EMERGING NARRATIVES OF NATIVE AMERICAN, ASIAN AMERICAN, AND AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN MIDDLE ADULTHOOD WITH AN EDUCATION DOCTORATE DEGREE

Jo Ann Marie Bamdas, Ed.S., Ph.D. Candidate
Dr. Valerie C. Bryan, Faculty Sponsor
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Between **1920 (1,042)** and **1999 (17,493)**
"almost 43% of all doctorates were awarded to women"
(NSF, 2006)

43,354 doctorates were awarded (7/1/2004-6/30/2005):

U.S. citizens = 28,180; Non-U.S. citizens = 15,174
5,071 awarded to "ethnically diverse U.S. citizens"

Native Americans received 139 (.005%)

Asian Americans received 1,493 (.05%)

Black/African Americans received 1,688 (.06%)

Figures according
to Survey of
Earned Doctorates

Problem Statement

- **Underrepresentation** of Native American, Asian American, Black/African American women in education, especially graduate level, especially doctorate
- **Misconceptions** about women of color (stereotypes, myths)
- **Lack of knowledge**
  – about women as learners
  – about women in middle adulthood as learners
  – about application of doctorates in the community
  – about these groups in adult education and adult learning principles and practices
- **Lack of full, whole stories** of women achieving the highest of the education degree
- **Lack of positive stories** – underrepresented groups looked upon from deficit model instead

Purpose Statement

- The purpose of this qualitative narrative research study was to interpret the meaning found throughout the formal educational experience stories of diverse women born after 1944, who earned a doctorate degree in the field of education after 1976 and worked educating adults in the community.

Research Questions

- What **motivates** participation by a woman at middle adulthood to pursue and complete an education doctorate degree?

- What are the **barriers**, which obstruct a woman in middle adulthood from completing the doctorate?

- What are the **enhancers**, supporting a woman in middle adulthood to pursue and complete the doctorate?

- How does a woman in middle adulthood **apply an education doctorate degree** while working with adults in an educational capacity within the community?

- Finally, what is the **meaning of pursuing and completing an education doctorate degree** by the women of these three underrepresented racial subgroups who lived the experience?

Methodology

- This study employed a Qualitative **Narrative Research** process (Creswell, 2005)

  1) identify a phenomenon to explore that addresses an educational problem; 2) purposefully select an individual from whom to learn about the phenomenon; 3) collect stories from that individual that reflect personal and social experiences; 4) restory or retell the individual's story (step 4 will also a) build in past, present, future, b) build in place or setting, c) describe the story, and d) analyze the story for themes; 5) collaborate with the participant storyteller in all phrases of research; 6) write a story about the participant's personal and social experiences; and 7) validate the accuracy of the report (p. 485).

Narrative Research
Example of Story

- See Handout
- One Story of Colleen's Classroom Experience (perceived differences in classroom and society)
- Powerful
- Varying levels of analysis beyond thematic

Research Design: Participant Sample

- Snowball sample - 14 Participants (5 Native American; 4 Asian American, 5 Black/African American)
- All U.S. Citizens – obtained all higher education degrees in the United States. – Florida, New York, Kansas, Washington State, North Dakota
- Ages – 42, 44(2), 47, 53(2), 54, 55, 56, 59, 63(3) = Avg. 53.9
- Time to Degree – 18 years between bachelors to doctorate
- Family Education Background – 1 Father (2 Ph.D.'s); 1 Mother (MA); 2 mothers high school graduates; Others 11th grade and below or not discussed

Research Design: Data Collection

- **Life story interviews (Atkinson, 1998) face-to-face, open-ended, chronological, Interview Protocol, 90-180 minutes (in offices, homes, conference rooms)**

- **Instruments: 2 Reflective Narrative Guides (RNG) (pre and post-interview)**

- **Documents List (Dissertation, CV or resume or biography)**

Research Design: Data Analysis

- Data Analysis – by participant then by race
  - 1) restorying
  - 2) coding with Atlas-ti 5.0 software
  - 3) thematic matrices
  - 4) conceptual maps
  - 5) researcher's journals, analytic memos

Generalizability, Validity, Trustworthiness

- Cannot be generalized as to limited sample size.
- **Validity through triangulation**: document analysis, researcher's journaling, analytic memos, member checking, collaboration with participant, trustworthiness.
- "The collection of multiple field texts, the triangulation of data, and member checking ensure good data are collected" (Creswell, p. 484).

