Mosaic Paths to New Knowledge:
Conceptualizing Cultural Wealth from Women of Colour as They Experience the Process of Becoming Doctoral Recipients

by

Sharon Leonie Brown

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Sharon Leonie Brown
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Department of Theory and Policy in Higher Education
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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the positive contributions women of colour (WOC) bring to higher education as they experience the process of becoming doctoral recipients. Their experiences are presented as a new epistemology—a theory of knowledge—as part of the larger area of cultural capital theory. The experiences of WOC in Canadian doctoral programs are conceptualized as ‘cultural wealth’ and new knowledge because evidence reveals that the intrinsic value of their contributions has evolved from unique cultural and historical resources. The discursive theoretical frameworks of Womanist theory, critical race theory (CRT) and cultural capital theory are utilized to guide the analysis of the findings. This study establishes the experiences of the participants as valuable and distinctive knowledge by emphasizing the intersectionality of race, class, gender, culture, and spirituality. The research suggests that the experiences of women of colour are informed by an inner wisdom woven from the mosaic, or uniquely diverse paths, which these women have taken toward earning their doctorate degree. The existing interpretation of cultural capital theory - originally established by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) - is considered the only social marker of wealth in socio-economic and educational research. Although previous studies have challenged this dominant perspective, this current study presents a unique interpretation of cultural capital theory by expanding the notion of cultural wealth from a Canadian perspective. This study highlights the importance of the racial/cultural context that is highly visible in Canadian culture but seldom addressed in higher education research. In addition, the aim of my study is to establish the wealth of “Mosaic Paths”
found among the cultural identity of WOC, as a new epistemology in Canadian higher education. Specifically, the journey toward achieving a doctoral degree is often over-generalized in higher education. This study will reveal the realistic paths that WOC must traverse in order to realize their goals. Finally, the findings from the data reveal six major sources of cultural wealth: 1) Mother’s Influence, 2) Age Capital, 3) Mentorship, 4) Survival Strategies, 5) Negotiating Academic Culture or Know-how, and 6) Spirituality.
Acknowledgments

For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
--Proverbs 2:10

First, I would like to acknowledge God for giving me the wisdom, courage, and strength to transform my mind to finally accomplish this arduous task. I am grateful for His guidance and grace which kept me on the path to realize my dreams. As the above Proverb suggests, the wisdom and knowledge that I have found on this journey has been at times a difficult lesson to come by but overall it has been “pleasant to my soul” (2:10). Second, I give special acknowledgment to my mother who supplied not only my practical sustenance for all these years but also my daily dose of encouragement, and support through her profound words and her unwavering love. I will never forget the other mammoth gift she gave me during this time, another dream come true. Thank you for believing and trusting in me, mama. I would like to acknowledge “Sue”, my wonderful twin sister and biggest fan, your journey is next, and you can do it! Remember, you know more than you think you do! Thank you to my dear friends who allowed me my space to live in “my cave” especially near the end when it got really stressful, and to those who stayed and prayed with me from the very beginning. The Peat Family - Halsey, Marisol, Dina, and Annia, for opening their home to me, when the isolation and family strains seemed overwhelming at times. To John Tolman (1954-2011), my quiet inspiration even though he was fighting his own battle; I know he would have been proud. To Ali, my little sister, for all the laughs and the exciting trips away from it all, and help at the end. To Jackie Reza, my long distance support and eyes in California. To Merlin Charles, my colleague, who lit a fire under me to get going down the final stretch, and came through for me in my hour of need to do the final (and best) round of editing for me. You are amazing, Dr. Charles! To Roslyn, my mentor, who has walked and talked me into my destiny when we first met during my Master’s degree; thanks for the nudge to take the next step, and despite the unforeseen losses down the final stretch, I hold on to grace and love, which continues to sustain me through it all. Next, I owe my timely completion for the last stage of my writing to my cousin Donald and Wendell Belonio; without their quick thinking, I would have lost 187 pages of my dissertation, one week before
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Dedication

For you Mama
Mabel Monica Brown

Mom, you started it all with your brave move away from your own mother and home to a strange new country to build a better life for yourself, and then all of us. Your perseverance and spiritual wealth has spilled into my life. This work was inspired by you, I love you will all my heart.

For my Twin

It is your turn to realize your ‘other’ dreams. You can do this Sue because you are smarter than you think you are. I am passing the baton and the bouquet of our wealth to you now.

And

To all the WOC who dare to realize their dreams of becoming doctoral recipients. Remember, the world needs us.
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Chapter 1
Origins of Cultural Wealth in Women of Colour (WOC)

To commit ourselves to the work of transforming the academy so that it will be a place where cultural diversity informs every aspect of our learning, we must embrace struggle and sacrifice. We cannot be easily discouraged. We cannot despair when there is conflict.

bell hooks, 1994

1.0 Introduction

Cultural diversity, as hooks (1994) admonishes in the quote above, must be something that should inform every aspect of our learning. Scholars and educators of colour must “commit to the work of transforming the academy” (p. 33) so that they can better facilitate establishing diverse spaces and dialogue for new knowledge to be represented in culturally diverse ways in the academy. The term Women of Colour (WOC) will be used from this point forward, to indicate non-white woman or those who are racially marginalized. I argue that these women continue to struggle and sacrifice to acquire a sense of acceptance and belonging in the academy where new knowledge is produced. As hooks (1994) suggests, the strategy is not to give up when faced with unforeseen challenges, but to persevere. Added to the struggle is the inability of WOC to successfully expose or present their invaluable experiences in a manner that can be easily validated under the gaze of the academy’s sometimes skeptical and glaring eye. Specifically, within postsecondary institutions and structures, there is a tendency to question the validity of knowledge that is produced by WOC, as this represents forms of knowledge that are rarely endorsed by the “old boys” network (Carty, 1991; Acker 2001). This argument contributes to ongoing struggles that scholars of colour must endure and presents unique challenges, for women in particular, in doctoral programs.

WOC are challenged by the fact that they are grossly underrepresented in higher education, particularly in doctoral programs. The of magnitude of the problem cannot be accurately estimated given that, acquiring statistics on racial demographics for my own departmental jurisdiction in the academy was next to impossible. I was told that “those kinds of
records are not collected” by administrative staff in my university. Equally futile were my attempts to secure records from Statistics Canada on the number of WOC who graduated from doctoral or professional degrees in Canada. Consequently, there is little quantitative support to validate the presence or contribution of WOC in doctoral programs. However, I did discover that women make up 47% of the total number of students enrolled in doctoral programs in Canada (see “39th Statistical Report, 1999-2008” generated by the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies (CAGS). The report also produced other detailed statistics for graduate enrollment in the following areas: disciplinary fields, master’s and doctoral programs and gender distribution among students. The report also calculates mean age, and even university ranking for master’s and Doctoral programs across all of Canada. Sadly, a review of over 200 tables and statistical records, of the over 200 tables and statistical records I reviewed, not one addressed race, ethnicity or cultural background as a category of analysis. This way of presenting data obscures exactly who makes up the large number of female doctoral students enrolled in Canadian universities. Subsequently, determining exactly what form(s) of knowledge they bring is just as elusive as the unelaborated numbers.

I started this project from the position that, the knowledge that WOC actually contribute to learning in higher education is often discounted and that the knowledge they seek in order to help change this situation is equally elusive. For example, I suspect that when WOC arrive at these educational sites—usually later in age than other students—they tend to second-guess their own cultural knowing and sometimes even their own skills and abilities because of their unfamiliarity with the academic culture (which seems to only reward dominant ways of knowing). Historically, women and visible minorities have been largely excluded from obtaining higher education; it was not until the mid-1960s that the doors began to open for these groups. However, WOC - particularly those in professional programs - still lag behind in higher education. Thomas-Long in her study entitled “The Politics of Exclusion: An Examination of Graduate Student Funding Experience in Ontario”, affirms that although efforts have been made to “increase participation among marginalized groups, the situation has not been altered significantly for Blacks, First Nations, and the working class” (2006, p. 2). Thomas-Long (2006) also suggests that there is a correlation between high income (social class) and university attendance. The author posits that this link affects the levels of participation among students of
colour who, in addition to lacking funds, also lack know-how. ‘Know-how’ is knowing how the academic culture functions, as well as knowing how to navigate through its seemingly secret passages. And this is what is necessary in order to succeed in the academy; students without this advantage become bewildered (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2003, p. 120). And so, while I started the study in a critical frame of mind, I know that, despite their many disadvantages, WOC have relied on their unique ways of knowing - passed on to them by their ancestors - to break through many barriers they encounter while in higher education in general, and doctoral programs in particular.

Specifically, I know that the inner wisdom cultivated by the many matriarchs found in communities of colour (i.e., West Indian, Indigenous, African, First Nations) has for centuries been the primary source of survival and resistance for communities of colour. One way of theorizing this, is by acknowledging the inner wisdom and cultural wealth of WOC, as well as their experiences, which have created is a unique form of knowledge; this still resonates today from the stories of my participants in this research. The wisdom that transformed these communities into viable sources of cultural and even economic wealth continues to evolve from communities of colour, in much the same way. This new (but old) knowledge must be used to transform dominant ways of knowing in higher education as it often goes unacknowledged in academic arenas. The goal of my research is to discover the essence of this knowledge, and how it can be used to both complement and challenge dominant ways of knowing in the university.

1. 1 Research Objectives and Key Questions

My research examines the various forms of cultural wealth that WOC bring to doctoral programs, through their varied experiences. This study also sets out to establish a new way of knowing, specifically from the multi-layered and unique perspectives of Canadian scholars of colour, and to provide a guide for identifying (and naming) new knowledge in educational research. This study is primarily focused on the implications for Canadian scholarship, and does not disqualify the major strides already accomplished by American scholars in my area of interest. I have named this epistemology, ‘Mosaic Paths to Knowledge.’ I suggest this path is mosaic in nature because of the variety of sources related to cultural and inner wisdom found
among the diverse experiences of WOC in Canada. The specific objectives that I have outlined for this study are:

1. To explore how intersecting social/historical differences such as race, class, gender, age and culture, impact the educational experiences of WOC in doctoral programs.

2. To investigate how WOC manage and maintain themselves on their path to becoming doctoral recipients.

3. To theorize the different forms of cultural wealth which are manifested through the educational experiences of WOC.

4. To question existing dominant forms of capital and suggest “mosaic paths” as a viable alternative for viewing participants’ various ways of knowing.

5. In the process, I hope to open safe dialogue between these students and professors to discuss ways to establish more inclusivity of new knowledge and cultural ways of knowing at this level of study.

6. As well as to provide an accessible study that both academy and lay-people can clearly grasp.

7. Provide a realistic “Path” of what the journey to becoming a doctoral recipient really looks like.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1). How do Women of Colour from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds, experience the learning process of becoming doctoral recipients?

2). How can cultural wealth be theorized for Women of Colour in doctoral programs?

3). How does the academic culture and power relations in higher education (H.E.) affect the experiences of Women of Colour in doctoral programs?

By tracing the historical beginnings of civilization, it is easy to establish the wealth of cultural knowing and value that emerged from the first matriarchal societies. Dove (1998), in her article, “African Womanism: An Afrocentric Theory,” uses the Africana Womanist theory to
document the cultural significance of Black women’s ways of knowing dating back to ancient African societies. Dove (1998) points out that Africa is said to be the cradle of all human civilization and therefore of culture, as others have shown (see Cheikh Anta Diop (1955/1991 and, 1991b). According to Diop (1959), Africa is where humanity began and where matriarchal societies were prevalent. Over time, the migration of peoples to northern climates produced patriarchal male-centered societies that were nomadic in nature. However, in African cultures, the woman is still revered in her role as the mother who is the bringer of life, the conduit for the spiritual regeneration of the ancestors, the bearer of culture, and the centre of social organization. In the European context, as Diop (1959/1990) explains, the woman is considered little more than:

[a] burden that the man dragged behind him. Outside her function of child-bearing, her role in nomadic society is nil.... Having a smaller economic value, it is she who must leave her clan to join that of her husband, contrary to the matriarchal custom which demands the opposite (p. 29).

Dove (1998) has characterized the conquest of Africa by Europeans as the conquest of matriarchy by patriarchy. She views the impact of European oppression as "a mental, spiritual, physical, and material reality, [such that] it is no longer plausible to define ourselves based on the Eurocentric concept of race—the Black, Brown, Yellow, Red, and White” (p. 16). Dove’s research supports the ideals of preserving the important contributions of women to culturally diverse communities. My research is an endeavour to do the same, by addressing how institutionalized racism has maintained the subjugation of communities of colour in many of their systemic racist structures.

Historically, the U.S. Civil Rights Movement was the first formal legislation that challenged much of the racist canons upheld by American society. It is from this legacy that the impetus from social justice groups to address the educational experiences of people of colour emerged. Today, WOC still depend on the knowledge and history acquired from their ancestors for their empowerment. When I found myself in a foreign country trying to pursue my undergraduate degree, my sense of belonging was greatly challenged. The culture, environment, and dialect were all foreign to me. I felt displaced and longed for home. It was the wisdom of my mother and my faith that sustained me then as now. The practice of relying on one’s inner
wisdom and on that of other wise women in one’s life is evident to me within the culture of WOC. I will argue that it is also evident in my research as an example of cultural wealth.

I have decided to begin this study by providing a brief foundational history of the wealth found in the cultural and racial histories of non-white women. I find that for the most part, research relating to people of colour tends to begin with the obvious barriers and problems that persist. Therefore, in this research, I find it important to highlight what I will call “the wealth” from the outset, so that I can move toward valuing the unique contributions of WOC. In the past, when addressing issues pertaining to Black women, my approach tended to focus purely on the negative aspects of race and oppression but now I am ready to take a more balanced approach. I remember that when I first began this journey, issues such as spirit injury and racial oppression were my primary concern. Although the journey toward the doctorate is fraught with many barriers and set-backs, I believe there is a magical process that happens to the budding academic who allows herself to be open to self-reflection and new knowledge. In my personal case, I attribute both my intellectual and spiritual prowess to the awakening of new ideas and directions that this process began to move me towards. Thus, my exploration of how women of colour experience learning in doctoral programs and the issues that impact those experiences became the starting points for this study. But in my effort to uncover the “cultural wealth” that is developed because of (or should I say in spite of) the life experiences of my participants, I have found both positive and negative influences that impact their learning. It is from this vantage point that I present the main research area of concern or ‘problem’ that necessitates the undertaking of this study. By “cultural wealth”, I mean the major tools of, mother’s influence, age capital, mentorship, survival strategies, negotiating academic culture and know-how (or “know how”) and spirituality. These terms are the six categories of cultural wealth for my study.

1.2 Introduction to Problem

Among the small but thriving population of Black and other WOC who are studying or have studied in doctoral programs, there is evidence that their cultural backgrounds and/ or acquired skills have helped to sustain them through the rigour of doctoral programs (hooks, 2009; Samuel, 2004; Samuel & Wane, 2005). Just how this is accomplished is the primary focus for my research. It would be interesting, at this juncture, to introduce the metaphor of the mosaic. I suggest that the experiences of WOC are Mosaic in nature because each unique combination of
cultural experiences contributes to formulating the path or journey to becoming doctoral recipients. When I use the term Mosaic in this context, I think of its everyday definition—small pieces of coloured stone or glass fitted together. When combined, these small stones provide added beauty or distinction to its form. In the same way, I will argue that the individual experiences of WOC are indeed unique in their own rights, but when combined, their experiences become more distinctive and easier to distinguish as being valuable]. Much like the pieces of stone or glass, several contingent experiences of WOC are required to produce mosaic knowledge—a unique work of art, so to speak—to complement existing academic knowledge in spaces of higher education. If WOC are so underrepresented in higher education, how can the presence of cultural wealth found in their mosaic knowledge - be acknowledged when they do arrive at the academy? The wealth and nature of their knowledge is what is highlighted in this study as part of the process of working towards this appreciation, which, in turn needs to be extended by educational institutions.

There is a growing need to replace the aging population of incumbent professors in higher education (Trower & Chait, 2002). Professors have the freedom to hand-pick their mentees and give them implicit and explicit cues about the culture of academia, while steering chosen students into areas of research in which they themselves are experts. Though this behavior is logical and even expected, it reproduces the ideologies and knowledge(s) that serve the dominant culture. Often excluded from this are small, scattered groups of determined researchers who engage in critical and inclusive pedagogies to create new knowledge (Henry, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Tinto, 1998; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Trueba, 2002; Yosso, 2005; Cummins, 2001; Taylor, Berhard, Garg & Cummins, 2008). In other words, this reproductive process continues to sustain particular types of research, as well as support certain students’ ways of knowing over others’ (Bourdieu, 1986; Lareau and Weininger, 2003, Yosso, 2005; Solarzono, 2000). This process is sustained by what I refer to as a “Dominant Interpretation” of cultural wealth (or capital). Dominant Interpretation is a term used by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) to describe the foundational concepts of cultural capital established in sociological research. This term is used in distinction from “Alternative Interpretations”, which incorporate an inclusive (race, gender, culture, etc.) perspective of cultural capital theory. Dominant interpretations are defined as one’s disposition or participation in elite cultural practices, which are held in high esteem by the dominant culture.
For example, De Graaf et al. (2000) refer to the narrow definition of cultural capital where, “cultural capital is viewed as participation in and understanding of ‘highbrow’ culture (that is theatre, classical music, museum, art etc.)” (p. 93). I believe it is within this last state that the educational institutions become culpable in sustaining dominant interpretations of cultural capital, which become very relevant for WOC in doctoral programs. Communities of colour – particularly women and other students of colour - are often isolated, and feel intense unease on predominantly White campuses (Solorzano, 2000; Samuel & Wane, 2005). As a result, students of colour who do pass through doctoral programs that self-reproduce or maintain dominant ideologies tend to leave the profession altogether (Trower & Chait, 2003). Thus the contributions of WOC continue to be over-looked and under-represented in doctoral programs (Samuel & Wane, 2005).

Mentorship for WOC and Black female students in doctoral programs is very limited. This is problematic because it translates into maintaining an under-representation of these types of women in the academy; it also serves as an example of how only certain forms of cultural capital continue to be rewarded in higher education over others. Mentorship is a very important issue that affects the know-how and development of scholars of colour in the academy. There is evidence that a lack of mentorship among people of colour contributes to low participation rates for students of colour in particular areas of professional and academic degrees in higher education (Clark, 2010; Leggon & Pearson, 2006). This topic will be discussed further in the following Literature Review chapter.

1. 3 Cultural Capital Theory: Dominant and Alternative Interpretations

On the one hand, the dominant interpretation of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1992; DiMaggio, et al., 1982) supports the notion that cultural capital is valued when found in forms that embody family lineage, prestigious occupation, and objects such as art, books, as well as symbolized capital which is found in the acquisition of dominant language. On the other hand there are alternative forms of cultural capital and/or wealth that some researchers have presented as new knowledge which communities of colour, and in the
case of this study, WOC bring to doctoral programs (Lareau, 1989, 2000; Moll et al., 1992; Deay, 1995; Trueba, 2002; Yosso, 2005). The topic of cultural capital is not a new one and is widely discussed in disciplines other than education (such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies). However, within this field of education we see how certain cultural ideals are reproduced and rewarded, while others continue to be ignored and subjugated (Bourdieu, 1986). This phenomenon can be vividly seen in areas such as curriculum, learning styles, and knowledge production in educational research where these studies are usually taken up in American forums (Astin, 1982; Carty, 1993; Ladson-Billing, 1998; Collins, 2000; Lareau and Weininger, 2003; Taylor et al., 2008).

As noted above, understanding the educational experiences of WOC in doctoral programs and determining the different forms of cultural knowledge which are contingent with those experiences are the first tasks of this project. Specifically, I will seek to discuss the various forms of cultural wealth and name them as new knowledge and as a new cultural capital generated from the various marginalized communities of colour represented by my participants. An earlier study (master’s thesis) investigated the early educational experiences of Canadian Black women (Brown, 2004). I collected 20 narratives from Black women who told me about their earliest memories of their educational experiences up to their experiences in higher education. Subsequent insight has helped me realize that the study conducted in 2004 was limited in its analysis in that: (1) It did not account for how class and culture can affect the experiences of Black women (it focused only on race); and that (2) it only looked at the experiences of marginalized women from one race, as opposed to considering other races or ethnicities. This current study assesses how cultural background and class relate to educational experiences of WOC. The emphasis remains on the experiences of Black women in this study - a liberty I take because of my own location as a Black woman. However, the voices of participants who come from differing socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds will also be included celebrated in my study.

Arguably, as with other areas of scholarship, literature written by American scholars of colour is utilized as the compass by which Canadian scholars of colour set their course and explain their own experiences and research. However, it is important to acknowledge that Canadian realities and ways of knowing are not identical to our American counterparts. We must be brave enough to blaze our own trails, to use our own tools and build our own houses; we do
not need to dismantle the master’s house (Lorde, 1984). Despite the challenges faced as generators of new knowledge, Canadian scholars of colour must become more responsible for what Henry (1993) calls, “the uplift of the race” (p. 66). Henry (1993) suggests:

As Black researchers, our research is necessarily a form of activism, revisionism, and reconstruction, which will involve a re-shaping and expansion of the discourses of Afrocentricity and Black Feminism in a Canadian context. So as we write our stories and generate our own theories as Black women, we must also reclaim a memory as part of the larger and prior community that needs explication from within rather from without, and we must reclaim a responsibility to “the uplift of the race” (p. 66).

Clearly, this responsibility to uplift the race, as Henry admonishes, cannot rest entirely on the shoulders of one person, but I am committed to making a concerted effort to do my part as a Black Canadian female, a budding scholar, and as a member of both my spiritual and cultural communities.

1. 4 Background of Problem

When introducing the topic and value of community wealth in her research, Tara Yosso, a Chicana professor at the University of California, uses a critical lens and the backdrop of other researchers and educators such as Oliver and Shapiro (1995) and Solonzano (2000) to establish the cultural wealth found in communities of colour. Yosso (2005) uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latina/Latino Critical Theory (Lat Crit) to discuss Bourdieu’s dominant perspectives of traditional cultural capital, which she believes have the tendency to produce a deficit perspective with regards to the capital of people outside of the dominant culture. In her discussion “Whose Culture Has Capital: A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth”, Yosso (2005) cites Bourdieu’s research as an example of a cultural deficit model. She states that Bourdieu’s work (along with others) negates the cultural wealth found in communities of colour.

Cultural wealth, according to Yosso (2005), is found in communities of colour and is identified by intrinsic characteristics that personify her conception of this term. Ideals such as: resilience, community, family, spirituality, empowerment, all resonate in her study. Yosso conceptualizes community cultural wealth with critical race theory (CRT) and challenges the
traditional interpretations of cultural capital put forth by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977). When addressing the debate over knowledge within the context of social inequality, Yosso (2005) suggests that Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) advance only knowledge produced by the upper and middle classes as capital and considered as valuable to a hierarchical society. This knowledge, produced by the upper and middle classes, assumes that the subordinate classes can then reproduce dominant knowledge. Cultural capital can be acquired and not just ascribed, though there are conditions that limit the accumulation of capital and social mobility.

Yosso (2005) asserts that Bourdieu’s (1986) theoretical insight about how a hierarchical society reproduces itself has often been interpreted as a way of explaining why the academic and social outcomes of People of Colour are significantly lower than those of Whites. In this line of thinking, People of Colour “lack the social and cultural capital required for social mobility” (p. 70). Yosso (2005) challenges this speculation through a powerful counter-narrative, naming various forms of capital, which she suggests are nurtured through the cultural wealth found within Communities of Colour. Yosso (2005) categorizes these forms of capital as follows: Aspirational, Navigational, Social, Linguistic, Familial, and Resistant Capital (p. 13). Finally, I believe the following quote succinctly sums up Yosso’s (2005) alternative form of cultural capital, or ‘cultural wealth’ as she terms it. Indeed, Yosso’s new interpretation,

[s]hifts the research lens away from the deficit view of communities of colour as places full of cultural poverty disadvantages, and instead focuses on and learns from the array of cultural poverty, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged (2005, p. 69).

My study will build on Yosso’s (2005) findings and is intended to complement the vision she has illuminated in her work. Contrary to the ‘forms of capital’ Bourdieu has theorized, Yosso’s forms of cultural wealth celebrate the contributions and experiences found in communities of colour. In addition, her conceptualization better supports the diverse communities of colour found in Canada, and provides an obvious fit for this study, particularly given its focus on celebrating the experiences of WOC in doctoral programs in Canada. Similarly to Yosso, I shift the experiences and cultural wealth of the participants from a deficit interpretation of cultural capital to the rich perspective of cultural wealth that is found in communities of colour. I intentionally rely on Yosso (2005) in her research, with her semi-
indictment of Bourdieuian theory, to re-emphasize the importance of cultural wealth that resonates from communities of colour.

Many scholars of colour have addressed this particular area of experiential knowledge in academy research, including hooks (1984, 1986, 1989, 1994) Collins (1990), Henry (1998); Samuel and Wane (2005), Mazuca (2000), Yosso (2005) and Thomas-Long (2007). I plan to build on this knowledge and to approach this topic from a perspective that is aligned with the everyday experiences of WOC in Canadian doctoral programs, by examining how this experience affects their inherent forms of cultural wealth. That is, I am using a methodology that taps into the holistic aspects of those experiences embedded in issues of gender, race, culture, spirituality, and cultural wealth, as well as my own experience as a Black female graduate student.

In summary, having explained the emergence of this research problem, my strategy in understanding this research is to apply womanism and anti-racist feminist theory, to modify cultural capital theory and to arrive at a new place of looking at the experiences of WOC as cultural wealth. This is not to establish the wealth of our experiences as a form of capital within the paradigm of cultural capital theory, but to cultivate diverse (and inclusive) interpretations of this theory, a mosaic knowledge of cultural wealth, so to speak.

1.5 Locating Myself as Researcher

The action required to locate myself as the researcher in this study encouraged me to look deeply into my own self-awareness and sense of knowing in terms of my identity, beliefs and how I see the world. My own mixed heritage, along with my place of birth, and subsequent places of residences in two other countries, made it difficult for me to find my place of belonging. Trying to find my fit in both my personal, spiritual and academic life has greatly influenced me as a researcher. It has especially influenced my need to focus on other WOC like myself who also feel displaced in the academy. The importance of belonging and cultural knowing is something bell hooks (2009) refers to as, “…a positive understanding of what it means to know a culture of belonging, that cultural legacy handed down to me by my ancestors” (p. 13). As I reflect, I know I must cultivate awareness about the strengths and possible limitations of my own worldview, experiences, perceptions, biases, and current knowledge. It is
important to be aware of how, according to Piantanida and Garman (2009), these predispositions “may expand or constrict one’s [own] capacity for being open to, and resonating with the experience of the study” (p. 60).

First, I must begin with my story; I must begin by naming my own source of knowing that guides me, and that is my spirituality, my faith. It is the acknowledgement of the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life, and in my life choices, that help to inform my scholarship. Embodied in this power is the source of my strength and empowerment. I have struggled to come to a place where I was brave enough to name it in my work. Before I carried out this research, I was afraid of how this acknowledgment—of my true spiritual identity—would be received by my thesis committee in my writing. So I subconsciously tucked it away where I could, perhaps at opportune times, refer to it when really needed without actually naming it. This changed after reading the writing of Riyad Shahjahan (2005) about spirituality in the academy. I realized that I needed to be just as brave and authentic as he was, in expressing his research ideas through his spiritual convictions. Therefore I have decided to name it. I now realize why spirituality is one of the areas of cultural wealth that I need to speak about in my research and in my own story, as it was also evident in the stories of my participants. I resonate with Shahjahan (2005) when he states:

I find it problematic when I see academy who view themselves as spiritual beings but continue to engage with research on spirituality with methodologies that do not acknowledge or negate their spirituality (p. 169).

I was impressed by the manner in which Shahjahan chose to honour his beliefs by opening his research with a prayer to Allah. Therefore, in like manner, I offer up this research to God, my strength and my redeemer, as I try to honour the telling of the stories and experiences of my participants as cultural wealth. In so doing, I boldly suggest that although this research does not focus on the centrality of spirituality in the academy, I do believe my role as the researcher for this study is very much informed by my own spirituality and religious observations; and spirituality as a topic will be taken up in discussions throughout this research. Furthermore, my cultural heritage and origins are ways in which I locate myself as a researcher in this study.
1.6 My Origins and Emergence of Research

The British Empire in the late 1940s and 50s was considered the “Mother Country” (Levy, 2004, p. 157) for many immigrants who lived in its vast colonies, and who were named subjects under its royal sovereignty. This was true for many Jamaicans in that era, including my parents. Beckoned by my father who preceded her months before, in the mid-1950s my mother heeded the call for a better life in the United Kingdom. Though the promise of marriage had much to do with it, her first mind and heart were lure by the opportunity to pursue her dream of becoming a professionally trained nurse in England. Upon her arrival in the UK, my mother soon realized that it would take more than her practical knowledge and application of the required course material to gain access to her desired occupation; she knew it would take ingrained skill and knowledge that could not be found in any textbook. She knew it would take extra faith and will-power that was sustained by her belief in God. The task also required dependence on the knowledge and wisdom that she knew came from her mother. My mother’s reminded her that she would need to work twice as hard as her British-born counterparts, just to receive the same rewards, which would eventually culminate in a future for herself and her children. My mother was raised by her parents until the age of three when her mother became a widow and was left to raise eight children on her own. The wisdom and resilience of my grandmother in the face of adversity was passed down to my mother, which is now passed down to me.

My siblings and I were quickly socialized into British culture. We all received our own sets of knives and forks and knew how to use them well before our third birthdays. As we grew older, other subtleties such as not being allowed to speak the Jamaican patois dialect in our home, or living in all-White neighbourhoods, were evidence of the intentional assimilation my parents chose for us - a choice they imagined would better our future lives. Still, the provisions of yams, sweet potatoes and plantains that we often found in the cupboards were reminders of the homage my parents paid to the wealth these gifts brought with them, through their original ancestral knowing—gifts that came from the rich soils of Jamaica and Africa. I think it is ironic that, for many West Indian immigrants, the United Kingdom with all her wealth was referred to as the “Mother Country”. This begs the question: What kind of mother would treat her children like that? ‘Mother’ is a term that is valued within West Indian and African communities;
therefore, many immigrants who left their island countries in the 1940s and 50s, with an invitation from the Queen-Mother, naturally expected a warm welcome and a better life; however, a shock awaited them.

My credibility as researcher rests largely on my ability to clearly explain exactly what it is I am trying to accomplish and why I think it is important. In order to do so, the meaning of my own cultural wealth guides me on how to frame the experiences of WOC. Initially clear in my understanding was my own knowledge based on my experiences, along with the fact that there were other women like me who shared similar experiences. Based on this knowledge, I knew I had to find a framework that would illustrate how we viewed the world. I believed that a thorough understanding of my own experiences (and the experiences of my participants) would help me frame a theoretical epistemology that aligned with the issues and themes that surfaced from the findings. As I traced my own beginnings, my intent for this research became clearer. It finally emerged from a place that thoroughly represented my own worldview, while supporting the value of my participants’ experiences. The discursive theoretical framework I finally rested upon was a combination of womanist theory, critical race theory (CRT), and cultural capital theory, which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

My goal is to present the findings of this study to a diverse community. It is my desire to answer the question, “So what?” in a manner that will not only satisfy my participants and my audience but also in a way that will satisfy me. I need this research to help me make sense of all the things that have happened to me on this journey. What is so important about this study? Primarily it is a study about my experiences, my life, my ancestors, and my “sisters”. Also, it is a study about women who have had similar experiences and how, collectively, we endeavored to persist through doctoral programs to find a place of belonging. And what is the significance to the academy and greater community? It could, I hope, serve as a vehicle of self-reflection for them as well. It is an opportunity to re-think how certain bodies of knowledge are categorized and valued. It is also an opportunity for people in power to consider the wealth that is present among a small but thriving group.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the pivotal incident that placed me on this path to becoming a doctoral recipient, and which ultimately facilitated the emergence of my study.
Twenty years ago, I decided to get serious about my educational pursuits. I had to face the huge road-block that had paralyzed me - namely the many years of feeling invisible and disenchanted in the classroom. With my “C” average transcript and my acceptance letter in hand, I ventured down to the American South to a Historically Black University and College (HBUC). Once there, I met my first (and worst) academic advisor. Mrs. Douthard looked at my transcripts then threw them down on the table and exclaimed in a mocking condescending laugh: “Where do you think you are going with these grades?” It was at that precise moment, that I decided that no one would mock me, or my grades ever again. “I will show you, lady!”, I screamed silently to myself. That semester I made the ‘Deans List.’ I graduated with an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree (HBA). Only two years after I graduated did I discover that Mrs. Douthard was an alcoholic and should have retired years prior to when I met her. In retrospect, I now realize that, had it not been for her cynicism, I would not have been so determined and motivated to prove something to her or myself. I know that many of my participants had similar ‘do or die’ tales that also drove them to, and kept them on their path. I realized that there had to be an explanation that gave me the resilience to persevere. What was it? The simple answer is that it was the strength of my faith, and the influence of my mother’s support, including the fact that my grandmothers predicted that I would be a survivor because of my breach birth. All these reasons speak to my cultural identity. These reasons also provided the tools that I would need to tease out some of the claims I would end up making for my research.

1.7 Purpose and Justification of the Research

This research can be considered as a testament to the combined stories, struggles, and strength of both my participants and myself. All of our efforts as well as the unique mosaic attributes are what I have named “cultural wealth” for this study. The purpose of this study is, first, to celebrate the experiences of WOC in doctoral programs in Canada. This includes my own lived experiences as a woman of colour on the path to becoming a doctoral recipient. Through these counter- hegemonic stories, I aim to nurture the memories and resistance of my participants who heal and grow from them, with the hop that others might learn and flourish from them as well. Celebrating their stories ensures the participants that their experiences matter and that their struggles for survival in the academy are not in vain. In addition, I will document the cultural
wealth that flows from their experiences, as a viable source of capital comparable to the traditional cultural capital sketched in the cultural capital theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1986).

I was the first generation in my family to pursue graduate level studies. This journey has given me cues (knowledge or ‘know-how’) that are hidden from the dominant view, which can contribute to successful completion and retention in a doctoral program. These markers are quite inconspicuous and not necessarily passed on by, or made accessible to those who have previously been socialized in an academic environment (e.g., mentoring).

These insights lead to the idea that “cultural wealth” and its various forms (especially those forms that are rewarded in the classroom) are conduits through which opportunity (or lack thereof) is passed on to the aspiring student of colour on her path to becoming a doctoral recipient. This study highlights the fact that the topics of race and racism, especially within the context of cultural capital theory, is not a topic that can continue to be taken lightly in the classroom or negated altogether in educational policy. It is for this reason that I make this topic a primary justification for taking up my study.

To centre the importance of the persistent presence of racism, I must point to my observation about Canadian society as a whole, as it relates to the background problem of racial and cultural equity in the educational process. All around the world, Canada is seen as a country that is relatively open in its embrace of various diverse multicultural communities. This is evidenced in The Canadian Multicultural Act (1977), introduced by the then prime minister, Pierre Trudeau. It is easy for an outsider, and even an insider who belongs to the dominant culture, to believe that racism does not exist, or that it is at least being addressed in Canada. However, the true nature of Canada’s view on cultural diversity and racial equity is revealed in the writings of Ng (1994) and Calliste (2000). Recent contributions have also been made by White researchers, Henry and Carol Tator in their (2009) work entitled: The Colour of Democracy: Racism in Canada. This work exposes how dominant dispositions and conceptions are maintained, and how many (mainly White) Canadians are oblivious to racial inequity in Canadian society. In the introduction of the first chapter, taken from their website, the authors state a powerful message that helps to support the justification and reason for my own research:
In a society that espouses equality, tolerance, social harmony, and respect for individual’s rights, the existence of racial prejudice, discrimination, and disadvantages is difficult to acknowledge and therefore remedy. Canadians have a deep attachment to the assumptions that in a democratic society, individuals are rewarded solely on the basis of their individual merit and that no one group is singled out for discrimination. Consistent with these liberal, democratic values is the assumption that physical differences such as skin colour are irrelevant in determining one’s status. Therefore, those who experience racial bias or differential treatment are considered somehow responsible for their state, resulting in a “blame the victim syndrome” (academy.yorku.ca/fhenry/colourofdemocracy.htm).

Fueled by these critiques of Canada’s “multiculturalism” I will examine specifically how racism plays a part in the experiences of WOC on their journey to becoming doctoral recipients. My main focus will remain positive, concentrating on naming the various forms of cultural wealth. However, experiences challenging the cultural wealth of my participants in their academic journeys will be theorized as racist practices.

1.8 Summary: Organization of the Thesis Chapters

Chapter One has outlined why and how I have chosen to undertake this particular research. In providing my rationale for the study, I have raised the question of why women of colour continue to be present in such small numbers in Canadian doctoral programs. The discussion focuses on the perspective of the participants’ experiences and explores how the women maneuver around and resist the power relations and dominant practices that persist in higher education. Chapter Two, the Literature Review, explores related issues in the literature. It identifies the foundational origins of the dominant interpretation of cultural capital and also provides some interesting studies that attempt to expose alternative or new cultural capital as viewed through the experiences of students, parents and communities. The rationale for the theoretical framework for the study is introduced near the end of chapter two, and is further explained in the following chapter. Chapter Three has two sections, the theoretical framework and the methodology component are described. Womanist theory, critical race theory (CRT) and cultural capital theory (CCT) constitute the theoretical framework used, and the methodology chapter describes the methodological tools used to collect data for my research. Chapters Four and Five are the data chapters, which comprise of the stories from the participants. This intimate
look into their stories and experiences simultaneously presents the six major categories of cultural wealth I have outlined for my research. The end of Chapter Five gives a synopsis of how the experiences of my participants constitute cultural wealth. Chapter Six discusses how issues such as power relations, in its various forms, impact the experiences of WOC in doctoral programs and what these stories mean in terms of the impact of cultural capital has on my participants’ experiences. Finally, Chapter Seven presents the closing thoughts, implications and recommendations section for the study.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

We must keep the perspective that people are experts on their own lives. There are certainly aspects of the outside world of which they may not be aware, but they can be the only authentic chroniclers of their own experience.

---Lisa Delpit, 1988

2.0 Rethinking Cultural Capital: Cultural Wealth

Who is better equipped to tell the story about one’s own life: the person who has experienced it, or the people who are watching from the sidelines? Too often in educational research, researchers take the position that they are experts in the lives of the marginalized, the ‘Other.’ Delpit (1988) suggests that people are experts in telling their own lived experiences, as opposed to other people telling their story for them. Communities of colour have their own cultural wealth to substantiate their own historical existence. In my study, the term cultural wealth is inter-changeable with Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of cultural capital in the sense that it identifies various forms of cultural wealth. On the other hand, I use this term to describe the particular forms of wealth, knowledge, and skills that thrive in communities of colour, particularly among women in doctoral programs. As new knowledge is discovered and experienced by particular groups in society, it should follow that any knowledge that is produced should explain experiences from the perspectives of the given community. This consideration is the case in communities where dominant perspectives or ways of knowing thrive but, as discussed in Chapter 1, it is not the case in many communities of colour. As a result, a new perspective for conceptualizing cultural wealth is necessary, and my research sets out to discover the reasons why.

I have argued in Chapter 1 that dominant ways of knowing are supported over other cultural ways of knowing in educational institutions (Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Trower & Chait, 2002; Ladson-Billing, 1995; Fordham, 1988; Turner & Thompson, 1993; Tillman, 2000) and that only certain students appear to be chosen and thoroughly mentored through the
educational process, especially in higher education. Why and how this happens is an integral part of the rationale for my research.

The literature on graduate student experience and cultural wealth (hooks, 1998; Collins, 2000; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Ladson-Billing, 1999; Delpit, 1988; Yosso, 2002; Solarzo, 2000; Trueba, 2002) is very limited. It is almost non-existent within the Canadian context. There is an emerging body of knowledge in Canada (Dei, 1991; Mazzuci, 2000; Samuel & Wane, 2005; Thomas-Long, 2007; Carty, 1991; Henry, 1993; Hajoti, 2010) that addresses the topics in my discussion to a certain extent. However none of the above sources discuss at any length, issues relating to experience and cultural wealth at the level of PhD studies, which is the focus of my research. Most of the cases from the American perspective focus on the experiences of undergraduate students, namely African American and Latina/o Americans. The Canadian researchers who do discuss educational experiences provide knowledge from middle school or undergraduate settings. Within the studies that do broach the topic of higher education, the use of cultural capital theory is limited, or not readily present. The literature that does discuss cultural capital within under-represented communities, primarily addresses the topic from a language and linguistics perspective and focuses, for the most part, on lower levels of education. These research topics are very important to the discussion of cultural wealth and capital as discussed below. Researchers strive to count the multiliteracies found in communities of colour as a valuable resource, which should be integrated into mainstream classrooms (Cummins, 2001; Norton, 1995; Taylor, Bernhard, Gargi & Cummins, 2008; Moll et al., 1992).

It is important to note that WOC did not just “show up” in higher education (Collins, 2000, p. 54). Indeed, it was a combination of deliberate factors that helped them to get there. One contributing factor is the educational experience which is shaped by the cultural (and racial) background and the resulting cultural wealth found in WOC. This is a salient point because, though some women may share the same racial background, they may not share the same dispositions—values, beliefs or, what Pierre Bourdieu (1977a) calls, “habitus”—because of their differing cultural backgrounds. Therefore, cultural backgrounds and specific dispositions are plausible considerations that might explain why, upon closer investigation, the experiences of WOC in doctoral programs might look so different from one another. Granted, no one person can be expected to have the same experience as the other; however, conclusions are often made
about specific groups of people in research, because of their shared racial identity (Fordham, 1998; Yosso, 2005).

The literature review here is taken up within five specific areas that are of theoretical interest and significance to this study. They are as follows: 1) Historical and Present Implications: Educational Experiences of WOC; 2) Accessibility and Representation on Predominantly White Campuses; 3) Mentorship and Educational Experiences of Minority Students; 4) Cultural Capital and Alternative Forms of Cultural Capital; 5) Communities of Wealth: Transforming Knowledge; and 6) Language, Identity and Racism.

2.1 Historical and Current Issues: Educational Experiences of WOC

Historically, the interest in studying the experiences of Black students (and other students of colour) began to surface during the time of desegregation, as the Civil Rights Movement gained its momentum in the American South in mid 1950’s and its legitimacy was made known in 1964, with the Civil Rights Act. The well-known 1951 lawsuit of Brown vs The Topeka Board of Education, was the case that brought to light the inequities that existed in the American educational system during that time. In the 1960s and 70s, the women’s rights movement joined the push for educational reform. Other marginalized groups, such as gays, lesbians and the disabled, also rallied independently to challenge discrimination that they faced in both society and the educational system in the mid 1970s (Gorski, 1999).

Throughout Western history, marginalized communities in general, and WOC in particular, have had limited access to higher education at graduate-level studies (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1994; Henry, 1993). The topic of women’s ways of perceiving the world was raised in the mid 1980s, but was discussed primarily in terms of gender as opposed to race or cultural identity (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldenberger & Tarule, 1986). More recently it has been noted that the few WOC, who do break into these programs are usually the first in their families to attain such a goal (Nettles, 1990; Trower & Chait, 2002; Reay et al, 2001, Mazzuca, 2000). As a result, when these women arrive, they do not have the know-how (Deil-Amen & Rosenblaum, 2003) to navigate through the power relations that permeate academic culture. Yet WOC are able to make meaningful contributions through their experiences and past cultural knowledge. Researchers
such as Yosso (2006) suggest that cultural wealth is valuable and should be complementary to the dominant interpretation of cultural capital first established by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977). The theories that examine the experiences of people of colour in higher education are relevant to explain the value that the experiences WOC have in the academy (Carty, 1991; Mazzuca, 2000; Samuel, 2004; Samuel & Wane, 2005; Mahtani, 2004), because these theories speak specifically to the bifurcated locations of race, gender, social class, and even spirituality (as evident in womanist theory). However, although this literature serves as a valid entry point into the discussion about WOC in higher education, the discussion in the context of this study cannot be taken up without the consideration of not only race and gender, but also the significance of cultural background.

2.2 Women of Colour in PhD Programs: Canadian Perspective

Historically, as scholars of colour have argued, the social economy of Canada has been strongly rooted in racist practices which are systemic and still very present in educational institutions (Calliste & Dei, 2000; Henry & Tator, 2006). For that reason, to help us understand the history of African Canadian people in general (Bristow, 1994), and WOC in particular, it is necessary to provide a solid entry point for any discussion around the educational experiences of women of colour in Canada in terms of their race, gender and cultural knowing. This is the rationale for naming their experiences as “cultural wealth.” The historical imprints of Black women and other women of colour in Canada play a vital role in shaping the mosaic of cultures found in Canada. Therefore, to address the issues that WOC face while in these programs, I used the qualitative methods of the interview, and the combined theoretical frameworks of: womanism, critical race theory (CRT) and cultural capital theory to explore the process of how WOC construct meaning while in doctoral programs. Through the lens of womanist theory (Walker, 1990; Williams, 1993; Hudson-Weems; Collins, 1996; Phillips, 2006) and Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000) the experiences of women of colour are uncovered and explained in this study. Critical race theory reinforces the systemic presence of racism in all structures of society in general, and specifically in higher educational systems. I use Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of cultural capital to first explain the meaning of cultural capital, and then expand its interpretation based on the Yosso’s (2005) work to identify the contributions of
wealth she found in communities of colour. Yosso’s interpretation also helps to guide my understanding of wealth as it is uncovered in the data.

