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Nos/otras Redefining the Silences: Stories of Women of Color Navigating Doctoral Education

Author

Campos, Magali

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Nos/otras Redefining the Silences: Stories of Women of Color Navigating Doctoral Education

A dissertation proposal in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Magali Campos

2024

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Nos/otras Redefining the Silences: Stories of Women of Color Navigating Doctoral Education

by

Magali Campos

Doctoral of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2024

Professor Daniel Solórzano, Chair

This qualitative study focuses on the experiences of Women of Color in doctoral programs to highlight the challenges they face, the silences they encounter, and the navigational tools they utilize to persist through their programs. Women of Color continue to be marginalized in academia and face many challenges when earning graduate degrees (Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Keating, 2006; McKee & Delgado, 2020; Montoya, 2000). This research specifically examines the experiences of marginalization and the silence that they encounter in doctoral programs. Using Critical Race Theory (Solórzano, 1998), Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000), and Chicana feminist theories (Anzaldúa, 2002; Delgado Bernal, 1998), I focused on nine Women of Color doctoral students from the fields of Sociology, Psychology, Education, Gender Studies, STEM, and History.

To center the voices of Women of Color in my dissertation, I utilized the methodology of pláticas and video testimonios. I gathered 75 survey/intake forms, 9 individual pláticas, 6 video

testimonials, and 1 group plática. The analysis gave insight into how their gender, race/ethnicity, and other intersecting identities impact their educational journeys toward completing a doctoral degree. The findings bring attention to the isolation, imposter syndrome, and violence they experienced.

An aim of this research was to also uncover the silences Women of Color encounter in academic settings. Theorizing with my collaborators, I created the Spectrum of Silence, which begins with Being Silenced, then shifts to the In-Between Silences, and ends with Choosing Silence. The Spectrum of Silence names the different types of silence that are experienced by Women of Color in doctoral programs. It extends our understanding of how silence is not static but shifts and flows depending on the context. Through a spectrum, not only can we recognize the detrimental ways Women of Color experience silence but also the way they exercise their agency as they navigate oppressive structures. Implications for this research point to (a) the power of utilizing race-gendered informed methodologies such as testimonios and pláticas for research on Women of Color, (b) the pedagogical implications of the Pedagogy of Silence, and (c) the need for more Faculty of Color to support the type of critical research Women of Color aspire to conduct.

The dissertation of Magali Campos is approved.

Teresa L. McCarty

Tyrone Howard

Dolores Delgado Bernal

Daniel G. Solórzano, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2024

DEDICATION

To my mom, dad, sister, and the rest of my family for being the first to believe in me and encourage my educational ambitions.

To the strong women in my life who have now passed. My Grandma Juana Cervantes, and my Nina Angelica Garcia Alvarez. You both showered me with unconditional love and support. You were present in every important milestone of my life, and I know if you could, you would be in this one, too. I will never forget you.

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I want to thank the nine women who shared so much of themselves and trusted me with their stories. It felt like an impossible task to preserve the richness of your voices, but I hope you feel that I did your stories justice in my retelling.

I want to thank my parents, Delma Campos Alvarez and Luis Campos. I can never thank you enough for everything you have done for me. You have always supported me, believed in me, and encouraged me. You both instilled the importance of education in me from a very young age. The first memory I have of someone telling me I'll go to college was you both. I still vividly remember Lily and I were still in elementary. The four of us were sitting in the car on our way to a family gathering. Before getting to my tía's house, we stopped by a market to pick up something. As we were pulling up in the parking lot, the conversation switched to one of my cousins who would attend college soon. That's when you both turned to the back where me and Lily were sitting and, in Spanish, told us, "You are going to go to college. It doesn't matter if it's at a university or a college, but you are going." You both turned back to look ahead, and my dad got out to pick up what we needed from the market while we waited in the car. It was such a brief conversation, but it had a huge impact on my life. From then on, I was determined to go to college, although I didn't completely understand what that meant. I took your words to heart, and I never doubted I would make it to college. I just didn't realize I would get this far.

I want to thank my goddaughter, Emily Mendez Campos, who, at the wise age of 5, gave me a motivational anecdote when I was in the midst of writing this dissertation. I took a short break and walked into the room you were in with Nama, watching Bluey. I plopped down on the bed beside you and said, "I don't want to work anymore." I just said it to release some tension, not thinking you were paying attention. But you are always paying attention. You turned your little face to me, and in Spanish, you said, "You know, Nina, when I don't want to go to school,

my mommy tells me I have to go. She tells me that I'll have fun. Then I go and I do have fun playing with my friends. We have to go to school, and we have to work even when we don't want to." Your words caught me by surprise because I didn't expect you to give me a pep talk. But it turned out that's exactly what I needed to hear, and your words helped me every time I wanted to stop writing.

Quero agradecer al resto de mi family. A todas mis tías, tíos, primas, primos, sobrinas y sobrinos. Les agradezco por todo sus esfuerzo para siempre apoyarme durante todos mis estudios. Sus palabras de apoyo me an ayudado a supercar dificultades. Me motivaron a esforzarme para hacerlos orgullosos. E sido muy afortunada de tenerlos. Thank you to my cousins that went to college before me and opened the road to follow. Jackie, I saw how hard you worked on your college applications, then you went to UCSC, and I wanted to be just like you. Thank you for helping me with my college applications and for showing me around the campus once I was accepter to UCSC. I hope I can do the same for the coming generation in our family.

I want to thank Randy Colón for always offering words of encouragement whenever I voiced self-doubt. There were many times that I struggled to believe in my own abilities, but you never let me dwell on that for too long. I also want to thank you for always taking the time to read over my final even when you had a load of students' assignments to grade. I don't think there was a paper I wrote that you didn't read over. Knowing you read them eased the stress.

Danny, thank you for the many years of mentorship. Every time I came to your office with doubts, I always left feeling reassured and excited to continue because of the genuine interest and encouragement you offered. You always remind me of how I not only fit in academia, but how my contributions can make a difference. You have provided so many opportunities for me to grow and learn, and I value every opportunity. Working with you so

closely has taught me what it means to do this work with care. I can never thank you enough for your patience and constant support.

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campus together. Your advice and affirmations during our commutes made the difficult days on campus bearable. Brenda, thank you for your friendship, and for sharing your creative mind and offering to let me use your art on my recruitment flyer and other dissertation materials.

I want to thank all my past students for fueling me with your enthusiasm, passion, and drive. I have had the fortune to have the best students. You have allowed me to grow my praxis and approach to mentorship. Each of you also continuously reminded me why it was that I wanted to be in academia.

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VITA

EDUCATION

2014	University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), M.A. Social Science and Comparative Education *Specialization in Race and Ethnic Studies*
2011	University of California, Santa Cruz, B.A. Major: Psychology

AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

2021	University Graduate Fellowship
2020	University Graduate Fellowship
2019	University Graduate Fellowship
2018	University Graduate Fellowship
2018	InterActions Journal Printing Poster Scholarship
2017	University Graduate Fellowship
2016	Best Poster at the 2016 Thinking Gender Conference
2014	Division-Based Merit Scholarship

RESEARCH SPECIALIZATIONS

Women of Color Students
Silence in Academic Settings
Critical Race Theory in Education
Chicana/Latina Feminist Theories and Methodologies

PUBLICATIONS

Valencia, Y., & **Campos, M.** (2023). Con respeto y confianza: A correspondence between sister-scholars that braids Chicana Latina Feminist methodologies in women of color research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1–12.

Campos, M. (2016). Mentoring away the glass ceiling in academia: A cultured critique. Edited by Brenda L. H. Marina. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, *12*(1), Book Review Article. gseis_interactions_29607

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Campos, M. (2023, April). "It was Though:" Women of Color Response to Racial Microaggressions in Doctoral Programs. Paper presentation at the American Education Research Association (AERA) conference.

Solórzano, D., **Campos, M.**, & Lopez, B. (2022, October). Center for Critical Race Studies in Education and Publishing. Pre-conference Presentation at Critical Race Studies in Education Association (CRSEA) conference. Virtual conference.

Campos, M. (2022, April). Voicing the silences: Testimonios of women of color navigating higher education. Paper Presentation at American Education Research Association (AERA). San Diego, CA.

Campos, M., & Valencia, Y. (2022, April). Con respeto y confianza: A correspondence between sister-scholars that braids CLF methodologies in women of color research. Paper Presentation at American Education Research Association (AERA). San Diego, CA.

TEACHING & PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2019–2024	Assistant Director Center for Critical Race Studies in Education at UCLA University of California, Los Angeles
2019, 2021, 2023	Teaching Fellow—Graduate Course Ed204D: A Seminar in Critical Race Theory University of California, Los Angeles
2021	Teaching Associate—Undergraduate Course M102: Chicana/o and Latina/o Educational Issues in the U.S. University of California, Los Angeles
2019, 2020	Teaching Associate—Undergraduate Course CS188: Chicana/o Students, Communities, and Educational Equity University of California, Los Angeles
2019	Teaching Assistant—Undergraduate Course CS113: The Day of the Dead Ritual Class University of California, Los Angeles
2018	Teaching Assistant—Undergraduate Course Ed 130: Race, Class, Gender and Inequities in US Education University of California, Los Angeles
2014–2018	Program Coordinator—Undergraduate Research Program Educators for Tomorrow University of California, Los Angeles

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the number of Women of Color in graduate programs has increased over the past two decades, but there are still far fewer compared to their white and male counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Despite the slight increase, Women of Color continue to be marginalized in academia and face many challenges when earning post-secondary and graduate degrees. As a result, bodies of work have developed around the experiences Women of Color face within academic settings across all levels of higher education in the United States (Anzaldúa, 2002; Burciaga, 2007; Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Keating, 2006; Montoya, 2000; Yosso, 2006). Scholarly literature highlights the academic narratives of Women of Color, trajectories, and challenges as they continue to carve out a space within institutions that historically were designed to exclude them.

While the number of Women of Color entering doctoral programs has increased from 2% in the 1976–1977 academic year to 18% within the academic year of 2021–2022, they continue to be disproportionately represented in higher education (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). The underrepresentation of Women of Color in higher education is strikingly more evident when viewing the statistics on faculty in post-secondary degree-granting institutions. The U.S. Department of Education National Center of Education Statistics (2023) reported that of the total full-time faculty (professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, and lectures) in post-secondary degree-granting institutions during fall 2021, Black Women made up 3.44%, Latinas 2.97%, Asian American 5.07%, Pacific Islander .08%, and American Indian/Alaskans Native .21% (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Women of Color make up 11.76% of all full-time faculty positions (U.S. Department of Education, 2023).

When we examine the 7.77% of Women of Color who hold professor (the highest level) appointments versus the 13.69% of Women of Color in instructor or lecturer appointments, we

see that Women of Color are more represented in instructor and lecturer positions than in tenured professor positions. To better understand where Women of Color faculty find themselves, I disaggregate the data by race in professor (the highest level) positions, and in the latter-rank positions of instructor and lecture positions. The data on full-time faculty positions at the professor level Black Women comprised 1.86%, Latinas 1.76%, Asian Americans 3.96%, Pacific Islanders 0.05%, and American Indian/Alaskan Natives at fewer than 0.14% (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). On the other hand, Black Women made up 4.32%, Latinas 4.96%, Asian Americans 3.98%, Pacific Islanders 0.11%, and American India/Alaskan Natives 0.31% of full-time faculty as instructors and lecturers (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). It is important to note these differences as Women of Color hold a larger representation in latter-rank postings of lecture and instructor, which are known for holding more course work, albeit with fewer resources and benefits, and faster burnout rates (Téllez, 2013). While there has been a slight increase of Women of Color entering higher education at the graduate level, these numbers begin to paint a picture of what Women of Color face as they persevere through the educational pipeline and tenure-track process.

We must look into the experiences of Women of Color graduate students to further understand why the numerical representation of Women of Color enrolled in these programs is not translating into faculty positions or other positions of leadership in education. A cross-disciplinary, country-wide study for doctoral students reported that women and Students of Color were less likely to pursue faculty positions (Golde & Dore, 2001). Although faculty positions in research institutions are not always the end goal for everyone who pursues higher education, it is still necessary to examine the experiences that may be discouraging people, specifically Women of Color, from continuing and persevering. The problem extends beyond numerical

representation of Women of Color in graduate school because even in fields in which women are known to hold better numerical representation, a stark gap persists between the number of Women of Color in graduate programs and in faculty positions.

There are numerous potential reasons why Women of Color are not represented in top positions in higher education. Many Women of Color do not pursue or continue their academic careers in higher education institutions due to gendered and racialized discrimination, as well as hostile campus climate. In 2013, an independent review team published a report investigating the University of California, Los Angeles' (UCLA) policies, procedures, and mechanisms for responding to incidents of perceived bias, discrimination and intolerance involving Faculty of Color (Moreno et al., 2013). The investigation was initiated by UCLA faculty who went to the UCLA Chancellor and Vice Chancellor with concerns of perceived racial bias, discrimination, and intolerance in the university. The review team interviewed 12 university administrators and 18 faculty members, solicited submissions from concerned faculty, and reviewed UCLA's policies and statistics of reported incidents of racial bias and discrimination against faculty. The Moreno et al. (2013) report discussed how every Faculty of Color who was interviewed had personally experienced systematic incidents of discrimination or intolerance around gender and racial lines by white male professors in their departments. One example offered in the report addressed racial conflict that faculty faced:

> . . . a group of senior Caucasian male professors began to systemically discriminate against the minority and female faculty members in the department. Such treatment ranged from junior faculty members of color being told that they would not make tenure, to the department's failure to make efforts to retain tenured faculty members of color who had received offers of employment from other universities, to discriminatory remarks leveled at minority faculty members such as "I thought Asian women were supposed to be submissive." Many of these minority junior faculty members later left the university. (Moreno et al., 2013, p. 13)

The quote above demonstrates the range of gendered and racialized discrimination many Faculty of Color experienced in a particular department in a prestigious university such as UCLA. The chronic discrimination directly affected and discouraged junior Faculty of Color from persisting in these academic spaces. It is alarming to learn that of the few Faculty of Color that make it to tenure-track positions, many had been told that they would not make tenure by senior faculty. Furthermore, their own department seldom took any action to rectify these types of incidents. Although alarming, this particular incident adds to the narrative and gives some explanation to the low numbers of Faculty of Color previously discussed. Within this excerpt, we can also begin to see what Women of Color specifically face as a result of their intersectional identities as Women and People of Color.

The Moreno et al. (2013) report offers an additional example centered around what Women of Color Faculty shared:

> Another faculty member, a female faculty member of color, told the Review Team that she threatened to sue the university after the department voted to deny her promotion to full professor. After receiving a settlement from the university, she retired because she had no further desire to remain in the department. (p. 13)

This is yet another example of how Women Faculty of Color are continually pushed out of the professoriate, and all the while their own department and university seldom work to improve retention. As a result of the department and university's failure to adequately address the issues many Women of Color Faculty left the university (Moreno et al., 2013). Ultimately, this report critiqued the racial bias or discrimination grievance process in place and called for a clearer process. After the investigation, the Moreno et al. report concluded that UCLA's policies and actions for responding to incidents of discrimination were inadequate and needed thorough revisions.

The Moreno et al. (2013) report offers a perspective on the hardships endured by Women Faculty of Color. And we can conclude that if they are facing these barriers at a faculty level, we must then examine what Women of Color are experiencing as graduate students. If there is a toxic campus climate for Faculty of Color, Students of Color in the same departments will likely also experience similar challenges. Though the Moreno et al. report shed light on the atrocious forms of systemic gendered and racial discrimination faculty faced, the experiences of graduate students are missing. From the whole report, graduate students were mentioned only once through an incident a faculty shared that involved a graduate student. The review team reported:

> One of the formal charges filed by a faculty member, brought in the 2011–2012 academic year, claimed that another latter-rank faculty member had engaged in discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity both against the complainant faculty member and a graduate student. (Moreno et al., 2013, p. 8)

In a response after the Moreno et al. report was released, the Graduate Council's chair, Maite Zubiaurre, stressed the importance of extending the scope to include students, both graduate and undergraduate students alike (AfterMoreno, 2014). Zubiaurre stated, ". . . students, the most vulnerable section of our academic population, witnessed an act of violence and racial hatred, and therefore became victims themselves . . ." (AfterMoreno, 2014, p. 24). This response highlights the importance of examining incidents of discrimination or intolerance throughout the multiple levels of education, including faculty, staff, and students. Based on this recommendation and call for next steps after the Moreno et al. report, my work has focused on the often overlooked experiences of Women of Color in graduate school.

Coming to the Work

I initially entered this line of research through a pilot study during the aftermath of the release of the Moreno et al. (2013) report in my first year in graduate school. Through a qualitative pilot study, I began to examine the experiences of Women of Color in graduate school

to explore how they navigate and retain themselves through their graduate programs. Below I summarize and highlight the findings that led me to pursue silence as the topic for my dissertation.

Pilot Study

I conducted four in-depth semi-structured interviews with Women of Color in doctoral programs. The in-depth semi-structured interviews consisted of talking about their life history, experiences in their graduate program, and reflections on their trajectory and future goals. Throughout the interviews, these women shared their journey to pursue graduate experiences, their classroom experiences, and their motivational experiences. While broadly inquiring about their experiences within their graduate programs, each of the Women of Color shared their own incidents relating to silence. This was striking because although none of my questions directly asked about experiences of silence, each one of them felt compelled to share with me how silence came up for them while in academic settings.

Each interview I had with the Women of Color within my pilot study gave me a glimpse to begin viewing silence as something that is present and complex within academic settings and must be further explored. The women expressed sentiments such as, "I always felt very silent all the time," when talking about her graduate school experience. Another shared, "I felt like high school again. I'm supposed to know the answer and I don't know. If I ask, I'm going to feel stupid for not knowing . . ." while reflecting on how she felt unsure seeking help due to her fear of being seen as incompetent. Additionally, another Woman of Color explained how she had used silence in response to a problematic question asked during one of her classes: "I didn't want to answer it—purposefully didn't answer it cause the professor asked for the 'Latino perspective.'" On a related note, another one of the women said, "I really don't want to be engaged in those conversations, sometimes I do, but that takes a toll on me emotionally and

physically." She expressed how at times she did not have the emotional or physical energy to engage in conversations or discussions relating to racially and/or gendered loaded topics, and instead utilized her silence to preserve herself and ensure that she continued working towards her own degree. Hearing from each of the women and their varied and shared experiences with silence made me reflect on my own academic experiences with silence.

My Experiences with Silence in Academia

As I take a moment to look back and reflect on my entire academic trajectory, silence has always been present. From the beginning of my educational trajectory, I faced others' interpretations of my silence in the classroom. The first time I heard a teacher comment that I needed to speak more in class, I was surprised because I was unaware that I had been doing anything wrong. I believed myself to be a good student, yet after hearing time and again that I needed to speak more, I began to develop self-doubt.

Others' interpretations of my silence continued as I began my undergraduate education. Towards the end of my first quarter, one teacher assistant told me on the last day of class that if I did not change and begin to speak up in classes, I was not going to make it to graduation. I was shocked at his comment and did not know how to react. I was one of only four freshmen students in this class, and I learned a lot by listening in this intimidating class setting. Although I tried to brush off the T.A.'s comment, I was never able to—his words echoed in my head throughout the rest of my time there. These interactions stayed with me, and although it did not drive me to speak up more, it did impose the belief that silence under any context was bad and that there was something wrong with me.

Consequently, I began to contextualize silence due to frustration. The frustration came from years of having my silence framed in negative ways, and then it was solidified by my initial experiences in my master's program at UCLA. As an incoming student, during Orientation Day,

we had the opportunity to meet and introduce ourselves to the faculty in our division. As I waited for my turn, I heard from my peers and learned of their research aspirations and how well-received they were by the faculty in the room. Hoping to make a similarly good first impression, when it came to my turn, I took a deep breath and said, "I'm Magali Campos. I grew up in LA, and I hope to do youth participatory research using testimonios." Less than a beat later, a professor turned to me and announced in front of the group, "We don't do that here." I was mortified, as I was the only one that was received in this way. After a few seconds of discomfort, we moved on to the next person as I attempted to collect myself. I was already dealing with impostor's syndrome, and this professor essentially confirmed those feelings. I hadn't even stepped foot in a classroom and the scholarly work I was proposing to do was being rejected and silenced. I soon learned that he didn't know what he was talking about and persisted by finding support. Although my initial research focus did shift, fortunately, due to this support, I ultimately did use testimonios in my research process.

But before then, these feelings of frustration increased on a day when an instructor in a graduate class decided to begin a discussion on power by turning to one of my peers and demanding her to stand. When my colleague stood in confusion, our instructor turned to the rest of the class and asked, "What did I just do? I used my power as the professor. That, ladies and gentlemen, is how power works." Everyone around the room seemed confused. I knew that what he had done was not appropriate and I wanted to say something, but I could not—it appeared that no one could. Looking back, I regret not saying anything. This silence was different from the one I had previously experienced. This silence felt paralyzing and each day I became more and more bitter.

That frustration was creeping towards all aspects of my life. I was angry with myself and I began to see everything in my graduate program through bitter eyes. That affected the way I interacted with my peers, my professors, and my family. Since I felt like I needed to do something to release some of that frustration, I began to channel my energy towards research that would help me understand the experiences of silence felt by Women of Color while in an academic setting. Most importantly, I was not the only one experiencing and exercising my silence in the class. With the new direction of my research, I felt reenergized.

With the revitalization and reflection, I was able to view the different ways women around me—and I myself—had utilized silence. I was able to re-examine a clear recollection regarding my silence, which had occurred through another incident with the same professor previously mentioned. Although this had been a relatively small course, this professor had not taken the time to learn my name. On the occasions he decided to call on me to add to the discussion, it was usually by the wrong name—Marianna, the other Latina in our graduate program. One day after numerous misnaming, I had had enough. When he pointed and called on me as "Marianna," I looked back at him and then to Marianna. Without saying anything for a few seconds, I stood in opposition and corrected him. I responded by pointing towards Marianna and asking our professor, "Did you mean to say Magali or Marianna?" He stared at me in confusion for a few seconds before he responded, "Marianna is the name I know so. . . " He said this while looking directly at me, and he still seemed very unclear as to the issue at hand. Marianna and I just exchanged an annoyed glance; we both refused to respond and sat silently. As a result of our "lack" of response and our silence, he moved on to another student. Yet our silence was very intentional, and in our silence, we were able to communicate with one another. Marianna and I built from that and connected on the shared understanding that if he continued to

call us by the wrong name, we would continue disrupting his hegemonic ways by not answering. Later in the course some of the other women in the class practiced what I believe were similar forms of silence as resistance. And through that silence, we bonded. Silences like that can speak volumes.

Before engaging in my research to understand the variation within silences and hearing from the women in my pilot study, I failed to see that my silence was not always something negative, but something that allowed me to persist in higher education by staying silent for self-preservation (San Pedro, 201; Villalpando, 2003). With a better understanding of my own experiences and the experiences faced by the Women of Color I interviewed for my pilot study, I embarked on a line of research to better understand ways silence appears for Women of Color within academia to better contextualize some of the ambiguity that accompanies silence.

Purpose of the Study

My research aims to contribute to our understanding on the experiences and challenges Women of Color encounter while navigating doctoral programs. More specifically, my research objective is to highlight the experiences of Women of Color in doctoral programs to explore the silences they face in academic settings. This uncovers the many ways silence can be presented and gives some meaning to the ambiguity it often carries. Indeed, silence is very difficult to conceptualize due to its sheer ambiguity and the fact that it is often viewed negatively and as something that must be overcome. While silence can have negative consequences, though, framing silence as always being negative forces a dichotomy between silence and voice—voice equates empowerment while silence connotes oppression. Although this can be the case in certain situations, important meanings can be missed with such a simplistic generalization of silence. To bring attention to alternative and often overlooked strategies Women of Color utilize

to sustain themselves within this process, I focus on silence. Therefore, in order to reach a clearer understanding of silence, my inquiry is guided by the following questions:

1. What experiences of marginalization do Women of Color encounter during their doctoral education?
2. In what ways do Women of Color experience silence while navigating their doctoral education?
    a. How do they make sense of the silences that they encounter?

Through exploring silence, we can then continue developing ways to view silence for its complexities and see the ways it can benefit Women of Color in graduate programs as they navigate through academia. Recognizing silence as fluid can add to the existing discourse on the retention and equitable conditions for Women of Color in academia. Through these questions and exploration of the literature, I hope to add to the discourse on Women of Color in academia, particularly to the way in which we conceptualize and view silence in the academic space.

Conclusion

In this chapter I begin to introduce the setting where Women of Color find themselves once they enter higher education. I draw on the attrition and persistence of Women of Color in doctoral programs and in the professoriate, namely the marginalization that Women of Color encounter in academic settings within higher education (Moreno et al., 2013) and how silence can be a response to those incidents. In the following chapters, I provide a review of relevant scholarly literature, theoretical frameworks, methodology guiding my research, and findings addressing the research questions. In Chapter Two, I delve into the literature surrounding Women of Color in academic settings and focus on the marginalization Women of Color experience in academia as they navigate doctoral programs across different disciplines. Guided by the work of bell hooks (1990) on shifting the margins as a site of strength, I focus on

alternative strategies of silence Women of Color utilize to navigate doctoral programs. I provide an overview of bodies of work that conceptualize silence including detrimental silence, pedagogical silence, and beneficial silence (Burciaga, 2007; Malhotra & Carrillo Rowe, 2013; Montoya, 2000; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). Chapter Three outlines the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory (Yosso & Solórzano, 2005), and Women of Color epistemology that include Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000) and Chicana feminist theories (Anzaldúa, 2002; Delgado Bernal, 1998) that shape the research process. In Chapter Four I detail the qualitative methods and methodology of pláticas[1] and video testimonios[2] that drive the proposed research and center the voices of Women of Color. Chapter Five introduces my research collaborators through collaborator profiles that give insight into the intersecting identities. In Chapter Six, I discuss the educational journeys and the tools and tips my collaborators offer for future Women of Color Scholars. Chapter Seven details different forms of silence Women of Color experience in doctoral programs. Lastly, in Chapter Eight, I provide a review of the study, implications, limitations, and future directions of this work.

[1] Pláticas is a methodological approach grounded on Chicana Feminist Theory that allow for open, guided conversations with participants.

[2] Testimonios means testimonies in English, and it is a methodological approach where participants share their experiential knowledge in their own words.

CHAPTER TWO: INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE REVIEW

Often in academic research, when silence has been a topic of exploration, it has typically been framed with negative connotations. Silence has been viewed as detrimental to the academic advancement of communities of color and positioned as something that must be overcome to enact social change. While this rings true in certain circumstances, by always placing silence as an issue within pedagogical perspectives, we run the risk of interpreting silence as a deficit response (Foley, 1996; Lorde, 1977; Olson, 1978; Rich, 1979; Roberts, 2000). Only recently have some scholars begun to examine silence through a critical lens that grapples with the complexities of silence as not only something to overcome but as a location of positive possibilities (Burciaga, 2007; Malhotra & Carrillo Rowe, 2013; Montoya, 2000).

Leading with this work, I seek to further explore the possibilities silence can have within the context of academic settings for Women of Color navigating doctoral programs. First, the literature defines and locates the marginalized experiences Women of Color experience while in academic spaces. This is important to gain an understanding of the broad placement Women of Color find themselves when they enter higher education. Second, the literature reexamines marginality through the work of bell hooks (1990), explicitly by placing marginality as a site of strength. Although being part of a marginalized group can create terrible outcomes, it is important to view the persistence and perseverance of individuals within those groups. Women of Color have continued to carve out spaces within hostile academic environments, and shifting responses to marginalization through a lens of strength and resistance offers the possibility of uncovering underexplored strategies of survival. To culminate this literature review, I provide a deeper exploration of the different ways previous research has conceptualized silence. In doing so, I hope to highlight and deepen the conversation on silence in connection to the academic context.

Marginalized in Academia

Marginalization is perpetuated by individual acts, institutional structures, societal norms, and belief systems that often privilege the dominant culture while subjugating those outside of it (Burciaga, 2007; Crenshaw, 1991; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Watford et al., 2006). There is covert marginality and overt marginality that affect the experiences of Women of Color in academia. An overt form of marginality occurs through conscious actions that discriminate in direct ways (Burciaga, 2007; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). Overt acts of marginality are not socially acceptable. One example of an overt form of marginality is when a Woman of Color is the target of sexual comments or advances by graduate students or faculty (Vo, 2012). For the most part, unwarranted sexual advances and/or harassment are incidents that are socially and institutionally unacceptable where there are institutional policies in place to prevent such incidents from occurring. On the other hand, covert forms of marginality are frequently indirect and subtle acts that are discriminatory yet often considered acceptable. A covert form of marginality can be when Women of Color are told that their research is not "rigorous" or "objective" enough because they chose to do research with Communities of Color (Burciaga, 2007; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012).

As a result of its pervasiveness within institutional structures, Women of Color face marginalization through all levels of the education system—K-12, higher education, and in the professoriate level. While narrowing the focus to marginalization within higher education for Women of Color, much of the work brings attention to challenges faculty and undergraduate students face, whereas a much smaller portion addresses the experiences of graduate students. Works such as the anthology *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* "provide the framework for understanding the contradictory culture of academia" (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012, p. 1). This book is divided into five sections: (a)

general campus climate, (b) faculty-student relationships, (c) networks of allies, (d) social class in academia, and (e) tenure and promotion. Each of the sections provides insight into the different dimensions of issues affecting Women of Color in academia. Margaret Montoya (1994) shared her experience and reflection with putting on and taking off what she calls her *mascara,* or mask, to navigate life as a law student and later as a critical law scholar. Works such as Ong, Wright, Espinosa, and Orfield's (2011) article and Cantú's (2008) edited book, moreover, each illuminated the world in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) for Women of Color. Furthermore, Tara Watford's (2007) dissertation added to our understanding of the various forms of marginality Women of Color in doctoral programs experience.

Francisca de la Riva-Holly (2012) and Yolanda Flores Niemann (2012) named typical problems Women of Color Faculty face, such as being constantly challenged, presumed to be inferior, assumed to have acquired their position through affirmative action, and lacking the necessary qualifications. Women of Color are at a continuous state of marginality as a result of their race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, language, immigration or citizenship status, religion, age, ability, or nationality (Burciaga, 2007; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). Both faculty and graduate students alike must go against the stereotypical presumption that they are not competent as teachers, scholars, or students (Montoya, 2000; Niemann, 2012; Riva-Holly, 2012; Téllez, 2013).

Women of Color Faculty have a particularly difficult time when entering faculty positions as a result of poor social structures that suppress scholars who are not white men. As Women of Color pursue higher education or a professoriate position, they feel estranged from their departments due to the socialization process (Montoya, 1994). Women of Color are often tokenized and seen as the solution to critiques about a lack of diversity. By employing Women of

Color, institutions of higher education fall into the pitfall of tokenizing based on race and gender—the presence of Women of Color is deemed a means to meet gender and race/ethnic diversity (Niemann, 2012). Although tokenization may appear to be an opportunity for the development and growth of Women of Color in the academy, this tokenization can negatively impact the full participation of Women of Color in academic settings. In her chapter, Niemann illustrates the consequences and challenges Women of Color Faculty face when tokenized. She draws connections between the process of tokenization and the stigma that often follows for its association with affirmative action. In her work, Niemann recounts, "Once tagged as an affirmative action hire, colleagues may discount the qualifications of the applicant and assume she was selected primarily because of her minority status, thus leading to the presumption and stigma of incompetence" (p. 338). This same sentiment can be extended to what Women of Color in doctoral programs experience. Regardless of their title and expertise, Women of Color enter into academic spaces without the presumption of competence; rather, we have to continuously work hard to prove our competency (Cantú, 2008; Montoya, 1994; Niemann, 2012; Onwuachi-Willig, 2012).

Furthermore, experiences of marginalization are especially prevalent for Women of Color in the STEM fields. Women of Color are underrepresented across all fields of higher education, but this is especially true within STEM. Due to the lack of representation, Women of Color are led to feelings of isolation. An investigation of Women of Color in STEM graduate programs indicated that most of the difficulties they faced were due to isolation, racism, sexism, and relationships with faculty and peers, as opposed to barriers with access to financial aid (Brown, 2000 as cited in Ong et al., 2011). The literature describes the STEM campus climate as "chilly" towards Women of Color and demonstrates how they are treated differently by faculty and peers

in science (Cantú, 2008; Ong et al., 2011). Ong et al. (2011) explained this experience of marginality as the result of the "double bind" in which Women of Color find themselves. The double bind explains the unique challenges Women of Color face within multiple systems of oppression due to their race, ethnicity, and gender identities. A Black Woman in a computer science and engineering program expressed her experiences facing the "double bind": "As far as being a woman, I don't think they expected too many women to be in that area; as far as being a black woman, they don't expect you to be there at all" (p. 310). Additionally, Women of Color also reported feeling scrutinized and negatively judged by their peers, which further led to their feeling of isolation. If they did not prove themselves to be competent, this scrutinization meant exclusion, such as costing them the opportunity to join a study group and create community among their peers (Cantú, 2008; Ong et al., 2011).

