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ABSTRACT

The life and educational experiences of nine male students during their doctoral programs were studied using the narrative tradition of qualitative research with multiple interviews with each participant. Their responses were then compared with those from a similar dissertation study that focused on the experiences of female graduate students from similar universities (A. Ford on, 1996). The comparative study indicates that gender is a contextual factor in the lives of doctoral students. The academic, psychological and financial stressors are similar for both males and females, but their coping strategies differ. Males had a stronger "breadwinner" mindset and experienced more stress financially as graduate students. For females, social and ideological prejudices were an extra burden. An appendix describe participants' characteristics. (Contains 3 tables and 30 references.) (SLD)

# How Male and Female Doctoral Students Experience their Doctoral Programs Similarly and Differently?

A Presentation for the AERA Conference 2001

Seattle, WA

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2001

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## Abstract

Many studies have indicated that high rates of attrition still exist in doctoral programs. These studies reveal how graduate students experienced academic, social, psychological barriers and what coping strategies were required to overcome barriers in order to successfully complete their doctoral degrees. What is less evident in this literature is the influence of gender on doctoral studies, and the students' own stories of what the experience of being a doctoral student is like. This presentation will report the findings of a study of nine male doctoral students that was conducted using the narrative tradition of qualitative research.

To compare their responses with those of women doctoral students reported in an earlier study, findings were then compared with those in a similar dissertation study that focused exclusively on the experiences of female graduate students from similar universities. The purpose of this present study, therefore, was to examine the life and educational experiences of nine racially and ethnically mixed male doctoral students at a research I university in the Midwest, focusing in particular on their narrative accounts of academic, material, social, psychological, and ideological barriers, and supporters.

This comparative study amply indicates that gender is a contextual factor in the lives of doctoral students. The academic, psychological, and financial stressors are similar for both males and females, but their coping strategies differ. Males had stronger sense of a "bread winner" mindset and experienced more stress financially as a graduate student. For females, social and ideological prejudices were extra burdensome. Additional research should address other contextual factors which male and female doctoral students experience, especially academic advising.

## **How Male and Female Doctoral Students Experience their Doctoral Programs Similarly and Differently?**

### **Introduction**

There are many studies targeted on understanding the doctoral study phenomenon. They are both quantitative and qualitative. According to previous studies, as many as 30% (Miller, 1990), 40% ( Sigafus, 1998) or even 60% (Germeroth, 1991) of all students who enter a doctoral program never finish the degree, many of them remaining “ABD”. Tinto (1993) defined the dissertation stage as the most challenging stage of doctoral studies. He claimed that mentoring support is critical at this stage. Because many doctoral students do not complete their highly competitive doctoral studies, their issues, difficulties, and supporting factors have become topics of study. Much of this research focuses on academic, financial and psychological factors that inhibit or enhance progress toward degree completion. What is less evident in this literature is the influence of gender on doctoral studies, and the students’ own stories of what the experience of being a doctoral student is like.

This presentation will report the findings of a study of male doctoral students that was conducted using the narrative tradition of qualitative research. Findings are compared with those in a similar dissertation study that focused on the experiences of female graduate students from similar universities (Fordon, 1996). Based on intensive interview data with nine doctoral students, Fordon employed grounded theory to identify educational supporters and barriers. This presentation of the results of a similar study facilitates a gender based comparison of male and female life and educational experiences in similar context.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the life and educational experiences of nine racially and ethnically mixed male doctoral students at a research I university in the Midwest, focusing in particular on their narrative accounts of academic, material, social, psychological, and ideological barriers, and supporters, to compare their responses with those of women doctoral students reported in an earlier study.

### **Literature Review**

Life histories and intensive interviews were originally used to understand the social world in which teachers and students live (Waller, 1932), and to map the nature and extent of social contexts (Federal Writers' Project, 1939, Botkin, 1945). As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stressed that " narrative is a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experiences and its study which is appropriate to many social science fields"(p.2). Feminist theorists adopted the personal narrative as a new dimension for understanding the experience of females. Gender analysis has been the cornerstone issue in feminist researches. The personal experiences of women have been given high recognition (Harding, 1987; Reinharz, 1993) and the voices of marginalized people are heard in feminist texts. However, it is the researcher's belief that gender based analysis should not exclude men from its investigation. Rather, men should be given voices parallel to women to understand the broader and comprehensive nature of gender issues in human society. The researcher applied this belief in the study of male doctoral students.

