in," and understandably, he's got 10 students or however many more if there's others he's working with outside of our group, that he has to read information...read drafts and things like that and get information back to us. So I don't think it was...for my particular group, I don't think it was a completely clear timeline and process and there weren't...at least from the chair, there weren't mechanisms in place to help make sure we were moving along that process smoothly and that that was happening. I mean, in a nutshell.

I did receive support from my chair and committee. I did receive guidance in selecting a topic. It took me about 4 years from beginning to end to complete the actual research once I decided on a topic. Coming in, I had an idea of the topic that I wanted to do, but I got to the topic in a roundabout way because nobody was really studying what I wanted when I first came in. It's important to choose a topic that you like, that you wouldn't mind reading about for about 4 to 7 years, something that really excites you and won't bore you; you won't get annoyed about it. And then persistence, not...being willing not to give up. Take a little bit at a time; try breaking it up into bite-size pieces. Also be willing to ask for and seek out the resources that you need to succeed and then have an idea...if it's someone coming into grad school, have an idea or topic in mind prior to applying to grad school, that way you have a more defined and refined search. Carefully choose a faculty member with similar interest so that you're on track the minute that you step into the program. You're not kind of searching it, figuring it out.

My chair, my dissertation chair, the one who I said is like my dad, he was probably the most important person in that process. So he took me through this process of coming up with a couple of different dissertation subjects. The one that I was going with at first, he let me run with it even though he didn't like it, and then realized I couldn't do it, so he was very...he's kind of a guy that does like tough love, so he lets you make a mistake and then say, "It's not going to work, but go ahead and do it and see what happens." And then you make your mistake

and he goes, “Alright, now come on, let me show you what to do. And then also on my committee, I had the woman that I mentioned. She was my first TA assignment and what was good about her is that she was the opposite of him. She wasn’t tough love. She was like soft love like, “You are so brilliant and you can do anything. You’re going to be a star,” and everything you write she goes, “Oh, my goodness, this is publishable in this state,” or...she’s really, really highly respected in her field, but also very nurturing and supportive. And so...and she comes up...what happens too is you feel like you earned it because she came off initially as very tough, but once she kind of takes to you, she would just be your biggest cheerleader. And so it was a nice balance for me. It was a nice balance for me of having both of them.

I picked my committee based on who I thought I could work well with. I didn’t want to waste a lot of time dealing with personality conflicts. We needed to gel. They needed to understand what type of project it was that I wanted to do. I didn’t have human subjects. I did a grounded theory study, and so for me, I needed to know that the people that I worked with were familiar with the type of study that I wanted to do and what type of impact I wanted to have on the field of education. And so I picked my committee chairperson based on the professor that I had gotten to know, a professor that I admired, one who I thought was witty, had a lot of personality, didn’t take life too seriously, didn’t sweat the small things so to speak, and that’s the kind of person I am. So my chair was someone that I thought was just like me...I wanted it to be my work, I just needed a coach or someone to help me maximize my potential in this project, and so I chose him, but then I needed someone constant, someone that I would see more regularly and someone who worked on a project that was very close to what I wanted to do, and so I chose Professor John Doe who finished his program, before me, I think he finished in ’03, but he just so happened to be someone that I developed a friendship with. We were colleagues. He was a principal at one of our middle schools and again he’s very witty, had a lot of personality and he encouraged me...you know, he was the first person to call me doctor, and he called me doctor before I even wrote page one of my proposal. He was saying, “Get it done,” and he was like, “I’m going to help you get it done. I’m calling you doctor every time I see you,” and so I thought, “Oh, gosh, if you’re going to call me doctor, I’m really going to have to become one. There’s no turning back.”

I chose a faculty member at my university who had a reputation of being...I mean, she’s well-known, but sometime her students struggle to get through because she just has really high expectations, but I knew that going in and I knew...I said, “OK, I want to work with this woman. I know she’s going to push me hard,” and she did. In some respects, I think...and I think everybody goes through this to a certain extent. When you’re in that writing phase and you keep getting your drafts back over and over and over again and just like, “OK, please just tell me what I need to write.” My other two committee members, I actually selected one person from Fullerton who I had worked with previously and I knew would be an expert on the topic or could contribute to the topic I had selected.



And then the third person, I struggled with that. That third person was from University XYZ. I think I sent e-mails to a couple of faculty members in the College of Education and ended up with her. She was really nice. She was really sweet. She was actually...when I was defending my proposal, she was pregnant, so she was on maternity leave when we did it, but she did come up with some really good contributions to my research. Actually they worked good together and they all gave me good feedback.

### *Summary*

This chapter provided a narrative description of the women participants interviewed for this study, and provided an articulation of the women's essence of their experience with a compilation of verbatim quotes to support the themes identified during the analysis of data. Chapter 5 will discuss these findings further, compare them to available literature, and examine the implications and recommendations for future studies.

## Chapter 5. Discussion of Findings

*“The path of the scholar is at best a lonely one. In his search for the truth he must be the judge of his findings and he must live with his conclusions.”*

—(Franklin, 1992, p. 1)

### *Introduction*

Six themes emerged from the data that connected the experiences of all 7 study participants. This chapter further discusses these findings, compares them to the existing literature, introduces implications for each finding, and offers recommendations for future study.

