Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

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From Family Storytelling to Emancipatory Knowing: Bearing Witness to the Resistance of Black Women Leaders in Higher Education

Date: March 5, 2022
Time: 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Place: Remote

Abstract
We, in the Black community, have preserved our existence and histories through storytelling. The blessing of stories passed from one generation to the next serves as survival signposts. Amidst this tradition, ongoing dominant narratives work to mischaracterize and dehumanize members of the Black community, specifically Black women. The unique and intersectional position of Black women leaders invites an onslaught of racial challenges in any sector. However, a complex relationship exists between Black women leaders in academia and the metanarratives manufactured by dominant groups. While often viewed as entertainment, the cultural practice of storytelling has the ability to incite empowerment and emancipation of the mind. This qualitative study explored how family storytelling functions facilitate emancipatory knowing in Black women leaders (BWLs) at predominately White institutions (PWIs). Black feminist thought and intersectionality served as the theoretical framework and pedagogical lens’ for understanding Black women leader’s lived experiences. Traditional, qualitative, and visual methods were utilized to collect data from 10 Black women leaders employed at a PWI. Narrative inquiry aided in gathering in-depth stories to address the research questions. Three research questions guided and framed the study: (1) How does retrospective family storytelling facilitate emancipatory knowing in Black women leaders at predominately White higher education institutions? (2) What do Black women leaders perceive are the emancipatory functions of retrospective family storytelling? and (3) How do Black women leaders employ emancipatory functions/knowing to oppose dominant narratives? The exploration of this under-researched area lobbied for the influence of storytelling as a tool of survival, resistance, resilience, and knowing for Black women leaders in higher education. The findings indicate that family stories function as navigational and therapeutic tools. In addition, the study offers a culturally relevant leadership profile for Black women leaders in higher education. These findings are presented along with suggestions for future research on the intersection of family storytelling, Black women leaders, and higher education.

Keywords: Black women leaders; family storytelling; emancipatory knowing; higher education; predominately white institutions

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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