Fordon (1996) has demonstrated that feminist research was a useful approach to understand the gender issues that influenced the educational experiences of female doctoral students. It is the researcher's expectation the same will hold for male doctoral students. This identical design of research not only reflects the ideology of the researcher, but also sets up the foundation for the possibility of comparison.

Many researchers have approached this topic from different aspects to understand the issues and problems. Denton, Tsai, and Chevrette (1987) found that faculty felt that doctoral students had sufficient opportunities for research while, the students felt that they did not. Peters and Peterson (1987) found that those felt included in social groups were more likely to complete their degrees than those who were not. Denton, Tsai, and Chevrette (1987) and Baird (1992) reported that full time students were more involved in their research projects than part time students. Wright and Lodwick (1989) discovered that older students tend to progress toward program completion quickly.

Adler(1976), Rimmer, Lammert and McClain (1982) determined that students of different race, gender and marital status had different needs during their doctoral program. Friedman (1987) concluded that international students studying in the U.S had different concerns in dealing with cultural shock, language barriers and relationships with faculty and fellow students. Willie, Grady and Hope (1991) found that African American doctoral students felt they had less access to professors and fewer teaching opportunities than white students. Turner and Thompson (1993) concluded that female doctoral students of color have fewer opportunities for support and socialization than white female students.

Washington, Goddard and Newman (1990) found that more female students than male doctoral students felt out of control. Adler (1976) found that female doctoral students experienced role conflicts between personal life and professional life. Hanson (1992) also supported Adler's finding of the inequality between female and male students. Faghihi and Ethington (1999) however found that women appeared to have higher intellectual involvement than male doctoral students.

Wright and Lodwick (1989) suggested that support in general was important. Valdez (1982) found 48% of students experienced a major crisis in the first year of doctoral studies and support from a “buddy” was important. Dorn and Papalewis (1997) suggested peer mentoring support play significant roles in doctoral students academic success. Wagner (1997) suggested smaller enrollments would provide every student with full scholarship and more interaction. Madrey (1983) also found that the support from the spouse of doctoral student was very important financially, emotionally, psychologically and academically.

The array of findings in the literature review describe the nature of the context proposed for study.

### **Method**

This was a qualitative interview study. The participants were identified with a combination of networking and snowball sampling (Patton, 1994). Nine male participants of North American Caucasian, African American, Asian, and New Zealander nationality and ethnic backgrounds were invited to take part in this study in a research I university in the Midwest. They were doctoral students in Materials Science Engineering, Business, Medicine, Music, History, and Environmental Engineering(see table 1).

Participants profiles are outlined as follows:

John, 40 years old. European American. Material Engineering. About to defend dissertation, 4<sup>th</sup> year. Remarried, with two children from wife’s previous marriage.

Matt, 29 years old, African American. PhD in Pharmacology and MD in medicine. In his 5<sup>th</sup> year of the combined degree program.

Martin, 25 years old, European American. PhD in Quantitative Analysis. 1<sup>st</sup> year in the program.

Nathan, 39, European American, on wheelchair. PhD in Organizational Behavior.

Doctoral candidate, 3<sup>rd</sup> year in the program.

Joy, 25, Indian student. PhD in Material Engineering. About to defend the dissertation.  
5<sup>th</sup> year in the program.

Tim, 38, European American. PhD in British History. Doctoral candidate. 8<sup>th</sup> year in the program.

Jun, 30. Chinese student. PhD in Environmental Engineering. 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the program.

Alex, 33, New Zealand student. DMA in music. Doctoral candidate. 3<sup>rd</sup> year in the program.

Lim, 32, Malay Chinese. DMA in music. Doctoral candidate. 6<sup>th</sup> year in the program.

Interview sites were selected in public places both on and off campus depending upon the preferences and circumstances of participants. Multiple intensive interviews with each of the participants were conducted. A semi - structured interview guide was prepared to guide the flow of conversation (Kvale, 1996). The content of the interview guide followed closely the topics used by Fordon. Questions were raised differently each time depending upon the judgment of the researcher's understanding of the circumstance of each interview and participant. Questions beyond the interview guide were raised to follow the flow of conversation with participants. With the aid of participants, an on going interview schedule was constructed.

Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Field notes, observations and artifacts were kept in each participant's profile. The collected data were initially analyzed according to material, social, ideological patterns as well as semi-open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The latter resulted in the addition of the categories of academic patterns and psychological patterns. Profile of participants is presented in the appendix.

## Findings

Findings are coded into supporters and barriers in five categories: academic, social, material, psychological, ideological.(see table 2). In comparison with female students experiences reported in Fordon's study, findings that are comparable in her study were recategorized to the above five patterns. Details are displayed in Table 3.

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Table 3

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### Academic Barriers:

Six of the male doctoral students reported that they were lacking academic advising and mentoring support in the program. John's advisor didn't agree to his research topic and he had to abandon the doctoral degree and transferred to current university. Nathan was discouraged that "faculty have more self interests than helping students". He was lost in the first year. Tim's advisor didn't have the specialty in the research topic he was doing, Tim felt he was not prepared to do the dissertation and get adequate intellectual challenge. Alex received no orientation nor advising, he also unfortunately fell between the "fight" of his professors. Lim reported that "it's not easy to get help" when needed. Matt said he was unsupervised in doing lab research in his first year.

Jun thought the English was a little challenging in the beginning and he spent a lot of time on reading in order to catch up with the lectures.

Matt reported that his table received less attention from the professor in a lab class compared with other tables and he couldn't tell that it was racism or not.

Tim thought the faculty ego was difficult to deal with.

Future job market and uncertain future were worrisome to some doctoral students. Tim, Lim, Alex, and John felt the pressures of survival after they have devoted so much efforts in the degree pursuit. Tim placed the dissertation as the least priority because he felt he needed to support the family.

Two participants also reported that faculty ego and politics were difficult to deal with.

#### **Academic Supporters :**

Advising and orientation were important factors for the successful experiences of graduate students. Martin was very satisfied with the orientation and advising he has received as a first year student. He felt confident that he could succeed in his doctoral studies because of the support he has received.

Joy received an exchange scholar invitation to do the research in Belgium for five months, which broadened his vision and technical skills in the field. He thought it was very helpful that his advisor kept close contact with him in person, via e-mail or over the phone. He felt very encouraged and supported. His advisor and he jointly owned a US patent. Joy also received help in applying for a visa to the US from the international students office of the university.

#### **Social Barriers :**

Students view the relationship with family members, colleagues and professors as an important factor that impacts their doctoral studies. John divorced his colleague wife because she couldn't get enough attention from him. He suffered huge amount of peer pressure after the divorce. As a result, he had to give up the program even though he was about to defend the dissertation.

Matt, Tim, Martin and Lim felt pressured by the responsibilities as a family protector and provider in addition to their studies.

Nathan experienced divorce because his handicapped body couldn't meet the demands of his ex-wife. Later he lost his job in the company merging. These incidents motivated him to pursue the doctoral studies. After he started doctoral studies, his new girlfriend left him because she didn't want to wait for another four years. Nathan was very discouraged by his relationship with women.

### **Social Supporters:**

Family: wife is a major supporter for six of nine married doctoral students. Matt thought his wife provided him the “needed space, latitude, and patience”. She took care of the family and children when he experienced breakdowns. In addition, his extended family members were ready to help him when he needed them in babysitting. Martin thought his wife was his best friend.” She had creative mind, it's been nice she always listens to me whatever bothers me. It's good to give me this space and time to think about the problems.” John thought his wife was very supportive to his study. Tim's wife took care of children and shared most of the housework as a part time mom. Tim thought she was his very good friend. International student couples, Jun and Lim thought that their wives and they supported each other. They view their relationship as interdependent.

Peer support: John, Joy, and Jun reported that collegial team meetings in the department were very useful to share researches with colleagues and get input from each other as well as professors. Jun, Joy and Nathan especially benefited from their peer mentor who provide them orientation, course selection advice, taught them about college politics and other survival skills.

Nathan thought “I would quit if I didn’t have my mentor in my first year. The second year I learned to play the game.”

**Material Barriers:**

Seven of nine participants in this study reported financial stress as a doctoral student. Lim, Alex and Tim were distracted by the financial pressure and they had to work more to make ends meet. Lim had to support his wife’s parents by sending money home as much as he could. Tim took a full time job in order to support his wife and three children. Tim also had limited space at home which restrained his possibilities to study when children were running around at home. He did not have transportation means to move around freely until recently. For Matt, sometimes he felt the stress of student’s loans which would accumulate quickly.