Watford's (2007) dissertation, *Looking Beyond Equal Representation: Perspective of Gender Equity from the New Majority*, examines the fields in which women have begun to gain numeric majority, namely psychology, sociology, and education. Through her dissertation, Watford attempted to answer questions regarding the culture of academia and examines whether it has adequately responded to the needs of women in the fields in which they have become a numerical majority. According to Watford, although women were the numerical majority, they were still discouraged from pursuing a career in the professoriate due to their experiences as doctoral students. As a result of these forms of marginalization, Women of Color often battle feelings of isolation and self-doubt, but within these spaces, they have found ways to persist.

Margins as Strength

Women of Color are frequently left in the margins within academic settings, but as bell hooks (1990) offered, women who are in the margins can use this place to transform it into a place of possibility and a space of resistance. For hooks, the margins are a location where people

are placed *as well as* a location where people choose to stay. She shifts the narrative and highlights the agency Women of Color in the margins can call upon to situate themselves and their communities to new possibilities. Patricia Hill Collins (1992) added to the conceptualization of viewing marginality as a site of strength, where experience within the margins can be used to highlight and give insight that people outside the margins would have difficulty seeing. Both hooks and Collins express that living in the margins can nourish one's capacity for resistance. In turn, work that comes from the margins gives a particular perspective that challenges hegemonic discourse.

Similarly, Solórzano and Villalpando (1998) asserted, ". . . Students of Color can redefine their marginal location as a place where they can draw strength" (p. 217). They showcase the way undergraduate Students of Color redefine their marginal location and make it a source of empowerment as they reach their goals. Being in the margins can be used as a site of resistance that comes from the lived experiences and the different outlook from their social location. Other scholars have also identified ways marginalized communities have drawn on their marginalized identities as a source of strength. Within the STEM field, Ong et al. (2011) revealed how Women of Color drew on their marginalized identities as a source of self-empowerment that fueled their "inner fire" to retain themselves and complete their graduate studies. Women of Color would tap into their racial/ethnic and cultural identity to redirect their agency and use it as a driving force. Relatedly, Cantú's (2008) edited book, *Paths to Discovery: Autobiographies from Chicanas with Careers in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering*, centers the experiences of Chicanas in STEM careers to demonstrate how they used their location within the margins to create space within male-dominated fields. They drew from their position within the margins to create new

paths and new styles to overcome discrimination within their fields not only for themselves but for the Women of Color who would come after.

The anthology, *Presumed Incompetent* (Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012), allowed Women of Color Faculty to center themselves in the work and share their experiences from a place of empowerment in spite of—or actually because of—their marginalized identities. Drawing from their own lives, these Women of Color share their stories to create discourse that would not only address their lived realities but also affirm their location within the academy (Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Moffitt et al., 2012). Marginality can become a place of empowerment to remain in academia not only to reach career and academic goals but to also help others.

Conceptualizing Silence

Silence and silencing can occur inside academic settings due to the marginalization Women of Color encounter within higher education. Due to the significant work scholars have done to shift marginality as a source of strength, silence can instead be seen as a tool that Women of Color utilize to navigate the margins. As a result of the different ways silence manifests within the lives of Women of Color, it can become very difficult to identify whether the silence should be attributed towards something beneficial, detrimental, or somewhere in-between. The literature touching on silence often focuses on how silence is detrimental to the people utilizing it as a response to discrimination (Martinez-Vogt, 2015; Olsen, 1978; Olson, 1997). In response, some scholars have begun to explore such misinterpretations of silence within academic settings due to Western educational practices; more recent scholarship has identified how silence can be incorporated as a productive mode of learning (Foley, 1996; Roberts, 2000; San Pedro, 2015). Ultimately, there is research that places silence within a better light, where it can be seen as a strategic form of navigating oppressive structures such as higher education (Allen & Solórzano, 2001; Malhotra & Carrillo Rowe, 2013; Montoya, 1994, 2000;

Onwuachi-Willig, 2013). To further understand the complexities of silence, in the following section I explore the various ways silence has been conceptualized to grapple with the ambiguity it often presents. Through the review of the literature, I have organized the bodies of work under what I am labeling as detrimental silence, pedagogical silence, and beneficial silence.

Detrimental Silence

Much of the literature surrounding silence has been theorized through a political context within feminist work (Olsen, 1978; Rich, 1979). Such work put forth the notion of the need to speak in order to break the silence around the lives of women. Silence is not only recognized through what is not being said but also through who is noticed, and whose work is deemed publishable (Olsen, 1978; Rich, 1979). While early white feminist scholars like Olsen and Rich worked towards breaking the silence, their approaches often left out Women of Color by speaking for them. Additionally, this argument further silenced Women of Color because the approach to breaking the silence was done through the assumption that everyone's experience of silence was the same, when this not always the case. Women, particularly Women of Color, have varied experiences when it comes to instances of silence within academic settings. This is important to keep in mind when conceptualizing silence within the lives of Women of Color.

Women of Color such as Audre Lorde (1977) have also grappled with the meaning of silence that is ever-present in their lives and positioned it as something that must be overcome. In a speech, Lorde reflected:

> My silence had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you. But for every real word spoken, for every attempt I had ever made to speak those truths for which I am still seeking, I had made contact with other women while we examined the words to fit a world in which we all believed, bridging our differences. (pp. 88–89)

Lorde alluded to the fear of the process needed to transform silence into language and action to speak her truths. This can be seen as a call to action for other Women of Color to break their

silences and speak to “those truths” that will lead to change. Lorde is placing voice as the liberating action and silence as something needed to be broken. Similarly, Lorde regarded silence as a complicit response that would not protect you or others like yourself.

Silence is often equated to being oppressed, while speaking and finding voice is seen as a liberating and empowering action (Lorde, 1977; Malhotra & Carrillo Rowe, 2013; Olson, 1997). In her reflection, Lorde identified points in her life where she had used her voice and spoken her truth to identify societal issues. This led Lorde to be able to connect and build with other women to create societal change. Although the response of silence when faced with marginalization is not a viable option for Lorde, she acknowledges that some women employ it as a means of protection. It is important to note that during this time in her life, Lorde was grappling with her own mortality, which generated a sense of urgency to confront injustice through speaking.

Other scholars that have situated silence as a negative response have described it as complicit, forced, and a result of shame (Lorde, 1977; Martinez-Vogt, 2015; Olson, 1997; Onwuachi-Willig, 2013; Roberts, 2000). Similar to Lorde, Roberts (2000) identified silence as complicit when it is a response to hate speech. Although Roberts attempts to interpret silence as a paradox—it is both a product of oppression and a challenge to oppression—most of her piece identifies silence as something negative that must be overcome. Silence is seen as a response that idly allows for the continued marginalization of People of Color. Remaining silent when faced with oppressive situations, such as hate speech, is equivalent to being complicit to hegemonic structures in our society.

Another form of silence with a negative manifestation is when it is forced and placed upon Women of Color. When silence is not a choice, it is often a result of systemic issues. Emily Martinez-Vogt (2015) focused on the silencing faced by Latinas in community college. She

reported that Latinas in community college responded with silence when experiencing racism and stereotyping on campus. This can become an issue because ". . . silence becomes a mechanism by which racism and stereotypes fester by default . . ." (p. 3). Although racism and stereotypes are prevalent within educational institutions, Martinez-Vogt situates silence as being a vehicle that allows racism and stereotypes to perpetuate. Similar to the experiences Latinas face in community college, Montoya (2000) identifies Women of Color as having silence imposed on them. In her work, Montoya focused on the experiences of Women of Color in law school. Montoya explains the way silencing occurs in the classroom as a result of the institutional interest to protect hegemony. The interest of hegemony drives the classroom, and as a result, when Women of Color hold different views from the "norm," their contributions are not valued (Montoya, 2000). This form of silence also emerges as a result of a hostile environment. For Women of Color in higher education the environment is often hostile due to the invested interest of protecting dominant culture. The devaluation of Women of Color views and contributions then leads to them feeling silenced. Women of Color do not feel safe to speak and fear that if they speak, they will be deemed incompetent due to their differential views and experiences (Allen & Solórzano 2001; Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Yosso, 2006).

Manifestations of silence within academic settings tend to focus on the pedagogical implications silence has for students in the classroom. When instruction is met with responses of silence by the students, the blame is often placed on the student. The reasons for their silence become attributed to their lack of understanding or engagement with the material. If they are silent, it is because they are not invested or academically ready to engage with the material. Yet this perception is the result of misinterpreting the silences due to Western practices and narrow ideas of how students should participate in classrooms (Roberts, 2000; Sue et al., 2007). In

particular, Students of Color are often the ones affected by this narrow view of classroom participation.

Pedagogical Silence

Contrary to ascribing silence as a negative response within academic settings, Foley (1996) problematized the negative assumptions attached to silence utilized by Native American youth. Much of the literature he read "documented how white teachers are quick to read the silence of Indians as evidence of low motivation, lack of competence in English, or worse still, low cognitive ability" (p. 80). Reading silence in this way is deficit and has led to the further marginalization of Indigenous youth. San Pedro (2015) similarly demonstrated how Indigenous students use silence as a shield to protect themselves and exercise their agency while learning. Particular Communities of Color hold cultural values that place silence as important to the learning process (Sue et al., 2007). Understanding silence as something only negative disproportionately affects People of Color. When evaluation measures narrow academic understanding and heavily weighs verbal participation for grades, Students of Color are placed at a disadvantage. Wing Sue et al. shared that Asian students felt forced to conform to Western norms and values such as speaking more in class although such behavior violated their cultural upbringing. This speaks to the larger issue of making education and learning assessments more culturally responsive in order to not miss the different ways students learn.

In a piece titled, "Between Speaking and Silence: A Study of Quiet Students," Mary Reda (2009) urged instructors to break deficit views of understanding students' silences as only a result of failing to understand. Instead, Reda called for instructors to view different expressions of learning that include silence. Reda placed silence as a productive mode of learning that allows students to pay more attention through critical observations.

Similarly, Montoya (2000) situated silence as an important pedagogical tool. Her work identifies the ways professors in law school could normalize different types of communication styles and silence within their instruction. Across disciplines and academic levels, the implementation of silence as a pedagogical tool can help students who utilize different modes of learning. Certain students engage in the learning process through silence and communicate engagement nonverbally. Additionally, when implementing silence as a pedagogical tool, it allows for the normalization of moments of silence within academic instruction and can then allow students time to process the material. Indeed, having even a few extra seconds to respond to an in-class question can help a student build the courage to speak in class.

Although literature highlights the importance of implementing silence into pedagogical practices, not all are in agreement to the benefits this would have for Students of Color. Roberts (2000) also explored silence within pedagogical processes, but pushes back on silence being viewed as a beneficial pedagogical tool or means of resistance for Students of Color. Roberts took a cautionary stand and speaks against a pedagogy of silence because she believes that many Students of Color who do not speak have something to say but are too intimidated to do so. For Roberts, engaging in a pedagogy of silence would only enable students' fears to continue and become detrimental to their academic development. Roberts said, "Our goal for these students of color should be to help them speak up more rather than encourage them to remain silent" (p. 354). This notion connects back to the previous discussion on situating silence as something to overcome. It is important to offer both sides of the argument because it provides a clear picture of the messiness that comes from attempting to understand silence.

Beneficial Silence

Women of Color and other marginalized communities write about the importance of overcoming their silence in order to liberate not only themselves but others as well (Malhotra &

Carrillo Rowe, 2013). While breaking the silence may be one form of liberating marginalized communities, a dichotomy is created between voice and silence that views silence as oppressive (Olson, 1997). Placing silence opposite to liberation presents voice and the process of liberation as linear instead of cyclical. In their anthology, *Silence, Feminism, Power: Reflection at the Edge of Sound*, Malhotra and Carrillo Rowe (2013) compiled a body of work questioning the silence and voice dichotomy. They examine silence as a space of possibilities, as a space to breathe, a space to reflect and to heal. Their book is organized into four parts: (a) transformative silence: intersectionality, privilege, alliances; (b) learning to listen: academia, silence and resistance; (c) recovering silence: community, family, intimacy; and (d) legacies of silence: memory and healing power. They write, "We theorize silence as a space for fluidity, non-linear, and as sacred, internal space that provided a refute- especially for nondominant people" (p. 2). Their analysis breaks from the dichotomy and explores the fluidity that silence carries. Similarly, work that explores the positive uses of silence often describes it as strategic, defensive, supportive, and deliberate.

Montoya (1994) also conceptualized the manifestations of silence among Women of Color in law school. In her earlier work she reflects on how law school's normalization of "rational objectivity trumped emotional subjectivity" (p. 25) had caused her to use silence after an incident where she spoke with conviction and emotion and was met with disregard. But instead of being heard when she spoke about issues being overlooked in class, classmates, professors, and administrators devalued and ignored her contribution. This response later plagued Montoya with enough self-doubt that she questioned her position within the program. In order to continue moving forward, Montoya navigated using her mascara and silence to accommodate their expectations of people speaking in the space—she used this rational

objectivity to retain herself in the program. She shared, “Speaking out assumes prerogative. Speaking out is an exercise of privilege. Speaking out takes practice. Silence ensures invisibility. Silence provides protection. Silence masks” (p. 26). Montoya identified speaking and being heard as a privilege that does not come easily and must be practiced. Using silence as a protective mask allowed her to move within spaces.

Later, Montoya (2000) continued to explore the ways in which Women of Color in law school employ silence. Montoya theorized how silence functioned as a centrifugal force that decentralized the power and privilege produced by discourse grounded in White supremacy. Her work demonstrated how law students used silence to convey their viewpoints, destabilized the power dynamics that often pressures them to assimilate, and challenged traditional legal discourse that persistently places them in the margins. In this case silence is performative, calculated, and purposeful to communicate without words their opposition to oppressive, normalized, and hegemonic law practices.

Others have continued to build on viewing silence as purposeful to show how People of Color utilize strategic silence (Allen & Solórzano, 2001; Burciaga, 2007; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Allen and Solórzano define this type of silence as choosing to be silent at a point in time so their voices are heard at another time. Women of Color can employ strategic silence to remain silent and strategically speak on issues they feel are important. Researchers have demonstrated how Women of Color stay silent as a strategy for being heard in white, male-dominating spaces and not being seen as an angry Person of Color (Burciaga, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Silence can be stronger than words when utilized on their own terms (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). This form of silence distinguishes between being silenced and choosing to stay silent, as well as highlighting that the amount of time spent talking

does not mean that they will be heard. Duncan (2001) further problematized the assumed relationships between speaking and being heard: "One may speak and simply not be listened to, understood, or taken seriously" (p. 29). Duncan also brings attention to how Women of Color utilize silence to make their voices heard when choosing to speak.

Moreover, silence can be something that Women of Color choose to preserve their well-being. When navigating hostile environments, Women of Color can choose to stay silent and not engage in heated conversations when they do not have the energy to do so (Allan & Solórzano, 2001; Montoya, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). A clear example of engaging in silence as a form of self-preservation can be when a Woman of Color decides not to call out people in a classroom voicing problematic or deficit assumptions about communities of color (Allan & Solórzano, 2000; Montoya, 1994). These conversations take a toll on Women of Color—rather than confront every problematic comment, they choose when to speak and when to remain silent in order to preserve their energy and continue with their educational journey. The usage of silence as preservation can also be a result of racial battle fatigue, which entails needing time to heal and reenergize before continuing to speak in hostile environments (Villalpando, 2003). Staying silent ensures that Women of Color stay healthy and continue in academia as either a graduate student or faculty member. When looking at Women of Color Faculty, this type of silence can present itself when they first enter as junior faculty (Onwuachi-Willig, 2012).

From the understanding of margins as a site of resistance, Montoya (2000) also spoke to silencing being reclaimed by Women of Color and using it as a tool of resistance. She further explained how "silence can disturb and disrupt the linguistic hegemony" (p. 266) when Women of Color hold their silence on occasions when they are expected to speak. An example of this type of silence appears when Women of Color are expected to speak on issues about race and

held as the spokesperson for their whole community. When responding to this interaction, some Women of Color choose to stay silent and not meet the unreasonable expectations of speaking for an entire group. Countering hegemonic practices of only valuing the contributions of Women of Color when speaking about race, Women of Color who practice silence disrupt hegemonic practices and the natural course of instruction. This strategic use of silence can be interpreted as an act of resistance because of the disruptions to hegemonic practices in academic settings, and it may also bring attention to the unconscious oppressive practices.

Summary

There is much ambiguity in the way in which silence is manifested in academic spaces. Although it has begun to be theorized, there is much more that we can learn from its complexities. Montoya (2000) conceptualized how silence can help Women of Color navigate academia, as well as how silence can be used to marginalize Women of Color. Montoya grappled with demonstrating the differentiation between silence and silencing, where the former is a choice and the latter is forced. Montoya further problematized the understanding of silence within academic settings by emphasizing the ambiguity of silence through the distinction between silence and silencing. She displays how an experience of silence can be both something Women of Color choose and something that is imposed on them.

It is necessary to continue exploring the meaning behind the silences that Women of Color utilize while in academic settings. The recent research on the experiences of Women of Color Faculty is very telling of the way in which they too face silence (Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012). Although the literature about Women of Color Faculty can be similar to the experiences that doctoral students encounter, there is still a need for more work focused on graduate students' experiences with silence. With this research I hope to further identify and name the silences that are simultaneously ever-present and ignored in doctoral programs for Women of Color.

CHAPTER THREE: CENTERING WOMEN OF COLOR THROUGH CRITICAL FRAMEWORKS

To further explore the manifestation of silence in the lives of Women of Color navigating doctoral programs, it is important to centralize their intersectional identities within my work. For that reason, this research is guided by both Critical Race Theory (CRT) and a Women of Color Epistemology (WCE). The Women of Color Epistemology is composed of Black Feminist Thought and Chicana Feminist Theories to strengthen the gender lens of this research's critical raced-gendered framework. Critical Race Theory serves as an entry point to centralize the racial and ethnic identities of Women of Color, while Women of Color Epistemology further centralizes the gender identities of Women of Color in doctoral programs. Each framework provides tools to understand the multifaced experiences Women of Color bring to academia.

Most importantly, CRT and WCE assist with the tools necessary to prevent homogenizing the experiences they bring to the research. In this chapter, I introduce the different components of the theoretical framework guiding my dissertation. I begin with Critical Race Theory, followed by Women of Color Epistemology. I discuss Black Feminist Thought and Chicana Feminist theoretical concepts of academic nepantlera,[1] nos/otras,[2] and transformative ruptures. These complementary frameworks provide the foundation and tools needed to learn from the experiences of Women of Color in doctoral programs.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) began as a sub-field of Critical Legal Studies in the mid-

[1] Nepantlera is a term coined by Anzaldúa (2002), deriving from the Nahuatl word Nepantla, meaning in the middle or in-between-ness. Nepantlera was used to conceptualize the experiences of Chicana women moving within multiple and often conflicting belief systems.

[2] Nos/otras is a concept developed by Anzaldúa (2002) and Keating (2006) to demonstrate the promise for coalition work. Nosotras is a Spanish word meaning "us," but with the backslash in the middle the word is separated as "us" and "others."

1970s. A group of lawyers, activists, and legal scholars across the country came together to discuss the lack of advancements the Civil Rights Era had promised, and they sought to find a new language to describe the continued oppression and methods to continue moving forward (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Due to the frustration, Taylor (2009) recounted, ". . . a group of legal scholars including Derrick A. Bell, Charles Lawrence, Richard Delgado, Lani Guinier, and Kimberle Crenshaw began to openly criticize the role of law in the construction and maintenance of racially based social and economic oppression" (p. 2). Critical Legal Studies pioneered the assessment that U.S. law and legal system establishes and perpetuates unequal power relations in our society (Taylor, 2009).

In 1989, the field of Critical Legal Studies first shifted to Critical Race Theory because although Critical Legal Studies had included a critique of mainstream legal ideology, it still fell short of including race and racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Through that first CRT workshop in 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams were among the legal scholars who created the language examining the prevalence of systemic racism that is used in CRT (Taylor, 2009). Conversely, CRT centralizes the implications of race and everyday racism, and stresses the need to understand the ways that racially minoritized communities experience systematic racial stratification (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Moreover, a CRT framework utilizes race and racism to examine social structures, practices, and discourse that affect People of Color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Additionally, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) further connected how the centering of race can be used to explain the educational inequities in our society. This theoretical framework was linked to education with the understanding that societal racism is steeped within education and must be analyzed (Bell, 1989; Leonardo, 2013).

CRT is an interdisciplinary framework that challenges dominant and deficit ideologies

and practices that disproportionately disenfranchise People of Color (Solórzano, 1998). The framework of CRT aids research by challenging educational practices and policies that have historically, systematically, and institutionally marginalized Students of Color. In accordance with Solórzano (1998) and Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001), the five tenets of CRT in education are: (a) centrality and intersectionality of race and racism; (b) challenging dominant ideologies; (c) commitment to social justice; (d) centrality of experiential knowledge; and (e) utilizing interdisciplinary perspectives. Together, the five CRT tenets guide educational research to challenge the dominant discourse on race and racism to find alternative ways of knowing. The tenets are crucial to my research as they center the lives of Women of Color to explore the silences they experience as they navigate doctoral education. In the following section, I expand on the meaning of each of the tenets, and explain how they directly connect to my research process.

From its origins, CRT was built upon the belief that race and racism are prevalent and permanent in our society (Bell, 1989). The first CRT tenet—the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism—allows scholars to center the role of race and racism in the lives of People of Color across social institutions. With this tenet, CRT calls for the examination of how the social construction of race comes into play in the everyday lives of People of Color. Although race is central within this tenet, CRT also acknowledges other forms of minoritized identities including gender, sexuality, and income. In this way, CRT recognizes race and racism beside other forms of oppression that remain important to the study. While looking at how Women of Color experience marginality in academia, it is important to begin with this tenet because academia is a place where race is made and maintained (Leonardo, 2012). Additionally, this tenet also allows us to focus on the intersections with other forms of subordination related to race and racism, such

as gender, class, sexuality, language, culture, immigrant status, phenotype, accent and surname, and more (Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

As the second tenet of CRT, challenging dominant ideology directly addresses discourses that claim objectivity, meritocracy, and apolitical stances. In connection to education, this tenet counters the widespread ideology of access to equal educational opportunity and the view of education as the great equalizer. These romanticized ways of thinking contribute to the hidden ways white hegemony is maintained in social institutions like education. By challenging dominant ideologies that hide self-interest and power of dominant groups in society, the marginalization that Women of Color encounter in academia can be explored. Challenging dominant ideology is incredibly important to speak to the marginalization that occurs in the academy, where the blame for underrepresentation is placed on Women of Color.

CRT's third tenet of commitment to social justice upholds CRT's main drive to connect research into action. More specifically, CRT research aims to work towards eliminating all forms of oppression across race, gender, sexuality, and other marginalized identities, as well as empower historically marginalized communities. The commitment to social justice tenet recognizes learning and teaching as a political act (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). In particular, the low representation of Women of Color in doctoral programs is a social justice issue that needs more attention. The main focus of this work is to learn more about the challenges Women of Color face as they pursue doctoral degrees to increase access and retention. Additionally, with the close examination of often-overlooked forms of navigation such as silence, this work hopes to empower Women of Color, who have historically been marginalized in academia.

The centrality of experiential knowledge, CRT's fourth tenet, centers the experiences of

People of Color as a valid source of knowledge when conducting and analyzing research. CRT challenges traditional notions of objectivity in research that dismiss the strength and contribution of Communities of Color. Instead, it highlights the experiential knowledge that People of Color carry as important and valuable to the research process of examining race and racism in educational research. CRT identifies experiential knowledge as historical, collective, and individual knowledge that is available in forms such as storytelling, family histories, and testimonios. This guiding principle is heavily present throughout the research process of my dissertation. I aim to center the experiences and voices of Women of Color through the methodological approach of testimonios and pláticas. The voices and experiences of the Women of Color in my dissertation give the most insight to the direction and analysis of this work.

Lastly, an interdisciplinary perspective, the fifth tenet, allows for an interdisciplinary approach drawing on multiple disciplines (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT utilizes interdisciplinary knowledge to better analyze and understand the complex ways race and racism are represented in social institutions. As my research focuses on Women of Color, I draw from gender and ethnic studies disciplines for Black Feminist Thought and Chicana Feminist Theories to better contextualize and understand their experiences with silence in academic settings.

Introduction to Women of Color Epistemology

Drawing from prominent Women of Color scholarship, a Women of Color Epistemology (WCE) helps to further center the gender identity of Women of Color. This brings a critical raced-gendered epistemology that recognizes Women of Color as holders and creators of knowledge. Epistemology, or systems of knowing, is connected to worldviews people hold based on the conditions in which they live and learn (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Delgado Bernal (2002) described how critical raced-gendered epistemologies "directly challenge the broad range of currently popular paradigms, from positivism to constructivism and liberal feminist to

postmodernism, which draw from narrow foundations of knowledge that is based on social, historical, and cultural experiences of Anglos" (p. 106). Raced-gendered epistemologies emerge from different social, cultural, and political history than the dominant race (Delgado Bernal, 1998, 2002). A WCE carries ideologies from Critical Race Feminism (Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2016), as well as both Black Feminist (Collins, 2002) and Chicana Feminist (Delgado Bernal, 1998) literatures. WCE expands on the intersecting identities of Women of Color and rejects blanket statements and ideologies that homogenize their experiences. Furthermore, WCE centers the experiences of Women of Color to document experiences of conflict, survival, and resistance (Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2016). This epistemology directly connects and supports the research purpose of uncovering tools that Women of Color utilize, such as silence, to navigate doctoral education. It is imperative that I actively honor the different identities of the women within the work to prevent homogenization. More specifically, this research focused on the teaching of Black Feminist Thought, and Chicana Feminist Theories of academic nepantleras, nos/otras, and transformative ruptures.

Black Feminist Thought

I begin with Black Feminist Thought as part of the Women of Color Epistemology to center and honor the foundational work that Black Women have created. They laid much of the foundational knowledge that has been used to develop critical raced-gendered frameworks. Black Feminist Thought emerged from the necessity to reclaim Black Women's intellectual contributions that had long been forgotten and ignored in U.S. society. Collins (2000) theorized that the intentional erasure of Black Women had been done by design. The long history of erasure is due to the economic, political, and ideological oppression Black Women have faced in society. As a response, Black Feminist Thought is utilized to create social thought, reclaim subjugated knowledge, reinterpret intellectual discourse, and challenge who is viewed as

intellectuals (Collins, 2000). Black Feminist Thought engages in creating social thought that opposes oppression and brings to light their intersectional oppressions.

Another purpose of Black Feminist Thought is to reclaim Black Women's work that has been forgotten or denied, such as the work that Marilyn Richardson (1996 as cited in Collins, 2000) did to bring to light the writing and speeches of Maria Stewart, who had publicly critiqued the treatment of Black Women and shed light on political issues in the 1800s. Reinterpreting work through new theoretical frameworks is another characteristic of Black Feminist Thought. Traditional theoretical frameworks typically displace marginalized groups and often do not capture the complexities within the lives of Black Women. Lastly, Black Feminist Thought challenges traditional ideas of who are viewed as intellectuals and creators of knowledge. Formal education or degrees are not necessary to engage in creating knowledge. Similar to Critical Race Theory, this characteristic of Black Feminist Thought calls for the centering of experiential knowledge from marginalized communities within knowledge production.

This theoretical framework was created to place Black Women at the center to examine the intersectional oppression they experience due to racism, sexism, and other systems of subordination. Collins (1986) explained how their intersecting identities allow Black Women to gain a unique standpoint on their own oppression. One way Black Women gain this unique vantage point can be explained through the concept of the outsider-within. The term outsider-within is defined as a social location of a marginalized person entering dominant spaces such a higher education. In entering these spaces, for instance, Black Women can view the contradictions between the ideologies and actions of the dominant group. They can see and experience the contradiction between the belief of U.S. society describing education as the great equalizer, but actively engaging in exclusionary practices. Collins (2000) stated, "being in an

outsider-within location can foster new angels of vision on oppression" (p. 11). Centering the experiences of Black Women and other Women of Color in doctoral programs as outsider-within allows a critique of educational institutions. The critique can lead to offering insight on the prevailing problems in higher education and move towards a more just system.

Black Feminist Thought is essential to this research as it highlights the knowledge that Black Women have produced that has helped identify the specific standpoint and consciousness Black Women have within U.S. society. This perspective also acknowledges the foundational knowledge of Black Women that not only helps center the lived realities of Black Women, but other Women of Color as well. As a Chicana researching Women of Color, I worry about misappropriating this body of work. Black Feminist Thought was produced by and for Black Women, and I do utilize this framework with caution. Collins (2000) offered some guidance on this dilemma when describing a main characteristic trait of Black Feminist Thought as lying in "its commitment to justice, both for U.S. Black women as a collectivity and for that of other similarly oppressed groups" (p. 9). Although Black Women and other Women of Color do not hold the exact same experiences, they do face similar forms of oppression under White supremacy. My research aims to uncover the overlooked experiences and navigational tools of Women of Color in doctoral programs through a broader commitment to justice.

As I choose to utilize this foundational knowledge as part of my theoretical framework, I listen to the critiques Black Women have given to the depoliticizing and misuse of Black Feminist ideas in academia. Collins has attributed some of the intellectual suppression of Black Women to the symbolic inclusion that seemingly welcomes their work, despite not welcoming the bodies of actual Black Women. In this research, however, Black Women are not only included ideologically but as part of the whole research process. Black Feminist Thought and its

concept of the outsider-within help centralize the educational lived realities of Women of Color who encounter marginalization when navigating doctoral programs. Putting the lives of Women of Color in the center of the research helped identify their navigational strategies.

Chicana Feminist Theories

Chicana Feminist Theories challenge the gaps of traditional scholarship and allow for the examination of race, class, gender, and sexuality (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Delgado Bernal et al., 2006). Chicana Feminist Theories are guided by decolonial processes throughout all aspects of the research process. Similar to CRT, Chicana Feminist Theories challenge traditional research by pushing back on notions of objectivity and regard participants as co-constructors of knowledge (Delgado Bernal et al., 2006). Chicana Feminist Theories offer different ways of conducting counter-hegemonic work, unsettling dominant models of analyses, creating decolonizing methodologies such as testimonio, auto narratives, and counter-stories by building upon Chicanas' ways of knowing and knowledge production (Delgado Bernal et al., 2006). Through that function, Chicana Feminist Theories center the knowledge that marginalized women carry to expose experiences that are not visible from traditional standpoints (Delgado Bernal et al., 2006). Although the principles that underline Chicana Feminist Theories are typically utilized for research exclusively about Chicanas, I adapted it to my research that also includes other Women of Color. I proceeded with caution so as to not essentialize and/or misrepresent any of the Women of Color I worked with.

Furthermore, I also utilize Chicana Feminist Theories as a location to position myself and identify my standpoint as a Chicana Scholar conducting this line of research. Through much reflexivity of my own experience and positionality, I advance to examine the experiences of Women of Color in academia. In particular, I utilize the concepts of nepantleras to illustrate the multi-dimensional experiences of Women of Color as they navigate within the margins, the in-

betweens, of academia. The Chicana Feminist Theories concepts of nos/otras demonstrated how Women of Color come together without erasing their individual identities. Lastly, I utilize the theoretical concept of transformative ruptures to highlight the locations of conflict in academic settings that may result in opportunities for transformation.

Academic Nepantleras

Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) coined the term nepantlera in her seminal work, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, to articulate the messy and conflicting experiences she encountered as a Chicana. Nepantlera derives from the Nahuatl word, nepantla, meaning in the middle or in-between. In her work, Anzaldúa (1987, 2002) positioned nepantleras as people within thresholds that move among multiple worlds and refuse to align themselves with any one individual, group, or belief system. This can be painful and difficult because nepantleras often find themselves straddling conflicting worlds that can lead to feelings of isolation, misunderstanding, and rejection (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2006). Although being a nepantlera can be difficult, the ability of moving among different worlds opens the possibility of developing innovative perspectives with transformative potential.

The liminal space in which nepantleras find themselves can be linked to the in-between-ness many Women of Color feel as they step into academia (Anzaldúa, 2002, 2005; Keating, 2006). When Women of Color enter academia, they find themselves both within and outside of academia due to their intersecting identities. Nepantla is a process that occurs during stages of transition and destabilization, and can describe issues related to identity and epistemology (Keating, 2006). The destabilization or choque, as in a sudden jolt, can be caused by unexpected incidents due to conflicting ideologies. An example of a choque can be the destabilization Women of Color experience in higher education after facing remarks cloaked with

microaggressions in a classroom setting. Often, Women of Color in academia are in a state of nepantla because they are part of academia facing these choques, but also because they become bridges between academia and community; neither fully part of the academy or part of the community but a link that holds them together (Anzaldúa, 2002). This bridge can be through research, work, or physical representation of the "other" in the academy. As the people in the thresholds who navigate the in-between of academia, Women of Color are nepantleras who undergo discomfort as they face structural challenges. Although nepantleras experience discomfort and pain, through this newfound perspective, transformation can occur in nepantla (Keating, 2006). By grappling with the ambiguity and discomfort of silence and approaching Women of Color as academic nepantleras, I aim to clear the path to discover navigational tools that are seldom explored.

