**Title of Proposal**
Black Undergraduate Women and the Politics of Invisibility: Emergent Research Perspectives and Building a Collaborative Research Agenda

**Abstract**
Black women clearly have a presence in higher education but their experiences linger invisible and unacknowledged signaling a need to interrogate and examine their presence. Papers in this symposium introduce emergent research about black undergraduate women and justify the need for creating a collective research agenda that centers black women.

**Format**
First Choice: F07- Topical paper session
Second Choice: F00-
Third Choice: F00-

**Content**
Overview and Significance to ASHE members

Black women clearly have a presence in higher education when compared to black men. US Department of Education statistics indicate in 2008-09 black women earned 66% of bachelor's degrees conferred to black students, indicating they earned nearly twice as many degrees as black men. Despite numerical presence their experiences linger invisible and unacknowledged signaling a need to interrogate and examine the presence of black undergraduate women.

"The myth that black women have achieved high levels of educational...attainment over the past twenty years may contribute to the lack of attention by colleges and universities" (Rosales & Person, 2003, p. 53). One example is the significant research on black undergraduate men. Harper (2012) noted since 2001, over 62 publications were written about black undergraduate men. First, that such a body of literature could emerge so quickly indicates that perhaps similar attention might be garnered for black women. Second, some of this literature unintentionally positions black men’s issues as superior by comparing their access, retention, and graduation rates to black women only, resulting in a grand narrative. This narrative unfortunately implies since black women fare better than black men, statistically speaking, there is less need to center their experiences. Moreover, the limited literature on black women typically represents them as faculty, administrators and graduate students.

These observations collectively beg the question, “What about black women collegians?” There is too little attention devoted to them. Betty Collier Thomas (in Guy Sheftall, 1990) indicated, "Women have been the victims of scholarly neglect. Black women, possessing a double minority status, have received even less scholarly attention (p. 1).” More theory-building and cutting-edge research is needed to provide clear findings and implications for future research and practice about black undergraduate women. This symposium introduces emergent research about black undergraduate women and engages participants in a conversation about creating a collective research agenda that centers black women collegians. This symposium is important to ASHE, particularly members who have research agendas geared toward race and gender equity. The symposium is also important given the conference focus on inequality. According to a report by the African American Policy Forum, Black women have a net worth of $5. Not only is this information startling, but it also points to the issues of invisibility and disenfranchisement Black women face within and beyond the walls of higher education. This symposium will serve as a space to not only share emergent research but also to engage with ASHE scholars who are committed to bringing greater visibility to the experiences of Black undergraduate women through research and collaboration.
Objectives

Participants will:

- Learn about the status of current research on black undergraduate women
- Learn about emergent research on black undergraduate women
- Examine the harmful narratives shaping black women’s collegiate experiences
- Identify additional research questions that need to be answered with regard to black undergraduate women

Structure

The Chair will begin with a short introduction about the landscape of research about black undergraduate women. Then five paper presentations will be offered on emergent research on black undergraduate women. Following presentations, the discussant will highlight themes across the papers and identify areas of future research. The chair will then invite audience members and presenters to engage in an interactive conversation about building a collaborative research agenda on black undergraduate women. All will discuss salient issues that have not been addressed in the literature, potential research questions, and possible collaborations among those in the audience.

Chair: Dr. Natasha Croom is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education at Iowa State University. Her research focuses on women of color in higher education, experiences Black women full professors, and critical race theory.

Discussant: Dr. Lori D. Patton is Associate Professor of Higher Education at Indiana University. Her research focuses on African Americans in postsecondary educational contexts, critical race theory, college student development and campus environments. Her research on black undergraduate women has focused on spirituality and lesbian identities at HBCUs. She is editor of the forthcoming book, Black Undergraduate Women and College Success

Presenter 1: Christa J. Porter is a Fixed Term Assistant Professor in the Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education Program at Michigan State University. Her research interests consist of the socialization processes, achievement, and identity development of Blacks through the educational pipeline, with a particular focus on Black undergraduate women. Her paper will highlight findings from a grounded theory study of identity development in Black undergraduate women, with attention to how these women, attending a predominantly white institution, articulated their identity as it related to their societal and familial influences, interactions with others, and intersections of identities.