**Material Supporters:**

All participants received or partially received scholarships during certain stages of their studies. They regarded scholarship as very important support to their continuation of study. Nathan has a very high pay job which he worried he would enjoy his comfortable life and not to finish the degree. Martin has won a research scholarship from Association of Academic Minority Physicians and a fellowship from Howard Hughes Medical Institute to do his research. He was able to develop that research into dissertation topic later on these two scholarship and fellowship. Tim also received a grant from the university to study in Dublin for a year which helped him with his research in Irish history.

**Psychological Barriers:**

Psychological barriers had strong impact on participants to complete their programs. Six participants expressed different degrees of self doubt about their ability to complete the degree at certain time of the process. It was more overwhelming in the first year to overcome that sense of

incompetence. John felt desperate after he lost his marriage, his degree and sense of self before he changed universities. Matt suffered seasonal stress and high blood pressure after the first year of medical school in addition to family responsibilities. Martin experienced stress and difficulties, but he felt he was not supposed to express them. Nathan felt he was lonely, “a sense of being abandoned, incompetent, hopeless”. In addition to his own feelings, he felt “faculty make you feel they are so much smarter than you are”. After he took a job as a young vice president of a company, he was under huge peer pressure to “make my mark”. Tim suffered from family neglect and peer prejudice at young age. “My self esteem has always been low in my life because I was short at school. I was not able to develop that”. Tim was frustrated whether he was able to finish his degree or not. Tim, John, Alex and Lim also experienced depression during the course of studies and they were concerned about job and career future.

#### **Psychological Supporters:**

Participants developed different strategies to cope with their psychological stressors. John sought counseling service after the failure of his marriage. Matt was treated as “inferior others” by his fifth and sixth grade teacher. He developed strong motivation from that hurtful experience to excel in academic pursuit. Martin and Nathan internalized challenge as their motivation to complete the degree. Alex chose to clear up his mind and reconnected to the goal. He also used work to occupy lonely times.

#### **Ideological Barrier(s):**

There were few findings that were ideological in nature. Matt was reluctant to think that racism was a barrier to him as an African American. “ I will not say racism does not exist. I use racism as the last alternative after you rule every other possibilities out”. He did admit that he has

to be more careful about what to say when he talked in front of class which was predominantly Caucasian students. But “that doesn’t prevent me from asking questions”.

Participants didn’t think there was gender difference nor gender was a barrier for them. A few of them did think female faculty and students had disadvantages. Matt thought female students were “much like African Americans, women students don’t get the respect and credit they are often worth”. Martin thought that “statistics may not be the field women find interesting”. Nathan had no direct knowledge or conversation with female faculty about this topic, but he believed that “...a couple of female faculty assume they had to work harder to get ahead. I am sure it is not equal because by and large this has been a man’s world in academics across all disciplines”. Tim thought that “women professors might be disadvantaged in a traditional male profession. They might be discouraged because they are women, I don’t know”. Jun thought “female’s social roles take time away from doing research. I think women have to take care of housework more than men do”. In terms of family relationships, he thought that “it is regarded abnormal if a wife is running around all day but the husband stays at home”. According to Lim’s observation, “female professors are more strict, few of them want to show professionalism”. He thought why there were gender differences in career was because “women stopped learning after they get married. Now they don’t want to get married, nor have children”.

#### **Ideological Supporters:**

All participants regarded doctoral study as a means to be better educated and making contributions. They were determined to finish the degree.

After the failure of marriage, John went to spirituality for the answer. He changed his priority and put job on the least of his list and family on the top. He said, “the irony is after I changed my priority, I have my wife, family and I am going to get my degree. When I had job as

my top priority, I lost everything”. John found source of support from church activities and prayer. Matt took his faith as essential to him. He believed God will not let him fail. He was a church worship leader and he was very proud of being an active member of his church. He thought it was very important for him to connect with the God, so he could overcome. Joy thought Hinduism philosophy was very helpful to guide his conduct, morality and value in life. Jun believed in presence. Though his future was an uncertainty, he was not worried. “I don’t know what I am going to be. I am happy with what I am doing”.