Validity/Trustworthiness

- According to Atkinson (1998), "no set of formal procedures for determining narrative validity existed for the process itself is highly subjective . . . what matters most, perhaps, is that the life story is able to be deemed trustworthy..." (p. 60). A search for the trustworthiness . . . not truth . . . of the participant's story was a high goal set for the researcher and this dissertation research study.

Introduction to the Women

- Colleen, Cecelia, Clarabelle, Jean, Miskus (university president, university faculty, English instructor, tribal university president, government liaison to Native American colleges)

- Fermina, Leilah, Latte, Liu Shun (university faculty; school district second language director, university faculty, college faculty)

- Mogul, Bettie, BJ, Carmen, Adaobi (community college dean, university faculty, assistant superintendent, university director, educational consultant)

Findings: Motivation SELF-AWARENESS

"I knew what my purpose was"

1. **Placement in the Family** (oldest); middle, youngest, racial culture, generation
   - Responsibility; independence
   - Obedience (Asian American women in sample)
   - Role model
   - Help others
2. **Family Educational Expectation** Education the way out (Native American, Black/African Americans)
   - "Our work" (Asian)
   - Women dominant
   - **Work ethic**
   - Philosophical hallmarks handed down
   - Belief in daughter
3. **Community's Educational Expectation**

4. **Strengths and Weaknesses** – reading, arts and humanities, love of learning, math weaknesses)

5. **Perceived Differences in Classroom and Mainstream Society** ("knew and told I was different")

6. **Knowledge of Self-Motivation for the Doctorate Degree**
   - **Goal Orientation-Finishing** (sees **finish** line)
   - Goal – high school diploma
   - (college if possible – Native American/Black/African American)
   - Make a difference, make an impact, want something better, change

"Well, you can apply if you want to, but Indians can't meet our qualifications"
"Your education . . . indicates you should be . . . a basket-weaver"

Findings: Barriers

- Educational Barriers
    1. Racism
    2. Gender
    3. Advisers
    4. Numerous institutional problems and changes