Nos/otras

In order to explore silence for its positive and negative possibilities within the lives of various Women of Color, the concept of nos/otras is very important (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2006). Anzaldúa and Keating demonstrated the individuality among People of Color and the promise of coalitions and coming together through nos/otras. Nosotras means us in Spanish, but the word becomes separated into nos, meaning us, and otras, meaning others, with the slash in the middle. Although separated, the "us" and "others" are kept together though nosotras and transform the word to also mean "all of us" coming together. Anzaldúa explained nos/otras as holding an alliance between the two groups of us and others, while at the same time honoring people's differences (Anzaldúa, 2002). The slash in in the middle of nos/otras serves as a bridge and promise of nosotras, of us, coming together one day. The concept of no/otras does not represent a unified set of ideals or experiences and instead embraces the contradictions.

Anzaldúa's conceptualization of no/otras leans on an intersectional approach, but it strives to create a coalition based on those intersecting identities (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981).

Keating (2006) explained further: "nos/otras offers a unique way to discuss commonalities among differently situated individuals and peoples" (p. 10). Nos/otras provides a platform from which to work from our similarities but also acknowledge our differences. By using the Chicana Feminist Theory of nos/otras in research involving Women of Color who are not all Chicanas, it is important for me to be cognizant of the similarities as well as the differences within experiences. Nos/otras allows for the coming together of Women of Color from different standpoints and experiences. For this dissertation, the concept of nos/otras is so central to preventing the homogenizing of all Women of Color that it is part of the title. Nos/otras serves as a visual reminder and a way to operationalize the commonalities and differences within my collaborators.

Nos/otras also touches on the insider/outsider positionality of researchers. As a Woman of Color conducting research with other Women of Color, I may sometimes feel as an insider to the community, but as a researcher that also positions me as an outsider. The insider/outsider, us/them dichotomies are continually present as scholars and researchers (Saavedra & Nymark, 2008). Even when employing methodologies such as testimonios and pláticas as a means to uphold the researcher to engage in counter-hegemonic critical research, Saavedra and Nymark cautioned researchers to engage in critical reflective work. They conclude that each researcher still has the colonizing potential due to the location and positionally within Western institutions in which it is being conducted. For that reason, I must be "constantly engaged in a process where first we must continuously be self-reflective of our participation in dualistic thinking" (Elenes, 2001, p. 633). I see the risk of perpetuating hegemonic work when engaging in research that

examines the experiences of silence for Women of Color, but the concept of nos/otras reminds me to continue engaging in work that is aligned against that. The last thing I want to do is further marginalize Women of Color by misrepresenting their experiences.

Transformative Ruptures

Delgado Bernal and Alemán (2017) conceptualized transformative ruptures as ". . . those incidents, interactions, experiences, and movements that expose and interrupt pervasive coloniality and structural inequities" (p. 5). They continue by explaining how the exposures and cracks the transformative ruptures produce, offer opportunities and possibility for change. Transformative ruptures are a way to understand the process that attempts to destabilize structures of inequity. Building on Anzaldúa's notions of nepantla and choques, transformative ruptures emerge when clashes arise between discourse, ideologies, and politics (Anzaldúa, 2002; Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017). When these clashes occur, transformative ruptures offer the possibility of growth within the cracks just like Duncan-Andrade (2009) talked about Students of Color growing like roses on concrete. Despite the pervasiveness of racist institutional inequities within our society, through transformative ruptures there is hope "and understanding that transformative rupture can multiply, breading coalitional resistance and progression towards more equitable and just policies, practices, and outcomes (Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017, p. 29). Similarly, Women of Color who encounter clashes, or choques, as they navigate doctoral programs, silence and other responses to marginality may result in transformative rupture and opportunities for change.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the frameworks of Critical Race Theory and epistemological approaches of Women of Color through Black Feminist Thought and Chicana Feminist Theories. Connecting these theoretical frameworks allows me to center the lives of Women of Color and

acknowledge their lived experiences as a unique standpoint to understand oppression in the academy. With these critical theories and frameworks, I can better understand the complex identities and responses Women of Color in doctoral programs employ to survive their program. In this chapter, I began to connect my research to the instruments and ideologies within these theoretical frameworks. Guided by Critical Race Theory and Women of Color Epistemology, in the following chapter I outline the research design used to collect and analyze my data in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter details the research design my study utilized to examine the academic lived experiences of Women of Color in doctoral programs. I explain my recruitment strategies, research collaborators, the tools used to collect the data, and my data analysis. Within my description of the data collection tools, I discussed the methodological underpinnings of pláticas and video testimonios, and how they are utilized in this research. Lastly, in this section, I continue to discuss my positionality as a Woman of Color conducting this research.

As a reminder, my guiding research questions are:

1. What experiences of marginalization do Women of Color encounter during their doctoral education?
2. In what ways do Women of Color experience silence while navigating their doctoral education?
    a. How do they define the silences that they encounter?

This study seeks to bring attention to the experiences of Women of Color in doctoral programs to uncover navigational tools that are often overlooked. Similarly, silence is an occurrence that many Women of Color experience that is not often studied or viewed for its intricacies, and for that reason, it is a significant focus of this research. The unit of analysis of this research are the experiences of marginalization and the silences within those experiences. To expand, the first research question pursues a broader spectrum of the experiences of marginalization that Women of Color encounter while in doctoral programs and how they navigate these challenges. The second research question centers on silence in their navigational experiences. This question is vital to my research because of my aim to problematize the often negative attributes given to silence and my attempt to understand its complexities. Additionally, the sub-question to the second research question serves to further center the voices of Women of Color by providing the

space for them to name their silences. Due to the ambiguous nature of silence, the best way to understand the silences that Women of Color experience in doctoral programs is to have them define how it emerges and how they utilize it. By highlighting the challenges Women of Color face and how they navigate them, this research brings attention to methods that can better support the retention and success of Women of Color in doctoral programs.

I want to note that guided by the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory and Women of Color Epistemology, I use the term research collaborators instead of participants. This study relies on the voices and experiences of Women of Color in doctoral programs, and the term collaborators more accurately represents their contribution to this work. By engaging in this practice, I reinforce the notions of viewing the experiential knowledge of those at the center of the research as an important driving force within the research process. Furthermore, utilizing the term research collaborators challenges the researcher/participant hierarchies and instead views those at the center of the research as co-constructors of knowledge.

Recruitment Strategies

To recruit collaborators, I used snowball and convenience sampling. Recruitment started in one higher education institution, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), but was later extended to other institutions across the United States. The initial recruitment site, UCLA, was suitable for this investigation because it is a research institution that offers 84 doctoral programs. The scope was later expanded to include Women of Color attending doctoral programs in other institutions due to the global pandemic, shifting the data collection process virtually. Adhering to social distancing protocols, I was able to work with Women of Color attending doctoral programs across different institutions in the United States. To recruit, I reached out to my previously established networks and sent emails to department list-serves, school organizations, and social media targeting graduate students in doctoral programs. As a

graduate student in the education fields engaged in interdisciplinary work, I have frequently been in social science, education, and humanity spaces and have forged networks and communities there.

In the initial steps for recruitment, I reached out to those networks and sent my recruitment flyer (see Appendix A). In addition, I also contacted Student Affairs Officers and Graduated Advisors across departments and asked them to share my recruitment flyer with their students on their list-serves. Without having a pre-established network in STEM, in addition to reaching out to Student Affairs offices, I also sent recruitment emails to school organizations such as the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), and the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanic and Native Americans in Sciences (SACNAS). AISES aims to increase the representation of American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, First Nations, and other indigenous peoples of North America in STEM through its different chapters. SACNAS is similar to AISES but targets both Chicana/o Latina/o and Native American students in the sciences.

Lastly, the recruitment strategy that generated the most engagement and recruitment was the use of social media. Using Facebook and Instagram, I created a public post that included the recruitment flyer and asked for help targeting potential collaborators. These public posts made it easy for others to share, and I was able to reach many online spaces and groups dedicated to Women of Color in academia. Through the recruitment efforts, I received 75 responses to the survey/intake form, which I detail in the next section, that aided the selection of research collaborators.

Recruitment Flyer and Survey/Intake Form

The survey/intake form assisted in the recruitment efforts and gave a sense of what Women of Color were experiencing in a broader capacity. The flyer used to recruit included a

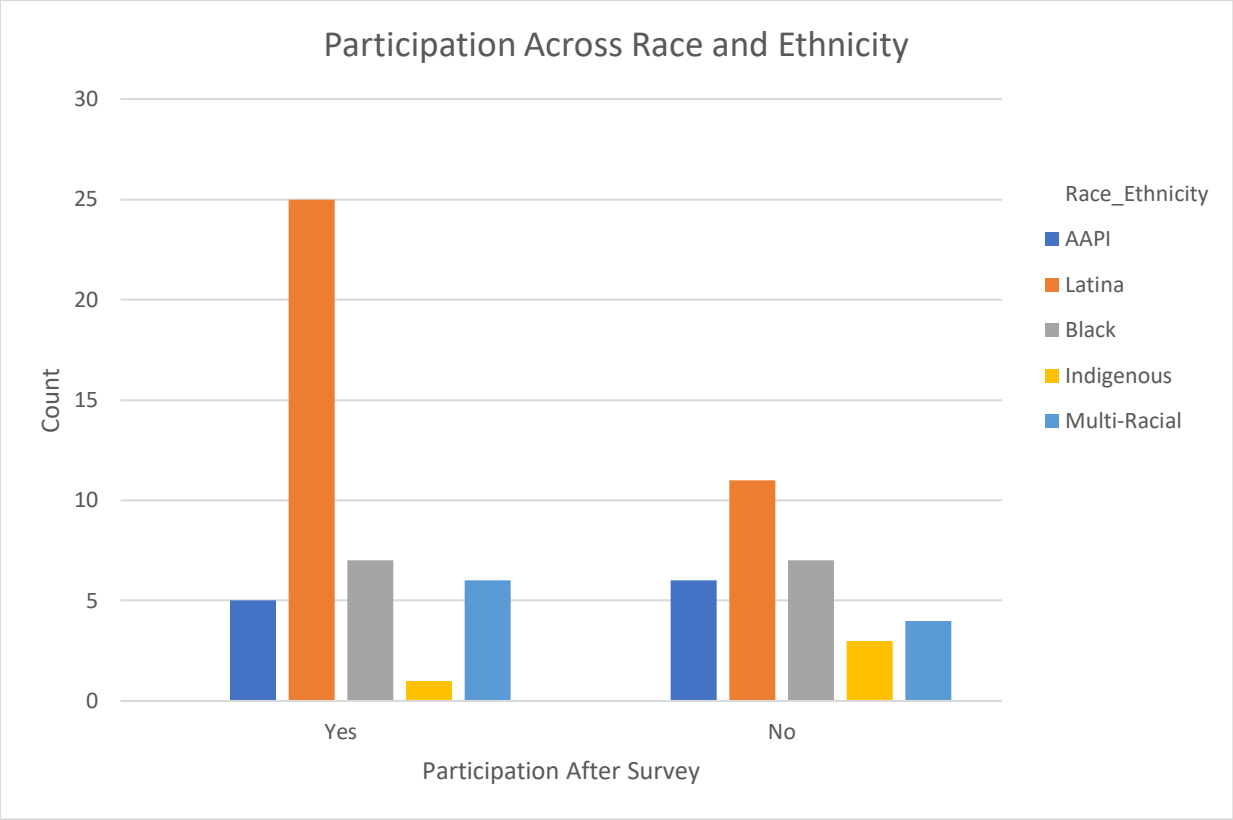
link to a survey/intake form for those interested. I used Google Forms (see Appendix B) to create a survey/intake form for potential research collaborators to fill out. The survey/intake form began with questions 1 through 5, a section targeting demographic information such as (1) Name, (2) Ph.D. program/department, (3) Year in the program, (4) Identifying as a Woman of Color, and (5) Self-identification of race/ethnicity. The following section of the survey/intake form, questions 6 through 41, focused on their experiences in their doctoral programs and functioned through a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. Questions 42 and 43 were open-ended questions that allowed them to share their experiences around silence.

Lastly, questions 44 through 46 targeted their interest in participating in the research further and asked them to share their contact information. Out of the 75 responses received, 44 women indicated they would be interested in continuing their collaboration with this project. As seen in the chart below (Table 4.1), out of the 44 women who indicated wanting to continue, 5 were Asian American, 25 were Latinas, 7 were Black, 1 was Indigenous, and 6 were multi-racial. They came from 32 specific disciplines in the broader fields of Social Sciences and Education, 7 from STEM, and 5 from Humanities. The survey/intake form results assisted in selecting potential research collaborators that would best represent Women of Color across race and ethnicity, discipline, and year.

Reviewing the submissions and keeping the different variables of race/ethnicity, discipline, and year in mind, I identified 15 possible collaborators. Of the 15 women identified, 4 were Asian American, 5 were Latinas, 4 were Black, 1 was Indigenous, and 1 was multi-racial. Additionally, 6 of the women came from Social Sciences and Education, 5 from humanities, and 4 from STEM. Lastly, six women were in their second through third year, 3 in their fourth year, 1 in their fifth year, 4 in their sixth year, and 1 in their seventh. Using the contact information

provided, I emailed each of them, introduced myself, provided more details of the additional data collection stages (individual plática, video testimonio, and group plática), and asked if they were still interested in continuing. There were a few women who I received no responses from, and others who replied saying that unfortunately they no longer had the availability to continue. Of the 15 I reached out to, I successfully scheduled individual pláticas with 9 of the women. In the next section I go in further into who my 9 research collaborators were.

Figure 4.1. Racial/Ethnic Demographic of Survey Participation.



Research Collaborators

Nine Women of Color proceeded to collaborate with the qualitative methods of the research design. As previously mentioned, the 9 collaborators were selected based on the criteria

of identifying as a Woman of Color,[3] and having completed at least one year in a doctoral program. Additionally, due to the focus on silence in this research, it was also important that they had expressed comfort in delving further into their encounter with silence. I aimed to have a group of collators that would represent varied identities across (a) race/ethnicity, (b) discipline (i.e., Social Science and Education, STEM, and Humanities), and (c) years in the doctoral program. Of the 9 collaborators, 4 came from the Social Sciences and Education (2 from Sociology, 1 from Psychology and 1 from Education), 2 from STEM[4], and 3 from Humanities (Cultural Studies, History, and Women and Gender Studies) (see Table 4.1). The race/ethnicity of the 9 collaborators were: 3 Asian American, 3 Black, 2 Latinas, and 1 Indigenous. They also came from different stages in their program, ranging from being in their second year and still taking classes, to those preparing their dissertation proposals, and those who were in the dissertating stages of their program. In Table 4.1, I provide the pseudonym they chose, their program/department, year in program, where their school is located, and their race/ethnicity. With this group of collaborators, a broad spectrum of lived experiences were collected. This allowed me to bring attention to similarities and differences between the lives of Women of Color within different academic fields, and racial/ethnic identities. The goal of this research is not to present all experiences of Women of Color but to give depth into some of those experiences through the individual stories of these 9 women. In the following section, I delve into the data gathering methods of pláticas and testimonios that were used in this research.

[3] In this work, the broader term Women of Color is utilized to include Black, Latina, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native American women. Later when I describe the findings, I specify the race/ethnicity the women have chosen to disclose whenever necessary.

[4] I do not specify the STEM programs the women are in because due to the low number of Black women in STEM, it could be an identifiable marker.

Table 4.1: *Nine Women of Color Collaborators*

Name	Program/Department	Year	School Location	Race/Ethnicity
Sanaya	Sociology	2	University in California	South Asian American
Kiki	Cultural Studies	2	Private University in California	Filipina American
Itzel	Sociology	2	University in Chicago	Indigenous (Mam)
Kiana	STEM	3	Private University in California	Black
Jasmine	STEM	4	Private University in Indiana	Black
Tina	Psychology	5	University in Georgia	Black
Fatima	Education	6	University in California	Latina
Isabel	History	6	University in California	Latina
Natividad	Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies	6	University in Kansas	Filipina American

Data-Gathering Tools

Guided by Critical Race Theory and a Women of Color Epistemology, I use pláticas and video testimonios as my main data-gathering tools. In this section, I describe the different phases of the data collection process, followed by an explanation of how pláticas and video testimonios function as data-gathering tools. The data for this qualitative research was collected through three parts. Part One consisted of individual pláticas with each of the 9 research collaborators. The research protocol can be found in Appendix C. The aim of Part One is to highlight the different graduate school experiences around marginalization that Women of Color face while in

their doctoral programs. This part also begins a conversation around the silences they have encountered. Through the individual plática, I was able to build rapport that facilitated their participation in Part Two. Part Two consisted of collecting video testimonios from my research collaborators (see Appendix D for protocol). The objective of the video testimonios was to have them reflect on the conversation we began around silence during the individual plática as well as other experiences around silence that they had not yet shared. The main purpose of the video testimonios was for them to have the space to give meaning to their own experiences, and name the silence(s) they encountered while in doctoral programs. Part Three of the data collection process entailed one group plática with 3 of my research collaborators (see protocol in Appendix C). The purpose of Part Three was to practice reflexivity as a group and work together in theorizing the different ways silence is encountered by Women of Color in doctoral programs. In centering their voices in this discussion allowed us to shed light in the ambiguity that is often associated with silence and silencing. As previously mentioned, in the following section I explain more in-depth the methodological underpinnings of both pláticas and video testimonios and their application to this research.

Individual Pláticas

Drawing from traditional practices of sharing stories, Chicana Feminists use pláticas to engage the researcher and research collaborators in dialogue within the research process (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). The Spanish word plática means to talk or to be in conversation. A plática is different from an interview (structured or unstructured) because they are built around open conversations between the researcher and research collaborators. It is unlike an interview, which is structured around a one-way conversation to gather as much information as possible from the interviewee (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016).

Godinez (2006) expanded the concept of pláticas outside of the academy and demonstrates that pláticas are a "way to gather family and cultural knowledge through communication of thoughts, memories, ambiguities and new interpretations" (p. 30). This explanation of pláticas directly touches on some of the elements in the research process, including the experiences of Women of Color doctoral students and the manifestation of silence in their academic trajectories. To learn from the Women of Color in this research, it is important to engage in communication of thought to create knowledge and give meaning to the experiences of marginality and silence that are often surrounded by ambiguity. By working together and utilizing pláticas, we open the possibility of providing some clarity and offer new interpretation to navigational tools Women of Color use to persist in doctoral programs. Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016) further expanded pláticas and named five contours that guide the use of pláticas as a methodology:

1) Centers Chicana Feminist Theory and other critical theoretical frameworks;
2) It honors participants as co-constructors of knowledge;
3) Connects holistic lived experiences of the research collaborators to the research inquiry;
4) Provides a potential space for healing; and
5) It relies on relations of reciprocity and vulnerability.

Each of the five contours of pláticas greatly assisted different components of the research process, such as the preparations, execution, and analysis.

The first contour, *centers Chicana Feminist Theory and other critical theoretical frameworks*, is exhibited by my use of Critical Race Theory, and a Women of Color Epistemology that draws from Chicana Feminist Theories and Black Feminist Thought. This particular contour encouraging the use of other critical theoretical frameworks also validated the

decision to utilize a traditionally Chicana methodology with other Women of Color, not only Chicanas. Combining Chicana Feminist Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Black Feminist Thought, these frameworks provided the tools to center the intersecting identities of Women of Color and help capture the complexities within their lives as graduate students. The second contour of pláticas, *honor participants as co-constructors of knowledge*, was a central theme throughout my theoretical framework and methods/methodology. This extended beyond the pláticas, my research collaborators were essential in the meaning-making process throughout all stages of the research. During data collection, honoring them as co-constructors of knowledge meant that shifts in conversations to topics I had not foreseen were just as important as the topics included in the research protocol. Their contributions came in through the data collection of individual pláticas, video testimonios, and group plática. Additionally, I practiced member checking during the group plática, as well as shared transcripts of the pláticas with initial codes with each of my research collaborators in order to incorporate them further throughout the data collection and analytical process. Without their voices and contributions, this research would not have been able to come to fruition.

The third contour of pláticas, *connecting the holistic lived experiences of the research collaborators to the research inquiry*, recognizes that social identities cannot exist in isolation from one another. Women of Color in graduate school are not *just* students *or* Women of Color; we exist with multiple identities that cannot be separated. Instead, Women of Color can engage with one another on how their various roles and identities influence their lives as doctoral students, enriching the conversations (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). This contour also helps to further humanize the data collection process in honoring the holistic lives of Women of Color who have busy schedules by being flexible, understanding, and accommodating. There were

numerous times when pláticas had to be rescheduled for reasons such as not feeling comfortable in the room they were in, unforeseen deadlines, juggling a role as a new mother, or simply forgetting the date and time. I was open to rescheduling as many times as needed, and although this process sometimes deviated my data collection timeline, it was important to allow for flexibility.

The fourth contour, *provide a potential space for healing*, further humanized the research process. Fierros and Delgado Bernal warned that pláticas could result in crying as they can be used to address deep traumas and challenges. They explained, ". . . pláticas flow from past stories of pain and trauma, current negotiations, and future hopes" (p. 17). Although at times we did encounter moments of pain, anger, and frustration during the individual pláticas, these moments also created a potential space for healing as we connected through our sorrows and offered words of affirmation. In the process of sharing experiences with one another, we open a space to begin the healing process that continues beyond this research project. The fifth contour of pláticas, *relies on relationships of reciprocity and vulnerability*, emphasizes the role of trust that is created between researcher and collaborators. Unlike most traditional research methods, pláticas require a reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the participant, where participants (collaborators in this research) are encouraged to ask questions, and researchers to share connecting experiences with collaborators. Rapport is often built through shared vulnerability where collaborator also shares in the difficult conversation alongside the collaborators. Through the pláticas, my collaborators and I shared some of the difficult experiences we have faced as Women of Color in doctoral programs and we offered each other advice, resources, words of affirmation, and encouragement.

The contours that guide pláticas are often intertwined and reinforce one another, such as connecting the holistic lived experiences of the research collaborators to the research inquiry (contour 3) would not be possible without honoring participants as co-constructors of knowledge (contour 2) or centering Chicana Feminist Theory and other Critical Frameworks (contour 1), or vice versa. Similarly, providing a potential space for healing (contour 4), would not be possible without building a relationship of reciprocity and vulnerability (contour 5). In doing this research I found that the five contours of pláticas went beyond the methodology of pláticas and were also instrumental in the way I approached the video testimonios. I further explain this in the section on video testimonios. Before that, I share the process of conducting the pláticas for this work.

The 9 individual plática were around 90 minutes long and they all took place through Zoom. Once the collaborators confirmed their interest in continuing, I sent a follow-up email asking for 3 dates and times that would work best for them. When a date was set, I emailed a personalized Zoom link, the consent form, and the plática protocol (Appendix C). In this email, I also offered to meet with them prior to the plática to address any questions or if it would help them feel more comfortable meeting me prior. Although none of my collaborators took up my offer in this project, it is something that I will continue to practice when conducting pláticas.

Each plática began ensuring their consent form was signed and addressing any questions they had regarding the form. I then provided a space to review the plática protocol, as the majority of my collaborators were unfamiliar with the methodology. When crafting the protocol of the individual pláticas, I chose to mostly have conversation topics over questions to promote a better conversation flow. The protocol (Appendix C) included a brief description of what pláticas are, the purpose of our plática, and the guiding conversation topics (educational background, academic challenges/experiences in the Ph.D., conversation around silence and future goals).

Additionally, incorporating the contour of honoring collaborators as co-constructers of knowledge, it was important for them to have access to the plática protocol prior to our plática.

Once recording began, I shared a little bit about myself and some of the experiences that led me to this research in an attempt to follow the contour of reciprocity. Engaging in this way allowed my collaborators to get to know me and feel at ease sharing their own stories. At this point, I would also ask them to choose their pseudonym for me to use in this research. Guided by the conversation topic in the protocol, we had conversations around their educational journey leading to the Ph.D., academic experiences and challenges in their doctoral program, encounters with silence, and future goals after completing their degree.

Some pláticas delved more into certain topics than others, for example, when sharing about their educational trajectory to their doctoral programs, some women share as far back as their secondary education while others began in their last years of undergraduate schooling. There were also conversations that intertwined the personal with their academic experiences, as they shared how their roles as the eldest daughters in a first-generation immigrant family and their responsibilities as doctoral students would intersect. Together these individual pláticas offered a glimpse into what Women of Color experience in doctoral programs, identified tools used to navigate, and began the conversations around the silences they experienced or used. At the end of the plática, after stopping the recording, I offered my collaborators a $30 compensation gift card. Before parting ways, I shared the video testimonio protocol and addressed any questions they had regarding the protocol (see Appendix D).

Video Testimonios

The practice of testimonios has a long history in Latin America and has been used to document experiences of marginalized groups as a way to push against those injustices (Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Pérez Huber, 2009; Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012). Although

testimonios began with Latin American origins, this methodology has moved to other locations and fields. Scholars have identified testimonios as being a tool that Women of Color scholars have utilized to document and theorize their own struggles, survival, and resistance (Pérez Huber, 2009). Furthermore, Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona (2012) offered their understanding of testimonio as:

> Testimonio is an approach that incorporates political, social, historical and cultural histories that accompany one's life experiences as a means to bring about change through consciousness-raising. In bridging individuals with collective histories of oppression, a story of marginalization is re-centered to elicit social change. (p. 364)

It is made clear that testimonios have a distinct approach to objectivity, where the value of testimonio comes from the person telling the story being informed of their positionality and being aware of the social, political, and historical context. This approach of critically centering marginalized identities in crafting the testimonios is what unfolds the hidden and overlooked lived realities of People of Color. Testimonios are often used to bear witness to stories from marginalized communities that are seldom heard (Benmayor, 2012). Testimonios have a larger purpose than simply telling a story but must also bring awareness to a social issue to create change (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012).

Through testimonios, the individual story becomes part of a larger communal story, and at the same time is careful not to essentialize the stories of People of Color and present them all as homogenous. Within the testimonios, there is space to build solidarity through shared experiences but still maintain differences in perspectives, experiences, and identities, revealing complex relationships (Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012). This decolonial method allows for the centering of People of Color to produce counterhegemonic work that does not display their experiences as homogeneous or through deficit perspectives. To

note, Women of Color have long demonstrated the power of using storytelling to challenge deficit perspectives/theories and create new theories that better fit their lived realities (Benmayor, 2008; Lored, 1977; Yosso, 2006). In this work, testimonios became a vehicle for Women of Color in doctoral programs to center their voices, reflect on their experiences with silence, and shed light on the ambiguity often found in silence by naming it themselves.

Traditionally, testimonios are literary/written pieces, but for this research, the testimonios were in the form of videos. Benmayor (2012) has demonstrated the power behind using digital testimonios as a pedagogical practice in undergraduate classrooms. As she describes her process of guiding her students to create their digital testimonios, she speaks to the power of hearing their voices, which adds to the strength of their testimonios (Benmayor, 2008, 2012). Additionally, I was influenced to elicit video testimonios for my research after seeing how Rita Kohli[5] utilized video testimonios on her work with Teachers of Color and their experiences of racial battle fatigue (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018). The video format allowed Teachers of Color to step into an isolated room and vent their frustrations to share their challenges through an iPad recording. I asked that the testimonios be a digital recording[6] instead of written text. My hope with structuring the testimonios as video recording was to alleviate some of the time commitment from my research collaborators. Additionally, I hoped that recording their testimonio in the comfort of their homes would ease some of the anxiety that can come from having to be so open in front of someone else. In practice, I soon realized that regardless of the mode by which a testimonio is created, it is a very taxing and vulnerable process.

[5] Rita Kohli presented her work in Dr. Solórzano's Research Apprenticeship Course in 2015. She highlighted teachers of color and their experiences with racial battle fatigue. She collected her data during a conference geared to help support teachers of color. During the conference, Kohli and her team placed an iPad in an empty room, and allowed teachers to record themselves and use it as a tool to express their challenges and let out their frustrations in an isolated setting.

[6] As a precaution, I have put steps in place for research collaborators who are adamant against having to video record their testimonios—I gave them alternative options to only audio record or write their testimonio instead.

As mentioned in the previous section, at the end of the individual plática, I shared the protocol for the video testimonio with my collaborators. Following the individual plática, I emailed each of my collaborators with the protocol, an individual links to submit their video testimonio, and offered my assistance if they encountered any difficulties or had questions during the process. I also assured them that no one else would have access to their videos, and would only be using transcripts excerpts through my dissertation findings. Lastly, I shared an ideal time frame of 1 to 2 weeks for their video testimonios.

I periodically sent gentle reminders to my collaborators whose testimonios I had not received. Due to the sensitive nature of the testimonios and how vulnerable they had to be, most of the women took longer than 2 weeks to share their testimonio. I experienced the process of creating a video testimonio first-hand as I felt it was important to engage in act of reciprocity and vulnerability, as I also shared my own video testimonio with all my collaborators. At the time that I shared my video testimonio, I had already received 3 of the video testimonios from my collaborators. I received a total of six video testimonios, and they range from the shortest being 10 minutes long to the longer being 29 minutes long. After receiving the video testimonios, I transcribed them using Otter.ai.

Ideally, through this process, I would have received all 9 video testimonios, but in humanizing the research process and acknowledging the multiple responsibilities and difficulties Women of Color graduate students carry, it is understandable that not all could create their testimonio. One of the three whose testimonio I did not receive, after five months of correspondence, let me know that unfortunately, she would no longer be able to collaborate. She was juggling academic challenges, health issues, and familial situations, that prevented her from collaborating further. Another one of my research collaborators, in her last email with me, shared

that she still intended to submit her testimonio but was also facing some academic and health difficulties. In reflecting on her current academic situation, she ended her email: “The importance of your project has never been more evident” (Isabel, email correspondence). The last collaborator missing a testimonio also shared she intended to send her testimonio, but she was in the process of visiting a campus that had offered her a tenured track position. I share these narratives not to justify presumed “holes” in my data set but instead to demonstrate how their generous contributions continue to add to understanding the often difficult experiences Women of Color have in academia. What led to them not crafting their video testimonio directly tied to the research topic and added to the narrative.

In summation, testimonios are often used to bear witness to stories of marginalized communities. Through the process of crafting testimonios as individual stories, these testimonios simultaneously maintain each person’s individual complexities as well as become part of a larger communal story. Testimonios are written from the margins through a process of self-reflexivity that relocates knowledge production within the margins. They are overtly political and intentional about raising awareness about struggles with a call to action. Testimonio, as a methodological approach, gives light to the range of experiences of Women of Color in academia.

Group Plática

Continuing in using the contours of pláticas, the group plática provided a space for three of my collaborators and myself to come together and define the different forms of silence that Women of Color in doctoral programs experience. The goal of the third data-gathering phase was to begin member checking, theorize, and define the silenced together. This session also served to engage in member checking as I was able to share emerging themes that had been seen

across the individual pláticas and video testimonios. In doing so, we were able to openly share personal experiences while also having a space to reflect with new perspectives.

The group plática was scheduled after the individual pláticas and video testimonios had been transcribed. Through the transcription process, I developed initial findings, which allowed me to engage in member checking during the group plática. This process allowed me to craft the conversation topics included in the group plática protocol (found in Appendix D). Some of the conversation topics developed were around the internal conflict and the decision-making process that my collaborators had expressed when reflecting on how they experienced using silence and being silenced. Another major topic in the initial findings was the ways silence looked different depending on their racial/ethnic identity. Touching back on the primary aim of this data-gathering phase to theorize silence with my collaborators, a section of the protocol consisted of sharing the way that I was beginning to conceptualize silence to see if they saw it similarly or had a different perspective. In the following part of this section, I share the process of scheduling and conducting the group pláticas.

At the end of the individual plática, I asked each of my collaborators if they would be interested in joining a group plática. All expressed an interest in participating if they were available when the scheduling process began. When the time came to schedule the group plática, a few of my collaborators were no longer available due to their shifting roles, while others did not reply. Based on availability, I scheduled a group plática with four of my research collaborators. On the day of the plática, one of the collaborators was not able to join due to a last-minute shift in her schedule.

The group plática was a two-hour long conversation. The three collaborators who joined the group plática were Fatima, a Latina in Education, Kiana, a Black woman in STEM, and

Sanaya, a South Asian in sociology. We began the session with a brief introduction so they could get to know each other and begin building rapport with each other. In an effort to continue building rapport and utilizing this space to get insight from them, we began a conversation on the video testimonio process. They shared how in preparation for recording their video testimonio, they jotted down some points they wanted to make sure to cover. Fatima shared that she used Post-It notes and had them around her monitor while filming her video. We connected on the initial hesitating of watching ourselves as we recorded our testimonios and how it then shifted into a cathartic experience. Sanaya shared, "But as I was talking and just remembering so many things, so many more things came to mind. So it ended up being kind of cathartic for me, and it ended up being longer than I intended" (Group Plática).

They also shared some of the logistical difficulties that they encountered, and the work that went into finding a quiet and safe space to record their videos. Kiana walked us through the different times she had to move around her spaces until she found one that she could use long enough to record her testimonio. As a new mother with a partner who works from home, and a shared lab space, she told us, "I like found a room that I could close the door, and most people are leaving for the day. So that was mostly my challenge is finding a quiet space to be able to collect my thoughts" (Group Plática). Their comments were very insightful to reflect on and for later consideration if I choose to continue using video testimonios in my future research.

