



Black Female Doctoral Students: Overcoming Challenges that Inhibit Degree Attainment

Cheryl D. White
Tonisha B. Lane
Stacey N. Jackson
Shetina M. Jones

Sponsored by the ACPA Standing Committee for Women



Presenters



Presentation Objectives

- To present a theoretical framework of the challenges faced by Black female doctoral students
- To provide current and/or future Black women doctoral students with information, encouragement, and strategies to persist in their chosen field of study
- To motivate session attendees to contribute to the research on the persistence of Black women doctoral students in student affairs and other fields of study
- To cultivate informal mentoring networks for Black women doctoral students in student affairs

Introductory Statistics

- Black women are attaining doctoral degrees at the highest levels in history
 - 2.1%(1989) of full-time faculty
 - 4.0% (2009) of full-time faculty
- Black women have the largest faculty presence of women of color
 - 8.6% (Fall 2009)
- Outpace Black men in the professoriate
 - 57% (2009)
- Black female doctoral recipients increased from 60% to 66% between 1997 & 2007

(Jones, Wilder, Osborne-Lampkin, 2013)

Black Feminist Thought

- Black women experience isolation, alienation, and perceptions of intellectual inferiority (Allen, 2001).
- Black women are treated as outsiders due to their status as African American women operating in a white, male dominated world (Collins, 2000).
- Black women are oppressed by racial and gender identity, socioeconomic status, religious preference, and sexual orientation.
- BFT is committed to social justice for Black women through empowerment, self-identity, critical discourse, and action.
- Tenets of BFT epistemology (Collins, 2000):
 - Validation of lived experiences as a legitimate source of knowledge and truth
 - Use of dialogue to assess knowledge claims
 - Ethics of caring with a recognition that all knowledge is intrinsically value-laden
 - Personal accountability for knowledge claims (p. 275-284).

Factors that Affect Persistence and Graduation

- Environmental/Institutional
 - Navigating the doctoral process
 - Outside forces that serve to influence enrollment decisions and degree attainment
 - Programs and policies of higher education institutions
 - Institutional culture

(Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011; King & Chepyator-Thomson, 1996)

Factors that Affect Persistence and Graduation (cont.)

- Academic
 - Perceived individual and institutional racism
 - “B” is for Blacks
- Financial
 - Lack of financial resources
 - Working full-time and/or multiple jobs

*(Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Gildersleeve, et al., 2011;
King & Chepyator-Thomson, 1996)*

Factors that Affect Persistence and Graduation (cont.)

- Psychological Factors
 - Imposter syndrome
 - Definition: “These individuals find it difficult to internalize their achievements and are reluctant to ascribe their successes to intrinsic skill or intelligence” (Cokley et al., 2013, p. 85).
 - Disproportionately affects women and students of color
 - Women of color are affected by double-minority status.
 - Ex. “The hardest thing is thinking that someone is going to find out that I really shouldn’t be here, even though it is something that I have fought so hard for” (Gardner & Holley, 2011, p. 85).

Factors that Affect Persistence and Graduation (cont.)

- Motivational
 - Attitudes, beliefs, and values which prompt individuals to achieve goals
 - Intrinsic versus extrinsic
- Social
 - Lack of Black professors, administrators, organizations
 - Relationships with other students, staff, faculty affect persistence

(Aryan & Guzman, 2010; Gildersleeve, et al., 2011; King & Chepyator-Thomson, 1996)

Sharing of Experiences



Sharing of Experiences

- How do program-related factors influence Black female doctoral students' persistence in degree attainment?
- How do academic advisor-and faculty-related factors influence Black female doctoral students' persistence in degree attainment?
- How do institutional-related factors influence Black female doctoral students' persistence in degree attainment?
- How do student-related factors influence Black female doctoral students' persistence in degree attainment?
- How do external factors influence Black female doctoral students' persistence in degree attainment?

Suggestions/Strategies for Success

- Environmental
 - Identify scholars/practitioners outside of your department and/or institution that can offer support
- Institutional
 - Prepare for GRE or other entry exams 2-3 months in advance
 - Immediately begin to “work” professional development plan
- Psychological
 - Make time for spiritual/personal reflection

Suggestions/Strategies for Success (cont.)

- Academic
 - Identify a mentor
 - Establish a writing group
 - Create a database for references
- Financial
 - Check with academic department for scholarship, fellowship, grant, etc. information
 - Utilize tuition assistance programs at home institution

Suggestions/Strategies for Success (cont.)

- Motivational
 - Write even when you don't feel like it
 - Start with 15 minutes a day
- Social
 - Attend departmental/college functions
 - Connect with students, faculty, and department administrative assistant
 - Be visible

Questions?

Contact Information

- Cheryl White – Wayne State University
 - csmithwhite@wayne.edu
- Tonisha Lane – Michigan State University
 - shanksto@msu.edu
- Stacey Jackson - Oakland Community College
 - snjackso@oaklandcc.edu
- Shetina Jones - Michigan State University
 - shetinajones@gmail.com
- LinkedIn Group - Black Women ROCK in HESA
 - http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4457607&trk=hb_side_g

Upcoming Socials/Events

- SCW Women of Color Social
 - Monday, 5:30-7:00 pm, Westin Indianapolis Chamber
- SCW Open Business Meeting
 - Tuesday, 1:00-2:30 pm, Westin Indianapolis Grand Ballroom 4
- SCW Sisterhood Social
 - Tuesday, 2:30-4:00 pm, Westin Indianapolis Capitol III
- PAN Fahari Social
 - Monday, 9:30-11 pm, Marriott Downtown Ballroom 2