### *Theme 1: High Educational Expectations by a Teacher, Counselor, or Parent Promote College Degree Attainment*

Six of the 7 study participants stated that attaining a college education was an expectation by a parent, counselor, or teacher early on in life. Of these, 3 participants stated that a doctorate degree specifically was an expectation. Education was highly valued in the participant's homes and, therefore, they were expected to attend college. This study corroborated findings by Conklin and Dailey (1981) who communicate that college attendance is determined for some children even before they enter first grade. Harris et al. (1999) says that “African American parents often stress the necessity for their children to acquire college training in order to escape social and economic disadvantage and hardships” (p. 425). Gonzalez-Pienda et al. (2002) cited parents' educational expectations for their children as one of the strongest predictors of a child's success in school. Parents' high expectations play an important role in influencing children's educational and occupational plans (Sewell et al., 1970). Attinasi (1989) conducted an exploratory study from Mexican-American students' point of view

regarding the context surrounding their decisions to persist or not persist in higher education. Through his interviews of 18 students, he found that oral communication of expectations was extremely important to students.

*Implication.* Parents, teachers, and counselors must set high expectations of educational achievement for students. They must encourage them early and often regarding their educational objectives and should instill an educational mind-set by allowing students to believe in themselves. Encouragement by a parent, teacher, or counselor has a positive impact on whether a student will attend college.

*Theme 2: Early Academic Achievement and School Involvement Motivate Future Study*

Of the study participants, 5 indicated that they were academically successful in high school, and 2 indicated that their academic success took place in undergraduate study. All of the participants were involved in social or extracurricular activities, including student government, sports, cultural clubs, and sororities during high school and/or undergraduate study. This early academic achievement and social integration planted a seed for intellectual stimulation and served as an impetus for the women to further their education. Pascarella, Smart, and Ethington (1986) found that academic and social integration did have positive effects on persistence. Farrell (2003) found that extracurricular activities created an internal culture and as members of these activities, students identified with this culture and it became part of their persona, students formed a sense of belonging that encouraged positive outcomes. Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, and Fernandez (1989) describe school involvement as more than simple technical enrollment, but an established social bond between themselves, the adults in the school,

and the norms governing the institution. Students who participate in school activities feel they are a part of the school and are less likely to withdraw.

*Implication.* Parents, teachers, and counselors must encourage good study habits and promote excellence in subjects in which the student excels. Parents, teachers, and counselors should encourage students to become involved in extracurricular campus activities. Students need to be encouraged socially to achieve academic success.

*Theme 3: Student Support Services and Institutional Integration Aid in Doctoral Student Persistence*

All seven of the study participants articulated that available student support services and resources such as a formal orientation to the program, counseling centers, academic advisors, writing centers, study groups, on-campus housing, teaching assistantships, and membership in campus organizations influenced their persistence. The ongoing, positive interaction between faculty and the access of campus resources creates a warm nurturing learning environment. These findings corroborate earlier findings by Nettles (1991), and Tinto (1993), who cited faculty and campus integration as influences on doctoral student persistence. Lovitts (2001) found that the key to persistence was institutional integration. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) assert that the level of student involvement and connections to academic and social systems play a critical role in students' persistence. They found that both the frequency and quality of interactions with peers and faculty and the participation in extracurricular activities—measures of social and academic integration into the college life—contribute positively to student's persistence. With respect to institutional practice, Bean and Metzner (1985) emphasize the importance of academic advising, presumably to influence student's goal

commitment and intent to leave. Summers (2003) found that counseling services increases retention of students identified as highly likely to drop out. Foster (2008), in his study of student engagement experiences, found it is essential for students to develop a realistic educational plan, which includes not only having a list of courses to take each semester to the fulfill their educational goal requirements, but also to ensure that students understand how to make the most of their college experience and to be intentional about the experiences that they pursue while in the community college environment. This can also be referred to as helping students develop their educational purpose. Ramos (1994), in his study of all but dissertation candidates, found that candidates should be provided with some form of structure during the post comprehensive exam period; candidates should also be provided with an environment that operates in a developmental context.

*Implication.* University administrators and doctoral advisors must not underestimate the value of student support services and on-campus resources. Formal orientation programs that help doctoral students become acclimated to the campus environment, create social networks, and introduce students to resources such as the writing center, career centers, and peer groups should be instituted. Career and writing centers play a pivotal role in student success. Advisors and university administrators must commit to fostering success for doctoral students by offering academic, financial, and social support, as well as establishing a diverse learning environment.

*Theme 4: Mentors and Social Supports Play a Critical Role in Students' Persistence and Success*

All 7 participants stated that mentors and social supports were crucial to their successful doctoral degree completion. Social support was defined as encouragement,

assistance, and advocacy given by family members, friends, colleagues, advisors, and administrators. The participants overwhelmingly stated that mentors were the guiding force that assisted them. These findings corroborate Tinto's (1993) position that doctoral persistence is directly related to students' successful socialization. Tinto (1993) found that students earned higher grades and persisted in college longer when they were involved in mentor programs, peer study groups, and tutoring programs. Fleming (1984) indicates that the influence of peers seems to be particularly important. Good, Halpin, and Halpin (2000) affirm "mentoring to be a viable approach to providing role models and leadership for underrepresented groups within higher education" (p. 376).

*Implication.* Institutions must create structured mentor programs and student peer groups. The academic and social environment is important because it allows students to feel connected and creates a safe place where students can go to get guidance and support. Mentoring is quite honestly giving back to others by sharing our experiences, good or bad, in an attempt to enhance someone else's life. There is a cause and effect mode that prevails when mentoring is provided in both positive and negative manners.

#### *Theme 5: Clear Educational Goals and Self-Determination Are Crucial to Doctoral Degree Completion*

Another factor cited by 6 of the 7 participants as influencing their doctoral degree completion was having clear educational goals and the self-determination to complete them. Participants each held an *I can do it; I'm going to finish* disposition that influenced their persistence. This refers to participants assuming a proactive role in seeking assistance, managing time, and selecting research topics. Process ownership is reflected in their self-determination. Development of clear goals enables participants to implement

work plans and timelines for completion. This is consistent with previous studies that suggest that students who develop a positive self-image, self-esteem, and an internal locus of control obtain academic achievement and success (Allen, 1992). Nettles (1991) and Tinto (1993) include these factors as part of their doctoral persistence theories.