Our conversation then shifted to the ways silence came up across collaborators in their individual pláticas and video testimonios. There were moments when hearing each other's stories sparked memories of forgotten shared events. This led us to necessary topics not all included in the protocol, such as a very reoccurring racial microaggression of being mistakenly called by the

wrong name. All four of us had experienced multiple occurrences of being mistaken for the other Women of Color in the space or experienced professors avoiding saying our names.

Other times, we spoke of experiences previously shared during the individual plática or video testimonio but elaborated by offering a shifting perspective. Some of those new perspectives offered insight into the internal conflict and the decision-making process that my collaborators had expressed when reflecting on how they experienced using silence versus being silenced. Through our process of theorizing together, there was a moment when Kiana shared how was seeing what we were saying as being in a spectrum. From that moment on, I applied this perspective and developed the Spectrum of Silence when analyzing the data. The Spectrum of Silence begins with being silenced, then shifting to the in-between silence, and ending with using silence on the other side of the spectrum. Within this spectrum, there can be different points that illustrate different silences. I further explain the spectrum in Chapter Six.

Before sharing the data analysis process, in the table below (Table 4.2), I summarize the data collection tools, the questions they aim to answer, and the purpose behind each of the methodological approaches.

Table 4.2: *Summary of Research Design*

Method	Question	Purpose
Survey/Intake Form	All questions	Identify potential collaborators to take part in the plática and video testimonio. Insure representation across race/ethnicity, year in program, and field of study.
Individual Plática	Q1 & Q2	Highlight graduate school experiences. Begin conversation around silence. Identify tools used.
Video Testimonio	Q2 & Q2a	Reflect and center their voices around experiences of silence to shed light on the ambiguity.
Group Plática	Q2a	Member check, theorize and define the silences together.
Self-reflexive Journal	All questions	To practice reflexivity during the process of collecting and analyzing the data.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey/intake form, individual pláticas, video testimonios, and group plática in this research was analyzed through various coding cycles. As mentioned previously in this chapter, the data collected from the 75 responses to the survey/intake form was used to identify potential collaborators. I also used the survey/intake form to gain a broad understanding of what Women of Color experienced in their doctoral programs. To do so, I focused on the two open-ended questions on the survey/intake form, questions 42 and 43. I used MAXQDA, a data analysis software to code the open-ended responses, and developed codes using in vivo, and process coding strategies.

The individual pláticas and video testimonios were transcribed using Otter.ai, and I began initial coding while reviewing and editing the transcriptions. In the first coding cycle, I hand-coded using simultaneous coding, process coding, in vivo coding, and thematic coding strategies

(Saldaña, 2021). Due to the intersecting identities of Women of Color, simultaneous coding helped me unpack multiple meanings any one experience carried. Process coding is a strategy that facilitates identifying "actions/interactions/emotions taken in response to situations, or problems, often with the purpose of reaching a goal or handling a problem" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 96). This was particularly helpful in identifying the ways my collaborators responded and faced difficulties in their doctoral programs. Using in vivo coding preserved and honored the voices of my collaborators by centering their voices in the analysis. Finally, the last coding strategy used in this first coding cycle was thematic coding, which helped identify reoccurring patterns across collaborators. Thematic coding began to weave together a cohesive narrative of how my collaborators were answering my research questions through the stories they shared. In the first cycle, thematic coding particularly helped in examining explicit and implicit themes related to racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression in education.

The coding strategies of the first cycle were imperative to organizing the initial analysis of the data. This was particularly important as the initial findings were also used to finalize the protocol used for the group plática (found in Appendix D). In doing so, I was able to engage in member checking on reoccurring themes around silence and theorize together in ways to better understand the ambiguity that often comes when trying to understand silence. As I mentioned in the previous section, this process allowed my collaborators and I to start viewing silence within a spectrum, and with this new lens, I went back to the data to see how the different experiences of silence shared fit within a spectrum.

Following the first coding cycle, the subsequent cycles continue using in vivo coding, thematic coding, and focused coding (Saldaña, 2021). I continued using in vivo codes, as it was important to continue developing the narrative within the data that honors the direct words from

my collaborators. With the new framework offered by my collaborators to view silence within a spectrum, thematic coding, and focused coding strategies helped organize the existing codes, highlight emerging themes around silence, and implement the feedback my collaborators suggested during the group plática.

My hand-coded analysis were first organized in three separate Word documents—one for individual pláticas, another for the video testimonio, and the last for the group plática analysis. The documents identified the codes and related quote excerpts from the data. The initial codes were then further organized through a code book in Excel, combining all the data and related quotes together. This process helped me see how collaborators further expanded on their experience through the different methods. They often expanded on topics that were touched on during the individual pláticas, during their video testimonios, and in the group plática. In doing so, I was able to better understand their stories and highlight how their stories answered my research guiding questions.

Moreover, the strength of my data analysis came from the involvement of my research collaborators in the data analysis by first sharing initial thoughts and themes that emerged in the first plática to address them during the group plática. This gave the research collaborators and myself space to continue theorizing and identifying navigational tools Women of Color graduate students utilize.

Positionality and Reflexivity

As a Woman of Color Chicana scholar in a doctoral program, these identities give me a unique vantage point within my research. Due to my positionality and theoretical frameworks that center the lived experience of Women of Color, and celebrate my cultural intuition as I may find myself as an insider within the research process. Although I do plan to draw from my cultural intuition as a Woman of Color graduate student, I also proceed with caution and

acknowledge the danger of perpetuating incorrect assumptions that come from occupying the role of a researcher. To mediate this potential issue, I practiced reflexivity through journal entries that I composed during every step of the data collection, analysis, and writing process. The self-reflexive journal helped me make sense of my preconceived thoughts prior to each plática and video testimonio. Then once again, after conducting the pláticas or reviewing their video testimonios, I would return to my reflexive journal to record my reflections, feelings and understandings. After data collection was completed, I continued using the reflexive journal to document my meaning-making prosses. This strategy allowed me to pause and reflect to prevent me from participating in harmful research practices that misrepresent the Women of Color in my research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter Four focused on my research designs that were used to study the experiences of Women of Color doctoral students, identify navigational tools, and the silences that they encounter. The chapter outlines the data collection tools of pláticas and video testimonios, as well as the analytical tools that helped focus the voices of Women of Color within the research. Together, the methods covered in this chapter assist in documenting the experiences and navigational tools Women of Color employ to make their way through doctoral programs. As I come to the end of this section, it is important to remember the issues that brought me to this research. The slight increase in the number of Women of Color earning doctoral degrees has not equated to substantial changes to the educational structures that continue to perpetuate inequalities and marginalization they face. I engage in this research as a response to those issues and seek to highlight the lives of Women of Color to identify ways that they are resilient, and in turn, I bring attention to navigational tools to better support their success and retention.

The following chapter delved into this further by addressing my Research Question 1: What experiences of marginalization do Women of Color encounter during their doctoral education? In Chapter Five, I introduce each of my 9 research collaborators through collaborator profiles. The introductions give insight into the intersecting identities they carry and the experiences that led them to a doctoral program. In Chapter Six, I discuss how the gendered and racialized identities of my research collaborators impact their educational journeys, how they navigate difficult educational spaces, and the tools and tips they have to offer for future Women of Color Scholars. Chapter Seven addressed Research Questions 2 and 2a: In what ways do Women of Color experience silence while navigating their doctoral education? And how do they define the silences that they encounter? To answer these questions, Chapter Seven details the Spectrum of Silence and situates different types of silences Women of Color experience while in academic space within different points in the spectrum. Through diagrams and experts from the data, the Spectrum of Silence allows us to better understand the nuance of silence and its complexities. The final chapter of the dissertation concludes with Chapter Eight and provides a review of the study, implications, limitations, and future directions of this work.

CHAPTER FIVE: COLLABORATOR PROFILES: STORIES FROM WOMEN OF COLOR IN ACADEMIA

This chapter centers the stories of the nine research collaborators who made this research possible. I offer their introductions to honor the stories woven throughout this dissertation. These short collaborator profiles give insight into their intersecting identities and positions within academia. While also providing context to their perspective journey to their doctoral program and the pivotal moments or individuals that played a significant role in their journey (Espinoza, 2012). Utilizing the concept of nos/otras, these collaborator profiles highlight similar experiences among collaborators while acknowledging their differences (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2006). I also used these introductions as a humanizing approach to demonstrate that my research collaborators are more than their doctoral student identity. In doing so, I hope readers can better relate to the collaborators, see themselves represented, and make stronger connections to the findings presented in the following chapters.

Sanaya

Sanaya is a first-generation South Asian American, daughter of Pakistani Immigrants. She has lived most of her life in Southern California. At the time of the plática, she was in her second year in a Sociology program at a university in California. Sanaya was about to complete the Master's portion of her doctoral program. Sanaya is the youngest of her siblings and shares a 10 years age gap with her oldest sister. Wanting to make her own way, as a high school student, Sanaya initially resisted the draw that the liberal arts private college her sister attended had on her when applying to college. She eventually gave in and visited the campus on her own. With fresh eyes, she felt a strong connection with the campus and was drawn by its social justice core values. That is how she ended up attending a private liberal arts college in Southern California for her bachelor's degree, majoring in Organizational Studies.

As a lower-income South Asian American student in a predominantly white institution, she was not prepared for the isolation and culture shock she experienced in her first years there. This was particularly difficult because she felt that no one, including her older sister, had warned her. She remembers the first year being mentally, socially, and academically difficult. The constant self-comparison with her wealthier peers who had always attended private schools throughout their lives generated a lot of self-doubt, and she believed she was not as smart as her classmates. The pivotal moment that changed Sanaya's perspective and experience came from her major, Organizational Studies, when she met a Woman of Color faculty. Sanaya related and saw herself represented through this first-generation Woman of Color Faculty. This faculty member became her mentor and encouraged her research ideas and desire to pursue graduate school. She demystified graduate school for Sanaya. Through countless meetings, classes, and summer research together, Sanaya received advice, guidance, and encouragement from this Woman of Color Faculty. Sanaya wanted to pursue a doctoral degree to do the same for other students like herself.

Sanaya did not wait to receive a doctorate degree to help others. Through her campus employment in the Writing Center and Career Services, she saw many low-income Students of Color feeling the same way she did when first entering this predominantly white private institution. Engaging in peer mentoring and in what she called "me search" solidified her desire to apply to doctoral programs. She liked the idea of teaching college students, mentoring students and continuing her research pursuits in the future.

Kiki

Kiki is a first-generation Filipina American who has lived in southern California. As the eldest daughter, she carries the responsibility of being a role model for her younger brother and making her parents proud. At the time of the plática, Kiki was in her second year of a doctoral

program in Cultural Studies at a private university in California. Before her time in this doctoral program, Kiki attended a public university in California, where she received a bachelor's degree in Ethnic Studies with a minor in Education. When reflecting on her educational journey, Kiki did not share too much about her time as an undergraduate. She attributed the pivotal moments that led her to pursue a doctoral degree to experiences she had in her master's program. After completing her bachelor's degree, she attended a Private University in California for a Master's in Cultural Studies. Kiki liked the more intimate classroom structure of a private graduate program and enjoyed the in-depth discussion that occurred around her preferred subject of study.

The pivotal moment during this time for Kiki was receiving mentorship from one of her female professors. This professor encouraged her and ultimately became her thesis advisor. Kiki had not considered a doctoral program until her thesis advisor strongly encouraged her to pursue it. Her advisor shared her personal graduate school experiences and suggested potential faculty to contact. A particularly memorable moment that Kiki reflects on when having a difficult time in her doctoral program is when her thesis advisor made an effort to connect with her parents. Kiki's parents attended her thesis forum, and during the event, her thesis advisor sought them out and spoke to them about what a great student Kiki is and the potential she saw in her. This meant a lot to Kiki because there are not many opportunities where her Filipino immigrant parents are included in her academic spaces. For Kiki, it hasn't always been easy to thoroughly explain what it means to be a graduate student to her parents, and this helped them understand a little better the reason she spent so many hours on her computer. With the support of her parents and her thesis advisor, Kiki decided to apply to a doctoral program because she wanted to make her parents proud and wanted the intellectual challenge.

Itzel

Itzel is a first-generation student whose family comes from the Mam Indigenous community in Guatemala. At the time of the plática, Itzel was in the second year of her Sociology doctoral program at a Chicago university. Her family immigrated to West Michigan, where Itzel has lived most of her life. As an Indigenous individual from Guatemala, Itzel spoke about how she is often mistakenly racialized as a Latina but does not identify as one as she does not feel it adequately represents her racial/ethnic identity. Some of this sentiment stems from the circumstances her parents found themselves in when driven to immigrate from their home country of Guatemala. Due to the Civil War that took place between 1960 and 1996, the Indigenous communities were targeted. After many traumatic and life-threatening situations, Itzel's parents fled to Mexico and then the United States. Itzel spoke on how her family received little to no recourse due to their Indigenous identity and were never granted asylum despite qualifying due to their circumstances. When talking further about why she does not identify as Latina, she shared, "It's always the narrative of like we need to celebrate our Indigeneity like this big like Mestizo project of like, 'Oh, we're all mixed, like there's no Indigenous community.' It very much erases Indigenous communities and their needs." In her experience, the Latina and Mestizo identities contribute to the erasure of the Indigenous communities and prevent the necessary resources from reaching them, such as the example that Itzel shared regarding her parents' immigration status.

Another way Itzel was misracialized as a Latina was through others' assumptions that she spoke Spanish. Itzel and her family primarily use their Indigenous language, Mam. However, due to the large Spanish-speaking community in Michigan, Itzel shared how she had to learn Spanish alongside English early on out of necessity. Although she is not entirely proficient in Spanish, Itzel reflected on how it felt necessary to network with people in their community who

spoke Spanish to get resources. As a child and the eldest daughter, Itzel often acted as a Spanish/English/Mam translator for her parents, as Mam translation was never provided otherwise.

Itzel attended a predominantly white, nationally ranked high school in West Michigan. Although she did academically well, she shared the isolating experience of being in that competitive environment. Some of that isolation also came from trying to understand her own identity and navigating being a citizen daughter in a mixed-status family. During her last year in high school, something occurred that shaped her outlook on life. Her father was deported, and understandably, greatly affected everyone in her family. Itzel shared that this was a very depressing time in her life, and she almost did not go to college due to the sadness and turmoil. But she shared that lucky enough, through a connection with a community-based organization, she gained a full-ride scholarship to attend a university in Michigan. The location allowed her to stay close to her family and commute to campus.

Similarly to her high school experience, Itzel describes her time in her predominantly white university as isolating. Although initially isolating, she found a community and encountered pivotal moments that led her to where she is now. The first pivotal moment was her first sociology class, where her professor showed the film Waiting for Superman, and for the first time, she saw stories that reflected her own. She vividly remembers being so moved by the documentary that she was crying because of how much she was relating to the issues being highlighted in the film. Realizing that through sociology, she could do work highlighting the societal injustices her community experienced, she declared sociology as her major.

The second pivotal moment during her undergraduate studies was participating in Theater of the Oppressed. A graduate student in the group mentioned that Itzel seemed interested in

graduate school. They connected her to the Ronald E. McNair program to learn more about a potential doctoral program. After this interaction, Itzel became set on attending a doctoral program. She became part of the McNair program, where she gained the skills and resources to pursue a Master's program in the same institution directly after earning her bachelor's degree in Sociology.

As a master's student, she had some bad experiences due to racial tension in her school. She felt dejected but sought the guidance of her mentor, a Black woman in the department who helped her navigate the difficult situations. Through this support, Itzel excelled academically and gained numerous awards, scholarships, and an acceptance to a Sociology program at a university in Chicago. When discussing why she decided to pursue a doctorate, besides wanting to help her community, Itzel seeks the degree for the stability and the protection the title can provide.

Kiana

Kiana is a first-generation Black woman in her third year in a STEM doctoral program at a university in California. At the time of our conversation, she was basking in the glow of being a new mother to a baby boy. Kiana is the eldest of six and spoke of the responsibilities she has carried as being the oldest. She was responsible for setting an example by performing academically well. As she became old enough to work, she began to contribute financially to help her family. Kiana is the first in her family to attend and graduate from college. She shared that her mother and stepfather were both pushed out of high school, while her father and stepmother's education ended after high school. Although her mother was pushed out of high school, the importance of education was instilled in Kiana and her siblings. Her mother valued education so much that she moved her family multiple times in search of the best school district. Early in her education, Kiana showed great potential, and when her mother was asked if she would allow Kiana to skip a few grades, she decided to move her to a more challenging school

instead. Kiana recounts starting school and being among Black students, and slowly, as they began moving, seeing fewer and fewer Black peers until she became one of the only in her school.

Although Kiana attended a good high school, she still felt like she needed to fill many of the gaps in her quest for higher education. She shared, “I went to a good high school, that doesn’t mean anything. Everyone already knew that stuff, they were from the middle class. You know, we didn’t” (Kiana, Individual Plática). She quickly pointed out that although she was in an affluent school, which one would assume offered the resources needed to attend higher education, that was not the case for her. Kiana describes her method of finding the information she needed as a “do-it-your-self” (DIY) approach. With the encouragement of her family, but without a clear trajectory of how to reach higher education, she DIY her way through by finding informational pamphlets and seeking community resources. Growing up involved in the church, much of Kiana’s community resources came from her church community, and she leaned on her youth pastor when applying to college.

Considering her family’s financial limitations and familial contributions as the eldest daughter, she chose to attend a university close to home. She revealed that a significant component of her decision was that she wanted to be near the support system of her family and church community to offset the isolation experiences she would encounter as a Black first-generation student in a STEM major. As she predicted, Kiana was one of the few Black Women in her classes. Her specific STEM major was an impacted major with limited access to counselors, which once again drove her to use her DIY approach. To navigate her major and future goals, she sought to connect with other first-generation Students of Color and programs geared toward helping them. Kiana became heavily involved in the Mathematics Engineering

Science Achievement program (MESA). Through her involvement, she became aware of the available resources and gained encouragement to pursue graduate school.

Although she did not apply to a graduate program right after completing her Bachelor's of Science degree, she held on to her graduate aspirations. After completing her undergraduate degree, she continued working with different MESA chapters, where for ten years she worked as a science educator, directly working with k-12 students interested in STEM and training teachers through professional development to help them cultivate Students of Color in STEM. When speaking of the pivotal people who helped her in her journey toward her doctorate program, she didn't mention specific people by name because, in her words, "the list would be too long." However, she did say that they were often Faculty of Color, colleagues in MESA, family, and community members. Through her stories of her journey to her doctoral program, she attributes "being connected to the community and supporting other students along the way" that's how I acquired information on different career opportunities."

When the time came for her to begin her graduate education, she used what she learned as an education in MESA to earn a fully funded scholarship to attend a STEM master's program at another university in California. This time, she attended a school farther from home but continued to stay close to her family and found a new community. Kiana describes her time through her master's and current doctoral programs as approaching it at full speed. She began her doctoral program immediately after completing her master's degree. Her current research expands between both programs. At the time of the plática, she was already a budding expert in her topic after developing it for the past 5 to 6 years. She holds several publications, expanding from her time as a master's student to now. When asked about her future plans and the reason for pursuing a doctoral degree, she shared her interest in teaching at the collegial level and working

on developing programs to incentivize and support more Black students and other Students of Color in STEM.

Jasmine

Jasmine is a Black woman in her fourth and final year in a STEM doctoral program at a private university in Indiana. She is a first-generation American and the daughter of Caribbean Immigrants. Jasmine attributes her desire to pursue a career in STEM to her mother's educational journey and her family's struggle in their country of origin. Like many immigrant children, Jasmine's life was filled with stories of her parents' homeland and the hardships that led them to migrate. Collectively, her family's stories were in the foreground of exploitation due to tourism and limited access to education, jobs, and healthcare. Jasmine remembers hearing from her mother about the different ways rainwater can be caught and stored safely. Her mother grew up in a village with no running water and saw how people got sick and died from preventable diseases due to lack of clean water or access to health care. Seeing this regularly, Jasmine's mother wanted to study medicine to return and improve the quality of life for those in her village. Unfortunately, that was not a possibility for her mother because of a lack of access and monetary funds. Even though her family could not afford to send Jasmine's mother to medical school, they still valued education greatly. Jasmine shared, "Our family pinched pennies for many years. And I'm talking like aunties, uncles, cousins, like everybody. My mom went to school and was the first person in my family to get an education." Her mother got a teaching degree and taught in k-12 for a few years before migrating to the United States.

Jasmine mentioned that achieving an education career was bittersweet for her mother because she had to abandon her original dream of becoming a doctor. As a result, she promised herself she would go to the United States in search of more opportunities for herself and her future children. Once in the United States, her mother continued working as a teacher, instilling

the same drive for education in Jasmine. She said, “Because of that story, that’s always been why I’ve been so focused on school, even from a very young age.” So, when Jasmine showed promise in science, her mother thought that maybe her original dream of becoming a medical doctor could be fulfilled by her daughter.

When Jasmine began her undergraduate degree at a university in Florida, she intended to go into medicine but instead decided to stay in her field of STEM. Jasmine found a supportive community and spoke about her graduate mentor, Brian, a Black graduate student from the Caribbean. Brian encouraged her to join a faculty member’s research lab known for cultivating a collaborative and supportive lab environment. Both Brian and the faculty member mentored Jasmine, and she speaks of them as strong advocates for her when she ran into problems. This was important because when she received a National Institute of Health (NIH) fellowship as an undergrad, she experienced a lot of racial microaggressions. As one of the few Black students in her cohort, she received a lot of inappropriate comments regarding her skin tone, hair texture, and intellectual capabilities. It went as far as a White woman working for the program telling Jasmine that depending on how well she did, it would determine if other students like her, meaning Black students, would be admitted in the future. Upon hearing this, Jasmine went to Brian, and he talked with the woman regarding her racist and inappropriate behavior. Despite the racial microaggressions she encountered in the program, Jasmine excelled in the program and began her graduate program after graduating. She gained many of the necessary tools to succeed in her program in Indiana, but what drives her area of study is her mother’s legacy and the desire to find solutions to preventable diseases. When asked about her plans, she was adamant about not wanting to stay in academia and not be a “martyr for the cause.” At the time of the plática, Jasmine had already accepted a job offer working through the private sector.

Tina

Tina is a Black woman in her fifth year in a Psychology doctoral program at a university in Georgia. She attended a small liberal arts women's college and majored in Psychology. Early on, she knew she needed to attend graduate school to pursue a career in psychology. Tina mostly shared fond memories of her time as an undergraduate student. She received a lot of encouragement and mentorship from professors. She shared, "I did not have any faculty members to discourage or dissuade me from going into graduate school." Tina recognized that it is uncommon for Black women to receive such support. Although she received this support and excelled academically, she was burned out and chose to take a break from school after gaining her bachelor's degree. She took a 6-year gap before beginning a graduate program. During those six years, she taught English in Japan and Korea, then returned and continued working in the United States. These experiences allowed her to grow and reenergize before becoming a student again.

After six years, Tina then started a doctoral program in Clinical Medical Psychology at a university in Georgia. This was a new program experiencing a lot of shifts, and they eventually changed from offering a Ph.D. to Psy.D. When that change occurred, Tina was halfway through the second year of what should have been her Ph.D. program. This, along with some of the challenges she experienced in the program, made Tina decide to leave for a program that was a better fit. She was not the only student unhappy with the change; many of her peers also sought to leave in search of a different program. In their displeasure with losing students, Tina recounts how her former program treated them. She shared that when making the necessary arrangements to leave, they were told, "Well, you can apply to other institutions, and we'll write you recommendations. But remember, essentially, you were not good enough to get into other programs." This did not discourage Tina, and instead, she used this as a challenge to prove them

wrong. She did prove them wrong and soon after joined a doctoral Psychology program at another university in Georgia.

The desire to prove them wrong was not the only motivator Tina had to pursue her goal of receiving a doctorate in Psychology despite the challenges. When talking about the people who motivated her, she mentioned a professor during undergrad and her mother. Tina credits her mother as the most significant source of support throughout her academic journey. Tina's mother got a doctorate later in life while balancing a family and working a full-time job. Tina shared that her mother was a role model and helped her believe that she, too, could get a doctorate. As a second-generation doctoral student, Tina could seek her mother's guidance and receive advice on how to handle difficult situations. As a Black woman entering academic spaces, her mother understood firsthand the hardships her daughter would encounter. It wasn't only the advice that helped Tina but the validation that her mom offered her. At the time of the plática, Tina was only one step away from being the second doctor in her family.

Fatima

Fatima is a Latina in her sixth year in an Education doctoral program at a university in California. She is the daughter of Mexican immigrants and the youngest of five. She is part of a mixed-status family. Growing up, she got three main messages: (a) do well in school; (b) lay low to not draw unwanted attention to her family; and (c) stay close to help the family. As the youngest in her household, Fatima had many role models growing up, which also brought additional pressure to do well to make them proud. At times, the pressure drove Fatima to feel she had to solve her problems before reaching out to her siblings or parents. The first academic situation she remembers facing difficulties was transitioning from bilingual to English-only instruction. Writing in English was her biggest challenge during this time, and to this day, she still carries some insecurities regarding her writing.

Fatima was a driven student who excelled academically, and regardless of wanting to keep her problems close to her chest, her family continued offering their support. One occurrence when her family helped her was when she was about to enter high school. After a school assembly where a magnet school coordinator gave a presentation, Fatima's dad took it upon himself to gather more information to help his daughter. He approached the coordinator and said, "You got to tell us how she can get in. I'm not leaving until we find out how she can get in." Fatima was grateful for her father's persistence but worried about disappointing her family if she did not get in. Unfortunately, she was not admitted and attended the local public high school for her first year. She tried one more time and gained entry to the magnet school before her second year in high school. With a new resolve, Fatima remembers not wanting to let her family down. She shared, "I had to prove that what my dad did to advocate for me was work it." Upon arriving at her new school, Fatima witnessed the stark difference in resources compared to her previous school. In her new school, she received clear guidance on what classes to take and received resources from the college counselor on-site that would later help her enter college.

Fatima considered her family's opinions when it came time to apply to colleges. She weighed the option of applying to her brother's dream school, which he could not attend due to his immigration status at the time, or to the local state college that her sister attended years prior. For a brief moment, she considered going to a college farther from home but ultimately decided on a university in California that was nearby. When her acceptance letter arrived, while celebrating, she remembers being moved to tears because she had already told herself that it wouldn't happen for her.

Determined to make her family proud, Fatima chose to major in Business. She hoped that with a Business degree, she could help her family's small business, which had been their

livelihood for most of her life. She wanted to "get a degree, find a job, and have her parents stop working." Unfortunately, her first year did not go as smoothly as she had hoped. As a first-generation commuter student, she struggled to identify her community and resources. Her first challenge came in a calculous class she needed to take for her business major. Despite her best efforts, she could not improve her exam scores. After the second exam, she visited her professor's office hours for the first time. While waiting outside the office to speak to the professor, she overheard what he had said to another student. That student too had been having difficulty doing well on the exams. In response, she heard the professor say, "Just stay in the class, you're fine. Tell the TA what you need help with. You can still make it happen." Overhearing their conversation gave her some relief as she was in a similar situation. Expecting to hear the same, she stepped into the office when it was her turn and shared her concern. She told the professor her test scores and brought up the math problems she found challenging on the exam to gain clarity on how to improve. Instead of helping her, the professor told her there was nothing he could do for her. His exact words were, "What do you want me to do? I can't come up with a magic spell to fix it. There are just some students who can't understand the material and that was fine." The solution he offered was to sign a petition for her to be able to drop the class. The only difference between Fatima and the previous student was that he was a white, and she was not. In shock, she agreed and walked out of the office with the signed paper. While walking out into the hallways, she remembers thinking, "they caught me," and the imposter syndrome set in. Resigned, she began making plans on how to tell her family that she was no longer going to attend the school.

Before going to the calculus professor's office hours, she had planned to go to her Chicana/o Studies TA's office hours and decided to keep her plan to say goodbye. In the short

time that she had spent at that university, this TA, a Latina graduate student, had become the one person Fatima felt comfortable with. As soon as Fatima stepped into the room, her TA could see something had happened. After hearing what happened and Fatima's plan of leaving, she asked, "What do you like?" Fatima had not taken the time to explore what she would genuinely like to study because he was so set on business. After considering and reflecting on the classes she had been enjoying, Fatima responded, "I think I liked Sociology. I like learning about people." In response, her TA shared information on the research program and other resources that could help her explore her actual interests. This pivotal moment set Fatima on the route of a doctoral program. After meeting with her Chicana/o Studies TA, Fatima shifted her plans of leaving the university to switch majors instead. Fatima completed a double major in Chicana/o Studies and Sociology with a minor in Education. Fatima was able to find her place on the campus, conduct undergraduate research, and gain entry into a Master's to Ph.D. program in the same institution. When asked about her future plans, Fatima is unsure if she will stay in academia as a professor. Still, she is open to any possibility that would allow her to continue working with students.

Isabel

Isabel is a Latina doctoral student in her sixth year of a History program at the University of California. She is an only child to immigrant parents, and now that they are older, Isabel takes on the lead role in the caretaking duties. Although growing up working class, Isabel was able to attend a prep school for her secondary education through her parents' employment. Her parents worked for a wealthy family who offered to sponsor her schooling after seeing Isabel's academic potential. Isabel remembers having to write little notes to her benefactors, updating them on her progress. She did not always feel at place in her prep school, being working class and Latina, but the education she received prepared her well to enter college.

With a fully funded scholarship, Isabel attended a private university in California. There, she pursued a double major in Spanish and History. She acknowledged the privilege that came from being fully funded and not having to worry about how she would cover the cost of schooling. At the same time, she spoke about the additional pressure that came with maintaining perfect grades so as not to jeopardize her scholarship. An unexpected challenge that arose was in connection to her ethnic identity. Isabel shared, "Even though I'm very vocally Latinx, I'm proud of my heritage; somehow, the academy still has an idea of what certain individuals need to look like to claim certain things, you know." Although she is Latina and identifies as one, she was often forced to justify and prove her Latinidad. This was mainly attributed to her phenotypically lighter features. Her experience speaks to the tensions arising from the multiplicity within the Latinx ethnic group.

Isabel spoke fondly of a Latin American literature class when reflecting on pivotal moments. In this class, the professor stressed the importance of looking for the voices often written out of history. That lesson inspired her to continue looking for the stories, often of Women of Color, who were left out. This led Isabel to become involved with a writing oral histories project. She fondly remembers how that project helped her see the importance of telling those narratives. Although she was interested in history, she also aspired to practice law.

Ultimately, Isabel pursued law and went to law school after completing her bachelor's degree. Isabel shared that as a first-generation Latina, she found law school to be a very difficult space. She completed her degree but was disillusioned and wound up not completing the necessary things to gain her license to practice.

Isabel decided to return to school and began a Master's program in Latin American History at a state school in California. Once there, she returned to her earlier teachings of finding

the gaps and filling them with the stories of Women of Color. With the support of women Faculty of Color, she explored her interests and decided to extend her work to a doctoral program. She aims to "bring new perspectives into the field of history." This is very much reflected in her work as a doctoral student. When asked about her plan for when she completes her degree, she shared, "The future makes me a little nervous about whether or not I'll be able to find a position." Although unsure of her future, Isabel does hope to continue working with Students of Color, preferably at a liberal arts college. She ended our conversation by expressing her teaching approach; she said, "For me, having that cultural understanding is a big deal, and it humanizes the entire process." Approaching her pedagogy through a humanizing approach would encourage more Students of Color to make their discoveries of untold stories and expand the field.

Natividad

Natividad is a second-generation Filipina American and neurodivergent doctoral student in her sixth year in a Women and Gender Studies program at a university in Kansas. She chose her pseudonym, Natividad, to honor her grandmother. When speaking about her academic journey, Natividad shared that early on, she was aware that higher education wasn't meant for her for multiple reasons, but she was determined to do it anyway. This stemmed from the low representation of Women of Color in academia and the accessible accommodations that were sometimes denied to her as a neurodivergent student.

For her undergraduate education, she went to the same university in Kansas she is currently attending for her doctorate. At the university in Kansas, she pursued a bachelor's degree in Gender studies. There, she met a professor who was the first to tell her to consider going to graduate school. Before hearing this, she had not considered it, but this encouraged her to continue working with this professor. Natividad continued taking classes with this professor

and engaged in research under their mentorship. Although she did not go directly into a graduate program after her bachelor's degree, she attributes this mentorship as the source that prepared her for a doctoral program.

Natividad took seven years before returning, and during those years, she worked as a domestic violence survivor advocate through a non-profit. Part of her role as an advocate was to give workshops. After witnessing how well she did in the workshops, her boss commented to Natividad about how well she did when teaching adults. Natividad said, "So that's really what drew me back. But also, part of it, too, was like I was getting really disenchanted with the nonprofit system." Ready to return, she turned to her alma mater for her doctoral program. She continued working there with her undergraduate mentor, now her advisor. When asked about her future plans, she expressed that she hoped to find a tenured track appointment but was unsure if it would happen. Luckily, only a few months after our conversation, Natividad shared that she was offered a position at an institution she was excited to accept.