- Personal Barriers
    5. Juggling multiple roles in limited time

Lack of Financial Assistance and
Lack of Mentors
NOT present in this study

CHALLENGED, BUT DID NOT STOP THEM

Enhancer Findings

1. Family, Culture, and Community Foundation

2. Financial Resources

3. Friends

4. Others (study participant), professional colleagues, self
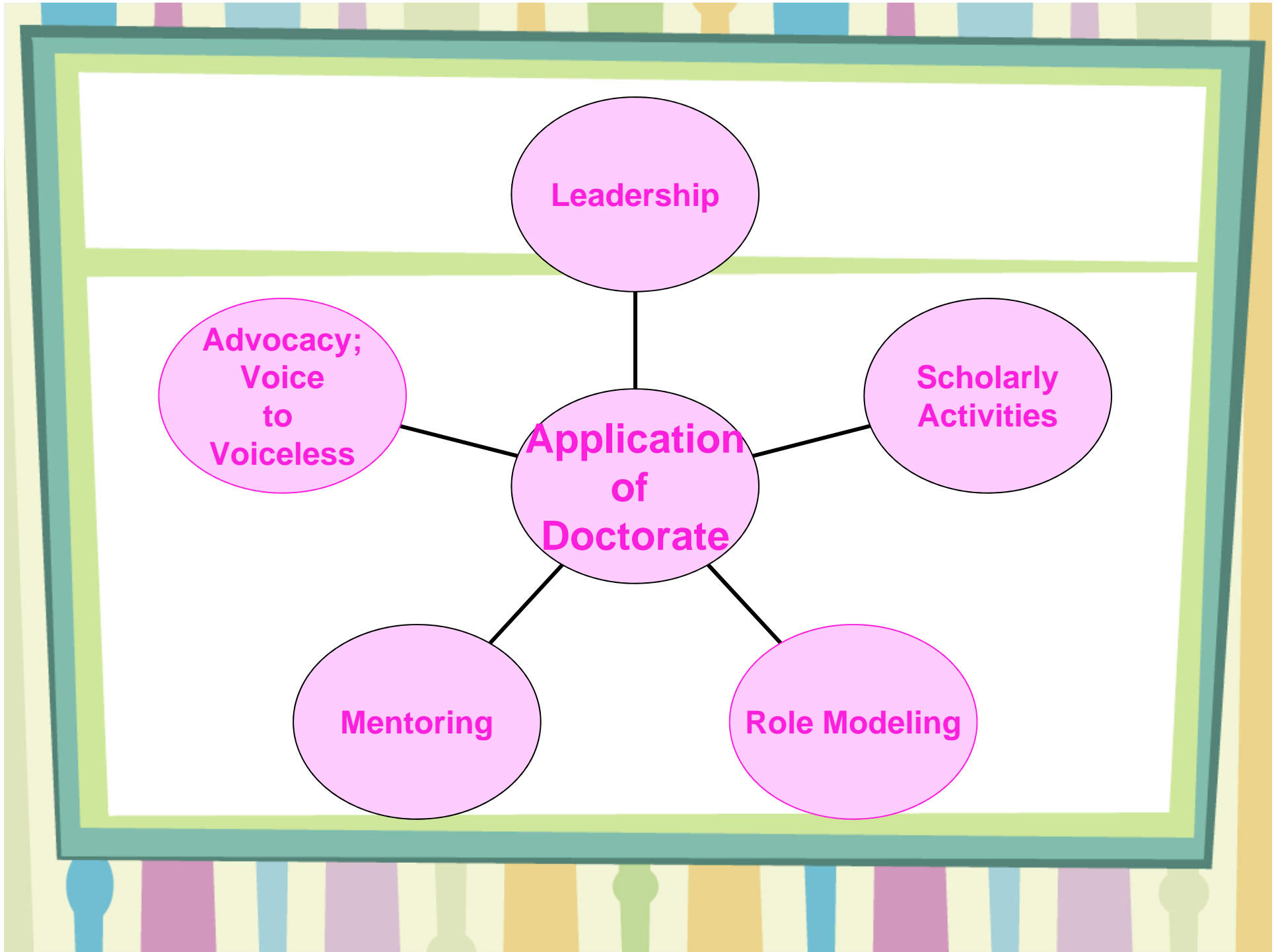
HAVING INSTITUTIONAL MENTORS was not a theme

Findings: Application of the Doctorate

One overarching finding–"giving back culturally"

1. Leadership;
2. Scholarly activities;
3. Role modeling;
4. Mentoring;
5. Advocacy, voice;
6. New programs created;
7. Publications, workshops on diverse issue.

Findings: Meaning of the Education Doctorate (unique to each individual)

- Giving back is most important
- But... "It's just a step in the process"
- "It's what am I going to do with it;" "and then it's not just about me"

Subthemes:
1. Achievement, Accomplishment,
2. Credibility
3. Self-Fulfillment

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conceptual Framework:
Adult Learning, Narrative Imagination, Narrative Inquiry, Reader Response

- Women's learning (Hayes et al.)
- Motivation to participate in education (Cross's COR Model)
- Learner Characteristics (goal-oriented; i.e., Houle, Guglielmino, Long)
- Self-directed learning (Long, Guglielmino, Eisenman, Stubblefield, Cloud, Redding)
- Andragogy (Knowles)
- Leadership (Bennis)
- Programming (Transfer of Learning; Reflection; Evaluation)

Conclusions: Motivation

Leadership in youth was not usually studied as part of this process.

Women mastered the life to which they were born in spite of enormous barriers and limited opportunities. Each woman had a guiding vision, clear idea, strengths, passion, integrity, and desire to make things better for other people in their cultural sphere (Bennis, 1994).

Self-awareness began early in youth and continued into adulthood; a powerful area of consideration in higher education research studies on women as learners.

Self-directed learning, self-directed learning readiness, and motivation, cognitive, personality, emotional, and other psychological aspects of early childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and gerontology are important areas of study to contribute to adult education, adult learning, and lifelong learning literature.