### **Conclusion**

From the report of the participants, the broad and deep issues of the male doctoral students were revealed through personal narratives. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stressed that “ narrative is a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experiences and its study which is appropriate to many social science fields”. The male experiences did provide a valid and rich insight into their lives and educational experiences. After comparison with the findings of Fordon’s study, conclusions were drawn as follows:

There are both many similarities and differences in the doctoral study experiences evident in the narratives of male and female students. Barriers were overwhelming themes reported by both genders in their doctoral pursuits.

#### **Academic Patterns**

Regarding academic patterns, faculty advising and mentoring were reported as lacking for both genders. Some reported that their doctoral course work did not prepare them for the comprehensive/qualifying exams and dissertation. Some faculty did not take that as their professional responsibility. One participant reported to run into faculty “fight” innocently and

didn't progress much in an entire year. Those who received sufficient advising and mentoring from faculty reported their studies as successful experiences. The advising was more important during the first year of study and dissertation stage which confirmed other research findings. Some women reported that male students dominated the class discussion while faculty took it for granted. Though two female students in Fordon's study reported that they felt male students were more "aggressive" and "competent", male students regarded female students as equally competitive. Nathan said : "At doctoral level, the competition gets much tougher. You have to be very good to stay on the top of the pyramid. There is no dummies in the doctoral programs. Men or women, doesn't make any difference".

### **Social Patterns**

Social support was regarded as a critical factor for surviving, especially encouragement from family, external mentors, and friends. A few male students reported faculty members as their friends. For married students, both men and women reported that they didn't have enough time and energy for their families while studying. More men clearly received more support from their spouses than women from their spouses. There were incidences from both male and female students that they could have dropped the study without the help from their friends or family members. In Lynn's case, "Lynn said she would not get married while she was a doctoral student because she didn't want to compromise her career goals like many women she knew". On the other hand, "male students who married these women and compromised nothing".

Social factors became barriers as well. One male student was forced to abandon his dissertation and transferred to another university due to the heavy peer pressure after he divorced his colleague wife. A female student was criticized by her advisor for lacking of ambition because she was preparing for her wedding during the study. For international students, some

reported experiencing a sense of isolation due to lack of social connection and support that were available for them in their home countries.

### **Psychological Patterns**

Regarding psychological patterns, negative feelings about themselves and programs were difficult to deal with for both men and women and both reported a struggle to overcome the self doubt and feelings of incompetence. Some of these male students sought professional helpers, work or internalized their motivation to succeed to shift the negative feelings of self. Nathan felt very strongly about his motivation of completing the degree

I have so many friends, family care about me, I can't let them down. I started my doctoral program with external influences, it only happened when all these crazy things had to happen at one time. But now I internalized it. It's like having a baby. I have been through pregnancy and so much labor pain, I want my baby more than any time. I am not going to give up my baby. It is good that I internalize it

“Do I get depressed? Yes. I just have to refocus on the task and work harder”. Alex shared how he coped with his feelings.

### **Material Patterns**

Regarding the material patterns, both male and female participants reported financial issues to be critical barriers. Male students expressed greater stress in this area. Several male students regarded themselves as or wanted to be family “provider and protector”. One male student almost abandoned his dissertation due to financial pressures on him and his family. Both

male and female students reported the job markets were a threat to their motivation to finish the degree.

### **Ideological Patterns**

Finally, regarding ideological patterns, both male and female students undertook doctoral studies as means for making a better life and being a contributor to society. However, the reality of the job market for doctoral students to pursue academic career was an influential factor to their motivation of degree completion. Martin was very optimistic about statistics job opportunities after he graduated. So to him “my strugglings are worth it”. On the other hand, Tim, was quite discouraged to the academic career opportunities and altered his career plan as a result of that. For Lim, as an international student, was not very optimistic neither. He regarded his country lacking opportunities for musicians and music educators. Being a Chinese Malay, he said “Malays have an easier life. They have better social security and job opportunities”. Lim worked very diligently on his dissertation, but he commented that “I may regret my career choice in the future, but right now I don’t have time to worry about it”.

Some females reported that their gender was a barrier. They were subjects to sexist comments and sexual harassments from male faculty and students. Some reported they were not treated as seriously as male students by their male and female faculty. Female students also reported they needed more female role models in their departments and in their study materials. Some of them were not encouraged to pursue academic careers as women when they were younger. No male reported similar incidences, but few men from lower social economic family backgrounds reported needing more encouragement in pursuit of their doctoral degrees. For some students, religion is a source of support to complete the degree. Matt believed it was God

that didn't prevent him from doing what he was doing. For some men, the pressures of taking family responsibilities were sources for finishing the degree on time.