Conclusion

The collaborator profiles in this chapter offer a glimpse into the identities of my nine research collaborators and give insight into the experiences that led them to a doctoral program. It is important to get a sense of the experience that shaped who they are now to better understand what drives them and how they navigate their doctoral education. Through their similarities and differences, their rich stories demonstrate a diverse set of experiences that are not typically in the forefront. To echo my collaborator, Isabel, these collaborator profiles also offer a way to write in the stories of Women of Color that are so often left out. In telling their stories, I hope that readers resonate with the realization that there is no one clear route to a Ph.D. program.

One of the similarities shared among collaborators was the deep-rooted familial support.

The false rhetoric that Families of Color do not care about education is so largely spread. The stories the women shared contradict that deficit belief and instead demonstrate the high educational aspirations Families of Color hold for their children. For many of my collaborators, it was their parents who nurtured their academic aspirations and continued supporting them through higher education. Another important similarity was that if they spoke of pivotal moments, they often mentioned People of Color or people who understood the way they carried their intersecting identities into academic spaces and advocated for them when necessary. They were the graduate mentors, professors, or community members that revealed the hidden curriculum first generation, and students of color often have such difficulty accessing. Their desire to follow in the same footsteps and make a difference for others, such as themselves, was also largely seen. Many of the women revealed that their desire to pursue their doctorate was to give back to their community and support other Students of Color.

In the next chapter, I explore the challenges that Women of Color face in doctoral programs. Some of the challenges highlighted in the collaborator profiles continue into the next chapter. That is because many of the challenges are a result of the racism and inequity that exist in academia.

CHAPTER SIX: "I'M NOT GONNA MAKE MYSELF A MARTYR FOR THE CAUSE:" CHALLENGES WOMEN OF COLOR ENCOUNTER IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

This chapter explores the challenging and marginalizing experiences Women of Color encounter while navigating their doctoral programs. I begin with an overview of the academic climate in which Women of Color find themselves in with key findings from the survey/intake form. The open-ended questions in the survey/intake form provided a brief glimpse of the overarching challenges Women of Color experience in graduate school. These initial findings are then given more depth through the findings gathered through the individual pláticas and group plática. This section of the chapter expands on how the gendered and racialized identities impact my research collaborators' educational journeys, how they navigate difficult educational spaces, and the tools and tips they have to offer for future Women of Color Scholars.

Overview of Academic Climate for Women of Color

The first strategy for gathering data for this dissertation was a survey/intake form. The survey/intake form assisted in the recruitment efforts and gave a sense of the experiences Women of Color were experiencing in a broader capacity. Included in the survey/intake for work are two open-ended questions that allowed collaborators to challenging experiences. The survey generated 75 responses, and through the open-ended questions, the women shared experiences around the challenges they faced when engaging in critical conversation or research. The 75 responses to the survey/intake form served as an entry point to gain a broader sense of the general experiences of Women of Color in their graduate programs. They also shared how they experienced not being heard when expressing themselves in classes or meetings. The most salient commonalities lay in their lack of sense of belonging due to facing racial microaggressions, which led them to seriously consider leaving their program. This is particularly worrisome as so few Women of Color gain their doctorate and enter the

professoriate. In the data presented in this section, when sharing direct quotes from the survey/intake form, I use a number to represent the collaborators alongside their field of study.

Many of the women in the survey shared that they often received pushback from professors, advisors, and peers when they engaged in critical discussions or attempted to conduct research using critical frameworks or methodologies. Collaborator 12, a doctoral student in Psychology, shared the dismissive way her advisor reacted when she wanted to use Critical Race Theory in her research. She wrote, "I argued that I needed to include Critical Race Theory in my dissertation research, and my advisor said I was getting a doctorate in Psychology and not Sociology and attacked my merit as a scientist" (Survey Collaborator 12). This advisor's narrow understanding of Critical Race Theory led him to believe it had no place in Psychology and dismissed the valuable contribution this student's scholarship would produce. Instead of receiving support from her advisor, this student was made to doubt her intellectual abilities.

Similarly, many of the women shared how they often felt unheard or challenged when sharing in classes or during meetings. An example of that was when Collaborator 25, a doctoral student in Education, wrote, "I was questioned on the content I was presenting for a class. This questioning made me rethink my competence for the program, and it impacted my participation in other classes" (Survey Collaborator 25). This is reminiscent of the literature on presumed incompetence, where the qualifications and intellectual capabilities of Women of Color are questioned in academic settings (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; McKee & Delgado, 2020). Learning from these negative experiences, some women shared how they had to regulate what they said because when they spoke too much on issues connected to marginalized communities or when they spoke up against problematic language being used, they were further scrutinized or ignored.

Due to those interactions, the Women of Color reported not feeling a sense of belonging or feeling ignored within their programs. One collaborator, a doctoral student in Education, wrote, "I feel that my presence and experiences have been ignored by my adviser, department, and the university at large" (Survey Collaborator 75). Along similar lines, another woman in STEM shared the difficulty in navigating her program due to ". . . not really knowing my place and how some of my opinions would be received" (Survey Collaborator 74). Clearly, a lack of support contributes to feeling out of place and makes navigation through the program harder.

Other difficulties that they expressed were when they faced marginalization and racial microaggressions in class or work settings (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020). One of the collaborators, a doctoral student in History, wrote about a difficult TA position she had with a racist professor. She wrote, "I had an incident with a professor in the History department who created a hostile work environment by expressing racist ideas against Latinx students, as well as constantly offering 'helpful advice' critiquing every aspect of my person as a first-generation Latinx scholar" (Survey Collaborator 26). Not only was she forced to continue working in such a blatantly racist environment, but she also had to endure the professor attempting to sabotage future TA opportunities by having a student write a negative evaluation citing cultural barriers as the issue. The cumulative effect of these challenging experiences can potentially push women out of academia. A woman in education shared how she often contemplated leaving her program, "I have been able to resist and continue to be critical, but at this point, it has become very taxing, and at the end of each year, I have considered dropping out. I am almost done, and that's what keeps me in my program" (Survey Collaborator 13). She voiced the constant struggle many women experience while navigating the challenging, marginalizing encounters. Although she

ends by saying that being almost done is the only thing keeping her from leaving her program, this may not be the case for everyone.

The survey responses give a glimpse into some challenges Women of Color encounter in graduate school. Through the survey collaborators, it can be seen that when Women of Color attempt to engage in work that centers on race and racism, they are not supported. The same is seen when they bring discourse around race and racism during class discussions or meetings. During these instances, they reported feeling not being heard when speaking and were told that they were being too subjective. The Women of Color who responded to the survey also shared instances when their competency was questioned, unlike their counterparts. Ultimately, many of their responses highlighted the ways Women of Color experience racial microaggression in their pursuit of a doctoral degree. The survey overview offers an introduction to some of the themes explored in more depth in the next section on the challenges Women of Color encounter in doctoral programs.

Challenges of Graduate School: Isolations, Tensions, and Racial Microaggressions

The long-held exclusionary practices in which higher education was structured have made it difficult for Women of Color to thrive in higher education. Although the exclusionary actions are not as overt as they once were, they continue to play a role in the low representation of Women of Color in graduate school. Women of Color face many challenges when pursuing a doctorate. Entering academic spaces can be difficult due to the race, gender, and other intersecting identities of Women of Color (Marina & Ross, 2016; McKee & Delgado, 2020). Centering on their intersecting identities, this section expands on the themes around (a) isolation and the imposter syndrome, (b) marginalization, (c) racial microaggressions, and (d) the violence that Women of Color encounter in doctoral programs. Although I do my best to separate the

themes to make the findings digestible, I want to note that the themes are interconnected and inform one another.

Isolation and the Imposter Syndrome

Entering academic space can be hostile toward Women of Color, and they are often made to feel like outsiders. This can be due to the academic practices of what knowledge is deemed important, campus culture, and lack of diversity. Unsurprisingly, Women of Color regularly find themselves in programs where they are one of the few or the only of their racial or ethnic identity. This is true in fields that are traditionally male-dominated, such as STEM and history, as well as in fields that are known to have more women, such as Social Sciences, Education, Gender Studies, and Psychology. Natividad, a Filipina in a Gender Studies doctoral program, shared:

> So one would think and assume that, things like racism, or sexism, or any of those things would be less of a problem, right? But I was one of the first Women of Color in my department. There's one other person who essentially got pushed out into American Studies. But we were the first in the program. And they were not prepared for us. In the sense of the way that they taught. Everything really focused on white students, the white canon. I didn't learn anything about Women of Color feminism, that's stuff that I had to learn on my own. (Individual Plática)

Natividad speaks to how even fields that were created to center a marginalized community such as Gender Studies, can still carry white supremacy and sexism. She went into her doctoral program with the expectation of not experiencing as much racism or sexism, but she was surprised by the reality.

Part of the reason she was surprised was because years prior, as an undergraduate student in the same department, she did not see the racism or sexism, and instead felt supported. This was the reason she chose to return to the same institution. The stark change can be attributed to the fact that as a graduate student, she is working more intimately with the tenured track faculty in her department and is now privy to the internal politics that exist within her department. While

as an undergraduate student, she primarily took classes with lectures, and the faculty member who became her advisor supported her research interests. Natividad's experiences also shed some light on the importance of continuing to look specifically at the experiences of graduate students because they differ from those of undergraduate students. Natividad also points to the lack of diversity in her program as a reason why she and other Women of Color in the department feel isolated or pushed out. Natividad was one of the first Women of Color to be admitted to her graduate program. She expressed how she felt that although she was admitted alongside another Woman of Color, her program was not prepared to support them in the same way their white counterparts were supported. This was due to the white Western-centric epistemologies and practices that were used and maintained in her Gender Studies department. To engage in the type of work she wanted to do, Natividad had to fill the gaps on her own and seek the necessary epistemologies and methods for her work that focused on Women of Color. Although she was able to carve out a space in this department, the same could not be said for another Woman of Color who was admitted a year after Natividad. The lack of diversity and support led her colleague to be pushed out of the department.

This is also seen even when programs promote themselves as diverse. Tina, a Black woman in Psychology, shared her experience entering a program that was advertised as diverse, but it was not as she expected once she got there. During the individual plática, Tina said:

> So I joined this program specifically because they had a focus on diversity. And I was super excited to be in the program…But as I learned a little bit more, talked with some of the alumni, I started to see some of the holes in the program's idea of diversity and approach to diversity. I think that they do care about diversity. And I think that, especially with research, they care about diversity. But I think that on a day-to-day basis, it's challenging for them to step outside of-- I don't want to say it in a crass way, but step outside of their whiteness. And so, in the day to day, there have been some experiences that were a little off-putting. (Individual Plática)

Tina was drawn to this program, particularly because of the type of work that she could do focusing on Communities of Color. She expected their aim for diverse research to extend to the program, but Tina soon found out that was not the case. Although she names the centering of whiteness as an issue, she is still worried about being too crass and alludes to "off-putting" incidents. Those off-putting experiences were times she heard racially coded comments and experienced racial microaggressions. Initially, she thought that she was reading too much into interactions or being "too sensitive," but was reaffirmed by others who had gone through the program. Seeing the contradictions between the ideology and the practices of a program is something that many Women of Color experience as outsiders-within (Collins, 1986). Tina also saw the disconnect between engaging in diverse research while still centering whiteness and Wester-centric epistemologies to conduct research. This is also reminiscent of how Natividad had to fill the epistemological gaps to navigate Gender Studies. Tina has had to do the same in her program.

The isolation in doctoral program can also persist even if there are other Students of Color in their program. Sanaya, a South Asian American in Sociology, spoke about the confusion she experienced when she first started her program because she did not see any of the Students of Color in her department. Sanaya said:

> It became really clear over time that the Students of Color in our department, they were nowhere to be seen. You might see them in the hallway, printing something out, and then you never saw them again. And I was really hoping to connect with them. But they just didn't want to be around. They didn't want to be in that building. So that was a big initial warning sign of why they don't want to be around. Why is it only the white students that get to use our grad lounge and, hang out and take up space here? I would go into those spaces, but I wouldn't feel comfortable. And again, I just chalked that up to starting grad school. This is scary for everyone. But I did end up talking with another Woman of Color, who's also Asian American. And I talked with her about her experience and her research. When I finally asked her for her advice, she said, something along the lines of, "Don't waste your time with some of these people here. Do what you have to do, get in and out." And she talked about how that's advice she got from other Students of Color

> when she started. That was a few months in, and that's when I was like, "Oh, okay," there's a bigger problem here. (Individual Plática)

During her first year, she noticed that there was an absence of Students of Color in the common space around her department. She knew other Students of Color were in her program, but she could not find them. As a new student, Sanaya attempted to find her community and connect with others who might help her navigate the program. In her observation she noticed it was only the white students who were making use of the common spaces offered by her department. In retrospect, she recognized that these were the warning signs of a bigger underlying problem in her program. As more time went by, she also felt uncomfortable in those spaces. Sanaya began feeling she did not belong due to not being able to build connections with others in her program. This was later confirmed by another Woman of Color a few years ahead of her in the program. She initially attributed this to herself but later understood that it was an institutional problem. This was later confirmed by another Woman of Color a few years ahead of her. She affirmed the feelings Sanaya was having while also offering her advice to focus on getting out rather than building connections with others in the program.

As shown above, many of the women made mention of feeling uncomfortable in their programs. These feelings of discomfort often contributed to them questioning their belonging and experiencing the imposter syndrome. When speaking of imposter syndrome, a Filipina in Cultural Studies, Kiki shared:

> [Kiki] I feel a lot of those questions and emotions of when you feel like you don't belong in the room. I forgot what it's called. What is, there's a term for it.
>
> [Me] Imposter syndrome?
>
> [Kiki] Yes! There you go. Oh, god. Yeah, that's so big. And I don't think people realize that's an actual thing. People think that it's a scapegoat. But that's a real thing. And I don't think people realize it's unless they actually experiencing it. (Individual Plática)

Although she initially doesn't remember the term to name her feelings, she connects her feeling of not "belonging in the room" to the imposter syndrome. There's a palpable need to validate this as a genuine experience, something she has truly lived through. Her response makes it seem like it is something that she has had to justify to herself and others. The imposter syndrome refers to doubt about your own skills, success, and abilities, which leads to questioning whether you are deserving of occupying space in the positions you hold. Kiki talks about how big and consuming those feelings of self-doubt can be. Research shows that the feelings of imposter syndrome can double with one or more marginalized identities (Strachan, 2022).

Similarly, when Sanaya continued reflecting on her early experiences in graduate school, she spoke of how she felt not being supported in the same way her peers were. With that lack of support, she shared:

> It was really hard to develop an academic identity for a long time. Nobody was validating my work or saying that it was a worthwhile scholarly pursuit. In some of my methods classes, when I would write proposals, they would encourage me and say, "Oh, this is really interesting," but it wasn't really anything beyond that. And seeing, a lot of my other cohort mates developing good relationships with faculty. It just made it really hard. Made it feel like I didn't belong. And it also brought up feelings of frustration of—I don't like comparing to other people, but it just seems a lot of people had it so easy. (Individual Plática)

For Sanaya, the lack of support she received contributed to her feeling a lack of sense of belonging and imposter syndrome. A similar thread between Sanaya and my other collaborators was how their program and academia upheld what some of them called the white cannon. This makes it difficult for Women of Color who engage in work that centers on minoritized communities because they have to fill the epistemological, literature, and methodological gaps that their white counterparts did not.

Although in her classes Sanaya was being told that her work was interesting, she still felt a lack of validation and support in her research pursuits. Even when the work is not directly

challenged, as Sanaya shares in this portion of our conversation, the surface-level support is not sufficient when there is no substantial mentorship to conduct that work. The lack of support caused her to develop self-doubt about her research skills and doubted her academic abilities. Sanaya does not specifically name her discomfort as imposter syndrome, but her comparison to how her peers are advancing made her feel as if she is lacking as a student and contributed to her having a difficult time developing an academic identity. What is even more concerning is that she did seek help when sharing her work but was met with surface-level support, which made her feel unheard. One way that research has identified that alleviating the effect of imposter syndrome is when Women of Color feel they are going to be heard when voicing their needs (Berry & Mizelle, 2023; McKee & Delgado, 2020; Strachan, 2022).

Feelings of isolation, lack of a sense of belonging, and imposter syndrome are not attributed to one moment but a cumulation of messages and incidents. As Isabel, a Latina in History, states, "Those are the kind of weird little moments where it does lead to a lot of imposter syndrome. I do often feel like I am not supposed to be here" (Individual plática). Many collaborators spoke about the "weird little moments" that made their graduate school experience difficult. Those moments were often times of marginalization or racial microaggression, and that is what I focus on in the next section.

Marginalization in the Academy

As one of the most salient themes across collaborators, this section focuses on the ways that Women of Color experience marginalization and racial microaggression during their journey to the doctorate degrees. Marginalization occurs through individual acts, institutional structures, societal norms, and belief systems that privilege the dominant culture while oppressing those who are not (Crenshaw, 1991; Watford et al., 2006). There are overt and covert acts of marginality. Over marginality happens through conscious and direct discriminatory actions that

are not typically socially acceptable. Covert marginality is a stubble form of discrimination that is often acceptable and not recognized for its harmful outcomes. Although my collaborators did experience overt marginalization, I focus on the covert forms that they reported. The marginalization they experienced occurred in the form of being infantilized, enduring the invisible labor/cultural tax, and not being supported in their research pursuits.

Infantilization

Many of my collaborators reported being infantilized by others in positions of power, such as their advisors, PIs, professors, and staff members. Infantilization is typically tied with the words that are used to describe women and actions that diminish women's agency. This form of cover marginality can be seen as a gendered form of marginalization, but for Women of Color, there is a racial component to how they experience infantilization differently than white women. Kiana, a Black woman in STEM, shared the infantilization she has faced as a Woman of Color in her field. She shared:

> I am a much older student but because I'm a Woman of Color, no one can tell. So that becomes very interesting because I'll be 38 in the next month. And having people talk to me like I'm a 21-year-old girl who doesn't know her identity. Or as someone looking to be a carbon copy of some non-person of color researcher. It just doesn't work like that. Because they're completely oblivious to the challenges and what it means to be a Woman of Color in the sciences. (Individual plática)

Kiana states that despite her age and being in her late 30s, she is still being treated like a young girl "who doesn't know her identity." This is largely due to the way the faculty, particularly her advisor, in her department treat her when sharing her research or research ideas. Despite the challenge Kiana has experienced as a Woman of Color in the sciences, she has developed a strong sense of academic identity, and this is often dismissed by her advisor. Kiana feels that this stems from her advisor wanting to create a carbon copy of herself when it comes to how she approaches research while also lacking the understanding of what it means for Kiana, a Woman

of Color, to navigate the field. Due to her particular positionality and her focus of research, it would not be appropriate to approach her research through a white Wester-centric framework.

Kiana has identified gaps and strategies that have allowed her to create a space for herself in her field, but her advisor often fails to recognize her important contributions. During another part of our conversation, Kiana candidly talked about how this infantilization has led to her research expertise being questioned or ignored during lab and individual meetings. But when others reiterate her points, they are heard and praised for the insight they offer. These are some of the issues that she alluded to when she says they are "completely oblivious to the challenges and what it means to be a Woman of Color in the sciences."

This infantilization also occurs for women outside of the STEM fields. Natividad, a Filipina in Gender Studies, also experienced infantilization. Similar to Kian, Natividad's story, is particularly telling and adds to understanding how infantilization for Women of Color also has a racial component in addition to their gendered identity. Natividad shared how she no longer wanted to work with an individual in her committee because of how they treated her. When she shared the reason why, she said:

> It was something that really sent me off because I felt they weren't legitimizing some of my experiences around research. They didn't necessarily see me as an adult. . . . So people sometimes have a tendency to infantilize me because I do look younger. I don't want this person on my committee anymore because they don't seem to trust the things that I do. (Individual Plática)

Similarly to Kiana, Natividad also appears to be younger than she is and does not feel treated like an adult. The extent of the infantilization came through in the way that this committee member gave her feedback and dismissed some of the significant findings she was identifying in her research. Her research was with women in an Asian country, and when Natividad reported findings that demonstrated her participants engaging in resistance practices, her former

committee member questioned her findings and accused her of reading too much into it. This committee member not only infantilized Natividad and her research skills but also her Asian collaborators.

My collaborators also touched on how the process of being infantilized in the academy, their other identities and experiences are negated. Tina, a Black woman in Psychology, experienced this and shared:

> I think that being a grad student is this weird time where you're an adult, but they don't treat you like an adult. To have that day-to-day, of whatever academic or professional experience, be diminishing. And then for life outside of that to be, "Oh, like here's a divorce." And it's not easy. (Individual Plática)

Tina highlights the difficulty of balancing her life when she is not allowed to bring your whole self to the space. She is not just a graduate student but also carries important roles outside of the academia. The professional experience she gained prior to entering the program was also disregarded. Tina perfectly describes the strange positioning of not being treated as an adult when in academic space but then dealing with adult situations, such as navigating a divorce, in her personal life.

Listening to the stories of my research collaborators, it was also evident that infantilization is conditional and occurs only when convenient for those in positions of power. While Women of Color are often infantilized and discredited for the knowledge and experience that they bring, they are also asked to do additional unrecognized labor. Itzel, an Indigenous woman in Sociology, shared how she experienced this, "Sometimes we're treated as employees; sometimes we're treated as infantilized students, but we are grown adults. That it's very frustrating" (Individual plática). Itzel expressed the frustration that many Women of Color experience when navigating graduate programs. The next section focuses on the unrecognized or invisible labor that Women of Color doctoral students engage in.

Invisible Labor/Cultural Tax

In the same vein of being infantilized, women are asked to do more work without being recognized for the additional labor. Daniels (1987) first conceptualized this as the emotional and physical invisible work that women do to maintain and develop institutions. She called it invisible work because it is work that is largely not recognized or seen as work by society. Other scholars have come after extending the concept of invisible labor to include a racial component. This work typically uses the term cultural tax or invisible tax (Duncan, 2004; Morales et al., 2024; Padilla, 1994; Rosales et al., 2023). The cultural tax (Padilla, 1994) has been defined as the contributions of minoritized individuals to diversity efforts that go unrecognized by institutions and the toll this takes on their personal advancement. More specifically, scholarship has identified the way this burden and expectation to perform the inviable work in academia often falls on Women of Color (Duncan, 2014; Morales et al., 2024). When institutions are pushed to shift their traditional white-centric structures to include diversity, it is the Faculty of Color and Students of Color who carry the responsibility.

In a reflection of this, Duncan (2014) offers, “Such processes result in a peculiar contradictory position in which women of color may find ourselves perceived as both ‘hot commodities’ within the academic marketplace and ‘cheap labor’ designated to do the dirty work” (p. 41). This notion of “hot commodities” and “cheap labor” is what my research collaborators experienced in their doctoral programs. Kiana, a Black woman in STEM, had experienced this many times. As one of the few Black women in her field, she is often “taxed” with filling the gaps and leading meetings and presentations that speak on diversity and race. In the latest of these incidents, her PI asked her to do extra work but positioned it as an opportunity. During the group plática Kiana shared:

> I had a situation where my mentor asked if I wanted students to come for the summer from a particular program. I let her know that I didn't want students from this particular program because they didn't have any previous research experience. As someone who's in the later years of my PhD, I need someone who's gonna help me. Who has an idea of some of the skills. I don't want to have to teach someone, "This is the cell," you know what I mean. These are basic concepts. While they'll get a lot out of it, it would be really taxing for me, because instead of being able to focus on getting my work done, I'm having to stop to give them these foundational skills to understand what I'm doing. And so my PI decided to volunteer my project with a summer program, a different summer program . . . I already had this conversation. I don't want this. . . . And at the end of the day, I just don't want her to pick anyone for me, because she's picking based on "Oh, you guys are going to get long because you're first generation." You know what I mean? "You're going to get along because they're underrepresented." As if we don't have differences or personalities or we're more than those visual things. (Group Plática)

In an attempt to diversify her lab, Kiana's PI asked her to mentor and train a first-generation undergraduate student. After years of doing the extra labor that was asked by her PI and others in her lab, she decided that she was not going to take on the extra work this time. It is not that Kiana did not care or understand the impact this opportunity could have on the undergraduate students, but she wanted to prioritize her academic needs. She was at a point in her academic journey where she needed to focus on her research to advance her research and get closer to finishing her degree.

Due to COVID-19, Kiana had not been able to access the lab for a few months. Her timeline had shifted, and she had planned on taking advantage of the summer to get back on track. Kiana voiced her rejection of the plan when her PI first brought it up. Her PI later forgot or ignored Kiana's concerns and hand-selected her to take on an undergraduate student for the summer. The reasons that Kiana was given for why she was picked are reminiscent of the literature on how this extra labor or cultural tax often falls on Women of Color. It was not that the undergraduate student was interested in Kiana's topic, but that the PI thought that they would connect because they are both first-generation students and alluded to the student's possibility of being a Student of Color. If her PI really wanted to make the space to bring in undergraduate

students and offer her lab as a space, she could have picked someone else or had the student work under her, but she saw Kiana as the person to take on the extra labor. If Kiana is unsuccessful in making her advisor understand this is not within her capacity, it will be her scholarly progress that will suffer. While in the current arrangement, her institution, PI, and the undergraduate student assigned to Kiana will benefit from this.

Even in moments when Women of Color comply and engage in doing the invisible labor or cultural tax, it is unlikely that they will be recognized for that work. Natividad, as one of the few Women of Color in her Gender Studies program, has done a lot to connect with undergraduate students. As a graduate student, she has been able to teach courses that center Women of Color feminism. Due to her pedagogical approach and the topics she teaches, many students seek her for support. Regardless of the impact she has had on the undergraduate students in her department, this is the first time they have acknowledged her work. Natividad shared:

> We didn't feel we were praised. We weren't the quote unquote, "golden children" of the department. For example, this is the first year that I have been nominated for a teaching award. But I've had consistently good feedback with my teaching. Faculty members have seen me teach, they see what I do, and they like it. But I've never been nominated until this year. I am the first Woman of Color to be nominated for a teaching award. So it's that shit again. It's the constant, subtle undermining, microaggressions. It's the small shit like that gets you down after a while. (Individual Plática)

Natividad has seen peers who do not engage with students in the same way she does, receive nominations for this award. It is only after six years, and in her final year that she gets nominated. Not only that but to her knowledge, she is the first and only Woman of Color to be nominated for this ward. She shared this in the wake of expressing survivor guilt over seeing how her friend was pushed out of the program. That is why she begins by saying, "we didn't feel like we were praised," and "we weren't the golden child of the department." It was both her and her friend, another Woman of Color, whose work kept getting overlooked and ignored. Natividad

ends by sharing how these "small" things, microaggressions such as these, are what get her down and make her contemplate leaving. The next section focuses on how they experience marginalization through the pushback they receive on their research.

Receiving Pushback on Research

It is common for Women of Color to receive pushback or discouragement when pursuing race and gendered research or when race-gendered frameworks and methodologies are used. The value that academia places on apolitical and neutral ideologies to situate objectivity is based on traditional white and male-centered knowledge. Upholding these traditional ideologies as objective maintains and reproduces white supremacist structures in academia. Conducting race-gendered research and using race-gendered frameworks directly challenges the institutional structure (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020).

In the survey/intake form responses, there was a glimpse into how Women of Color are challenged when wanting to use a race-centered framework, Critical Race Theory. In the survey/intake form, a woman in Psychology was discouraged from using Critical Race Theory and was made to feel that if she used it, it would discredit her as a psychologist. Psychology is not the only field to challenge the use of Critical Race Theory. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of anti-Critical Race Theory and ethnic studies bans that directly affect scholars who engage in this work. This is something that also came up during the individual and group pláticas. Sanaya, a South Asian American in Sociology, shared:

> I sent him a tentative outline for my thesis. And I used Critical Race Theory and he was discouraging me from using it. And then he also said something like, "You shouldn't say white supremacy because that might, that sounds a little too extreme." And then he said, "Critical Race Theory is a little bit like too political." (Individual Plática)

Sanaya's advisor discouraged her from using the framework and ideology that would allow her to examine how minoritized racial/ethnic groups would experience academic settings. She was

specifically told that using white supremacy and Critical Race Theory was too political and was asked to depoliticize her work. She was surprised by her advisor's comments because in her undergraduate institution, those frameworks were supported, and she was encouraged to use critical frameworks that centered on her participant's racial/ethnic identities.

Along with the push to depoliticize race-gendered work, scholars engaging in this work are often accused of being subjective and not as rigorous as "traditional" research. Isabel, a Latina in History, shared the comments that male colleagues have made about her work. During the individual plática, she shared:

> I have met a lot of male scholars in the field, who told me that none of the evidence that I'm looking at is actually being interpreted properly or that there isn't enough for me to talk about. Which is of course silly, because it's there, they're just not kind of looking at it . . . I hear a lot of scholars and other peers say that I'm doing this as a passion project, because I'm a woman, or because I'm first-gen. Like somehow this is less intellectual work, and more a project of me wanting to tell these stories. And of course, I do want to tell these stories, but I don't see that my gender or my background necessarily take away from the intellectual work that I'm doing. A male colleague, who still continues with the same, "Oh, well, yeah, you're studying women. Don't you think that's too easy?" He was telling me, "Oh, well, don't you think you shouldn't be talking about women because you have a bias?" And I said, "Well, you're just talking about male history, that's what all history is." So my mouth, the attitude, has made me a little bit persona non grata in certain groups. But I can't help it because I've had to deal with it for an entire lifetime. I think you have to develop this kind of thick skin and it's hard. It's really hard. (Individual Plática)

The legitimacy and rigor of her research were questioned simply because of her intersecting identities and the connection to the identities of her research subjects. Isabel's research skills and capabilities also fall into question in the eyes of some of her colleagues. The question regarding her interpretation of the evidence and the question of whether there was enough evidence both delegitimized Isabel's academic identity and the agency of her research collaborators. Isabel is also confronted with other's notions of objectivity simply because she chooses to center the voice of women when they are often excluded. She directly challenged

what the cannon in her field deemed as objective and called out her male peer for only focusing on men's history. In other parts of our conversations, Isabel shared how she saw that white women who conduct work in minoritized communities are often praised and not challenged in the same way she is. This only adds another layer to how race, ethnicity, gender, and other intersecting identities shape how Women of Color experience graduate school.

Isabel has gotten these challenges to her research numerous times. This resonates with scholarship that examines the challenges race work encounters and warns that researchers engaging in this type of work should prepare to face potential consequences, as "research that is truth-telling can often result in negative consequences for the truth-teller. However, revealing the truth is freeing and necessary for challenging systemic racism" (DeCuir-Gunby, 2024, p. 86). Isabel seems to be well prepared for this as she made it clear that although it has been difficult, she has developed a thick skin to move beyond those disparaging comments. The section that follows describes the racial microaggression Women of Color experience in doctoral programs.

Racial Microaggressions

> There were so many more issues and people were so dismissive of them, if they even believed me. I could sit here all day, ALL day. I can sit here all day, and I still will not finish telling you all of the shit that people felt was okay to say to me. Ranging anywhere from my hair texture, my body shape, how I look, where my family comes from, my family's immigrant status, my family's financial status. Just all of it. It was really tough. (Jasmine, Individual Plática)

The epigraph shared above is from a plática with Jasmine, a Black woman in STEM, when sharing about her experiences in her doctoral program. She very openly shared about the many racial microaggressions she experienced in her program due to her interesting identities. She has received many layered assaults on the basis of her race, body, and family. I chose to open the section on racial microaggression with Jasmine's words because they encapsulate the

challenging experiences Women of Color encounter and the various forms of racial microaggressions they experience.

The concept of racial microaggressions came from needing to identify the role of race and racism in the everyday lives of People of Color. When theorizing a framework that would examine race and racism in the everyday life, Chester Pierce (1970) first came to the term of offensive mechanisms. This term became a way to identify the subtle everyday attacks perpetuated by the dominant culture, white people, to subjugate Black people. Alongside offensive mechanisms, he used the term micro-aggression to speak to the subtle and stunning effects that offensive mechanisms have on Black people. In his later work, Pierce came to use race-inspired microaggression to speak to the racial motives of the subtle, stunning, and often non-verbal attacks experienced by Black people (Profit et al., 2000).

Extending on this conceptual framework, Solórzano and Pérez Huber (2020) offered racial microaggressions to speak to the everyday racism People of Color experience. Racial microaggressions are defined as verbal and nonverbal assaults directed towards People of Color, often carried out in subtle, automatic, or unconscious forms. They are layered assaults based on race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent or surname. Racial microaggressions are cumulative assaults that take a psychological, physiological, and academic toll on People of Color (Solórzano et al., 2000; Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020). Women of Color in academia also face racial microaggressions due to their race, ethnicity, gender, class, and other interesting identities (Crenshaw, 1991; McKee & Delgado, 2020; Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020). The Women of Color doctoral students who were a part of this work experienced many types of racial microaggressions, and in this section I share some of the racial microaggressions that were perpetrated by their field, professors, advisors, and peers. This

section on racial microaggressions ends with examining being called by the wrong name as a racial microaggression.