*Implication.* Institutions can no longer underestimate the importance of helping students to develop their educational goals and a specific educational plan in which to achieve that goal. Students must be self-aware and possess an intrinsic desire to commit and complete the arduous educational endeavor of a doctoral pursuit.

*Theme 6: Supportive Doctoral Advisors and Committee Members Aid Program*

*Completion*

Of the 7 participants, 6 emphasized the importance of their relationships with and input from doctoral advisors and committee members. Participants reported both strained and positive relationships with advisors, but were still successful in completing their programs. Girves and Wemmerus (1988) contend that the role of the advisor is critical during doctoral socialization, both as role model and as primary socializing agent in the department, by establishing the standards and norms of performance and behavior. Bowen and Rudenstein (1992) confirm previous research with regard to the advisor-advisee relationship and the negative effect of a failed relationship. Bowen and Rudenstein argue that selecting a dissertation topic is a formidable hurdle for doctoral students, and that the period between the end of the coursework and engagement in dissertation research is unusually difficult. Lovitts (2001) posits that those students who do not establish a relationship with their advisors are less likely to complete their doctoral programs. Bauer (1997) examined how doctoral students made sense of their department,

doctoral advisors (relationships, student orientation, program design), and how their perceptions informed their progress. Results indicated that strong student/faculty and peer relationships, good advising, careful topic selection, and a clear understanding of departmental expectations were noted as important. Internal motivation was also cited as vital to degree completion.

*Implication.* University administrators and doctoral advisors must understand the critical role they play in assisting students with degree completion. Accessibility and communication is tremendously important. Work should be done to build a relationship and to establish a healthy line of communication. Communication should be enhanced through a variety of methods, including e-mail, chat rooms, electronic bulletin boards, and blogs in which students interact with faculty at their convenience and also receive timely responses. Special interest should also be taken in the genuine interest of the dissertation topic between faculty and student. Table 5 contains recommendations for stakeholders.

Table 5

*Recommendations for Parents, Doctoral Advisors, and University Administrators for Influencing the Persistence of African American Women in Doctoral Degree Persistence*

Recommendations for Parents	Recommendations for University Administrators	Recommendations for Doctoral Advisors	Recommendations to aspiring doctoral students
Set high educational expectations for your children.	Do not underestimate the value of student support services and on-campus resources.	Help students to develop their educational goals.	Build a community of support around you. Seek the help you need.

*(table continues)*



Recommendations for Parents	Recommendations for University Administrators	Recommendations for Doctoral Advisors	Recommendations to aspiring doctoral students
Encourage students to become involved in extracurricular campus activities.	Create structured mentor programs and peer groups for students.	Understand the critical role you play; be visible, accessible and communicate often.	Be intrinsically motivated to finish. You have to do it for yourself. Select doctoral advisor and committee carefully.

### *Limitations*

The study was limited to African American women who obtained the doctorate degree from traditional universities within the last 15 years. All participants were doctoral degree recipients from private and public universities located in Southern California. The criterion sampling of 7 participants limits transferability. Some qualitative researchers argue that the goal of generalization is inappropriate in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, there are aspects of transferability, which enable others to examine recommendations and to adhere to them as appropriate approaches.

### *Other Interesting Findings*

While many of the findings were consistent with Tinto's Persistence Theory, some findings were unexpected. The discussion includes findings in regard to matriarchal home influence.

Findings from the study confirm the importance of encouragement from parents for African American students, even at the doctoral level. Though many of the parents did not have a college education, education was highly valued in the home and participants were encouraged to go to college. An interesting discovery made by the

researcher was the high levels of maternal influence on the participants to attend college. 5 of the 7 participants expressed the encouragement to attend college came from a mother or female counselor or instructor. The paternal influence is vaguely mentioned by participants. Throughout the interviews, it was interesting to hear the participants describe their mothers or other female supports as prevalent and fundamental to their attending and completing school. One could assume then that females can play a big role in the lives of other females, particularly in the African American community. This leads the researcher to wonder just how much influence is gender specific in the African American community. Does a father have an influence on his daughter's decision regarding higher education? In contrast, how much influence does a mother have on her son's decision regarding higher education? A closer look at this topic could prove beneficial to the African American community.

#### *Recommendations for Future Study*

The following recommendations are a compilation of the responses that were given by participants' in this study. Findings suggest that successful doctoral degree attainment may be largely influenced by internal, external, and institutional factors.

The role of mentors in the doctoral process emerged as a persistent theme throughout this study. It is important to investigate further mentor-protégé relationships and their impact on student satisfaction and program completion. It would also be prudent to examine further the presence or lack of various forms of institutional and academic resources (support services) provided to doctoral students in order to offer suggestions to guide universities and academic departments in establishing much needed support outlets for minority doctoral students. Interviewing faculty members, doctoral advisors, and

program administrators would offer multiple viewpoints related to institutional factors and the doctoral process. Further research to identify specific types and the extent of committee support received would be advantageous for advisors and university officials seeking to create positive relationships in which doctoral students could successfully thrive.

Factors contributing to successful doctoral degree completion for African American men and women in other disciplines need to be determined, particularly in disciplines where under representation of African Americans and other minorities is more pronounced. Factors contributing to the successful degree completion by foreign students versus African American students need to be determined. Reports suggest foreign students are completing the degree at a higher percentage than African American students. Furthermore, future investigations on factors leading to successful doctoral degree attainment should be expanded to include doctoral program completers at historically Black colleges and universities. Future investigations should include a larger number of participants and other ethnicities.