Although the emphasis for her Canadian study focused primarily on gender, Wall (2008) found that there were distinct differences between the experiences of women and men in doctoral programs because the site for doctoral education is highly bureaucratic. Advantages, disadvantages, control, exploitation, even emotion are all based on the distinction between men and women (Acker, 1990). According to Wall’s (2008) study, “women in academia tend to express feelings of discomfort with the academic organizational culture because it is viewed as being dominated by and constructed for men (Leonard, 2001; Benschop & Brouns, 2003). The experiences of women in the male dominated academy were found to be compounded by race and age (Acker, 2001; Leonard, 2001; Letherby, 2003). Women of colour in academia often experience discrimination based on stereotypes about race (Mahtani, 2004; Kenway & Bullen, 2003, Margolis & Romero, 1998). There are also several American studies to support the issue of student experiences (and women of colour) in doctoral programs (Ellis, 2001, Gold, 2000; Aryan & Guzman; Turner & Thompson, 1993; Ladson-Billing, 1998; hooks, 1998; Collins, 2000). The central issues that arise revolve around factors such as race, gender, campus climate, and issues of socialization. For example, according to Ellis (2001) most students in graduate and doctoral programs are White, despite efforts by the universities to increase enrollment for visible minorities.

2.3 Accessibility and Representation on Predominantly White Campuses

There is increasing pressure from legislatures, parents, and employers to better understand the learning process and to produce new knowledge to support it. Graduate students must prepare themselves to be the new educators of tomorrow. With this responsibility, they are confronted with high expectations from the various public stakeholders (this pressure can be more overwhelming for some students than others), which require them to become sufficiently socialized within the profession. In the article, “Preparing the Next Generation of Faculty”, Austin (2002) suggests that the socialization process in graduate school must change substantially for new faculty members to work effectively in the ever-changing world of higher education (p. 95). “Knowing how” to access information and resources: having the confidence to
assume the role of a colleague with professors, studying in predominantly White schools and departments (social isolation) and finding supervision for specialized topics on race, faculty diversity, and funding allocations are only a few of the skills that students must negotiate in graduate-level studies (Nyqueist et al., 1999; Austin, 2002; Trower & Chait, 2002; Solomon & Wane, 2005; Thomas-Long, 2007). These are salient on-going issues, which the literature insists that faculty members, administration, researchers and policy makers must consider when assessing the student experience. Moreover, the way these issues are broached within the structured educational environment continues to influence the quality of experience, which marginalized students can encounter in higher education, including those in doctoral programs.

For example, Trower and Chait (2002) raise the issue of faculty diversity by providing staggering statistics that reveal the insufficient numbers of women and racially minoritized faculty who can serve as mentors on the pathway from graduate student to doctoral recipient and then faculty member (p. 34). They suggest that the small numbers of women and minorities represented is not a “pipeline problem,” (which means the problem for WOC does not occur during the K-12 formative years of education, referred to as the pipeline). The main issue, they contend, is one that has been called “chilly climate” and many choose to forgo graduate school altogether while others withdraw from the ‘pipeline’ midstream because too often “many experienced an uninviting, unaccommodating and unappealing “environment in academy” (p. 34). Statistics provided by Trowers and Chait (2002) for the American situation suggests that 94 percent of full professors in science and engineering are White; and 90 percent are male. Overall, their study suggests that there are only five percent of the full time professors in the U.S. are Black, Hispanic or Native American (p. 34).

Other obstacles that are part of the chilly climate for racialized and culturally diverse students who participate within an academic culture—which is a set of beliefs and assumptions, often unspoken and unwritten, that guides individual and collective behavior and shapes the way institutions do business. Margolis (2001) refers to this as the “hidden curriculum.” In Margolis’s (2001) study - which consisted of 26 WOC - a broad scope of issues related to their graduate experience was revealed. These include:
Formal and informal social structures of graduate programs; financial and mentoring support; relationships with faculty and other graduate students [feeling of isolation]; researching, publishing, and teaching opportunities; and other experiences that influenced decisions, choices, and career plans (Margolis, 2011, p. 5).

New generations of academics are socialized both discreetly and directly by senior scholars so that they can know how to adapt to dominant norms of the academy. These values, according to Trower and Chait (2002), include among others: collegiality, allegiance to disciplines, respect for faculty autonomy and the sanctity of academy freedom. There are also subtler norms that undercut efforts of diversity: hierarchies of disciplines, gender or race-based stereotypes, values assigned to various elements of faculty work (for example, teaching versus research), and value assigned to various forms of research (pure versus applied, quantitative versus qualitative). People in powerful positions—professors, department chairs, faculty senate officers, deans, provosts, and presidents—are well-situated to articulate and perpetuate a university’s prevalent culture (Trower & Chait, 2002). Distinguished above the forms of academic capital that Trower and Chait speak of are the structures of Bourdieu’s (1986) cultural capital found in the symbolic systems of art, science, religion and language. These systems “shape our understanding of reality and maintain hierarchies” (Swartz, 2001, p. 1). Such hierarchies are also found in institutions of higher education. It is within this socially stratified system that I approach my research.

2.4 Mentorship and Educational Experiences of Minority Students

One way of demystifying the academic culture of higher education for racially marginalized students is through mentorship, and other support by the experts already in the field. Mentoring relationships are vital to the facilitation of successful experiences among woman of colour and are necessary in order for them to break through the ‘glass ceiling’ of privilege (Guido-DiBrito & Batchelor, 1998; Lock, 1997, Acker, 2001). According to Hughes (1988) however, “Minority women students have the most limited access to ethnic role models and mentors like themselves” (p. 65). Also, Patton and Harper (2003) suggest that African American female graduate and professional students who seek mentoring relationships are at an obvious disadvantage. My research will investigate the criteria used to select certain students
and how particular students can be excluded. In a related study, Clark (2010) suggests that the decision for students of colour to pursue medical and health profession careers is determined largely by the level of mentorship a student receives from teachers and professors. Mentorship, from this perspective is perceived as, “sociocultural participatory activity for engaging students in science learning” (Clark, 2010, p. ii). My study infers that cultural (wealth) capital can play a significant role in how students are: mentored, funded for external awards, supervised, and even how they survive the academy altogether (Thomas-Long, 2007).

The value of mentorship is examined by Lori Patton (2009) in, “My Sister’s Keeper: A Qualitative Examination of Mentoring Experiences among African American Women in Graduate and Professional Schools”. This article addresses how the participants define mentoring, their perspectives on current mentoring relationships, and the significance of having an African American woman mentor. Patton (2009) focuses on, “(a) how participants defined mentoring, (b) participants’ perspectives on their current mentoring relationships, and (c) the significance and availability of having an African American woman as a mentor” (p. 510).

According to Quinlan (1999), “Women often have different needs and concerns from their male counterparts…[and] face a complex, interrelated set of career issues that may be outside men’s experience” (p. 32). Specifically, feelings of isolation, high stress levels, and low self-efficacy can, and do cause WOC to have a more difficult time establishing mentoring relationships in comparison to male counterparts. This challenges their representation in higher education. Counseling and curriculum are also significant, because students from diverse backgrounds sometimes have difficulty adjusting to the values which characterize the academic culture in higher education. These values are often in opposition of their own beliefs and cultural knowledge (Ladson-Billing, 1995). In her book Teaching to Transgress, hooks (1998) illuminates the issue of cultural censorship among marginalized students whose ways of knowing contradict the dominant behaviours of privileged students in the classroom. Students from underprivileged backgrounds soon learned that their compliance to certain unwritten rules rewards them in the classroom, helps them advance, in a way that is deemed acceptable by their peers. Also, hooks (1998) adds:

Even though students enter the “democratic” classroom believing they
have a right to “free speech,”…. [m]ost students are not comfortable exercising this right—especially if it means they must give voice to thoughts, ideas, feelings that go against the grain, that are unpopular (p. 179).

Overall, the literature in the area of mentoring infers that the benefits of mentoring provide opportunities for job advancement, wage increases, and other job related opportunities (Allen, Jacobson & Lomotey, 1995; Bova, 2000; Ellis, 1992; Johnson & Nelson, 1999). Moreover, the benefits of both job and personal achievement are a direct result of mentorship by mentees (women) who share cultural and or racial likeness to their mentor (Crawford & Smith, 2005)

Sharing survival strategies and experiences are additional methods Black women and WOC use to combat the many barriers that they face in the academy. The telling of their stories incites political change, which also provides healing for these women (Bristow, 1994; Carty, 1993; Collins, 2000; Cook, 1997; hooks, 1998; Henry, 1998; Lorde, 1994; Mazucca, 2000; Mogadime, 2002; Wane et al., 2002). The literature on this topic suggests that what is needed, are other indicators and measures of success, which can facilitate the validation of the experiences of WOC and count them worthy of empirical investigation in higher education (Henry, 1993; Bannerji, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Collins, 2000). Attention must be paid to how dominant societies view the cultural contributions of one group over another and how particular knowledge from particular cultures is reproduced and rewarded in society (Astin, 1982; Bourdieu, 1986; Yosso, 2008).

To reiterate, the experiences of minority students in higher education within the racial and academy climate on campuses -especially in predominantly White educational institutions - have proven to be very problematic for both students and faculty. A study conducted by Hurtado (1994) found a link between the racial climate of an educational institution in the U.S. and the self-concept (esteem) of students who came from racially diverse backgrounds. Hurtado (1994) covered the era of the 1970’s, fifteen years after desegregation in the American South. At that time, university campuses were lightly peppered with the presence of Black students and people of colour on predominantly White campuses. However, the emotional waves of racial pride from the civil rights movement were still very present; therefore, the first generation of Black students who attended integrated institutions of higher education at that time (though small in number) were strongly insulated by the great sense of pride and support they received from well-
organized Black communities (e.g., The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or NAACP).

Hurtado (1994) concluded that, “though marginalized students recognize that their educational environment may inhibit effective interaction [with faculty and other students], students learned how to cope with these problems in ways that minimized the impact of their success” (p. 331). It is unclear if Hurtado was inferring that students chose to ‘grin-and-bear-it’ because of the familial and community expectations they carried on their backs; however, her research seems to imply that the student’s perception of the racial climate on those campuses was not that bad. Given the historical time frame, I believe the impact of the harsh racial climate that students experienced in Hurtado’s (1994) study was grossly understated and perhaps did not capture the true essence of what students were actually experiencing individually in terms of their race, gender and class. Perhaps, similar to my efforts, Hurtado wanted to capture the resilience, and not negative aspects of the students’ experiences. However, a relevant and accurate assessment of what happens to marginalized students on these campuses is required to further understand the problem.

a. Overt and Covert Racism

A more current perspective is presented by Solorzano (2000) in his study, “Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions [sic] and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students.” Solorzano (2000) found that subtle insults, verbal, non-verbal and even visual, were directed at African American undergraduate students and had a negative impact on the racial climate of the campus. ‘Microaggressions’ [sic] is defined by Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, and Willis (1978) as “subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘put downs’ of black by offenders” and that the “cumulative weight of their never-ending burden is a major ingredient in Black-White interactions” (p. 66). Solorzano (2000) gives examples of some of the many terms that represent forms of micro-aggressions, such as: “When I [a White person] talk about those Blacks, I really wasn’t talking about you,” or “You [a Black person] are not like the rest of them”, and “I don’t think of you [a Black person] as Black” (p. 61). Solorzano’s (2000) study was more direct than that of Hurtado in revealing the harsh climate that some students of colour still face today on predominantly White campuses in
America. The study revealed that discrimination based on race was the cause of feeling isolated and hurt. The issue of racial climate on campuses is important to my study because students of colour must find coping mechanisms and skills to subvert the chilly reception and subsequent repercussions that they encounter in the academy.

Soloranzo’s (2000) research did not specifically look at women of colour who are in doctoral programs; however, this is useful in helping to highlight the issues faced by marginalized students in general. The experiences of Black women on White Campuses have been specifically explored by African-American female scholars such as Collins (1999) Donalda Cook (1997), and bell hooks (1984). These women discuss the issue of humiliation and lack of confidence in writing about their experiences in a predominantly White academy forum. For example, hooks (1984) writes of her experiences as a graduate student:

During my graduate school years, I dreaded talking face-to-face with White professors, especially White males. I had not developed this dread as an undergraduate because there it was assumed that Black students, and particularly, Black female students were not bright enough to make it in graduate school. While these racist and sexist opinions were rarely directly stated, the message was conveyed through various humiliations that aimed at shaming students, and breaking our spirits (p. 56).

In hook’s quote, the situation that Black female students in graduate programs face is profoundly articulated. Her theorizing comes closest to the issues and questions that I wish to raise in this study. Although her work is largely from the African-American perspective, I believe the implications of the research are far reaching and present an entry point for my research.

A Canadian study which addresses similar issues about educational experiences is Samuel and Wane’s (2005), “Unsettling Relations”: Racism and Sexism Experienced by Faculty of Colour in a Predominantly White Canadian University.” The authors discuss how the contributions of WOC, both faculty and students, continue to be over-looked and under-represented on predominantly White campuses in Canada. The participants in their study reported experiencing isolation, unfair evaluations, and the need to challenge Euro-centric curriculum and other ways to endure resistance (Samuel & Wane, 2005). Also in Samuel’s (2005) book, Integrative Antiracism: South Asians in Canadian Academy, the issue of racism among South Asian students was shown to be prevalent, though not overt. She states, “[o]vert or
blatant acts of racism are few; more prevalent is the covert or hidden kind” (p. 3). And because of this, her research found that South Asian students could not, “maximize their academy potential because of everyday racism in university settings.” (p. 3). Scheurich and Young (1997) also discuss the relevancy of overt and covert racism in higher education by giving examples of a overt situation, where a professor makes a racial slur during a class lecture, or a covert reference where a superintendent may not promote a Hispanic principle in a White majority area, even though the Hispanic applicant might be more qualified. Overt racism is explained by Schuerich and Young (1997) as:

A public, conscious, and intended act by a person or persons of another race chiefly because of the race of the second person or persons…there is a social consensus…that these behaviors are socially unacceptable…the only difference between overt and covert is that the latter is not explicitly public (p. 5).

Subsequently, mentorship for this particular group in doctoral programs is very limited because of the hidden racism in the academy (Samuels, 2005; see also Margolis, 2001).

There is no reason to believe that the consequences of veiled racism affect only South Asian students but also many other WOC feel its repercussions as well. For example, in her study about the experiences of Italian-Canadian women in higher education, Josephine Mazzuca (2000) emphasizes how her participants became first generation graduates students and how they had to cross cultural borders of knowing to accomplish this feat, coming from a culture steeped in strong Italian traditions. Mazzuca states how her participants, who were raised as second generation Italian immigrants born in Canada, were largely informed by the cultural knowing from home, which had a great influence on their learning at school; trying to figure out how to navigate the Academy became an added burden. In a related study, Hojati (2010) discusses the experiences of Iranian women in higher education. Highlights of how women in her study have fled from a hostile environment in their homeland to pursue further education in Canada are presented against the backdrop of ‘Islamophobia’ during post-September, 2001. Hojati argues that the women in her study face an intense form of hostility in Canadian universities because of their ethnic identities as Iranian women.

These studies emphasize that the transition from home (or homeland) to school was often difficult for WOC because of issues related to cultural ways of knowing, power structures in
higher education, and ways the world has viewed them (Mazzuca, 2000, Hojati, 2010; Razack, 1998). Racist practices within the academy are not only problematic for WOC in and of themselves but also arguably because the situations translate into under-representation of their presence on White campuses in Canada. The rejection of their cultural ways of knowing also serves as an example of how certain forms of cultural and intellectual capital are rewarded over others in academy. Specifically, when some students are groomed in the profession by seasoned professors, they obtain differential access to funding awards and collaboration on writing projects. Still, among the small but thriving population of diverse women, there is evidence that the cultural backgrounds and/or acquired skills found among the various WOC, though different from that of the dominant culture, may also serve to help them survive the subtle exclusion of doctoral programs (Wane & Samuel, 2005). The aim of my research is to identify skills and survival techniques, which WOC rely on to navigate through Canadian doctoral programs specifically those related to their cultural ways of knowing.

2.5 Communities of Cultural Wealth: Transforming Knowledge Into Cultural Capital

Further review of the literature provides useful interpretations of the various forms of alternative cultural capital, referred to in Chapter One by Yosso (2005) who maintains, “the Communities of Colour nurture cultural wealth through at least six forms of capital which represent an array of cultural knowledge such as: 1) Aspirational, which refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face or real or perceived barriers; 2) Navigational, is the skill of navigating through social institutions 3) Social, is the network of people and community resources 4) Linguistic, includes intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences 5) Familial, refers to cultural wealth nurtured among family that carriers a sense of community history and memory and 6) Resistant capital is those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality.” (p. 77).

As I have suggested, she provides valuable and tangible ways to rethink the construct of cultural capital using characteristics which represent the cultural knowledge found in racialized communities. Again, what is important to these communities is the assessment of skills and ability as a form of capital, and not just as family background or acquisitions, which are the components used to measure dominant forms of cultural wealth. The main argument is that the value of skills and abilities of WOC can be transformed into and counted as cultural wealth by dominant institutions and administrators. Lareau and Weininger (2003) affirm that, “academy
skills should not be excluded from the purview of cultural research. Academy skills are instead part of what we should be conceiving as cultural capital” (p. 598).

In addition, Lisa Delpit (1995) in her classic, Other People’s Children, provides reasons why it is important to stress the importance of ‘skills’ and ‘ability’ in the assessment and evaluation of learning for Black students and other students of colour. Her commitment to this endeavor is apparent when she states, “I would further explain that skills are a necessity…. Students need technical skills to open doors, but they need to be able to think critically and creatively” (p. 19). Black mothers, teachers, and sisters must nurture cultural knowledge plus skills, so that meaningful learning can resonate within the young Black student (Delpit, 1995).

A collective identity produced within communities of colour can be transformed into cultural capital. A collective identity can be nurtured in reaction to prolonged exposure to racial oppression and segregation (Ogbu, 1992) and such identity can affect one’s own desire to achieve academically. Fordham (1988), in “Racelessness as a Factor for School Success: Pragmatic Strategy or Pyrrhic Victory?”, suggests that there are “endemic tensions and conflicts experienced by Black high-achieving students as they seek to define their dual relationship to the indigenous Black American culture system and the individualistic impersonal cultural system of the dominant society” (p. 79). Cummins (2001) addresses this problem as well, by expressing how important it is to have culturally relevant curricula in schools, especially in communities where a language other than English at home. Trying to achieve academically while maintaining one’s cultural and racial identities may present a conflict that becomes even more problematic, especially when some minorities and their youth cultures are characterized by the way they speak, dress and the music they listen to (Ladson-Billing, 1995).

Theory about why this stereotyping occurs in particular minoritized communities and not in others, is presented in Ogu’s (1992) definition of what he calls, “Voluntary” and “Involuntary” minorities. Voluntary minorities are defined as immigrants who have moved voluntarily from one society or region to another to procure better economic opportunities and/or political freedom. In contrast involuntary minorities are characterized as people who were originally brought into North America (or other conquering countries) against their will because of, for example: slavery, conquest, colonization, and forced labour. The different treatment which each
group experiences from dominant colonizing cultures helps to maintain power and opportunistic differentials between the two, primarily within educational, socio-economical and political structures. For example, Ogbug (1992) suggests that:

Voluntary minorities usually experience initial problems in school due to cultural and language differences as well as lack of understanding of how the educational system works. But they do not experience lingering, disproportionate school failure. The Chinese and Punjabi Indians are representative U.S. examples (p. 8).

Ogbug continues by suggesting that: “Voluntary minorities seem to bring to the United States a sense of who they are from their homeland and seem to retain this different non-oppositional social identity at least during the first generation” (1992, p. 9). In contrast he argues, because of the lingering effects of racism, involuntary minorities have a completely different experiences. According to Ogbug:

Involuntary minorities, in contrast, develop a new sense of social or collective identity that is in opposition to the social identity of the dominant group after they have become subordinated. They do so in response to their treatment by the White Americans in economic, political, social, psychological, cultural and language domains (1992, p. 9).

An example of a group, which can be characterized as voluntary minorities, would be the thousands of West Indians who migrated to England and North America in the mid-1940’s and 50’s. They arrived with a sense of optimism and even confidence as they sough a better life. The dreams of these new comers were in opposition to the realities faced by the African-Americans, or involuntary immigrants already in their homelands for over 200 years (Waters, 2001).

Finally, as argued by Cummins (2001) in response to Ogbug’s (1992) findings, “a major reason why academic difficulties among involuntary minorities tend to be persistent is that cultural and language boundaries become more rigid than is typically the case for voluntary minorities” (p. 33). Cummins further states that “these cultural boundaries frequently are entrenched by various forms of discrimination on the part of the dominant group. Fordham (1998) uses the term, “fictive kinship” to describe the collective cultural symbols shared by
Black Americans. Interestingly, Fordham (1998) suggests “merely possessing African features or being of African descent does not automatically make one a Black person, or a member in good standing of the group” (p. 56). Fordham (1998) also noted, “those students who chose to minimize their connection to the indigenous culture and assimilate into the school culture improve their chances of school success” (p. 57). The more students tended to act ‘White’, the greater academic success was afforded to them. However a conflict of loyalty to their own peer group and doing well in school did surface as an issue for these students as well.

Although Fordham’s (1998) study did present an interesting perspective as to how young minoritized youth self identify, her definitions of “Black” and “fictive kinship” refer specifically to African Americans born in the U.S., which could inadvertently rule out the populations of Black people that self-identify within the Black diaspora from regions such as: Africa, Europe, Canada and the West Indies. Black people from these regions may not share in the same linguistic disposition that Fordham (1998) posits, but according to *Ebonics* (Delpit, 1995) or ‘talking Black’ affords African Americans kinship, or sense of community. In Fordham’s study, racialized students who did not speak Ebonics were viewed as outsiders by the dominant group. On the other hand, in an article by Carter (2003), entitled “‘Black’ Cultural Capital, Status Positioning, and Schooling Conflicts for Low-Income African American Youth”, Black students illustrated how they maintain their authenticity to their Black culture with their ability to “walk the walk and talk the talk” (p.138). That is, the more Black students behaved in ways they felt better represented their ‘blackness’, the greater their self esteem, and sense of belonging among their peers. Conversely, in an article published by Bergan and Cook (2002), entitled “High School Students of Colour Talk About Accusations Of ‘Acting White’”, the researchers found that of the 38 students (who were relatively high achievers) that they interviewed, none of them reported hiding academy achievement to avoid accusations of acting White. Although most of the respondents admitted that they felt strong resentment toward their accusers, they also stated they were not intimidated by them. In fact in the author’s words: “their mean GPA was 3.3, and many reported competing for grades” (p. 130).

The literature on cultural capital used and perceived both inside and outside communities of colour is significant and must be addressed in my study. Notably, the cultural wealth of language and the symbolic power it possesses is a salient issue in terms of academic language,
and the gate-keeping function it represents among scholarly writing for WOC in higher education. Specifically, the consequences of being perceived as having a ‘foreign accent’ (Spencer-Rodgers, & McGovern, 2002) do have consequences for WOC, and need to be addressed in the academy.

To this point, I have provided some examples from educational researchers who incorporate and support an alternative interpretation of cultural capital in their work (Reay, 1998; Lareau, 1987, 2000; Moi, 2004; Delpit, 1998; Fordham, 1998; Yosso, 2005). Taken together, these researchers emphasize that the concept of cultural capital should not be restricted to only “high brow” interpretations (DiMaggio, 1982). The research has shown that “cultural capital” can be considered in a variety of other ways. For example, gender, ability, lived experiences, and level of parental participation in school involvement are all viewed as possible examples of alternative cultural capital shared among lower/middle-income or minority communities (Reay, 1998; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Lareau, 1987, 2000; Moi, 2004). Another important outlook for an alternative interpretation of cultural capital is by reaffirming the value of ‘academy skill’ stated by (Lareau & Weininger (2003) previously. Finally, the studies of Fordham (1998) and Yosso (2005) reveal that ‘fictive kinship’ and ‘community cultural wealth’ are key issues for formulating cultural capital among Black communities and other communities that are classified as ‘minority’.

a. Cultural Wealth and Linguistics

The cultural wealth of linguistics—the intellectual and social skills through communication experiences in more than one language or style—was previously identified as one of the six areas of cultural wealth found in the marginalized communities of Yosso’s (2005) study. The idea that the plural identities of children, in terms of their race, culture and specifically language, can be integrated into the classroom is becoming a highly focused issue in critical pedagogy, especially in the area of cultural and linguistic capital.

The Citizenship and Immigration Canada report entitled “Summary Tables – Permanent and Temporary Residents, 2010”, reveals that the total number of foreign students in Canada was 96,157. In Ontario, the number was 39,148 students. With the surge of immigrants coming into Canada, the landscape of the educational pipeline from Kindergarten to graduate studies is
changing rapidly. The capabilities of these immigrant youths are also changing. In addition to being highly literate in modern technology, they are also more adept than their parents and grandparents at adapting to the culture and lifestyles of their new home. Young immigrants are better equipped to cross linguistic and cultural borders without any conflict (Trueba, 2002). This phenomenon translates into viable sources of cultural wealth that can be easily identified in communities of colour.

A Canadian study conducted by Taylor, Bernhard, Garg and Cummins (2008), entitled “Affirming Plural Belongings: Building on Students’ Family-Based Cultural and Linguistic Capital Through Multiliteracies Pedagogy”, presents new knowledge, as well as practical application, in the area of affirming cultural wealth found in the homes of immigrants who are L2 (English as second language) learners in early education. The researchers in this study allow the young participants to write narratives in their own language in the classroom. The collaboration of both student and teacher provides a strong sense of identity for students, who take pride in seeing stories about their own ways of knowing in script. The teacher also benefits by being exposed to new knowledge that she/he could build on and then expose to other students in the classroom, thus ensuring a more inclusive and safe learning environment for both immigrant students and their mainstream counterparts. In their study, Taylor et al. (2008) attempt to reframe literacy as a communal resource rather than an individual’s attribute or skill. Arguably, pedagogy as a whole asserts the need to “redefine family cultural and linguistic capital as global, national and personal resources” (Taylor et al., p. 274). This is important because Taylor and colleagues states that:

While children of minoritized cultural and linguistic backgrounds are often affirmed in their cultural identity, the school and teachers generally ignore their home languages and literacies, vital ‘funds of knowledge’ that might contribute to academy learning (2008 p. 270).

The goal of Taylor et al., was to centre dual-language knowledge from minoritized students as “cultural and linguistic capital” (2008, p. 275), and to place it in the curriculum as a means to empower students. Though their findings focus on a cohort of school-age children, the praxis demonstrated in this study is relevant to my research in higher education. For example, if graduate students of colour can move freely between their multiliteracies in doctoral programs,
then perhaps a sense of empowerment will be widely felt among people of colour in these programs. Subsequently, if cultural wealth from the home, in both national and international contexts, is integrated into the learning process, then perhaps we could anticipate and support an increasing number of WOC pursuing doctoral degrees. Additionally, if integration of their new knowledge into academy was successful, we could see more and more success from WOC in terms of academy awards, publishing and job placements for those who are already in these programs, as well as for those who dare to pursue the doctorate degree. According to Cummins et al. (2008), “meaningful learning is intensified through the production and receptions of these [multiliteracy] texts” (p. 275). That is, when the production of research created by graduate students of colour is well received, it helps to enhance their learning experiences, strengthen and empower their identities, and create new cultural knowledge.

Trueba (2002), in his article entitled “Multiple Ethnic, Racial, and Cultural Identities in Action: From Marginality to a New Cultural Capital in Society”, argues that:

The mastery of different languages, the ability to cross racial and ethnic boundaries, and a general resiliency associated with the ability to endure hardships and overcome hardships will clearly be recognized as a new cultural capital that will be crucial for success in modern diversified society (p. 7).

The next example also does not focus on the higher education learner but it discusses issues relevant to my study. Canadian researcher Bonny Norton (1995; 2000) discusses the construct of “investments” as it relates to language and language learners. She argues that if learners “invest” in the target (dominant) language, they will ultimately gain greater resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital and social power. This notion explores how relations of power impact human relations, especially in classroom settings. Despite being motivated, a learner can be excluded from the language practices of the classroom and then be labeled as a “poor” or unmotivated learner. In fact, language learners might often resolve their frustration in the classroom by resorting to silence. Duff (2002), a colleague of Norton, notes that, “Silence protected them from humiliation” (p. 312). In his study, Norton (2000) concedes that:

[I]t could be argued that while language learners were highly motivated, they were not invested in the language practices of their classroom, with its unequal relationships of power between language learners and native
b. Cultural Wealth and Silence

Silence is often viewed as incomprehension on the part of the language learner or, in other cases, the meaning of silence is seen as compliance to dominant ways of knowing. The above statements question these observations and reveal how silence can be an act of resistance on the part of the person (without the power) who chooses not to participate. This issue of the “silenced dialogue” is a topic which Lisa Delpit (1988) debates in her study, “The Silenced Dialogue: Power, and the Pedagogy in Educating Other People’s Children.” Delpit discusses how all the non-White respondents in her study spoke passionately about how they felt “left out of the dialogue about how to best educate children of colour” (1988, p. 282). The problem she identified was that both parties believed they had the same aim but one side was doing all the talking, while the other remained silent. The teachers of colour were not being heard by their White counterparts on how to best educate students of colour. The argument revolved around the skills-oriented approach to writing versus process-oriented approach. According to Delpit (1988), teachers of colour were accused of being too “skills-oriented”, whereas the process method was deemed the more favourable or advanced approach to teaching writing (p. 281).

Although much of the focus of Delpit’s study is addressing younger Black children in classroom settings, I would argue that there are parallels in her research that coincide quite well with the concerns stated in my own study. For example, Delpit discusses the relationship of culture and power, as she sees it enacted in the classroom, which I suggest are also present in the graduate level classroom setting, as well as with the power relations and struggles that exist between student/supervisor, and student/academic structure relationships.

From the beginning of my study, I have raised the question of why some cultures are valued over others in educational settings. In the U.S., this phenomenon can be seen as beginning with the Jim Crow laws that legalized racial segregation after the American Civil War. This legislation greatly affected the educational practices in that era, enforcing a “separate but equal” mentality for Blacks and Whites (Simkin, 1997, p. 60). The “Jim Crow Laws”, as Simkin explains, were anti-African American laws that discriminated against African Americans in terms of public school attendance, use of facilities such as restaurants, theatres, hotels, and so on,
and even public transportation. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was enacted to put an end to all racially discriminating laws. However, as I have been arguing, the residual effects of racism from that era are still very much present in educational institutions. For example, it is argued by scholars of colour that racism is now manifested in a more covert manner, especially in Canada. This issue is compounded by the fact that, in Canadian society, there is the persistent claim that overt racism does not exist, which in turn obfuscates the presence of the concealed forms of racism. Because of this denial, efforts made by communities of colour to identify and eradicate such discriminatory practices in higher education become that much more difficult (Henry & Tator, 2009).

c. Power Relations

I have been suggesting here that identifying the correlation between culture and power is essential to understanding the importance of valuing the cultural wealth, which emanate within diverse communities. Specifically, the importance of identifying the lived experiences of WOC in my research is related to how critical race theory, explains and the systemic racism and the resulting power relations that some of my participants were exposed to during the process of becoming doctoral recipients. This is evident with second group of participants in my study (Chapter 5), who experienced challenging relationships with their supervisors.

To focus this argument at this juncture, I borrow an outline called the “Culture of Power” from Delpit (1988), where she clearly explains how the phenomenon of culture and power work together and are enacted in classrooms (p. 282). This outline helps to clarify just how hierarchies and power relations are maintained within dominant cultural ways of knowing, and why some cultures continue to be valued over others in educational institutions. Delpit theorizes that there are five aspects of cultural power and describes each of the relevant issues. These are paraphrased as follows:

i. Issues of power are enacted in the classroom – These issues include: the power of the teacher over the students; of publishers to decide what texts get published; of those who determine curriculum; and of individuals or groups to determine level of students’ intelligence or degree of “normalcy.” To summarize, schooling determines one’s future job and status in society and, therefore, schooling is related to power.
ii. There are codes or rules for participating in power; or is a “culture of power”—Delpit suggests that there are codes of power in sanctioned linguistic forms, communicative strategies and presentation of self; that is, ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, ways of interacting. These codes will be discussed at length with the participants in my own study.

iii. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have the power—This means that success comes to those who acquire the culture and ways of knowing of those who are in power. Delpit suggests here that children from middle-class homes tend to do well in schools that reflect the culture of the middle classes, whereas children from non-middle class backgrounds tend to struggle more.

iv. If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier—Members of any culture transmit information implicitly to their co-members. However, as Delpit explains, when implicit codes are attempted across cultures, communication frequently breaks down. I will examine how this particular example of cultural power is correlated to the relationship between student/supervisors in doctoral programs. If students are not properly mentored and are not shown “how to” become a scholar, can they ever “know how” to identify the explicit (or implicit) codes of power, which will eventually groom them to excel in the academy.

v. Those with power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—its existence—Delpit suggests, in this final point, that acknowledging personal power and admitting participation in the culture of power is distinctly uncomfortable. On the other hand, those who are less powerful are more likely to recognize the presence of power most acutely. Because of their access to this particular code of culture, Delpit (1998) stresses, “White educators had the authority to establish what was considered “truth” regardless of the opinions of the people of colour, and the latter were well aware of that fact” (p. 284).
All of Delpits’ points above relate to my own study to the extent that they address the power relations between WOC and authorities in doctoral programs, and are addressed through the stories of my participants.

2.6 Language, Identity, and Race

As noted above, there have been initiatives undertaken by Canadian linguists and critical pedagogues (Delpit, 1988, 2002; Taylor et al., 2008; Cummins, 2001) to address the issue of power relations in classrooms. More and more incentives are being implemented to negotiate diverse identities from various communities of colour into the curriculum of the classroom, which Cummins (2001) addresses in his work, Negotiating Identities. The importance of reflecting one’s identity in the curriculum appears to be making strides at the elementary levels of education, as highlighted in the study above; however, this does not seem to transfer effectively into educational policies or practices at higher levels of education, especially in doctoral programs. The literature suggests that not only are there inequities that exist in the classroom but that language is a proven barrier for communities of colour as it relates to race (Delpit, 2002; Smitherman, 2002; Fanon, 1967). The power of language helps to shape our understanding of the world. How we identify ourselves in relation to that world is a derivative of the language we speak. In other words, our identities and how we perceive ourselves (and are perceived by others) are strongly linked to the language we speak, as well as the degree to which one speaks and writes the dominant language.

In The Skin That We Speak Delpit (2002) suggests, “it is no wonder that our first language becomes intimately connected to our identity” than our skin colour (p. xvii). That is, both our skin and our language play a pivotal role in determining who we are and how we are received. Our language “skin” provides an even more precise mechanism for determining class and status (Author, Date, p. xvii). In her research, Delpit discusses the differences and significance of what she refers to as African American Vernacular, or Ebonics, which she suggests implies second-class status for those who utilize it. There is much debate over this issue. My intent is not to question or delve into these findings but, rather, to argue that they support the presence or significance of language forms and the cultural wealth found in diverse communities. Delpit’s (1998; 2002) work supports the view that language is a social marker and is used to determine
one’s identity and intellectual competence. The issue of language and racism is also a standpoint that affects the experiences of WOC in my study, as will be heard through their voices.

The meanings and symbolism of words can affect how some people of colour, in general, and Black people in particular see themselves. For example, English language dictionaries tell us that the words “black” or “darkness” connote evil or ‘bad’. It follows that a Black person can easily be made to personify the colour of their skin in the same terms. When internalized, language can act as a means by which persons of colour can alienate themselves from their own identity. Language not only assists in distinguishing one’s identity, it is also strongly associated with power.

Frantz Fanon, the renowned Black psychiatrist from the island of Martinique discusses this phenomenon. In his book, Black Skin, White Mask Fanon suggests that:

The man who has language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power (1967, p. 18).

Fanon confronts the difficulty which forces what he calls the colonial subject to speak in the language of the master, claiming that: "The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately Whiter—that is, he will come closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language" (1967, p. 19). Fanon’s discussion of language and race helps provide a theoretical understanding of why people from historically disadvantaged backgrounds adopt the language from their surrounding dominant culture, while negating their own. This process is violent, even though the violence is erased in colonizer histories (Razack, 2002). Geneva Smitherman (2000), a prominent Black linguist at the University of Michigan, in Talkin That Talk, explains the role Fanon played in understanding the issue of language and power for Black people. Razack suggests that: “As a healer [Fanon] sought ways to bring wholeness to the divided Black-self that imitated things European and attributed inferiority to Black culture” (2002, p. 4).

Smitherman, admits that during her own journey from, “Ghetto Lady to Critical Linguist” (2000, p. 1), that her own African American English (AAE) was used as a rationale to put her back a year in grade school. When she figured out the strategy of keeping her mouth closed in the
classroom, she was put forward three grades. Unfortunately, she was ultimately unable to escape the scrutiny of those enforcing the required “proper English” when required to take a language test for the teacher training program she applied to; having failed the proficiency test, she landed in a speech therapy class, which was required in the 60’s and early 70’s in the States (a policy now abandoned). Through her readings of Elders found in Black intellectual tradition, she discovered many who influenced her learning and leadership responsibilities. Specifically, she recalls E.B. DuBois’ (1903) proclamation about the “Talented tenth”—where he argued that the top ten percent of the Black population of intellectuals, researchers and businessman should take leadership and responsibility for the other ninety percent, the masses. This was to avoid the risk of White leadership being forced on them. In her today’s context Smitherman understands that necessity for action:

The Talented tenth should commit itself to using its knowledge, research and scholarship to the upliftment of the entire Black group….The role, of the Black intellectual (any intellectual of colour) is not just to understand the world, but to change it….For research expands our knowledge base and without knowledge there is no power and no prospect of change. Being a critical Linguist means recognizing that all research is about power— who has it, who doesn’t—and the use of power to shape reality based on research (2000, pp. 6-8).

The upliftment of the race is a responsibility that is also articulated by Canadian scholars (Henry, 1993; Bristow, 1994), a responsibility I assert to myself as a WOC, as part of the “Talented tenth” in my community. The purpose of my study is not to join in the heated discussion of the 1996/7 Ebonics debate or to question the legitimacy of African American English (AAE), which is the primary focus of most of Smitherman’s research. Instead, my intention is to affirm the important issues of language, race, and power which she has highlighted and to show their relevance to my own research. My aim also resonates with those of Trueba (2002), who critiqued the notion of the Latino/a communities as “handicapped” because of their oppression and low economic status, and aptly identified the cultural wealth associated with their acquisitions of multiple language and navigational skills in the presently growing diverse society. Trueba advocates that:
The mastery of different languages, the ability to cross racial and ethnic boundaries, and a general resiliency associated with the ability to endure hardships and overcome obstacles will clearly be recognized as a new cultural capital that will be crucial for success in a modern diversified society, not a handicap (2002, p. 7).

Taken together, the researchers cited in this literature review all share the notion that there is a deficit mentality in the way society, and the educational research communities conceptualize the abilities, skills and wealth found among communities of colour. A further point to be addressed in this chapter, are the gaps that still exist in the literature.

2.7 Rationale for Theoretical Framework

The research analysis uses the discursive framework of womanist theory, Critical race and cultural capital theory to drive the understanding of the experiences of WOC in doctoral programs. The rationale for this framework is based on my belief that womanism—as discussed in detail in the following chapter—can adequately represent an explanation for the experiences of the participants in my study. Specifically, the intersections of race, gender, culture, language and spirituality can all be addressed from the paradigm of womanism, without the need to single out specific frameworks for specific racial cohorts. There are specific feminist theories that address specific women from certain ethnic and racial backgrounds, such as for example; ‘AsianCrit,’ which speaks to the experiences of Asian women, ‘Latcrit’ which addresses Latina women, etc. These fractions stem from Critical Race Theory (Yosso, 2005). Also, there is Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000), which addresses the bifurcated oppressions of both race, and gender for Black women. I am by no means negating the importance of researchers positioning their own racial and/or cultural difference when investigating their own community. In fact, there will be times when I will refer to my own experience and agency as a Black woman researcher and make references to my ‘otherness’ as a Black, British-born, Canadian woman with Jamaican heritage, grounded in spiritual roots.

Moreover, I see womanism as an inclusive theoretical framework, able to frame experiences of all WOC in this study and their various ethnic identities. Specifically, I appreciate how womanism, recognizes not only the racial ethnic/gender and sexual identities of women, it also acknowledges the importance of spirituality, and the choice of heterosexual relationships for many WOC. Finally, if made to choose, I believe the label ‘Womanist’ as opposed to ‘Feminist’ is a much better description of how I see myself as a
Black heterosexual woman of colour, trying to navigate my academic, social and spiritual worlds. With a womanist framework, I feel liberated and empowered within the strongholds of systemic racism that continue to lurk in educational structures and in society. This framework was useful in identify the everyday experiences of WOC as significant, and the component of spirituality found in womanist theory supported the survival instincts and resistance found in my participants.

Most importantly, the participants are free to tell their stories which are influenced by their own racial, cultural and spiritual knowing. For these reasons, and because of the systemic racism that persists in structures of society, critical race theory is added to my framework to insulate the impact of systemic racism found in educational institutions that in turn effect the experiences of my participants. Specifically, this framework is used to understand the power relations that exist not only in the academy, but also between faculty and students in general, and WOC in doctoral programs particular. Finally, in an effort to identify and establish the cultural capital of my participants (prior and present) I utilize Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) cultural capital theory to provide a foundational understanding, and a means for explaining their experiences (in terms of abilities and skills) as pursued the doctoral program, as well as to explain the power relations WOC encounter in academe. The following chapter explains in detail the significance of each of these frameworks.

2. 8 Gaps in the Literature

Despite many commonalities I found in the literature to my own work, most studies reviewed here were either based in an American or British context, and so leave unanswered the situation in Canada. A future endeavor may lead me to undertake a comparative study that encompasses other regions, but for now, my interest lies within the Canadian context. Primarily, I found that the studies that I discovered from Canadian contributors did not address the same cohort of participants (WOC), which is the focus for my research. Overall, the major gap in the literature revealed that there are few studies that inquire into the experiences of students in graduate level studies, especially in professional programs. Still, there were a few studies that did challenge the concept of alternate forms of cultural wealth and how it must be considered in the discussion of cultural capital and education in general (Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Trower & Chait, 2002; Ladson-Billing, 1995; Fordham, 1988; Turner & Thompson, 1993; Tillman, 2000, Margolis, 2001). Far less frequent were studies that focus on the cultural wealth of WOC in
higher education and, particularly, in doctoral programs. I agree with the findings made by Nettles (1990) who posits that:

[Academically] while the existing literature offers some indications of the importance of minority group students…the literature offers no insight about, 1) how their graduate school experiences are related to their performance in graduate school, 2) how their backgrounds prior to entering graduate school are related to their graduate school experience and performance (p. 497).

Delpits’ (1998, 2002) research stands out as very powerful in the way it uncovered issues of racism and power relations in the classroom. Although its main focus centred on school-aged children and did not address experiences of WOC at graduate levels of education, there were some insights I gleaned from her research topics that are related to my own study. For example, Delpit’s research did provide insight into the area of language and racism. This will be vital in my investigation of how WOC are perceived in doctoral programs when they, 1) have English as a second language and, 2) speak, write and interact differently from the academic language and know-how of the Academy.

Yosso (2005) presents a thorough outline of the various forms of cultural capital that are reflected in communities of colour from her study, but I detect some gaps in the study as it relates to my topic. For example, there is no mention of the specific experiences of racialized women in doctoral programs. Much of Yosso’s (2005) focus critiques the assumption that students of colour come to the classroom with cultural deficiencies from early in their education. However, her discussion emphasizes the contribution of the community, in terms of its combined cultural wealth, whereas I intend to focus on the cultural capital and contributions of individual awareness of the historical contributions of their matriarchal ancestors of African (and Asian) cultures that are relevant to current educational issues faced by WOC in Canada today. It is left to be seen in my research how these cultural influences facilitate cultural wealth among WOC in doctoral programs.

Clearly, more research is needed in the area of school experience among WOC in doctoral programs. This study addresses some of the gaps that persist within dominant theory paradigms. Thus in the next chapter to bring together a discursive theoretical framework as a means to analyze the data from my research, I consult Womanist Theory, Critical Race Theory
and (an inclusive) Cultural Capital by deconstructing the dominant interpretation of Bourdieu’s (1977a) cultural capital theory. The rationale behind constructing such a theoretical framework deepens our understanding of what women arrive with when they come to doctoral programs, in terms of their cultural backgrounds, familial histories, and lived experiences.

2.9 Summary

This review of the literature chapter covers ideas and studies relevant to my research interest, including research on the experiences and cultural wealth among WOC in the areas of:
1) Historical Implications, 2) Accessibility and Representation on Predominantly White Campuses, 3) Mentorship and Educational Experiences of Minority Students, 4) Cultural Capital and Alternative Perspectives of Cultural Capital, 5) Communities of Wealth, and 6) Language Identity and Race. I have deduced that most of the current studies revolve from the American context, or more precisely a non-Canadian perspective. The selection of these six areas of discussion reveal how communities of colour have historically evolved through a legacy of oppressive practices in education, originating in the American South, to the current landscape of challenges found on predominantly White campuses. Compounding this for Canadian immigrants are the veiled forms of multicultural acceptance and hidden racism students of colour encounter (Henry & Tator, 2009).

My review of the literature also reveals that marginalized communities, who were once viewed as having a deficit presence in academy or as having a ‘handicap’ because of their ‘oppressed’ backgrounds, gained strength as their multiple ethnic, racial, and cultural identities produced resources of cultural wealth needed in this growing diverse and globalized society (Moll et al., 1992; Trueba, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Collectively, their perceptions provided me with an expanded notion (albeit) of the concept of ‘cultural wealth’ that will guide my study. Their findings were very useful and served as a guide toward my own conception of a mosaic interpretation of cultural wealth and what it might look like from the perspective of my participants.
Chapter Three
Methodology

Section 1: Theoretical Framework

“If we’re really going to move forward, we need to hear the ‘Other’ voices. They can explain themselves….Not everything Western is authentic”.