### **Discussion**

The results of this comparative study indicated the breadth and depth of personal narrative as an approach to research. In a similar context, the comparative platform provided more detailed and valid understandings of gender as experienced in doctoral study. Results show that participants in doctoral programs experienced numerous barriers, but the social stereotype, academic expectations, and family obligations make doctoral study more stressful for female doctoral students than for males.

This study amply indicates that gender is a contextual factor in the lives of doctoral students. The academic, psychological, and financial stressors are similar for both males and females, but their coping strategies differ. Males had stronger sense of "bread winner" mindset and experienced more stress financially as a graduate student. For females, social and ideological factors were extra burdensome. Additional research should address other contextual factors which male and female doctoral students experience, especially academic advising. Meanwhile, it is the researcher's suggestion from the results of this study that faculty and advisors should take into account more factors about doctoral students' life than just academic matters. Eighteen male and female students reported in this study showed that they all have to deal with multiple stressors while doing doctoral study. A good academic advising and mentoring service will be critical to the success of doctoral students. In addition, a caring and supporting environment will be necessary, especially for female students who are not comfortable with academic isolation. In addition, many of them swimming against the current to realize their career goals. They need more sustained advocates during this process.

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## Appendix

Table 1

### Participants Profile

Name/age	Degree	Nationality/ethnicity	Marital status
John/41	4 <sup>th</sup> year. PhD in Material Science Engineering, College of Engineering	European Caucasian	married
Matt/29	5 <sup>th</sup> year. PhD in Pharmacology and MD in Medicine, College of Medicine	African American	married
Martin/25	1 <sup>st</sup> year. PhD: Applied statistics College of Business Administration	European American	married
Nathan/38	3 <sup>rd</sup> year. PhD in Organizational Behavior College of Business	European American	Divorced, Handicapped
Joy/25	5 <sup>th</sup> year. PhD Material Science Engineering College of Engineering	Indian	single
Tim/38	7 <sup>th</sup> year. PhD in British History College of Arts and Science	European American	married
Jun/30	1 <sup>st</sup> year. PhD in Environmental Engineering, College of Engineering	Chinese	married
Alex/33	3 <sup>rd</sup> year. DMA in Piano Performance, College- Conservatory of Music	New Zealander	single
Lim/28	6 <sup>th</sup> year. DMA in Violin Performance College- Conservatory of Music	Malay Chinese	married

Table 2:  
Findings of Nine Male Doctoral Students in My Study:

Name	Categories	Barriers	Supporters	Opinions about Gender Differences
John	Social	Relationship with co-workers/advisor after divorce, divorce	Social: Collegial team meeting, current wife	no differences between men and women in academic fields
	Academic	Conflict with advisor, abandon degree	Academic: Transfer universities	
	Finance	limited income	family budgeting	
	Ideology	workholic,	Change priority: family first, religion	
	Psychological	Depression and desperation	Counseling	
Matt	Social	Stress from study and family responsibilities pressure to be successful, family duties	Wife provides needed space, latitude, and patience Wife, extended family support	Much like African Americans, women students don't get the respect and credit they are often worth of.
	Material	Financial, students loan	scholarship	
	Psychological	Seasonal depression, high blood pressure, self doubt	5 <sup>th</sup> 6 <sup>th</sup> grade teacher was racist, became motivation to excel	
	Ideology	refuse to let racism to be obstacles	God, Spiritual songs and meditation Work harder to approve yourself	
	Academic	lack of advising, supervision	Gain independent research skills and prestigious scholarships	

Table 2 continued:

Martin				
	Social	feel pressured to be a supportive husband friends and family don't understand	Focused on stat. Wife and parents are very supportive	I think this may not be the field women generally find interesting
	Academic	Don't want to show weakness to professors	Advising, peer support, orientation, flexibility	Hope wife make compromise if there is job conflict
	Material	Financial stress	Scholarship	
	Psychological	"I am smart, I should be able to do whatever you want"	Internally motivated by the challenge of knowledge	
	Ideological		Being successful	
Nathan				
	Social	Divorce, merger work load girlfriend left stressful studies	Very good at sports, star, leader Buddies, mother	I am sure it is not equal because by large this has been a man's world in academics across all disciplines.
	Academic	Lack of advising, academic orientation, Nobody cares faculty have more self interests	peer mentoring, take initiatives, learn to play the political game, read economically, encouragement from professors	She should be subversive, but very attractive, smart, have a sense of humor, professional, career oriented.
	Material	job is too rewarding to finish the degree	great income, scholarship	
	Psychological	self doubt, peer pressure from work place, lonely, a sense of being abandoned, incompetent, hopeless faculty make you feel they are so much smarter than you are faculty , ego some frustration for being handicapped	internalize the motivation	
	Ideological			