The vocalization of one's lived experience, the paths, and the road blocks, will help to promote a better understanding of African American females. It becomes critically important to understand that the sample does not provide a complete view of African American families, women, students, or educational experiences. However, it is 7 examples that if the seed is planted, then there is a strong probability that it will grow and take on a life of its own. Persistence in education has been demonstrated by the participants in sharing their journeys. The researcher hopes that any student who will read this manuscript will be motivated to say if they can do it, so can I.

*Summary*

This chapter provided a summary of the findings on the experiences of African American women in doctoral programs. Findings were discussed in relation to previous research in the literature. Implications for future practice were presented as well as recommendations for future study. This study has provided valuable insight into the experiences of African American women in doctoral programs and contributes to a body of knowledge that will help to further our understanding of this population.

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## APPENDIX A

## Interview Protocol

Date:	Time:	Location:	Interviewee Code:
Research Question	Interview Question	Probe for Tinto's Concept	
1. What are the pre-entry behaviors that lead African American women to beginning a doctoral program?	<p>1a) Please tell me how your career ambitions and goals changed (or not) as you graduated from high school, as you graduated from college, and prior to entering post-graduate work.</p> <p>1b) Please tell me about your undergraduate experience in terms of what behaviors, conditions, or circumstances that ultimately lead to the completion of your undergraduate degree.</p>	(a) Pre-entry experiences	
2. How do African American females gain access to doctoral education, as revealed in Tinto's first "transition and adjustment" stage of graduate persistence?	<p>2) Please tell me about your experience as you entered your doctorate program?</p> <p>a) What influenced your decision to pursue a doctorate degree?</p> <p>b) How did you decide on the program and/or school?</p> <p>c) Did the program offer an orientation for incoming students?</p> <p>d) How would you characterize your financial support?</p> <p>e) How would you characterize your familial support?</p> <p>f) How would you characterize your work support?</p>	(b) transition and adjustment	
3. What facilitates the success of African American	3) Please tell me about your experience throughout your	(c) attaining candidacy and developing competency	

<p>females during doctoral study, as revealed in Tinto's second "attaining candidacy and developing competency" stage of graduate persistence?</p>	<p>doctorate program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Did the school offer a writing support center?</li> <li>b) Did the school offer mentor support for first year students?</li> <li>c) Did you participate in study groups?</li> <li>d) Did you have a designated study time?</li> <li>e) Did you have a designated study location/area (i.e. library or home office)?</li> <li>f) How did the environment at your college or university assist you in persisting and not giving up?</li> </ul>	
<p>4. What are the pathways to doctorate degree completion for African American females, as revealed in Tinto's third "research and completion" stage of graduate persistence?</p>	<p>4) Please tell me about your experience as you completed your doctorate program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Did you receive strong support from your chairperson and committee members?</li> <li>b) Did you receive guidance in selecting a research topic?</li> <li>c) How long did it take to complete your research?</li> </ul>	<p>(d) research completion</p>
<p>5. Based on RQs 1,2, and 3, what are the experiences of African American females in doctoral programs?</p>	<p>5) In the final analysis of your doctorate program, what did you feel were some of the challenges you faced? How did you approach these challenges?</p> <p>How do you feel the university assisted with these</p>	<p>Probe for overall experience</p>

	<p>challenges?</p> <p>What advice would you offer for student retention and doctorate degree completion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) What are some suggestions for student retention and doctorate degree completion?</li><li>b) Is there anything you would like to add or advice you would like to give to aspiring doctorate degree students?</li><li>c) Is there anything thing else you would like to share with me that you think I have neglected to ask you in regards to your doctorate degree completion?</li></ul>	
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Note: The following question format has been adapted from Michelle French's 2006 Study: The alignment between personal meaning and organizational mission among music executives.

## APPENDIX B

## Expert Panel Résumés

HERNANDEZ

**EDUCATION**

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- Pepperdine University, Malibu (California) 2006-2009  
*Doctorate in Organizational Leadership*
- Phi Delta Kappa (4.0 GPA)
  - Dissertation Focus: Evidence-Based Practice
- California State University, Los Angeles (California) 1993-1995  
*Master of Science Degree in Nursing*
- Magna Cum Laude
  - Nursing Administration Focus
- California State University, Long Beach (California) 1990-1993  
*Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing*
- Cum Laude
  - Critical Care Specialty Focus
- Barnes Hospital School of Nursing, St. Louis (Missouri) 1980-1983  
*Registered Nurse Diploma Program*
- Graduated Top 2% of Class
  - Received Honors in Med-Surg, Pediatrics, & Leadership

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

---

- California State University, Long Beach 8/04 - present  
*Adjunct Professor Critical Care*
- Critical Care Clinical Instructor
  - Intermediate Medical-Surgical Clinical Instructor
- Long Beach Memorial Medical Center 1999 - 2005  
*Staff Resource Registered Nurse*
- Critical Care/CVICU
- Long Beach Veterans Administration Medical Center 1984-1992  
*Staff Registered Nurse*
- MICU Specialty
  - Lead Nurse/Administrative Duties



- University Of California Irvine Medical Center 1983-1985  
*Staff Resource Registered Nurse*
- Medical-Surgical Focus
- Barnes Hospital (St. Louis, MO) 1982-1983  
*Staff Registered Nurse*
- Undergraduate/Graduate Nurse (Aug. 1982 - May 1983)
  - Registered Staff Nurse Oncology (May - July 1983)

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS & CERTIFICATIONS**

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- CCRN Certification 1985-1992, 2003 – present
- Advanced Cardiac Life Support Valid thru 2012
- American Association of Critical Care Nurse Member since 1984
- Sigma Theta Tau International Member since 1991
- INACSL Member since 2005  
*International Nursing  
 Association for Clinical  
 Simulation & Learning*