~Dana, participant

3.0 Introduction

As the participant suggests in the quote above, it is important to conceptualize the meaning of the educational experiences of the participants in this study within appropriate theoretical perspectives that are relevant to their lived experience. The goal of constructing such a framework is to bring clarity to the outsider about the reality of the world from the ‘Other’s’ perspective (hooks, 1998; Collins, 2000; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Understanding and appreciating the history of the ‘Other’ is the first step to fostering an inclusive learning environment and this is a task I now take on.

In this chapter, I first present the theoretical framework used to analyze the data, and secondly, I discuss the qualitative methodology of the interview to present how the data was collected. The participants will also be presented in this section. I use the discursive theoretical frameworks of womanist theory (WT), critical race theory (CRT) and cultural capital theory (CCT) to foreground the significance of race, gender and cultural wealth in relation to the experiences of the participants in this study. I provide a definition and an explanation for each of the above theories in the following three segments. First, I explain my definition of Womanist Theory and how it is important to my study. Second, because my discussion of cultural wealth is approached within a critical race lens, I present the topic of CRT prior to my discussion of cultural capital theory. Next, I present examples of dominant and alternative forms of cultural capital. Under this heading, I discuss the effectiveness of the term “cultural wealth” and its influence to this study. Finally, I speak briefly about the influence of other decolonizing theories such as anti-racist theories and their significance to my study. The study of Yosso (2005) and Solarzono (2000) will be used to ground the critical lens alongside Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory of my theoretical frameworks.
3.1 Womanism (Womanist Theory)

In Layla Phillips’ (2007) *The Womanist Reader*, the term, “womanism” is defined as “a social change perspective rooted in Black women’s and other women of colour’s everyday experiences and everyday methods of problem solving” (p. xx). This definition is developed further when Phillips (2007) adds that these everyday problems are “extended to the problem of ending all forms of oppression for all people, restoring the balance between people and environment/nature, and reconciling human life with the spiritual dimension” (p. xx). Phillips’ definition addresses the fact that, on a daily basis, women of colour vie between themselves, their relationships with men, children, their spirituality, the environment and even their oppressors, in an effort to restore peace and justice for all. This is accomplished by the acknowledgment of or adherence to a spiritual dimension as they encounter their everyday experiences. Womanism as a theory explains the lived experiences of Black women and other WOC, incorporating the importance of spirituality in the lives of these women, and how experience is shaped around one’s (interpretation of) spirituality. From this perspective, this definition is inclusive of all women, regardless of class, race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, and spiritual beliefs. For me, womanism (as opposed to Feminism) as a framework is especially relevant to my study because it helps to explain how WOC reconcile the feelings of oppression and isolation as they experience the process of becoming doctoral recipients. This framework is significant in that also locates my own identity as a Black heterosexual, woman of spirit.

The idea of womanism was first introduced to the general public in 1983 by Alice Walker’s, *In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens: Womanist Prose*. Since then, “feminists of all colours, as well as women of colour and others who question or reject feminism have been debating the uniqueness and viability of womanism as a freestanding concept” Walker, 1983, (p. xix). When first experiencing Womanist theory, I found myself at defending and justifying womanism as a suitable fit for this study, and it was instrumental in setting the stage for my thinking about my topic. I support Hudson-Weems’ (2000) explanation of why a separate framework, other than the dominant ‘Feminism’, was required for Black women. As Hudson-Weems she aptly states:
While many other Black women naively adopted feminism early on, because of the absence of an alternative and suitable framework for their individual needs as Africana women, more are reassessing the historical realities and the agenda for the modern feminist movement, and have bravely stood firm in their outright rejection of it. For many in the academy who reject it and who go beyond by creating alternative paradigms, they experience blatant unsuccessful attempts to silence them via ostracism and exclusion from the academy circle of either publications (including not being referenced by other scholars), and/or dialogue (including not being invited to participate in some of their conferences in order to articulate yet another interpretation of our struggle as non-feminists (2000, p. 205).

The difficulty of trying to implement a specific theoretical framework for understanding the experiences of Black women is effectively outlined in the above quote. An earlier observation about the ‘tricky business’ of feminism comes from Abtherker (1980), who states:

In short, "feminist," in the modern sense, means the empowerment of women. For women of colour, such an equality, such an empowerment, cannot take place unless the communities in which they live can successfully establish their own racial and cultural integrity (p. 13).

As a Black woman, I see the need to present a holistic perspective of the lived experiences of the Black woman and other WOC in my research. I believe the perspective of Womanism explores areas that some critical feminist perspectives do not. According to Henry (1993), “[e]pistemologies, methodologies, and methods that inform Black women’s cultural matrices are needed, since the dominant research paradigms and perspectives often reflect racist, sexist, and classist thinking” (p. 210). Another Black African American scholar and epistemologist, Beverly Gordon (1990), boldly questions the intent and accountability of educational practices as it relates to inclusion of WOC, and urges the need for certain questions to be addressed when she asserts:

The twenty first century will be marked by struggles of people of colour for position, credibility, and respect within Western societies and the nature of that education. Whose vision of the role of African Americans or other people of colour, and the disenfranchised will prevail? Questions about the kinds of societal structures and assemblages and the gradations of worker and work envisioned are directly linked to two fundamental questions: for what purposes might people of colour be educated? How might education assist
Deciding upon a suitable framework for this study required me to ask some poignant questions about who this research was for. My study incorporates women from various cultures; therefore I am convinced that as the researcher of this study, I have a responsibility to interpret the experiences of Black women and [emphasis added] WOC according to their own ways of knowing the world. Annette Henry (1993) echoes this sentiment when speaking of the difficult task of the Black female researcher in the academy:

We must ask ourselves, for whom is our work? For what purposes do we conduct our research? As Black researchers, our research is necessarily a form of activism, revisionism and reconstruction which will involve a re-shaping and expansion of the discourses of Afrocentricity and Black feminism in a Canadian context (p. 66).

Annette Henry (1993, 1998), a Canadian scholar whom I greatly respect, was actually the first scholar I was introduced to when I began my Masters several years ago. She uses Africana Womanism in her own doctoral dissertation entitled, “Taking Back Control: African Canadian Women Teachers Lives and Practices”, and her work greatly inspired me. Dating back to Henry’s (1993) work and up until now, there have been many examples of researchers who have attempted to move the experiences and knowledge found among people of colour from the periphery to the centre of academic discourse. Dillard (2008) states, “Articulating an endarkened feminist epistemology is clearly an act of resistance, a talking back to the oppressive and alienating condition of Western conceptions of knowledge and the marginalization of indigenous feminist ways of knowing and being” (p. 281). Dijanna Hill-Brisbane’s (2005) research, “Black Women Teacher Educators, Race-Uplift and the Academy Other-Mother Identity”, speaks about the experiences of Black women faculty, and articulates how the link between the teacher’s identities and the concept of race-uplift is practiced by these women in the form of academic mothering to elevate their community from racism and oppression. Race-uplift is considered to be part of the Womanist tradition that reflects a commitment to establishing social justice for Black women and other WOC (Collins, 1991; Henry, 1998; James, 1999; Ladson-Billing, 1996; Walker, 1993).
According to Piantanida and Garman (2009), “if one is seeking insight into the practical consequences (or ethical implications) of educational policy or the meanings that participants ascribe to their educational experiences, then methods consistent with an interpretive epistemology and ontology may be more appropriate” (p. 51). I believe the interpretive epistemology of Womanism as a qualitative methodology for this particular research, can better represent an accurate analysis of the diverse women and experiences in my study. Interpretive inquiry is one of the characteristics in qualitative research which allows the researcher to be the “‘big interpreter’, [where] the researcher maintains an exclusive privilege to interpret and report what the interviewee really meant” (Kvale, 2009, p. 15). It is because of my close proximity to the unfolding of the stories and experiences of my participants, that I feel I can justify interpreting them using womanism—with its various holistic components such as cultural awareness and spirituality—as part of my theoretical framework.

3.2 Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) found its origins in the legal profession. In the 70’s and 80’s a collection of legal scholars (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993; Bell, 2005), began to challenge the rampant racial oppression that continued to permeate the American judicial system despite landmark legal gains of the 1954 Supreme Court ruling of Brown vs The Board of Education which ruled in favour of desegregating the educational system, or the enactment of Civil Rights Act in 1964. According to Parker and Lynn (2002), critical race theory focuses theoretical attention on how race and racism are systemic parts of American society. Racism is directly linked to how the U.S. legal system is shaped and the ways in which people think about the law, racial categories and privilege (Harris, 1993). Although CRT has extended to other disciplines such as Women’s Studies (Wing, 1996), and sociology (Aguirre, 2000), CRT in the educational field (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Collins, 1991, 2000; Solarzano,1997, 1998; Tate, 1997) is different from the legal paradigm theory. Solarzano, Ceja, and Yosso, (2000), explain their understanding of CRT from the perspective of education when they suggest:

The critical race theory framework for education is different from other CRT frameworks because it simultaneously attempts to foreground race and racism in the research as well as challenge the traditional paradigms,
methods, texts, and separate discourse on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact on communities of colour (p. 63).

In education, CRT takes the position that racism is a part of the fabric of American society and it needs to be addressed because it is not going away (Solarzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Parker and Lynn, (2002) discuss that CRT is “a discourse of liberation” used as a “methodological and epistemological tool, [to expose] “theoretical the ways race and racism affect the education and lives of racial minorities.” (p. 7). According to Ladson-Billing (1998), the framework of CRT “departs from mainstream legal scholarship by sometimes employing storytelling” (p. 7). Ladson-Billings illustrates this by giving an account of her own personal experience with racism while visiting a hotel VIP lounge and relaxing before an educational conference lecture. She recounts how a gentleman with a strong southern accent poked his head in and asked, “What time are y’all gonna be servin?” Ladson-Billings states:

I tell this story both because storytelling is a part of critical race theory and because this particular story underscores an important point within the critical race theoretical paradigm, i.e. race [still] matters (p. 8).

Although Ladson-Billings was wearing a business suit and reading a newspaper, it was still common sense for the Southern White man to surmise that the Black woman before his eyes was obviously ‘the help.’ Often, the collective belief is that society has come a long way, especially Western society, in its deficit perceptions of race and race relations. Ladson-Billings (1998) insists that the presence of race is still very significant in everyday life, as evidenced in the notions of conceptual “Whiteness” and “Blackness” (p. 9). For example, in her work taken from King (1995), Ladson-Billings (1998) suggests:

Conceptual categories such as, “school achievement,” “middle-classness,” “maleness,” “beauty,” “intelligence,” and “science” become normative categories of Whiteness, while categories such as “gangs,” “welfare recipients,” “basketball players,” and “underclass” become the marginalized and de-legitimated categories for blackness (p. 9).
Ladson-Billing (1998) also suggests that, “…CRT becomes an important intellectual and social tool for the…deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and the construction of equitable and socially just power relations” (p. 9). Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2005) present tangible examples of what a reconstructed university setting might look like in society, when they posit:

A reconstructed university must displace much of the credentialing function of the current system, and organize itself around a principle of intellectual enrichment, social justice, social betterment, and equity [where] students would see the university as a vehicle for public service, [and] not merely personal advancement (p. 317).

Both, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), in their article “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education”, concede that matters of race inequities still exist in education. Their analysis suggests that: 1) race still exists in American society, 2) U.S. society is based on property rights, rather than human rights, and 3) the intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool for understanding inequity (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995, p. 47). Finally, in the more recent study by Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2005), the researchers challenge the role of the ‘moral activist’ as it relates to CRT. They focus on the provocative issue of what they refer to as “the call” (p. 279), explaining that:

The call is the moment where regardless of one’s stature and/or accomplishments, race (and other categories of otherness) is recruited to remind one that s/he still remains locked into the racial construction (p. 280).

Specifically, the authors above are referring to how, regardless of who you are or how high you rise, an African American will always be exposed to the threat of being addressed by the “N-word” (p. 278). Ladson-Billing & Tate (1995) suggest:

African Americans almost never are permitted to break out of the prism (and prison) of race that has been imposed by a racially coded and constraining society. Clearly, this same hierarchy and power dynamics operates for all people of colour, women, the poor, and other “marginals” (1995 p. 280).
Ladson-Billing and her colleagues are not speaking about blatant racial slurs, they are speaking of subtitles or ‘micro-aggressions’ (Solorzano, 2000; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) associated with ‘the call’, as in the example given of Ladson-Billing’s experience at the hotel. The issue of being Black faculty in positions of authority, yet still challenged by White students and White administrators are some of the issues addressed by Ladson-Billing and Donnor (2005) in their study.

CRT not only addresses the experiences of African Americans or the Black diaspora, but also incorporates other communities of colour. Therefore, it is often the theoretical framework used for scholars of colour in their research (Anzaldua, 1987; Padilla, 1987; Delgado, 1995; Yosso, 2005). Although critical race theory (CRT) came out of the School of Law tradition, it has distinguished other paradigms of knowledge, which investigate the experiences of WOC. As Such expressions as: Latcrit, (Delgado, 1989); Femcrit, and Asiancrit (Chang, 1999) analyzes the experience of women usually in the area of class and gender (sometimes culture) but does particularly address issues of race.

According to anti-racist, anti colonial researchers such as Dei (2000), trying to micro-manage theories that emerge from communities of colour suit the oppressors and is precisely how new knowledge becomes ignored and thus systemic racism maintains its presence in the global society. What must happen, he argues, is the development of an easily recognizable and easy to comprehend framework that supports people of colour as a collective, but at the same time maintains individual, distinctive stems of knowledge that would support the diverse ways of knowing for all the women represented. I propose to incorporate such a paradigm and name it, ‘Mosaic Paths to Knowledge’, a new form of knowledge, which will be developed primarily from this research, based on the combined experiences of the participants in the study. The support for this knowledge is based on the wisdom, skills, and even the age deference that WOC contribute to their pursuit of their doctorate studies, as they encounter barriers and hidden information needed to matriculate in a timely and successful manner. The primary characteristic of storytelling, and challenging notions that suggest racism is non-existent (in blatant or, micro-aggression forms) in Western society, especially in Canada, are components I wish to borrow from, when theorizing the data collected for my study. Understanding the basic foundational
premise of capital theory is also necessary in order to support my understanding of cultural wealth and what it looks like from the perspective of the experiences of WOC.

3.3 Cultural Capital Theory: Unpacking Bourdieu

As suggested in Chapter I, I use Cultural Capital Theory to help articulate the cultural ways of knowing and experiential knowledge found deep within the stories of my participants. A general understanding of Pierre Bourdieu’s cultural theory is necessary in order to grasp the implications of how cultural wealth is transmitted through the educational experiences of WOC. In my discussion here, I include a few foundational observations about the origins of Bourdieu’s theory, and a user-friendly explanation of this theory as part of the theoretical framework developed in this chapter. It is not my intent in this research, to give an in-depth analysis or to delve into the deep philosophies of Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital theory, or other facets of his work.

The term “cultural capital” refers to Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) theory, which suggests that different forms of cultural knowledge, such as language, modes of social interactions, and meaning are valued hierarchically in society. In general, cultural capital is a term used by sociologists to explain how patterns and behaviours are affected by class differences, especially in education. As noted earlier, critical pedagogues argue that only those characteristics and practices (i.e. cultural wealth) of the dominant paradigm will facilitate academic achievement within mainstream schools that reflect dominant and exclusionary ideology (Leistyna, Woodrum, & Sherblom, 1996, p. 334). This means that it is only achievements and skills that can be characterized in the dominant culture that appear to get rewarded or supported. The issue that remains is what happens to the wealth of non-dominant skills that students and marginalized communities bring into educational institutions? How are they counted and valued?

The highest credential that is bestowed on an individual in pursuit of higher education is the doctoral degree and, given Bourdieu’s insight into cultural reproduction is no wonder there is that women of colour continue to be under-represented at this level of education. The reproduction of education, according to cultural capital theory, safeguards its own structures by
establishing symbolic forms of power that must be attained in order to inherit the material and intellectual gains it affords. Therefore if WOC are not equipped with dominant forms of cultural capital, they risk being excluded from many of the rewards that society has to offer. Added to this concern is the need for the student to first acquire the ‘know how’ in order to have the adequate tools for the rules of the game, which will then afford them successful navigation on the playing ‘field’ (doctoral programs, academic culture). Habitus (ways of knowing, background, beliefs) influences the degree to which the student will acquire capital in this arena, whether economic, cultural, social or symbolic forms of capital. Thomas-Long (2006) brings out similarities to this phenomenon with her discussion of Bourdieu’s (1977) theory of cultural capital when she states:

Bourdieu’s idea of symbolic power in graduate educations draws us into relations of “competencies” that are seen as coordinated to the culture of departments and disciplines. For instance, graduate students with particular dispositions of speech, writing, dress and so on, appear to fit in within the departmental culture, which in turn makes the opportunities to access various resources (financial, linguistic, and social) easier (p. 72).

Indeed, it is necessary for WOC to acquire particular skills and abilities while in the doctoral program but just how they go about it, is the primary issue for this study, and what those skills and abilities are called (e.g., capital or wealth) is the secondary issue to be determined, when discussing the experiences of WOC as they pursue a doctorate degree.

3. 4 Language and Academic Language As Symbolic Power Reproduced in Society

Language is a form of symbolic power, or what Bourdieu refers to as, an “instrument of power.” In this symbolic state language is used as a leverage to gain position in society, and is viewed as form of cultural capital, which is reproduced in society (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 648). Language is an example of symbolic capital because is falls under the category of “institutionalized” cultural capital –which is the objectification of cultural capital in the form of academy qualifications (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 47). The other two categories of cultural capital are what Bourdieu (1986) labels as, “embodied” and “objectified” capital. The embodied form of this capital is acquired through the lifelong work of self-improvement, which is what “embraces
the mind and disposition of the person’ (p. 47). The objectified forms of cultural capital are those objects in society that are values, such as books, art, instruments, and media.

Bourdieu (1977a) views language as a marker of distinction when explaining differences in educational attainment and notes that language is both an instrument of communication and power. Swartz (1997), in his analysis of Bourdieu’s work, explains that the symbolic systems of culture: arts, science, religion etc., shape our understanding of reality. These same systems also help establish and maintain social hierarchies in the form of: dispositions, objects, systems, institutions, or cultural embodied power relations (p. 103). From these systems, educational institutions conclude what ways of knowing (e.g., academic knowledge, and know-how) are considered valuable transmitters of knowledge. This behavior reproduces dominant educational practices in education and societal culture. For example, Bourdieu (1989) in Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1997, 1990) Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, articulates very clearly just how the reproduction of dominant knowledge is transmitted through symbolic forms of power, when he states:

Thus as we now know that, in America no less than in Europe, credentials contribute to ensuring the reproduction of social inequality by safeguarding the preservation of the structure of the distribution of powers through a constant re-distribution of people and titles characterized, behind the impeccable appearance of equity and meritocracy, by a systematic bias in the favour of the possessors of inherited cultural capital (preface, p. xi).

The reproduction of education in society is accomplished when only dominant forms of knowledge are transmitted and maintained in the classroom. There is no need or room for ‘other’ ways of knowing in these settings. Teachers and persons in authority sustain this knowledge by rewarding students who speak and adhere to dominant culture found in these institutions. Compliance to this way of knowing meets little resistance as students also experience academic and professional rewards for their adherence. Further explanation of how education is reproduced in society is presented in Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron’s (1970, 1990) Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture (2nd Ed). In their study, they make an important observation about the correlation between language and culture and how it is leveraged in the educational system:
The influence of linguistic capital, particularly manifest in the first years of schooling when the understanding and use of language are the major points of leverage for teachers’ assessments, never ceases to be felt: style is always taken into account, implicitly or explicitly, at every level of the educational system and, to a varying extent, in all university careers, even scientific ones (p. 73).

What’s more, according to their findings the ability, or ease with which a student is acculturated into academic language in higher education is largely dependent on the language spoken at home in the early years (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Language is more than a means of communication; how you speak it, how it is received and, even more important and relevant to my research, who is speaking (i.e., racial, cultural identities, markers that Bourdieu and Passeron neglect to address in their research) determines how people become further stratified in society and, in turn, in their educational success. Identity and language are a large part of this stratification, because these markers affect students, and determine how teachers interact with students because of their particular cultural and linguistic demarcation.

Cummins’ (2001) Academy Expertise Learning model explains how identities are negotiated between teacher and students in the classroom. Often the expectations that teachers communicate to students who come from bi-lingual or multi-lingual backgrounds is that they will leave their language and culture at the door; their multiliteracy is seen and treated as a problem in the classroom. What results are feelings of insecurity, ambivalence or resistance as the knowledges from these students are subjected to power relations between the dominant group and the subordinated communities (Cummins, 2001). Students can only be empowered when their identities are reinforced and when the curriculum reflects their cultural ways of knowing are on par with dominant knowledge(s). In Taylor, Bernhard, Suchi and Cummins (2008), Cummins suggests:

Meaningful learning is greatly acquired through the production and reception of these texts, in which they see their linguistic and cultural identities positively showcased, affirmed and reflected back to them by socially significant audiences such as school and home communities or extended transnational family networks (Cummins, 2008 p. 276).
Cultural reproduction continues, despite the dense demographic of communities of colour in Canada, because meaningful text (culturally specific curriculums) for these groups appear in limited spaces in classrooms of both middle school and higher institutions.

I believe the ideas Bourdieu (1986) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, 1990) put forth in the areas of symbolic power and the reproduction of education, society and culture will help me to deconstruct the dynamics which occur in graduate education and its relation to the experiences of WOC. It has been established that language acts as a marker of intelligence, which in turn breeds power or positioning for particular students over others. For example, a graduate student who portrays a particular (dominant) disposition of language, writing, dress, knowledge or art etc., is perceived by the academic culture in general and their department in particular, as bright and intelligent. In turn, this perception reproduces the dominant culture by rewarding this type of student with resources and opportunities (financial, social), which makes access and success for that student much greater over other students. Those who are recipients of such awards, Thomas-Long continues, “are held up as the model student as a reflection of the ‘brightest and best’” (p. 72). Thomas-Long (2006) posits:

If language gives its speaker legitimacy, then in the labour market, it would accrue value. Thus, linguistic differences have different value in terms of accent, grammar and vocabulary that determine the social position of the speaker (p. 112).

The social level of one’s habitus also determines the access they may have to the symbolic power of language. This is evident when Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) draw a correlation between social status and one’s ability to acquire academic language. They suggest that the closer one’s proximity to a lower class, the more one’s ability to move toward scholarly language becomes challenged. Therefore, as Bourdieu (1991) suggests, “linguists are right in saying that all languages are linguistically equal; they are wrong in thinking they are socially equal” (1997, p. 652). Language then becomes a prominent factor which influences students’ ability to assimilate within academic culture. If a student, for example, does or does not have an accent but is a visible minority, what different outcome can each expect? Many in my study believe that their accent, or lack of one, had a direct influence on their experience in the doctoral program. Also, if a student and/or their parents were not socialized in the academic culture, do
Language is not simply an instrument of communication: it also provides, together a richer or poorer vocabulary, a more or less complex system of categories, so that the capacity to decipher and manipulate complex structures whether logical or aesthetic, depends partly on the complexity of the language transmitted by the family (p. 73).

Hence, according to cultural capital theory, it can be deduced that family background and heritage can determine the level of cultural capital (all forms) that can be experienced given the “right” social upbringing. The theory and interpretation of cultural capital, as it relates to my study, inadvertently characterize the pursuit of graduate level studies as a luxury not all can afford. For example, one must be able to exist without a full time job, have a solid support system (in and outside of the family), and be able to have the luxury of affording the extended length of time needed (with very little pay) to complete the degree.

Acquiring a doctoral degree is closely linked to household income and family background (Thomas-Long, 2006). Once all these prerequisites are established, there are other un-written rules that characterize ‘success’ within the walls of the academy (Trower & Chait 2002; Margolis, 2000). Often, these hidden cues are only revealed inside the academic environment. The cultural knowledge that is produced in these environments is often only understood by those who also have matching values, which are acquired from having similar cultural and familial backgrounds. This form of knowledge, which is referred to as “know how” by Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum (2003), allows the student to successfully navigate through higher education. Unfortunately, other students without this advantage can become bewildered and disenfranchised. This is especially true for doctoral students who do not receive supportive mentoring from their supervisors or committee members.
Therefore, issues such as funding, positive interaction and support from supervisors, degree of outside family pressures, and of course how well a student is able to adapt to the culture of academy are factors that are needed for those students whose parentage and histories are not representative of the dominant culture (Trower & Chait, 2003). According to Nyquist et al. (1999), *On the Road to Becoming a Professor*, there are many implicit nuances and specified knowledge(s) that all prospective doctoral recipients are required to have mastered. These students must possess particular skills, resources, and knowledge that are passed down to them by their parents or gained through the networking relationship of the student/supervisor. What happens to students who do not have the acquired knowledge or network needed to deconstruct the academic culture of higher education? What if students discover a way to break these barriers with or without the assistance of their parents’ cultural knowledge? Will their knowledge contribution be counted? My study evaluates this question from the perspective of the participants’ experiences.

Bourdieu’s (1986) cultural capital theory is used to explain how various tools come together to affect the way certain dominant ways of knowing are structurally placed in society to produce reproduction of those ideals. Bourdieu’s discussion about habitus, field, and practice explain just how he theorizes this concept, and how cultural capital occurs. Commencing with his classic definition of habitus, Bourdieu’s (1990) explains that it is:

[a] property of social agents (individuals, groups, or institutions) that comprises a “structured and structuring structure” (1994d:170). It is “structured”, by one’s past and present circumstances, such as family upbringing and educational experiences. It is “structuring”, in that one’s habitus helps to shape one’s present and future practices. It is a “structure”, in that it is systematically ordered rather than random or un-patterned. This “structure” comprised a system of dispositions which generate perceptions, appreciations and practices (1990c: 53) (p. 51).

Bourdieu’s redundant use of the word ‘structure’ emphasizes the role that a controlled social order (of sorts) is used as a compass to navigate habitus—the disposition, or nature of a person who is informed largely by upbringing and heritage. In his definition, Bourdieu also speaks of ‘a system of dispositions’, or simply stated, characteristics and ideologies that describe
a person. All of which helps to determine the presence of (in this case, dominant) cultural capital a person might possess. Practice, as Bourdieu (1986) explains, results from the relationship between one’s disposition (habitus). Bourdieu’s explanation of field illustrates the setting or environment where one’s habitus is developed or challenged. It is the social arena where practice occurs. Capital, in his continued discussion, is simply one’s position on the field. To clarify, a person can either be on a leveled playing ground, having the advantages of cultural capital, or on an unequal playing ground, where one does not have those same advantages (Bourdieu, 1986; 1990).

3.5 Dominant vs. Alternative Forms of Cultural Capital

Researchers using the dominant version (DiMaggio, 1982, 1985; Farkas, Grobe, Sheeman, & Shaun, 1990; Aschaffernburg & Maas, 1996; DeGraff, DeGraff & Krasykamp, 2000; Sullivan, 2001; Dumas, 2002; Eitle & Eitle, 2002) of Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory tend to rely on the economic and symbolic forms of capital to explain their studies. Researchers using an alternative or critical lens (Smrekar, 1996; Reay, 1998; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Blackledge, 2001 Carter, 2003) and (Yosso, 2005; Solarzono, 2000) who I will introduce later for analyzing cultural capital in the field of education, especially among communities of colour, rely on the cultural and social forms of capital. In Lareau and Weininger’s (2006) study entitled, “Cultural Capital in Educational Research: A Critical Assessment”, they identify authors who use both approaches, but highlight those who have developed an alternative approach in their work.

The task for researchers who seek an alternative perception of cultural capital is to expose the contributions of ‘skill’ and ‘ability’ in their assessment of the dominant interpretation of cultural capital. They present an inclusive representation of the skills and knowledge found in communities of colour, an acknowledgement that goes unnoticed within a dominant interruption of cultural capital theory. The alternative authors identified by Lareau and Weininger (2003) demonstrate how viable sources of cultural wealth can be found in communities of colour. For example, Carter (2003) in her article, “Black Cultural Capital, Status Positioning, and Schooling Conflicts for Low-Income African American Youth”, provides a good definition of an alternate perception of cultural capital as:
Non-dominant cultural capital embodies a set of tastes, or schemes of appreciation and understandings, accorded to a lower status group, that includes preferences for particular linguistic, musical, or interactional styles (p. 138).

Lareau and Weinburger (2003) cite Reay (1998) as a source of an alternative interpretation of cultural capital. In *Class Work: Mothers’ Involvement in Their Children’s Primary Schooling*, Reay (1998) affirms that the cultural capital that mothers in her study draw from is a result of both their present situation and past histories. Reay (1998) argues that it is necessary to focus on the gendered nature of parental involvement as she sets out to “examine the ways in which women’s own educational histories and the working of local and wider educational markets shape their involvement in their children’s schooling” (p. 46).

Annette Lareau (1989, 2000) had earlier examined the importance of the relationship between parenting and schools and considers level of interaction between the two to be a form of cultural capital. In her study, Lareau (1989, 2000) found that parents from working-class families depended on the teacher (school) to direct their children’s academy progress, whereas parents from middle-class backgrounds saw the schooling of their children as a shared responsibility. The work of both Reay (1998) and Lareau (2000) represent an alternative interpretation of cultural capital in their work by concluding that “the role of parents and especially mothers, in activating cultural capital, is critical to understanding class differences in children’s school experiences” (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p. 603). I have introduced the work of Solarzono (2000) and Yosso (2005) who also emphasize the issue of culture and race as an important aspect for understanding alternative forms of cultural wealth.

3.6 Conceptualizing Community Cultural Wealth: Contributions of MLK Jr.

As noted above, Tara Yosso (2005) conceptualizes community cultural wealth within critical race theory (CRT). In this discussion Yosso (2005) shifts from the deficit view held by dominant interpretations of cultural capital to an alternative perspective that is shed in a more positive light. Yosso (2005) critiques the dominant methods Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) used to discuss social and racial inequity in cultural capital theory. While Bourdieu’s (1986) work sought to provide a structural critique of social and cultural reproduction, Yosso (2005) suggests
that this theory has been subsequently used to claim some communities as culturally wealthy, while others are culturally poor. Her insightful argument suggests that the limited interpretation of Bourdieu (1986) exposes White middle class culture as the standard and, therefore, all other forms and expressions of “culture are judged in comparison to this ‘norm’” (p. 75).

In Yosso’s theoretical refinement, cultural capital is not just “inherited or possessed by the middle class but rather it refers to an accumulation of specific forms of knowledge, skills and abilities that are valued by privileged groups in society” (2005, p. 76). As her political standpoint, Yosso (2005) chooses not to “dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde, 1994) of Bourdieu’s theory but rather embarks on a path to establish her own version of cultural capital theory which she renames, “Community Cultural Wealth.” Yosso’s (2005) research, along with others (Walker, 1983; Smith, 1999; Collins, 2000; Wane, 2003; hooks, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Delgado & Benal, 2002), is an example of scholarship (of colour), which is emancipatory for racialized women and their communities. I intend to build on the above-mentioned studies, along with others, to establish the experiences of the participants of my study as an alternative and valuable form of cultural capital.

While reading KING: A Pilgrimage to the Mountain by Harvard Sitkoff (2008) several months ago, I discovered the rigorous steps Martin Luther King Jr. took on the path to pursuing his doctorate degree. He would get up every morning at 5:30 a.m. to write for three to four hours before going out and minister to the needs of his congregants (Sitkoff, 2008). Despite his natural gift for oration and the charisma that unexpectedly spilled from him, Martin Luther King Jr. (MLKJ) felt he needed to affirm himself somehow and believed a doctorate was a distinguished title that brought with it “a cachet of privilege” (Sitkoff, 2008, p. 17). I was inspired by this and attempted to implement a similar regime by getting up at 6 a.m. every morning as I began the long writing process myself. Ignoring all other recorded character flaws of Martin Luther King Jr., I deliberately focused on the inner strength and struggles of this great historical figure. He was a man who changed the lives of Black people and many other oppressed people in an unprecedented manner, with the added pressure of eyes from around the world watching him through public telecasts and newspapers.
Very young and freshly minted with his PhD, King knew he was hired by the church to preserve a conservative, low-key disposition in all political matters, or risk being expelled like his predecessor (Sitkoff, 2008). MLK deliberated his obligation to do the ‘right thing’ for the greater good and slowly ventured out of his comfort zone to implement his non-violent philosophy which contributed to the success of the well publicized 1955 bus boycott in Selma, Mississippi. The brave actions of MLKJ were initially frowned-upon by the church leaders because of the historical canon that kept church and state separate. Imagine what would have happened to the historical gains of the Civil Rights Movement had MLKJ acquiesced with his superiors and kept the status quo? I view MLKJ’s experience as an example of using cultural wealth (survival strategy, and spiritual). His beliefs, cultural background, skills and abilities all speak to how his courageous life and legacy has given society a wealth of knowledge (in and outside academia), of how a life packed with extraordinary experiences can impact others in unforeseen ways for years to come. MLK’s life is a cultural wealth that not only benefited his own community, but also the world at large.

When referring to the commitment required of Black teachers to work to transform the academy, bell hooks (1999), in Teaching to Transgress, also refers to Dr. King’s struggle to implement change on a global scale. King was fearful that his decisions could alienate his conservative bourgeois supporters, as well as the black church. As a Black scholar and social activist, bell hooks states that she drew strength from the life and works of Martin Luther King Jr. and his profound inner strength. In her words:

[academically] he felt compelled by his religious beliefs to oppose the Vietnam war, King meditated on a passage from Romans, chapter 12 verse 2, which reminded him of the necessity of dissent, challenge and change: “Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewal of our minds” (p. 33-34).

In this illustration, hooks (1999) posits that everyone in both the academy and society “are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions—and society—so that the way we live, teach and work can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passion for justice, and our love for freedom” (p. 34). Similar to hooks, WOC like myself must borrow from the inner strength and cultural wealth drawn on by hooks and MLKJ. In the case of my choice to marry
Yosso’s ideas, CRT and Womanist theories, I am comfortable to frame my research analysis so that WOC identities will be maintained.

In making my choice for interpreting WOC interviews, I am challenging “banking” education. Freire’s (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* illuminates this ideal when he challenges the education process as merely an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. In this model, instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits, which the student patiently receives, memorizes and repeats. Freire (1970) refers to this as the “banking” concept of education (p. 53). Womanist theories and other anti-racist theories challenge dominant practices, such as the banking model, in both educational and social institutions in an effort to bring to the forefront knowledge from the perspective of the communities of colour and other oppressed peoples.

3. 7 Anti-Racism and Cultural Capital

Because there is a good theoretical fit between Yosso’s and other scholars of colour’s ideas, together, they will inherently support an anti-racist approach. Dei (2000) defines anti-racism “as an action-oriented educational strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and interlocking systems of social oppression” (p. 27). A key goal for this study is to conceptualize cultural wealth from a different perspective and eventually, to encourage those who hold on to dominant perspectives about communities of colour, to change their minds. This objective is an action-oriented strategy that is important as the sequel for my research.

According to Calliste and Dei (2000), “integrating race and gender analyses in anti-racism discourses allows for the exploration of multiple and, perhaps, conflicting meanings of community” (p. 12). Calliste and Dei (2000) suggest, like Yosso, that historical contributions from communities of colour are often discounted and, in some cases, “the futures and identities of racial, ethnic, class and sexual minorities and women have been constructed for them by the dominant” (2005, p. 15). Dei (1996) also suggests that a critical integrative anti-racism approach moves beyond the acknowledgement of material conditions that structure social inequality, to an interrogation of White power and privilege and its rationale for dominance. That is, anti-racism addresses the relationship between socially constructed markers and how
institutions use these differences to grant privileges and impose penalties to different members of society. For example, participants in doctoral programs feel they have been penalized when it comes to funding, as pointed out in my literature review, and even with mentorship in relation to their choice of racialized topics for this research. For example, as Thomas-Long (2006) notes, in the case of her study that “there was a perception among many participants that in order to get funding, research utilizing critical theories such as anti-racism must be intentionally ‘dumbed-down’” (p. 64). This probably diminishes the value of their work but the effectiveness of an anti-racism approach is in its ability to identify the inter-relations of race, gender, culture, and social background from the perspective of people in subordinate positions in society.

Dei (2000) posits that all social oppressions are generated and reinforced through each other and that the racist project acts as a conduit to perpetuate power and domination within its various structures and institutions. Finally, anti-racism focuses on:

- **Equity**: that is, the qualitative value of justice. It deals with representation: that is the need to have multiple voices and perspectives involved in the production of mainstream social knowledge. Anti-racism also examines institutional practices to see how institutions respond to the challenge of diversity and difference: understood as the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, language, culture and religion (Dei, 2000, p. 34).

Anti-racist theories provide a politically informed perspective that has been very helpful for my own understanding of the many ways that social injustices are woven together to oppress communities of colour. Its influence reverberates throughout the discussions of my research topic and the experiences of my participants.

### 3.8 Decolonizing Theories

Decolonizing theories seek to decolonize the mind and spirit of the oppressed. According to Tuhiwai Smith (1999), research is an encounter between the West and the ‘Other’ where much more is known about one side of those encounters than is known about the other side (p. 57). Her work examines different approaches and methodologies that are being developed to ensure that research with indigenous peoples can be more respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful. These practices, according to Smith (1999), “openly challenge the research community about racist practices and attitudes, ethnocentric assumptions, and exploitive research, sounding
warning bells that research can no longer be conducted with indigenous communities as if their views did not count or their lives did not matter” (p. 98).

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) provides an account of how the historical world view and ‘discovery’ of new knowledge emerged from the period of European history known as the Enlightenment. This was how Western knowledge came to be established as superior. The historical perspective Smith (1999) provides is vital to understanding how the term ‘research’ is contextualized in a dominant Western ideology. ‘Discoveries’ about and from the new world expanded and challenged ideas of how the West views itself. For example, Indigenous peoples were “classified alongside the plant and animal life of a particular region, hierarchical typologies of humanity and systems of representation were established and ranked by archeologists and other kinds of researchers” (p 58). Some indigenous peoples were ranked above others based on beliefs about whether they could be considered human or sub-human. The criterion for ranking was based on whether the object possessed a soul and, hence, could be offered Christian salvation. Even within religious ideologies, the system for organizing research was always about power and domination.

Consistent with anti-colonial approaches, the priority for this study is to decolonize (deconstruct) the tenets of dominant methodological research, in order to understand how the histories and experiences of indigenous (racialized) people are framed within imperialist and colonialist frameworks of reality (Dei, 2000; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Similarly, my aim is to preserve the value of the lived experiences of my participants as cultural wealth from an ideological perspective that is culturally sensitive and relevant.

3. 9 Transforming Epistemology

My choice of theories such as that of Yosso (2005) is also consistent with Gloria Anzaldua’s (1990) calls for people of colour to transform the process of theorizing. This is a call about epistemology—the study of sources of knowledge. Scholars such as Ladson–Billing (2000) and Dolores Delgado Bernal (1998, 2002) have alluded to the question about whose knowledge counts and whose knowledge is discounted in educational research.
Race and racism have shaped epistemological debate throughout US history (Yosso, 2005) and it is no different in the history of Canada. In this context, the mandate of scholars of colour is to transform how sources of knowledge are theorized, as well as how they are valued in Canadian educational institutions of higher learning. Dominant epistemologies usually prevail within educational paradigms and in this elite community certain sources of knowledge are counted while others are discounted. Where does knowledge come from? Is it not attained through experience and understanding?

The *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines knowledge as the information, understanding and skills that you gain through education or experience. Plainly stated, knowledge comes from a person’s experience and understanding of the way the world is seen (Dei, 2000). Specifically, the experiences that come from the WOC in this study must be counted as knowledge. As such, it must be considered to have its own epistemology and must not be discounted as invaluable. What is needed is for WOC not to wait for the dominant culture to decide when or how they will include their knowledge(s) as a valuable epistemology, but for WOC to continue to transform the process of theorizing by naming their own epistemologies and by claiming ownership of the wealth they produce. We can do this by the telling of our own stories, which in turn, strengthen not only our communities but also our own spiritual and intellectual resolve. Rethinking dominant ways of knowing helps to transform cultural ways of knowing into new knowledge and epistemologies.

**Section 2: Methodology**

### 3. 10 Methodology

In this section the methodology for my study will be discussed. A qualitative inquiry research design was employed. I begin with an explanation of the characteristics of a qualitative inquiry design and Interviewing as my methodology. The methodology was done in three phases: the interview, the interview schedule, and maintaining a journal. This triangulation facilitates a thorough cross reference from more than one method of data collection. Details
about transcribing and the participants follow. The chapter ends with comments about the limitations of the data collecting process from the perspective of the participants.

**a. Interview as a Methodology**

Finding a universal definition for quantitative (positivist) methodology is much harder when referring to qualitative research. Steinar Kvale (2009) asserts that “Qualitative research is no longer simply, not quantitative research, but has developed an identity (or maybe multiple identities) of its own” (p. 49). Qualitative research as Kvale continues, “is intended to approach the world ‘out there’…and to understand, describe and sometimes explain social phenomena ‘from the inside’ in a number of different ways:

- By analyzing experiences of individuals or groups. Experiences can be related to biographical life histories or to (everyday or professional) practices.
- By analyzing interactions and communications in the making, based on observing or recording practices.
- By analyzing documents (text, images, film, music) of similar traces of experiences or interactions. (p. x).

According to Kvale (2009), an “Inter-view [is] an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of common interest” (p. 7). The interview is, “a powerful method for production knowledge of the human condition…Interviews allows the subjects to convey to others their situation from their own perspective and in their own words” (Kvale, 2009, pp. 7-11). In my interview study, experiential knowledge was the central theme in the lives of my participants who were pursuing, or who had graduated from the doctoral program. As the researcher, it was my job to validate their stories and apply them to my research question, which investigated how the experiential knowledge of WOC in doctoral programs can be conceptualized as cultural wealth and new knowledge. According to Kvale (2009), the fundamental steps in the Interview process are: 1) specific ways of documenting 2) rules of transcribing 3) specific ways of performing qualitative analysis 4) determining validity 5) reporting what was said and how it was analyzed (p. xvii).

The specific ways of documenting the qualitative interview are specific to individual preferences. There is no hard rule as to how the researchers should go about it. I chose to rely on
my recording device to document the dialogue, as well as to back it up with the video interface from my computer. The specific ways of performing qualitative analysis and determining validity are processes that, according to Kvale (2009), take some serious consideration. It depends largely on the degree to which the researcher chooses to report the data. For example, if participants are quoted verbatim, or if the researcher paraphrases the meaning, there are issues that can have an effect on the validity of the data. Reporting what was said and how it is to be analyzed is the final step in the interview process. My rules for transcribing were personal to me, in that it was important for me to do my own transcribing, as opposed to hiring someone (see Transcribing, section 3.14).

Specific ways of performing qualitative analysis, (from recollection of my Methods courses) vary from method to method, but can include: case study, institutional ethnography, focus group to phenomenology and content analysis. My study utilizes interviews, as a methodological approach for this study. Determining validity in qualitative research is, put simply, determining truth. Pervin (1984) purports that validity in the social sciences pertains to the degree that a method investigates what it is intended to investigate, to “the extent to which our observations indeed reflect the phenomena or variables of interest to us” (p. 48). Finally, reporting what was said and how it was analyzed is the last, yet intrinsic aspect of qualitative research. The effectiveness to how well this is done, will inherently determine the validity and value of the epistemological knowledge it produces (Kvale, 2009). This is important because knowledge, from this perspective is validated through practice, and “the qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge” (p. 21).

Initially, I was nervous when I ventured into the field to begin my interviews. I knew I was knowledgeable about what I was about to do but it was also important for me to implement the open-ended in-depth approach in a manner that would be relaxing and reflective for both the participants and myself. After getting past the formality of setting up the equipment and prompting the participant to begin, the atmosphere soon changed into a conversation that appeared to be unfolding between two friends. It was advantageous to set up the interviews away from the university, as more comfortable settings helped to produce a peaceful setting and an easier flow in conversation. For example, the first interview was conducted at the participant’s home. Afterwards, I realized I was quite self-conscious and uncomfortable with the idea of
doing my first interview. I believe my nervousness with the first interview, coupled with the relaxing environment of that home, caused me to lose track of the time, resulting in the first interview lasting over three hours!

For the next interview, I decided to create both a relaxing environment for the participant, yet a reasonable amount of order and comfort, for me as the researcher by giving the participant the option to come to my office. In this manner, I was able to keep track of the time and was careful to create a supportive environment for the participants. One way I was able to accomplish this was first setting a timer on my computer, and second I was able to keep the participants relaxed through my calming tone and body language. I would lean in and make sure I made eye contact with the speaker. I would affirm their responses with common expressions of agreement and interest, such as, “Really?” and “What do you mean?” and “Uh-um”, etc. to demonstrate how attentive I was to what they were saying. It was challenging, however, to balance keeping eye contact with the participant I would jot down occasional notes, while gaging my tone of voice to ensure I was not to loud, or spoke to softly. There was also plenty of laughter and sharing moments between the participants and myself. Largely, all but one of the interviews transpired as two friends talking over coffee or lunch (minus the food). The sixth interview I arranged was my most difficult one. I had no prior knowledge of this participant; that is, we did not know any colleagues in common that would link us together. I had secured her name from a professor. This particular participant (see “Grace” in chapter Four and Five for more details) spoke very little. I found myself rambling to fill in the blanks. I was mortified when I realized after our somewhat strained (on my part) interview, that I had lost all the data in a computer/voice recorder malfunction and I had to sum up the courage to call her and do it all over again. Graciously, she consented but the second interview was over the phone. Most profound was the fact that Grace turned out to be one of the participants from whom I learned the most about myself. Additionally, during the process of data collection, my “know-how” in this area became sharpened.