Presenter 2: Jennifer Johnson is Assistant Professor of Education at Bowie State University. Her scholarly agenda is to promote the college access and persistence of traditionally underrepresented populations (e.g. first generation college students, lower-income individuals, and racial/ethnic minorities) through the qualitative examination of the experiences and outcomes of students across institutional contexts in higher education. Her paper will illustrate an in depth narrative case study focusing on how Black undergraduate women navigate their social experiences, particularly their race, gender, and class status within the context of a highly selective "Ivy League" University.

Presenter 3: Kimberly A. Griffin is an Associate Professor in the Higher Education, Student Affairs, and International Education Policy Program at the University of Maryland, College Park. Dr. Griffin's research interests are primarily focused in three areas: the access, experiences, and outcomes of underrepresented communities in higher education; diversity within the Black higher education community; and the influence of relationships on outcomes at critical time points. Chrystal George Mwangi is an assistant professor in higher education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her scholarship broadly centers on 1) structures of opportunity and educational attainment for underrepresented populations along the P-20 education pipeline; 2) impacts of globalization and migration on U.S. higher education at the student, institution, and policy levels; and 3) African and African Diaspora populations in higher education. Shawna Patterson is a doctoral candidate in Higher Education at Florida State University and a Dean in College Houses and Academic Services at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research interests include Black and Latino/a issues in higher education, media influences in the postsecondary sector, student of color identity development, and critical theory in higher educational contexts. Though she is early in her career, Patterson has published three independent articles on the experiences of Black women in higher education and has collaborated on six publications.
explore the state of diversity in higher education. Their paper explores the experiences of Black immigrant women, who are a growing population on many campuses. Their findings highlight how Black undergraduate women from Africa and the Caribbean described transitional issues, how identity related to their transitions, and their access to and use of support and resources on campus.

Presentation 4: Jessica C. Harris, Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education, Indiana University

Jessica C. Harris is a recent graduate of the Indiana University Higher Education and Student Affairs Program. Her research interests focus on college women and sexual assault, critical race theory and multiracial college students. Her paper uses the concept of structural determinism to explore the ways in which structures of racial determinism and monoracial understandings of race impacted the identities and experiences of Black/White multiracial women undergraduate students attending a predominantly White institution (PWI) in the Midwestern U.S.

Presentation 5: Rachelle Winkle-Wagner is Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Wisconsin Madison. Aiming to uncover and provide solutions for educational inequalities, her research focuses on the overarching question: How do underrepresented students (students of color) survive and thrive in their pathways to and through college? She is author of The Unchosen Me: Race, gender, and identity among Black women in college. Courtney Luedke is a lecturer in the College of Education and Professional Studies at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater. Her research focuses on college access, persistence and success for underserved populations including low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students in higher education. She also explores how various stakeholders contribute to the success of Students of Color in college. Carmen McCallum is an Assistant Professor in Higher Education Administration at Buffalo State, SUNY. Her research interests include the recruitment, retention, and experiences of graduate students of color. Her most recent work highlights the role of culture in graduate school decisions. Their paper focuses on the African American Women’s Alumnae Project (AAWAP), a historical and life story analysis of the reflections of African American female college alumnae (from 1955-2014) on their success and opportunities in college. The study offers a 59-year life history of Black women’s experiences in college, a perspective that has generally not been included in the cannon about students of color in college and the focus is centered on the actions that Black women identified as important for college success, some of which have not been previously considered. The paper offers a focus on Black women as unique actors and advances a counterpoint to the growing body of work that centers on Black men.

Attached File

Reference(s)

References


Goldrick-Rab, S. (2007). What higher education has to say about the transition to college. The Teachers College Record, 109(10), 2444-2481.


Winkle-Wagner, R. (2009). The unchosen me: Race, gender, and identity among Black women in