Table 2 continued:

Joy	Social		Peer support Parents encouragement	Do not see the gender differences
	Academic		Frequent Advising, Visiting researcher ISSO with visa Scholarship, employment opportunity	
	Material		feel confident	
	Psychological			
	Ideological		Hinduism pray	
Tim	Social	family duty, no sustained support students bite each other	Wife	Women professors might be disadvantaged in a traditional male profession. My experience is people getting it not because of their gender or sex, but because they are lack of capability.
	Academic	Lack academic advising, mentoring, lack of preparation to do the dissertation, interested in too many things, faculty ego, lost interests		
	Material	financial, space, transportation, market pessimistic,	job, grant/trip to Ireland,	
	Psychological	Low self esteem(short), self doubt,		
	Ideological			

Table 2 continued:

Jun	Social	Poor quality of life Isolation	Wife and I support each other Peer support daughter	<p>“ I think female’s social roles take time away from doing research. I think women have to take care of housework more than men do”  “strong women in my work unit have to be wild. I feel sorry for them” Women have to be very wild and bad, otherwise it’s difficult to get what you want.  Employer prefer men other than women.  “its regarded abnormal if the wife is running around all day but the husband stays at home”</p>
	Academic	Language barrier,	Appreciate study opportunity job market is good	
	Material	tight finance	scholarship	
	Psychological			
	Ideological		I believe in presence. I don’t know what I am going to be. I am happy with what I am doing.	
Alex	Social	Isolated childhood, outsider Lonely and isolated	Parents, music 4 <sup>th</sup> grade teacher, piano teacher who is famous some musician, performers have said high about me visit home country of parents finding the roots try to believe I am going to succeed some peer support	
	Academic	Unprofessional, cold and indifferent, Stuck between faculty fights, Job future		
	Material	Financial, Work		
	Psychological	Depression and stress	Work more reconnect to goal	
	Ideological			

Table 2 continued:

<b>Lim</b>	<b>Social</b>	I do most housework to support my wife	Wife and I provide support to each other	Female professors are more strict, few of them want to show professionalism.
	<b>Academic</b>	Lack advising job market pessimistic Not easy to get help First year difficult	Look at bulletin, plan carefully, ask secretary for information work hard to gain independence	Women stopped learning after they get married. Now they don't want to get married, not have children
	<b>Material</b>	help wife support her family at home	Partial scholarship Find part time jobs	
	<b>Psychological</b>			
	<b>Ideological</b>	I may regret about my career choice, worried about future Prejudice against Chinese in Malaysia.	keep focused	

Table 3: Comparative Findings of Male and Female Doctoral Students Experiences

Factors of Influence	Similarities	Differences
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack advising and mentoring</li> <li>• Faculty conflict with students and other faculty members</li> <li>• Adequate faculty advising and orientation were very helpful to students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female students perceive make students as aggressive, they dominate the class discussion</li> <li>• Male students perceive female students as equally competitive</li> <li>• Female students reported they were not treated as professionals</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social support from families, friends, and peers are critical to their academic survival and success</li> <li>• Limited time for the family</li> <li>• International students reported they lacked community connection and support</li> <li>• Peer support was significantly helpful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower expectation for female students and students from lower social economic background.</li> <li>• Family role and career goal conflicts for female students</li> <li>• Relationship could be obstacle to the completion of degree</li> </ul>
Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male students feel more pressure as support to the family</li> </ul>
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self doubt</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Internalize the motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male students are more reluctant to show emotional needs and weakness to professors</li> </ul>
Ideological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value education</li> <li>• Job concerns</li> <li>• Religion is a source of support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female perceive gender as barriers</li> <li>• Need more female role models</li> <li>• Racism is used as motivation for success</li> </ul>

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