## **PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

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- Guest Speaker: Evidence-Based Practice in Nursing  
*Long Beach Memorial Annual Nursing Research Conference*  
 June 2009
- Primary Author: A Phenomenological Study of Nurse Clinicians' Participation in an EBP Clinical Research Fellowship Program  
*Pepperdine University Doctoral Dissertation*  
 April 2009
- Primary Author: Women in Leadership. *Presented at Paris International Education Conference, December 2007*  
*Presented at Hawaii International Education Conference July 2008*
- Co-Author: Caring for a Critically Ill Patient with Sepsis: Using Clinical Decision Support and Simulation  
*American Critical Care Nursing Journal* May, 2009  
*American Journal of Nursing* April 2006
- Secondary Author: Medical Education Technology Institute  
*Simulation Scenario: Acute Coronary Syndrome/STEMI* October, 2

Consultant: Medical Education Technology Institute  
*Research & Review of Clinical Simulation Scenarios* 2005  
- present

Research Assistant: METI & Philips (ongoing research)  
*Early Sepsis Detection & Treatment* 2005-present

Critical Care Skills Day for BSN Nursing Students  
*Project Director: Created, planned, developed, coordinated &  
implemented* 2005

Medical-Surgical Skills Day for BSN Nursing Students  
*Project Director: Created, planned, developed, coordinated &  
implemented* 2004

## THURMOND, Ed.D., CPA

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### PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Accomplished **global financial executive** with a proven record of leadership, innovation and profitability enhancement. “Big-4” CPA.

- Strategic Planning
- Revenue Enhancement
- Process Redesign
- Increase Productivity
- Organizational Development
- Profit Enhancement
- Cash and Asset Management
- Management Information Systems

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**McGladrey Capital Markets**, (wholly owned subsidiary of H & R Block), Costa Mesa, CA | **2003 – present**

***Chief Financial Officer***

Strategic focus on top and bottom line growth. Focus on regulatory compliance both domestically and internationally. Created and implemented systematic controls to ensure proper revenue recognition. Sarbanes Oxley implementation. Outsourced benefits administration with significant savings. Saved over \$5.0 million per year by closing unprofitable lines of business.

**myCFO, Inc.**, Irvine, CA and Mountain View, CA **2001 – 2002**

***Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer*** (2002)

Secured \$7.0 million line of credit. Implemented more rigorous compliance processes and procedures relating to the registered investment advisory practice. Family Office Services practice successfully sold to Harris Bank in November. Founded in late 1999, 2001 revenue was \$56 million.

***Vice President and Controller*** (2001 – 2002)

Developed financial plans and metrics for Professional Financial Services. Prepared financial and operational analysis for CEO, COO and other top management, including all analysis for prospective M&A opportunities. Member of management committee.

- Evaluated potential strategic alliance partners, joint venture partners and suitable acquisition candidates both domestically and internationally.
- Ensured consistent successful execution of both operational and financial plans.

**KINKO’S, INC.**, Ventura, CA **1998–2001**

***Vice President, Finance, Kinko’s International, a subsidiary of Kinko’s, Inc.***

Responsible for all financial, accounting, treasury, risk management and IT functions for

all non-US entities. Revenue grew from less than \$20 million to over \$100 million.

- Designed global tax planning and intellectual property management and holding strategy resulting in tax savings of \$8.0 million per year.
- Successfully negotiated buyouts of joint venture partners in Korea, the Netherlands, Australia and the UK. Joint venture partners included Penfolds in Australia and the Virgin Group in the UK.
- Evaluated target countries for new business expansion in Europe and Asia.
- Designed and implemented financial model to ensure country profitability in the least amount of time, with appropriate cash management and maximum utilization of tax credits and tax loss carry forwards.
- Established worldwide banking relationships with numerous banks including Bank of Japan, Tokyo Mitsubishi Bank, Sumitomo Bank, HSBC, Lloyds and ABN Amro.
- Implemented a worldwide back office system, which among other things, reduced the monthly close from 45 days to five days.

**DELOITTE & TOUCHE, LLP, Los Angeles, CA 1995 – 1998**

***Director of Finance and Administration – West Region*** (1998)

Responsible for coordination of \$600 million operating plan, business plan and capital budget for west region. Responsible for financial reporting, variance analysis, administrative cost controls, strategic planning and support of the Office Managing Partners. Directly managed finance and accounting staff for region. Negotiated contract for 350,000 square feet of office space in downtown Los Angeles. Performed special projects for firm CFO.

***Director of Finance and Administration – Orange County*** (1995-1998)

Directed a staff of 60 in Accounting/Finance, Management Information Services and Technology, Telecommunications and Office Operations. Coordinated preparation of operating plan, business plan and capital budget.

**ASSOCIATED TRAVEL INTERNATIONAL, Santa Ana, CA 1993–1995**

(Thirteenth largest travel agency in United States) (Now Navigant)

***Chief Financial Officer and Vice President of Administration***

Directed accounting, finance, treasury, insurance and related functions during a period of significant change and upheaval in the travel industry.

**AMERICAN AIRLINES, Fort Worth, TX 1989–1993**

***Managing Director-Finance, Europe, Middle East and Africa*** London, England (1992-1993)

Senior financial officer for SABRE Europe, a division of the SABRE Travel Information Network. Directed four operating groups and five country teams. Promoted to this

position to identify reasons for poor performance and create/lead a turnaround.

- Designed and implemented effective operational and financial reports for worldwide distribution aimed primarily toward non-financial and non-English speaking budget owners and sales people.
- Identified and implemented a turnaround plan that included restructuring the sales process. Targeted selling led to a significant reduction in cost and restored profitability.

***Manager, General Accounting***, Fort Worth, TX (1990–1992)

Created Accounting Department for SABRE Travel Information Network. Managed a staff of 22 accountants, analysts and support staff. Performed all controllership functions.