Presumed Incompetent

A common thread throughout this section has been the need for Women of Color to prove themselves qualified and deserving of their positions in their respective doctoral programs. This constant belief of presumed incompetence that Women of Color encounter is a form of racial microaggressions. Kiana, a Black woman in STEM, talked about her experience with this and shared:

> So yeah, racism runs rampant. It's just a part of our day-to-day, just being in the sciences. . . . Like something that's common is if you give a presentation, you're going to have probably three times, four times as many questions as your counterparts. To the point where even in my classes, it made my classmates uncomfortable with how many questions and how I was, like pretty much attacked during a scientific presentation versus them . . . I go up, and from a point that I even said the title of my slide, they're already asking me questions and coming at me and not believing anything. . . Because you think that I got here, because of my color, I use my, me being a minority to get here. Like this idea of affirmative action, when, in reality, I have the most qualifications. I met the requirements twice to your once. (Individual plática)

Kiana describes having to navigate racist occurrences in her day-to-day academic interactions. Kiana encountered everyday racism in her program and shared that despite working twice as hard to be where she is, she is still questioned about her capabilities. Prior to her doctoral program, she had developed a robust research background with multiple publications. Yet, when presenting her work, she will receive four times as many questions as her peers. She attributes this to the false perceptions and racial stereotypes they hold about Black women. Kiana speaks about the way the misconceptions people have regarding affirmative action and the way it is used to discredit the accomplishments of Women of Color. Kiana expressed the frustration she felt from the constant attacks she encountered. When presenting her work, she cannot even get past the point of her title page before being interrupted by questions. It has gotten to a point where

even her peers feel uncomfortable about the visible difference in how Kiana is treated compared to everyone else. Her peers have privately talked to Kiana about it but have not raised their concerns to a professor or in the class setting. Kiana's experiences with racial microaggressions when she presents give a clear insight into the way professors, institutions, and academic fields perpetuate challenges that Women of Color must overcome when entering these spaces.

Epistemological Gaps

Women of Color graduate students also experience racial microaggressions via the epistemological ideologies that are upheld. Traditional epistemologies across disciplines are typically male-centric and are upheld as the canon. While the epistemologies of People of Color are diminished and deemed as unnecessary additives. This form of racial microaggression also contributes to the erasure of the knowledge that Women of Color bring to academia. Isabel, a Latina in History, had negative integrations with a professor regarding the work she was drawing on to frame research centering on the histories of Latin American women. Isabel recalled:

> It was just these microaggressions the entire quarter. That I needed to read more English literature because I needed to learn how to write a narrative that was more like English literature. And really bizarre, dismissive things like that. I didn't think was necessary in a graduate program. (Individual Plática)

Isabel received the message that her approach to telling Latin American women's stories was inappropriate for her field. Her cultural intuition and decolonial approach were diminished and deemed incorrect (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Instead, she was told to read more English literature and structure her storytelling in a more "traditional" format. This traditional English literature format would not be appropriate given the focus of her study, but that was not acknowledged. Natividad, another one of my collaborators, also experienced this form of epistemological racial microaggression. In her pursuit of doing her research, she had to fill the intellectual gaps that her program was not supporting. Natividad shared:

> I didn't learn anything about Women of Color feminism. I had to learn on my own. The methods that we wanted to use . . . I'm really fascinated with the way that you do your research because that kind of decolonial methods is not a thing they taught us. There was no like sense of how to do those things or wasn't respected. So those types of elements [racial microaggressions] were really rough. (Individual Plática)

She talked about how her program failed to provide an institutional opportunity to learn about the feminism of Women of Color. Even though she was in a gender studies program, she had to learn Women of Color Feminism independently. Natividad also commented on her desire to engage in decolonial methodologies, but her program did not support this, and she was advised against it. Unfortunately, Natividad was not the only one discouraged from exploring decolonial methods that would better fit their collaborators. As a result, I engaged in many conversations where my collaborators sought to learn more about my methods and asked for sources to continue exploring. Through their narratives, it was simple to see that it really is rough for Women of Color to navigate their research.

Difficult Mentorship Relationship

Racial microaggressions perpetrated by advisors were also a widespread occurrence in the lives of Women of Color. Many of my collaborators had difficult experiences with their advisors, who often had them seek alternative advisors or mentors. Sanaya, a South Asian American in Sociology, shared her regret about working with her first advisor. During their first few meetings, Sanaya tried to understand her advisor's mentoring strategy and shared her current research. Sanaya explained her research on the experiences of low-income Asian American students in predominantly white institutions. In her research, Sanaya highlights the importance of supporting this group of students, as they are often overlooked due to the misconception that all Asian American students are doing well. Her advisor's feedback was not what she expected. Of that interaction, Sanaya shared:

> His comments were, "I don't know why these students are struggling so much. When I struggled in college, I just studied harder." And he made another comment that was like, "Asians actually make more money than white people." And I was like, "Did you read anything I wrote about how that's not always accurate for every Asian ethnic group?" So yeah, I just didn't know what to make of it . . . And I wish I would have switched advisors at that point or talk to someone and been, "hey, I don't feel like that's appropriate for him to be saying about my research" . . . and I don't want to blame myself because it's not my fault. But I wish I had read deeper into his work. . . Once I took off my old advisor I'm all about just, getting whoever supports me on my committee, wherever they are. (Individual Plática)

He made a racial microaggressive comment regarding Asian American students. His comment let Sanaya know that he was blind to his privilege and that he was ignorant of the systemic inequities that Students of Color in academia must overcome. Just studying harder is not a solution to the problem Sanaya's research was exploring. Her advisor's inappropriate comment also signaled to Sanaya that her advisor did not read her work, but she tried to move past it as it was in her first year of the program. She tried to stay optimistic and hoped these would be isolated incidents, but when it continued, she realized that he would not be a source of support in her research pursuits. She stopped seeking his mentorship, eventually switched advisors, and looked for outside support. Initially, Sanaya blamed herself for not realizing that he was a poor fit sooner but then affirmed that she was not at fault. The struggle of coming to terms with a difficult relationship with an advisor or PI was expressed across collaborators. This experience, alongside the other forms that Women of Color experience racial microaggression in their doctoral programs, contributes to the reason why many take longer to complete their program in comparison to their white counterparts. In the next section I focuses on the racial microaggression that Women of Color experience when they are called by the wrong name.

The Misnaming of Women of Color

Another common racial microaggression that Students of Color often experience in school is tied to their name (Kohli & Solórzano. 2012). Many of my collaborators detailed the

ways they were often misnamed, called by the name of the other Women of Color in the space, or had their names mispronounced or avoided by peers and faculty. This is particularly troubling as names hold very personal and often cultural meanings connected to their families. Kohli and Solórzano (2012) wrote about the impact this has on students and the tone teachers set in the classroom setting when this occurs. This racial microaggression also contributes to feeling like outsiders or as if their department and professor do not care to learn their names. Jasmine, a Black woman, shared how the staff and professor in her STEM program would mistakenly call her by the wrong name. Frustrated with this, she said, "They would literally refuse to learn my name from the other Black students that were there. And acted like all of our names are just inter-swappable. Just did not give a fuck" (Jasmine, Individual Plática). Although there were few Black women in her program, this problem persisted. She experienced being called on by the wrong names during classes and by the staff in email correspondence. There was a particularly troubling incident where Jasmine received an email intended for someone else that disclosed important information, and the email with her information was sent to another Black woman in the program. Although this violated both of their privacy, they received a simple disingenuous apology. Kiana, another Black Woman in STEM, also spoke about the many incidents where her name was mixed up with the other Black women in the program. Kiana shared:

> So exhausting to say, "Can you please stop mixing us, because we look nothing alike." And, "I don't see you mixing up any of the other students who actually do look alike or have similar names." Like it'd be different if our names were similar or something like that. (Group Plática)

Kiana shows how tiresome it is to constantly correct others when they use the wrong name to address her. In her attempt to come up with a reason this occurs that is not connected to racism, she falls short and concludes that they are not similar in name or appearance. She also reflects on

how her white peers who might share similar names are not experiencing being called by the wrong name.

I share another example of how my collaborators encountered a racial microaggression related to their names. Sanaya, South Asian America in Sociology, recounted during the group plática that although she had not experienced too many misnamings, she did encounter professors who avoided her name. Sanaya reflected:

> I don't think there's any other South Asian in our department to mistake me for. That's probably why that's the case. But I also don't really recall many faculty ever, using my name. (Group Plática)

Although Sanaya has not experienced being called by the wrong name, she attributes this to being the only South Asian woman in her program. Sanaya has touched on the ways that, as a South Asian student, she has been treated differently from other Asian American students in her program. She was not often associated with other Asian American students and, on occasion, even had others voice racial comments against Asian Americans because they forgot her ethnic/racial identity. The way she has experienced this racial microaggression is in the way that her professors avoid her name. She does not recall many of her professors calling her by name, although they do to other students. This is equally disheartening as when being called on by the wrong name. In the next section, I focus on how these cumulative incidents, like being called by the wrong name or your qualifications being called into question, have a lasting effect.

The Violence Women of Color Encounter in Academia

The previous findings shared in this chapter show various levels of violence that Women of Color encounter in academia. Continuing with how racial microaggression is understood, the cumulative everyday racism have psychological and physiological consequences for People of Color. The body of work demonstrates that People of Color and Women of Color do experience higher cortisol and stress levels due to racism and sexism in academia (Morales et al., 2024;

Watson, 2019; Watson & Marie, 2022). The lasting effects can harm the well-being of Women of Color in doctoral programs. Itzel, an Indigenous in Sociology, saw the violent effect of academia firsthand:

> I was on the phone with our current Director of Graduate Studies. I was bawling my eyes out for, like 45 minutes. I hate that I have to ask for this help. I hate that my timeline is really bad. And unfortunately, uhm [begins crying] sorry, it's because it's been recent. One of our, one of the students in the department died by suicide. It's been two, three weeks. She's a Black Woman. And it's really hard to go back to normal and deal with all these things where we know that these things shape our experiences. We know that these things pull us away from getting things done and progressing in the department. And we haven't really felt supported. At least in my situation, I feel supported now. After bawling my eyes out, after reliving my traumas with these people. But it's just really hard, because, there's all this stuff, and it feels like there's no support. (Individual Plática)

Unfortunately, the violence in academia and other psychological stressors cost Sanaya's friend her life. This greatly affected Sanaya and her peers, and although the department spoke about offering additional support for the grieving students, they have not followed through. Itzel gave some context of the climate in her department before the tragic death of her friend. A few months prior, during an annual review, the director of graduate studies accidentally sent out a department-wide email that included the names of five underperforming students. The email included notes and a message of why this group of students needed to be singled out and talked to. One of the names included was of the Black woman who took her life. Itzel talks about how this incident could have been a contributing factor as it embarrassed her and placed more pressure on her friends to perform while having this label. Sanaya's department failed to provide adequate support during this mistake and continued to operate as normal shortly after. Struggling during this time, Izel had to advocate for herself to receive support. She laments having to relive the trauma and needing to be vulnerable in order to receive adequate support.

This tragic passing resonant with the early death of many prominent Women of Color in academia. Two scholars whom I heavily draw from for this research, Audre Lorde, age 57, and

Gloria Anzaldúa, age 61, both passed early due to health complications. This also made me reflect on my time as an undergraduate at the University of California, Santa Cruz. When the only Black Faculty in the psychology department, Dr. Aaronette White, unexpectedly died at the age of 51 from an aneurysm. Most recently, in September of 2023, two prominent Black academic leaders also met untimely death. Dr. Joanne Epps and Dr. Orinthia Montague's death brought significant attention to the hostile and racist work environment that may have contributed to their early passing (Hudson-Ward, 2023). This form of violence is primarily seen with Black women but similarly affects other Women of Color (Morales et al., 2024).

It is understandably why, when I asked about future career plans, Jasmine, a Black Woman in STEM, spoke about not wanting to stay in academia and stated, "I'm not gonna make myself a martyr for the cause" (Individual Plática). Experiencing the physical and mental toll and seeing the experiences of the few Women of Color around her, she chose to put her needs first. She no longer saw the benefit in sacrificing her well-being for academia and instead sought to enter the private sector for financial security. Jasmine still held her social justice ideas of using STEM to find solutions to the preventable death in her community, but she no longer believed it should be at the expense of her mental and physical health. Making this choice is not easy, and it is something that is not typically recognized. Jasmine was not the only collaborator who expressed not wanting to continue in academia or shared apprehension when contemplating a career.

I conclude this section with some words from Natividad as she shared the frame of thought that has helped her combat the violence of academia and feel good about her plans for the future. She shared:

> Ultimately, the academy needs us way more than we need them, and I keep forgetting that. There's literally no way that the system can keep running without graduate students

> in general, but like graduate students of color, queer students. . . So don't let any institution make you feel this way. . . Otherwise, academia will take everything. (Individual Plática)

Natividad engages in self-validation about the vital role she and other graduate students of color hold in academia. Graduate students of color often identify the gaps and extend the traditional school of thought in their fields by centering communities of color. Institutions also use the labor of minoritized students to promote diversity when it is appropriate and within their interests (Berry & Mizelle, 2023; Malhotra & Carrillo Rowe, 2013; McKee & Delgado, 2020; Morales et al., 2024). Natividad cautions that without her self-validation, "academia will take everything." This is an important reminder of the dangers Women of Color face while in academic settings. In the next section, I highlight the support and strategies Women of Color named necessary in their academic journeys.

Persisting Through Graduate School: Survival Tactics and Tools

During our conversations, it was necessary to also discuss their positive experiences in academia and the factors that help them persist through adversity. The sources of support they identified were the importance of a supportive mentor, working with students, and finding community. When asked about advice for future Women of Color in doctoral programs, they recommended setting boundaries early on, staying connected with family and community, engaging in self-care, and seeking therapy.

Importance of Mentorship

Bodies of work have identified mentorship as a contributing factor to the retention of Students of Color across the educational pipeline (Malhotra & Carrillo Rowe, 2013; McKee & Delgado, 2020). The role that mentorship plays is seen through the collaborator's profiles offered in Chapter Five. In their introduction that detailed the academic journey that led them to their doctoral program, each spoke about mentors who were pivotal to their trajectory. The graduate

mentors, professors, or community mentors, often Persons of Color, were the people who revealed the hidden curriculum to them. Similarly, finding good mentors during their time as doctoral students was equally important to making progress in their programs. For Women of Color in doctoral programs, having a good relationship with advisors, help from Faculty of Color, and seeking support from past mentors or committee members were how they made it through in their programs.

Having a good relationship with their advisor made the difficult and marginalizing situation manageable. Even when they faced racial microaggressions and were marginalized by faculty, the negative impact was eased when they had an advisor they could rely on for support. Natividad talked about the support she received from her advisor, "I've seen my colleagues who have gotten the brunt of it. So there's a little bit of survivor's guilt. Do you know what I mean? Like I had a champion who could protect me" (Individual Plática). She spoke a few times about being able to challenge her program on their inequitable practices that disproportionately affected the few students of color they had, and she didn't feel scared in doing that because of her "champion." Similarly, Itzel also received help from individuals in her department when she faced challenges that prevented her from moving forward in her program. She shared, "And I've found people in my department, faculty, who I feel like are really good at advocating for me, and getting me jobs, and getting me opportunities" (Individual Plática).

Unfortunately, as this chapter shows, not all students have good relationships with advisors. When that is the case, the Women of Color in this research often looked for other faculty or spaces that would support them and their research. If they were lucky, they found an advisor to switch with, but there were situations where switching was not an option. When they could not switch, they turned to looking for committee members who could offset the

difficulties. Isabel, a Latina in History, speaks about how she manages a strained relationship with her advisor and shared:

> She gives me anxiety and I hate talking to her every time. So I've gone to somebody else on my committee to discuss my work, which has actually worked out far better. . . But I still have her as my advisor because she is a very big force in the field and I need the recommendation . . . I just need to get through working with her and do the best that I can, getting support elsewhere where I need it. (Individual Plática)

Although her advisor gives her anxiety and has not been as supportive of her research, she continues working with her because she is too scared about the retaliation that would occur if she did. Isabel fears that if she were to switch, her advisor would be upset with her, and that would cause her to lose favor with others in her field. Instead, she found other faculty that would be supportive and could guide her in her research topic in a way that her advisor could not. For the women, the faculty whom they received support from were often Faculty of Color and/or faculty that was sensitive to their racial and other intersecting identities. They understood their positionality and the direction of the work they wanted to engage in.

Finding Community and Working with Students

My research collaborators also cited finding their academic community and working with students as ways for them to stay in their programs. Finding community often consisted of other Students of Color in their programs or other students they found outside their department. Finding their community allowed them to feel a sense of belonging in hostile climates. When reflecting on how she navigated challenging experiences in the classroom, Fatima, a Latina in Education, shared:

> Back then, it was first the phase of shutting down. And then, feeling the imposter syndrome. But then I'm always fortunate that I have people around me that remind me, "No, don't go there." Who back me up, and tell me, "No, you're saying something. Let me help you out." And then they pull me back . . . reminds me I have this community. They see me through other lenses, and I appreciate them. So, when the next one [racial microaggression] comes, I'm a little more prepared. (Individual Plática)

She was recounting an incident of racial microaggression perpetrated by a peer during a class. During the class discussion, a white woman felt it was appropriate to build on a previous comment Fatima had made regarding a racist incident she had experienced while on campus. On her way to campus, a stranger on the street yelled at her, "Fuck you. Go back to Mexico." Her white peer took it upon herself to recreate the scenario before adding what she felt was necessary to the conversation. This stunned most people in the class, but not much was done besides moving on to another person after a few seconds of silence and a quick "That's not how I meant it" from the white woman. Reflecting on these incidents and other incidents where her contributions were challenged by other students during class discussions, Fatima identified her community as the source that brought her back in. Being supported by her peers and validated when she does confront racial incidents prevents her from internalizing it. Before finding her community, she struggled with imposter syndrome, but she now feels better equipped to deal with those situations. The same was seen through the stories of other Women of Color. Natividad also shared, "Once I had other Students of Color in the program that helped because I ended up building a community . . . I ended up realizing your network has to run deep in a hostile situation" (Individual Plática). The communities that they build are essential for persisting in their doctoral programs.

Another aspect connected with the building community was how many of the women also identified working with students as something that sustained them through difficult situations. Working with students often served as a reminder of the goals that led them to pursue a doctorate. Building connections and mentoring undergraduate students also extended their campus community. Women of Color often pursue graduate education with the intent of doing social justice work and giving back to their respective minoritized communities. Isabel, a Latina

in History, fondly remembers working with students and shared, “And I think for me, the balances then with the students that I interact with were undergrads . . . And that kind of offsets all of the anger that I have to feel in these situations” (Individual Plática). Working with students, Isabel witnessed how the representation she offered as a Latina in history, and her pedagogical approach connected her with the undergraduate Students of Color in her classes. She served as a mentor to past students and wrote letters of recommendation for students pursuing graduate school. Isabel’s narrative was a perfect representing of what most of my collaborators shared when talking about their work with undergraduate students.

Each of the pláticas ended by asking my collaborators for advice they would offer to incoming Women of Color doctoral students. A few tips came up across all collaborators. They stressed the importance of setting boundaries with advisors, PIs, and other faculty in their department.

Setting Boundaries

They each saw this as an important first step as it would prevent some of the ways they become overextended with the work they were asked to do. As previously seen with Kiana, she is intentional about denying work opportunities offered by her advisor when they are not in her best interest. Although she is not always heard, she is consistent in attempting to maintain her boundaries. Setting boundaries also extended to deciding how much academic work they let spill over to their personal life. Many spoke about having designated times for when they stopped replying to emails to make sure they maintained some balance with their personal life.

Staying Connected with Family and Community

Their advice on setting boundaries is also closely related to their advice on staying connected with family and community. By staying connected with family and community, they honored their whole selves. Women of Color often spoke about how easy it was to lose sight of

other aspects of their lives due to the rigorous process of their programs. It was particularly difficult to balance in their first years, and in moments of isolation, the challenging racial situations were much more difficult to overcome. Staying connected to the community reminded them of the larger picture and remember things that are important outside of academia.

Engaging in Self Care

By setting boundaries, they also made sure to carve out time to engage in self-care. There were times when it was difficult for them to center their need and engage in self-care without guilt. However, having a support system and establishing this practice made it easier to do. Kiana shared how she started a self-care Saturday with her friends and set up an accountability text they would send each other, such as, "Today, no science. Just us! Like whatever we want to do, and we're not going to feel guilty 'cause we're all going to do it together." This helped her center herself and maintain her close ties with friends.

Importance of Therapy

They also spoke about the importance of seeking therapy for their mental health. Most of them made use of the psychological services that their insurance would support. This helped them navigate the often racist interactions and combat internalizing the negative feelings those interactions elicited.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the challenging experiences Women of Color encounter in doctoral programs. The findings and narratives provided by my research collaborators help us understand how their gender and racial/ethnic identities impact their education journeys. Beginning with the survey/intake form, the data allowed a glimpse of how (a) Women of Color received resistance when engaging in critical research centering on race and racism, (b) their competency was challenged or questioned, and (c) their experiences of racial microaggression. These findings

were then extended through the individual and group pláticas. The findings are organized thematically, but it is important to note that although separated into different themes, the findings are interconnected. One of the challenges that they detailed was the isolation they encountered as being one of the few or only Women of Color in their programs. These feelings of isolation contributed to feelings of not belonging and internalizing the imposter syndrome. The women also gave insight into the marginalization and racial microaggressions they experienced.

They experienced marginalization through infantilization and the invisible labor/cultural tax they encountered. The infantilization came in the way that those in positions of power diminished their agency and disregarded their contributions. While at the same time relying on them to do the unrecognized work connected to diversity initiatives in the form of a cultural tax. When it came to racial microaggression, they experienced it based on their race, ethnicity, gender, and age identities. The racial microaggressions were perpetrated by their field, professors, advisors, and peers. Another racial microaggression experienced by my collaborators was having their names swapped and being misnamed. The section focusing on the challenges that Women of Color experience ends with bringing attention to the psychological and psychological violence that Women of Color encounter in academia.

To combat the challenges, the women offered fundamental support that came from mentorship and finding a community in their programs. They also offered navigational tips, such as setting boundaries with faculty members and students, and working to protect their well-being. They also stressed the importance of staying connected with family and community to honor their whole selves and not only focus on their academic identity. Engaging in self-care was also a necessary practice to maintain the stamina needed to complete a doctoral program. This helps fight the burnt out which is something many Women of Color experience. Lastly, they all

stressed the importance of seeking psychological help and utilizing those services to combat the effects of the negative interactions they experience on a daily basis. In the next section, I focus on the silences that Women of Color encounter while navigating their doctoral education.

CHAPTER SEVEN: WOMEN OF COLOR UNCOVERING AND THEORIZING SILENCE

This chapter defines the silences that Women of Color in doctoral programs experience. To understand how silence has been previously understood, it is essential to revisit Audre Lorde's (1977) words on silence, "My silence has not protected me. Your silence will not protect you" (p. 88). Lorde viewed silence as something that must be overcome and an inefficient strategy to respond to oppression. In the context in which Lorde is reflecting on how silence affected her life, she saw it as being in opposition to voice, building connections, and something we must overcome to enact change. Although there are many instances when silence is detrimental to the lives of Women of Color and other marginalized groups, viewing silence only through this lens can miss its complexities. In doing so, we may miss the nuance of silence when considering it in a different context. For instance, my own experience shared in Chapter One, when as an undergraduate student, my TA interpreted my silence in class as something negative that would prevent me from graduating. Due to the ambiguity surrounding silence, the outside interpretation of my silence missed that I was using it as a way to learn and acclimate to the new rigorous environment. Until that point, I had been proud and excited about the ways the class had extended my thinking, but this misinterpretation of my silence caused me to internalize it as a deficit strategy.

Other scholars have taken a different approach to conceptualizing silence, shedding an understanding of how silence can be seen beyond its detrimental effects. Montoya's (2000) work on silence demonstrated how Women of Color in law school used silence to decentralize academic hegemony in Socratic seminars. Similarly, Allen and Solórzano (2001) revealed how Students of Color strategically used silence to ensure they were heard when speaking on issues they felt were important. Additionally, the anthology, *Silence, Feminism, Power: Reflection at the Edge of Sound*, is instrumental in sharing how silence has been a space for breath, a location

to reflect and heal for women (Malhotra & Carrillo Rowe, 2013). Together with these bodies of work, we can begin to see silence and its complexities. As seen in this introduction, silence is not always in the absence of voice, voice is not always heard, and silence has the potential to be heard.

This dissertation aims to continue expanding how we understand silence in the context of the lives of Women of Color in doctoral programs. In the next section, I share how my collaborators and I developed the Spectrum of Silence as a conceptual diagram to better understand the complexities of silence. Through the depiction of silence through a spectrum, I demonstrate the shift and flow of silence depending on the context. I draw from excerpts of what my collaborators shared in the individual pláticas, video testimonios, and group plática.

The Spectrum of Silence

With the help of my collaborators and their stories, we built on the previous literature to capture the intricacies of silence. During the group plática, my collaborators and I engaged in a conversation in which we reflected on the silences we experienced. Our conversation allowed us to build rapport and connect with each other's stories. It was at this point, around an hour into the group plática, that I asked for their input on how I was understanding the silences. I explain how I was organizing my conceptualization of silence by using the categories of detrimental silence, pedagogical silence, and beneficial silence. I shared examples from the individual pláticas and video testimonios to show how different silences could be organized into these categories. I also expressed that although I was trying to step away from presenting silence in a dichotomy of silence versus silencing, the categories still had the potential to present silence in that way. In response, one of my collaborators, Kiana, a Black woman in STEM, shared that as she heard me explain, she began to see how those silences could be along a spectrum. In the group plática, she shared, "I'm a visual learner. I'm thinking a spectrum. On the spectrum, we have these different

contexts" (Kiana, Group Plática). I agreed with Kiana, that visually, the spectrum would lend itself to demonstrating the different contexts in which silence emerges for Women of Color in doctoral programs.

Kiana's comment quickly enhanced the way we continued theorizing silence as another collaborator, Sanaya, a South Asin American in Sociology, shared, "I feel like for myself, personally, things that were detrimental silence to me at one point, I now see them as beneficial, or I use the same silent strategies, but it's beneficial to me rather than detrimental now" (Sanaya, Group Plática). Prior to Kiana's comment about viewing silence in a spectrum, Sanaya was looking for a way to share how in her own experience, certain silences that at one point felt detrimental but now, in retrospect, can be seen as beneficial. The spectrum gave her a way to understand and explain her own shifting view of her silences. This conceptual model's strength is that it visually and theoretically demonstrates how silence is not stagnant but shifts. In my initial analysis of the individual pláticas and video testimonios done in preparation for the group plática, I saw similar shifts within collaborators' perceptions of their own silence. I took this opportunity to gain insight into what could be a cause of the shifting perspective and asked Sanaya if the change was due to a shift within herself or an external change. She replied:

> I think, for me, it's a shift within myself. In the way I view myself and the decisions I made earlier in my program. Whereas before, I was coming from a place of feeling ashamed, or I should be strong enough to say something in that moment. And now that I've had some distance, and I'm reflecting back on it, I see that staying silent in those situations did benefit me. I just couldn't see it at that time. And it was what I needed at that time. (Group Plática)

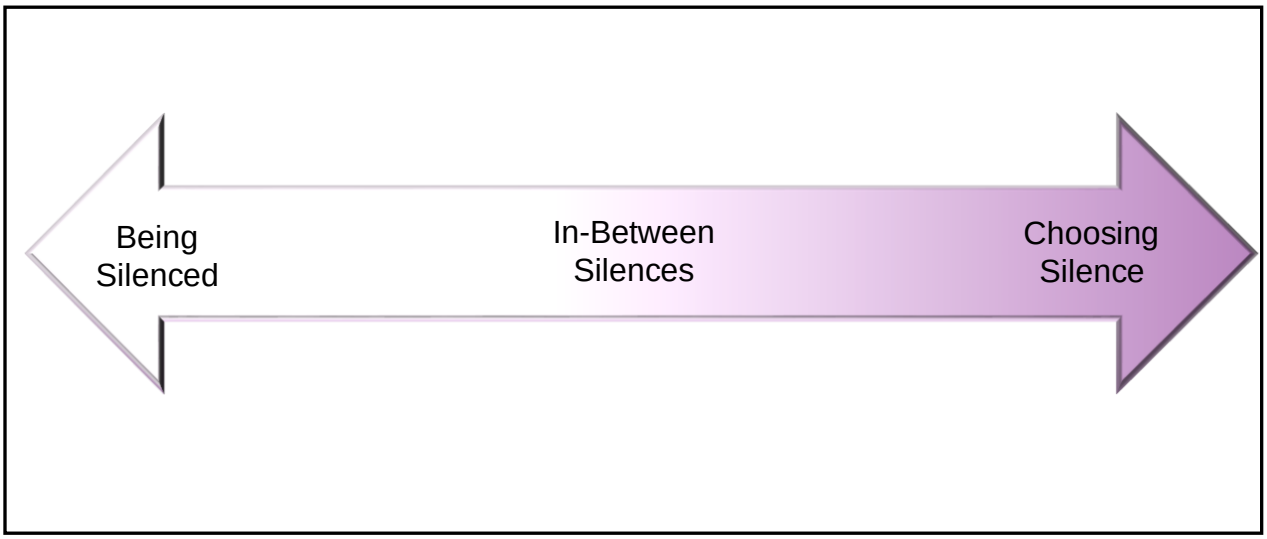
For Sanaya, the shift was internal. By collaborating through the individual plática, video testimonio, and group plática, she was able to reflect on her past encounters with silence through a new lens, of silence having many forms and giving them new meaning. Although it will require more work to fully illustrate the internal process that Sanaya shared, the spectrum offers an

avenue to show the contextual and personal shifts that encompass some of the earlier categories constructed.

Using a spectrum to conceptualize silence, I revisited the conversations during the individual pláticas, video testimonios, and group plática to create the Spectrum of Silence (see Figure 7.1). There were numerous examples of how my research collaborators experienced silence. For the sake of clarity, I used only a few examples to illustrate each of the types of silence on the spectrum. With each example, I build the model and define each point along the spectrum. I also offer a brief introduction of my collaborators when sharing their narratives, but I would like to remind you that you can find more about their identities by referencing Table 4.2, found in Chapter Four, or the collaborator profiles in Chapter Five.

The model I created is called the Spectrum of Silence. It begins on the left side with Being Silenced, with the gradient shifting to the In-Between Silence and ending with Choosing Silence. The Spectrum of Silence allowed me to uncover various ways silence occurs and gives insight into the decision-making process. The internal work that Women of Color employ when choosing to hold or use silence. This conceptualization extends our understanding of how silence operates in detrimental ways but also how it can be used to navigate difficult experiences in a doctoral program.

Figure 7.1. Spectrum of Silence.



Being Silenced by Professors, Departments, Environments, or Peers

A point along the Spectrum of Silence on the side of Being Silenced can be experienced by doctoral students when engaging with professors, departments, environments, or peers (see Figure 7.2). These types of silences are typically a response to facing overt or covert forms of marginalization and racial microaggressions (Lorde, 1977; Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020). Women of Color are often one of the few in their doctoral programs, and due to white supremacist structures permeating higher education, they face direct or indirect messages of not belonging. That is why it can be perpetrated by professors, departments, the environment, or peers who uphold the dominant ideologies and practices found in academia (Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Martinez-Vogt, 2015; McKee & Delgado, 2020).