3.11 Data Collection

To gain an understanding of how the WOC in my study experienced the process of being in a doctoral program, I began the interview process by asking my participants: “What made you decide to pursue the degree in the first place?” The response of this question often took us back
to memories from childhood or to thinking about the relationships among family members, mothers in particular. It was evident that familial experiences were important motivations to pursue the doctorate in most cases. The interviews lasted from sixty to ninety minutes and data collection occurred over three months. In the beginning, it was important for me to establish an atmosphere of trust, warmth, and safety. I was willing to meet at wherever location the participants felt most comfortable. Most preferred the privacy away from the distraction of their own home or office. The sessions were audio and video taped using a digital voice recorder and, a computer, for the video component. The voice recorder had the capacity to download the information into mp3 files, where they were stored under password security on my computer.

At the time of the data collection, four of the ten participants had already finished their PhD. However, during the writing process, one other had defended. To date, five participants have finished the program, while five [are still in the process of completing] have not yet finished the program. It was not planned this way but this is the way it worked out. Four of the participants had English as a second language. I refer to them as “L2”, while three others spoke a native language to their culture, (i.e., Creole/French). All of the participants learned of the study by word of mouth or what is referred to as the snow-ball technique in qualitative research.

Following a methodology of interview inquiry, in-depth interviews were conducted with each participant and participants were given the opportunity to email me brief written support for issues they felt they did not explain well during the oral taping or call me to explain further. A triangulation data was first proposed for this study where interviews, focus groups, and a brief online survey was originally planned to be a part of the data compilation. However, after a mock interview I discovered that this format distanced me from the level of depth I needed to get into because of the sensitivity of the topics to be discussed. Responses from the survey [for the five people who did return them] served as demographic information. I found this method of data collection to be redundant because the same information always came out early in the interview process. Also, feedback from some of the participants made clear why they talked about certain things, because I made them feel like we were like friends having a conversation. They said I made them feel safe. I was able to gain their trust and protect their identity early in the encounter. For these same reasons, participants were resistant to sharing their stories or exposing
their identities in a focus group setting. Therefore, I decided against adding a focus group component to the data collection.

3. 12 Designing Interview Schedule, Coding and Tools for Interview Analysis

As stated above, the research design of my research questions was first tested in a mock interview and online survey. From the responses in both of these categories, I was able to determine the futility of my questions by focusing on the quality of responses I received. From the interview, I was able to see that my initial questions were too limiting and produced only one-word answers or very limited responses. This early education let me know that I needed to go back and design questions that would allow the participants to walk easily in the direction I needed to gently nudge them toward. I began by asking myself questions: *Why did I seek this degree in the first place? Who helped me to continue when I felt I was losing my wind? What was the experience with my supervisors like?* From my own knowledge and experience, I was able to design the types of questions that I knew would generate deeper discussions. Additionally, I designed the interview schedule so that it was directly informed by the selected frameworks for the study. This method would enable me to check the validity of the results once all the data were collected. For example, I asked a question about familial educational background, to establish the impact of cultural capital. Another question focused on how a participant addressed power relations in the academy, which is supported by CRT. Then questions about spirituality and survival strategies speak to the womanist theory.

Initially, when designing this project, I opted for a pattern that would incorporate more than one approach. I thought I might include focus groups as well as Internet surveys. However, after taking a small course on research design, during the collection of my data, offered by the school, and remembering what I learned in a course I took with Professor Muzzin, years ago, I quickly discovered that based on the sensitivity of my research and its cohesiveness, I wanted to maintain a simple design of in-depth interviews that would be the best instrument for this study. Also, I reasoned that my own personal style of engaging the participants and making them feel comfortable during our closed dialogue was a strength that I brought to the table as a researcher. Therefore, in this methodology chapter, I discuss the method of “The Interview” as an example of a qualitative form of research I used for this study. A methodology is a theory and an analysis of how research does, and should proceed. Method refers to procedures and techniques needed
to carry out qualitative research (Harding, 1987). A stated in Chapter 2, the primary methods used for this research involve in-depth one-on-one interviews, using face-to-face dialogue, video recordings and telephone interviews as research instruments.

The process for analyzing the data was an arduous one. I began by trying to familiarize myself with techniques for coding and organizing the data. I enrolled in a NVIVO class which is a two part course offered by the university, designed to acquaint doctoral researchers with the necessary skills involving the use of computer applications to code the mounds of data collected for the research project. Besides, I found that as I was collecting the data I had already implemented (from my own know-how) a strategy to compile and code the various themes that surfaced throughout the data. In keeping with Kvale (2009) guidelines for interview methodology, I also numbered each line and page of the transcriptions and used them to reference the quotes made from my participants. I transferred these references into the larger, and then final document of the data chapters (e.g., blocked quotes from participants stories, allocated page numbers to the transcribed documents during the interview process).

When transcribing, I would colour-code topics with different font colours. For example, whenever a participant spoke about her mother, I would make that text a particular colour (e.g. purple), to identify this topic/theme in all the interviews. Another simplistic example is, whenever participants talked about funding or awards, I would make the font green to signify the correlation better the colour of money. Then, when I went back over all of the transcriptions, I could easily identify that the interviews were divided into many sections of various colours. If I wanted to determine each of the participants’ thoughts with regards to funding, I would look for green font throughout each interview. I would classify certain topics and colours on an Excel grid and use this as a guide to categorize the findings. The important aspect to remember about the tools of research is what Kvale (2007) suggests in the following:

[The] tools by themselves do not find the meaning of hundreds of pages of interview transcripts, the researcher who applies the tools does. The quality of the analysis rests upon his or her craftsmanship, knowledge of the research topic, sensitivity for the medium he or she is working with—language—and mastery of analytic tools available for analyzing the meanings expressed in language (p. 103).
Although my method of coding could be seen as archaic to some, the modern equipment available through software applications, such as the previously mentioned NVIVO, seemed too clinical and calculating for the organic nature of my discussion with my participants. It was important for me to read between the nuances of their choice of words and the language they used to explain themselves. For example, I discovered when the words, “You know?” was used often by my participants. I transcribed it as, “yk”. Throughout the interviews, I realized that participants wanted to make sure that I understood what they were saying and, even in some cases, if I agreed with what they were saying. Therefore, I would never omit this word from the transcribing process because it added a specific meaning to the process.

3.13 Maintaining a Journal

The decision to purchase and maintain a journal for my research came during my second year of my doctorate. Looking back, my first journal, which I started in 2007 represented the nascent and very confused stages of my research. In fact, it was only after I began the second journal in 2009, when I had finished the proposal, that I was able to utilize it effectively as a tool for my actual research. During the data collection, my journal served as a practical tool where I would converge and organize the data I uncovered from my participants. My initial habit was to create a ‘Field Notes’ section where I would write observations and body language cues, to capture informational points that were not captured on the audio recorder during the interview (especially for those who preferred not to be video-taped with my computer). After each interview, I would write reflections on my own performance. Did I probe enough? Was I confident as the researcher? Did I accomplish what I set out to do? These were all questions I asked myself. Then I would write down what I felt was my interpretation of what the participant was or was not saying. For example, I would recall whether the participant seemed relaxed, strained, guarded, etc., before, during and after the interview.

Secondly, my journal allowed me to reflect on the actual day of the interview and to visualize it by going back to that section. This was very helpful because, when I eventually approached the writing and analysis stage, it was almost six months after I had interviewed and transcribed all the data. Besides being a place where I collected all my references and wrote
down new ideas, words and thoughts from colleagues, books or even movies, my journal provided an informal comfort for me. I took it with me everywhere. I’d bring it whenever I had meetings with my supervisor or committee members, which would help me to ensure that I incorporated any suggestions that they had. I’d wake up sometimes in the middle of that night to jot down ideas that suddenly came to me and I could not afford to forget. My journal helped me know the order of operations for that day and assisted me in organizing the coherence and clarity of the research. Furthermore, not only did my journal help me to maintain accurate records and details of the data collection phase of this research, it also helped me to maintain a spiritual equilibrium that would come to me as I wrote my thoughts in my own penmanship. The intimacy of my writing made it easier for me to transfer thoughts into text. Finally, maintaining a journal was an effective way for me to reflect on my thoughts and watch first-hand my own growth as a scholar. It was there that I recorded my challenges and triumphs, which also helped me to locate myself in an authentic manner, as the researcher for this study.

3.14 Selection of Participants

Participants for my research were selected first by word of mouth, and were also invited to participate through the university listserv (on line) invitation. The participants for my study were selected using the following criterion. The ten WOC must have been registered or have matriculated from a doctoral program in Ontario. I sought to have representation from the indigenous regions of: Africa, Asia, North America, and South America. Almost 50% of my participants were already recipients of a doctoral degree. The rationale for including recipients to determine the level of professional success and survival strategies after matriculation. This decision was a good strategy for the development of the uncovered themes because this information came from the perspective of the participants who had already graduated from the program. Their insight was able to shed light on life after the PhD. Their insight with regards to the process and path toward the doctoral degree was indeed more advantageous, in that it provided various “in hind-sight” moments, and the challenges were clearer from their vantage point of having completed the degree. Initially, I presented a detailed sketch of the participants and what I believed was an effective attempt of veiling their identities. However, after consultation with my supervisor, I discovered it was necessary for me to re-think how I was going to present the women in my study, while protecting their identities. Therefore the
following sketches of my participants are more generic in nature and will reveal only their basic social identities and stage in the program.

3.15 Transcribing

Rules of transcribing incorporated making a decision whether or not to record (type) conversations verbatim or to paraphrase. Kvale (2009) suggests that it is authentic to keep the original language when typing quotes, that is, “quotes should preferably be loyal to the habitual language of the interviewee” (p. 132). However, Kvale (2009) cautions that this form of language might appear as incoherent or confused speech in the public arena, and can result in stigmatizing the interviewee. Therefore, the transcriber, on behalf of the subject, can “translate their oral style into a written form that is in harmony with [the speaker’s] habitual mode of expression” (Kvale, 2009, p. 133). In my choice to use the “verbatim” technique, I opted to keep all the vernacular phrases in the quotes, which were present in my participants’ language. This action exposed the beauty of my participants’ stories, as they spoke from the heart. The pauses and the nervous repetitive words, all indicate the authenticity in their dialogue. In good faith, I could not amend or edit out their actual words, as all of their stories, and even their language had to be preserved in my research.

Additionally, I decided early on, that the importance of transcribing the interview verbatim would help to establish the validity of this study. Part of my methodology for transcribing the data included creating a list of conventions (or legend of symbols) that helped me to move faster through the process and of course, this made sense only to me. I was aware that many of my colleagues opted to hire people to transcribe their data. For me, it was a matter of ethics why I chose not to. I felt that because of the sensitivity of the data, plus the organic process of transcribing it would be compromised if I did not do it myself. The average length of each interview was 70 minutes. The average page length for each of the transcribed interviews was approximately, eighteen pages. Four of the interviews were twenty pages in length. In total, there were over 200 pages of transcribed data collected for this study.
3.16 Ethical Issues

The ends and means for the interview inquiry involve moral issues (Kvale, 2009). The outcome of the interview depends on the human interaction with the participant, as well as the knowledge that is produced from that interaction. Kvale (2009) presents his understanding of the process this way:

The human interaction in the interview affects the interviewees and the knowledge produced by an interview inquiry affects our understanding of the human conditions. Consequently, interview research is saturated with moral and ethical issues (Kvale, p. 23).

The reason why ethical issues arise is because of the way qualitative interviews, as a methodology, go about “researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena” (Mauthener et al., 2002, p. 1). Also, because of the interpretive nature of the qualitative design, such issues can also easily arise (Kvale, 2009). Added to this concern, are the issues of privacy and protecting the identities of the participants and making sure at all times they know they have the right not to respond to certain questions, or can even leave the study all together. Many of the ethical concerns are thoroughly outlined in the “Ethical Review Protocol,” governed by the university that all research projects must comply too. Although it was undoubtedly a rigorous process, going through it I learned how to apply the information to my research in order to avoid breaching any ethical responsibilities.

3.17 Limitations for Data Collection

There were several limitations I encountered before and during the data collection for this study. Initially, I need to take some time to explain the limitations and extreme difficulty I experienced while trying to provide descriptive background sketches for each of my participants. The academic environment from which most of my findings derived, is small and known to many; I had to take particular precaution to ensure the anonymity of each participant. Finding willing participants was also a serious challenge. Most of the women who did concede to participate, would comment, “I remember how hard it was for me to find participants for my
study, so I will help you with yours.” Again, this willingness and support spoke to the cultural wealth and sisterhood that thrived among this small but powerful group of women.

Nonetheless, I had never before (when conducting previous studies) experienced such difficulty in trying to describe a participant without exposing her identity. Something as simple as stating where she was born or her native country, could easily “out” her identity among colleagues or, much worse, professors in the academy. The fear of reprisal, which is one of the evolving themes in my study, was a very real threat for many of my participants. Therefore, as I proceed, I have made my best effort to skillfully veil the cultural backgrounds, especially when it comes to the region of their native land. In other instances, I did have the liberty to describe at length particular participants who did not have an issue with being exposed or fear of reprisal. The one or two women who felt this way stated the importance of sharing their full story for the sake of new knowledge. They felt the study was important and worthwhile. They decided to risk whatever was necessary to be a part of my study. I believe the bravado that came from these and all the other participants is yet another example of the wealth and strength found among their individual and combined racial and cultural backgrounds. I applaud their willingness to add their important contribution to the wealth of new cultural knowledge forwarded in this study. I only pray that I have successfully fulfilled my duty to them and this difficult task.

3.18 Summary

In this chapter, I explained the discursive theoretical framework of: womanist theory (or womanism), critical race theory (CRT) and cultural capital theory (CCT) and provided reasons why this combination was conducive to my research. Primarily, womanism provides a holistic representation of the myriad cultures and experiences of my participants. The unique way that womanism marries the experiences of both Black women and women of colour was an important element when choosing it as a framework for this study. I provided some background of this theory so that the reader could be rooted in its beginnings and also to give insight into some of the reasons why other scholars of colour support it, as well as reasons why I chose to use this theory. Next, I spoke about Bourdieu’s (1986) cultural capital theory. I gave a foundational explanation of the theory, and discussed how alternative forms of cultural capital are necessary to understand the cultural wealth found among communities of colour. Critical race theory (CRT) was used to explain the intricacies of how race and gender are weaved into the experiences of
WOC. It expressed, (1) the importance of stories being told from the perspective of the tellers’ own experience and identity, (2) that race is a social construct, and (3) how it is used to challenge existing paradigms. I also gave examples of other anti-racist and decolonizing theories that address the issues of race and oppression in society and educational research. Finally, the methods section, discussed the characteristics of qualitative research design, and described the specific methodological tools that I employed to collect the raw data for this study. My study identified some sub-categories of cultural wealth, with the assistance of some of my participants. In Chapter Four, I officially present my participants and data that their interviews generated for the six categories of cultural wealth. An additional data chapter is found in Chapter Five.

In a separate section of this chapter, the methods and tools used to investigate my findings were also discussed. I employ in-depth interviews from a diverse group of ten WOC who were presently in, or recently matriculated from, the doctoral program. This section outlined the characteristics of qualitative research and discussed the interpretive approaches that were employed. The ‘Qualitative Interview’ methodology described the process for conducting qualitative interviews as a research tool. It further discussed the importance of decolonizing the Western practices of qualitative research by considering indigenous methodologies. Finally, this chapter discussed the data collection process of the research, which enables this research to be replicated for validity.
Chapter 4
Conceptualizing Cultural Wealth: Six Major Themes from the ‘Stories’ of the Participants

Data Analysis Part 1: Stories of Cultural Wealth

Every experience in our lives and the coming together of all of life’s experiences is but a preparation for whatever happens next in our lives


4.0 Introduction

The last twenty years of my lived experiences have led me either directly or indirectly on the journey to this very moment. As Dillard suggests in the quote above, everything in our lives prepares us for whatever is “next in our lives” (p. 450). I could have never imagined at the beginning of those years, that my combined experiences would now lead me into another journey deep into the lived experiences of my participants, as a researcher for my doctorate degree. This crooked road has revealed many uncharted paths of self-reflection and discovery for both my participants and me. The many themes that I discovered during the data analysis process provided new knowledge for the understanding of cultural wealth from the prospective of WOC in doctoral programs. Initially, I thought I could easily anticipate some of the areas of discussions that would evolve based on the interview schedule I held firmly in my hands. I soon realized that the tighter I grasped my script, the more I ended up in dead ends. As I became better equipped with taking the lead from my participants, more avenues began to open up for me in areas I never expected to discover. Specifically, I was intend on searching for cultural capital in the experiences of my participants, but what I found instead was a wealth of skills, and abilities. I found their cultural wealth.

When I began to allow my participant to just tell her story, I was given the unexpected privilege to share in their rich memories of ‘home’, school, and family; some pleasant, others painful. I quickly realized when I opened my interview with the question: “So, what in the world made you decide to pursue your PhD?” I had to be willing to go back as far as the participants were willing to take me to get at the answers. I also found that this opening question allowed for the participant to really reflect on why she was actually pursuing this degree in the first place. This question helped to remind her of the reason why she was here and willing to endure such a
difficult path; a decision which many had often lost touch of because of the overwhelming sacrifice and agonizing struggle to endure to the end. The telling of their stories became cathartic for them, and curiously for me as well. This chapter will pay homage to the stories of my participants told in their own words. To help the reader navigate through the next two data chapters, I will give a brief outline of what is to come.

The stories of all ten participants (five in the first data chapter, and five in the second) are presented in this chapter as selected themes are discussed. Navigational comments are provided and necessary to link each theme / category or cultural wealth. I make an effort to limit any interjection of dialogue from me, between each story, so as not to take away from the weight of each participant’s voice. I also answer the research questions put forth earlier (see page 17). Specifically, in this chapter I identify the various forms of cultural wealth evident in the experiences of these WOC in doctoral programs by presenting the findings in the form of the participant’s stories.

Throughout this study I use the term, ‘cultural wealth’ to refer to an alternative cultural capital. That is, I use it as a means to distinguish the difference between Bourdieu’s traditional interpretations and to acknowledge the wealth discovered in research as new knowledge that is unique to the participants of my study and the collective communities they represent. Yosso (2005) defines community cultural wealth as having six components of: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (outlined in Chapter Two) and suggests that each category is fluid and builds on each other to create community wealth. The cultural wealth identified through the educational experiences of the participants in this research was expanded through the theoretical lens of womanist theory and Black feminist thought to reveal new knowledge in the area of cultural capital theory. Similar to Yosso (2005), I also suggest that the categories are fluid and build on each other to create the cultural wealth of WOC. Again, similar to Yosso’s (2005) I have created a new knowledge framework and a different way of looking at cultural capital that is contextualized from a Canadian perspective specific for my study. Anzaldúa (1990), in *Haciendo Caras/Making Face, Making Soul: Creative and Critical Perspectives by WOC*, suggests that as WOC, we are to bring our own methods and approaches to research in order to transform the process of theorizing that transpires in academy spaces. She posits that: “In our *mestizaje* [original emphasis] theories we create new categories for those of
There are six main categories of Cultural Wealth, which I uncovered from the raw data which are: 1) Mother’s Influence, the inner-wisdom and support from mothers, 2) Age Capital, the unexpected wealth that comes from mature doctoral students, 3) Mentorship, guidance from elders and professionals in the field, 4) Survival Strategies, inherent wealth that was present to combat power relations and other barriers, 5) Negotiating academic culture and Know-how, the skill of navigating through the academic culture in higher education and, 6) Spirituality, the ever present cultural wealth used to empower and instill hope among the participants. When reading this section, it is important to note that the six categories from the list above are weaved into the stories of the participants. Each of the six categories are not necessarily addressed by each participant, therefore instead of inserting the experiences from each of my participants under one of the six categories above, I have chosen to introduce the participants and present the stories of each one first. Then I discuss the relevance of a given category, as it relates to, or to the degree in which it influences the experiences shared by the participants in their stories. After the participants’ stories are presented, an illustration and definition of each of the six categories for cultural wealth are explained. For added clarity, each participant is presented under the caption of her own pseudonym. Within the unfolding of each participant’s story, the applicable categories of cultural wealth are exposed and explained from the participants’ perspective. Throughout the rest of the thesis, participants will be referred to by their given pseudonyms names.

4.1 The Stories of Participants

The stories of the first five (5) of my participants will be presented in random order. The stories of the remaining five participants follow in Chapter 5, the second data chapter. Subsequently, in an effort to keep a sense of fluidity while presenting such a large volume of data over two chapters, I have organized each voice under the main themes, keeping in mind that not all ten participants had something to say about all six of the themes. I’ve found the easiest way to follow the proceeding chapter is to merely listen to the stories. My comments in-between the passages will serve as a guide to help the reader navigate through the themes. The proceeding
several pages of the stories are presented at length, and by referring to the table below in Table 1 it will be easier to maintain the logical flow of the data. Deciphering the demographical background of who is talking, and why they might be talking about a particular topic, in a particular way, is enhanced by the layout of this quick perusal. For example, a participant who is married with children will respond to a question differently from one who is not married with children; a single mother with children will also obviously have a different perspective on a given topic.

Figure 1, (p. 88) summarizes the identities and demographics of the participants. What is most important for this research is the participant’s story, therefore the particular cultural demographics are secondary and only necessary to show the scope of diversity among the WOC in my study. Criterion such as age and the number of years in their program are relevant to show the effect of cultural wealth based on these categories. Other demarcations such as providing a precise birth country increases the risk of unintentionally revealing the identity of my participants. Therefore, in certain cases, these details are deliberately left out. The environment from where much of this research has evolved is quite small and, as mentioned before, the fear of reprisal was a very real factor among many of my participants. As I proceed with caution, bear in mind what I intend to accomplish: The question of, “What factors constitute cultural wealth among WOC in doctoral programs?” is an overriding consideration in this section and the specifics of the participant’s identity then becomes secondary. Also, as stated in my methods section, I decided to record the words of my participants as they spoke them, that is, I opted to use the ‘verbatim’ format of interviewing and recording for qualitative research. I only made slight adjustments (indicated by the inserted blocked parenthesis where required) to assist in maintaining clarity or coherence for what was being said. Hence, keep in mind that all the responses are in the participant’s exact words, so that I could preserve the true nature of their speech, (and not necessarily that of the ‘academic culture’). This was a tactic I deliberately wanted to deliver when presenting their quotes in this particular fashion to preserve the spirit and emotion with which they were spoken. Also, page numbers after each quote refer to the transcript from the interviews. In the proceeding section, the participants discuss the various themes in terms of their stories. Some commentary between speakers and themes will be apparent to facilitate transitions between themes and topics. However, the exact syntax and grammar in which participants respond was left in its raw form (verbatim).
**Figure 1**

**DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Number</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Social Identity</th>
<th>Current Status in PhD Program/*Stage</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Aug 2010</td>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>45+</td>
<td>*Non White, Married with Children</td>
<td>Candidate, Year 7</td>
<td>7+ Years In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. September 2010</td>
<td>Gia</td>
<td>Late 30's</td>
<td>*Non White, Married No Children</td>
<td>Student, Year 2</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. September 2010</td>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Late 30's</td>
<td>Black, Married with Children</td>
<td>Doctoral Recipient, 2009</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. September 2010</td>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>45+</td>
<td>Black, Single with Children</td>
<td>Candidate, Year 5</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. September 2010</td>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Mid 40's</td>
<td>*Non White, Married with Child</td>
<td>Candidate, Year 4</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. October 2010</td>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>45+</td>
<td>Black, Married with Children</td>
<td>Student, Year 3</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. October 2010</td>
<td>Paula</td>
<td>45+</td>
<td>Black, Married No Children</td>
<td>Doctoral Recipient 2006</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. October 2010</td>
<td>Aduke</td>
<td>Late 30's</td>
<td>Black, Single with Child</td>
<td>Doctoral Recipient 2010</td>
<td>8 + Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. November 2010</td>
<td>Trista</td>
<td>Mid 40's</td>
<td>*Non White, Married with Children</td>
<td>Candidate, Year 4</td>
<td>4 Years In Progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Indicates a deliberate masking of racial identity to protect the anonymity of participants who came from a small community of WOC where the study was conducted in a Canadian university.
ANNE’S STORY:

Mother’s Influence

One of the most unforgettable examples of the wealth that comes from a mother’s influence on a daughter comes from “Anne”. Anne acquired her PhD from a Canadian university last year and holds a position as a junior faculty member at the same university. The path to becoming a doctoral recipient took Anne over seven years. Anne was First Nations and European blood. Her mixed identity and her mother’s forward thinking taught Anne at an early age how to strategically keep her native heritage a secret, a way to get what she wanted, and a necessity to survive. Anne’s mother strictly enforced the fact that she was never to reveal her true mixed identity to her Indigenous community or to the Western community that they were immersed in.

Anne and her mother share powerful stories of self-preservation and resistance. Anne’s mother literally saved her life and forged her academy path from an early age. For example, during her early childhood Anne had to be placed in foster care and her mother courageously rescued her back into her care. Then Anne’s mother fought to get her into mainstream education because she knew that is where she would thrive:

My mother was a very timid woman who stayed under the shadows and didn’t talk much. But every now and again she would come out fighting. And she went into that school and she fought, and she said, ‘my daughter should be here, she’s smart, and if you don’t let her in, I’m going to get a lawyer, and sue you for racism and discrimination’. That’s the way she kinda was (p. 3).

Anne explains that her mother’s lack of education did not stop her from breaking down the barriers that threatened to keep Anne from receiving a university education. Her mother’s strategy for figuring out how she was going to get her daughter a higher education was unique; she turned to the library in a very strategic way. Anne told me that her mother would go to the library and walk up to the librarian and say in her words, “You have a degree, what books do you need to read when you are in university?” And then she would make lists. And some librarians
were very mean and you know, some people would be snooty and awful, but many could be very nice. And we’d say, “Oh, we must read, Thomas Hardy” (p. 3).

As another example, Anne’s mother, who was of First Nation heritage, became ill with breast cancer and refused modern medicine. Anne became responsible for taking directions on how to administer the special herbs and natural remedies for her mother’s illness. Unfortunately, Anne’s mother passed away. She initially blamed herself; she says, “I failed, I killed my mother, I didn’t do the medicines right” (p. 8). Devastated by this, Anne made several attempts on her own life. In the end it was her mother’s childhood expectation that Anne would get a university degree and the intervention from the Elders of her community that would end up saving her life. Anne comments:

My mother died on me, and this is why I went back to school…. Everything that I am is [because of my mother]. So the Elders come and picked me up off the floor and they say, “Come to [name of school]”. We are not going to let you go, you are going to do something for us (p. 8).

Anne has persevered in her doctorate, and was determined not to disappoint her Elders or the wishes of her deceased mother. She realized it was time for her to walk the walk of what she had been talking about, to embody how she had been raised, as a woman who knew about the holistic power and influence of her community that had supported her financially, emotionally and spiritually.

Survival Strategies:

Another interesting strategy came from Anne when she explained that, as scholars of colour, we have to do what she calls “double duty” in order to succeed in the academy. Her strategy was to learn everything about a given course or topic but then looked at it with her ‘Native eyes.’ This is reminiscent of the “biculturalism” expected of Hawaiian faculty of colour described by Johnsrad and Sadao (1998). Ann knew she would be challenged by the colonized perspective so she decided to respond with a plan of action. In her words:

Yes, I’m going to show you that I understand you from your angle, but here’s an angle you never looked [at]. And it was double duty. So for a 20 page essay, I’d be writing 30 pages…because they don’t get the Native stuff, so you gotta
foot note it. What… [she names Indigenous scholars] would understand with one paragraph, I would have to write three pages! Because I had to show them! (indicates emphasis) (p. 9).

**Negotiating Academic Culture and Know-how**

Though Anne stressed the challenge of ‘double duty’, as noted above she did not discount the advice of her professors about counter perspectives. She speaks of her experience and respect for one in particular:

Now I love and respect this man and he’s whiter than White. He would kick my ass to the wall and challenge me on everything I ever said. He pushed and I pushed right back to the point where we were in class, and everyone was throwing around the term, “Western”. And all these White kids started saying that, so I said, “The Western this and the Native that”, But then one of them says to me, “What do you mean by Western?”…. I said, “I mean what you mean”. Then the professor said, “Yeah, what do you mean”. I was really hurt (p. 9).

But she rebounded because after that experience in the classroom, Anne went home and asked herself what she really meant by using that term, and came back with her own definition and submitted her paper which began, “When I say Western, I mean…” (p. 9). She received an A+ from the professor.

**Survival Strategies: Supervision and Spirituality**

Anne also remembered a time when one of her doctoral committee members advised her that she shouldn’t respond to difficult situations from such a deep, subjective place. She was told to remain objective so she could be protected from ‘the powers that be in the Ivy Tower’. Anne explains this mindset in terms of her own spiritual awareness from her perspective, when she states, “This is an example of how we are supposed to separate ourselves, our body and spirit from scholarship. This is the Western Way in academy” (p. 9).

Anne believed that exercising her self-control in situations where her committee members intervened was one of the best ways that she could preserve her spirituality. She still recalls the anger and disgust at the treatment of her community and the continued relentless drive to
suppress their knowledge. This anger erupted out of her when she had to write a required examination. Her writing was so highly emotional that it was recommended that she re-take the test. Cultivating a spirit of peace and acceptance helped Anne get through a very difficult experience during her journey.

GIA’s STORY

Mother’s Influence

Gia’s father was a highly educated Jesuit priest, and describes her mother as being a survivor. Gia describes her mother’s educational background in the following manner:

My mother finished middle school. Um, she studied something like hair dressing or something she never practiced. And ah, she never worked in the formal sector. She was a psychic on the side. So I come from an ex-priest and a psychic (p. 2).

Gia was determined to celebrate her mother by making sure that her mother was able to understand her work and what she planned to spend so many years of her life doing. It was also important to Gia that her mother be able to explain to her friends and relatives exactly what her daughter was doing. She states:

I need to write a thesis that my mother understands what I am doing. Like, otherwise if my mother doesn’t even know what I’m doing, there is a problem….My mother, they ask her, what is your daughter do? She loses it, and I really want her to be able to say two things that are simple for her to understand (p. 6).

Survival Strategies: Resistance

Gia has made it a point to write her thesis with her mother in mind, resisting the temptation to write dense academy prose, by writing a thesis that her own mother could understand. Her action informed my own desire to do the same. Were it not for my mother, and all the other mothers, many of us may not have had the strength, or belief in ourselves to seek the doctorate degree. The consensus among all of my participants was that they could not deny the relationships that persist with their mothers, whether good or bad. The significance of the Bloodmother and Othermother relationships in Black and other non-White communities reflects
the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and cultural oppression. Traditionally, Othermothers—women who assist Bloodmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities—have been central to the institution of Black motherhood (Troester, 1974). Gia, a second-year doctoral student is very articulate and intelligent but does not get caught up in the Western “jargon” of academia. She is down to earth, as she never forgets her roots and the influence of her mother and the free spirit that she was.

**Negotiating the Academic Culture and Know-how**

Gia earned a master’s degree in a region close to her native home in South America at a local university and was already a professor in a tenure track position at the age of 26. At the age of 28, she was at the top of her academy career and by then, had decided to immigrate to Canada to pursue a PhD When Gia arrived, she found that she had to repeat her Masters. She states, “I couldn’t take a short cut, I had to go a long way to come back to this PhD” (p. 12). After Gia explained to me the long road she had to take to get back on her path, she admits that she almost gave up the whole idea because of the setbacks she was experiencing in the master’s program in Canada.

**Survival Strategies: Supervision**

Gia feels a bond between herself and her supervisor, a man who shares a similar South American cultural background with her. In her case, the attachment was not automatic because of their similarly shared identity, but this happened quite serendipitously. She relates the interesting story of how her academic advisor became her supervisor:

I didn’t choose him, he didn’t choose me; we chose each other. Organically! …. We needed to meet one morning… but then at 9, he says I can’t leave home because…[so] “would you mind coming home?” And I thought, “Wow” that’s like a huge vote of confidence, and I felt like so privileged….We had the most amazing meeting because we were having coffee, and kids where just like running up and down, toys were in between and all of a sudden this, professor was like [a] human being! He took the time to ask me about my background about what I was doing. So ….at the end, I said, “do you wanna supervise me?” (p. 10).
Overall, Gia was one of the participants who exhibited great cultural wealth from her experiences before she arrived into the doctoral program from her native country, as well as exhibited in her obvious adjustment while in the doctoral program in Canada.

LYNN’s STORY

Mother’s Influence

Lynn is a single mother with two children and she is in her fifth year of her PhD. She is from a Caribbean island where the spoken dialect is Creole, a unique blend of French and Caribbean languages. As the only girl in a family of six boys, Lynn discovered very early how to leverage herself by preoccupying herself with her books to avoid the traditional fate that befell most of her female cousins who had to serve inside and outside the home doing physical chores. It was her mother who helped her in this endeavor and made her realize what it would take for her to succeed and leave her small island. She states:

For example, that might have been one of the reasons why I’ve gotten so far with my education because I used to look at my little cousins you know with buckets of clothes on their heads going to the river to wash and cleaning up after the family and things like that, and for me, I kind of figured it out early on…that was not going to happen to me. So very often when I looked around, and I realized there was a lot of work and chores to be done, I’d grab my book and go in the corner and start reading…There were times when my mom would say, or be calling, “Lynn the plates, or whatever…” She’d say (inserts West Indian accent), “Leave Lynn alone, she reading her book”. From the time I heard that, the book became my good, good, good friend” (p. 1).

Lynn never lost hold of her mother’s support, even as she matured and found that she depended on it even more while in the doctoral program, even though they now lived miles apart. When talking about her difficulties and feelings of isolation, Lynn confides that she would always turn to her mother. She explains what she would do whenever an obstacle came along the way:

I mean, the first person that I would tend to wanna talk to is my mother…In my case, I have to get on the phone and call her now many miles across the ocean…because you know how particular or how difficult it is to explain what our research is about, even to ourselves! ….She’d be like, “Yeah, It’s OK”. Not that she was necessarily able to give me any advice on the actual work, but she’d be able to very well tell me, (voice imitating her mom) “You can do it!
Just keep going”. You know, these words of encouragement? *I LIVE FOR THAT!* I mean without that I wouldn’t be here (p. 14).

Lynn made it clear that she really did ‘live for’ her mother’s encouragement, as did the other participants regardless of whether or not their mothers understood the particular research or not. Lynn said her mother was always the source she would go to for direction and ideas.

*Survival Strategies: Supervision*

Lynn explains how she came to work with her first supervisor, a White male professor, and what necessitated her having to change to another supervisor:

I know I’m trying to bring it all together because it wasn’t like a straightforward thing. Because I did change my topics or my area of focus, somewhere along the road, and so that necessitated rethinking who my supervisor would be. [Because] when you do come into the program, you have an academic advisor, who very often becomes your supervisor. But of course, and that was the situation in my case….He could have been my supervisor had I kept apparently along that same research...path. But then as my interests changed, I went back to my first love. So in a way, I can’t [really] complain, because I feel like he did help me to look for an appropriate supervisor—not helped in the sense but—pointed me sort of in that direction (p. 8).

Lynn’s explanation of how she came to and left the relationship with her first supervisor appeared to be characterized by a sense of obligation, on both their parts, and seemed to lack any real connection between the two. It was in her search for her next supervisor, where Lynn cultivated a habit of combing over an email message for a long time before sending it out to her perspective new supervisor (a White female professor), who did end up conceding to Lynn’s request over subsequent email messages. Lynn admitted she would take hours to write and send a simple email to her supervisor. She felt it had to be perfect until she began to realize, after her own self-reflection and after several months of developing a rapport with her new supervisor, what was really important in the student/supervisor relationship:

When you know who you are, you can be yourself even in writing an email. When you trust the relationship with the person, it’s so much easier to
communicate what you truly feel and what you want to say. The words come out more natural (p. 19).

Though it took Lynn some time, she did grow from the experience. Her growth, however, was more of a personal one and did not come as a result of any close mentorship from her supervisor.

_Spirituality_

Lynn was not focused on what the degree could get for her in terms of a job and stability but saw its attainment as a purpose she knew she had to fulfill. She knew that the divine forces [God] would take care of the rest. She confides her feelings in the following as:

> It is spiritually grounded: don’t worry about tomorrow, tomorrow will take care of itself. It’s not just about me, but about me being part of this universe, and the most important is the divine guidance that we receive. If we are open to it, it will help us take care of the future (p. 19).

I asked the women in my study to comment on spirituality and the effect in had on their lives, especially during the process of pursuing the doctorate and Lynn’s answer was:

> I think as you said that "spiritual strength”, that I know comes from beyond, and it is also in me, and I think that is part of what helps me to keep going and to have that faith (p. 10).

And she added that, when things got difficult, she depended on her spirituality to keep her going.

**PAULA’S STORY**

_Mother’s Influence_

Paula is a faculty member teaching in a program at the same university where she earned her doctorate. She is married with no children. She is from a small Caribbean island where most of her early education was acquired. Paula was a gifted child and was always ahead of her class. Paula came from a family of all girls. Explaining the importance of her mother she said, “I think
my mother understood that she had all girls. We had land in the Caribbean but she also realized that women don’t work land” (p. 12). Her family decided to send her away to England to further her studies because she finished school early and was too young to work. She received all of her advanced degrees from a Canadian university, where she is now employed as a lecturer. Paula insists that much of what she implements now (knowledge) are values she learned from her mother. Paula glowingly describes her mother this way:

…[My] mother has never once asked me, “What are you going to do with this?” or “Why are you still in school?” She’s never once. Honest to goodness… My mother. My mother is the quietest most unassuming. But the wisdom, oh my goodness. My mother is…like this, um. She likes to sit back and observe and then act…. And I learned that…there is value by observing. And that’s the most I learned, and I still do it! (p. 20).

Survival Strategies: Power of Silence

Paula learned the value of observation and keeping silent from her mothers’ wisdom. For example in her experience in the graduate classroom, Paula learned that the expectation from the academic culture was one where students are forced to have an opinion and a critique. She insists you do not have to be so “chatty and talking having an opinion, because there is learning that goes on by observing and looking around you, and then that’s when you speak” (p. 21). In the interview, as Paula said in the above quote, she claps her hands suddenly to signify the sense of power she felt as she remembered how she would deliberately hold back and then release the well thought out words she would speak in the classroom, and she said:

[S]ometimes people look at me and they say, “Why are you always smiling?” That doesn’t mean I’m always happy. Not necessarily, but you don’t know what I’m thinking, right? And, so there is that wisdom that is passed on from mothers. I think of a lot of the wisdom I learned from my mother. I learned probably a lot of book smarts from my father but wisdom I learned from my mother (p. 21).

Paula still utilizes the power of her unsuspecting smile. From the beginning of Paula’s educational journey, she was always the youngest among her peers and quickly discovered how to prove herself through her mother’s wisdom. Her confidence was consistently reinforced by the combined support and nurturing that came from her family. The expectation from her family,
as well as herself, was that she would excel in higher education - the family as a unit would see to that.

Survival Strategies: Mentorship and Supervision

The knowledge which came from Paula’s supervisor was revered by her as knowledge from her ‘Elders’. Using her account as an illustration, I theorize that the value of knowledge that comes from ‘Elders’ of colour in the field have forged a path of resistance for present and future scholars in the academy. Paula illustrates this point when she states:

I have White professors as well who do advise me….But I pick and choose how I navigate and having their bodies there, sometimes it’s not necessarily talking to them. Their politics, their writing resonates. Their bodies resonate and they set a pattern of how you want to pattern yourself, do you know what I mean? (p. 19).

Paula followed her supervisor’s advices without hesitation. She entered the PhD program and excelled under her supervisor’s mentorship. As previously mentioned, she won an OGS every year and even went on to collaborate in writing a chapter in a book with him. Finally, both Paula’s supervisor and external reader encouraged her to publish her thesis as a book. Recently, she received her first hard copy of her book from the publishers! Paula is a role model for many Black women in the program. The examples cited above indicate a form of cultural wealth that can come from the supportive mentorship of a supervisor Elder. Not only were the rewards of wealth present in the professional achievements of these participants who experienced supportive, nurturing relationships with their supervisors, but the presence of great confidence and inner-strength and ‘know how’ was also apparent among these women.

Paula made decisions to accept advice from committee members who do not share her race or gender and made decisions that ‘feel right’ (p. 19). She depends on the ‘Elders’ knowledge, whether physically present or not, to help her navigate through the process and resist the barriers she may encounter.

Age Capital
Part of the reason why I believe Paula had such a strong sense of herself was because of her maturity. Though she had been in school for a long time and was a gifted child, as a woman in her forties she knew what she wanted and how she would go about getting it. Age was a capital that benefited some of the participants. She stated some of the challenges as well:

I think Black faculty and young Black scholars have the hardest time to find work and to find permanent work. And so we have to start very, very early. This is problematic because many Black women come to the program at a later age (p. 8).

*Negotiating Academic culture and Know-how*

An example that illustrates the cultural wealth of knowledge is apparent with Paula as she was successful in securing an OGS for four consecutive years. In her words she explains:

Yes, I got the OGS consecutively for 3-4 years. Which is really amazing, because the first year I got it I thought, “Huh?” And the second year I was going to tweak it a bit and [it was suggested], “Why would you tweak something that is working?” (p. 9).

*Spirituality*

Following the wisdom of her mother, Paula always maintained a cool exterior with a beaming smile; whether she was angered or not, she never wore her emotions on her sleeve. For Paula, her spirituality was a sanctuary where she could connect with her own trapped inner feelings or frustrations; she also had the added ability to share them with trusted colleagues. Paula also had a strong altruistic obligation to the previous mentioned notion of ‘Race Uplift’. Through her volunteering work and her availability as a mentor, the true essence of her spirituality was readily present. She describes her disposition when explaining her vision about connectivity and sisterhood in the following quote:

So probably you could bring it back to spirituality. What defines us as a group? And how do we maintain that sense of self? I’m saying how do we connect with each other and maintain that connection? Which is really about Spirituality right now. And for me, I think it’s very hard because it’s intuitive as well....It’s that feeling of, do I feel comfortable? Or do I feel like I’m exposed? (p. 21).
SANDRA’S STORY:

Mother’s Influence

Sandra, in her story, described how there was rivalry between her and her mother. For reasons of privacy and to preserve the delicacy of her continuing situation, I purposely decided not to probe too deeply into the sensitive details of Sandra’s relationship with her mother. But I was quickly able to discern the presence of ongoing feelings of hurt and resentment and wanted her to be comfortable in telling me whatever she decided she wanted to talk about. Interestingly, Sandra associated England with opportunity and capital, while her birthplace in the Islands was deemed a deficit to her. Since Sandra was not born in England like her siblings, and also because her siblings were twenty years her senior, she was driven by the quest to prove something to herself and her family by excelling in her education. She always knew she was going to pursue her doctorate, a degree she felt was the pinnacle of educational success. When asked if her mother or any of the family members came to her graduation, Sandra responds in the following dialogue with me:

Sandra (Ln 44): As a matter of fact, NOBODY came to my convocation. And cause my mom was caught up with the fact, whether or not to go to _____ [Name of native country] for my cousin who was getting married, or come to my convocation

Lee (Ln 45): What was her choice?

Sandra (Ln 45): She went to the wedding! But what was strange,[was that] I said that convocation was really boring and she said to me, “Good thing I didn’t come”. But what she didn’t get was the reason it was so boring was because there was no family. It’s all about the family. The fact that families where there to celebrate with people and none of them were there with me. I don’t think they were very keen. I think there’s a huge sense of jealousy. And to be honest with you, sometimes I even think there is some jealousy with my mom. People don’t talk about it, but I think there’s jealousy within the family. Because whenever we have a talk or disagreement she [her mother] says, [mocking voice] “Just because you have this education”…(p. 17).
Survival Strategies

Surprisingly, even though Sandra did share similar racial and cultural backgrounds with other participants, her circumstances were quite different. My understanding for the reason why there was such a different perception of motherly support for Sandra was primarily because of her birthplace and birth order in her family. She felt she was already starting life with a disadvantage because of these factors. Sandra explains:

There are eight of us. In the 50’s my parents went to Sheffield in England and they had a bunch of kids, then they went back to _____ in the 70’s and that’s when they had me and um, so it was really important for me to be able to pursue something, whether it’s a doctorate or make something of myself. That gave you a title. Because um, I never had the opportunity of being born in England...And being born in [name of island where she was born] seems more of a deficit (p. 1).

It is clear that Sandra, though very proud of her accomplishments and confident in the fact that she knew she would always pursue and receive her doctorate, still harboured feelings of loss because her mother did not choose to come and physically support her at her graduation. Though it was evident that the relationship between her and her mother was very strained, it was still clear that Sandra never wavered in the expectation that—despite everything—her mother would support her in the end. Sandra was not clear as to whether or not she felt that her mother had come through for her now that she is finished but it was obvious that there was a strong sense of disappointment that still lingers in Sandra’s spirit, despite the strong exterior she exhibits. Sandra’s profound story illustrates that whether or not one has the support of her mother, the power and wealth of a mother’s influence, be it positive or negative, is quite significant to the cultural knowledge that exists among mothers and daughters of colour.

Negotiating Academic culture and Know-how

The following dialogue demonstrates the challenges Sandra saw herself facing in this regard:

Lee (Ln 22): Do you think there could be somewhat of a ‘streaming’ for women of colour into the EdD program as opposed to the PhD?
Sandra (Ln 23): I think there is *always* a streaming of woman of colour. I think it was when I was there and I still think it is there now. I really believe so with all my heart. But to be quite honest...I also think there is a streaming, if I could say so, ‘out’ of the PhD program and out of the EdD as well, where people of colour often tend to get turned down as well (p. 8).