***Senior Analyst, General Accounting*** (1989–1990)

Reviewed, evaluated and analyzed complex financial alternatives, including leases, public offerings and acquisitions. Coordinated all airline audits, as well as quarterly and annual reports. Contract analysis revealed an error that led to the recovery of \$20.0 million of revenue.

**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON**, Arlington, TX **1981–1989**

College of Business, Department of Accounting

Full-time instructor for master's degree program. Also instructed undergraduate accounting courses.

**MARGARET A. THURMOND, CPA**, Arlington, TX **1984–1988**

Firm's services included management of accounting and data processing, financial planning and analysis, debt restructuring, banking relations, cash management, establishment of internal controls, mergers, acquisitions and divestitures.

**ARTHUR ANDERSEN & CO.**, Dallas, TX **1978–1981**

**EDUCATION**

Doctorate in Organizational Leadership

Pepperdine, Malibu, CA, 2009

Master of Professional Accounting

University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX, 1978

Bachelor of Business Administration, Accounting

University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX, 1977

**PROFESSIONAL**

Certified Public Accountant, State of Texas, NASD Series 27 license,

Board member Association for Corporate Growth, Orange County and  
Chair Sponsorship Committee  
Board member 211 Orange County and Chair Finance Committee  
Member, Financial Executives Institute, AICPA, Past President, Tarrant County  
AWSCPA,  
Texas Society of CPA's, Fort Worth Chapter; Texas Society of CPA's;  
Articles published in the Woman CPA and Business Travel Executive.  
Paper accepted and presented at Hawaii International Conference on Education, January  
2008  
Paper accepted for presentation at the Paris International Conference on Education,  
Economy & Society, July 2008

## VITA

Schaper, Ed.D.

**EDUCATION**

Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Irvine, California  
Ed.D, Organizational Leadership  
June 2009

Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Encino,  
California  
M.A., Education—Psychology Emphasis  
December 2005

University of California, San Diego, Revelle College  
B.A., Urban Studies and Planning  
June 2001

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

8/09–Present	Senior Education Consultant, North America Region Synergies in Sync, LLC Folsom, California
7/09–Present	Associate Dean of Student Services MiraCosta College Cardiff, California
11/05–7/09	Director of Student Life San Bernardino Valley College San Bernardino, California
4/02–7/05	Director, Educational Talent Search & Student Activities Specialist Oxnard College Oxnard, California
9/01–4/02	Campus Involvement Coordinator Center for Student Involvement California State University, Los Angeles Los Angeles, California
3/95–9/01	Student Organizations Advisor and Program Coordinator University of California, San Diego La Jolla, California

## **LICENSES / CERTIFICATION**

Certified Advisor I  
 American Student Association of Community Colleges  
 June 2003

## **PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS**

Effective Leadership Practices for Student Leaders  
 Math & Science Student Success Center, San Bernardino Valley College  
 Fall 2009 Retreat, August 8, 2009.

Life Skills for Student Leaders to Promote Academic Success  
 Paris International Conference on Education, Economy & Society, July 17–19, 2008.  
 (Published proceedings)

Enrolling student participation in collegial consultation  
*Hawaii International Conference on Education Proceedings*, January 2008. (Published proceedings)

The Art of Possibility: Reframing Perspective to Re-energize Organizations  
 San Bernardino Valley College, Leadership Institute, December 7, 2007.

Fundamentals of Event Planning  
 National Association of Campus Activities, November 3, 2001.

Increasing Student Involvement through Incentive Programs  
 National Association of Campus Activities, November 3, 2001.

Hitting the Ground Running: A Roundtable Discussion for New Professionals  
 National Association of Campus Activities, November 3, 2001.

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

Association of Student Conduct Administrators  
 California Community Colleges Student Affairs Association  
 Phi Delta Kappa



## APPENDIX C

## Study Flyer



**Would you like to take part in a study  
about African American women who have  
obtained the doctorate degree?**

If you are an African American woman who has obtained a Ph.D., Psy. D, or Ed.D. degree between 1994 and 2009, you are invited to share your personal experiences.

Sharing your personal experiences about pathways that helped you in degree completion will offer a voice to African American doctoral students and provide a framework for faculty, administrators, and students to shape policy and program development.

Your participation will include a 60-minute audio-recorded interview. Participation is voluntary. A graduate student researcher from Pepperdine University is looking for 10 women to participate in this study. If you are interested and want to discuss the study, please contact:

Luciana Starks, M.A.  
[Luciana.Starks@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Luciana.Starks@pepperdine.edu)

## APPENDIX D

## Telephone Introduction Script

Hello, I am conducting this research to develop an understanding of the experiences of African American females in doctoral programs and their pathways to the doctorate degree. The study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the doctorate degree. I understand that you are very busy and I truly appreciate your willingness to speak with me. If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you questions regarding:

- Your overall experience in your doctoral program.
- How you gained access to doctoral education.
- What facilitated your success during doctoral study?
- What pathways allowed you to complete the doctorate degree?

Your participation in the study will consist of two interviews: (1) an initial 5-10 minute phone screening interview that can be completed today, and (2) a structured 60-minute face-to-face interview. You will receive the questions in advance. We can choose a location that is most convenient for you.

You should know that your participation in the research is voluntary, you may quit at any time, and everything discussed will be kept confidential and seen only by me. You will be given a generic code number or name. I will keep the information in a locked file cabinet in my garage for five years. I will be the only person with a key and access to the file cabinet.

[I will review with the interviewee the following:

How the data will be collected (audiotapes and notes)

How the data will be transcribed

How the data will be used in future publications

How the data will be kept secure

The risks of participating in the research (i.e., none)]

Do you feel comfortable in continuing our conversation?

NOTE: The following has been adapted from Michelle French's 2006 Study: The alignment between personal meaning and organizational mission among music executives.