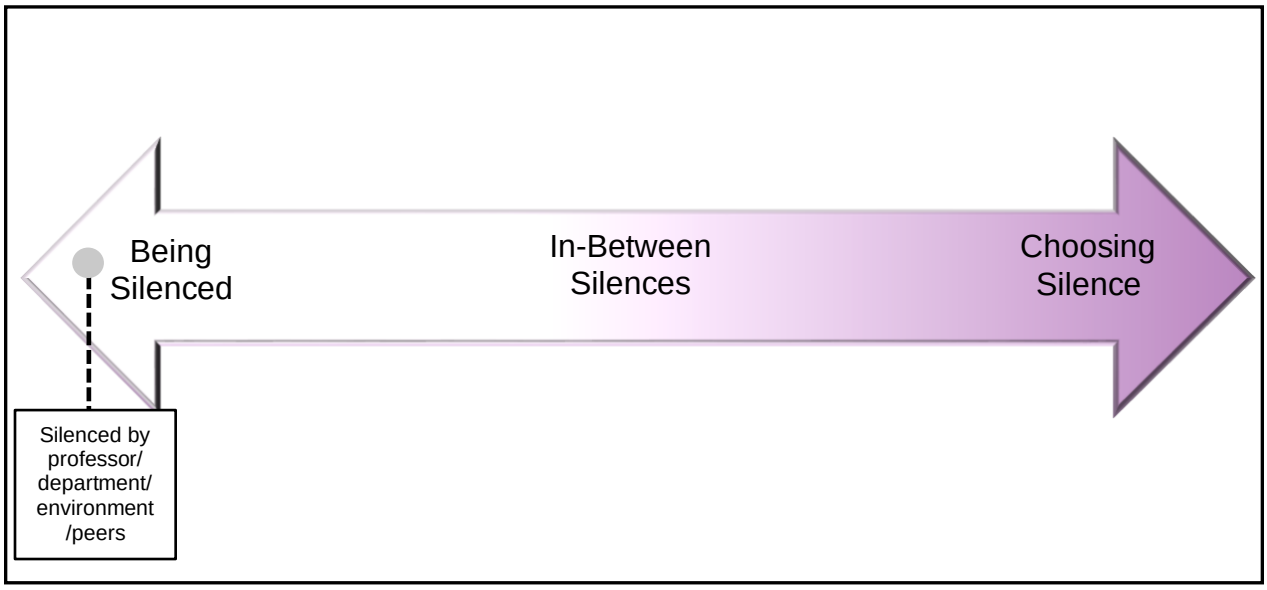
To illustrate this form of silence, I highlight what one of my collaborators shared. Tina, a Black Woman in Psychology, spoke about how she experienced being silenced by her former advisor, a white man. Tina shared:

> I have felt silenced a lot of the time. Most of the time, it's been when working with my former advisor. There was one instance where he was giving me some criticism, and I asked for clarification earnestly. And he said to me, "Well, don't ask questions." He

> didn't answer the question. And he said, "Don't ask questions. When you ask questions, you come off as defensive. So just take my criticism and do better." And I felt silenced in that moment, because my way of doing better is to first get an understanding of what it is I'm doing wrong, so that I can fix it. But I never got that understanding. And instead, I essentially got the message of just shut up and do better. . . . I was silenced. I mean, he literally told me don't ask questions. (Video Testimonio)

From the beginning of her statement, it is clear that this was not the only time she had felt silenced while in her doctoral program. What made this encounter stand out for Tina was that it was a culmination of various comments in which her advisor expressed displeasure with her performance. In his criticism, he even implied that other faculty in the department were in agreement with him and believed her performance was "underwhelming" and appeared as if she was "skirting by" as a doctoral student (Individual Plática). As a first-generation graduate student and a Woman of Color, it is often difficult to gain access to the hidden curriculum or understand internal politics. Tina's attempt to seek guidance and gain clarity on how to improve what she had done wrong was met with refusal and a further reprimand.

Figure 7.2. Spectrum of Silence.



In his response, it is also important to note the sexist and racist undertones of his comment, "When you ask questions, you come off as defensive." Black women are often met with the angry Black woman stereotype. I do not believe her advisor would have responded the same way if she were a white male graduate student asking questions. After this incident, Tina was no longer comfortable seeking help from her advisor for fear of "rocking the boat." Her advisor failed to fulfill his role, and instead caused more confusion and self-doubt. Although she later switched advisors and found out that what he had said regarding other faculty's opinion of her was untrue, she still carried feelings of self-doubt and imposter syndrome. Unfortunately, when reflecting on being silenced, Tina shared:

> It's been me thinking that I'm not good enough, or smart enough, or experienced enough to be heard. I hadn't earned the right to be heard. . . For me, it kind of felt like a weird regression back to younger days where I have been expected to not talk back to authority, not question authority. (Video Testimonio)

Tina's sentiments show the lasting effects that being silenced can have on someone. In her early graduate school experience with her advisor, that was the case; she could not question his authority, but the problem stemmed beyond one individual. The practices in her program made her feel she could not push or question authority. Additionally, the comment about "regression back to younger days" also hints at the way her age, gender, and race contributed to the way she was perceived and treated in the program. Similar to a finding presented in the previous chapter, we also see how her intersecting identities of presenting as a young Black woman led to her being infantilized and being treated as if she were younger when it benefited those around her. Although she deserved to be heard and was nearing the end of her graduate program, experiencing being silenced led to moments of self-doubt and made her feel undeserving of being heard.

Self-doubt, imposter syndrome, and fear of being wrong also contribute to feeling silenced by professors, departments, environments, or peers. An example of self-doubt and fear of being wrong led to one of my collaborators, Fatima a Latina in Education, being silenced by a peer. Fatima said:

> I don't participate all the time because some of the students intimidate me, and I feel they're out to get me cause they don't like me. . . I misread between the lines. And one of the students, just comes for my head. . . Part of me felt that she saw me as another Latina that got away with it, and shouldn't be here. And I never wanted to confront it. . . And that's when I decided I'm not participating in class anymore. And that was in week two, or three, and I'm like, "Yeah no, that's it for me." So I did go silent after that. (Individual plática)

The incident that Fatima shared, happened during her first year while she was verbally participating in a class. In her reading of one of the texts that were being discussed that day, she misunderstood a minor part of the reading. This minor misunderstanding led to a different interpretation from others in the class. Instead of being allowed to share and expand how she arrived at her understanding of the text, Fatima was confronted by a white woman in her class. Fatima said how she "comes for my head" because while trying to explain, the white woman continuously interrupted and demanded to know the exact pages of where Fatima had gotten that information. This response to automatically seek proof of competency is connected to how the knowledge of Women of Color is often questioned in academia (Berry & Mizelle, 2023). Fatima herself shared how she felt that her peer comforted her in this manner because she was "another Latina that got away with it." Similar to Tina's experience with her advisor, the white woman questioned Fatima's contributions in a way that she did not do to others in the class. Fatima's experience with being silenced by her peer can also be read as a silenced that occurred due to the class climate and environment. The professor in this class did not step in to diffuse the situation, giving Fatima the understanding that an incident like this could occur again if she spoke in class.

The structure of the class is what allowed the white women to feel emboldened to confront Fatima and receive no consequences. Although Fatima initially felt comfortable enough to share her thoughts in this class, that was no longer the case. Fatima ended by saying that she no longer wanted to participate in this class and remained silent for the remainder of the class.

Being Silenced by Others' Silence

Further along the Spectrum of Silence, another form is Others' Silence (see Figure 7.3). This form occurs in the Being Silenced part of the spectrum. This is typically when people who are in positions of power or privilege choose to stay silent when issues around race or challenges to oppressive structures occur. Instead of acting as allies or co-conspirators, they chose to maintain the oppressive structures through this silence, furthering the silencing of Women of Color and other marginalized groups. Co-conspirators are individuals who take personal risks by compromising their comfort, sacrificing their security, and standing with minoritized groups. (Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017; Love, 2019). This form of silence can occur in classes, meetings, and in staff or faculty offices. Itzel, an Indigenous Sociology student, highlighted how she encountered being silenced when advocating for herself and her peers. Itzel shared:

> I was advocating for myself and for my cohort. We had questions that weren't answered, and we have been getting mixed responses from faculty. . . I had asked her [Director of Graduate Studies] if we can sit down and just go over some of these questions. . . And I don't know if it was my delivery, I don't know if it was her being a white woman, being defensive. . . We went to this meeting thinking we were going to get answers. And unfortunately, this director [a different administrative director], I don't even know if she really read the email because I had provided context in that email. . . So she [a different administrative director] was really upset, and then the Director of Graduate Studies was just silent throughout the entire meeting. Didn't acknowledge anything, even when she knew that the [administrative] director was saying things that were wrong. And so it was just a really violent experience. (Individual Plática)

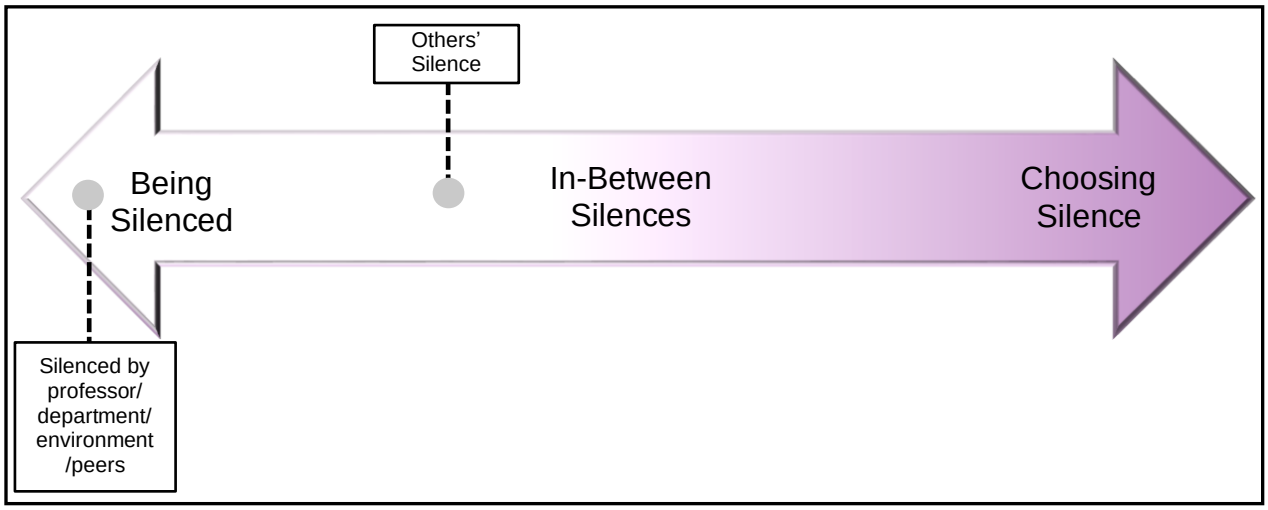
Itzel's experience demonstrates how using voice to advocate for one's needs does not necessarily mean it will be heard. Itzel and her peers had been seeking clarification on questions pertaining to qualifying exams, and reimbursements they were promised but had not received. After a year

of mixed messages, Itzel took it upon herself to seek the answers by setting up a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies in her department. In preparation for the meeting, Itzel provided detailed information on the questions they needed answers to. Itzel had been in conversation with the Director of Graduate Studies, both in person and via email. The Director of Graduate Studies was well aware of the situation when the meeting occurred, yet she chose not to correct her colleague. During the start of the meeting, Itzel soon realized that it would not go as smoothly as they had hoped. The Administrative Director did not familiarize herself with the situation and instead became defensive. The Administrative Director misunderstood what Itzel and her cohort were asking, and instead of addressing their questions, she berated Itzel and her peer due to her misunderstanding. Itzel recalls the silence from the Director of Graduate Studies and her lack of support during that meeting. Itzel believed that with the Director of Graduate Studies' intervention, the outcome would have been different. The Director of Graduate Studies' silence ultimately resulted in silencing Itzel and her peers even when exercising their voice. This silence is particularly troubling as many Women of Color already face many challenging experiences in academia and find it difficult to voice their concerns. When they muster the strength to speak up, they are often faced with silence.

Others' silence, when it comes from a person in a position of power such as a professor, they set an example and contributes to hostile climates for Women of Color. If a Student of Color raises a critique or comment regarding race and racism and the professor does not engage in that conversation, it signals to the class that those topics are not deemed important to discuss. In the previous chapter, there were various examples of how Women of Color received pushback or not being well received when speaking about race and racism in classes. During these interactions, they were often ignored, and the conversation would quickly shift to the next topic,

resulting in them feeling unheard even when they did use their voice. The women often said that these interactions led them to no longer feel comfortable talking in class after those incidents of being silenced. If professors intervened in these situations and engaged in the conversation, they would lead by example and signal that those topics of conversation were welcome in the class.

Figure 7.3. Spectrum of Silence.



In-Between Silences and Uncertain Silence

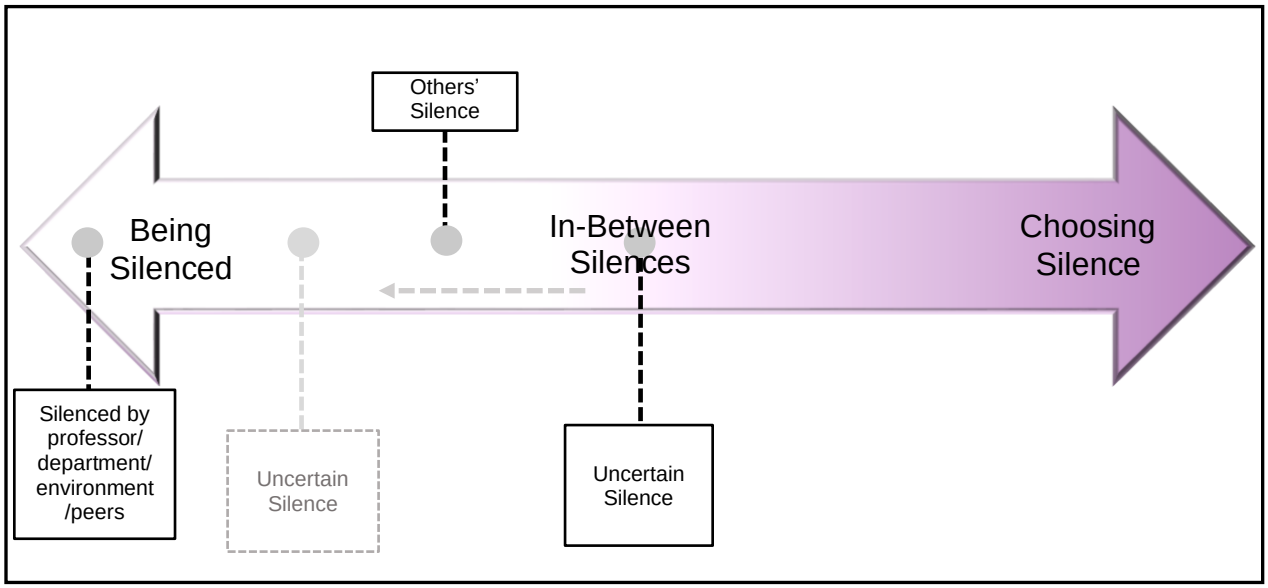
The In-Between Silences part of the spectrum embodies silences that are difficult to identify, whether they have been imposed or chosen. This section of the spectrum also helps demonstrate that silence is not static and can shift depending on the context or interpretation. A type of silence that can be found on this part of the spectrum is Uncertain Silence (see Figure 7.4). This occurs when a Woman of Color uses silence, but after the encounter, she regrets not saying anything. This is very similar to the way that People of Color often replay alternative scenarios of how they wish they responded to a racial microaggression (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020). Women of Color who encounter silence often contemplate the events that led to the silence and, at times, hold remorse about their decision. I draw from an experience shared by Sanaya, a South Asian American in Sociology. During the individual plática, she said:

> I hated that class, just because that Professor makes me uncomfortable. . . So I was really quiet in that class to begin with. But afterward, I wish I had said something to support that student that did speak up. . . That whole experience was really difficult. . . It just felt like he [professor] was disrespectful, not only for using that word, but also disrespectful to the student that was trying to engage in a conversation about it. (Individual Plática)

Sanaya expressed regret in staying silent when a white professor made a racist comment. During the class, when reading out loud a text, the professor read the n-word. It made people uncomfortable, and one person called him out by saying, "As a non-Black Person of Color, I don't think we should say the word."

In response, the professor got defensive and justified his actions by saying he did not mean it that way. Another group of white students came to his defense by saying it was not racist because he only read it from the text. At the moment of the incident, Sanaya chose to maintain her silence. Even before this racist incident, she already felt uncomfortable in this class because of the professor. Her silence had been something that had been helping her get through this class, but in this particular incident, she no longer felt it was the right decision. Sanaya's narrative demonstrates how an Uncertain Silence that began at the center can shift to the left into Being Silenced on the spectrum. To demonstrate this potential shift, on the Spectrum of Silence model, I have added a perforated arrow that leads from In-Between Silence to Being Silenced. The perforated arrow demonstrates how Sanaya's silence shifts from the center toward the left, as her regret now has her interpret the encounter as a moment of Being Silenced. Reading further into Sanaya's quote, we can see that in her reflection of the incident, she regrets not speaking up in support of the student who called out the professor. She viewed her professor's actions as disrespectful and only served to make Students of Color in the class feel silenced.

Figure 7.4. Spectrum of Silence.



Possibility of Silence for Self-Preservation

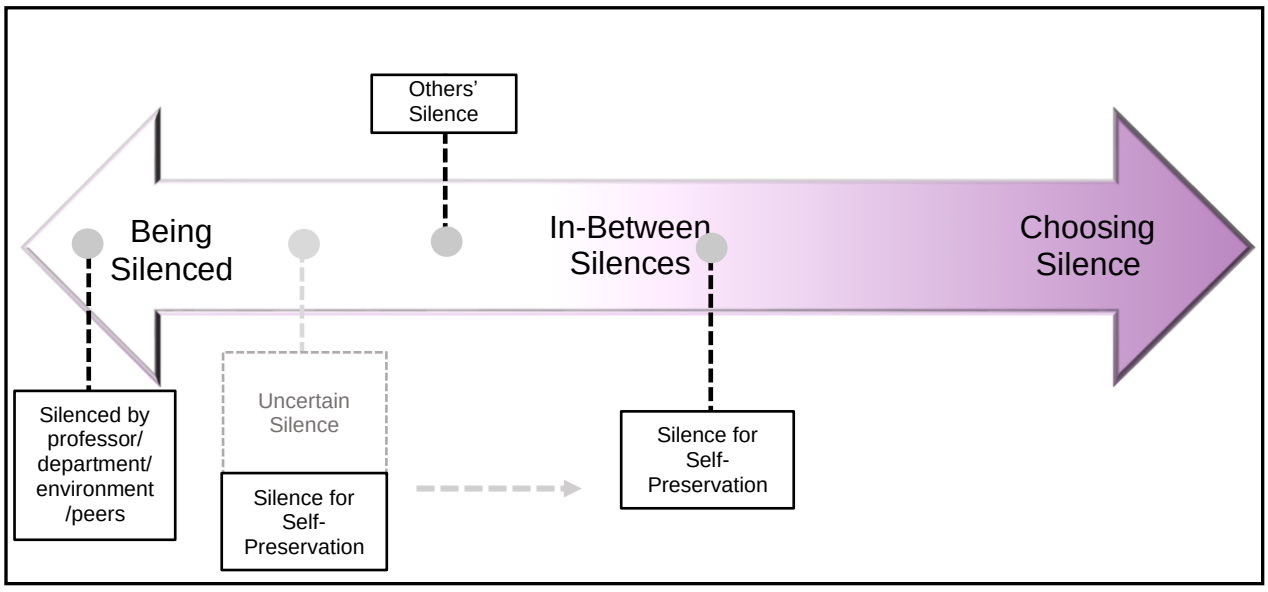
Another form of silence on the spectrum is Silence for Self-Preservation (see Figure 7.5). This is identified as a silence that serves as a protective mechanism that Women of Color utilize to preserve energy and mental well-being. The Silence for Self-Preservation allows Women of Color to protect themselves against retaliation that could push them out of academia. This strategy also helps Women of Color pick and choose what battles to engage in to ensure they do not become burned out before completing their program. Due to my research design, I was able to continue learning about Sanaya's thought process behind her encounter with silence. In her video testimonio, she revisited this incident and offered an introspective look at the feelings that she experienced. In her reflection, she said:

> Those early experiences I had in that first quarter of graduate school really contributed to me choosing to stay silent a lot of the times. Staying silent out of anger, sadness, frustration. . . But also, I think, looking back, it actually did protect me. In many ways protected me from further harm. If I had spoken up and somebody responded in a really hostile way, I think that would have not been a safe situation for me in my department. (Video Testimonio)

Sanaya's testimonio gives a glimpse into the complicated feelings that silence elicits. Her words also shed light on the ambiguity of silence and offer insight into what informs the decision to use it or not.

Sanaya began by listing the silence she experienced due to anger, sadness, and frustrations. As she continued explaining her process, she reconciled with the guilt and came to terms with how she used silence as a protective factor when in hostile climates. With this realization, Sanaya's once Uncertain Silence transforms into Silence for Self-Preservation and thus shifts back towards the right side of the spectrum (see Figure 7.5). Sanaya's story and the Spectrum of Silence help me depict how, depending on the situational context and personal introspection, an In-Between Silence can shift depending on how an individual identifies their silence as either being imposed or chosen.

Figure 7.5. Spectrum of Silence.



Silence for Learning

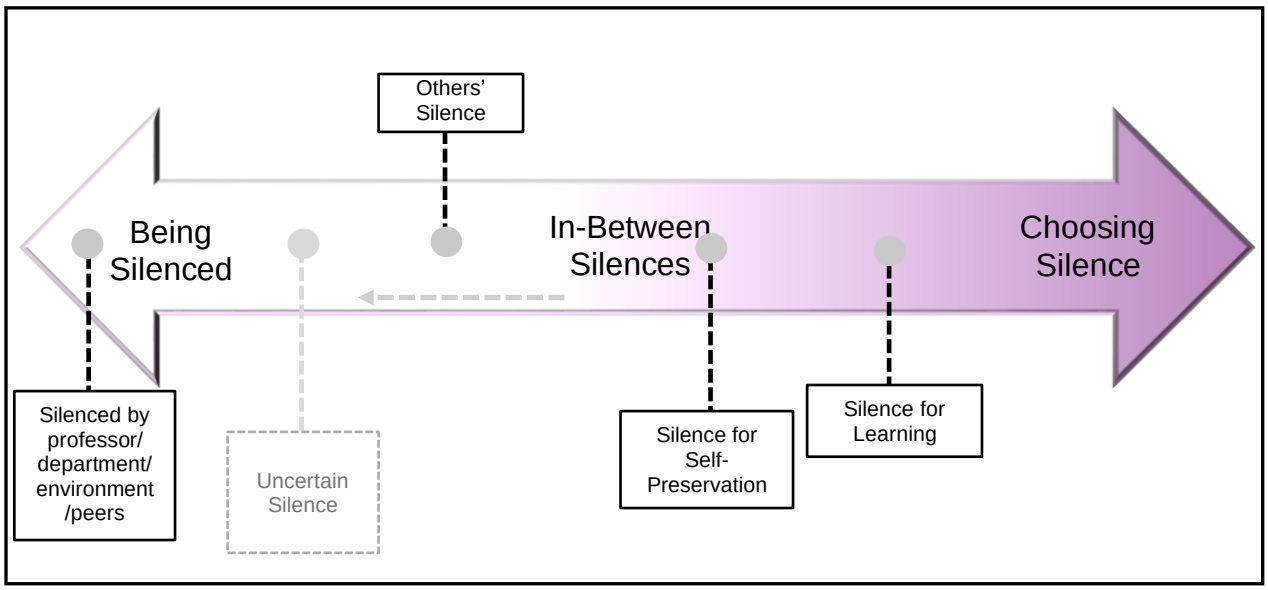
Shifting to Choosing Silence on the spectrum, another form is Silence for Learning (see Figure 7.6). This form of silence is a strategy that is used to make connections, process

information, or as a pedagogical tool to use in the classroom. Silence is a learning tool that is often used by Students of Color in academia. During the video testimonio, Itzel, an Indigenous woman in Sociology, shared the role that silence often played in her learning process. Growing up, she often used it in class settings and felt the benefits of sitting in silence as she made important connections before offering her thoughts in class. She often said that she did not speak for the sake of speaking but took her time to say something with intention. Once she had the opportunity to teach as a teaching assistant, she implemented what could be considered a pedagogical silence. When explaining her approach to teaching, she shared:

> I let students know that it's totally fine to sit with our thoughts for around two minutes. Which I know can feel like a very long time for students. But in my own experiences in academia, we're not given enough time to really process our thoughts. We're asked to share, and expected to come up with an analysis within like a minute, or maybe like 10 seconds, honestly. So I'm used to trying to implement that [silence]. I think that's been a positive because it's made my analysis whenever I contribute to conversations much more impactful. (Video Testimonio)

Itzel modeled and implemented a pedagogy of silence that allowed her students to learn in a culturally responsive environment. She sees that allowing students to sit in silence gives students the time to pay more attention and engage in critical ways. There is a body of work that attributes silences as being a model for learning for Indigenous students and other Students of Color (Montoya, 2000; Reda, 2009). Where like Itzel, they identify silence as an important part of the learning process that allows students to gather their thoughts and reflections for a critical engagement with what is being taught.

Figure 7.6. Spectrum of Silence.



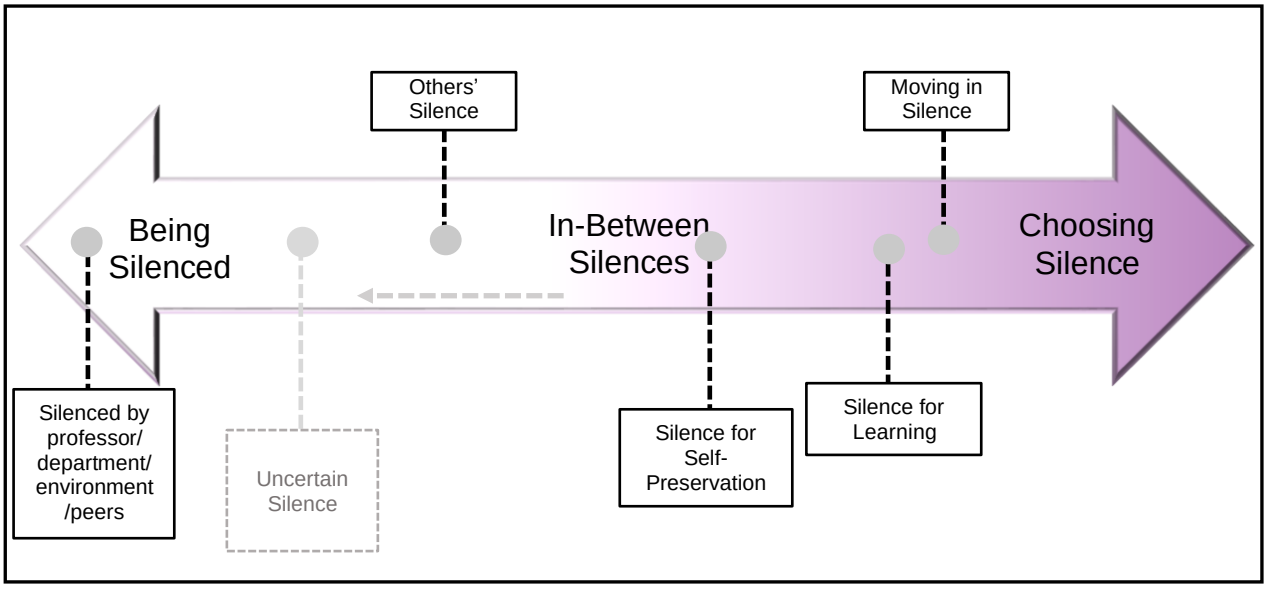
Moving in Silence

Another type of Choosing Silence on the spectrum is Moving in Silence (see Figure 7.7). This type utilizes silence as a tool to navigate hostile and competitive environments. Women of Color often find themselves as targets of the competition, especially when they succeed in receiving awards, fellowships, or writing opportunities. They are often seen as academically inferior and underserving of their accomplishments. Women of Color use Moving in Silence as a strategy to filter what they share with peers so as to not make themselves a target of competition. Jasmine, a Black woman in STEM, spoke about how she used silence as a navigational tool. She shared:

> At the time, I did have an unhealthy competitive environment between the older grad students in my lab. It was weird because this unhealthy competitive environment was really only reflected towards me . . . I was even more silent with folks in the lab. . . And let me tell you, I also believe in making moves in silence. So I told very few people my timeline . . . I felt like the more I kept to myself, the better off I would be. Because again, people want to see you do well, but not too well. (Video Testimonio)

Jasmine connects her initial difficult moments in her lab to them "wanting you to do well, but not too well." She saw the competitiveness being directed towards herself, the only Black woman in her lab. She soon learned that it was in her best interest not to share what she was applying for or her timeline. Initially, when she first arrived at her program, she was sharing the opportunities she learned about with her lab mates because, as an undergraduate student, she was used to a collaborative STEM lab. Jasmine did not realize that being in a collaborative lab was unique and not the norm. After learning that she could not move in the Lab the same way she did as an undergraduate student, she filtered what she shared. Utilizing this strategy allowed her to successfully make her was through her program and earn her degree within four years. This strategy could also allow Women of Color to protect themselves while navigating their program.

Figure 7.7. Spectrum of Silence.



Silence as Resistance

The last form on Choosing Silence part of the spectrum is Silence as Resistance (Figure 7.8). This silence disrupts hegemonic academic practices. The practices are usually tied to the

marginalization and racial microaggression students often face due to the white supremacy that steeps into academic settings. Fatima, a Latina in Education, utilized silence as resistance when she was called on by the wrong name. In her video testimonio, Fatima recorded:

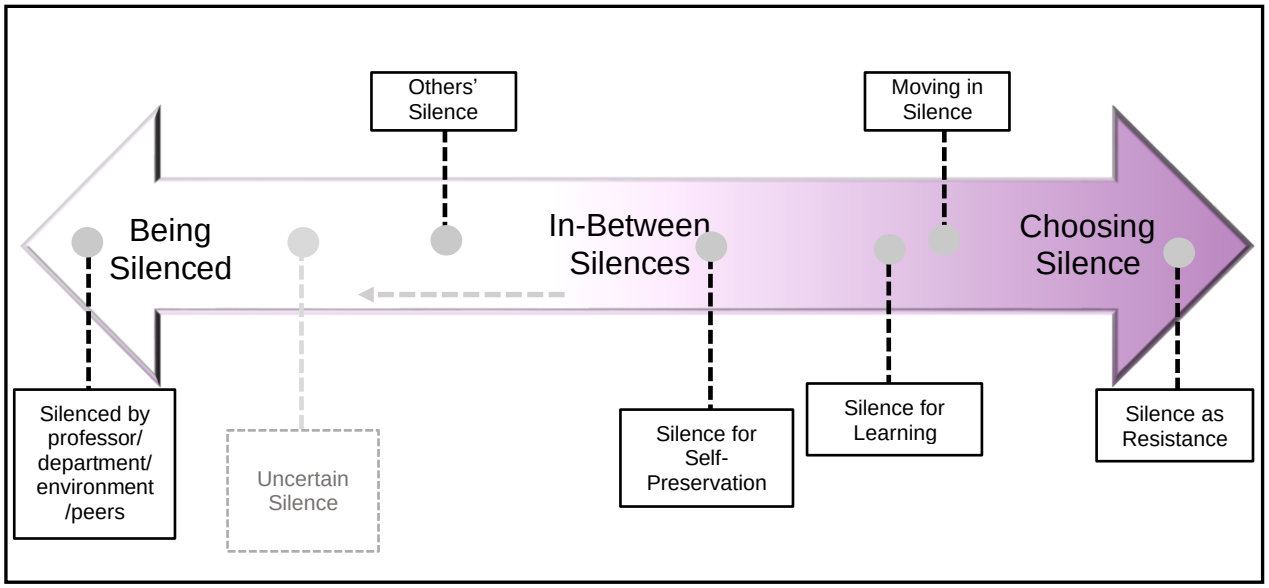
> When he said, "And we're gonna have Andrea present on this chapter." And I'm like that's my chapter, that's not me. And I decide to not say anything. Just cuz I wanted to bring that discomfort. Like I've been here for seven weeks and you don't know who I am. And so I stayed silent. I don't know how to call it, but it was just me, my little fight back . . . there's little instances [racial microaggression] that start chipping at you. . . So I stayed silent for a bit, and he looked around the room, nobody answered. My friend who knew I had to present that week, we made eye contact, and we were, I guess internally giggling. (Video Testimonio)

After weeks of being in the small class, Fatima's professor still did not know her name. Her white professor interchanged her name with another Latin American-sounding name, even when Andrea was not a student enrolled in the class. Fatima chose to take the opportunity to make the professor confront his mistake and have the class sit in discomfort. She was tired of letting the racial microaggressions and the interaction that gave her anxiety in this class chip away at her. Fatima took this stand as a way to fight back and bring attention to his racial microaggression. In the process of this act of resistance, it also opened a location for Fatima to connect with her friend in the class and affirm one another presence. That eye contact and internal giggle signaled to Fatima that it was not in her head, and she was justified in her act of resistance.

Hearing Fatima's video testimonio made me think of the concept of transformative ruptures included in my theoretical framework. Transformative ruptures are defined as incidents, interactions, and experiences that expose structural inequalities. These ruptures can also act as locations of coalition and change. Connecting this back to Fatima's use of silence, we can read this incident as creating a rupture that offered an opportunity for change (Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017).

This silence allows women to identify allies and co-conspirators. This form of silence also has the potential to be an avenue of racial microaffirmation. Racial microaffirmations are subtle verbal or nonverbal strategies People of Color engage in to affirm each other's dignity, integrity, and shared humanity (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020). The shared glances that Women of Color exchange during racial or gendered incidents can be seen as a form of racial affirmation. When they do voice their concerns out loud, they communicate non-verbally through silence. Additionally, these looks are often the first signal of who they can trust and connect with to build community.

Figure 7.8. Spectrum of Silence.