Since Sandra thought from the onset that she would never be accepted to the PhD program, she deliberately applied to the EdD program, as a strategy to get acceptance. Sandra was sure that she would have never gotten in otherwise. She states, “So I’d rather get streamed into the EdD than *not at all* [Italic indicates emphasis]” (SN, p. 7). The stigma of Sandra’s ‘professional’ degree also caused her to opt out of applying for academic awards. She said she did not feel confident and that, “I’m just an EdD., I would never get it” (SN, p.7). The good news is that, in the last year of her program, Sandra successfully switched from the EdD program into the PhD program. The value and weight of that experience even outweighed the jubilance of successfully defending her thesis. According to Sandra and some of the other participants, the difference between the EdD and the PhD has many political implications, especially where opportunities for awards, publications, and even collaborations with professors were concerned.

*Mentoring/Supervision*

Sandra has since graduated from the doctoral program and is teaching part-time in the academy but she still maintains a very close bond with her old supervisor. Sandra is a confident Black woman and talked freely about her belief in herself. Though she did not get much support from her family, she expressed a real love and admiration for her supervisor, whom she viewed as a supportive mother and confidant. Sandra believed the level of trust and support in the relationship was attributed to the fact that her supervisor was a woman of colour who consistently exhibited great “mothering and nurturing qualities” (p. 7). When I asked the question: *Do you think having a supervisor of colour helped you in the program?* Sandra replied:

> It helps big time, big time! It makes a big difference. Because you need someone who understands you. Not to say you can’t get someone from the dominant culture to truly take you under their wings and fight for you, but where [she gestures, looking around] is it? (p. 8).

Sandra continues speaking very highly of her supervisor and expresses her deep feelings in the following passage:
My supervisor is sent from God….She is a Godsend. I think she is one of the ancestors who has been re-born. That’s what I think….I’ve been done for almost two years [and still], I think about her a lot. She is never never out of my mind. Never out of my mind (p. 19).

Sandra explained that one of the main reasons she feels so indebted to her supervisor was because of the way her supervisor supported her with the transition from the EdD program into the PhD program. Sandra recounts that, even when she gave up hope of ever receiving that designation, her supervisor never gave up and continued to fight for her.

4.2 What is Cultural Wealth and How Is It Identified Among WOC?

Yosso (2005) uses a broad definition to define what she means by ‘culture’. She suggests that:

Culture refers to behaviors and values that are learned, shared, and exhibited by a group of people. Culture is also evidenced in material and nonmaterial productions of a people (p. 75).

Figure 1 illustrates the six categories of cultural wealth I have attributed to WOC in doctoral programs. Their wealth is upheld through their combined Mosaic paths of knowledge. ‘Uplifting’ the race is what scholars of colour are challenged to do (Dubois, 1903; Henry, 1993; Ladon-Billing, 1998) and this is illustrated by the extended arms of the various shades of women, which represents the different racial ethnicities in my study which were: Black, Latina, Asian, East Asian, and First Nations. ‘Mosaic paths of knowledge’ simply asserts that knowledge creation evolves from all WOC and, although there are many established theories among multi-ethnic scholars, a common meeting place can be found within this paradigm. As a Canadian Black woman and a woman of colour, I feel the need to establish a space without prescribed labels or names with which one must self-identify. All that is required to gather under the Shade of Knowledge banner is a willingness to create new knowledge for WOC and for the researcher to be a woman of colour. A specific political leaning is not necessary here and all are welcome to come in and leave with their own preferred socio-political naming. Therefore, a Womanist, a Black-Feminist, a LatCrit Theorist, an Asian Critical Thought theorist, Post Modern Structuralist or whatever the self-identification —all are considered valid knowledges under the Mosaic paths of knowledge tree.
Cultural wealth found among participants as illustrated in the following figure 1. The silhouette of the woman with her arms raised symbolizes how the combined categories of wealth can be upheld as Mosaic Knowledge. The raised arms can also depict the responsibility of WOC to “uplift” their own communities (Henry, 1993) with the new knowledge they have learned from their experiences. The examples of cultural wealth are presented in a circular diagram, flowing one from another. The order is displayed randomly, but each category somehow informed the other. For example, a WOC who has been fortunate to have the cultural wealth of her mother’s influence could also have a strong presence of spirituality in her own life. Or, another WOC might be able to better grasp her sense of ‘know-how’ (ability to navigate the through academic culture) because of her age capital, and the experiences in life, which naturally follow.

**Categories of Cultural Wealth Defined:**

*Wealth of Mother’s Influence* - refers to the cultural wealth that appears as a result of the strong influence and inner-wisdom that participants relied on to get them through the program. Whether or not the mothers were educated on the topics, or even educated at all, the wealth of knowledge, and the expectation from these mothers that their daughters would succeed, was a very influential example of cultural wealth. When a participant had a mother who stayed with her and encouraged her on the path toward becoming a doctoral recipient, success seemed assured. Whether it was a physical presence or a spiritual one (one of my participant’s mother passed before she was able to see her graduate), this capital was central to the well-being of the women. Historically, Black women and WOC depended on the inner wisdom that was passed on from generation to generation through the matriarchs of their communities.
Figure 2

MOSIAC PATHS TO KNOWLEDGE

Forms of Cultural Wealth
For Women of Colour In
Doctoral Programs

Wealth From
Mother's Influence

Wealth From
Age

Wealth From
Survival Strategies

Wealth From
Negotiating Academic Language

Wealth From
Spirituality

Wealth From
Mentorship
**Age Capital** - refers to the cultural wealth found in the wisdom that came with the maturity of age. The average age of women entering the doctoral program studied here is between 25 and 29 years old. The average age of my participants was 40+, only two of the ten were in their mid-thirties. Sadly, some participants tended to second-guess their ability because of their late start and unfamiliarity with the academic culture. However, most participants felt that their lived experiences gave them an edge when coming into the program and they felt that they could handle any hardship that was put before them because of it.

**Wealth of Mentors** - refers to the capital found among academy and spiritual Elders in the community (academic Elders defined as the founding and/or leading academy scholars of colour revered by budding scholars of colour) who mentor and guide students both academy and spiritually. Only a few of the participants in my study had this form of capital, especially with those who shared the racial and/or cultural identity with their elder or mentor. Participants who did have such experiences were successful in terms of awards and writing opportunities with professors.

**Wealth of Strategies for Survival Capital** – refers to the many unique ways WOC implemented strategies to survive in their programs. Many of the self-defined strategies were pulled from prior knowledge of lived experience from having to face oppression and barriers of race, gender, ethnicity, and cultural background. This knowledge proved useful for some participants inside [within] the doctoral program. Whether it was knowing when to keep silent when faced with opposition from professors, Dana (p.121) or purposely avoiding the urge to racialize their research topic. This cultural wealth can be considered an end to a means for the participants and, therefore, a necessary choice to keep WOC in ‘the game’, as it were, during their journey through the program.

**Negotiating Academic language (Know how)** - refers to the wealth of knowing how to negotiate the barriers of academic language in the academy, a skill my participants had to learn through their experiences. In my study, the benefits of having a dual language is a wealth that required the WOC to do what one of my participants calls, “double-duty” (AC, 2011, p. 7), when they arrived into the program. This extra agility would require them to find unique ways to translate their own language into the language of the academic culture, in an effort to avoid being viewed
as having a language deficit by either their colleagues or professors. The participants who had a strong sense of their own identity and confidence in themselves while in the academy, tended to navigate through the program better than those who did not. Participants used this new knowledge even when they had to strategically hand-pick their thesis committee members.

**Wealth of Spirituality** – As a cultural wealth, spirituality is defined in individual ways by the participants. This wealth also includes the resilience and resistance found among the participants in particular, and the cultural wealth of spirituality that many WOC in general identify with in their everyday lives. Most of the participants said that their spirituality played an integral part of their holistic identity and that it was used as a means of empowerment and perseverance in the doctoral program.

4. 3 Six Major Categories of Cultural Wealth Explained Through Participants’ Stories

1. Mother’s Influence

One of the major reoccurring themes that kept surfacing in the stories of my participants was the presence of their mothers in their lives. I was told about how mothers helped to encourage, support, and motivate my participants in extraordinary ways. This was also the case in my own experience. My mother played a significant and consistent role in my ability to persist in the program. Unexpectedly, the effect of not having this kind of support from a mother was also an issue that was raised by one of my participants as well. Although only six out of the ten participants mentioned their mothers during the interview process, the intensity and passion with which they spoke pointed to the powerful impact and subsequent wisdom (cultural wealth) that I was able to identify from the data. Therefore the strength of their conviction, plus the significance of “Othermothers” (or influence of Father) that have also influenced the lived experiences of WOC, warrant this category as a major theme. For example, Troester (1984) suggests that, “other mothers—women who assist bloodmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities—traditionally have been central to the institution of Black motherhood” (quoted in Collins, 2000, p.178). Therefore those participants who did not speak of their mothers specifically, referred to some other woman as a mother figure, as in the case of Sandra, who emulated her supervisor as a “Godsend,” and “an ancestor who has been reborn.” (p. 17). From the data, I was able to determine that the participants who had their mother as a continual
presence on their journey benefited greatly from it. This was especially true during moments of despair. Even in cases where the mother was not in the same city, or in close proximity, she was always a phone call away and that made all the difference in the world. Somehow, after just hearing her voice, participants knew in their spirit that everything would be okay. Lynn expresses this sentiment in the following passage:

Not that she was necessarily able to give me any advice on the actual work, but she’d be able to very well tell me, (voice imitating her mom) ‘You can do it, Just keep going.” You know these words of encouragement. I LIVE FOR THAT! I mean without that I wouldn’t be here (p. 14)

Even in the case of Anne, whose mother unfortunately passed before she could see Anne accomplish the milestone of getting her PhD, the memory and presence of her mother was very much with her every day on the journey toward her goal. Mother’s influence is a strong example of cultural wealth that carried and sustained many of the participants through the program.

2. Age Capital

The data revealed that WOC tend to approach higher education during the later stages of their lives. The reason for this occurrence varied among the group but central issues were: opportunity, finance, lack of familial support, and family obligations (i.e., caring for children or elderly family member). Because many WOC return to school at a later age, they have already acquired life and survival skills learned on the job or through everyday experiences. Conversely, when WOC arrive at higher education they must learn the implicit cues and nuances that are often hidden within the academic culture, even though their younger counterparts are already socialized in the academic culture having gone straight through the educational pipeline without any life interruptions because of the privileged backgrounds that allow such continuity, I believe that the age (and experience) of WOC capital makes up for those apparent lost opportunities, and that they can, and do, still come out on top (or at least shoulder to shoulder with their counterparts).
The strengths that older WOC bring to doctoral programs are tenacity, lived experience, determination, reliance on spirituality of some form, ‘do-or-die-last-chance-mentality’, and perseverance. The age disparity between WOC versus White doctoral candidates may be a reason there is an overwhelming sense of timidity and insecurity from WOC who tend to arrive to doctoral programs as more mature (in age) students. Yet WOC used their age capital as an advantage to face challenges they had learn to manage from experience. As a result, some WOC would work harder to prove something to themselves as well as to others (both inside and outside of the academy). This disposition was evident when Sandra, one of my Black participants who had completed her doctorate last year and was teaching in sole-responsibility capacity, commented:

I felt like I had something to prove, so I need to do a PhD… I need to have that title because I have something to prove. Now that I have it, I don’t know how I feel. Because I already gained that whole thing that I needed to prove, ‘have it’. And it’s like, ‘Now what?’ (p. 3).

There were obvious feelings of inferiority that surfaced, although they were not often articulated directly. My word “timid” was sometimes used, instead, to express these feelings related to arriving later to higher education. For example, Dana agreed that she felt intimidated because of her late start and this made her feel even more isolated than she already felt. She expresses her thoughts in the following statement:

Often the light bulb might go off when we’re about 30 or 40. And we say, you know what? I’m going to give this a try. But we still do it with, like you said, “timidity”. So that’s another thing that has to be faced. It’s not that we’re stupid, we just have to battle with the light bulb that’s gone off in our heads and we want to go further. So we are timid, and, ‘Can I do it at this age?’ (DP, p. 12).

Conversely, there were women in my study who felt their maturity worked as an asset for them from the beginning. Gia for instance stated:

Finally, after eight years of immigrating, I’m able to bring my experience back. So there’s a level of confidence when I met my advisor at the
beginning [for the first time]...Because you know that you are mature ...because you have a life (p. 22).

Similarly, Lynn nicely sums up the cultural wealth that age gives to the mature doctoral student in the following lengthy but very insightful passage:

I think that there is something that comes with age... By then you know who you are. You have a better idea as to what you want. You’re not just being like, you’re not just fulfilling someone else’s agenda, but your own. And I think that that is part of the formula sometimes for success. I mean it’s true that some people might accomplish a lot, even a doctorate at a younger age, but at the same time there’s more to it than just having been gone through the motions....And I think that’s what we, especially our kind of people 40+, that’s what we, we bring. And then...the larger community is starting to recognize that as well. Because I’ve heard principals from schools you know, lamenting at the fact that they have 22yrs olds who claim to have their Master’s and their PhD’s and they wonder what it is they are going to bring to them, or to the teaching experience apart from just that piece of paper (p. 25, 26).

The discovery of the cultural Age Capital was something that never occurred to me at the beginning of my research but it was something that I always knew worked in my favour in my own educational experience. I was always one of the oldest students in the class, even though it was difficult for both my colleagues and teachers to easily detect. I felt confident approaching my professors after class, and even challenging them on occasion because of my experience as an adult woman returning to school in her mid to late twenties. I felt I did not have anything to lose and that I owed it to myself to get all I could from my education this second time around (I moved to the States to complete my undergraduate degree I had started but unsuccessfully completed in Canada). Now, I can say that all along my age was a cultural value that helped me to push my way to the level of studies that I am now experiencing.

3. Mentoring

Mentoring is said to be most effective when mentor and mentee are matched according to similar characteristics, including race, as these similarities serve as a foundation for creating trust and effective communication for the long term (Leon et al., 1997). For example, many of the
Black women in my study saw the benefits of having a Black supervisor and those who did not have one, said they felt the difference. Again, because of the limited availability faculty of colour, tenured Black female professors cannot be expected (nor do they have the resources) to mentor all Black female graduates students. Paula, one of the Black participants, told me that one of the ways in which the issue of limited faculty of colour was addressed, was by delegating the mentorship responsibilities among students in the department who shared similarities in race. She described how this is accomplished in the following comment:

They [her department] had mentorships. I got mentored by all the students who were here. So you get to mentor a student incoming for a year. That’s your responsibility as a student, take them under your wing. So then everything... after the TA has done their job, they mentor someone else, and that’s how it’s done. It also frees up the professor as well right? (p. 8).

Much of the success (success in this context measured in terms of awards, conference presentations and publishing) that was apparent among the participants in my study, derived from them having supportive mentor/mentee relationships with their supervisors or committee members. Participants who were properly mentored or felt affirmed and empowered in their relationships with their supervisors were more likely to have a rewarding experience in the program; they were also more likely to finish the program within four to five years. Participants with these favourable conditions were also more likely to have won funding awards and become published. Participants who were mentored by their supervisors also received opportunities to present their research in the conference circuit, as well as opportunities to collaborate in writing and research to establish their publishing requirements. This affirmation from supervisors and other mentors can imbue a keen sense of confidence and positive identities for WOC when they are able to see their own research championed and supported by both supervisors and colleagues.

In lieu of having a supervisor or mentor who shared their self-identity, most participants believed that having a mentor who, in her/his own right, was “well established” was a benefit. Paula, in her response, explains why:

[if] you can have a mentor…someone who is already established so they are tenured, because this is what’s going to get you the grants or the position.
Because they’ve already established their name (p. 18).

After the questioning of all of the participants on this subject, intuitively, I can link the preferences of the Black students for a Black supervisor within the Womanist perspective that supports the ideal of *mothering* that is found in the Black diaspora. The reliance on strong Black women to guide and support other young women in the communities, whether they are biologically linked or not, was a strong example of cultural wealth that was prevalent in this community of colour.

4. Survival Strategy

Figuring out how to implement self-defined strategies to ensure one’s survival in the doctorate program was manifested among some of my participants. The WOC in my study realized from the beginning that they were up against many barriers because of their race/ethnicity, gender, and cultural background. These strategies acted as a buffer from the oppression that these women faced in their various departments, among colleagues and in classroom settings. The data revealed that having or not having the “Know-How” to navigate through the program made a big difference in one’s outcomes in terms of opportunity, funding and supervisory support.

Choosing not to include ‘race’ as a dynamic in the research was another strategy. Another participant referred to the practical and political advice given to her by her supervisor, where she was told to get involved with the student governance and attend the meetings. That way, she would have hands-on knowledge about the ways the academy functioned and about the way students protected their rights. For example, she stated:

> Simple things like, which professors’ class you should take. You may not agree with them, but you’re hearing. You begin to get an idea of what the culture is like. You know, position yourself. So this was the first way I think I started to get an insight [know-how]. And it bothers me now, because I didn’t see a lot of minority students participating in the caucus. And when we were talking about who now becomes the activist leaders, you are silenced in the background from then, so the voices are not getting heard. So [we were told to] go to the caucus and the assembly, so that you are visible. So it starts there (p. 8).
Others leaned on their colleagues who might be trusted for support and knowledge about how to go about getting things done. Participants did share their experiences in this way, though the women said they were left alone to figure things out and did not usually go out of their way to seek others who would share knowledge. When they did, the sharing of information and stories would usually occur in scenarios with personal one-on-one encounters or in semi-formal spaces in focus groups or interview settings.

Language was mentioned as a marker of cultural capital (the term “L1” is used to refer to the first language that a person speaks at home and “L2” is the language (academic) spoken at school or any other language they might acquire (Cummins, 2001). L2 participants realized early that knowing how to master the academic language in both oral and written forms was the key to getting through the program in good standing. Knowing how to use particular language for funding applications, for example, contributed to one’s success in receiving awards. Most of the L1 students admitted they had difficulty expressing themselves verbally. One L1 participant had difficulty speaking but could write effectively, so she focused on that skill and soon found that she was rewarded with scholarships and publications. This was also the case with Grace. Grace felt challenged in the classroom during heated theoretical debates and did not participate. She was concerned that her lack of participation would have an effect on her professors’ perceptions of her skills and ability as a scholar. After being given sound advice, she decided to focus on her writing and quickly saw the value and rewards of her written scholarship.

In line with the findings in the literature (Cummins 2001; Delpit, 1998, 2000; Dove, 1998), I also found a strong link between language and cultural identity with my participants. Having a strong sense of oneself was a strategy participants used to address unfamiliarity with English and academic language would otherwise have been seen as a deficit. When asked if she thought that having English as a second language worked against her, Gia, confidently replied:

It’s not working against me, but I do make adjustments. And so what I’ve decided is to let other people do the adjustments for me so that I don’t lose my spirit…If I break it down from the beginning, I can’t write. So I’ve negotiated with these people. So I’m like, going to let it flow, and you tell me where to break it down or whatever (p. 5).
I was fascinated to see how this L1 participant took the attitude of, “if you don’t like it, fix it according to your standards [because] I cannot kill the spirit from the beginning.” She had the confidence to celebrate herself and the bravado to know how to encourage her professors to do the same. Another participant, Aduke, shared her strategy. She indicated that she had to be very strategic in her language regarding her applications for funding and in the way she communicated with administration. Everything she said or did not say during her journey toward the doctorate was well thought out, she recounted. Aduke knew from the beginning how important it was for her to be self-informed about this, and in her words:

I mean, we’re in an age right now, which is not to deny racism, and not to deny colonialism, but we’re in an age right now where the president of the US is a Black man. Um the way he won that campaign was through STRATEGY. And sometimes he would engage race, and sometimes he didn’t. He always did it strategically (p. 15).

The power of silence was also another strategy that some participants said they utilized to preserve their mental state in the face of out-right mistreatment. Deciding to hold back their words, or use racial references when they really felt the need to set the situation or their position straight, was a strategy that worked for some of the participants. For example, when discussing the strategy of knowing how and when to use race as a subject when applying for awards, Aduke cleverly decided she could only do so, depending on the scholar one chose, whether or not they were well-known and recognized for their work in the dominant area. I responded with this comment after I realized where she was going with her train of thought and replied, “Ah, I got it. It’s like you match your references with your topic.” Aduke explains further by illustrating the following strategy:

Exactly! And sometimes silence is actually, like you said, more powerful than saying something. And um, you still get to [be in control]. [Then] we don’t have to deal with the/fearing the consequence? So yeah you’re right. Sometimes silence is very powerful (p. 17).

Understanding the power of silence as experienced by my participants was an interesting task. I discovered that there were some participants, such as Aduke, who realized early on that silence could, and did work. Her choice to exercise it was voluntary. Then there was Grace, who
because of her L1 location as an Asian student had no choice but to be silent and utilize other strengths.

5. Negotiating Academic Language/Know-how

Of the ten participants in my study, four have English as a second language (that is, they are L1 learners, which means their first language spoken at home is a language other than English) and a fifth participant who is bilingual in French, making a total of five. The Academy places high value on academic language when it comes to writing and receiving awards. This has a direct impact on L1 and L2 students in doctoral programs, especially in terms of getting help, jobs, self-esteem, being published, etc. The value of one's ability to dialogue efficiently (well versed in relevant topics) in academic language in front of peers and professor in the classroom is a tool that becomes powerful for the student; this is also an indicator of intelligence from the perspective of the professor. Overcoming the language barrier of the academic culture was a wealth that some of my participants possessed. Overcoming their own insecurities in this area, or at least finding ways to negotiate them, was very significant to them. One participant expressed an intimidation when it came to emailing a supervisor. She said she would make sure the language and tone of the email was perfect before sending it off. Lynn stated: “it would take me hours before I got it right. I would go over and over it, to make sure it sounded right.” This category of wealth was a form of new knowledge that participants acquired pursuant to acquiring their doctoral degree. It was not prior knowledge, which is characteristic of survival strategies

The dominant values explained in cultural capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) reveal how the language and knowledge found in the academic culture are established as the only acceptable norm. Of the ten women in my study, five came from backgrounds where either English was their second language or they were bilingual in French. In some cases, the knowledge of a second language (L1) did not provide any barriers in the Academy but, in most, (L1) learners experienced significant set-backs. The power relations that exist around language were quite significant as a theme.

The value that the academy puts on academic language was a burden for some of the participants in my research study who were L1 learners. Lynn, a bilingual Caribbean francophone, discussed the value of English in her home country:
I grew up in a very vibrant linguistic environment. Where, well of course being from the Caribbean you know that English was somewhat imposed. So being able to speak properly and articulating and all that, was something that I figured was a good thing. But at the same time, the native indigenous language...Creole was somewhat revered for the most part but also it was rejected somehow too because of its roots in slavery and colonization (p. 2).

Later in our discussion, Lynn articulated how she adapted early to the knowledge that speaking French over Creole would get her somewhere further in society:

And you would make a point to distinguish it [French] from Creole, although Creole is French. Because it is a mixed language, the syntax is more or less derived from various African languages. So, yeah that’s a whole other story in itself. But again, if one was able to speak those so called, “good languages” English and French, that’s what could get you like somewhere in life. The ability to speak French is something that has always been of an advantage to me (p. 3, 5).

Lynn was not the only participant who spoke about the benefits of having and using a European language in the academy and her positive experiences with speaking this language. This correlates with Gia, who spoke Spanish as her first language, a link between the advantages of speaking a romantic language even with residual ‘accents’ became evident in Gia’s story. Gia celebrated her language and learned how to manipulate it to her advantage in and out of the academy. Gia spoke of how she becomes a different person in English because of the nature of the language. When communicating in English, language is more direct, whereas, in the Spanish and Asian cultures, language is more of a “circular motion” mode of communication, which is permitted in both writing and speaking forms. Gia noted that making adjustments in both areas is necessary when communicating in English. She states:

I am a different person in English. I am the same person but the logics of the language, the way the language works is so precise. And so you don’t go in circles, uh and, and so you’re forced to be like upfront. Just because of the nature of the language. You’re forced to be like, ‘this is what I think, this is what I want this is who I am”.... Well Spanish is more a romantic language, and you go in circles you never never go straightforward. I got a feedback from my supervisor and he said like, ‘you can only use [one] long sentence per page, not in every paragraph.’ And I laughed because I can’t avoid, it’s just
like, la, la, la, flowers and then...what am I trying to say, I have no idea, but it sounds so cool (p. 5).

Gia had more than one form of cultural wealth. Her supervisor also spoke a romantic language and permitted her more leeway when she reverted to her own way of knowing in her writing (which was of course similar to her supervisor’s way of knowing). Second, because she had previous experience as an academic in her home country, it was not difficult for Gia to become acculturated to the academic culture of the university. Added to this knowledge was the perception that a Spanish accent was perceived in a way which, in her particular case, came across as what she called a ‘sexy intelligence’ as opposed to the stumbling block, which having an accent might present for other participants in my study.

Participants in my study explained how they felt language as well as accents (having a non-dominant accent) play a great role in the academic culture and how it can affect both students and professors; having a particular accent while speaking English in the academy might be met with racism and feelings of isolation and shame. Paula (PT), a Black doctoral recipient from the Islands, has a pronounced British accent and expresses her feelings on this point when speaking to her colleagues and professors of colour in the academy:

There is racism that happens around language….If my African accent is too heavy or my Caribbean accent is too heavy. But if I have a refined UK, accent that might not be a bad thing…That’s how cultural capital works into language… There are African scholars who talk about that. Some of them talk about maybe you should take elocution lessons. One of my professors talked about that. (p. 10).

6. Spirituality

My analysis of the data revealed that spirituality was a powerful component that was present in the lives of most of my participants. Spirituality was practiced in various forms. Some went to church on a regular basis, while others called on their ancestors for support, while still others meditated and prayed. But all acknowledged a power bigger than themselves, whether it is God, Allah, Yahweh, or the power in nature and the earth, to help guide them through their
academic journeys. Spirituality served as a conduit for inner wisdom. It was a means by which some participants were able to conquer their fears. In the beginning of our interview, Lynn explained how she overcame her fear of sending out emails, because she relied on the wisdom of her spirituality to strengthen her and her confidence in choosing the right words. Then near the end of our interview we talked about spirituality and the peace it brings to her life. She recognized that it had the power to lift the shell of intimidation off her spirit. In the first excerpt below, Lynn explains what her spirituality is to her and in the second quote she demonstrates how it worked for her:

Ever since I’ve known myself, I’ve always seen myself as an anchor somewhere beyond myself and I know I grew up with that. My parents /I guess religion has something to do with it, but it’s not only religion. I think as you said [it is] that ‘spiritual strength’ that I know that comes from beyond, and it is also in me and I think that is part of my/part of what helps me to keep going and to have that you know? Faith! (p. 10).

Secondly, Lynn announces how uplifting it was to release her fears and explained how this happened in the following passage. I asked her if she was [still] afraid to speak to her professors. She replied:

Oh no! Not anymore! In fact even just this week, I went home and I announced to my sons, "You know what? Guess what? Today I had a meeting with so and so. And you know the nicest feeling? I feel like I’m not afraid of him anymore. Sometimes this extra shell of, I don’t know what, has been lifted. And this is uplifting too, because you/ and I think all this is part of coming into your own. No, that’s not the expression—“being”. And asserting yourself sometimes as a mature woman (p. 15).

The two examples above illustrate how tangible spirituality can be in the lives of WOC. Lynn sums it up when she states she is “coming into her own being” (p. 15). Spirituality is not just a philosophy; it is a practical way of knowing. Spirituality was seen to manifest itself in physical ways as well. Sometimes it was the presence of an artifact, a particular observance, or calling on the ancestors that created the comfort and security of a presence greater than the lives of some of my participants. I learned from Aduke about the spiritual significance of wrapping
the head as a sacred public expression, to remind her of her “Orisha” (which means ‘Destiny’ in her faith). She explains in more detail:

So there is the element of observance. And observance meaning discipline as well. And not just kind of, you know, giving into anything that you want to do. Not eating certain things, not going certain places. Sometimes not even going out at certain times. Wearing certain colours, and tying one’s heads. That is huge in Yoruba culture. I know it’s huge for Black and African people because our head is seen as a sacred part of our bodies because it is connected to the higher element of who we are and the Ultimate Being (p. 12).

No matter how spiritually connected the participants were, none of them could escape the pressures or the oppressions that many continued to encounter throughout their time spent in the program. However, they make it clear that it was their inner wisdom that guided them in how they should or should not respond.

4.4 Summary

The participants in the study were also introduced in this chapter. Their voices assisted in presenting the six major themes that emerged from the interviews. Also, in this chapter, the idea of “Mosaic Paths” of Knowledge was discussed. The categories of wealth I outline are said to be mosaic in nature because of the delicate pieces of knowledge, that are pulled together from the uniqueness of each WOC, which, when combined creates information about the actual path to becoming doctoral recipients from their perspectives. The next chapter-- Chapter Five-- will continue to discuss the data analysis and findings of this research in more detail from the voices and stories of the participants. It will also introduce some of the issues that evolved as a result of this study. Keeping in mind, that the evidence of wealth (six categories) are dispersed within each of the participants stories, therefore it was important to present the participants and their stories, and then show how the categories of wealth evolved from their experiences.
Chapter Five
Data Analysis and Synopsis

Data Analysis Part 2: Stories of Cultural Wealth Continued

There is a dialectical relationship between social identity and knowledge productions; who we are has important bearing on how we come to make sense of the world

--Dei, 1998

5.0 Introduction

The focus for analysis in this section continues from Chapter 4. It answers the one of the main questions which drives this research, as follows How do WOC experience the learning process of becoming doctoral recipients, and what values enhance those experiences? In this chapter, the remaining five participants respond to the question above, according to the six categories outlined as cultural wealth. Here again, the participants’ voices are left in their purest form (verbatim), to illustrate both the cultural influences and authenticity of their expression in telling their stories.

Sub-categories (or minor categories) of cultural wealth and other name-worthy issues that surfaced during the data collection process will also be presented in this chapter. I have labeled them separately from the other major categories because I did not want to have too many categories of cultural wealth, and secondly, I realized that these smaller categories were important enough and therefore warranted mention on their own merit in my study. Not all of the participants had experiences that supported these sub-categories, but the ones who did, helped to reveal how important the various topics that will be presented in this chapter are to understanding the cultural wealth in WOC. Finally, a synopsis of the interpretation of the experiences from my participants’ stories as they relate to the prospective categories of cultural wealth will be addressed.

TRISTA’S STORY

Negotiating Academic culture and Know-how

Trista, a flex-time non-White PhD candidate in her final stages of completion, used the strategy of omitting racialized content from her research as a protective cloak to insulate her
from the difficulties she had faced as an L2 (English as a second language) learner in the Academy. When asked if her research question was related to her identity, Trista responded:

They ask about my research, and I only tell them about the technical side. I don’t tell them about my ethnic selection of my sample or anything like that because it becomes a very touchy subject….Well before I did [racialize my work], and now I’ve learned from it. (p. 9).

In this example, as well as throughout the entire interview, Trista appears to be wounded by the whole doctoral process. She admits to having an extremely strained relationship with her supervisor but has learned to suffer in silence. I was deeply saddened by Trista’s resolve to accept her feelings of defeat based on the relationship with her supervisor. It was evident that she believed she did not have what it would take to become an academic professional, largely because this is what she was told by her supervisor. When asked what she planned to do with her degree when she graduated, she replied:

I’m going to sacrifice it up for my Daddy… I mean it’s also for my personal satisfaction. And also something for my family and kids to look back and say, “hey, mommy did it” (p. 5).

Although Trista is presently working in a profession that could support her and her family, her initial goal was to become a professor like her deceased father. However, now with all the angst and lack of support she has experienced in her department, she has decided to trade in the usefulness of the doctorate for a promotion on her job.

Survival Strategies: Supervision

Trista, was the only participant in my study that has made a conscious decision not to practice in the academy after she graduates from the program. Her decision was based entirely on the strained relationship she experienced with her supervisor, which left her bereft of confidence and inward feelings of worthlessness or incapability. Trista comments calmly as though she were merely stating an obvious fact, and described this disempowering relationship as follows:

Right now what I’m encountering [is that] my prof is complaining about my
English [and] how it’s just so poor. He already said, the last time I met with him that “you can never be an academic”…. I was made to feel really, really ashamed of how I express myself in written form (p. 2).

Hearing Trista’s story made me very sad. I felt it was such a shame that it had never occurred to Trista that she should challenge her supervisor and try to prove him wrong by doing whatever it would take to strengthen her writing skills, or the less strenuous option of choosing to believe in herself, no matter what he told her. She became prey to the self-fulfilling prophecy. Unlike Grace, my other Non-White participant, who knew from the beginning she was at a disadvantage because of her L2 status and therefore decided to foster a counter strategy for success by becoming a strong writer, Trista had decided to acquiesce to her professor’s strong words and opinions about her scholarship and not practice at all in the academy. I was very concerned about Trista and when I asked her how she copes with all of the pain she is experiencing, she said:

Well I just numb myself right now and then I just move on. I’m noting it to myself, and I’m thinking that when I’m finally finished this I would have had some time to reflect and be able to … make it better (p. 4).

Trista’s coping mechanism was to block-out the pain and humiliation of her difference, something she was used to doing from childhood.

_Negotiating Academic culture and Know-how_

I soon realized that the only way Trista is able to continue in the program was by internalizing her pain and anguish caused by the difficult relationship she had with her supervisor. When women experience the doctoral program in isolation, they may be oblivious to the intellectual capital that is present with other WOC with whom they might share similar experiences. Finding common ground can lead to action for change, but more immediate and most important, it could be a means of healing and strengthening for both the mind and spirit. Isolation is a residual effect of the academic culture. Isolation breeds a heightened sense of hopelessness and ignorance about one’s choices in the face of looming power relations that exist within the academic culture, especially for WOC in various departments where they are often the
‘only one’ of colour doing racialized or culturally relevant research. This was the case for Trista.

**DANA’S STORY**

*Negotiating Academic culture and Know-how*

Dana’s experience illustrates how language can be problematic even for an English speaking PhD who possessed the right language and even a perfect British accent. Dana suspected that it was her Black skin that was at the root of many problems with professional colleagues as well as in the academy. She used the phrase “English but not Equal” to explain that, although she does not struggle with a foreign accent and speaks English, the English she speaks is not regarded as equal to the caliber of English required by the academy. The racism she experienced came in the form of a challenge that was based largely on her skin colour. Dana felt that her credibility as a professional in her chosen field (outside of the academy) was not equally values as those of her White colleagues on the job because her qualifications and skills identified on her non-Canadian transcripts and work documentations where not accepted in Canada emphasizing that White academic culture was the standard, She states:

> …And it’s not that you’re not able to do it. You’re more than able, that’s why we’re arrived there. You’ve got other social and cultural issues that impact your ability. I wonder about the impact you have if you’re White middle class, you’ve already have a family system that have social/work connections, networking. [Whites] also have the support network of language that is ahead. They’ve already been trained into the culture of reading and writing a certain way (p. 10).

Dana’s goal to achieve a PhD was born out of her need to acquire Canadian credentials in an effort to address the power relations she continued to face on her job. She felt that if she acquired a higher degree from a Canadian institution, the poor treatment would stop. It did not. Though she was born in an English speaking country, Dana was not familiar with the professional terminology and abbreviations her Canadian colleagues would frequently use on the job. She explains:

> Well in [names her profession] for instance, in Canada they use a lot of abbreviations. In the UK, we don’t use abbreviations. When I came here to
Canada, they would just go on with their abbreviations. Rolling it off, and it was like a power thing. Some of them I understand but some of them they’re just way over the top and I’m just like, “hang on what does that mean?” You’re made to feel stupid. And then they would talk it fast through like it was some power thing, and I got to feel that this was very unsafe practice. Like how can you give me a ‘hand-over’ full of all these abbreviations? I’m coming from a different space, do you understand how I’m saying it? (p. 11).

Ironically, Dana used the term, “hand-over” one that I was not familiar with and so I asked her to explain what she meant by it. She told me that it meant not really explaining what something means but handing you an acronym of a complicated meaning instead, which is really not an explanation of anything at all. What was so powerful about this encounter was that even during our interview, the power of language and its ability to isolate one learner from another was evident right there between this participant and myself. In her effort to explain to me what was happening to her on the job, she used a terminology that was safe and familiar to her own way of knowing and she felt comfortable enough to express it in front of me. This provided a perfect example for what I am trying to illustrate with this theme of language and its role in maintaining relations of ruling. When, in my case I was willing to ask for clarification on words or ideas I did not understand, it was met with a genuine effort on the part of Dana to help me in that process, without making me feel inferior or even unintelligible. In a safe environment such as the one that was established between my participant and myself, the power relations of language can be dismantled. However, as in the case of Dana and her co-workers, she risked being exposed as an inferior knower by asking for better understanding and was belittled and made to feel “stupid.” Similar to other participants in my study, Dana experiences feelings of inferiority that persist among perceived marginalized communicators. Dana sees the self-practice of silence as a sense of power:

For me “silence” can be the choice not to voice your opposition to a difficult decision and action on the part of your professors. Even in the face of unfair treatment (p. 12).

For Dana, the message in the academy and the workplace is not knowing what the right answers are but knowing exactly how to say them and how you sound to the listener/recipient.
Therefore, Dana, Grace, and Trista chose to remain silent in situations of oppression that might bring about more oppression if they resisted. On the other hand, silence is also used as a form of wealth in my study in that its use presented rewards for my participants. For example, choosing to focus on writing skills, and limit excess dialogue in classroom discussions was a strategy that gained recognition from the professor, as Grace explains in the example above.

*Survival Strategies: Supervision*

Dana, a Black professional woman, came to the program to establish higher rank in her outside field as a professor. When I asked Dana to characterize her relationship between her and her supervisor her response was as follows:

I think it’s however very much [in] part on her terms? I don’t think it’s a deliberate thing. I just think it’s maybe a characteristic thing. You know? Or [maybe] not a characteristic thing [but] more an experience kind of thing? It could be a person’s approach. For me to um...I’m not feeling that freedom to say, ‘look this is really what I would like to do’, or ‘can we explore that Option’?

Sadly Dana has become resigned to doing whatever her supervisor has suggested and has slowly grown frustrated with the lack of freedom to explore her own topic. Presently, Dana has had to take a leave of absence from the program and expressed a pervasive feeling of isolation that still overwhelms her experience over the four years she had been in the program.

**GRACE’S STORY**

*Negotiating Academic Culture and Know-how*

When Grace became extremely overwhelmed by the fierce competition in her classroom and grew more and more frustrated with the voices that tended to dominate the discussions, she brought her concern home to her husband who was also a racialized (but not L1) academic, whose advice to her was to just focus on writing well. He pointed out to her that, though participation in class was important, the weight of the term paper had greater significance in terms of overall evaluation. When Grace relied on the strength of her writing to make an impression on her professor, her efforts earned her two OGS awards and two published articles in
peer reviewed journals. After my first interview with Grace, I discovered that Grace made me nervous because she spoke so few words. Similarly, while the academy associates specific articulation or even accents with the dissemination of intelligence and knowledge, it can learn a lot from the unfamiliar voice or dialect. Strangely, it appears as though the academy, as a culture, avoids silence in the room. For example, rarely are students given the opportunity to sit in silence and be reflective, and seldom would you find a professor conducting a class in this manner. There was so much Grace taught me about the power of her silence. Grace had a very deliberate way of talking; none of her words were wasted. They seemed to be well thought out, purposeful in their delivery. During our second interview, I shared my self-reflection with Gracie and told her how profound I felt her silence and deliberate speech. Oddly, when I complimented Grace because of her unique attribute with the way she expressed herself, it was difficult for her to actually see this as her strength. She was surprised at my comment and said, “I don’t know [why] you say my little words is profound? But that’s what you think. And I never think of myself that way.” In fact Grace admitted that she saw it [her use of silence] as a weakness.

Grace insisted that her inability to communicate effectively in English was a weakness for her it was always a deficit. However, I would question if she really had any other recourse, as that was the way she was made to feel in the classroom. I really cherished and received each word Grace spoke as a gift. She taught me that the power comes in knowing that you can choose what you say and what not to say, when to speak and when not to speak. And I reminded her that her way of knowing was just as valuable. Near the end of our discussion on this topic, Grace added:

Yeah but um I guess the silence ah, [pause] basically I don’t really conceptualize silence. Probably I embody it… I guess that’s one difference [between] the academy, and my own kind of way of knowing (p. 6).

Influenced by my dialogue with Grace and a renewed perspective of my own use of language, I was able to clearly identify the “power of silence”, with her experience. Shortly after our interview, I found I had to put this mindset into practice when I began to encounter upsets of my own where the direction and supervision of my own work was concerned. I chose not to speak, not to challenge anything or anyone. I decided to be still and pray that things would settle on their own, which of course they did.
Survival Strategies: Supervision

Grace seemed to have a distant but functional relationship with her supervisor. As with all her activities she was very deliberate in how she chose to work with, and how she chose to speak about her supervisor/supervision. She selected a White female professor to work with. Her decision seemed methodical and appeared to serve an ulterior purpose. The following dialogue (methods approach used by Kvale 2009) with Grace helps in illustrating my point:

Lee (Ln 11): In your supervision, did you have anyone of Asian descent on your committee?
Grace (Ln 11): Ah, my committee, no.
Lee (Ln 12): Was it important to you or was it not an important issue? To have someone who represented your ‘ways of knowing’?
Grace (Ln 12): Well ah, I guess, more importantly, I guess, I prioritized the theoretical, you know framework. My committee members have a lot of theoretical framework, so. Yeah I mean, I could have chosen anybody, somebody Asian but no, I ended up not having any (p. 7).

In Grace’s case the importance of having a WOC for a supervisor was not relevant. Another theme that emerged (not only with Grace, but among other participants as well) was the hesitancy in choosing racial or culturally-biased research topics. The following question was posed: Do you feel that the academy is supportive of works that are not from the dominant culture? Or do you think that they only support certain types of research? The response from Grace was:

Well I think um now a day with all these you know funding ah, things like accountability all this market driven kind of things I guess sometimes it’s unfortunate to think this way but you might have to, change or modify your scope, um of the things you want to look at. Sometimes I do not feel that you know, it is going to be good to continue researching on this particular population [she is speaking about her own research about Asian women] Because you know, it’s not dominant, and ah what about job market, and also what about funding…. A lot of forces around (p. 8).
Survival Strategies: Awards

Grace, above, gives insight into how changing the scope (i.e., deciding to minimize racial content) of one’s research could have an influence on the type of funding one can get. Grace was a recipient of multiple OGS awards and learned from her professor, as well as other colleagues who were mentored by this professor, how to “language” (Aduke, p. 7) her application. Not only did Grace feel that perhaps she would not continue doing research within her own community, she felt that doing so could prevent her from finding a job after her studies. This particular perception was also echoed by Dana, Trista, and Rachel.

RACHEL’S STORY

Survival Strategies: Supervision

Rachel was the first participant in my study who dared to speak out in detail about her strained relationship and experience with her supervisor and department. She came from a specific part of the world characterized for its political unrest. She believed that her knowledge of anti-racist or colonial paradigms came from her own experience as a politicized woman growing up in that region. Her understanding of many of the theories she was required to learn in the classroom came from her particular way of knowing. Rachel, a teaching assistant (TA), felt that she was a living example to her students regarding what particular theories, such as anti-racist feminism or anti-colonial theory, looked like in action because of her own experience and practices as a TA. Rachel was dismayed by the realization that her professors, including her supervisor, did not walk the talk that they professed in their own practices. She explains it this way:

When I’m talking to my student[s], as a TA, and I talk about feminism, it’s not [just] talking (emphasis added) about “Feminism.” Maybe I don’t mention the name, but through the real example they can critique racism. It is in their daily work and their daily behaviour to each other [that] they can critique those things…. In theory they [professors] are anti-racist or anti-colonial but in practice they are not. In their marking, they are not. In their judging about you, they are not. In their supporting you, they are not. Because when I need your support, if you understand me and support me, it counters anti-racist action. But then you [professors] follow the structure of the education [system] (p. 7).
The participants all agreed that if graduate students do not find supervisors who have a vested interest and expertise in your specialized topics, they could encounter an even more daunting and lonely experience in the doctoral program. What’s more, the issue of trust had a profound effect on the relationships between supervisor and supervisee.

In this next example speaking out proved to exacerbate an already difficult situation. In terms of challenges they faced with the language barrier, both Trista and Rachel did not experience the rewards that Grace’s strategies (though Grace was not initially completely confident in herself) afforded her. Rachel spent more than eight years trying to complete her doctorate. She encountered major setbacks because of her non-standard English along the way. She often verbalized her displeasure and the unfair treatment she received, to anyone who would listen. Soon, she found herself isolated from both her colleagues and her professors. Upon her arrival in this country, Rachel was proud because she could already speak English and had been a good student and critical thinker in her country. She told me that all her knowledge (academic and familial) was informed by her culture. Hence, she experienced a huge shift in her ways of knowing when she came to Canada. She relates her experience in the following quote:

Knowing how to speak English and knowing how to speak academy are two different things ...Because when I was in the class, if I was equipped language, I could be able to develop my thoughts. The students [would] borrow my thoughts in class and [then] they [would] expand it...I could talk about it, but not in such professional words.[I was told that] my thought was ahead of my language. So how do you judge me? How do you evaluate my mark? (p. 10).

During this interview, Rachel posed many pressing questions about this issue. Her concern was that both she and her professors realized that she was well versed in the course content and the theories but her problem was that she had difficulty expressing her cultural wealth in Standard English. To what extent should educational institutions be responsible for ensuring easier transitions for foreign scholars who have the ability to contribute great knowledge to the academy but are blocked by a language barrier? This was Rachel’s major concern.
Writing as Healing

As revealed in some of the stories from my participants, the way that healing can be attained is by writing the counter-narrative of one’s story. Writing helped Rachel gain her confidence. Although Rachel had faced a difficult doctoral journey, she focused on being a good writer and watched as she reaped the rewards of that deliberate action, i.e., publishing, good grades, respect and affirmation from professors. Others used silence as a means to preserve relationships among professors. For example, some did not always agree with the direction their supervisor was taking them but acquiesced so that things would hopefully go smoother for them. Feelings of inadequacy were quite overwhelming for Rachel who perceived herself to be quite knowledgeable in her home country but who quickly discovered how inferior her intelligence was perceived by both her colleagues and professors, because of the fact that she was an L1 student she was constantly reminded of the limitations of her ‘thick accent.’