## APPENDIX E

## Screening Questionnaire

Date:	Time:	Interviewee Code:
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The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe and explore the experiences of African American females in doctoral programs and their pathway to the doctorate degree.

The following are the criteria for participation in this study. I will read each criterion to you. Please state whether or not the criterion applies:

[I will begin reading the criteria to the participant.]

Criteria	Participant Response
1. Is an African American female	
2. Has earned the Ed.D or Ph.D between 1999 and 2009. What degree? What year?	
3. Alumnae of traditional, campus-based doctoral program. Name of school?	
4. Willing to be audio recorded.	
5. Willing to share their educational experiences.	

May I answer any questions for you? Do you meet all of the previously stated criteria?

Meets study criteria? (circle one)      Yes                  No

[If all criterias are met, I will let them know that I would like for them to participate in the study, and schedule a date and time for the 60-minute structured interview.]

## APPENDIX F

## Informed Consent for Research Study Pathways to the doctorate degree:

## The lived experiences

Participant:	
Principal Investigator:	Luciana Starks
Title of Project:	Pathways to the doctorate degree: The lived experiences

1. I \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the research study being conducted by Luciana Starks (the researcher), a doctoral candidate in the Organizational Leadership program at Pepperdine University, Los Angeles, California, under the direction of Dr. Michelle Rosensitto.
2. I understand that the overall purpose of this research is to describe and explore the experiences of African American females in doctoral programs and their pathways to the doctorate degree. I understand that this is a study for Luciana Starks' doctoral dissertation. I have been selected because I am an African American female who has attained a doctorate degree (Ph.D or Ed.D). I understand my participation will involve me discussing my experience during my doctoral studies. In the 5-10 minute telephone interview, it was determined that I met the study criteria. I agree to participate in an in-depth structured interview that will last approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be held face-to-face at a mutually agreed location.
3. I understand that the information I provide in the initial interview and the in-depth interview will be kept strictly confidential. I am aware that the researcher will take notes during each of our conversations. The in-depth structured interview will also be audio taped. I understand that all audio recordings and notes will be coded to protect my anonymity. The audio recordings will be listened to by the researcher and a professional transcriber. The confidentiality of my records will be maintained in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. I understand

that all interview and transcription materials will be stored in the researcher's garage in a secure filing cabinet accessed only by the researcher. The data will be destroyed five years after the last attempt has been made to publish findings from the study.

4. I understand that data from this study will be written into a report and may be published or presented at a professional conference. I understand that the researcher will take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of my records, and my identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this project. I permit the use of direct quotes in written material and presentation of the research. I understand that all names used in these written materials will be fictitious to protect my identity.
5. I understand that the possible benefits to me or society from this research include enhancing the way future students matriculate through graduate education, or the research could inform colleges and universities on measures that could positively affect the access and retention of minority student populations.
6. I understand that the risks and discomforts that might be associated with this research are minimal. These risks include discomfort with some of the interview questions. There are no potential psychological risks, or risks of exposure to fatigue or embarrassment. I am free to terminate my participation at any time. The interview will be 60 minutes. The interview will be conducted at a mutually agreed upon location so that confidentiality and privacy is maintained, while unforeseen or adverse effects can be minimized. I understand that all of my responses will be kept confidential in all publications resulting from the study.
7. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to participate and/or withdraw my consent and participation in the study at any time without penalty. I understand that I do not have to answer every question.
8. I understand that I will receive no financial compensation for participating in this study. I understand that my professional or personal status will not be affected by my refusal or withdrawal from the study.
9. I understand that the researcher is willing and available to answer any questions I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may

contact Dr. Michelle Rosensitto if I have questions or concerns about this research.

10. I understand that in the event that I experience any emotional discomfort resulting from participation in this research, no form of compensation is available. Treatment may be provided at my own expense or at the expense of my health care insurer, which may or may not provide coverage. If I have questions, I will contact my health care insurer.
11. I understand that I will be provided with a summary of the dissertation findings if I indicate my interest in receiving these at the end of the interview. I know that I may ask any questions about the study at any time.
12. I understand to my satisfaction all of the information herein regarding my participation in this research study. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have retained a copy of this informed consent form, which I have read and understand. I hereby consent participation in the research described above.

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Participant's Signature

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Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the participant has consented to participate. Having explained and answered any questions concerning this form, I am co-signing this form and accepting this participant's consent.

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Principal Investigator's Signature

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Date

The informed consent template has been adapted from Michelle French's 2006 Study: The alignment between personal meaning and organizational mission among music executives.

## APPENDIX G

### Reflective Journaling

Nothing in my life would have ever predicted that I would be writing this dissertation. I am an African American female and first-generation doctoral student. By all accounts of the literature and statistics it is unlikely for me to be where I am today. I was raised in a single-parent home in South Central Los Angeles. My family did not have great material wealth or any high social standing. However, I was surrounded by extraordinary people who taught me about faith, perseverance, and the value of education. I am an example of what is possible when girls from the very beginning of their lives are loved and nurtured by people around them.

This research grew out of my interest in the areas of access and retention of Black scholars. As a young Black woman and potential scholar, I wondered what was in store for me in the years to come once I had completed my doctorate degree. Toward the end of my first year of doctoral study, I began to conduct a series of pilot studies to see what I needed to do in order to get the most out of my degree. In friendly conversation with a number of women who had completed the doctorate degree, I found that each shared specific jewels or identifiable steps to degree completion. Some described the road to the doctorate degree as life changing, while others could only remember the barriers they faced to completion. From those conversations, I felt a sense of empowerment. I also felt privileged, as if I had stumbled upon a golden road map. I thought it would be helpful to pass this information on to others.

As I investigated further, I realized that women and minorities in general were completing degrees at increasing rates. However, the reality presented in reports and databases failed to tell the complete story. The current state calls for more empirical work

and the development of a perspective that seeks to reveal the real lives and experiences of this population. Hence, this study.