Conclusions: Barriers

The majority of the women in this study said they did not have mentors in their institution.

Mentors were in families and communities.

Qualities of the mentor for the individual appeared as family member, friend, or community friend included: belief, expectation, challenge, encouragement, and empowerment. The family put a premium on education with their belief in its importance.

Mentors were also the people which the women read about through the variety of reading material to which most of the women had access. Dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, and fiction are examples of materials which focus on adventure, risk taking, and concepts or ideas of a variety of topics.

Conclusions: Barriers

Asian American women continue to be stereotyped;

Several cultural norms were discussed by the Asian American women in this study so that the women's voices can be heard and graduate policy and programs changed accordingly.

The stories indicated that Native American women suffered from poverty early in life and many levels of discrimination in education.

Native American women were easier to locate in this research study; were the most underrepresented in attaining graduate education particularly the doctorate degree.

Additional research studies needed re policies for admission and retention of graduate students including adding Native American faculty of color to staff.

Conclusions: Meaning

- We **need to "narratively imagine"** Native American, Asian American, and Black/African American women's motivation, barriers, enhancers, application of education, and meaning of education in adulthood.

- The numerous ways the women experienced discrimination can be seen with the narrative imagination and was a useful part of the research study's framework.

Numerous Contributions to the Literature

1. Expanded research on Asian & Native American women holding education doctorate degrees.

2. Contributed to the threadbare literature on placement in the family or birth order. Long (1989, n.d.), Guglielmino (1977), Cloud (1992), Stubblefield (1992) have provided some light into this area with self-directed learning and readiness to learn.

3. Reopened literature to leadership characteristics developed early in a woman's life. Women of color early in life faced two types of discrimination, race and gender both from within the family and community and in formal educational institutions. The findings make an important contribution to the practice of leadership in the community, especially as to role modeling and mentoring.

Contribution to the Literature

4. Contributed to the concept of self-awareness and self-actualization (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, 1954) which began in the early youth of the women in this study and continued beyond earning the knowledge necessary to complete the doctorate degree and transferred into the diverse global community.

5. Illuminated how the women learn differently for many reasons having to do with social conditions, and culture impacting the development of self through society. Historical, economic, and cultural forces are at work in shaping meaning for each of the individual women.

6. Contributes to a greater understanding of women's formal and informal learning which heretofore has been neglected (Hugo, 1990).

Recommendations: Institutions

- Read the dissertations & their recommendations and follow.

- Educational leadership departments need to develop & institute cultural diversity workshops WITH PEOPLE OF COLOR, professional development venues, for its students and campus partners to learn the truth about Native, Asian, and African Americans rather than the stereotypes and myths.

- Provide true cultural and racial resources to potential mentors or former graduates to inform others to select higher education or doctoral degree would be an avenue to investigate for doctoral programs wanting to reach this audience.

Recommendations: Institutions

- More graduate education programs needed with faculty of color, more female faculty of color and more mandatory professional development programs for credit which utilize democratic principles and practices.

- Institute Nussbaum's "narrative imagination" and "cultivating humanity" and other philosophical readings in coursework, professional development, leadership seminars & mentoring meetings.

- Incorporate accurate literature in educational leadership courses w/ writings by Native, Asian, & African American women.

Recommendations: Future Research

1. Conduct a larger research study with Asian American and Native American women with earned education doctorate degrees.

2. Study the political, socio-economic, socio-historical period of the post-WWII era with regard to women of color (immigrating to the USA for higher education & in the USA seeking higher education) to contribute to the adult learning theory on motivation to participate in formal education. "The world citizen needs knowledge of history and social fact" (Nussbaum, 1997).

3. Additional qualitative narrative research sampling adult women from 40-100 years of age focusing on informal and formal learning in youth with research topics: motivation, barriers, and leadership.

IMAGINE

If these 14 women have achieved this much,
what 14 more, 140 more, 14,000 more
can do

*An ability of the world citizen is the narrative
imagination . . . the ability to think
what it might be like to be in the shoes
of a person different from oneself, to be
an intelligent reader of that person's story,
and to understand the emotions and wishes
and desires that someone so placed might have.*
—Martha C. Nussbaum

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