ADUKE’S STORY

Negotiating Academic culture and Know-how

Although Aduke’s parents were born on the African continent, she was born and raised in Canada and had no difficulty with the language prevalent within the academic culture. She commented that how, despite her heritage, people often were surprised that she did not have a foreign accent. Aduke asserts that because of the way she speaks (with a pronounced Canadian accent) the assumption is that she speaks ‘normal’. When asked, ‘Do you see this (speaking in dominant language) as a form of capital?’ Aduke responded:

Oh yes, definitely! It is a form of privilege that I do have. It’s because the way I speak is not as threatening. It’s not seen or taken up as threatening. It really does allow people to feel that, they’re OK. Because, "Oh they speak like me! They speak like me kind of thing. So she’s not “that” Black. She’s not “that” different! You know? So um yeah it is a form of privilege that I do have ( p. 13).

This passage illustrates how the cultural wealth of academic language is used to provide access for a student of colour who experiences both gender and racial discrimination in the classroom as
a teaching assistant. The observation was also made that, having a ‘non’ accent facilitates finding future job placements for WOC.

**Survival Strategies: Supervision**

Aduke explains her strategy in choosing her supervisor: Because she knew her topic revolved strongly around race and African indignity, she cleverly placed herself under the tutelage of one of the leading experts in the field. She explains:

[I decided to match my topic] with somebody who has [already] been established, who had basically paved the way, you know trail-blazed, right? So that it wasn’t as sticky, it wasn’t as “controversial”. So the hidden or the implication was that, under the tutelage...under the mentorship of this supervisor or this um reference, I have the potential of being a scholar like this particular academic that has attracted all of this research, and gotten all of these awards. Do you see what I’m saying? (p. 8).

Aduke’s insight was brilliant, and her cultural wealth of knowledge must be put forward to future WOC coming into the program. For example, she shared one of the most valuable pieces of information that every WOC should know when applying for awards. Aduke told me how her supervisor mentored each of his students and showed them the proper language to use when competing for awards. She explains:

[He] provided examples for us which were [from] other students’ who were successful in getting awards....Taking a really close look at the kind of language they used. So you couldn’t always necessarily talk explicitly about what it was you were talking about. You had to say it, not necessarily in layman's terms but you couldn’t be, I don’t like the word radical it almost has a type of “craziness” connotation to it. It couldn’t be maybe as radical as you might want it to be. It had to be more along the lines of something that was digestible, comfortable, less threatening for people who were taking a look at the applications, and making the decisions about the award (p. 7).

The use of language, thus emphasized by Aduke’s supervisor was the type of knowledge important for her to learn in order to succeed in academy. Not only is knowing how to speak an
‘academic language’ important in the classroom setting and for evaluation requirements, the correct language is essential for securing academy awards. Aduke won an OGS award for the four years she was under her supervisor’s tutelage. Paula, another Black participant, had also received an OGS award for the four years while she was in the program and, like Aduke, she was under the tutelage of the same professor. Paula shares her experience with her supervisor in this way:

[My supervisor] said to me, “well what are you going to do next?” And I said, well I’m getting married, I’ll start a family and I’ll come back”. And then he jumped on that and said, “Are you serious about coming back?” And I said, “Yes, but I need a break”. Because I didn’t take a break from undergrad. And he responded, “my advice to you, if you are really interested, don’t take your break.” Because what happens is that life gets in the way and you never come back. And you’re going to regret it down the road because you are going to say, ‘What if?’ And so I went home and I told my husband—we just got married—and he said, “Well the man obviously know what he’s talking about” (p. 2).

**Spirituality**

Overall, most of my participants stated that they do recognize that presence of spirituality in their lives but a few felt it was necessary to keep spirituality and the academy separate. There were some who utilized their spiritual knowledge to confront difficult academic issues. When asked why she would wear her head covering, Aduke responded that she did so when she knew she had to confront a negative situation or negative person at school. She shares:

Yeah, to protect my spiritual knowledge and to protect from the violence of oppression. So you know, let me just say that, um, there are some departments of the university that claim to be a more equitable one, when there are in fact some of the spaces where I experienced some of the most vicious inequities and oppressions. And, um, so yeah, when I would go to those departments during those times, I would always have my head tied (p. 12).

Spirituality is a difficult topic to discuss in the academy and though this was true, many participants maintain unique ways to celebrate their beliefs, and depended on it as a strategy for survival.
5.1 Other Minor Themes Uncovered from Data

Apart from the six major themes of cultural wealth analyzed through the voices of my participants (Chapter Four), there were other minor themes of interest that surfaced. These themes are not necessarily regarded as cultural wealth in and of themselves, but are worthy of mention in my study because these topics recurred during all the interviews. I also wanted to highlight their importance separately, without filtering in any sub-categories into my major six themes, because I believed doing so would only dilute the substance found within the original forms of cultural wealth already identified for my research.

The following topics are examples of other minor themes; some are considered forms of cultural wealth, whereas others are important topics that affected the experiences of the participants in relevant ways:

Community Elders

Involvement with community Elders proved to be a source of wealth for some of the participants, especially those who belonged to an Indigenous community. The presence of the Elders, in the experiences for these participants, was not uncommon. For example, Anne said that she relied greatly on the counsel and wisdom of her Elders to support her through the program. Though it is customary for First Nations community ‘Bands’ to provide financial support, the spiritual guidance that the Elders provide, is not a topic of discussion that is readily present in the academy. The concept of Elders can also be expanded to incorporate experts and scholars in the academic field. A Black participant in my study expressed how the prolific work and legacy that her supervisor has generated in the field of anti-racist and anti-colonial research heralds him as an Elder in the academic community for many Black students and students of colour - notwithstanding the fact that he is also considered an Elder and Chief in his own African village. Community leaders can provide financial support, spiritual guidance, intellectual capital, and cultural knowledge that contribute to the wealth of experience for WOC in doctoral programs. This sub-category is related closely to my major theme of spirituality, as the Elders in the community did provide spiritual guidance for my participants. I chose to keep this as a separate category because here, Elders can be seen as either a (secular) academic guide or a spiritual
guide. I did not want to fuse these two important but very different concepts of cultural wealth together.

**Colleagues**

Feelings of isolation affected all of the participants in my study, in one form or other. Many noted that having someone to talk to, who was going through the same thing made all the difference. Sharing ideas, triumphs, and even failures were part of the collegial relationship. The most important role that colleagues served for each of the participants was the willingness and ability to encourage and support each other through words and actions. Some colleagues even offered to pray for one another. Knowing that there was someone else going through what you were going through served as a support-group system. Colleagues would impart strategies to hone writing skills, or pass on articles that might contribute to research, or even invite the participants over for a meal. Paula saw the importance of getting involved and being connected to other students voices in a much more active way when she states:

> The first thing I got involved with was ‘Student Caucus Meeting.’ That’s where I found out what was happening because students will talk among themselves…That’s really crucial for minority students to know, because the way information is disseminated in those meetings gives us access to different kinds of cultural capital [wealth]. Not even cultural capital, but capital which is knowledge. Where things are, who to access, how to access…(p. 3)

**Funding and Awards: Money Matters**

The issues that surfaced with my participants within the theme of funding were greatly influenced by who one’s supervisor was and how well one was able to word and write funding applications. These factors became the qualifying indicators, which determined whether or not certain students received rewards, and subsequent awards, throughout their studies. For most of the participants, arriving at this inside knowledge about funding was primarily through supervisor/professor mentorship or by talking to other colleagues who had prior success with the process. For example, participants who were conducting research that analyzed issues of race and decolonization found success in receiving Graduate Assistantships under the tutelage of a particular professor who was successful in generating a prolific amount of publications on the
subject and who (according to a few of my participants) in turn made the university look good because of their work.

The effect of funding on identity, empowerment, and confidence was an issue that surfaced during the interview process. Of the 10 participants, five had been recipients of OGS awards. No one in my study received the prestigious Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) fellowship award, where $30,000 or more is awarded to the recipient. The five participants who did receive awards all demonstrated a sense of confidence in one area or another. That is, some felt confident in their skills as a writer, while others felt they were all-around good scholars and believed in the value of their own research as they watched it validated through the reward process. Conversely, the participants who did not receive awards felt disempowered and knew they had to work extra hard to make a mark in the department or to be noticed by their professors. Participants in this second category tended to constantly second-guess their abilities and contributions. This was manifested in the timid way they would approach their supervisors or the way they reported silencing themselves in classroom discussions. According to Thomas-Long (2007), those who are beneficiaries of funding tended to define themselves in positive ways. Overall, the issue of funding had a double-edge effect on students. Thomas-Long explains:

On one hand it [funding award] gives students a sense of accomplishment and the sense of being valued within the department. On the other hand, funding can have devastating effects especially when it is used as a selection mechanism to sort students into categories (2007, p. 150).

Illustrated in the case of Thomas-Long’s study about the power relations of funding in the academy was helpful in framing my own interview schedule with the participants of this study. I found her observation above to be true, particularly with one of my participants. Out of the ten participants in my research, five had received Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) awards. Of these, the “double-edge effect” (Long, 2007, p. 150) was apparent with Gia. Gia had received an OGS award the first time she applied and, though she was very happy, she was aware that other people were talking about her. Her divided emotions are expressed in the following comments:

I applied for the OGS and I got it which is good, and I think I’m extremely lucky because I know it is not everybody’s experience. [But] someone may say,
‘Yeah Gia, look how privileged she is because, she got this, or she got the OGS” (p. 18).

During the interview, I sensed relief from Gia as she realized that she could talk about her award with me without fear of reproach or jealousy. The remaining four women who received awards did not appear to be facing the same concerns as Gia. When looking at the names, I discovered that three of the award recipients were from the same department, known for its research in the area of anti-racist and anti-colonial theories, a department well-equipped in preparing its students to become scholars of colour. The department that Gia belonged to, however, was not really recognized as a leader in racialized or ethnicity-based studies. As an L1 student, I believe many of her (dominant) colleagues were surprised that she got the OGS. Gia felt that she had to work ten times harder as others around her during the application process but it obviously paid off.

**Fear of Reprisal**

Fear of reprisal from supervisors or the department was a real threat that affected many of the participants in my study. The source of this fear was primarily focused on the possibility of being identified as a participant in this research. This phenomenon was evident with one participant in particular. Grace was so fearful of being identified that I was unable to get detailed information about her cultural background or parents. She was very guarded and deliberate in what she was prepared to share and what she was not prepared to share. This fear factor became a significant topic with my other participants as well. Taking the needed precautionary cues from Grace, I expressed my commitment to confidentiality and was able to tap into her thoughts about fear in other areas. For example, some participants feared their supervisors when it came to expressing the design and format of their research. Also, there were two participants who were afraid to contact their thesis committee members, even after waiting over six to eight months to hear back from them about submitted chapters or drafts.

Maintaining flowery descriptions of supervisory relationships, although there were apparent let downs and obvious conflict was another indicator of fear of reprisal. This response characterized how many participants realized the extent to which their supervisors could affect their present or future professional endeavours, both inside and outside of the academy (power relations). When I asked about the supervisory relationships, almost all of the participants
presented a ‘status quo’ response of ‘everything is good.’ Though it was evident that many of these relationships were indeed amenable, when questioned deeper about any troubling incidents or issues that might have occurred with their supervisor, those who did have obvious problems chose not to comment and expressed their deep concern about the level of anonymity and confidentiality. I would afford them in this study. I perceive this behaviour as arising out of fear of reprisal. Throughout the interviews some of the participants would stop me and remind me about their need for anonymity. The emphasis grew stronger as I delved deeper. I had to guess that those who questioned my ethical responsibilities as a researcher to protect their identity and stories, elected to simply give ‘flowery depictions’ of their relationship and feelings about their supervisor. This was a very big issue with almost all of my participants. But for those who trusted me with critical comments in this section I have purposely withheld specific details that did come to the surface. I tried my best to generalize my findings without watering down the powerful messages I believe this section reveals through the various experiences among my participants. What’s more, I found that the quality of these supervisory relationships was directly reflected in the way participants viewed themselves as developing scholars and their ability to balance the freedom to be themselves with a level of professionalism with their supervisor.

While writing this chapter, I began to uncover a theoretical link between the levels of comfort or safety participants felt with supervision and the perceived degree of competence participants felt about their own capabilities as a scholar. For example, the more a participant felt she was genuinely supported by her supervisor, was the more likely she was to exhibit feelings of self-confidence. Conversely, if the relationship between student and supervisor was perceived to be strained or distant, feelings of insecurity, self-doubt, and obligation were more prevalent. The stability and strength of the supervisor/supervisee relationship could also affect the ‘cultural wealth of resistance’ in terms of the level of sustainability and persistence that doctoral students demonstrated in the program.

**Supervision: Challenging Relationships**

As mentioned earlier, the topic of supervision was extremely sensitive among the group of women who experienced strained or challenging relationships with their supervisor. Paramount for this group was a pervasive fear of reprisal. It was quite challenging for me to get
participants to speak about their experiences. In the beginning, I found that most would only speak in general terms when referring to the relationship. The challenges manifested themselves in various degrees of fear and, in extreme cases, hopelessness. What was obvious was that there was a direct link between the quality of experience in the program and the relationship participants had with their professor/supervisor. This is to say, that mentorship plays a key role in how WOC experience the process of becoming doctoral recipients. Those who dared to articulate the presence of challenges in their relationship with their supervisors described a very difficult time navigating from step to step on the path. For example, designing the research after data collection was a challenge for one participant because she and her supervisor did not agree about how the research should be formatted and presented. In another case, a participant was “stuck” in the proposal writing process because she felt she was proposing a study that her supervisor wanted and not one that she wanted or was passionate about. Challenging supervisory relationships hindered the writing process in a significant way but, most damaging, it hampered the confidence of the participant, causing them to question themselves at every step.

**Supervision: Rewarding Relationships**

The mix reactions of the women in my study toward their supervisors underlined the importance of these forms of cultural wealth. Half of the participants reported that they experienced rewarding relationships with their supervisors, while the other half of this group experienced strained or distant relationships with them. Those who had rewarding relationships fared better in their journey toward becoming doctoral recipients, and those which challenging relations, tended to matriculate later in their programs. My effort was to identify what forms of cultural wealth were present among the group with rewarding relationships. The WOC in this category were confident, had published, and were recipients of funding awards. WOC who had challenging relationships tended to feel isolated, graduate later, and were not recipients of any awards. Evidently, the cultural wealth of mentorship (academic and spiritual) had a great effect on the types of relationships the WOC in my study had with their supervisors.

**Identity**

Cultural identity and naming played a role among my participants. In particular, of the five Black women in my study, only two had similar political and/or theoretical outlooks when it came to how they viewed themselves. They did not have a problem with being called a ‘woman
of colour’, where others in my study were uncomfortable with that term and preferred to be called a ‘Black’ or ‘African-Canadian’ woman. Similarly, some of the Black women identified with being Black feminists, whereas the two women with similar perspectives preferred to be called Womanist and did not like the term ‘feminist’ and did not self-identify as one. What was paramount for all my participants was the desire to be identified and received as a promising bright scholar, especially when compared to, or measured against their White colleagues. Therefore, acquiring affirmation from one’s supervisors and one’s academic performance or ability were issues that became very important. For example much concern was expressed if language, writing skills or even cultural/racial background threatened to label participants as anything less than their counterparts, then the question of identity and know-how became a huge factor. Ironically, the issue of racial difference was not something that many of the women were willing to openly talk about in the beginning of the interviews. For example, when I asked Lynn, a Black woman, if she believed that one of her strengths was that she didn’t get caught up in the ‘critical race stuff”, her insightful response was:

I think it works for me (not focusing on race). I mean sometimes I do question, and stop to think about it [race]…I don’t seem to think like others, like some of my ‘people’, if you know what I mean? Because I guess I have a strong sense of who I am, and I know I am just as capable as others to get what I want, and get where I want to go, and to blaze that path if I have to. I still respect [Black] people or others for their own way of seeing things because you know and/No matter how close we are in terms of our background, everyone has their own individual journey to go through. So, it’s not just a question of forget and move on…I think its good to remember, but sometimes I think we have to remember the good things as well. Especially when people of colour start talking about what they are experiencing and they are told, “Oh move on.” But at the same time I think, we have to really know who we are. And know what our strengths are. And use that as an anchor, as well as all the other “good stuff” that has been done by all our ancestors, then keep going with it. (p. 9).

Lynn was the only Black woman who did not accentuate her Blackness (racialized identity) in either her research or in what she believed to be her true essence as a WOC. She identified more with her cultural roots as a French speaking West Indian woman. Lynn’s outlook as a Black woman later influenced my own ways of knowing. Her interview caused me to reflect on many
areas when it came to my own identity. Identity was also an issue when it came to deciding research topics. Some of the participants felt it in their best interest not to racialize their subject matter. This realization came early on for some, like Lynn, but much later for others like Grace and Dana.

**Power of Silence**

During my interviews (and throughout the literature) it was noted that the skill in academic dialogue and discussion are highly valued in the classroom. Graduate students vie for the attention and affirmation of the professors, while gaining either admiration or animosity from their peers. The ability to speak well and to critically analyze the readings automatically ranks a student as superior, especially in the eyes of the professor which is where it counts the most. What became interesting to discover was the way that the L1 learners in my study who were from regions within the Asian continent strategized to overcome their inability to compete in their classroom banter. What existed among L1 learners in my study manifested themselves quite differently among these specified participants and the strategies to overcome other barriers were just as diverse. Some of these participants sought refuge in their writing, electing to remain silent in the graduate classroom, while others acquiesced to the constant reminder from their supervisors that they were not up to par. The effect of the language barrier was most pronounced among my three non-White participants, where one found great success and the others greater isolation in their elected strategy to overcome the language barrier. It is interesting and important to note that the participants who spoke the romantic languages of Spanish and French, reportedly had no issue with competing or keeping up with their colleagues, even though their accents were pronounced. Finally, it is important to note that the issue of silence can be taken positively and negatively, and is often presented as problematic in the academy when, for example, students report being “silenced” in the classroom, because of either; cultural codes, a domineering presence in the classroom, covert racial micro-aggressions, or power relations.

**Celebrating Yourself**

A sad and recurring theme among all of the six participants who had completed their PhD (during the writing of this chapter, one of my participants successfully defended her doctorate and became a recipient) was that they all admitted to not really celebrating the fact that they had
completed one of the single most heralding tasks of their lifetime. They had not taken the time to really take in and celebrate the significance of the accomplishment. What does that say about WOC? Why can’t they stop? I realized that the preoccupation and stress with finding a job now replaced the years of struggle, wear and tear on the body and soul that each of them had to endure to get through the program. Oddly, it was as though it never occurred to them that a celebration was in order. From their perspective, there was a need to focus on to the new and bigger struggle now. As I near the end of this long journey, I too can relate to the cool response that resonates in my spirit despite knowing I am broaching the culmination of such an arduous and distinguished task.

**Life After the Ph. D.**

Of the 10 participants in my study, five women were recipients of doctoral degrees. Three of the five recipients were Black women, one self-identified as First Nations, and two of Asian descent. Three Black women emphasized life after the defense, for the Black female scholar, looks very different than that of a White female scholar. Opportunities for employment in their desired fields were hard to come by. One of the degree recipients is an L2 and still has not found work in the academy. Much of the insight about life after the PhD came from Paula, one of my key informants, as well as Anne and Sandra. They all agreed that finding work was the most troubling aspect of life after the defense and that battling through the journey of getting a doctoral degree was only half the battle. The reality of finally acquiring the doctorate takes a while to sink in, and there are times when one becomes oblivious to the fact that they actually have it. The “What Next” syndrome is also an evitable stage of this process. Another valuable source of information was the admonition from both participants and faculty of colour, to always remember the currency that this degree generates. It was advised that you should be proud to use it when necessary, especially outside of the academy when as a WOC, or racial minority you might be regarded as something less than favourable by the unsuspecting public when about your everyday business. There are accounts of scholars of colour being mistaken for “the cleaning help” or “the bus driver”, or some other demeaning disposition merely because of their racial identities. Overall, “Life after the PhD”, will continue to delivery both its many rewards and challenges.
5.2 Synopsis of Participants Response to Some of the Major Themes:

Mother’s Influence: Significance of Mother/Daughter Relationships

The act of supporting and pushing their daughters to succeed came natural for many of the mothers in my research and served as an inspiring example of cultural wealth among WOC in this study. It is not surprising that this theme would evolve from my research as the most meaningful for both my participants and me. Together, we realized that were it not for our mothers, we would not have made it so far. I must preface that not all of my participants felt the same way. There were one or two participants who did not feel that their mother played any pivotal role in their academy success, if at all. However, the Mother’s Influence was significant for most.

The influence of the mothers’ support and wisdom was a recurring theme that emerged during the interviews with most of my participants. The cultural wealth that emanated from the participants’ mothers was something that they learned to rely upon very early on in their lives. Most conceded that implementing their mother’s wisdom without reservation was a choice that contributed to their survival in the PhD program. I heard countless examples of how the mother’s influence and support for her daughter made all the difference in the world for them. The inspiration that came from mothers fueled the participants to get up when they felt down trodden and to never give up.

Age Capital

WOC tend to go back to school at a later age and they bring to the academy their experience from work, life, raising children, oppression. They must learn implicit cues that younger students are already socialized in because of their early exposure to higher education. On an average, WOC tend to go back to school later in life because of reasons that vary around lack of opportunity, familial support or encouragement, finances, or family obligations (i.e., care of small children, senior parent). However, the cultural wealth that we bring with this age includes: tenacity, firsthand experience, and a ‘do-or-die-second-chance-mentality’. The age deficit brings, on the one hand, a great sense of timidity where students often would not challenge professors or colleagues on issues, even those relating to their own welfare. On the other hand, WOC who are older than their classmates can come into the program with something
to prove - to show “them” that they are not stupid and have a right to be there (See Dana and Sandra’s story).

**Mentorship**

Overall, the WOC in my study who experienced nurturing relationships with a mentor fared much better than those who did not have the same opportunity during their doctoral program. Mentorship, for those participants came from close relationships with their supervisors—which at times extended to the merging of private and public lives of both student and professor in order to accomplish this goal. These relationships provided WOC with the “know-how” needed to navigate within the academic culture, especially when it came to issues around funding, (e.g., writing and wording award applications). Other examples of meaningful mentorship came from Elders in the community. The guidance from these spiritual leaders provided both practical and tangible support. Conversely, the WOC in my research who were not fortunate enough to experience becoming a mentee, tended to experience much frustration and feelings of isolation; they felt stranded in a structure that provided no guidance as they tried to figure out what steps to take, and what steps to avoid while on the path to becoming doctoral recipients.

**Survival Strategies**

All the WOC demonstrated unique survival strategies in their effort to endure the rigors of their doctoral program. Some figured out how to manage the feelings of isolation, and frustrations by learning techniques that worked individually for my participants. Many of the survival strategies were implemented to counter the power relations that were evident in the classroom. These power relationships were present in both student and faculty encounters as well as with the institutional structures of the academy. In responding to the various non-inclusive environments in the academy, some of the participants would choose to remain silent during class discussion, or learn how to “language” award applications and academic papers to get funding or recognition from their professors. Still in other cases participants simply trusted their inner-wisdom when it came to making decisions to help them navigate through the doctoral program.
Negotiating Academic Culture and Know-how

L1 participants voiced concern around questions that inevitably arose around the ability and skill level of students with English as a second language. Questions that can be raised on this point are: If foreign students have great potential, why could they not simply give their work to a professional editor so that the written work could be made clearer or equivalent to the academic standard of the university? What was the responsibility of the university or the supervisor who encounters such students? These were some of the ideas posed by participants with a language barrier during the interviews. The general consensus among these candidates was that they were unnecessarily made to feel unsafe and even humiliated and misunderstood on many occasions.

Another issue that surfaced under this theme was the awareness of the value that the Academy placed on the ability to write and dialogue effectively using academic jargon. Participants who did not have this oral skill reverted to strengthening their writing skill. If participants struggled in both areas, they stated it was an organic, in-the-moment kind of learning that got them through. This process was often frustrating but never a situation where any would admit succumbing to defeat. Many admitted that journal writing was cited as a catharsis during difficult times. I too relied on my daily journal entries for strength along my own journey.

Spirituality

Spirituality was a reoccurring theme that emerged from the data. The link between spirituality, self-preservation and healing was very apparent with my participants. When faced with the reality of feeling separated from one’s own way of knowing on predominantly White campuses of higher education, the women of colour in my study experienced a heightened sense of isolation and residual feelings of deep rooted pain. The natural inclination was to lean on their spirituality. Referring specifically to what happens to Black women who are studying in these types of institutions, bells hooks (1993) describes the severity of the wounds they experience, when she states:

Irrespective of our access to material privilege we are all wounded by White supremacy, racism, sexism and a capitalistic economic system that lumps us collectively to an underclass position. Such wounds do not manifest themselves
only in material ways; they affect our psychological well-being. Black people
are wounded in our hearts, minds, bodies and spirits (p.11).

Though some women might recognize the extent of their own injury, others lack access to
organization to collectively facilitate healing (hooks, 1993). WOC are often left to fend for
themselves when faced with the many situations that loom while trying to pursue the doctorate.
Does it not occur to them that there are other women just like them going through much of the
same things? Many questions can be raised: Do our senses become so dulled because we are
plagued by the unrelenting stress, fatigue and ailments that attack our bodies and mind, as we try
to battle with the sometimes hidden oppressor of systemic racism, sexism, and classism? If we
cannot effectively see our adversary, or clearly be aware of what we are up against, how can we
expect to strategically resist on our own? I believe that spirituality and the telling of our stories is
a sort of elixir for my participants and for myself as well. In my post-doctoral endeavours, I
intend for this research to serve as a forum where we can heal our wounds—and for some, just
anxieties of the process—and find solace in knowing that we are not alone. Individually, I
depend on my own spirituality and relationship with God to keep me standing amidst the strain
of this journey. Support from family and friends are also helpful.

5.3 Summary

Each of the categories of wealth, and subsequent themes expressed through the combined
stories of the participants in chapters Four and Five have been analyzed from my interpretive
perspective as the researcher. What’s important to clarify is that the ‘cultural wealth’ of the
WOC in this study, was not intended to be taken as a holistic concept that represents the
experiences of the combined group, but rather the wealth appears individually among the
participants, and their perspective experiences. It is not to speculate that, if a participant
belonged to a specific race or culture they were more likely to respond in one way or another to a
certain theme. My goal was to show that, as a group, the mosaic experiences of WOC, when
placed in the “field” (Bourdieu, 1990) or arena of the academic structure in doctoral programs,
are inclined to react in intrinsic ways which are informed by their individual ways of knowing
(i.e. prior knowledge) that they bring to the academy. Overall, the findings reveal that those who
had a stronger sense of who they were, regardless of racial ethnicity or social class identities,
were better able to have a degree of control in navigating the process of becoming doctoral
Some of the participants who were already aware of the wealth and inner wisdom that naturally guided them, relied heavily on it (e.g., mother’s influence, spiritual knowing). The wisdom of this knowledge gave some of the participants’ feelings of invincibility; no matter what their background was, and no matter what circumstances they had to endure to finish the program.

In the next chapter I explore the degree to which participants could hold on to their own cultural and intellectual knowing, in the face of power relations, and use various degrees of resistance (in the form of survival strategies, or spirituality) to accentuate the value of their cultural wealth. The way my participants go about executing (or in some cases concealing) that knowledge, and the way that knowledge was received (or rejected) in the academy, while they experienced the process of becoming doctoral recipients, all had an effect on how their cultural wealth helped them to compensate with challenges. Obviously, the process of how this occurred among my participants varied with the women but the qualifying characteristic that they all shared was that, no matter what the barrier or limitation for them, quitting was not an option. The actual path that must be taken in order to become a doctoral recipient is presented in the following chapter. It challenges the prescribed path generated in conventional student handbooks found in predominantly White campuses.
Chapter Six
DISCUSSION

“To know the road ahead, ask those coming back.”
~Chinese proverb

6.0 Introduction

I have spent the last several chapters illustrating how I broached the topic of cultural wealth and educational experiences for WOC in a Canadian university. My sole purpose for this study was to transform the understanding of how we conceptualize cultural wealth (or cultural capital) as seen through the experiences of the participants in my study. In the very beginning, I established that the experiences of my participants and the knowledge that it produces are “mosaic” in nature because when the pieces of knowledge (stories) are put together, they produce a beautiful picture of cultural wealth. I suggested that historically, the cultural and matriarchal contributions of WOC could be traced back to the beginning of civilization and were passed down from generation to generation. Conversely the Western ways of knowing supported a nomadic lifestyle of finding fortune or a better life, by moving from place to place. Once settled, a ‘survival of the fittest” rules of engagement associated with ‘work ethic’ became the moral code for distributing wealth among select and ‘deserving’ settlers. This practice was apparent in all political, socio-economical, religious and, most relevant to my study, educational structures of society. This research set out to reveal that capitalistic practices are not the only measure of wealth, and that many times, the colonial project and racist practices are put in place to keep the powerless from these resources of wealth, or to keep them from using the contributions of their own wealth in dominant culture (Dei, 2000).

This study has addressed many questions that I have pondered for years as a WOC trying to navigate higher education within the academic culture. It has also brought to the surface some sensitive issues that I have never thought about before. These issues require examination from the “outside”, as well as to reflect on them from the “inside”. There is nothing that can be taken for granted; the participants risked their privacy and reputations to bring this new knowledge to light.
They allowed themselves to be vulnerable and transparent, for the greater good of those who will follow after them. My choice of interviews as a methodology, as well as, womanist theory and CRT as my theoretical frameworks, portray the way I come to see and know the world around me. This framework and methodology helped me to answer the research questions for my study. The three main questions that guided my research were: 1) How do WOC experience the process of becoming doctoral recipients? What values enhance those experiences? 2) How is cultural wealth theorized among WOC in doctoral programs? 3) How do the dominant practices of the dominant culture impact the experiences of WOC in doctoral programs?

I have answered the first question by identifying: mother’s influence, age, mentorship, academic culture and know-how, survival strategy, and spirituality, as factors that influence cultural knowing. The second question about how WOC learn follows from this: learning is experienced through WOC’s own cultural knowing, supported by genuine mentoring and supervision, colleagues, community, and networking. Third, dominant ways of knowing that are entrenched in higher education hinder the experiences of WOC through power relations. Educational institutions support these structures by rewarding complying students through funding, job placement, and publication opportunities during and after completion. This outcome often causes WOC to minimize the racial implications of their research by focusing on just evidence-based analysis [as opposed to evidence informed by experiential knowledge].

In this chapter, I discuss the issues that impact the process for WOC on their path to becoming doctoral recipients. The specific sections to be discussed are divided into four sections which are: 1) Impact of Power Relations on Participant Experiences and Intellectual Capital, 2) Disempowerment and Cultural Codes for Empowerment, 3) Resistance and, 4) Value of Cultural Wealth. In the first section of this chapter, the affect that power relations in educational institutions has on the educational experiences of communities of colour in general and WOC in particular will be addressed. Specifically, issues related to power relations in the classroom, and how faculty in authoritative positions can inadvertently disempower and isolate WOC, will be the main focus. I juxtapose here the claim that the combined cultural wealth from my participants constitutes intellectual capital, despite dominant deficit perceptions that contributions from communities of colour are less valuable than contributions from dominant sectors in society. Next, I present examples of how WOC feel disempowered in doctoral programs. Examples of
resistance will be provided in the section on “resistance” to illustrate why WOC are not to be conceived as passive recipients of racism and oppression, which at times can render them powerless. Finally, the impact of the value of cultural wealth from the experiences of WOC will be discussed.

Prior to the implications and recommendations section, I provide illustrations of what “the path” to becoming a doctoral recipient looks like. The conclusion will highlight my own reflections and recommendations for the future.

6.1 Power Relations In Educational Institutions

The chronic lack of access to educational resources at in higher education continues to affect the low participation rates for communities of colour (Trowers & Chait, 2002). Added to this issue are the power relations that persist in the classroom for both students and faculty at this level of study (Solarzano, 2000; Solarzano & Yosso, 2002; Samuels & Wane, 2005). Academic structures, especially in higher education reproduce power relations by continuing to maintain dominant interpretations of cultural wealth and knowledge in the curriculum. By refraining to implement culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), or by rewarding and affirming particular students’ knowledge over others with certain practices, are examples of how power relations are played out within and outside the classroom. According to Cummins (2001) “power structures are not monolithic” (p. 303), that is, they do not appear only in one form, or place. These structures can appear in social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1990) of education, classroom dynamics with students, academic language and linguistic culture, and relevant to my study, in experiences of the WOC in doctoral programs. The evidence below from my participants’ experiences will be used to support these and other claims.

6.2 Impact of Power Relations and Dominant Practices on Participants’ Experience

My study consisted of in-depth, one-on-one interviews and data analysis of the experiences of WOC on the path to becoming doctoral recipients. Evidence from the data suggested that the academic culture of the university impacted the experiences of my participants in the following major areas: disempowerment in the supervisor/supervisee relationship, negotiating Know-how,
funding, and also when choosing racialized research topics. My research is concerned about ways these entities can support the scholarship and specific ways of knowing of WOC. For example, WOC can be affirmed through personalized mentorship. Their scholarship can be supported through the granting of awards for their racialized and/or specialized topics. Often, the topics that these women write about are influenced by their own racial and cultural ways of knowing.

From the beginning, cultivating a non-hierarchical relationship with a supervisor was extremely important to Gia, one of my participants. Coming from a background of already completing a successful professorship in her own country, she was not intimidated by the power-relationships that often exist between professor and student in the West. It was the combined cultural wealth of her age, experience, and academic skill that contributed to the high level of confidence Gia proudly exhibited upon her arrival to the academy. On the other hand, Trista was an example of one of my participants who experienced the power relationship with her supervisor that impacted her in a negative way, and decided as a result, not to talk about race in her research. When asked whether or not her research topic is racialized? Her response was:

A little bit, but not very much. Actually I did select a large portion of my sample from my ethnic background. It’s really bad to say but I try not to racialize my work, because I know it’s going to get ignored. It’s going to be too touchy. Even at the work place I do that.

Trista, from her experience in the academy realized that the best way to combat the power relations she encountered during her doctoral studies was to simply comply.

A few of the participants said that, in hindsight, if they had realized beforehand how many problems they would encounter from their departments, and even in the workforce, they would have reconsidered ‘racializing’ their research topic. For example, Trisha declared:

I really try to stay out of [racializing topics]…It’s really bad to say that but I try not to racialize my work because I know it’s going to get ignored. Even at the work place I do [that] (p. 3).

As noted previously, Grace was also questioning the utility of continuing to research the particular racialized population that has been the main focus of her research for years. She states:
Well I think, um, now-a-days with all these you know funding ah, things like accountability all this market driven kind of things I guess sometimes it’s unfortunate to think this way but you might have to, change or modify your scope, um of the [pressures] you want to look at. Sometimes I do not feel that, you know, is it going to be good to continue researching on this particular population? Because you know, it’s not dominant, and ah what about job market? And also what about funding dis [sic] and that? A lot of forces around, I don’t know (p. 8).

Put bluntly, Grace was perplexed at the idea that her area of interest around her racialized topic was probably not going to produce much return in terms of future jobs. She had determined that both at the academy and beyond, there was more interest in areas of fiscal growth and globalization, and not equity.

Finally, Dana felt the impact to her sense of self (identity) as well as the poor reception towards her choice of her research topic from her professional colleagues on her job. In fact, the main reason why Dana sought a doctoral degree was to establish herself in the field as a Black female professional. She told me that she was constantly challenged by her co-workers about her own credibility and know-how at work. She believed the value of a completed doctorate would quiet her naysayers. Dana felt her lack of success in getting rewards was directly related to her racialized topic, stating:

Yeah, I applied for the SSHRC and the OGS. I wasn’t successful. When I first applied it seemed very promising that I might get it. But, you know, I guess I really realize that more and more I needed to change my topic. It wasn’t one that would tantalize those who would be looking at funding (p. 4).

The implications and lukewarm reception their research receives causes WOC not write about what they know best—themselves. They discover that it is not worth the effort because there are no practical rewards, in the forms of prestigious awards or even job security outside of the academy, because of the way the academic culture mishandles the much needed new knowledge that grows out of this small community of women in higher education. Hence, when the racialized research topics of WOC are rewarded and recognized with greater practical support
and enthusiasm in the academy, then this action can become one way that the stronghold of the existing power-relations (in these structures) lose their tight grip.

Additionally, an issue closely related to the implications of racialized research topics is the effect that the hidden curriculum (Margolis, 2001) has on the experiences of WOC. Not knowing implicit information about the academic culture, especially in graduate programs, can greatly impede the educational experience for students of colour, which can further displace the student from the doctoral process. Connecting to and discovering how the academic culture functions, is the first step to alleviating the overwhelming sense of alienation felt by many minority students. The effort and skill needed to demystify the academic process can be very daunting, if not self-defeating, for many minority students (Nyquist, 1999). Students from underrepresented backgrounds must foster an acquired social “know-how” of sorts, which students who are not from these backgrounds come in contact with quite naturally. The hidden curriculum is another form of power relation that is characterized as more covert in nature.

Often students from the dominant culture have parents who already know how the academic culture functions because of exposure to these particular environments (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2003; Nyquist et al., 1999). How, then, do those who are historically disadvantaged successfully navigate through this sometimes blinding process? Perhaps, it is through the uncovering of their alternative cultural capital. However, the road that leads to doctoral programs is often obstructed by a hidden curriculum and continues to be a problematic issue for WOC. Margolis (2001) in his book, The Hidden Curriculum, discusses how the curriculum or process for navigating through the academic culture, or for dissertation advising (Acker, 2001), may be hidden to some but revealed to others.

Still another important issue is the sense of isolation, which both students and faculty of colour experience in the academy (Trower & Chait, 1998; Bannerji, 1991; hooks, 1998; Collins, 1998; Wane & Samuels, 2005). The impact on and over-exposure to isolation was a contributing factor to the number of students who chose to leave the profession of education. In their study Trower and Chait (1998) suggest that, “despite earning doctorates in ever-increasing numbers, many women and persons of colour are eschewing academy careers altogether or exiting the academy prior to the tenure decision because both groups experience social isolation, a chilly
environment, bias, and hostility” (p. 36). Trower and Chait (1998) reported that the common concerns among these women included [but were not limited to]: limited opportunities to participate in departmental and institutional decision-making, research that is trivialized and discounted, lack of mentors, and little guidance about the academic workplace or the tenure process.

In their study entitled, “Unsettling Relations”: Racism and Sexism Experienced by Faculty of colour in a Predominantly White Canadian University,” Samuel and Wane (2005) cite many issues such as curriculum design, evaluations, administrative support, and mainstream student reactions as part of the problems faced by faculty of colour. For example, Faculty of colour are often confronted with resistance from mainstream students who demonstrated their disapproval with what was perceived to be unfair evaluations. Other racist behaviours include lack of administrative support where, for example, research grants would be allocated to professors who worked on more ‘mainstream’ areas of interest as opposed to those who chose racialized topics (Samuel & Wane, 2005, p. 80, 83).

Referring to Bourdieu’s (1993) concept of field and how it relates to the structure of the academic culture, Trueba (2002) states, “academy becomes a unique universe of its own with its own rules and its own form of capital” (p. 18). This realization supports the power relations that persist in the academy. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1992) views field as a unique relationship between people in various positions. Bourdieu (1992) was specific about the autonomous hierarchal relationships of academic structures when compared to other economic or political structures, yet he seemed to infer that once inside (the academy) there was a fair playing field among its players. This is not the case with WOC in my study or any other community of colour in higher education in general.

6.3 Impact of Disempowerment

In addition to the power relations and exclusionary practices operating within their doctoral programs, participants in my study felt to a greater or lesser extent, discouraged and disempowered. The reason why some people from the same race or culture, exposed to the same oppressions, react differently when placed in an academy structure is, according to Trueba
(2002), directly related to the different habitus and levels of cultural capital based on early environmental, cultural and psycho-social developments. Trueba’s research infers that feelings of disempowerment are related more to personal or psychological perceptions and less to systemic racial issues. Contributing to this perspective is Ogbu’s (1987) research that suggests the reason why people of colour do not have success is because of deficit self-identities that tell them that, if they pursue education, which is seen as a White characteristic, then they are negating their own identity as a person of colour. Trueba (2003) finds limitations to this outlook and says that this (Ogbu’s study) does not explain why some people of colour are resilient and thrive in the academy, while others from the same race do not. Trueba believes Bourdieu’s (1992) model of “fields” (economic, cultural, political) helps to explain how an individual’s early socialization and self-identity formation (the habitus) occurs as a result of interacting with these agents in each field. For example, he argues that environmental influences can affect the health outcomes of people from the same race in different ways where, for instance, Blacks in America are known to have high blood pressure but those in South Africa have the lowest rate. Or, for example, how Chinese Americans have developed high blood pressure and cholesterol compared to their cousins in mainland China. Cancer rates among Mexican Americans are higher than those who live in Mexico. These ratios are what Trueba (2002) uses to explain Bourdieu’s application of field, and why Ogbu’s (1987) deficit theories for people of colour—which suggests that minorities are unable to escape the ill effects of racism and oppression, by virtue of their identity as a minority - are not viable for reasons to support a deficit model, as Ogbu does not factor in the significance of cultural wealth found in communities of colour.

Trueba’s insights are helpful in pointing out the relationship to identity and cultural capital. However, specific data from my study revealed that there is a definite link in the way my participants perceive themselves in relation to the cool reception that their physical presence and their research receive from the academy. One of my participants felt that her ‘race’ related topic was not embraced by her supervisor, so she decided she had to devise ways to water it down a bit. Another participant conceded that, in hindsight, she could not see the usefulness in conducting research with race/culture related topics because when it comes to finding jobs, it can work against you. Overall, the participants in my study felt disempowered from the reception (lack of) their research, the level of freedom to make decisions about their topics with supervisors and, in specific cases, some participants felt disempowered by their language
barriers. Even though my participants were in the playing field, so to speak, of their doctoral studies, agents such as their habitus, or disposition toward their cultural ways of knowing, proved to be two way strikes against them.

6. 4 Racism and Language

The theme of Negotiating Academic culture and Know-how for WOC in doctoral programs was an important issue with my participants. This theme is documented in the literature by Berry and Mizelle (2006) in, *From Oppression to Grace: Women of Colour and Their Dilemmas Within the Academy*. In this work, Murata (2006) gives specific examples of language barriers from her perspective as a Japanese-American graduate student. Her story, entitled “Bridging Identities: Making Sense of Who We Are Becoming To Be,” helps illustrate this point about the barriers of language in the academic culture. I have elected to use this specific example from the authors Berry and Mizelle’s book for two reasons. First it highlights a story from a specific culture and sheds light on knowledge from this region of the world, even the wording of the title in Murata’s essay is an example of how language supports the uniqueness of this culture. Second, I do not want to isolate specific examples from my own research for fear of exposing the identities of my participants. Murata (2006) presents her experiences in the academy by first outlining the differences of learning found in *Ways of Knowing*, referring to the study of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1997) who use the concepts of ‘connected knowers’ versus ‘separate knowers’ to explain how women come to know and understand their world. Connected knowers consider the most valuable knowledge to come from their personal experiences and possess a high value for relationships, through empathy. In opposition to this view is the ability to adopt a critical and objective way of thinking, with the expectation of keeping the personal side separate as a means of survival in the academy is characterized as ‘separate knowers’. Murata’s study draws attention to the hierarchical value that academic knowledge has over experiential knowledge. Murata (2006) identifies herself as a connected knower because of her own cultural background as a Japanese woman and postulates:

In the Western academic culture, it is challenging for connected knowers to survive: they are not given the opportunities and support necessary to develop. The Academy is not a friendly place for connected knowers (p. 26).
Reference to connected knowing allowed Murata to provide an understanding of how the Japanese philosophy or way of knowing, “Kokoro” (mind and heart), is in opposition to the “separate knowing” of the Western academy. It is important to note here, that scholars of colour have criticized the Belenky et al. studies as generalizing ways of knowing from a sample of White women. However, Murata finds the concept useful when explaining the Japanese communication, which is characterized in a circular fashion, as opposed to the more direct Western culture. It is commonly expected in Japanese culture that the listener patiently waits for the speaker to arrive at his or her prolonged point, while the speaker provides what Westerners would deem as unnecessary, background details.

Murata (2006), expanding on the example from Belenky et al., found that the similar phenomenon of the “separate knower” vs. the “connected knower” caused her to struggle with her communication skills as she faced her Western colleagues in the graduate classroom. Murata (2006) describes the graduate classroom in the following way, “what went on in our seminars was an unsafe and cruel competition in which we strived to say what professors wanted to hear, and act in a manner they expected of us” (p. 28). Murata also had difficulty with the fact that her classmates could not hear or see her thoughts. She found her contributions were often met with comments such as, “We don’t have time for this now”, or “What you are saying does not make sense here”. Similar to the Asian participants in my study, Murata felt oppressed in the classroom and ostracized by her professors because of the language difference and communication style.