## APPENDIX H

## ABWHE Permission Letter

ABWHE Association of Black Women in Higher Education



Los Angeles Chapter, ABWHE  
PO Box 2955  
Culver City, CA 90231

July 29, 2009

Attention:  
Luciana J. Starks  
Doctoral Candidate

Dear Mrs. Starks,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Association of Black Women in Higher Education (ABWHE), I am writing this letter in support of your doctoral dissertation study titled, "Pathways to the Doctorate Degree: A phenomenological study of African American females in doctoral programs." You have my permission to create three research-related postings per month on the Los Angeles chapter's Google Group listserv. I understand that you plan to post your study's flier in an effort to gain study participants.

Should you require any further assistance, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Heather P. Tarleton, MPAP, PhD  
President, Los Angeles Chapter  
Association of Black Women in Higher Education (ABWHE)  
<http://abwhe-losangeles.weebly.com/>

## APPENDIX I

Correlation Between Research Questions, Interview Questions,  
and Tinto's Persistence Theories

“Tinto's model refocused the higher education community's understanding that persistence is the outcome of the interaction between students and their experiences in the campus environment” (Swail, Perna, & Redd, 2003, p. 44). The present study will gather information as participants reflect upon their doctoral experiences during four stages of Tinto's (1975, 1993) theoretical models. These stages are: (a) pre-entry experiences; (b) transition and adjustment; (c) attaining candidacy and developing competency, and (d) research completion (Tinto, 1975, 1993).

Research Question	Interview Question	Probe for Tinto's Concept
1. What are the pre-entry behaviors that lead African American women to beginning a doctoral degree program?	<p>1a) Please tell me how your career ambitions and goals changed (or not) as you graduated from high school, as you graduated from college, and prior to entering post-graduate work.</p> <p>1b) Please tell me about your undergraduate experience in terms of what behaviors, conditions, or circumstances that ultimately leads to the completion of your undergraduate degree.</p>	(a) pre-entry experiences
2. How do African American females gain access to doctoral education, as revealed in Tinto's first “transition and adjustment” stage of graduate persistence?	<p>2) Please tell me about your experience as you entered your doctorate program?</p> <p>a) What influenced your decision to pursue a doctorate degree?</p> <p>b) How did you decide on the program and/or school?</p>	(b) transition and adjustment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) Did the program offer an orientation for incoming students?</li> <li>d) How would you characterize your financial support?</li> <li>e) How would you characterize your familial support?</li> <li>f) How would you characterize your work support?</li> </ul>	
<p>3. What facilitates the success of African American females during doctoral degree study, as revealed in Tinto's second "attaining candidacy and developing competency" stage of graduate persistence?</p>	<p>3) Please tell me about your experience throughout your doctorate degree program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Did the school offer a writing support center?</li> <li>b) Did the school offer mentor support for first year students?</li> <li>c) Did you participate in study groups?</li> <li>d) Did you have a designated study time?</li> <li>e) Did you have a designated study location/area (i.e. library or home office)?</li> <li>f) How did the environment at your college or university assist you in persisting and not giving up?</li> </ul>	(c) attaining candidacy and developing competency
<p>4. What are the pathways to doctorate degree completion for African American females, as revealed in Tinto's third "research and completion" stage of graduate persistence?</p>	<p>4) Please tell me about your experience as you completed your doctorate program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Did you receive strong support from your chairperson and committee members?</li> <li>b) Did you receive</li> </ul>	(d) research completion

	<p>guidance in selecting a research topic?</p> <p>c) How long did it take to complete your research?</p>	
<p>5. Based on RQs 1, 2, and 3, what are the experiences of African American females in doctoral programs?</p>	<p>5) In the final analysis of your doctorate degree program, what did you feel were some of the challenges you faced?</p> <p>How did you approach these challenges?</p> <p>How do you feel the university assisted with these challenges?</p> <p>What advice would you offer for student retention and doctorate degree completion?</p> <p>a) What are some suggestions for student retention and doctorate degree completion?</p> <p>b) Is there anything you would like to add or advice you would like offer aspiring doctorate degree students?</p> <p>c) Is there anything else you would like to share with me that I have neglected to ask you in regards to your doctorate degree completion?</p>	<p>Probe for overall experience</p>

## APPENDIX J

## Coding Sheet

Date:	
Participant name:	
Generic name:	
MP3 file number:	
Start time:	
End time:	

## APPENDIX K

## Transcriber Confidentiality Letter and Agreement

AGREEMENT and acknowledgment between Luciana Starks and Sandy Hill.

Whereas, Luciana Starks agrees to furnish the undersigned audio recorded files (Wav. Files) of seven interviews relating to a research study regarding African American women in doctoral programs,

and

Whereas, the undersigned agrees to review, obtain, and transcribe such information only for the purposes described above, and to otherwise hold such information confidential pursuant to the terms of this agreement,

BE IT KNOWN that Luciana Starks has or shall furnish to the undersigned certain confidential information, as set forth on attached list:

1. The undersigned agrees to hold all confidential or proprietary information or interviews in trust and confidence and agrees that it shall be used only for the contemplated purpose, shall not be used for any other purpose or disclosed to any third party.
2. No copies will be made or retained of any written or audio files supplied.
3. At the conclusion of our discussions, or upon demand by Luciana Starks, all information, including written notes, audio files, or notes taken by you shall be returned to Luciana Starks.
4. This information shall not be disclosed to any employee or consultant unless they agree to execute and be bound by the terms of this agreement.
5. It is understood that the undersigned shall have no obligation with respect to any information known by the undersigned or generally known within the industry prior to date of this agreement, or becomes common knowledge within the industry thereafter.

Dated: November 19, 2009

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Sandy Hill, Transcriber