As I come to the end of conceptualizing silence through the Spectrum of Silence, I share one more example that continues to demonstrate how encounters of silence can act as a location of transformative ruptures and racial microaffirmation. During the group plática, as we shared our different encounters with silence, we resonated with one another experiences. We felt affirmed that although we often feel alone, we are not. It also allowed us to reflect and give new

meaning to our silences. Thirty minutes into the group plática, Kiana, a Black Woman in STEM, decided to share her shift in perspective,

> I did want to say something or make a comment because listening to everyone on the call. It's kind of refreshing because I'm realizing, I remember being mistaken for the only other Black girl in the entire department. Or a time when I refused to present. So for me, I'm also seeing that if there is a way to use the silencing as protesting, and it's not just me using it in the same way. We are able to combat the challenges that we experience in our everyday interactions. (Group Plática)

Engaging in this conversation and resonating with the stories being told, Kiana recognized the ways she, too, used silence as resistance when initially she viewed her past use of silence negatively. During this conversation, she now saw the strength of how she utilized silence to navigate her program and refuse the extra work that was so often placed on her plate. Kiana felt comfort in knowing that she was not the only one using silence in this way. Silence, for Kiana and many of the other women, was a tool to navigate and combat the challenges found in their doctoral programs. The narratives and the Spectrum of Silenced shared in this chapter demonstrate that Women of Color protect themselves, learn, navigate, and resist in doctoral programs through silence.

Conclusion

This chapter centered the voices of Women of Color in the theorization and define the silences we encounter in the doctoral programs. The methodological approach of this research allows me to weave the narratives of my collaborators across the methodologies of the individual pláticas, video testimonios, and a group plática. The strength of this research was the crucial role my research collaborators played in developing how I came to theorize silence through the Spectrum of Silence. It was during the group plática that my collaborators proposed silence being among a spectrum. Their insightful recommendation allowed me to revisit the data and envision how silence could look along a spectrum. As demonstrated in this chapter, the Spectrum

of Silence begins on the left with Being Silenced, then shifts to the In-Between Silences, and ends with Choosing Silence. The first form of silence on the spectrum is Being Silenced by a Professor/Department/ Environment/or Peers. This type of silence upholds the dominant ideologies and practices found in academia that result in Women of Color feeling that they are unable to voice their concerns or opinions. Another form of Being Silenced comes from Others' Silence. This form of silence occurs when people in positions of power or privilege maintain power structures through their silence. In instances when their words can make an impact or speak in support of Women of Color during racial conflict, they choose to stay quiet.

Moving further along the Spectrum of Silence, the following form of silence occurs in the In-Between Silences. A form of silence found at the In-Between Silences is Uncertain Silence, and that is when a Woman of Color stays silent but later regrets their decision, and contemplates what they could have done instead. Depending on how an individual comes to terms with their silence, this form has the potential to move on the spectrum of transform into a different type of silence. Uncertain Silence either stays in the center or shifts to Being Silenced, if upon reflection, they felt they were silenced by the power structure. But Uncertain Silence can transform into Silence for Self-Preservation and move towards Choosing Silence on the Spectrum. This can occur when, upon reflection on an Uncertain Silence, they reconcile their initial regret and recognize their silence as a protective tool for self-preservation.

Shifting to the Choosing Silence part of the spectrum, Silence for Learning is a type of silence that Women of Color utilize to engage in different ways of knowing and using the silence to learn and process information. Silence for Learning also acknowledges the different learning strategies that are typically favored by Communities of Color. This is then followed by Moving in Silence, a form of silence the Women of Color utilize as a navigational tool when occupying

space in hostile competitive environments. Women of Color use Moving in Silence as a strategy to filter what they share with peers so as to not make themselves a target of competition. The last form of silence illustrated in the Spectrum of Silence is Silence as Resistance. This form of silence is a tool that women use to combat experiences of marginalization and racial microaggression. For example, when they are called by the wrong name or asked to speak for a whole community, they refuse to comply, and their silence forces perpetrators to confront the discomfort. The Spectrum of Silence begins to name the different types of silence that Women of Color experience in doctoral programs. Viewing silence through a spectrum allows us to not only look at the detrimental ways Women of Color experience silence but also the way they exercise their agency as they navigate oppressive structures.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

During this project, I encountered many moments of uncertainty regarding my decision to focus on the silences. I questioned whether I should be doing this research. My doubts were not because I felt it wasn't important but because of the heightened political, societal, and global unrest we have been living through. Does work on silence have a space in the conversation when so many experiencing injustices are calling for our voices? Ultimately, I turned to the literature and my collaborator's stories to reaffirm my decision. The literature demonstrated the contextual and complex forms silence takes. At the same time, my collaborator's stories reminded me of the importance of silence in telling the whole story of their experiences in doctoral programs. As Women of Color, due to their intersection identities, they experience the consequences of sexism and racism within the academy. These experiences often led to silence, but as seen in this research, silence is complex, and it is not always to the detriment of their success. It, too, can become a tool to take back their agency and navigate oppressive structures. I begin with this narrative to show transparency in my own journey as a Latina Woman of Color doctoral student engaging in this research. I saw so much of my own experiences reflected through the narratives that my collaborators trusted me with. I have felt immense pressure to honor their voices, and I hope they feel I did their words justice.

This chapter culminates this dissertation by bringing all the pieces together. I first revisit the research questions, and provide a brief overview of the theoretical frameworks and methodologies that guided this research on the experiences of Women of Color in doctoral programs. I then provide a summary of the findings in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, and how they connect to answering the research questions. I then follow these summaries with the methodological, pedagogical, and institutional implications derived from the findings. That is followed by the limitations and future direction of this work. Lastly, I end with parting words my

collaborators and I shared during the group plática that exemplified the affirmation we experienced in sharing space.

Revisiting the Research Questions

This qualitative study focuses on Women of Color in doctoral programs to highlight their challenges, the silences they encounter, and the navigational tools they utilize to persist through their programs. To reach a clearer understanding, my research is guided by the following questions: 1) What experiences of marginalization do Women of Color encounter during their doctoral education?; 2) In what ways do Women of Color experience silence while navigating their doctoral education?; and 2a) How do they make sense of the silences that they encounter? I approached these questions through the theoretical formworks of Critical Race Theory (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001), Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000), and Chicana feminist theories (Anzaldua, 2002; Delgado Bernal, 1998) to center the intersecting identities of Women of Color in this research. Critical Race Theory serves to centralize the racial and ethnic identities of Women of Color, while Black Feminist Thought and Chicana feminist theories further centralize the gender identities of Women of Color in doctoral programs.

More specifically, from Black Feminist Thought, the concept of outsider-within speaks to the unique social locations Women of Color find themselves in academia as being within academic institutions but treated as outsiders (Collins, 2000). This unique social location allows them to see the contradictions between the ideologies and actions that academia holds. Through this positionality, Women of Color in doctoral programs can identify and critique to bring attention to the prevailing problems in academic institutions. Chicana Feminist theory offers the concepts of nos/otras (Anzaldúa, 2002; Keating, 2006), and transformative ruptures (Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017). Where nos/otras offers a way to operationalize the commonalities and differences within Women of Color in doctoral programs. Transformative ruptures are incidents,

interactions, and experiences that expose structural inequities that Women of Color can then build on as locations of coalition and resistance. Each framework provides tools to engage in this research aimed at understanding the multifaced experiences of Women of Color in academia. That is to say that my methodology was informed by my framework that centers on the voices and experiences of Women of Color.

For this research, I collected 75 survey/intake responses, engaged in individual pláticas with my 9 research collaborators, 6 video testimonios, and 1 group plática. I tell the story of my nine collaborators in Chapter Five. Each method builds upon the others. Individual pláticas touched on their graduate school experiences, identified tools they used to persist, and began a conversation around the silences they faced. The video testimonios allowed them to reflect on their experiences with silence while centering their voices and shedding light on the ambiguous nature of silence. Ending with the group plática that gave space to engage in member checking on initial findings from the individual pláticas and video testimonios. But most importantly, the group plática allowed us to come together to theorize and define the silences experienced in doctoral programs. In the next section, I provide a summary of the findings in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, and how they connect to answering the research questions.

Summary of the Findings

The title of Chapter Five is, Collaborator Profiles: Stories from Women of Color in Academia. This chapter introduces the stories of the nine research collaborators who made this research possible. The short collaborator profiles give insight into their intersecting identities, academic experiences, and the journey that led to their doctorate program. A common thread among the collaborators was the profound support they received from their families. For many, it was their parents who nurtured their academic aspirations and continued supporting them through higher education. Another commonality among my collaborators was the pivotal role

that graduate mentors, professors, or community members who were often People of Color. These mentors revealed the hidden curriculum first generation and Students of Color often have such difficulty accessing. Lastly, the women revealed that their desire to pursue their doctorate was to give back to their community and support other Students of Color. Their rich stories demonstrate diverse experiences that are not typically told. In the next paragraph that follows, I summarize the findings from Chapter Six.

The title of Chapter Six is, "I'm not Gonna Make Myself a Martyr for the Cause:" Challenges Women of Color Encounter in Graduate School. The research question this chapter aimed to answer was 1) What experiences of marginalization do Women of Color encounter during their doctoral education? The findings gathered from the narratives of the Women of Color in this research gave insight into how their gender, race/ethnicity, and other intersecting identities impact their educational journeys toward completing a doctoral degree. Within the individual pláticas and group plática, the women identified the challenges they faced as they navigated oppressive higher education institutions. They called attention to the isolation and imposter syndrome they had experienced due to the low number of Women of Color in their respective programs, as well as the exclusionary institutional practices that made them feel as if they did not belong. The Women of Color also gave insight into the marginalization and racial microaggressions they experienced in academia. The marginalization was in how they were infantilized, invisible labor/cultural tax, and received pushback on research. Where similarly, the women experienced an array of racial microaggression perpetrated by the field, professors, advisors, and peers. The racial microaggressions they experienced were being presumed incompetent, experiencing epistemological gaps, difficult mentorship relationships, and being called by the wrong name. The last of the challenges that are explored in this chapter is the

violence that Women of Color encounter in doctoral programs. These challenges often made it difficult for the women to move through their program and extended the time it took them to complete. Although the findings are organized thematically, I want to give a reminder that it was organized that way for clarity, but the findings are interconnected and informed one another.

In the individual plática and group plática, the nine women also discussed how they persisted in their program and shared advice to incoming Women of Color doctoral students. They spoke about the importance of mentorship, finding a community, working with students, setting boundaries, staying connected with family and community, engaging in self-care, and seeking therapy. These recommendations came directly from my collaborators and the strategies they use to sustain their journey. In the next paragraph, I summarize the findings from Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven is titled Women of Color Uncovering and Theorizing Silence. This chapter centered the voices of Women of Color as we theorized the silences together and gave meaning to the ambiguity silence carries. The research questions that guided the research were: 2) In what ways do Women of Color experience silence while navigating their doctoral education?; and 2a) How do they make sense of the silences that they encounter? The findings in this chapter came from the conversation that occurred through the individual pláticas, video testimonios, and group plática. The research design allowed me to weave their narratives across methodological approaches. The strength of this chapter was the central role my research collaborators played in developing how I came to theorize silence through the Spectrum of Silence. It was through the group plática, when engaging in member-checking, that my collaborators suggested that they saw silence as being along a spectrum. Their insightful

recommendation allowed me to revisit the data and envision how silence could look along a spectrum.

The Spectrum of Silence begins on the left with Being Silenced, then shifts to the In-Between Silences, and ends with Choosing Silence. The previous chapter offers numerous silences along the spectrum, but in this summary, I provided one example of each of the sections of the Spectrum of Silence. The first example begins with Being Silenced by a Professor/ Department/Environment/or Peers. This type of silence upholds the dominant ideologies and practices found in academia by making Women of Color feel that they cannot speak or are unheard. Moving further along the Spectrum of Silence, the next example occurs in the In-Between Silences part of the spectrum. That is Uncertain Silence, that is when a Woman of Color decides to stay silent but later regrets their decision. Depending on how an individual comes to terms with their silence, this form has the potential to move on the spectrum or transform into a different type of silence. Uncertain Silence either stays in the center or shifts to Being Silenced, if upon reflection, they felt they were silenced. But Uncertain Silence can transform into Silence for Self-Preservation and move towards Choosing Silence on the Spectrum. This can occur when, upon reflection, they reconcile their initial regret and recognize their silence as a protective tool for self-preservation.

Shifting to the Choosing Silence on the spectrum, the last form is Silence as Resistance. This form of silence is a tool that Women use to combat experiences of marginalization and racial microaggression. For example, when they are called by the wrong name or asked to speak for a whole community, they refuse to comply, and their silence forces perpetrators to confront the discomfort. The Spectrum of Silence begins to name the different types of silence that are experienced by Women of Color in doctoral programs. It also extends our understanding of how

silence is not static but shifts and flows depending on the context. Through a spectrum not only can we recognize the detrimental ways Women of Color experience silence but also the way they exercise their agency as they navigate oppressive structures. The set of findings in Chapters Six and Seven elicited methodological, pedagogical, and institutional implications, which I discuss in the next section.

Implication of the Research

This section outlines the implications of the findings. I begin by addressing the methodological implications of using pláticas and video testimonios for research with Women of Color in doctoral programs. I then speak about the pedagogical implications of the Pedagogy of Silence that arose from the data. I end this section with the institutional implication that we need more Faculty of Color to support the type of critical research Women of Color aspire to conduct.

Methodological Implications

Through my research process, it was evident that the strength of this research came from the methodological approach of pláticas and video testimonios, which unapologetically centered the voices of Women of Color in doctoral programs across race/ethnicity and fields. The individual pláticas gave my collaborators an opportunity to name and reflect on their experiences of marginalization within the academy. During the individual plática, Natividad, a Filipina in Gender Studies, affirmed the methodology when she shared, “I really appreciated the way that you put your protocol with your consent form. The way you talk to me is really cool. Because it just feels like we’re on even footing” (Individual Plática). The reciprocal process of pláticas gave them the space to feel comfortable speaking on the challenges in a way they had not done so before.

The testimonios built on the connections that the pláticas had provided, and my research used the video testimonios as an opportunity to further reflect on their experiences, specifically

with silence. This methodology again unapologetically centered the voices of my research collaborators and allowed them the space to name and interpret their own silences. Collaborators often spoke about how they felt after engaging in the plática and the video testimonio for this research. The words of one of my research collaborator, particularly stuck with me. Tina, a Black woman in Psychology at the end of her video testimonio said, "This is really important work and I appreciate you for giving us voice. You're doing the opposite of silencing us, and I really appreciate you. Thank you so much" (Video Testimonio). I do hope to uplift the voices of Women of Color, and Tina's words were affirming that I was going in the right direction.

In their video testimonios, my collaborators sometimes revisited experiences they shared during the individual plática but provided more details or a shift in perspective. Such as what was seen in Chapter Seven with Sanaya's reflection on her previous silences. During the individual plática, she spoke about feelings of guilt she carried due to her silence, but in the video testimonio, she reflected further and recognized that it protected her from further harm. She made peace with her guilt and instead said, "If I had spoken up and somebody responded in a really hostile way, I think that would have not been a safe situation for me in my department" (Video Testimonio). Sanaya gives a glimpse of how silence is not stagnant and shifts depending on the way the individual process and interpret their experiences.

During the group plática, we were able to build together and theorize how Women of Color experience silence. In our process of sharing, we resonated with each other stories and, at times, elicited long-forgotten memories. During the group plática, my collaborators also expressed shifting perspectives on some of their experiences and moved toward letting go of internalized feelings surrounding some of their navigational strategies. I once again turn to Sanaya, a South Asian American in Sociology, who shared her new insight into how she was

coming to understand her silence after engaging in the individual plática, video testimonio, and group plática. She shared, "For myself, personally, things that were detrimental silence to me at one point, I now see them as beneficial, or I use the same silent strategies, but it's beneficial to me rather than detrimental now" (Group Plática). Kiana, a Black woman in STEM, also shared how the process of engaging in the different aspects of the research and being a part of the group plática allowed her to recognize how she has been using silence as a form of protest and resistance when she was being asked to do the invisible labor/cultural tax in her lab. When initially she primarily viewed her silence through negative connotations.

These narratives and the insight that they provide were only possible because of the methodological design. I was able to weave together and build with my collaborators across each stage of the data-gathering strategy. This shows the power that comes from utilizing race and gendered informed methodologies to conduct the critical work needed to center Women of Color.

Pedagogical Implications

In Chapter Seven, one of my collaborators identified Learning in Silence as a form for Choosing Silence on the spectrum. This can also be understood as a Pedagogy of Silence. This acknowledges that not all students learn the same, and a Pedagogy of Silence can act as a culturally relevant pedagogy for Students of Color. Indigenous and other scholars of color have identified how Indigenous and Students of Color use silence as part of the learning process where, in the moments of silence, they are able to gather their thoughts and make critical observations (Montoya, 2000; Reda, 2009; San Pedro, 2015). My collaborator, Itzel, an Indigenous scholar in Sociology, described how she uses silence in her own learning and as a pedagogical tool when she teaches. In her video testimonio, she detailed the way she implements silence: "I let students know that it's totally fine to sit with our thoughts for around two minutes.

Which I know can feel like a very long time for students" (Video Testimonio). She shares that she does this because students are not often given enough time to process in academic settings and are asked to, "come up with an analysis within like a minute, or maybe like 10 seconds, honestly" (Video Testimonio). Reflecting on her own experiences as a student, she knows that this is not enough time to process and give an insightful comment. Itzel acknowledges that this can cause discomfort for students as they are used to filling the silences in other classes, but with time, they come to appreciate it. Itzel also shared that students have approached her and shared their appreciation of how she uses silence because it has given them space to collect their thoughts and the courage to contribute when they are typically too shy to speak in class.

Other collaborators also spoke about using silence to learn about the internal politics of their classes and departments to identify potential friends, community, or co-conspirators. This is particularly essential when they enter new spaces. Through silence, they can assess where it is safe to engage in critical discussions, challenge sexist or racist content, and identify individuals in the space that they can rely on for support.

This brief glimpse of the Pedagogy of Silence demonstrates that it is essential to continue exploring how it can be used more broadly. With the rise of Students of Color reaching higher education, diversity measures are not enough for their retention. A Pedagogy of Silence can be one way to support the educational development of Students of Color and retain them. The subsequent implication also aligns with supporting the retention of Women of Color in doctoral programs.

Institutional Implications

As the findings show, Women of Color are often challenged by faculty and advisors when conducting research that centers on minoritized communities or attempts to use critical frameworks or methodologies. Many Women of Color across disciplines were told that they

needed to stop using theories, frameworks, or methodologies that do not fall into the epistolary canon that is typically white-centric in their fields. This was particularly true when they attempted to use Critical Race Theory in their work. Most disciplines are still not as receptive to using Critical Race Theory in their research and dismiss the value it can bring to their students' scholarship and the fields. Women of Color need the support to expand how, as academics, we examine societal problems by centering race and racism that are usually at the root of the problems. For my collaborators, when they did not receive the support they needed from their advisor, they often received the help they needed from the Faculty of Color. For fields to expand and become receptive to utilizing critical frameworks, institutions need to develop initiatives to hire more Faculty of Color. This will be mutually beneficial for the retention of Women of Color doctoral students and Women of Color Faculty.

Limitations and Future Direction

Despite the contributions this research makes, there are limitations that I hope to address through future research. Although I obtained a rich set of video testimonios, one limitation in the work is that I was not able to gather video testimonios from all nine collaborators. In future work, I aim to extend this work and increase the number of collaborators so that I can receive more video testimonios. Another limitation in the work was that in the theorization of silence, I was not able to adequately incorporate the effect that race/ethnic identities have on how Women of Color encounter silence. Depending on the stereotypes that are tied to women's racial and ethnic identities, their silence might be accepted, expected, or rejected. In future work, I plan to continue developing the Spectrum of Silence to include more of how Women of Color experience silence differently. For future direction, I also plan to continue building on how silence can serve as an avenue for resistance and racial microaffirmation between Women of Color in doctoral programs.

Another future direction of this work is to revisit the survey and incorporate a more mixed-method approach. The survey/intake form generated a lot of data through the 75 responses that I was not able to fully incorporate into the dissertation findings. Revisiting the existing data can elicit statistical analysis that can be put in conversation with the two open-ended questions that are a part of the survey/intake form. The survey/intake form can also be edited and relaunched to see if there are differences from when the survey was first launched in September of 2020. Additionally, I intend to continue this work and focus on specific racial/ethnic groups to add specificity to the different range of experiences with silence. Due to the overwhelming responses from Latinas, who made 57% of the survey submissions, conducting work focusing on Latina experiences would be beneficial. Lastly, heavily influenced by Aja Martinez's (2020) book, *Counterstory: The Rhetoric of Writing of Critical Race Theory*, I plan to revisit the narratives of my collaborators to create composite allegory/fantasy counterstories. This can be a way to continue preserving their stories while maintaining the anonymity of my collaborators. Creating counterstories also offers an opportunity to disseminate the data through avenues that could come across as more accessible.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I revisit the questions that guided this research, a summary of the findings, discuss the research implications, and the limitations and future directions of the research. In the research findings, I shared summaries of Chapters Five, Six, and Seven of this dissertation, which provided a rich tapestry of the experiences of Women of Color in doctoral programs. Their narratives also offered an innovative way to understand the complexities of silence and how it is utilized to navigate difficult academic spaces. This analysis is dedicated to all the quiet people who are often made to feel that they must change a fundamental part of themselves to be seen and accepted.

Engaging in this research has been a cathartic experience as I confronted my own difficult experiences. This research was born out of my need to process my feelings of frustration, but in conducting this research, I found a reason to stay. I am grateful to all the Women of Color who gave their time, energy, and words of affirmation about the importance of this research. I close this dissertation with the words shared at the end of the group plática. This conversation served as a reminder and motivation to continue.

> [Kiana] Thank you so much for letting me participate. I find this to be something that's very valuable in being able to be in a situation where I'm not worried about my voice being filtered, or manipulated some sort of way. And I did want to comment and say that even though you might feel isolated in doing this work, I am participating in other studies, where people are asking other questions . . . but I'm seeing how there's other publications on the horizon that will validate what you're doing. . . . They're not talking about silence but they're examining other aspects . . . of like, how we reconcile our identity and spaces as a way to navigate a hostile space in academia. . . . Although the questions that you're asking are very different, they're still gonna come together and build this framework that is necessary for people to understand. To hear these voices that have been silenced. Out of our mouths, and from our own experiences, we're finally able to truly capture some of the things of what it means to sit in the positions that we're occupying at our various programs.
>
> [Magali] Thank you! It gives me hope.
>
> [Kiana] It's happening for people that are actually good human beings. Sometimes it's not as encouraging when it's people getting ahead that we're stepping on other people to get there. But there are good human beings that are moving ahead and doing the difficult work and hold space for voices that usually don't have the space.
>
> [Magali] I so I just want to thank you again . . . if you wanted to share anything else, as we're ending our plática, I wanted to give space for that.
>
> [Sanaya] I just want to express gratitude to you all and for, I really enjoyed being in community with you all and having this conversation. It's really unfortunate that we've had to go through a lot of these really horrible things. But I think talking about this and having these spaces of community. And Magali, the work that you're doing is so important. So thank you to everyone. I learned a lot too.
>
> [Magali] Thank you, Sanaya. I really appreciate all your help. I appreciate all of your help. And I just want to say that if there's anything I can reciprocate, any way that I can help you along your own journey, please let me know. Like I said, I feel very connected with each of you. I know that we've only had two conversations, and I wish there would

be more. I still feel very connected. And I would be more than happy to do anything I can do to help you on your journey. Whether it's this month, next week or a month from now or a year, you can always reach out.

[Fatima] I just want to say thank you for creating the space, it felt nice to be able to share these experiences and knowing you're not alone. So thank you for creating the space and continuing the good work that is needed.

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYER

Dissertation Study on Women of Color's Silences in Ph.D. Programs

Do you identify as a Woman of Color?

Are you currently enrolled in a PhD program?

Is your area of study in Education, Social Science, Humanities or STEM?

Have you encountered experiences with silence as you navigate your doctoral program?

Art by: Brenda Lopez | @vida_nepantlera

If you answer yes to these questions, please consider participating!

This study explores how Women of Color experience and navigate doctoral education paying particular attention to **the silences they face**. Initial participation consists of only an intake form/online survey that will take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

If you are interested in continuing, the second part of the research consist of an individual virtual *plática* (informal interview) approximately 60-90 minutes, a self-recorded video *testimonio* (10-15 minutes), and an optional virtual group *plática* (focus group interview) approximately 60-90 minutes. **The video testimonios will not be shared with anyone other than myself.**

Please fill out the intake form/survey if you are interested!

https://forms.gle/hMAh2nURRXiVfmUs6

For more information, or questions please contact:
Magali Campos, Doctoral Candidate
UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies
At: maxcampos@ucla.edu

IRB# 20-000661

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH COLLABORATOR INTAKE FORM

ONLINE INTAKE FORM/SURVEY

Thank you for showing interest in contributing to my study.

You are invited to participate in a research project about the experiences of Women of Color in doctoral programs. This online survey should take about 30 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, and responses will be kept confidential.

You have the option to skip any question that you would prefer not to respond to. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with the University of California, Los Angeles. Submission of the survey will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate and that you affirm that you are at least 18 years of age.

If you express interest, this survey will also be used as a recruitment tool for the second part of the research. You are not committing to the second part of the research by submitting this survey. The second part of the research will consist of individual pláticas (informal interviews) approximately 60 to 90 minutes, video testimonios 10-15 minutes, and the possibility of a group *plática* (focus group interview) approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Your participation will be used to better understand the need to support Women of Color in doctoral programs.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact the Principal Investigator, Magali Campos, via email at maxcampos@ucla.edu or the faculty advisor, Dr. Daniel Solórzano at solorzano@gseis.ucla.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

Please print or save a copy of this page for your records.

** I have read the above information and agree to participate in this research project.*

IRB #20-000661

---

1) Name: (Frist, Last) _____

2) Ph.D. program/department: _____

3) Years in program: _____

4) Are you a Woman of Color?

   a. Yes b. No

5) Self-identification of race/ethnicity: _____

The following section of the survey focuses on your experiences in your doctoral program and the support they offer to graduate students. For questions 6 through 41, please read the following statements and on a scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" or "not applicable," mark the one that best reflects your experience with the statement.

6) I feel satisfied with my choice of doctoral program.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

7) I feel a strong sense of belonging within my program.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

8) I have a good working relationship with my advisor.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

9) I feel supported by my advisor to pursue my research interest.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

10) I feel supported by my PI to conduct my research.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

11) I feel supported to pursue my research interest by other faculty in my department.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

12) I feel supported to pursue my research interest by administrators in my department.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

13) I have a good relationship with peers in my department.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

14) I have a good relationship with peers in my research lab.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

15) I have been able to openly voice my opinion during class settings.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

16) I have been able to openly voice my opinion during office hours.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

17) I have been able to openly voice my opinion in my research lab.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

18) I have felt comfortable voicing my opinions during meetings with my advisor.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

19) I have been able to comfortably ask questions in class settings.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

20) I have been able to comfortably ask questions during office hours.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

21) I have been able to comfortably ask questions in my research lab.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

22) I have felt heard in classroom settings.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

23) I have felt heard in research lab settings.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

24) I have felt heard during individual meetings with my advisor.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

25) I have felt heard during meeting with my PI.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

26) I have felt silenced in classroom settings.

    a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

27) I have felt silenced in research lab settings.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

28) I have felt silenced in classroom settings by a professor.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

29) I have felt silenced in classroom settings by peer(s).

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

30) I have felt silenced by my peer(s) in my research lab.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

31) I have felt silenced by my advisor during a meeting.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

32) I have felt silenced by my PI during a meeting.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

33) I have felt silenced by peer(s) during class project/research meetings.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

34) I have felt silenced in classroom settings due to the content being presented.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

35) I have purposefully remained silent in a classroom setting.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

36) I have purposefully remained silent during office hours.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

37) I have purposefully remained silent during a meeting with my advisor.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

38) I have purposefully remained silent during a lab meeting.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

39) I am comfortable contributing to class dialogue.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

40) I have a difficult time contributing to class dialogue.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

41) Sometimes I choose not to partake in classroom discussions because they are too taxing.

a. Strongly agree b. agree c. undecided d. disagree e. strongly disagree f. Not applicable

The following questions are designed to give you a sense of the research focus and whether you would feel comfortable proceeding with the second part of the research.

42) Has silence been something you have experienced while navigating your doctoral program? If so, can you share a little about that experience and/or how you would describe the way silence showed up for you?

_____

_____

43) Are there any additional things you would like to share regarding your graduate school experiences that were not addressed by the previous question or statements?

_____

_____

44) Would you be comfortable talking about these experiences with me and other Women of Color?

    a. Yes
    b. No

45) Would you be interested in participating in this research further?

    a. Yes
    b. No

46) If you would like to hear more about the study and participate in the second part of the research that will consist of an individual plática, a video testimonio and optional group plática, please share your contact information (email and/or phone number):

_____

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this survey. I truly appreciate and value the information you have provided. Your responses will help shed light into the varied experiences of Women of Color in doctoral programs across disciplines.

If you expressed interest in continuing your participation with this study, I will be contacting you shortly through email.

If you have any comments or questions regarding this project, please feel free email me at maxcampos@ucla.edu.

I wish you all the best as you continue making your way through your doctoral program.

With Gratitude,
Magali Campos

APPENDIX C: INDIVIDUAL PLÁTICAS CONVERSATION TOPICS

Description: Pláticas are similar to informal interviews as they do not have a specific set structure. Instead of having specific questions, pláticas function under topics/themes that help guide the conversation between the researcher and collaborators. Pláticas offer a distinctive and intentional approach to conducting research that allows Women of Color to weave the personal and the academic in a way that is not always available when using traditional research methodologies. The pláticas for this study will be around 60–90 minutes each.

The first plática will be dedicated to reviewing their demographic information, exploring their experience and responses to marginalization. The topics bellow are conversation topic that may come up during the plática.

Individual Plática: Women of Color's Academic Life Histories

- Educational background
    - Education trajectory leading up to PhD
    - Academic identity
- Academic challenges
    - What have been some challenges you've faced as a doctoral student?
    - **Instances of marginalization**
        - How have you responded and how have you navigated them?
- **Conversation around silences they've faced**
- Future goals

APPENDIX D: GROUP PLÁTICAS CONVERSATION TOPICS

Description: The group plática will be dedicated to revisiting common themes across the first plática and video testimonios. Additionally, the group plática will allow us to continue weaving the personal and academic as we reflect and engage in a conversation about our academic experience and encounters with silence. The focus of the group plática is to collaboratively delve deeper into the various forms of silence we have each experienced while in our doctoral programs. The duration of the group plática session will be around 90 minutes to 2 hours.

The topics below are conversation topics that will guide our group plática.

Group Plática: Women of Color Identify the Silences

- Introductions (Name, and field)
- Discuss the experience of creating the video testimonio
- Common themes around the silences (from video testimonios)
- Internal conflict that comes between being silenced and choosing silence
- Complex/can be all at once (anger, sadness, frustrations and protection)
- Women "taking ownership of their own silence"
- The way silence varies between Women of Color
    - Same strategy might not be received in the same
- Identifying and defining the silence (what are your thoughts?)
- Detrimental silence
    - Due to insecurities or imposter syndrome
    - Silence seen as a weakness
    - Hostile environments (being one of the few)
    - Forced silence
    - Affected by the silences of others
- Beneficial silence
    - Moves in silence (to combat competition)
    - Strategic silence
    - Disruptive silence
- Pedagogical Silence
    - When teaching or applying to practice
- Benefits or draw backs of utilizing silence
- Additional tools of navigating doctoral programs

APPENDIX E: VIDEO TESTIMONIO PROMPT

Video Testimonio

Description: Traditionally, testimonios are written pieces, but for this research, the testimonios will be in the form of a video. Benmayor (2012) demonstrated the power behind using digital testimonios and spoke to the power of hearing individual voices as they tell their stories. Additionally, Rita Kohli utilized video testimonios in her work and demonstrated how the video format allowed people to step into a space that allowed them to openly express their success, frustrations, and challenges. Most importantly, I ask for a video testimonio in an attempt to limit some of the time commitment of my research collaborators. I also hope that self-recording a testimonios in the comfort of your home may ease some of the anxiety that can come from being so open in front of another person.

Goal: To have you reflect on the individual plática and focus on the experiences of silence and how you navigated them.

Prompt: Your Testimonio of Silence, is to be self-recorded video of 5-10 minutes (more if needed) using your computer camera. If you don't feel comfortable video recording your testimonio you may a) only audio record it or b) writer a 1-2 page (or longer) testimonio. As part of this research, your story is the most important part, and I appreciate anything you are willing to share. I am asking for you to reflect on the experiences you shared during our plática surrounding your journey in the doctorate program. But more specifically, I would like you to focus on the times silence has emerged and describe what happened. Record yourself via video (or audio) to share any experience(s) you have had with silence. Please consider the following questions as a point of reference for your testimonio:

- How has silence come up for you as you navigate your doctoral program?
- What prompts you to use silence or feel silenced?
- How was your silence received or read by others?
- If your silence was misinterpreted, how would you define or explain it?
- Considering silence is often linked with negative connotations or as a detrimental response, has this been true for you? If yes, how so? And if no, please explain.
- Reflecting on our plática and the questions above, is there anything else you would like to share?

Once you have completed your video, audio or written testimonio, you can upload it to the **google drive folder** designated specifically for you, which can be accessed at the following link:

*The video testimonios will not be shown to the public. They will only be viewed by me, and I will use your audio to transcribe your contribution. The transcripts of the video testimonies will be what I used to analyze and present the data to protect your confidentiality.

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