It is interesting to note that there is also a hierarchy when it comes to different languages that are spoken and valued in the academy. The disenfranchisement that Black Africans and Haitian French-speaking immigrants, who live in Ontario, Canada, are made to feel is another example of how this hierarchy and race gets played out in language. These unique groups face a double portion of oppression as they experience discrimination from both the francophone community and the broader Canadian society (Madibbo, 2007). In a reflexive moment, I realized that even I, as a West Indian woman, have fallen prey to the stereotype of what a French person looks like or represents. A French speaking West Indian colleague of mine helped me catch my error. She asked me, “what picture comes to your mind when you think of the French language and culture?” I immediately responded that I pictured Paris, France and checkered tablecloths
(still vivid from my visit to Paris, two years prior). She then queried why I did not picture Martinique or Guadeloupe? I was at a loss. Admittedly I forgot about my prior knowledge of other countries such as Guadeloupe or even the Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast of West Africa) but still could not picture a Black woman or Black people when I imagined the French language and culture. It was the idealism of a Euro-centric France that framed my ways of knowing.

6. 5 Fanon and Language

Language can also act as a mechanism whereby according to Fanon (1967) we alienate ourselves from our own identity, always feeling a need to prove our value to the dominant class. Fanon puts it bluntly when he posits that, “some Blacks want to prove at all costs to the Whites the wealth of the black man’s intellect and equal intelligence.” (1967, p. xiv). Frantz Fanon (1967) discusses this phenomenon in his book, *Black Skin, White Mask* after making the point that language is cultural wealth, by stating that:

A man who has language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power (p. 18).

Fanon (1967) confronts the difficulty which forces the colonial subject to speak in the language of the master, claiming that for "The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately Whiter -- that is, he (sic) will come closer to being a real human being -- in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language" (p. 19). Fanon’s discussion of language and race helps provide a theoretical understanding to why people from historically disadvantaged backgrounds adopt the language from their surrounding dominant culture, while purposely negating their own. Although only briefly addressed here, Fanon’s wisdom helped me to theorize my own experience on this point. In my case, there were restrictions placed on me as a child, which would not permit me to speak the Jamaican dialect of my parents. Sadly, I am still unable to speak the language of my parents because of having missed those formative years of socialization. The colonized minds of my parents thought it best that we conform to the language of our birth country of England, and not of their own native country. For example, my nephews always say how they hate when their mom and I “try to speak Jamaican” because it does not “suit us”, they insist. The sense of disempowerment that is related to language and acquisition of the dominant language can be overwhelming.
6.6 Cultural Codes in Communication: Ways Toward Empowerment

Cultural codes are an example of how WOC become empowered when challenged by power relations, and have an important relevance when discussing this topic. In my discussion about the value of cultural wealth found in WOC, I would be remiss if I did not incorporate into my arguments, the observation that differences between cultures do indeed exist. The theoretical lens of womanist theory and critical race that I use for my research helps me to point out these differences that occurred while studying my participants. I discovered that the presence of different cultural codes explain why, for example, some of the participants in this study would react differently to a real or perceived hostile situations in the doctoral program, or to oppression as a whole. Obviously, Black women experience their bifurcated oppression differently from, say, Asian women, just as Asian women experience it differently when compared to Latina women. What’s more, these differences continue to separate these women, although collectively they are (we are) all victims of racist and sexist oppression as WOC. The discussion of cultural codes brought forth by bell hooks (2000) exposes these dilemmas. However, I believe that once cultural codes are understood and implemented, they can be used as a tool to empower and not disempower. This tool could also have a very positive impact on the experiences of all WOC in doctoral programs, and is not limited to the women in my study.

The issues of cultural codes are discussed by bell hooks (2000) in, Feminist Theory: From Margins the Center. Cultural codes are “words, beliefs, and behavior patterns of a people that must be deciphered before meaningful communication can happen cross culturally” (Williams, 1986, p. 118). In her research, bell hooks speaks about cultural codes and how they affect ways of knowing for Black women and other WOC when it comes to communication between multi-ethnic groups. hooks explains that communication can break down between cultures (and races) because of the failure to recognize differing acceptable or unacceptable behavior between groups. She explains this very important concept and gives an example in the following passage:

One factor that makes interaction between multi-ethnic groups of women difficult and sometimes impossible is our failure to recognize that a behavior pattern in one culture may be unacceptable in another, that it may have
different signification cross-culturally. Through repeated teaching of a course titled "Third World Women in the United States", I have learned the importance of learning what we called one another's cultural codes. An Asian-American student, of Japanese heritage, explained her reluctance to participate in feminist organizations by calling attention to the tendency among feminist activists to speak rapidly without pause, to be quick on the uptake, always ready with a response. She had been raised to pause and think before speaking, to consider the impact of one's words, a characteristic which she felt was particularly true of Asian-Americans (hooks, 1986, p. 134).

Another point hooks (2000) makes when referring to cultural codes is that in her classroom she admonishes her students (WOC and White women) “to allow for pauses—and to appreciate them” (p. 58) as a way of learning from different cultures. Another example that hit resonated with me was when hooks (2000) described that the class she was teaching was particularly populated with Black women and non-Black students complained that the atmosphere in that class was “too hostile” (p. 58). This mindset only served to perpetuate the stereotype that all Black women are loud and hostile. In her scenario, hooks explained to the offended students that what they perceived as hostility and aggression (from the Black women) was considered to be just teasing and affectionate expressions and the pleasure of being together. hooks further explains that the cultural background for Blacks was that many were raised in families where people spoke loudly. Conversely, hooks identifies that the young, White middle-class woman in her class who was complaining was raised to identify loud and direct speech with anger. Again, hooks encouraged the [confused] students in her class to switch codes and to think of the loud talking as an affirming gesture. She posits: “By sharing this cultural code, we created an atmosphere in the classroom that allowed for different communication patterns” (hook, 2000, p. 58).

These cultural codes are present in my participants’ experiences and the same behavior which hooks (2000) explains above was mentioned by some of the participants. Unfortunately, it was only after the interviews that I became aware of the deep significance of cultural codes. Had I recognized them during the process, I might have been able to call attention to cultural codes as the participants explained their reaction to a specific behaviors or events they experienced in the classroom. I was aware of this phenomenon before but as I uncovered the themes in my research I developed a deeper appreciation and understanding of the different ways of knowing exhibited
in my participants. Equipped with my new knowledge of cultural codes, I was then able to recognize the effect it had on some of my participants as they experienced learning in the classroom, particularly in the area of language and communication.

For example, just as hooks discusses, I had always known it was culturally incorrect, as a Black woman, to speak about private things in public spaces; after all my mindset (cultural background) suggested such behavior was something that only what White folks do. Yet, this is exactly what is required of the Black scholar and the scholar of colour. I understood the dilemma that hooks (1989) faced when she shared:

> It has been a political struggle for me to hold to the belief that there is much, which we—black people—must speak about, much that is private that must be openly shared, if we are to heal our wounds (hurts caused by domination and exploitation, and oppression), if we are to recover and realize ourselves (p. 3).

### 6.7 Impact of Resistance

Resistance of WOC and Black women in particular is manifested in many ways. Historically, the mobilization of WOC during the Civil Rights Movement, and the subsequent move for Black women to establish specific paradigms of womanism and Black feminism were early examples of politicized resistance. This section discusses resistance from the perspective of the lived experiences of WOC from my research in three distinct areas: 1) Mothers and Matriarchs, 2) Strategies of Survival, and 3) Spirituality.

In the review of the literature, I discussed Yosso’s concept of alternative cultural wealth. Here, using examples from my participant’s stories, I develop the idea of “resistance capital.” First, in the literature, I found that resistance capital refers to those form of knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (Freire, 1970, 1973; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1994; Delgado Bernal, 1997; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This form of cultural wealth is grounded in the legacy of resistance to subordination exhibited in Communities of Colour (Deloria, 1969). Furthermore, maintaining and passing on the multiple dimensions of community cultural wealth is also part of the knowledge base of resistant capital. For example, even from within internment camps, Japanese communities resisted racism by maintaining and
nurturing various forms of cultural wealth (Wakatsuki, Houston & Houston, 1973). Extending on this example in history, Tracy Robinson and Janie Ward’s (1991) research highlights a group of African American mothers who (for hundreds of years) have consciously raised their daughters as ‘resistors.’ Through verbal and nonverbal lessons, these Black mothers teach their daughters to assert themselves as intelligent, beautiful, strong and worthy of respect, able to resist the barrage of social messages, which devalue Blackness and belittle Black women (Ward, 1996). Similarly, Sofia Villenas and Melissa Moreno (2001) discuss the contradictions Latina mothers face as they try to teach their daughters to “valerse por si misma” (value themselves and be self-reliant) within structures of inequality such as racism, capitalism and patriarchy. In each of these research studies, Parents of Colour are consciously instructing their children to engage in behaviours and maintain attitudes that challenge the status quo.

The young women in the studies mentioned above, as well as the women in my study learned to be oppositional with their bodies, minds and spirits in the face of racial, gender and class equities. From the stories of my participants, I found resistance present in this form and various other forms. Anne, for example would challenge the status quo by doing, what she called, “double duty.” Using this tactic Anne would learn all about the dominant discourses in her area of interest, and use counter stories from her indigenous ways of knowing to write her papers. Gia, resisted dominant language etiquette by choosing to maintain the circular, and rhythmic motion indicative of the communication in her Latin American roots, demonstrated in her writing style. Using the same mode of resistance, Grace focused on sharpening her writing skills to combat her feelings of inadequacy when speaking in the classroom. Yet in another example, Sandra used her age capital and life experience as she resisted being steered into the EdD doctoral cohort.

6.8 Mother’s Influence and Matriarchal History as Resistance

When discussing the topic of mother/daughter relationships and mothering in academy research, the distinction of race and culture must be made clear. Collins (1994) argues that the experiences of Black mothers are paramount to any inclusive discussion about mother/daughter relationships but are rarely considered within the paradigms of White feminist theory (Collins, 1991; Josephs, 1991). Typically, according to Collins (1991), the perception of motherhood in the Western family is one where the (White) women nurtures and the (White) man provides the
economic sustenance for the family nucleus. Whereas in the African tradition mothering, as both an action and concept, is not limited to the dominant viewpoint. The interdependent dimensions of providing emotional and physical survival for children is central to the philosophy of motherhood which is supported within the religious and social structures in African culture (Collins, 1991).

In Black cultures, the mother-daughter relationship is often regarded as a “socialization for survival” (Collins, 2000, p. 183). Collins suggests that Black mothers know how to protect the physical survival of their daughters but sometimes at a high cost to the daughter’s emotional health. The expectation was that a daughter was to “stay in her place” (Moody, 1968). This was a sentiment that was forged in slavery days but lingered into the present. Daughters might be obligated to back down from any political activism against racial, sexual and even economic oppression, and to comply with various forms of exploitation even though Black mothers knew it would result in their daughters’ own subordination (Collins, 2000). For example, when activist Ann Moody began to participate in sit-ins and voter registration activities in the early 1960’s, her mother begged her not to come home because she feared the Whites in Moody’s hometown would kill her. Education was seen as a vehicle of advancement and as a means to enhance positive self-value. Emotional strength was considered essential but not at the cost of physical survival (Collins, 2000). Continuing, Collins states that the nature of Black women’s work was paramount in ensuring their daughters’ survival. When speaking of Black mothers, she states:

Their work experience provided many Black women with a unique angle of vision, a particular perspective on the world to be passed on to their daughters. As is the case for women in the Black diaspora societies, African-American women have long integrated economic self-reliance and mothering (Collins, 2000, p. 184).

Historically, the nature of Black women’s work as mammies, slaves, and domestic workers, has exposed them first hand to their oppressors. Their experiences taught them the necessary dispositions needed for survival. It is because of their predisposition that Collins (2000) suggests that, “African American mothers place a strong emphasis on protection by trying to shield their daughters as long as possible…by teaching them skills of independence and self-reliance so that they will be able to protect themselves” (p. 186). As I approached this theme, I
discovered similar findings among my participants. The impact that mothers had on their daughters in my study, as they journeyed on the road to becoming doctoral recipients, was very inspiring. Though half of the participants had racial and cultural backgrounds outside of the African Diaspora, similarities persisted in the sense that the actions, on the part of the mothers, resulted in the survival of their daughters in the doctoral program. The major differences were evident when comparing the means the mothers relied upon to encourage their daughters but the different methods produced the same resolve among their daughters. For example, one participant of Objibwe heritage describes the sometimes unscrupulous but unique way her mother went about ensuring her daughter’s educational success, although her mother never had any formal education herself.

6.9 Survival Strategies as Resistance

Spurred on by the encouragement of their mothers and families, or simply an inner strength to survive, the participants in this study developed unique strategies for surviving in the program on their path to becoming doctoral recipients; they had the strength to resist failure. An important theme that surfaced in the data was the currency many felt the PhD had over the EdD, which was an important issue vocalized particularly among the Black women in the study. Almost all of the Black women suspected that they and other WOC were differentially accepted in the EdD cohort, which was considered a lower status and consequently overlooked for the PhD. They evidently saw this as a challenge and resisted the streaming of their Black bodies into the EdD by diligently facilitating a transfer to the PhD program once accepted into the EdD program. Identifying and resisting the power relations evident within the two cohorts is an example of how participants used their cultural wealth of survival strategies as a tool.

Sharing survival strategies and experiences are methods that Black women and WOC use to combat the many barriers that they face in the academy. The telling of their stories incites political change, which also provides healing for these women (Bristow, 1994; Carty, 1993; Collins 2000; Cook, 1997; hooks, 1998; Henry, 1998; Lorde, 1994; Mogadime, 2002; Wane et al., 2002). According to Wane, et al. (2002), in Back to the Drawing Board, combining the diverging voices and issues of African-Canadian women and other women through dialogue and practice (praxis) is a means of empowerment. In her opening chapter, Wane (2002) emphasizes
the importance of “creating spaces where Black women can articulate their feminist ideas be it through writing, community, or scholarly work, in a language that represents their own perspectives” (p. 17). Like Collins (2000), Wane, et al. (2005), emphasize the need to make theory and praxis accessible yet authentically representative of the voices of WOC.

It is easy to understand why, some women of colour would choose not to articulate their peculiar stories (as they were perceived by the dominant ways of knowing), especially when isolated on predominantly White campuses. This phenomenon, which also occurred in my research, threatens the survival of scholarship of colour, as they, for example question the utility of conducting racialized research. Specifically, Black female scholars may doubt the credibility of their own experiences and, under the strained environment of the academy, consider the thought of sharing them as unthinkable. Donalda Cook (1997) expressed this sentiment when she reflected that: For some time, I was not even confident enough to admit my experiences to myself; let alone consider my experiences to be of worth to the academic reader (p. 10).

WOC, in my study did express how they tended to second-guess their abilities while keeping up with both the rigor, and the covert and overt power relations found in the doctoral program. Cook (1997), in her article “The Art of Surviving In White Academy: Black Women Faculty Finding Where They Belong”, provides many examples of Black scholars sharing their experiences through the research interview methodology. Cook learned that Black professional women, like her, felt invisible, alienated, and tokenized. She found that many of the women accepted faculty positions knowing that they were entering hostile and unsupportive environments. It was in this knowing and having the sense of collectivity in shared experiences, and the assurance that they were not the only ones going through the fire, that the challenges of working in institutionalized Whiteness was bearable for these women. Patricia Monture-Angus (2001) speaks with the voice of a First Nations woman, describing how she survived the “Whiteness” in university as she confronted the difficulty of not having mentorship or guidance. She quickly came to understand the reason for such isolation:

I now understand this failure to share with new colleagues the importance of investing in and maintaining mentorship relationships to be a covert strategy that operates to deny ‘outsiders’ (that is anyone who is not a White male or chosen by them)...[their voice in academy.] (2001, p. 31).
Beyond this, I believe that in order for WOC to thrive in the academy they have to first be welcomed. The skills and abilities that were present within the wealth of experiences I found with my participants cannot, in their own right, undo the power relations that exist (and persist) in programs like the doctor of philosophy. Furthermore, the awareness of their new knowledge must not only be acknowledged but it must be implemented into the curriculum.

6.10 Resistance: Spirituality as Resistance

Spirituality is another form of resistance that many WOC rely on for survival. As my data show, WOC resist specific barriers found in the academic culture while pursuing their doctorates. They do this by initiating strategies of survival, some learned from their mothers and others learned while in the trenches, so to speak, of the doctoral program. Within my interviews, the participants focused on areas of resistance such as writing, age, spirituality, and language, as well as the power of silence.

Spirituality is now becoming a topic for discourse in higher education because those who have historically been excluded - African-Americans [and Canadians], Asian-Americans, Native Americans, Latino-Americans and other marginalized groups are bringing it to the table as they rely on it to resist Eurocentric hegemony in the academy. There is the need to create alternative offerings of “truth” including the very conceptualizations of what it means to be human, attempting at multiple levels to demystify the value-free claims of social science (Dillard, 2000). The specific example of Aduke, and her expression of spirituality supports my notion of spirituality and resistance, as well as those discussed in the literature of scholars of colour. Her alternative choice to practice her Yoruba faith, as opposed to her parents’ Christian observances was a first a challenge for her, but she believes this was part of her purpose for being on this planet. She expresses her resolve on this topic in the following manner:

How could I be a part of the unlearning and the decolonizing essentially, around the deep, deep, deep pathologization of our indigenous knowleges? Particularly in the forms of our spirituality. This is my contribution to the world ...To go to those really tough places and develop more empowering, or engaging decolonizing dialogue about who we are [spiritually] (Aduke).
One reason why spirituality must become central to the discourse of higher education is because it acts as an intermediary between the binary of theory and practice, helping form actions toward freedom and emancipation (hooks, 1999). At the same time, educators learn to identify the uniqueness, values and beliefs of their students, while examining what an engaged pedagogy, informed by spirituality, might look like. This process in turn, will help to mend the fracture that has occurred within the spirit of the learner and/or educator. Spirituality is a concept that I find to be synonymous with the resilience of many WOC, which as a result of our oppressed history and our faith, kept us standing.

In the exploration of spirituality in higher education, it is particularly helpful to use the lens of Africana womanism to help guide the direction of this discussion. The concept of spirituality allows Black women to claim their religious, historical and cultural roots. It provides examples of resistance and survival of our ancestors. Exploring spirituality within the context of education will create new pathways of understanding for both educators and students. By weaving spirituality into the discourse of learning and knowledge creation, educators and learners can foster spiritual growth while strengthening the connections between the learner, knowledge and the process of schooling (Wane, 2001). Inclusive educational methodologies must incorporate the lives of Black women inside and outside of the academy. It may take some time for the educational institutions to catch up with what WOC already know about spirituality and that is, the practical implications that spirituality has in their everyday experiences. Spirituality also acts as a conduit of hope, for some WOC in doctoral programs, a hope that often sees them through to the finish line.

The cultural wealth of spirituality was in fact a value that was taken for granted because of its perpetual presence in the lives of many of my participants in this study. Womanism, as a theoretical framework supports the presence of spirituality as a viable way of knowing for the women of colour who have had to surmount numerous encounters of oppression and threats to their survival (Phillips, 2007). Consequently, the emergence of a Womanist Theology (Williams, 1986) marries womanist theory with Christian spirituality, where Black women of faith [and other WOC] “[identify] with those biblical characters who hold on to life in the face of formidable oppression” (p. 124). According to sociologist Cheryl Townsend Gikes, much of Alice Walker’s definition of womanism “converges with the idea of “holy boldness” possessed
by certain women in our society” (Williams, p. 124). It is largely because of the spiritual component of womanist theory that I self-identify as a Womanist as opposed to a Black feminist. I have felt the ‘holy boldness’ throughout my own life, as I found numerous ways to avert the ‘closed doors’ that often blocked my purposeful journey. I would find ways to climb through a window or some side door, so to speak, but would never give in to that proverbial “closed door.” I felt invincible knowing I was guided by the power of the Holy Spirit in my life.

6.11 Spiritual Knowing and Belonging

From a very young age, I was told that my life would be different from my siblings. This observation was made by my late grandmother, who told my mother that I would be a strong and unique child because of the way I fought to enter this world as a baby born feet first (breech). I spent the first five days of my life alone in an incubator fighting to survive. Despite being born a twin, the feelings of ‘aloneness’ still lingered in my spirit throughout my adult life. Nonetheless, I was born with a fighting spirit. My spirituality guided me even before I knew or grew into my authentic self. I had a tenacious will to push through obstacles; I would experience the world in extraordinary ways. My life unfolded just the way my grandmother predicted it would. I always felt a strong spiritual and guiding presence in my life, especially when I left home and had to live on my own for the first time as a young adult in a foreign country. In contrast, I constantly wondered why there was an ever-present sense of bewilderment and estrangement lingering in my spirit as I journeyed on the path toward my doctorate.

My journey led me from various geographical locations, further and further away from home. Familiarizing myself with the physical landscapes of each city and educational institution was not enough to balance my feelings of lopsidedness. I realized that not having a true connection to a place that I could authentically call home was one of the causes that made my internal compass spin out of control and left me feeling very much alone. Then I read bell hooks (2009) Belonging. It all began to make sense. I also began to see more clearly the theme of spirituality as it related to my participants and myself. I realized that the importance of spiritual knowing had a huge impact on the women in this study who, like myself, unwittingly brought this knowledge with them wherever they went, even as it led them through the doors of the dominant and unfamiliar academy. hooks (2009) expresses this reality when she states:
I lacked the psychological resources and know how to positively function in a world where spiritual faith was regarded with as much disdain as being from the geographical south….I was constantly working to make my core truths have visibility and meaning in a world where the values and beliefs I wanted to make the foundation of my life had no meaning (p. 14-15).

As a Black Southern woman from the state of Kentucky, bell hooks poignantly speaks about how her experiences as a successful intellectual and writer took her full-circle back to her spiritual awakening or knowing of her birth home in Kentucky, where she now resides. Now that I have found my awakening in my own home in Canada, those prevailing feelings have since left me, and I am ready to take on the other great things, that my grandmother predicted would come my way. Similar to hooks, and other female scholars of colour, I am not naïve to the think that my experience as a WOC will be welcomed everywhere, especially in higher education, but I am hopeful in believing that a change is going to come.

6.12 Value of Cultural Wealth

One of the main questions that this study set out to discover was how cultural wealth was developed among the lived experiences of WOC in doctoral programs? My analysis revealed that the participants had already created the conditions that established their cultural wealth prior to, and during their journey toward becoming doctoral recipients. Wealth was inherited from their ancestors and, in most cases, specifically given from their mothers. As shown in the examples given by my participants below, the actions taken by the mothers to support their daughters, greatly influenced the inner wisdom and strength that many of the participants relied on to get through the program. This contributed to the overall development of their cultural wealth. References made by the participants pointed to their being supported by their mothers when the going got rough. Participants had an inner sense that their success was expected and anticipated by their mothers. They valued and protected their mother’s perceptions of them; quitting was not an option for these women. Lynn explains this unspoken expectation when referring to a conversation with her mother:
it’s not a question of pushing, cause in the end, she sends me back to myself and says, “What do you want to do?” And she would say (in the voice) ‘Well if you start you wanna feel you should [finish] ...? THEN DO IT!”.

Throughout this study, I re-affirmed, through my own experience, that the process for the development of cultural wealth is organic. I would like to be able to stand as a witness to this knowledge through the experiences of my participants, as well as to the larger community. Surprisingly, some of the participants did not even realize that they came to the academy already equipped with this wealth. The wealth is deep inside their spirits and it is only now, through this study and the process of naming it, that its knowingness leaps to life. Metaphorically speaking, much like the baby eagle who grows instinctively aware that it too possesses the majesty of its mother, whose swooping wings soar high above it, it still needs to be dropped from the nest and forced to learn how to fly upward on its own, during its dramatic decent. This is what happens to the women of colour who are confronted with the alien environment of the academic culture. Miraculously, she survives because she is forced to; but in most cases, she does not leave the program unscathed. Cultural Wealth is also developed naturally through the maturity and inner wisdom of the participants who usually come to doctoral programs later in life, through what I have referred to as ‘age capital.’ At first the gap in age, when compared to other students, presents itself as a deficit. In some cases, the participants were prone to question (second-guess) their abilities because of it. However, examples show that these women use their maturity and lived experience to navigate through issues in their departments and inside the academy. The WOC, Black woman in particular, have a wealth of experiences maneuvering through the numerous oppressions they have faced daily for most of their existence, therefore dealing with an intractable administration personnel or learning to quiet one’s frustration in the face of disapproval or mistreatment, was simply another hurdle, in their life’s journey to overcome.

According to Cynthia Dillard in her book, *On Spiritual Strivings: Transforming An African American Women's Academy Life*, it is important to move beyond biological constructions of race, gender and ethnicity toward cultural explanations of being human. By examining the origins of knowledge constructed from this perspective, the true nature and value of knowledge is exposed (Dillard, 2007). We find that what constitutes knowledge will depend “largely on the consensus of the community from which it is grounded” (Dillard, 2007, p. 2). The participants in
my study agreed on the value of their mother’s influence and the strength of their own survival instincts.

6. 13 Issue of Identity and Naming

Identity and naming have always been fundamental issues when discussing the lived experiences of WOC. Its consideration has played a significant role in the careful design of this sensitive qualitative study. Identities are historical, social and political constructs used to categorize individuals, collectives, communities, and societies based on intersectional factors such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, (dis)abilities, and age among others. These identities are fluid, diverse and multifaceted (Timothy, 2007). Carole Boyce Davies (1994) discusses the complexities inherent in African/Black identities:

The term that we use to name ourselves (Black, African, African-American, Black British, Minority, Latina/o, West Indian, Caribbean, Hispanic, People of colour, Afro-Caribbean, Third World and so on) carry strings of echoes and inscriptions. Each represents an original misnaming and the simultaneous constant striving of the dispossessed for full representation. Each therefore must be used provisionally; each must be subject to new analyses, new questions and new understandings if we are to unlock some of the narrow terms of the discourses in which we are inscribed. In other words, at each arrival at a definition, we begin a new analysis, a new departure, a new interrogation of meaning, [and] new contradictions (p. 5).

Davies (1994) brings out some salient points that are very important to my study, as I faced similar problems in naming and otherwise identifying similar issues. For example, I agonized about how I was going to name the participants of my study. Should I settle with the term “marginalized”, when in fact I did not view the existence of these women as insignificant or peripheral? Should I name them as “minority”, when I knew the contributions of my participants’ (and their ancestors’) experience have played such a major role in history? I finally decided that Women of Colour - ‘WOC’- would be an appropriate name in this context, for the rainbow of colours represented among my participants and the wealth of culture that their various geographical locations represent. Unexpectedly, this label created some divisions among my participants, particularly with the Black women. Only two of the five Black women could settle
with this designation, (the remaining wished to be referred to as Black of African-Canadian, and not WOC). The issue of naming is controversial in the literature. For example, in a study by Timothy (2007) “Third World Women,” “Women of Colour,” and “Minority Women.”: An African/Black Feminist Analysis of Our identities,” found that the Black women were opposed to such labels, which she argued, were socially constructed by White women. When one of the older Black participants in her study was asked, “Do you consider yourself to be a “woman of colour” the response was:

No, I’m a Black woman. I am an African. The new immigrants have not named themselves, “Woman of Colour”. Whites have given them these labels. When you are new to the country you do not know if the term existed before you came. You accept the term because you are trying to be Canadian (p. 169).

Conversely another Black woman from the present study responded in this way to the same question:

I like it because it includes Black women but also women of various shades, whether they are varying shades of Blackness, in the Indian Community, shades of colour…” (p. 159).

Although self-identification is the current practice, as a ceremony of reclaiming what was re-named by White colonizers, the problem of how to refer to ones’ participants in emancipatory research projects still remains uncovered. Finally, I realize that identities are never stagnant—they are fluid and will shift with different experiences, as well as with the impact of personal and spiritual growth. For this time and space, in which I find myself during the writing of this research, I have elected to name and identify the participants in my students as “WOC.”

6.14 Cultural Wealth Support

Cultural wealth in my study was supported through nurturing mentor relationships. The nature of the mentoring relationships extended past the professional duties of the supervisor/student relationships. According to the participants who were blessed enough to have these forms of relationships, their confidence and capabilities as scholars of colour were developed through the apprenticeship of their supervisors. The more similarities the student and supervisor shared, the stronger the relationship. The instances where racial identities were shared within the supervisor/student relationship saw greater returns in the level of academic productivity and academic freedom where topics were concerned. For example, the Black
women in my study who were mentored by Black women or men were more likely to have had success in the areas of publishing, conference presentations, or co-writing with their supervisors. These women also experienced spiritual connectivity, a strong sense of empowerment, and resilience in the face of struggle. Practical tools are needed to facilitate the success of the WOC in doctoral programs. This is how the cultural wealth found in WOC will continue to be identified, sustained, shared, and implemented by others. Other means of development are found in the collective knowing of communities of colour (Yosso 2003; Ladson-Billing, 1998).

Through a shared commitment to nurture and guide students of colour in the higher educational process, success became more evident. Therefore, keeping in line with the mandate to share our wealth in an effort to uplift communities of colour (Henry, 1998), I have taken the liberty to share an outline of the actual path toward becoming a doctoral recipient in the following section. This is a practical resource that I desire to be used for future WOC seeking to become doctoral recipients.

6.15 The Path

Earlier on in the objectives for my study, I suggested I wanted to outline the realistic path toward the doctoral degree. In the very beginning of this journey, I personally had no idea that the actual process one had to go through to earn a doctorate degree entailed so many things that I did not particularly see outlined in the student handbooks. I was aware that the process required at least four to five years of study after a master’s degree but I was completely misguided with all the steps that were involved in become a doctoral recipient. Consequently, I do not take it for granted that everyone who seeks such a degree, (or for one who seeks germane information in the area of education for themselves or family member) is aware of exactly what is required, or how long it traditionally takes to receive a doctorate. I have elected to provide a brief outline of the whole process at my current department, especially for those who might be considering the path to becoming a doctoral recipient in the near future. While it will differ from institution to institution and even between departments, this should give a good overview of some of the expectations.

First, after the completion of a master’s degree, a student can apply for the doctoral degree. The typical completion time for a doctorate is now set at five to six years in my program (but officially four years at the University of Toronto). There is a four-year funding package
available only for students who are in the Master’s and PhD program, as opposed to the EdD. stream, where no financial assistance is given. Students of colour usually have a difficult time being accepted into the PhD stream but if you are accepted to the EdD., immediately after your registration try to seek means to transfer into the PhD program. Be vigilant. Once in the funding cohort, the student is required to accept a job within the academy, and may be fortunate enough to be offered a position—Graduate Assistant (GA), Teaching Assistant (T.A.), TEPA (Teacher Education Program Assistant) or Research Assistant (RA). It is most advantageous to seek a TA position if one plans to teach in the academy or to have an academic career. In the past, emphasis in these programs had been placed only on research, with the increased ratio of a balanced research/teaching requirement. The first academic requirement for the doctorate is the course work. Students must take a total of six half graduate courses. Taking additional credits is beneficial, especially for the possibility of being cross-appointed in other departments. A participant in my study found this choice to be very advantageous. After the course work, the Comprehensive Exam, is scheduled, where the students receive as “pass” or “fail” grade. Next, is the Proposal, where the student painstakingly decides on the proposed topic that their research intends to investigate. This is a difficult challenge because the student has to write about a given topic using a selected theoretical frameworks, and methodologies that are difficult to determine without the actually data collection from your research. After completion of the research proposal, which is another daunting task that takes a lot of time to determine what you actually plan to write about, the student embarks on the field work and data collection. Once here, one might find they have made different discoveries (changes) since the proposal period, and the intended research might take on a different shape once out in the field. The length of the proposal usually varies from 20 to 50 pages. The Ethics Review Protocol is equally challenging step and only commences after the Proposal is passed by the thesis committee. According to the Ethics Review Committee Protocol of the university, candidates are required to write a 25 page document in a template provided by the committee, which explains the ethical considerations, methodological tools, and precautionary measures that will be taken to ensure protection of all participants who agree to be participants in the research. While waiting for the return of the Ethics Review, many students begin their proposal. When your pass proposal, proceed to Ethics passes (you receive, only a “pass” grade) then you proceed with the proposal—which describes in detail what the student proposes to study. After the acceptance of these items, (Comprehensive
Exam, Proposal and then Ethics Review) usually by the end of year two, students set out to secure their supervisor and thesis committee, compromised of two or three committee members, supervisor, and later an external and internal examiner which is decided upon by student and committee, then, the data collection stage begins. After the data collection and transcription of all the interviews (if using the qualitative methodology), the writing stage begins. Some students elect to hire someone to type up hundreds of pages that are produced from the recorded interviews, which depends on the sensitivity of topic, and the degree to which the researcher wishes to protect the privacy of the research participants. Beginning and maintaining a daily habit for writing, could be one of the hardest tasks to master. This is where many students veer off course. It is especially difficult for WOC who have children, and/or those who must maintain work schedules and are trying to write at the same time. Anticipate days, even months when you may not be able to write at all. It is all a part of the process, and you will get past it. Once the final draft of the dissertation is revised (keeping in mind, the revision process is always much longer than first anticipated, and takes painstaking effort to remain calm while waiting for, and addressing comments from the committee as more time slips by) and accepted by the committee, a mock (pretend) defense is set up and then finally [emphasis added] the day of the thesis defense arrives, where you present the findings of your research to your whole committee and the internal/external examiners. After the presentation, the student leaves the room and the verdict as to whether they should confer the status of Doctor of Philosophy is decided. If the student defends before mid-April, they can attend the June convocation (graduation). If not, they must wait until the fall semester. I should add, if one decided to pursue this degree in Europe or abroad, the time required to procure the degree is shorter, because the course-work requirements are omitted.

When I imagine a path, I think of an easily distinguishable road that has its various markers to let you know in which direction to go. Usually, you receive warnings while walking along the path—if there are any dangers ahead or detours to be aware of. For example, if the path is rocky, as with some of the nature trails on which I have ventured, daring hikers are admonished to “Enter At Your Own Risk.” The path to becoming a doctoral recipient is much like the realistic path I have described, you can expect many sudden changes and unexpected turns which quickly veer off into even smaller and rocky paths with their own unexpected twists and turns. The realistic path, though fraught with unsuspecting events, will get you there with
less causality because at least you will be aware of what may be coming at you down the road.

What follows are two figures: The first figure, (Figure. 3), illustrates the standard path toward becoming a doctoral recipient. The second figure, (Figure. 4) illustrates a more realistic path for WOC in doctoral programs. Much of the evidence I detail in “The Path” is derived from both my own experience, as well as the commentary from my participants. Although they were not asked specific questions about each feature in it, I was able to glean information from inconspicuous details of their stories and experiences pertaining to, for example, knowing how to get information in order to go on to the next stage, or simply the resolve to stay on the beaten path, no matter how far or long one may have deviated from the goal. For example, Anne, who took over seven and a half years to finish her doctorate, makes this point succinctly. When I asked her about her strengths, she said:

I look at my feet, [and] I go long not fast I’m a very slow walker and people will mock me, sometimes. But I can out-walk them. I can and I have out-walked many people, on many different paths. I’m I like all those clichés, ‘Slow and Steady Wins the Race’ [repeats twice]. And I say things like, “Once Begun is Half Done” [repeats twice].

Similar to Anne, my participants acknowledged that although some of them were slow, and even did not know specific things about the academic culture, or the hidden knowledge was needed to be successful on the path. They all conceded that the path was not straight and narrow. They tried their best to navigate all the twists and turns that were inevitable, but veering off the path, was repeatedly echoed by the participants as not an option. Through diligence, the WOC in my study who did complete their doctoral degrees were successful in passing through all of the stages mentioned above, as life’s unexpected turns got in the way. Only one participant has not completed the proposal stage to date. It was noted however, that many endured terrible strains and stresses during the journey. Sadly, none of them put any effort into celebrating themselves and their accomplishments during and after each stage. The final stage of celebrating oneself on the journey, after the defense, was often understated or neglected altogether. The reason for this phenomenon was primarily the fixation of the “What next?” syndrome, that most of my participants experienced, which was added to the frustration of finding a job. Nonetheless, I have included the last point of celebration as mandatory for the path
Figure 3

THE STANDARD PATH TO BECOMING A DOCTORAL RECIPIENT

Acceptance to EdD/PhD Cohort

Course Work

Comprehensive Exam
(Seek Committee Members)

Ethics Review

Thesis Research Proposal

Field Work/Data Collection

Writing Process

Revision Process

Defense

Celebrate Yourself
toward becoming a doctoral recipient. The two diagrams illustrate the varying realities of what actually happens when a woman of colour decides on this destination for her life.

On paper the first path looks very straightforward and easy to navigate (as in the diagram above), but in reality, it is fraught with unexpected events and many trying circumstances. Unexpected issues such as the death of a family member or friend, personal threat to one’s own existence, serious illness, break-up in relationships, birth of a baby, moving away from home, or having to leave your home, financial strain, or daily oppression on the job can all add more obstacles to the path. Astonishingly, these are only the issues that occur outside of the educational institution. When the WOC arrives into the doctorate program, a whole new array of other issues and problems are encountered as she faces the path toward becoming a doctoral recipient (e.g., power relations, Know-how, cultural codes, etc.). Additionally, during the process the student can easily find herself dealing with malfunctioning equipment, such as computers, where whole chapters are lost while writing the thesis, or worse yet, accidently deleted (as in my case). One could be facing the burden of financial strain, the consequent pressure of competing for awards, and the stress of never winning any at all, the list goes on and on.

The second diagram depicts a realistic path that the journey through the doctoral program is likely to take; grounded in both my own experiences and the relayed experiences of my participants, I was able to compile the feature of this second diagram. This diagram illustrates that the path to becoming a doctoral recipient is never straight and boxed in like the first diagram; it has many smaller paths that take us away and bring us back. Based on the information relayed to me by my participants, and the stories of their colleagues and friends, it is during the writing phase where most of the causalities occur. The time and dedication required could be so overwhelming that many linger here in this stage for years or, worse yet, never get past this stage. However, all those turns in the road form part of what helps to contribute to the cultural wealth of the women in my study who actually dare to take the long, winding, and oft times lonely road to becoming doctoral recipients. True, many casualties do occur as I was told, but for those who endure to the end, the sense of accomplishment is rewarding way beyond the degree itself. Again, much of the information about the jagged path to becoming a doctoral recipient comes from my own experience, that I found many of the WOC in my study had in common. As with many of the experiences (and supported data that I found) from my participants, I see my
insight that is put forth here as deriving from our various cultural wealth, therefore I use it as a reference to guide that path. The WOC in my study helped to confirm my interpretation, by conceding that they too had similar experiences. Both my experience, and the verbal confirmations of experience from my participants situate this path as a realistic (and valid) path for WOC on the journey to becoming doctoral recipients.

Another chilling reality that was revealed during my interviews suggests that life after the PhD is what really becomes a challenge for WOC after they have traversed the crooked path toward becoming a doctoral recipient. Finding work in the field is the major concern. Even then, the challenges for those who do actually find positions as faculty of colour are embroiled with racism, isolation, dismantling White hegemony in the classrooms, and so on, despite being in positions of authority as a faculty members (Dua & Lawrence, 2000; Samuel & Wane, 2005). What is needed, according to Samuel and Wade (2005) is “hiring a “critical mass” of woman of colour to “unsettled relations” and create a more congenial, affable, supportive and equitable academy environment” (p. 6). The task of hiring more WOC faculty members only becomes realistic when there is actually a pool of WOC to pick from. Therefore WOC must be directed “how- to” become faculty members in the first place.

This can be accomplished when practical knowledge, such as the stories shared by my participants, and ‘The Path’ (supported by proper mentorship, and guidance of course) are made readily accessible to communities of colour and educational institutions. Then perhaps the dream that many have had, plus the hiring of WOC on White campuses, can actually become feasible and sustainable. This can happen only when the power relations that persist in the academy are identified, and ratified. Delpit (1988) states, “issues of power are enacted in the classroom” (p. 284). First of all, this is true for WOC in my study because some were made to feel silenced or not good enough while inside the intimate graduate classroom settings; where often the points that they raised were challenged by other students, or when they elected not to raise any points at all because of feelings of inferiority. Second, “… there are codes or rules for participating in power…” (Delpit, 1988, p. 284) which is an issue that relates directly to Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum’s (2003) concept of “know-how” (p. 122). Knowing how to participate in higher education will determine how much power and success WOC can acquire while in their programs. Third, “rules of power are a reflection of the culture who has it” (Deil-Amen and
Figure 4

THE REALISTIC PATH TO BECOMING A DOCTORAL RECIPIENT

ACCEPTANCE TO PROGRAM: PhD or EdD COHORT

COURSE WORK
Know How? What courses to take?

COMP EXAMS
Figure out Requirements Procrastination

PROPOSAL
(Trying to figure out what topics to write about, had to generate ideas without practical research Pressure to apply for awards, look for supervisor).

ETHICS REVIEW PROTOCOL
(Waiting, waiting, waiting. Going back and forth with protocol member through emails, to get it just right)

DATA COLLECTION
(Sick family member or friends, losing data, doing conferences, trying to publish, issues with committee, realizing that after analysis of data, your proposal is now obsolete, relational issues with family and friends)

WRITING
(Issue of anxiety, looking for jobs, writers, block, fatigue, sense of defeat, self-questioning, then euphoria and disbelief when you submit)

REVISIONS AND WAITING
(Hours spent correcting revisions, waiting for feedback from editors; another grueling phase of this path. More corrections, experience extreme fatigue, frustration, stalling and procrastination set in, oblivious to how close you actually are to finish line)

EXTERNAL EXAMINER & DEFENSE (MOCK and REAL)
(Hunt for external examiner. Wait for comments, prepare from them for defense. Try to coordinate convocation around same time, seldom works)

NUMB
(Go to worrying about finding and securing work, no time for celebration)
Rosenbaum, 2003, p. 284). This point speaks to the dominant culture, which is prevalent in the academy. WOC feel they must adapt to dominant practices, often at the expense of negating their own culture, in their effort to stay afloat in their programs. The fourth point, “being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier” (p. 284), having the proper mentor and mentorship is an example of how this point is measured. Finally, the fifth point expresses a recurring issue that was present throughout my study where, “those in power are least…aware of its existence” (p. 284). Participants in my study expressed feelings of powerlessness whenever they tried to confront supervisors or administration about unfair treatment. They were often made to believe their concerns were more related to (in)ability or comprehension, and less related to probable pre-conceptions about their race or ethnicity. Delpits’s findings, and my own data determine the degree to with the realistic path toward becoming a doctoral recipient can be realized by WOC, and supported as evidence for my empirical research.

6.15 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented discussions about many issues that can affect the educational experiences of WOC. Primarily, power relations in educational institutions can threaten the actual survival of WOC in doctoral programs (aside from personal issues outside the academy). The impact of the power-relations found in the academy was experienced by participants who were challenged because of their linguistic limitations, and the resulting perception of linguistic deficits. The evidence from my participants’ responses suggested that they were inclined to allow their supervisor to direct their doctoral process authoritatively with little or limited input from the participant or her desires for the research plan. They simply just wanted to finish. This example of power relations between supervisor and supervisee caused participants to feel disempowered, and one of the primary ways the dominant culture of the academy affected the experiences of WOC (which addresses the third research question). The participants who had positive supervisory relationships reported having feelings of empowerment, and as a result moved more freely through, and out of the program. In this chapter, attention is given to the realistic path, with its twists and turns that both my participants and myself experienced to get through the doctoral program. Given all the unexpected challenges that arose, the consensus with all the participants was that, regardless of how long it would take,
coming off of the path was not an option. The information about “the path” was generated from the perspective of WOC, and although there are student handbooks available on the subject, the point here is that the presentation of information from those resources was either, not applicable or relevant to the lived experiences of my participants. For example, finding information, what to do when something did not go according to the prescribed outlined plan of the handbook, was a genuine issue for my participants. Finally, life after completing the doctorate in areas such as, finding a position, or reestablishing financial stability where a great concern for participants. The final chapter, Chapter Seven follows, and presents the conclusions and some final thoughts about my research.
CHAPTER 7
Conclusion

And do not be transformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God

--Proverbs 12:2

7.0 Introduction: What Now?

In the beginning of this study, I asked a rhetorical question about who should be the person to give an account of one’s own story? Obviously it is the person who lived the experience who is most equipped to recount it. Throughout history, this fact has been taken for granted, over and over again by authoritative structures in power. What I desired for this research to accomplish, is for educational institutions to reconsider learning from the perspective of ‘the other’; taking evidence directly from the person who is experiencing the learning process, in this case WOC in my study. This study is a call for renewal; an admonition for a new way of thinking about ourselves and especially for others who approach the world differently from dominant perspectives (e.g., cultural capital theory). Yet, pertinent questions still remain unanswered. Is it enough for policies about diversity and educational inclusion to be mandated if they cannot be implemented effectively to benefit the person of colour where it counts, with their experience. Or do these policies just serve to appease federal laws and legislation? These unanswered questions were some of the reasons why I pursued this topic for my thesis. My own journey toward becoming a doctoral recipient, as I wrote about in Chapter 1, facilitated much of the impetus that led me to discover the value and contribution that WOC do bring to the academy through their experiences on this same path. After presenting the literature, theoretical framework, and the methodology in Chapters Two, and Three respectfully, my analysis of the data (responses from the research questions) subsequently produced the six categories of cultural wealth for my research which were: 1) Mother’s Influence, 2) Age Capital, 3) Mentorship, 4) Survival Strategies, 5) Negotiating Academic Culture (Know-how), 6) Spirituality.

The results of my study of 10 WOC answer the following research questions: 1) How do WOC experience the learning process in doctoral programs? 2) How is cultural wealth theorized for
How does the dominant academic culture in higher education (power relations) affect the experiences of WOC? First, the data revealed that the participants used the prior and present knowledge from their lived experiences, and the new experiences of navigating through the doctoral program. Uncovered from the data were six major categories of cultural wealth, and several other minor themes that influenced the experiences of my participants. Admittedly, in the beginning of the study, I was expecting to uncover traditional interpretations of cultural capital, that I believed informed the experiences of WOC. For example, an assumption I held was that if the participant had parents or siblings who went to higher education, then they would have acquired a disposition of knowledge from their family background. This is similar to Bourdieu’s “embodied” notion of cultural capital. Surprisingly, I discovered a whole new area of cultural wealth that I did not realize existed prior to this study. Categories such as Mother’s Influence, Spirituality, and Navigational Know-how, all impacted the process of learning and sustainability for my participants in the program.

The academy and the faculty have to reflect on ways that they might be compliant in exclusionary practices, as well as ways that they can contribute to the smoother success and a more directly projected journey for the WOC, toward becoming a doctoral recipient. The recommendations, outlined by the implications of my study, are presented to suggest ways to change some of the inherent issues that are present in the dominant academic culture. I also believe that understanding what the path toward becoming a doctoral recipient actually looks like, and revealing the power structures that do actually exist, are integral for the success of any future doctoral student of colour.

7.1 Implications

First, because of the challenges and fears produced by supervisors and departmental values, WOC are hesitant to design research about their own cultural knowing and opt to create studies that are more aligned with the academic knowledge of their supervisor’s field of expertise. Put simply, they will design, “raceless” research and focus on other areas that they feel the academic culture deems more valuable (e.g., globalization, environmental studies, fiscal policies, curriculum design). Second, if mentoring by supervisors of colour for students of colour continues to be limited, then the topics for research will begin to resemble that of the status quo
because more and more WOC will have difficulty finding professors in their departments who specialize in their given area. Third, if the academy does not begin to recognize the cultural wealth of WOC in concerted, tangible ways, (i.e., large funding awards, publishing opportunities), the limited numbers of WOC and their representation on predominantly White campuses will continue to remain small, or even diminish, because of the lack of foundational support from supervisors and departments unfamiliar with the specialized and often racialized topics favoured by WOC. Finally, it is clear that practical support and affirmation are means by which the cultural ways of knowing of WOC can become ‘normalized’ in the academy. Acknowledgment on the part of White faculty and students, that problems related to race and cultural ways of knowing do still [emphasis added] persist in Canada, let alone the classroom, is a good place to begin to deconstruct the power relations that affect the experiences of WOC in the academy.

Given that I don’t know how to move this micro-based issue into a macro-based forum where change on a larger scale can actually increase the numbers of WOC in doctoral programs, and where real opportunities can exist for women after completion of their program, I recognize that a larger study, on a larger scale would be required. Naming and identifying the wealth of WOC is not enough, as I mentioned before. Policies and practices have to change. Many important questions surface as a result of this observation: How is value reflected in the academy? How should it be reflected? How can the academy become more responsible for adding value to the experiences of WOC in their educational institutions? Could it be achieved by: enhancing mentorship, increasing number of funding awards, better accommodations for L1 learners at this level, and better assistance for getting research published, better accessibility to information that is not only made visible, but also relevant to the lives of WOC? It was my intention to imply that the race-relations in this country are not a “non” issue as many (especially those in positions of power) would like to believe, or have us think. And it is this very mindset, that continues to saturate institutions of higher learning—even those with mandates in place for equity and diversity—that in turn directly affects the experiences of communities of colours in general, and WOC in my study in particular.
7.2 Self Reflections After Research

I have to be transparent and expose the changes this research and journey have brought to my life. Lynn, a Black participant in my study touched on it when she said she chooses to focus on “the good” and go forward. What she meant was, though she is cognizant of what her ancestors went through, especially those who survived the middle passage—where millions of Africans were taken on slave ships, as part of the Atlantic Slave Trade in the 1800’s. Many did not survive the inhumane conditions of this passage, and their bodies were disposed of in the sea—she has chosen to focus on the good or, I guess another word for good could be, “the wealth” of her people. When I first met Lynn, I saw that she chose not to make her research about race, but chose rather the significance of the French language and culture found in the Caribbean. In reflecting on my own ways of knowing, I have to concede that I was extremely race conscious when growing up. This awareness extended into my everyday surroundings and became inevitable in my research interests. When my family emigrated from England to Canada in the mid 1960’s, our family was always the only Black one on the block. My parents were accustomed to owning their own home. We never lived in low-income housing or rented apartments and, therefore, our neighbours were always all White. I remember my twin sister and I being victims of terrible racism. Because we had each other, we protected each other. Ironically, the novelty of our “twin-ness” caused us to be quite popular among the White students, so there were only ever a few nasty kids that bothered us. However, my oppression was experienced through my invisibility in the classroom. Surprisingly, my older sister told me she did not feel any racism growing up. This comment and other similar comments from people of colour have caused me to realize that many oppressed people do not even recognize that they are oppressed. They believe that it is only the “racial slur” which reveals a person as racist or can be the proven evidence of racism. Systemic racism and power relations in societal structures are not the common way of talking about racism, so consequently many are oblivious to its lurking presence. The mico-aggressions that Solarzono (2000) speaks about need to be made more transparent for people of colour or else how can they alleviate a wrong, if they are not even aware it exists? It is my aim for studies like mine to help open the eyes for such people, so they can really know what they are up against in the real world. I want to point WOC and other people of colour to the covert subtleties of racism that helps account for the low number of WOC
represented in doctoral programs, or the difficulties they will face when trying to find teaching jobs in the profession. I could go on pointing out problem after problem or oppression after oppression, but that is precisely the point. I do not want to. I now desire a new way of knowing, similar to the new knowledge that was introduced in this study.

My research has deposited in my spirit a desire to focus on the good. This is difficult for me because my inherent (religious) beliefs suggest that, “…And all our righteous acts are like filthy rags…” (Isaiah 64:4). In other terms, there is no altruistic act that any human can perform that could ever render us good in the eyes of God. Humanity is intrinsically evil but God loves His creation and gives us mercy and grace. Grace is my new buzzword for this year. The Christian author Phillip Yancey (1997), in his book *What’s So Amazing About Grace?*, makes a profound pronouncement when he states, “There is nothing we can do to make God love us more. There is nothing we can do to make God love us less.” (p. 70). Yancey also suggests that ‘Grace’ is a gift that no one deserves but everyone can have. Racism, crimes against women and children, oppression of the weak, cheating, stealing, and even murder will always be in our nature as human beings but kindness, community, forgiveness, sharing, humility, grace, and accepting each other for who we are can also reside there too. It is all a matter of choice. My research has also changed my mind about “the bad” things (racism, oppression, etc.), it tends to focus on, and now calls for me to lean more on my spiritual identity and less on my racial identity as a scholar of colour. This shift will allow me not to focus on the injustices I see outside and even inside the academy but to give grace, even when it is not deserved. I must “focus on the good”, as Lynn suggests, because it makes life brighter and the load lighter.

When reflecting on the stories of my participants, I can find the good in the wealth of their resilient spirits, in the tears and the laughter that persist in their spirits. The good is focusing on ways to present the “positives” of our plights as WOC in doctoral programs and the benefits we can share with each other. Women of colour do not always have to seek approval or even their sense of worthiness from the dominant culture. Fanon (1952) suggests in, *Black Skin White Masks*, that this seeking of approval was the nature of the African-American and his writings urged them to abandon their tendency to seek approval from their White counterparts. Similarly, I argue that WOC need to celebrate the good, their cultural wealth, their good and bad experiences, and embrace their own essence and value. We have to illuminate the light and inner
wisdom passed down to us from our mothers and ancestors. I believe that when we choose to shine the goodness of our wealth, that we will naturally attract goodness and opportunity to ourselves. It is true that I will always be cognizant of race and difference issues; they will always exist in my everyday life as well as in the academy and the greater society. What will be different though, because of my new knowledge which these women have given me, is the way I will broach those issues both professionally and personally, and that is with a big dose of grace.

The beauty I discovered in the ways of knowing found in my participants will remain with me for a lifetime. I will never forget the way my participants were able to laugh at themselves, yet cry with each other. The way they find comfort in their mothers’ words and clung to them even long after she has passed, or even if she was miles away separated by the sea. I found beauty in the way my participants were able to make their advanced years work for them, even though many of their counterparts were quite younger than them. Or the way they’d figure out little strategies to stay afloat and rise about the myriad of challenges they faced as L1 learners, or single mothers, or whatever the issue. I was moved by the way they would pray or meditate and rely on their inner wisdom when the pressure got unbearable. Even the skillful way they would turn to their Elders, or community of faith leaders, for guidance and spiritual support. I was most impressed with the way some would push through the obstacles that surfaced because of their language, or even two, sometimes three languages that some had to juggle, while perfecting the academic language of writing and speaking in higher education. An excerpt from my journal aptly sums up some of my journey:

The process of collecting, reading and writing about the data for this study has been a long and arduous task. It is only now, in coming to the end, that I realize the woman and researcher I was then has now grown and matured into something different. This realization has become strangely acute, especially after I re-read references that I had stockpiled and been familiar with for years, yet now discovering a better clarity about what was being discussed. I found that the depth of my spiritual growth had awakened a deeper understanding in my spirit and now I am able to understand all those theories and articles about my topic, as it related to me, a Black woman with a public and private self, and a resulting layered self-identity (August 29, 2011).

In her book, Talking Back, bell hooks (1989) unveils her pseudonym and in many practical and symbolic ways reveals her true name and identity as Gloria Watkins. When talking
about how she allowed her private self to become known to her public writing audience, she states:

When I gave talks, I spoke about my life much more than in my writing. Often it was that coming together of the idea, the theory, and shared personal experience that was the moment when they became concrete, tangible, something people could hold and carry away with them (p. 3).

Much like Gloria Watkins, I too discovered the areas of my whole self—coming together—to reveal an authentic me. In the past, the research articles were just that, research articles. Now they have become pieces to the puzzle of my own intellectual and spiritual knowing. It is in re-reading hooks (Watkins) and other female Black Elders that I’ve finally come to see what it means to live the theoretical and the practical experience, especially as a researcher. Now it makes sense to me why most of my participants were hesitant to talk about their experiences in an academic forum because they saw how casually they were handled or over-looked for academic purposes by people in power. They discovered it was part of the academic norm not to express themselves in that particular way.

Obviously, the spirituality piece is a significant one for me. My spirituality and faith guide me. They are my most valuable cultural wealth assets. Throughout my life, one of the primary ways I have chosen to personify that faith is through my weekly Sabbath observance. Many on-lookers would see this as being a slave to religious traditions. If only they could see the enormous amount of blessings (wealth) and favour that have been consistently present in my life because of this choice, they might re-think their conclusions. No matter what pressing secular deadline, meeting, celebration or occasion, even schoolwork I might have that is pressing, I stop and rest from all activities and refuel for 24 hours, commencing on Friday sundown and ending on Saturday sunset. This idea is something that Mary O’Reilly, an educator (1998) in Radical Presence, shares when she tells how she takes off every Monday to do absolutely nothing. She reserves this day just for herself. This is also similar to the operator I met on the phone call during a service order that took over an hour. She told me how, as a cancer survivor, she takes a day once a week to rest from everything, and do something for herself, granted this ideal might seem as a luxury for some, but this is coming from a Canadian culture, who often stock pile their
sick days, and feel guilty cashing them in. All I can say that this habit has been liberating for me during my journey on this path and is definitely the main contributor to my ability to find the strength and energy to write from week to week, and buffet the other stressors that came while on this journey.

7.3 Sisterhood and Woman of Colour

I have spoken extensively about the experiences of WOC in doctoral programs. I have not, however, spoken much about the divide that still exists among sisters of colour. There remains a divide between races and cultures, as well as within races and cultures, for many reasons. Divisions between WOC will not be eliminated until, according to bell hooks (2000):

...[academy] assume responsibility for uniting (not solely on the basis of resisting racism) to learn about our cultures. To share our knowledge and skill, and gain strength from our diversity. We need to do more research and writing about the barriers that separate us, and the ways we can overcome separations. Often men in our ethnic groups have greater contact with one another than we do (p. 57).

Exactly how we go about coming together is a question that still remains unanswered, as competition and rivalry especially in Black women, remain fierce. I believe that change begins within us women. It starts with one small action and grows into another until the uneasiness of our differences becomes the last thing we see between each other, as opposed to the first thing whenever we have the opportunity to come together. Sometimes we have to be willing to be the representatives for our own race; not to be confused with the ‘ambassador’ of our race who is (when sitting in classrooms as the only person of colour) supposed to know everything about all members of their communality. I am a strong believer and proponent of this form of action and social change, and see the importance of, as referred to in the Black vernacular, ‘representin’ the Black race, by showing grace and tolerance.

For example, I used to teach French in a private middle school that had a high density of Mainland Chinese students. Most of the students were, at first, very non-receptive and reserved with me. Through my many anecdotes and upbeat methods of teaching, I believe that I was able
win them over. Afterwards, many admitted that they had never seen a Black teacher before, while still others admitted that they used to be afraid of Black people. Their admissions were honest and I respected them. I was made aware of their perception towards my culture and, as a result, I would always go out of my way when around that particular community to present my ‘best me’. I was more than pleased to assist the two young Chinese students who approached me in the library the other day, when they asked me if they could use my library card to make one copy on the photocopy machine. Although I thought the request was a bit odd to ask a total stranger, I was secretly pleased that they felt comfortable enough to approach me as a Black woman. I willingly gave them the change they needed to make the copy, and even though they may have had no idea that what I was really attempting to give them was much more than just a few cents. What I wanted them to have was a memory of a kind act shown to them from what they might perceive as a very unlikely source.

The overall purpose I desire for my research is for it to serve in ways, much like the philosophy I have stated above. I would like my study to be not only food for thought and an important resource for Black women who might decide to venture on the journey toward becoming a doctoral recipient, but I would also like for this research to empower and a conduit of hope for other WOC so that we all as women of colour can feel safe to share our stories with each other regardless of our perspective differences, and most importantly because of our similarities.

7.4 Significance of “Mosaic Paths of knowledge” for Research in Higher Education

Initially, I naively felt the term ‘Indigenous’ was a concept that all the women in my research could relate to and one that they would not have any objections to being categorized as; it was also a term that I believed could encompass the combination of their diverse, yet Canadian, roots. I soon discovered just how wrong I was (see Chapter Five, “Identity and Naming”). During the collection of the references for the literature review, as well as during the collection of the data, I realized that I desperately needed to come up with a term that could support the myriad of identities and political locations represented among my participants’ racial and cultural backgrounds as WOC in Canada. I knew that their combined experiences were sites of cultural wealth that needed to be contextualized from a Canadian perspective. The first thing
that occurred to me was, as Canadian scholars, we have little choice but to depend on the findings and research of our American counterparts. I feel we are responsible to make concerted efforts to change this, as this is our responsibility as scholars of colour (Henry, 1993). Secondly, and perhaps more relevant is the issue of identity and naming among my participants. Never before had I encountered such contradicting perceptions of identity within such a small community of women. Each woman had a preference as to how she wanted to be named or identified in terms of race, ethnicity, and, location as an academic both inside and outside of the academy, especially among the five Black women in my study.

To help me solve what I perceived to be a critical on-going issue, within and between marginalized communities and even among Black women from the pan-Caribbean and pan-Africa diasporas, I, with the assistance of my supervisor, developed the term, ‘Mosaic Paths of Knowledge’ to create a user friendly description that everyone in the study (and even female scholars outside of the study) could relate to, as a means to explain the types of knowledge and ways of knowing that they produce, which are specific to Canadian WOC in the academy. I am deliberate in my intention and desire to suggest that the knowledge produced from this study can serve as a reliable and well-known source that will guide the journey for other WOC on the path to becoming doctoral recipients, and to one day be used as an instrument for hands-on research that can be used extensively in academic research, as well as for the prospective graduate or even high school student, who desires to take the path toward becoming a doctoral recipient. ‘Mosaic Paths of Knowledge’ is viewed here as its own epistemology for the pursuance of academic research, as well as a collaborative practical teaching tool for students and professors in higher education that can hopefully be transferrable into the classroom.

After I conceptualized this term, I came across a similar endeavor in the area of early childhood education, put forth in a study by Moll et al. (1992) called, “Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms”. The researchers use the term, ‘Funds of Knowledge’ to refer to the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household and individual functioning and well being” (p. 133). This study is relevant to my discussion because the researchers observed that the funds of knowledge found in homes in Latin American and Native American communities (considered to be poor) were transferrable to the classroom context. The
experiences from these contexts were integrated into the classroom setting with the collaboration of both teacher and students. The specific cultural and intellectual resources were: agricultural, mining, household, material and scientific, religious and medicine knowledge. The researchers in this study also determined that the teaching in the households represented a holistic approach, as the teacher in this environment knew the child as a whole person and not just as a student because of the multiple skills and activities shared with the child inside and outside the home.

Finally, the knowledge from these sources also helped the participants to survive and thrive in hostile conditions (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, 1992). In the same manner, I believe that the experiential wealth present in the experiences of my participants emanates from their various cultural and intellectual resources of mosaic knowledge. My participants have utilized this knowledge to help them navigate through their programs. If, through this study, their knowledge can be recognized and supported through the term ‘Mosaic paths of knowledge’ to represent the holistic contributions of WOC in academy, then their experiences will become part of the rubric of knowledge as well as a new epistemology produced in Canadian universities. If ‘Mosaic Paths of Knowledge’ is adopted as a viable paradigm in the discussion of cultural wealth, then I believe both the theoretical and praxis goals of this study would have been accomplished.

Throughout this arduous journey, my own understanding of my identity and cultural knowing helps me locate myself as a researcher who seeks to value and name the cultural wealth that emanates from my own heritage and ancestors. The wisdom of the matriarchs in the Black West Indian culture has been valued for centuries (Collins, 2000; Wade-Gayle, 1995; Walker, 1983; Waters, 2001). The wisdom of my own mother has guided me for the last 20 years, from the time I first decided to pursue my undergraduate degree until now. It has led me to my own path of becoming a doctoral recipient. It is with this experience and knowledge that I sought to unearth the experiences of other WOC in doctoral programs, who possess cultural and familial knowledge just as valuable as the knowledge I found in my own cultural background and educational experiences. I went searching for the cultural wealth within certain communities (among my diverse participants) because I also discovered I needed to name (identify) this knowledge, which often gets discounted both inside and outside of the academy, because of the prevailing dominant interpretations of cultural capital theory. Consequently, I was able to make
sense of my own experience and all the years spent making my way down this path. All the time, money lost, but also, support, and consistent guidance from my mother meant something more than just what a mother normally does for a daughter. I know my mother’s and my collaborative efforts are worthy of mention and need to be formally acknowledged for the rich knowledge and cultural wealth it could bring not only to our own family and community, but also the richness it could bring to the academy and the larger community as a whole. It is important that the academy embrace not only the experiences that many other women, like the women in this study could share, but it is necessary for the academy to also embrace the scholarship and new knowledge that they bring. It must recognize the rich content of their diverse stories but, most important, it must reward WOC in tangible ways as well.

As the researcher for this study, I do not see the reward aspect, happening often enough in the academy. In fact, many WOC question whether or not it makes sense to ‘racialize’ their work because of the inevitable challenges that doing so presents during their studies, and for their financial life after the doctorate. It is perhaps with recognition of studies like mine, and others (Mazucca, 2000; Thomas-Long, 2007; Maddibu, 2007; Opini, 2009; Hojati, 2010) that WOC will be encouraged to continue research in the areas of minoritized experiential knowledge. As a WOC who came from a rich spiritual heritage, I have faith that the research cited above, (and others I have oversighted) and my own endeavors in this research will be far-reaching in the areas I have already mentioned and, hopefully, other places beyond. During this research, I endeavored to be transparent in my intentions and to expose the transparency of my participants in the most sensitive and honest manner possible.

The question remains, how do I, as a scholar of colour, venture to reach the unreachable, those who might not ever read an academy journal or have to opportunity to stumble across my study in a university library of higher learning, E-journal or even through Google Scholar for that matter? Now that I have come to the end of the writing journey, like others before me, I must pick up a new task. Now, part of that task is making sure I believe in my research, making it count for more than just the final step required for my doctoral defense. Is it enough to leave a string of recommendations about what needs to happen in order to make a difference in the lives and experiences of women, much like the ones in my study? Can I really expect someone else to pick up the torch where I left off, to carry on the work that needs to be done? These questions I
ask myself because when I, who knowingly already have access to the academic journals and studies by other scholars, come to the end of the study and read the recommendation sections at the end, do I really take them to heart and act on them myself? I would like to think I do. I was warned over and over again by many colleagues to enjoy this process because you never really get a chance to go back to it. You never really get a chance to have the luxury of just researching and conferencing and expanding your study because the reality of finding a job and making a living looms before you. What sense does all of this make if all we feel what we can do afterwards is to just make a living the best way that we can, as newly minted Black and WOC Doctors of Philosophy? There has got to be more than that to look forward to, is not there? The questions still remain, now that we have discovered that we have all this wealth, where do we go from here? And where can we (actually) cash it in?

7. 5 Critical Analysis of Cultural Capital Theory

The cultural wealth that was uncovered in my study is not typically considered as cultural capital from the dominant perspective of Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) cultural capital theory. The perspective of Bourdieu’s (1986) and Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) suggests that cultural capital is evident only in particular forms, and within particular communities. For example, Bourdieu (1986) outlined three forms of cultural capital, embodied, objectified, and symbolic (addressed in Chapter Three) which are primarily found in White upper-middle class communities. Cultural capital is passed through families of origin and is maintained through structure that place hierarchical value on the various forms cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, culture includes, beliefs, values, and language that connect individuals and groups to institutionalized hierarchies. It is the intellectuals—who are the producers and transmitter of culture—who play the key role in shaping what those institutions look like, and how they operate (Swartz, 1997). Although, Bourdieu’s theory was instrumental in identifying how cultural capital is stratified in society and gave me parameters on how to understand and identify cultural capital, it focused only on the culture of the French Algerian peasants and the implications of their culture and class. Through my own intellectual and spiritual journey, I discovered that Bourdieus’s theory neglected to acknowledge the contributions of cultural capital found in communities of colour in terms of culture, class, gender and race. If intellectuals are the transmitter of culture, as Bourdieu suggests, then what happens to the intellectual of colour (and
their culture), whose knowledge is not considered within dominant structures in educational institutions where knowledge is created? There was a gap in his theories, and my understanding of cultural capital that needed to be addressed.

Therefore the necessity to encourage a new way of conceptualizing or re-thinking of cultural capital was an essential objective for my study specifically as an undertaking to create new knowledge in this area cultural wealth theory. It was important for me to name the experience of WOC in doctoral programs as cultural wealth, because this new theory identified the abilities and skills found within the experiences of my participants, as they became doctoral recipients (e.g., Mother’s Influence, Age Capital, Survival Strategies, Navigational Know-how, Spirituality). Bourdieu’s theories did not consider the cultural contributions of communities of colour, and namely did not consider the wealth found in WOC. Through the development, support, and self-empowerment of the cultural wealth found among these intellectual women, my research suggests that they possess valuable sources of cultural wealth that informed the learning experiences of WOC in doctoral programs. Admittedly, when I first began this study, I was naively looking for forms of cultural capital. What I discovered instead was a vast array of cultural wealth that even as a woman of colour, did not realize existed among these women. For example, only one the participants had parents who were doctoral recipients, or who had higher education, yet they still were able to survive and navigate through the program. I believe that the new theory of cultural wealth that was discovered in my study, as well as other studies to come like it, can be instrumental in critically looking at the issue of cultural capital theory, especially as it relates to communities of colour. For a future study, the valuable contribution of Dantley’s (2003) critical spirituality, will enhance a study that can delve further into the significance and value of spirituality as a cultural wealth found within the experiences of WOC in my research. The theoretical framework of critical spirituality will be helpful in identifying the aspects of spirituality that inform the experiences of WOC, and communities of colour on a whole as a significant category of cultural wealth that was discovered in my research.

7. 6 Contributions

Overall, it is my hope that this research would have accomplished three main objectives, 1) That it will provide inspiration for other WOC who one day hope to traverse on the journey
toward becoming a doctoral recipient, 2) That it will serve as a resource that can provide new knowledge in the area of cultural capital theory, as well as knowledge about the cultural wealth found in the experiences of my participants, 3) That it will provide new awareness for both the academy and communities of colour at large, so that our combined intellectual and cultural wealth will be easily recognizable and accessible for those communities and, 4) That the term, “Mosaic Paths to Knowledge,” will become acknowledged and used within both the academic culture, and the communities of colour so that leadership initiatives in both these arenas can glean insight from this new paradigm. I have tried to do my part, now I hope you will try to do yours. I also want to answer the question: Who is this thesis for? I want to identify four key groups for whom this research is intended, and what I desire them to do with this study:

- **Professors/Academy** – To learn how to support and recognize the wealth of knowledge that WOC bring. For faculty to open their mind with the goal of contributing their presence, body, and understanding, even if they cannot give any expertise in the area, for these women and their specialized research topics.

- **Future Students** – Should have confidence in knowing that what they bring to academy is valuable and does not have to be watered down in an attempt to pass a defense, or to get funding. They must also remember they are part of the 1/10 (10%) the Du Bois (1903) speaks about, and that they are responsible to uplift their communities.

- **Communities** - Must become proud of the scholars that their customs, heritage and beliefs have produced in them, and to use them (WOC) to facilitate change for social justice and empowerment within its own community of colour.

- **Media/Pop Culture** - Generate new images and pictures of the wealth of WOC in a realm that they would not otherwise consider, and it a way that rightly celebrates the contributions of these women.

Finally, my main endeavour is for this research to contribute to a new understanding of what it means to have “Mosaic Knowledge” and “Cultural Wealth.” I would like to contribute these terms to the field of educational research as a tool when discussing or investigating the
experiences of WOC, meant to also be transferrable in classroom settings. These terms are also meant to challenge scholars to re-think their understanding of cultural capital theory.

7. 7 Considerations For The Next Step

Now that the experiences of the participants are identified and named as cultural wealth, what is my next step? I tend to appreciate more the recommendations that came from the participants because they are inspirational ones and I believe they are actually doable. What concerns me, however, are the implications that still remain and threaten to sabotage the efforts of other women who are yet to follow in the footsteps of the participants in my study. The question remains, how do all those recommendations from research studies actually get transformed into new policies? It starts with home. I have started by questioning the doctoral journey as it is presented in official university guides and handbooks, by sharing the information for “The Path,” which will prepare WOC for the realistic barriers they might face. I believe, change could come from the self-reflection of the scholar who, after coming to terms with her/his own biased ways of knowing, can make a concerted effort to appreciate other cultural codes, which would lead to joint action. It will also come when power relations become well, less powerful.

Self-determination is important, so that recommendations can only be the beginning of addressing the issues raised in this thesis. It is important for each; WOC, administrator, and faculty member to search for themself and then determine in what way the ideas presented here can inform their own experience, writing and research? Ultimately I would like to work on a way that not only departments and departmental heads but also upper administration—deans, and presidents—might seek to ask themselves in what ways are they culpable in maintaining power relations in their institutions? With such a level of transparency coming from all levels, perhaps a kind of check and balance could serve to actually see change occurring where it counts, in the experiences of WOC.

7. 8 Recommendations from the Participants

At the end of each of my interviews, I asked my participants to leave me with some parting words of advice for other WOC coming into the program. I thought it fitting to have their
voices directed to those women who themselves will seek the path toward becoming doctoral recipients. Often recommendations at the end of many dissertations are thrown out there into the atmosphere for someone skillful enough to catch it, and for someone already with the necessary know-how and opportunity, or even the right academic background, to act upon it. Usually, the recommendations are intended for the scholars and peer review readers. As my research is to serve as a practical resource for other WOC, I deem it necessary to provide specific recommendations for future scholars of colour from the voices of those who have preceded them. The following excerpts are parting words of wisdom or inspiration ‘recommendations’ from each of my participants:

**Rachel** – “[Your] passion has to be bigger than your pain. Convert pain into learning because it is part of reality.”

**Anne** – “For me, it’s about looking ahead…To do the very best that I can do and to spend myself completely….I picked something I cared about that helped me to finish.”

*Gia* – “Talking is good. We [should] talk. I felt like I was sharing something. I really appreciate someone taking the time to ask these things because nobody asks.”

**Sandra** – “So I would say to the women, don’t be discouraged no matter what’s going on. That things will be alright, just keep on. And it sounds cliché, but it’s true. Just keep on. It’s OK to have moments of being discouraged but don’t let it derail you. Just keep on, keeping on. And do what you have to do.”

*Lynn* – “Come in with confidence…. If anyone comes in with an idea, just hold on to it tight and get this over with as soon as you can.”

*Grace* – “You should have your own agenda….Use the program as a healing process”

**Dana** – “I believe that we bring, especially in these days of globalization, we bring the missing link. The thing that’s really important is…people have always studied us [the ‘Other’]. They don’t need to study us [because] we will speak for ourselves.”
*Paula* – “I think it is incumbent upon us to give back in whatever way we can…but for Black people to survive, and particularly, Black women, we cannot stay intact and cut and run. [If we do] I think we will be destroyed souls by the time we are done.”

Aduke – “So I think it’s about being strategic. It’s about knowing that if you are going to. I think it’s choosing your battles and knowing/ asking is this worth it? And if it is, then go for it. But understanding that there are consequences and that there are prices to pay. And I’ve learned that.”

Trista – “[Always remember] Our strength, our resistance.”

Taken together, the parting words from these participants above weave an organic perspective that is useful as a practical roadmap for future WOC who also choose this path and to serve as profound wisdom for all others. The message is clear for the woman who dares to take this journey. You are admonished to make your passion larger than your pain, as you put all of your energies into the future of becoming your best you, to achieve not only your dream, but to assist the greater community by sharing the new knowledge that is now yours to give back. The words of wisdom that were most meaningful to me were to be strong enough to continue to write about yourself as new knowledge is always needed in this special area of cultural wealth. In other words, as WOC we are admonished to help preserve the “uplift” of our race (Henry, 1993; Collins, 2000). Also, I would add here that holding onto one’s faith and spiritual beliefs is a recommendation that once maintained, will produce benefits that will last a lifetime.

7. 9 Recommendations for Future Consideration

I have already suggested above, my lack of ‘know-how’ in moving my micro- data (small sample size) to institutional levels. Undoubtedly, such an undertaking would require the use of a methodology such as institutional ethnography (IE) and would require a larger investigation with many more participants. Hence the following recommendations are left for something (once new data in this area is collected) I will tackle next for a future addendum for my study:

a. PhD students should have support groups to help them—on their long journey—cope with feelings of isolation and being left stranded in the structure of doctoral
programs. This support can come from institutional structures set up by the universities, or from faculty, students, and alumni students, who have firsthand knowledge of pursuing the doctoral experience.

b. Universities, such as those in Canada, whose governments are presently trying to woo international scholars, need to implement policies that will allow for researchers to write their dissertation in their native language, and have them sent to an international evaluation centre (similar to those found in the U.S. for evaluating degrees from around the world) that interprets and rewrites them in English. In no way would this responsibility be left to the professor. The stipulation would be that the defense would have to be done in English but writing the thesis in one’s own language could be a practice that Canadian universities foster for the future, given the mosaic nature of this country. Is always a problem for L1 students. Presently, many students are relying on editors to help them write their papers. This reliance could be counterproductive because, after a paper is written (in perfect English) and the student successfully defends, what happens to that student who is now expected to become a scholar in their own right, in an area that is only English? It would be a very expensive and timely endeavor to establish such a facility but it would be worthwhile. Canadian universities could be the leading institutions in this area and perhaps set a trend (example) for other North American universities. With the increasing level of immigrants to Canada, higher education should be better equipped to deal with the diversities in a more tangible and equitable fashion.

c. L1 students should be mentored and partnered with a culturally appropriate writing coach upon entrance into the program. The English writing labs provided by the universities are very dominant in their approach to writing and the choice of writing samples that they use. Therefore, the writing support should be an inter-departmental function, which should be equipped to help the student with their specialized pedagogical interests.

d. The presence of Black female faculty must become a reality in the present or near future. Solutions for the lack of current faculty must be broached now. I believe the existing White faculty needs to become more culturally sensitive to ways of
knowing for WOC in their departments. This begins with the students. There must be a concerted effort to affirm the students of colour to help ease their insecurities. How can this be accomplished? First, by listening to the student. Make it easy for her to approach you with her ideas. Make her feel her interests matter. Support her with resources to help improve writing, if that is the area of concern. Help her learn how to write a winning application for an award, especially for those professors who have already won them. Invite her to collaborate on writing projects, suggest journals where she could submit her own work. The bottom line, it is the responsibility of all professors to find commonalities with all their students and not just the ones who share in their research interests or socio-cultural identities and/or perceptions.

e. An internal award or scholarship should be designed specifically for any WOC in the doctoral program. What is required is an award that does not have impractical hidden requirements but one that is specifically designed to meet the financial and emotional strain that WOC, especially those who are single, and with children encounter on a day-to-day basis. For example, of the ten women in my study, three were single (two of the three have children). It was two of the single women that took over seven years to complete their degree because of the added hardship of not having a partner. Universities should also establish an educational journal specifically for WOC (as opposed to only separate journals that exist for specific races or cultures). This will not only contribute to the wealth of new knowledge that is being produced by these women, but it could help to establish the university as leaders in supporting diverse research from within communities of colour, and of course, Mosaic Knowledge.

f. An Anthology textbook should be written (this is my goal) where scholars can go to one source, a compilation of educational experiences written by Canadian WOC to be used as a resource for future scholars and present teachers and students in the academy. Every year, additions should be made to incorporate the new knowledge created by the future and upcoming scholars. Present scholars of colour will have something to look forward to, knowing that their work can be published a book I one day hope to write “The Anthology of Mosaic Paths of Knowledge For WOC.”
What else did I set out to accomplish? I wanted my thesis to read like a story because when a story is touching, authentic, and even passionate, one can become connected with the characters and make one want to know what happened to each one even after all the issues are revealed. I wanted it to read as an academic work, but also as a source of information that would not intimidate the average curious reader (on this subject). I also hope that what I have said here, is perceived as very important by the reader, whomever that may be, and that I, as the creator of this knowledge, can do something extraordinary with this research.

7.10 Summary and Final Thoughts

Throughout these seven chapters of my thesis, I have presented the knowledge of wealth found in WOC—which I suggest originated from our ancestors in matriarchal communities of colour—from the perspectives of the experiences of my participants. I began with the positive influence of such wealth, which helped me to name the first category (which was close to my heart) as, “Mother’s Influence.” This category became the driving force for many of my participants which resulted in being one of the most riveting examples of cultural wealth, as seen in their “stories.” Undoubtedly, many WOC in my research relied on their mother’s wisdom to help guide them through the program. Other categories of wealth such as, “Age Capital” “Navigational Know-how” and “Spirituality” also provided WOC with the knowledge they needed to get through the doctoral program. Yet, the overall impact of WOC in doctoral programs were impeded by the fact that there were so few of them in these programs. The research suggests that, part of the problem faced by communities of colour participating in institutions of higher education in general, and WOC in particular is that their limited representation on predominantly White campuses can cause strong feelings of isolation, as some students are faced with varying degrees of overt and covert oppression (i.e., micro-aggressions).

To help establish the validity of Mosaic Knowledges—which are the unique examples of cultural wealth in the form of abilities and skills, found in the experiences of WOC—I suggest one must first re-think the concept of Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of cultural capital. His interpretation presents only a dominant, as opposed to alternative view, of cultural capital. The work of Tara Yosso (2005) was instrumental in identifying examples of cultural wealth, found in communities of colour. It was from this starting point that I was able to formulate a Canadian
perspective from her similar concept, as it pertained to WOC in doctoral programs. The literature suggested that issues such as: accessibility, representation, language, knowledge of academic culture, race and ethnicity, and power relations etc., were barriers that affected the learning process for students of colour in higher education.

Using the methodology of interviewing, and implementing Kvale’s (2009) tools for presenting the qualitative data, the relevance of a womanist, critical race theory and cultural capital theory was explained. This combined framework enabled me to bring the voices of my participants into the centre, and away from the periphery of academic discourse, through their stories. The racial, cultural and spiritual identities of my participants all played a role in the way they experienced the world around them. Womanism as opposed to feminism, I explained, was a plausible choice for this study because of my own integrated identities as a woman of colour and faith. Most importantly, womanist theory, embraces the spiritual identities of WOC. Womanist theory was effective in validating the everyday experiences of WOC, as important knowledge, useful for the academy. This theory also helped to explain how the experiences of these women were sustained through oppression, by utilizing their spirituality as a conduit of hope. I used the stories that were generated from my participants to simultaneously identify the six major categories of cultural wealth, which were: Mother’s Influence, Age Capital, Mentorship, Survival Strategies, Academic Know-how, and Spirituality. These categories of wealth explain and answer the primary research question of how WOC experience learning in the academy. Each participant has weaved within their stories three or four examples of cultural wealth from my list of categories. Critical race theory, as the second theoretical framework for my research, helped to explain why oppression and racism persist in society, and how its insidious presence remains steeped into the structures of society. For example, some of the participants felt that their research topics were not received with warm receptions from their supervisors, or were not rewarded financially (e.g., grants, OGS awards) was largely because of the focus of race in their work, therefore some participants responded by producing “raceless” research. The last framework of cultural capital theory explained how knowledge is reproduced in societal structures. Specifically, cultural capital theory helped to explain how the experiences of WOC where affected by the dominant academic culture found in higher education. This standpoint helped to answer the final research question for my study that asks the question of about the culpability of the academic culture and educational institutions in higher education as it relates to
the experiences of WOC in doctoral programs. The data revealed that not only did the power relations that existed between the student and her supervisor affect their overall experiences but participants also felt the necessity to conform to the research topics and adapt to the corresponding dispositions of their supervisors, in order to survive while in the program or the academic profession altogether.

Several patterns evolved from the data. Most notable were the ways my participants responded to the power relations that persist in educational structures, which can inhibit the educational experiences of WOC. Survival Strategies, Mentorship, and Spirituality were prominent examples of how cultural wealth was used to dismantle power relations. Moreover, the evidence found that those participants who had strong mentorship, and rewarding supervisory relationships fared better academically and financially, than those who were not as fortunate. Regardless of the challenges, all participants were committed to seeing the journey through to the end, and have left practical tools for other WOC coming into doctoral programs, as to how to accomplish this lofty endeavor. “The Path”, as I identified is not an easy one, and recommendations as to how to stay on it are provided in this study.

However, my study reveals that the cultural wealth found in the experiences and stories point toward important growth in the area of social and intellectual capital found in this small but thriving group of participants. Bolivar and Chrispeels (2011), in “Enhancing Parent Leadership Through Building Social and Intellectual Capital”, define intellectual capital as:

\[ \text{the knowledge and capabilities of a bounded collective, [which in this case are WOC participating in the process of becoming doctoral recipients] with potential for collaborative action (p. 5).} \]

Through the discursive critical lens of womanism, critical race theory (CRT) and cultural capital, I have discovered that the collective action of sharing stories has indeed produced intellectual capital, which again I have identified as cultural wealth. It is my hope that the mosaic knowledge from my participants can be formulated into a practical resource that will help other students of colour who desire higher education. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) posit:

The creation of intellectual capital relies on two mechanisms essential to the generation of new intellectual resources: (a) combination and exchange of
individuals’ knowledge leading to innovation and (b) the generation of new community knowledge that is greater than that possessed by any one individual in the community (in Bolivar and Chrispeels, 2011, p. 30).

The compilation of my participants’ stories can lead to new innovations, as the above authors suggest, when their combined knowledge is generated from, and returned back into the greater communities of colour.

Taken together, the recommendations from these participants weave an organic perspective that is useful as a practical roadmap for future WOC who also choose this path and to serve as profound wisdom for all others. The message is clear for the woman who dares to take this journey. You are admonished to make your passion larger than your pain, as you put all of your energies into the future of becoming your best you. Always remember to talk to someone and that ‘talking is good’. Come in with confidence and use the program as a form of healing. Remember that it is through talking and sharing that we can be healed. And it is you who can speak best for yourself—you do not need others to speak for you. Most importantly, remember to “Keep on keeping on” (Sandra, p. 214). It will be tough and very lonely but here in this study is the evidence from women just like you who have done it; so can you. Always be strong enough to continue to write about yourself because new knowledge is always needed in this special area of cultural wealth, the inner wisdom from your own cultural knowing. However, it is important to take what you have learned and give it back to your community, this responsibility is especially important for Black women. Do not keep it to yourself and think that you have arrived; this will only kill your spirit. Always be strategic, whether it’s in choosing to speak up and fight the right battles or knowing when to be silent. Finally, never forget your own strength and resistance! These are beautiful words to live by and such a powerful wealth of knowledge to embrace for the future women of colour on the path toward becoming a doctoral recipient. These are the recommendations left specifically for the unassuming WOC who dares to live her dreams and take this path. Interestingly, these recommendations have also served to push me just a bit further as I approach the finish line, exhausted and out of breath. I will ‘keep, keeping on’ until that grand day when ‘this too shall pass,’ with a celebration of course!
References


Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto and the Elementary Federation of Teachers of Ontario.


APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule

Semi-structured Interview Questions:

1. What made you decide to pursue your doctorate?

2. Tell me a bit about your academy and cultural background? Parents? Siblings? Is having English as a second language, a benefit or a barrier?

3. Tell me a bit about your research? How much does it reflect your own experience?

4. How would you describe your emotional and social support (networks) during this process? (Isolation?)

5. Tell me about your experience with funding and finding work? Did you get a TA at OISE? How does the job issue affect your home life?

6. Tell me a bit about your supervisor? How would you characterize that relationship?

7. How well would you say you know how to navigate through the academic culture in your program? How did you find things out? Do you think the Academy rewards certain behaviours or characteristics? (e.g., knowing, who, how, when, etc., to ask to get what you need).

8. How do you push yourself to get through and stay focused with your program? What are your strengths? Insecurities? What advice would you give others?

9. How well do you handle issue in the Academy that you may be displeased with, which personally affect you in your program?

10. Wrapping up, anything else you want to add?
APPENDIX B

Letter of Informed Consent

July, 2010

To the Participants in this study:

I am a Doctoral candidate in the Department of Theory and Policy at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. I am conducting a study for my Doctoral thesis under the supervision of Professor Njoki Nathani Wane. The thesis is entitled: “Rethinking the Constructs of Cultural Capital: Experience and Indigenous Cultural Capital Among Women of Colour in Doctoral Programs”. I would like to invite you to participate in this project. Participant must consent to all three phases of the research: (1) Web-based survey (20 minutes); (2) In-depth interview; (3) focus group (both 90 minutes). The duration of study will take place between the months of July and early September, 2010.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the educational experiences of women of colour in doctoral programs by focusing on how their indigenous cultural capital might enhance those experiences. I use the term “indigenous” when referring to cultural capital because usually this ideology is interpreted within the dominant perspective of Pierre Bourdieu (1986) cultural capital theory but excludes the symbolic and cultural wealth found in other indigenous communities. Therefore the criterion for selecting participants will be based on the participant who is a member of any indigenous community and/or who is woman of colour registered in or matriculated from a doctoral program in Ontario, Canada. Contingent on your consent, your primary role would be to respond to recorded and open-ended questions about: familial background experience in graduate level studies, social network, financial support systems and/or lack of, strategies for survival.

The duration of the interview will last approximately ninety minutes. Each session will be taped with digital voice recorder. The time and place will be one that is convenient to you. I will ensure all precautions are taken to preserve anonymity as well as pseudonyms will also be used within the body of the research to protect your identity. I will be the only and primary researcher on this project but if for any reason you feel uncomfortable, you are free to withdraw at anytime. All data will be kept in a secure place and copies of the final report will be made available to
you, upon its completion. Your anonymity will be kept secure at all times. You will be assigned numbers and pseudonyms throughout the process. All raw data will be destroyed after five years after the completion of the study. However the summary of the findings will be used in alternate forms of academy publication or presentation (i.e., OISE Library).

You may at any time refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the interview process without and judgment or reprisal. You may request that any form of information be eliminated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (905) 940 3292 or leoniebrown@sympatico.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. N. Wane at (416) 978 0423. Finally, you may also contact the U of T Office of Research Ethics for questions about your rights as a research participant at ethics.reviews@utoronto.ca or at 416 978 3273.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sharon Leonie Brown
PhD Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in OISE/UT.
(905) 940 3202

Dr. N. Wane
Director, Office of Teaching Support Education, OISE/UT.
(416) 978 0426

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of all the conditions above.

Name: _______________________________ School: _______________________________
Signed: _______________________________ Date: _______________________________

Please initial if you would like summary of the study emailed to you after completion: _____.
Please initial if you agree to have your interview audio/or videotaped ____.
Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
APPENDIX C

Bulletin Announcement

Participants for Research Needed for Doctoral Research:

I am a Doctoral Candidate at OISE/UT (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am working on research that investigates the educational experiences of women of colour in doctoral programs in Ontario, Canada. I am interested in how these women experience doctoral level education, and how their indigenous cultural capital might enhance those experiences. I am looking for any women of colour, from any visible racial or cultural background. A web-based 22 minute survey (via e-mail) will be circulated to gather the first phase of data. These women would have experienced at least one year of PhD level studies, be full-time PhD students, or have graduated from a PhD program in Ontario. Any interested participants can contact their thesis group co-coordinator, department secretary, or respond to posting in UTORID, Blackboard. Also, if you see me on campus you can verbally let your intentions be known and I will take your number and/or email address. The second phase of the data collection will include a 60-90min audio and/or videotaped interview. The third phase will include a focus group. The study is quite small, and only requires twelve women. Hence your commitment to all three phases is mandatory. Keep in mind I am quite flexible to work within your work, and/or personal restraints. Details will be given only to those who agree to participate in all three segments. All participants will receive a letter of informed consent by e-mail, to be signed in person at the commencement of the interview. This document will formally outline the contents of the research and give me permission to use you as a human subject.

Please contact:
S.Leonie Brown:
leoniebrown@sympatico.ca or leonie.brown@utoronto.ca
(905) ---- ----
Sincerely,

S.Leonie Brown
PhD Candidate
Higher Education
OISE/UT.